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## The Nobility of the Kaunas District in the Local Sejmiks of 1615 and 1632\*

### Abstract

Based on the instructions of the Kaunas sejmiks of 1615 and 1632, the article analyses the questions resolved by the nobility of the Kaunas district related to the life of the district and the whole Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A particular focus is given to how different state processes and events were reflected in the sejmiks of the Kaunas district. The article also includes a list of nobility who signed the 1615 sejmik instructions.

### Zarys treści

Na podstawie instrukcji sejmików kowieńskich z lat 1615 i 1632, w artykule przeanalizowano kwestie rozstrzygane przez szlachtę powiatu kowieńskiego, związane z życiem powiatu i całej Rzeczypospolitej. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na odzwierciedlenie w pracach sejmików różnych procesów i wydarzeń państwowych. W artykule zamieszczono także listę szlachty, która podpisała instrukcje sejmikowe z 1615 r.

**Keywords:** Kaunas district, nobility of Kaunas district, sejmik, instructions, Grand Duchy of Lithuania

**Słowa kluczowe:** powiat kowieński, szlachta powiatu kowieńskiego, sejmiki, instrukcje, Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie

The judicial and administrative reforms of 1564–1566 introduced in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania changed not only the administrative division but also the order of the political and judicial life of the districts (Pol. sing. *powiat*). In the case of the Kaunas district, next to the ruler's deputy residing in the Kaunas

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castle (*starost*), noble courts and sejmiks (the assemblies of all noblemen from a district or land) consisting of the local nobility were formed.<sup>1</sup> They became important institutions of local self-government where the nobility discussed political, economic and military issues of the state or local area and elected local-level officials or candidates for administrative positions. Also, the nobles of the districts were elected as deputies to the Sejms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Among the newly formed administrative units during the reforms was the Trakai Voivodeship, which included the districts of Grodno, Kaunas, Trakai, and Upytė. The Kaunas district was the smallest among other districts in the Trakai Voivodeship and, according to preliminary calculations, covered an area of approximately 6045 square kilometres.<sup>2</sup>

This article focuses on the Kaunas district sejmiks of 1615 and 1632. These instructions of the sejmiks allow us to better understand the political activities of the Kaunas district nobility in the first third of the seventeenth century. In particular: (1) the instruction of the Kaunas sejmik of 1615<sup>3</sup> and (2) the instruction of the pre-convocation sejmik of Kaunas of 1632, convened after the death of King Sigismund III Vasa.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the date of the instruction of the pre-convocation Kaunas sejmik of 1632, which is kept in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (AGAD), is incorrect. The description of the document (signature: AGAD, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, Division 2, ref. no. 3417) does not refer to 1632, but to the period from 12 December 1586 to 29 January 1587. However, the document was not created during the interregnum of 1586–1587, after the death of King Stephen Báthory, but during the interregnum of 1632, after the death of King Sigismund III Vasa. The historian Henryk Lulewicz has pointed out that during the Third Interregnum, on 22–24 January 1587, there was a pre-convocation sejmik of the voivodeship in Trakai, in which, together

<sup>1</sup> Z. Kiaupa, *Kauno istorija*, vol. 1: *Kauno istorija nuo seniausių laikų iki 1655 metų*, Vilnius, 2010, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> D. Vilimas, “Kauno žemės teismas paskutiniaisiais Stepono Batoro valdymo metais (tematinio tyrimo metmenys)”, *Lituanistika*, 57 (2011), no. 3, p. 228; D. Vilimas, “Iš Kauno pavieto žemės teismo kasdienybės. Pavieto vazniai XVI a. pabaigoje”, *Istorijos šaltinių tyrimai*, 6 (2018), p. 230; J. Ochmański, *Historia Litwy*, Wrocław, 1982, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw; hereinafter: AGAD), Archiwum Radziwiłłów (Archive of Radziwiłł Family; hereinafter: AR), Division 2 (hereinafter: Dz. II), ref. no. 621, Instruction to Kaunas district deputies given at pre-Sejm sejmik of the Kaunas district, 3 Jan. 1615, fols 1–10; AGAD, AR, Dz. II, Supplement, no. 272 (copy of the Kaunas instruction, no date and no deputies names, fols 1–4). See also T. Kempa, *Wobec kontrreformacji. Protestanci i prawosławni w obronie swobód wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej w końcu XVI i w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Toruń, 2007, p. 286, fn. 100.

<sup>4</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, Instruction to Kaunas district deputies given at pre-convocation sejmik of 1632.

with the nobility of Trakai, participated also the nobility of Kaunas, Upytė, and Grodno districts.<sup>5</sup>

Important information on the political attitudes of the nobility is also provided by the instruction of the Kaunas district sejmik prepared before the Sandomierz Rebellion (*rokosz sandomierski*) in 1606.<sup>6</sup> It expresses support for the rebellion and specifies the chosen deputies.

These instructions were compiled at different times. The first instruction is more detailed and, in addition to the obligations, includes short descriptions of the deputies and a list of the nobles who signed it. The second instruction is shorter and lists specific points.

The political activities of the Kaunas sejmiks and the local nobility of the later times have received considerable attention from researchers. For example, Robertas Kalvinskas, drawing on the instructions of the Kaunas sejmiks of the first decades of the eighteenth century, analysed the activities of the local sejmik during the Northern War.<sup>7</sup> Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė researched the political attitudes of the Kaunas nobility during the late eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Monika Jusupović examined the composition and activities of the eighteenth-century Kaunas sejmiks.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the articles dedicated to the sejmiks of the Kaunas district, she also published a monograph about the Zabiello family, whose members were active participants in the eighteenth-century Kaunas sejmiks.<sup>10</sup> Research on other sejmiks and their nobility is especially relevant when researching particular districts. For example, the following studies can be mentioned: Andrzej B. Zakrzewski's research

<sup>5</sup> H. Lulewicz, *Gniewów o unię ciągnął dalszy. Stosunki polsko-litewskie w latach 1569–1588*, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 360–361; AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 164, Ruthenian copy of the minutes of the Trakai “hooded court” of 24 Jan. 1587. For this observation, the author is thankful to the reviewers of *Rocznik Lituanistyczny*.

<sup>6</sup> Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie (The Princes Czartoryski Library and Archive in Krakow; hereinafter: BCzart), MS 2244, doc. no. 25, Instruction of the Kaunas district sejmik, 21 July 1606.

<sup>7</sup> R. Kalvinskas, “Kauno pavieta seimelio veikla Šiaurės karo metu”, *Mūsų praeitis*, 5 (1997), pp. 29–39.

<sup>8</sup> R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, “Kauno pavieta bajorija valstybės permainų laikotarpiu”, in: *Praeities pėdsakais: skiriama profesoriaus daktaro Zigmanto Kiaupos 65-mečiui*, ed. E. Rimša, Vilnius, 2007, pp. 293–311; R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, “1792–1793 m. Kauno pavieta konfederacija”, *Kauno istorijos metraštis*, 5 (2004), pp. 247–263.

<sup>9</sup> M. Jusupović, “Funkcjonowanie kowieńskich sejmików gospodarskich po reformach Sejmu Niemego”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 127 (2020), nr 4, pp. 855–881; *eadem*, “Rodzaje i struktura osiemnastowiecznych akt sejmiku Kowieńskiego jako świadectwo specyfiki akt sejmikowych Litewskich”, in: *Ženklaī, simboliāi, prasmės: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės tyrimai pagalbinių istorijos mokslų aspektu*, ed. R. Čapaitė, G. Zujienė, Vilnius, 2019, pp. 259–271; *eadem*, “Uczestnicy sejmików kowieńskich w czasach Augusta III i Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego – teoria i praktyka”, *Rocznik Lituanistyczny*, 2 (2016), pp. 127–142.

<sup>10</sup> *Eadem*, *Prowincjonalna elita litewska w XVIII wieku: działalność polityczna rodziny Zabiellów w latach 1733–1795*, Warszawa, 2014.

on the Trakai sejmik,<sup>11</sup> Diana Konieczna's work on the Brest-Litovsk sejmik,<sup>12</sup> and Robertas Jurgaitis's analysis of the Vilnius sejmik.<sup>13</sup> Emil Kalinowski's monograph on the nobility of Bielsk Land,<sup>14</sup> Artūras Vasiliauskas's study on the nobility and local politics of the Vilkomergė district,<sup>15</sup> as well as research by Andrej Radaman<sup>16</sup> and Uladzimir Padalinski<sup>17</sup> are also worth mentioning here. The district sejmiks and Sejms of the Commonwealth held in 1615 and 1632 have also received much attention from historians. Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska researched the Sejms of the Commonwealth in 1615–1616.<sup>18</sup> One of the most important convocations of the Lithuanian nobility in the seventeenth century, the Vilnius Convocation of 1615, was examined by Karol Łopatecki.<sup>19</sup> The district sejmiks and the Convocation and Election Sejms of the Commonwealth in 1632, the results of their works and the international and internal situation of the state have been researched by the historians Włodzimierz Kaczorowski<sup>20</sup> and Henryk Wisner.<sup>21</sup> The 1632 instruction of the pre-convocation sejmik of the Ashmyany (Lithuanian: *Ašmena*, Polish: *Oszmiana*) district was published by the Belarusian historian Henadz Sahanovic.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A.B. Zakrzewski, *Sejmiki Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego XVI–XVIII w. Ustrój i funkcjonowanie: sejmik trocki*, Warszawa, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> D. Konieczna, *Ustrój i funkcjonowanie sejmiku brzeskolitewskiego w latach 1565–1763*, Warszawa, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> R. Jurgaitis, *Nuo bajoriškosios savivaldos iki parlamentarizmo: Vilniaus seimelio veikla 1717–1795 m.*, Vilnius, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> E. Kalinowski, *Szlachta ziemi bielskiej wobec bezkrólewi w XVI–XVII wieku*, Warszawa, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> A. Vasiliauskas, "Noble Community and Local politics in Wilkomierz District During the Reign of Sigismund Vasa (1587–1632)", in: *Social and Cultural Relations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Microhistories*, ed. R. Butterwick, W. Pawlikowska, New York, 2019, pp. 132–147.

<sup>16</sup> A. Radaman, "Samorząd sejmikowy w powiatach województwa nowogródzkiego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w latach 1565–1632", in: *Praktyka życia publicznego w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w XVI–XVIII wieku*, ed. U. Augustyniak, A.B. Zakrzewski, Warszawa, 2010, pp. 55–103; *idem*, "Павятовыя соймкі Новагародскага ваяводства Вялікага Княства Літоўскага, Рускага і Жамойцкага напярэдадні кракаўскага ардынарнага сойма Рэчы Паспалітай абодвух народаў 1603 г.", in: *Вялікае Княства Літоўскае: палітыка, эканоміка, культура: зборнік навуковых артыкулаў*, vol. 2, ed. У.Р. Гусакоў, Мінск, 2017, pp. 221–252.

<sup>17</sup> У. Падалінскі, "Прадстаўніцтва і палітычная пазіцыя Вялікага княства Літоўскага на вальных соймах Рэчы Паспалітай у апошняй трэці XVI ст.", PhD dissertation, Мінск, 2004; *idem*, *Прадстаўніцтва Вялікага Княства Літоўскага на Люблінскім сойме 1569 года: удзел у працы першага вальнага сойма Рэчы Паспалітай*, Мінск, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> S. Ochmann, *Sejmy z lat 1615–1616*, Wrocław 1970.

<sup>19</sup> K. Łopatecki, "Konwokacja litewska 1615 roku. Z badań nad procedurą przyjmowania uchwał konwokacyjnych", *Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa*, 12 (2019), no. 4, pp. 493–522.

<sup>20</sup> W. Kaczorowski, *Sejmy konwokacyjny i elekcyjny w okresie bezkrólestwa 1632 r.*, Opole, 1986, pp. 43–172.

<sup>21</sup> H. Wisner, "Litwa po zgonie Zygmunta III. Od zjazdu wileńskiego do konwokacji warszawskiej", *Rocznik Białostocki*, 15 (1981), pp. 43–73.

<sup>22</sup> Г. Сагановіч, "Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага павета на канвакацыйны сойм 1632 г.", *Беларускі гістарычны агляд*, 14 (2007), no. 1–2, pp. 207–219 (also at <http://www.belhistory.eu/archives/1858>).

Based on the instructions of the Kaunas sejmiks of 1615 and 1632, the article analyses the questions resolved by the nobility of the Kaunas district and the realia of the district and the Commonwealth actualised in their work. As far as the information in the sources allows, the article discusses the nobles who signed the instructions and were elected as deputies to the General Sejm. The instructions of the Kaunas district are analysed in chronological order. This method was chosen as each instruction reveals the actualities of the Commonwealth and the Kaunas district during a specific period.

## Sejmik in 1615

According to Stanisława Ochmann-Staniszevska, in 1615, the situation was tense both in the spheres of domestic and foreign politics.<sup>23</sup> Military affairs caused tension and disagreements between the king and the nobles. The 1615 district sejmiks gathered in the context of the ongoing conflict between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and the Duchy of Moscow. At that time, Moscow was trying to regain Smolensk,<sup>24</sup> so the nobility of the districts had to discuss the issues of regional defence and taxes. The nobility of the GDL also had to solve disagreements between religious communities (e.g., between the Uniates and the Orthodox). The Orthodox sought to preserve their property, which the Uniates claimed.<sup>25</sup> These questions were also reflected in the pre-Sejm sejmiks of 1615.

The sejmik instruction of 1615 was signed, sealed and given to the deputies on 3 January 1615. The General Sejm was held in Warsaw from 12 February to 27 March 1615.<sup>26</sup> This detailed instruction provides information about the representatives and deputies sent to the General Sejm.<sup>27</sup> One of the leading noble families of the Kaunas district of those times can be seen in the signatory list. The first on the list was Kaunas district marshal Piotr Wizgierd. Other signatories were the following Kaunas officials: standard-bearer (Pol.: *chorąży*) Jan Dziewiałtowski, land court judge (*sędzia ziemski*) Andrzej Koplewski, land court clerk (*pisarz ziemski*) Malcher Skorulski, Mikołaj Skorulski, *wojski* (Lat. *tribunus*) Krzysztof Janowicz Mleczek, castle court judge (*sędzia grodzki*) Maciej Pietraszewicz, and Jan Ogiński. The instruction was also signed by Piotr Ławrynowicz Szukszta, Krzysztof Piotr Szukszta, Jan Karol Rostowski and other members of Kaunas nobility. The elected deputies were the Starost of Borysow and Deputy Cupbearer of Lithuania (*podczaszy litewski*) Janusz Radziwiłł and Deputy Master

<sup>23</sup> Ochmann-Staniszevska, *Sejmy z lat 1615–1616*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>24</sup> Łopatecki, “Konwokacja litewska 1615 roku”, p. 494.

<sup>25</sup> Kempa, *Wobec kontrreformacji*, pp. 286–287.

<sup>26</sup> K. Łopatecki, “Uchwały izby poselskiej a działalność legislacyjna sejmu – przykład 1615 roku”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 128 (2021), no. 2, pp. 549–575.

<sup>27</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 9.

of the Pantry (*podstoli kowieński*) Kazimierz Kulwiński.<sup>28</sup> The members of the Skorulskis, Mleczeko, Szukszta, and Rostovskis families can also be named as they were the administrative elite of the Kaunas district in the first half of the seventeenth century. During the period, the members of these families occupied elected or appointed positions in the Kaunas district and were elected as deputies to the Sejms of the Commonwealth or the GDL Supreme Tribunal more often than the members of other nobility families.<sup>29</sup>

One of the signatories, Jan Ogiński, was close to the Radziwiłł family of the Biržai (Pol. *Birże*) line since his youth as he grew up in the Radziwiłł estate. Between 1595 and 1597, Jan Ogiński accompanied Janusz Radziwiłł on academic trips to Western Europe.<sup>30</sup> As previously mentioned, in the sejmik of 1615, Janusz Radziwiłł was elected as a deputy to the General Sejm.

**Table 1.** The nobles who signed the instruction of the Kaunas sejmik in 1615<sup>31</sup>

Noblemen	Occupied positions in 1615
1. Piotr Bohuszewicz Wizgierd	marshal ( <i>marszałek</i> ) of Kaunas district
2. Jan Dziewiałtowski	standart-bearer ( <i>chorąży</i> ) of the Kaunas district
3. Andrzej Koplewski	land judge ( <i>sędzia ziemski</i> )
4. Malcher Bartłomiejewicz Skorulski	land court clerk ( <i>pisarz ziemski</i> )
5. Krzysztof Janowicz Mleczeko	<i>wojski</i> of the Kaunas district
6. Maciej Pietraszewicz (Pietraszkowicz, Piotraszewicz)	judge of the castle court ( <i>sędzia grodzki</i> )
7. Jan Ogiński	–
8. Aleksander Wołodkiewicz	–
9. Piotr Ławrynowicz Szukszta	–

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 1; BCzart, MS 2245, no. 14, fol. 101, A list of the GDL deputies; Ochmann, *Sejmy z lat 1615–1616*, p. 216; Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka (The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences; LMAVB), fond 139, no. 1072, fols 1–1v, Report from the Slonim assembly by Stefan Grodzinski in a letter to J.K. Chodkiewicz, 2 Feb. 1615; Polska Akademia Nauk – Biblioteka Kórnicka (Polish Academy of Sciences – Kórnik Library), MS 289, fols 457–463, Protest of Sejm Deputies of 27 March 1615; Российская национальная библиотека (The National Library of Russia; RNB), Sankt-Peterburg, Pol. F. IV 33, fols 89v–91; Kempa, *Wobec kontrreformacji*, p. 286, fn. 100.

<sup>29</sup> L. Šedvydis, “Kauno pavieta politinė bendruomenė 1544–1650 m.: studijos akademijose bei kolegijose ir jų įtaka tolesnei karjerai”, *Kauno istorijos metraštis*, 15 (2015), pp. 7–31; R. Jaramičius, “Kauno pavieta bajorijos elito giminės XVI a. II pusėje – XVII a. I pusėje”, *Kauno istorijos metraštis*, 19 (2021), pp. 7–28.

<sup>30</sup> T. Wasilewski, “Janusz Radziwiłł h. Trąby (1579–1620)”, in: *PSB*, vol. 30, Wrocław, 1987, p. 206.

<sup>31</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 9.

Noblemen	Occupied positions in 1615
10. Krzysztof Piotr Szukszta Towtginowicz	Upytę castle court clerk ( <i>pisarz grodzki</i> )
11. Mikołaj Piotrowicz Skorulski	–
12. Wołodkiewicz*	–
13. Daniel Worłowski	–
14. Bartłomiej Bohdan Jachnowski (Juchnowski)	–
15. Jan Karol Rostowski	–
16. Marcin Pładziewski	–
17. Jakub Kulwieć	–
18. Andrzej Kudrewicz	ministerialis/woźny

\* Unfortunately, not all individuals and their signatures and stamps are identified.

At the beginning of the instruction, particular introductory obligations can be seen. First, the deputies were instructed to thank the king and greet him. It was also important for the nobles that the assembled Sejm did not reduce their rights and freedoms and that every discussion, both when adopting the laws and when examining the disagreements of the nobles, took place under the applicable law and order. The deputies had to be in charge of ensuring that the orders were followed. The instruction stated that the king had to guarantee all nobles the protection of their rights and liberties while, at the same time, the king's supremacy was recognised.<sup>32</sup>

The obligations of this instruction can also be divided into several groups: (1) issues of regional defence and foreign policy, (2) delimitation issues of the GDL and the Kingdom of Poland, (3) legal issues, (4) issues of religious communities, and (5) personal requests of the nobles.

The war with Moscow continued during the second decade of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the situation with the southern neighbour, Turkey, also became complicated. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the main topics in the instruction were war, regional defence, and compensation to the nobility for the war losses. The deputies of the Kaunas district sejmik to the General Sejm were obliged to seek peace with Moscow and the Ottoman Empire. In both cases, the deputies had to ensure the best possible benefit was preserved for the Commonwealth.<sup>33</sup> The deputies were also obliged to express their displeasure at the conduct of the war with Sweden. The nobles were unhappy that the elected ruler, Sigismund III Vasa, was solving his problems while leading Poland-Lithuania to war. According

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 1.

to the nobles, this significantly harmed the Commonwealth; thus, it was necessary to think of peace.<sup>34</sup>

Lithuanian nobles of various districts expressed their desire for Livonia to belong to the GDL.<sup>35</sup> Guided by this goal, the nobles of the Commonwealth agreed to contribute to the military campaigns of King Sigismund III Vasa to Livonia. However, the first period of war with Sweden (1600–1611) was challenging for both the Commonwealth society and the state treasuries. In 1606, the nobles of the Kaunas district supported the Sandomierz Rebellion directed against the king and elected their representatives to the Sandomierz convention (the judge of land court Adam Sumorok and Łukasz Hryczyna).<sup>36</sup> It should also be emphasised that the rebellion was led by Janusz Radziwiłł, who was elected as a deputy from the Kaunas district to the General Sejm in 1615.<sup>37</sup>

When the truce period began in 1611, the GDL nobility no longer wanted to finance the war with Sweden and the interests of Sigismund III Vasa to reclaim the Swedish throne. The nobles of the Kaunas district were no exception: they looked rather reservedly at the support of Sigismund III Vasa's military campaigns. Deputies were instructed to protest against the general summons if the issue was raised in the General Sejm.<sup>38</sup>

During the discussed sejmik of the Kaunas district, the question of the lawlessness of the troops was raised: the deputies were obliged to ensure that the Sejm solved this issue.<sup>39</sup> During the battles with Sweden in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the inhabitants of the GDL had to experience losses caused by their troops marching to war and, later, returning from it. Although hyperbolising to a certain extent, the GDL officials remembered the damage caused by the marching armies. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the district sejmiks took place, the war outcomes and the losses caused by the units of the army marching through the GDL were felt. It is indicated that the units chose their own camping sites and waited for payment;<sup>40</sup> therefore, during the war, the local nobles had to think not only about how to defend themselves against foreign armies but also how to deal with their own army. In 1615, the

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, fols 2–3.

<sup>35</sup> А. Радаман, “Інструкцыя соймака Новагародскага паведа паслам на элекцыйны сойм 1587 г.”, *Беларускі гістарычны агляд*, 10 (2003), no. 1–2 (18–19), p. 166.

<sup>36</sup> BCzart, MS 2244, doc. no. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Wasilewski, “Janusz Radziwiłł h. Trąby”, p. 206.

<sup>38</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, fols 4–5.

<sup>40</sup> A. Tyla, *Lietuva ir Livonija XVI a. pabaigoje – XVII a. pradžioje*, Vilnius, 1986, p. 98; S. Herbst, *Wojna inflancka 1600–1602*, Warszawa, 1938, pp. 171–172; J. Wimmer, “Wojsko i skarb Rzeczypospolitej u schyłku XVI i w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku”, *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości*, 14 (1968), no. 1, p. 20.



Kaunas district nobility emphasised that the issue of paying the troops should also be resolved. The soldiers often resorted to lawless acts when they did not receive their payments.

Regional defence issues were also raised. The deputies had to ensure that the border starosts and the keepers of castles on the border with Moscow fulfilled their obligations and stayed in the castles.<sup>41</sup> The GDL nobles were concerned by the cases of carelessness when border castles were kept empty.<sup>42</sup> Back in 1614, at the Vilnius convocation, the representatives of Breslauja, Vilkmėrgė, Upytė, and other GDL districts demanded that the elders and keepers of Livonia and all border castles lived in the castles would not depart from them, kept the crews of a fixed size and that the Riga castle was adequately equipped.<sup>43</sup>

The nobles of Kaunas also appealed to the Polish nobles, claiming that brothers in one homeland had to contribute to the maintenance of Smolensk and help to carry the weight of the war;<sup>44</sup> this issue was discussed at various congresses of the GDL for at least several years. In 1613, after agreeing to collect taxes at the Vilnius convocation, the representatives demanded that the Polish nobles also contribute at the same time.<sup>45</sup> In the 1613 instructions to the pre-Sejm sejmiks, King Sigismund III Vasa assured that the GDL nobles would not have to bear a greater burden than the Polish nobility and that the payment would not be collected a second time.<sup>46</sup> However, in the convocations of 1614 and 1615, the representatives of the GDL complained that without Polish support, they found it difficult to withstand the burden of the war and wanted Poland to contribute to the GDL's border protection.<sup>47</sup> At the Warsaw Sejm of 1615, one of the main demands of the GDL representatives was to defend their interests against the lawlessness of the confederated army and to protect the borders.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that the attitude of the Kaunas nobility toward the war with Sweden coincided with the majority opinion of the GDL nobility. During the truce period (1611–1617), the most important thing for the nobility both of the Kaunas district and most of the GDL regions was to extend the truce or make peace with Sweden and create reliable protection for Livonia.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>41</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Tyla, *Lietuva ir Livonija*, p. 139.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Tyla, *Lietuva ir Livonija*, p. 136.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> "Zjazd główny (konwokacja wileńska) stanów WKsL w Wilnie (21 V – 5 VI 1615)", in: *Akta zjazdów stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, vol. 2: *Okresy panowań królów elekcyjnych XVI–XVII wiek*, ed. H. Lulewicz, Warszawa, 2009, pp. 208–209; Tyla, *Lietuva ir Livonija*, p. 136; Łopatecki, "Konwokacja litewska 1615 roku", pp. 493–522.

<sup>48</sup> Tyla, *Lietuva ir Livonija*, p. 136.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 140.

Sigismund III Vasa's claim to the Swedish throne, the extension of the war, and its financing caused tension between the GDL nobility and the king. Meanwhile, border protection was perceived as unavoidable to live in wartime conditions.

In the instruction of 1615, individual requests and obligations for deputies going to the General Sejm can also be found. Several nobles sought compensation for losses incurred during the war. The request was submitted by the chamberlain of Trakai (*podkomorzy trocki*), Duke Bogdan Ogiński, stating that his property in the Mikulin estate in Vitebsk Voivodeship, Orsha village, suffered a lot of damage during the war with the Duchy of Moscow. Some of the losses were caused by the fires; it was also emphasised that during the attacks, some subordinates were physically harmed. According to the instruction, the deputies had to ask the ruler to compensate for the damage caused to Ogiński and to return the possessions confiscated by Moscow in the Mikulin estate.<sup>50</sup> One of the nobles who signed the instruction was Jan Ogiński, the son of Bogdan Ogiński, whereas Janusz Radziwiłł, a person close to the Ogińskis, was chosen as a deputy. Although Bogdan Ogiński was a chamberlain of Trakai, he had considerable estates in the Kaunas district, and thus, he submitted his request in the instructions of the Kaunas sejmik. An identical request was submitted for the estate of the Lyubavichi (*Lubawicze*) near Mikulins in the same district of Orsha. Chamberlain of Braslav (*podkomorzy brasławski*) Krzysztof Steckiewicz also argued that the attacks of enemies from Moscow (fires and violence) obliged the deputies to ask the ruler for compensation for the lost property and for the estates to be returned.<sup>51</sup>

In the instruction, the deputies represent the individual interests of the nobles. War is the time when one can try to curry favour with the ruler for military and political merit. The king was requested to compensate for losses and expenses endured by Castellan of Vilnius Hieronim Chodkiewicz.<sup>52</sup> Referring to the outstanding military merits of Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, the deputies demanded the Lithuanian hetman's rights to Kretinga be satisfied.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, it was requested that Nesvizh (Pol.: *Nieśwież*, Belarus.: *Niasviž*) retained its old freedoms and rights.<sup>54</sup>

Most likely, at the initiative of the Ogiński family, the instructions contained an order for deputies to defend the interests of the Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius in disputes with Vilnius town officials.<sup>55</sup> These matters had to be resolved in the Sejm. Bogdan Ogiński and his son Jan Ogiński were

<sup>50</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, fols 7–8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 7.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 5.

members of this Brotherhood.<sup>56</sup> The request of the Vilnius Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit is described by Tomasz Kempa. At that time, the situation of the Brotherhood was extremely difficult. The Brotherhood was at risk of losing a large part of its property, as the Uniates Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity, founded in 1608 by Hipacy Pocij and Józef Rutski, claimed the property that had remained in Orthodox hands.<sup>57</sup>

The second matter of importance to the Orthodox concerned a court decision in 1609, by which several citizens, members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit, were sentenced to pay heavy fines for their involvement in the actions against Pocij and Rutski. Particularly persecuted was a Vilnius citizen, Semion Krasowski.<sup>58</sup>

In this difficult situation, the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit drafted a special memorandum, which its emissaries probably delivered to the district pre-Sejm sejmiks. The memorandum referred to the privileges of the Orthodox Church and the Brotherhood and sought to prove that the property claims of the Uniates were unfounded.<sup>59</sup>

As the instruction of the Kaunas sejmik shows, the situation was particularly important for the Vilnius Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit. The disputes between the Orthodox and the Uniates concerned the land on which the Orthodox church, the monastery and the Brotherhood's school stood. The members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit turned to Janusz Radziwiłł, an influential politician and Calvinist.<sup>60</sup> As already mentioned, in 1615, Radziwiłł was elected as a deputy to the General Sejm from the Kaunas district sejmik.

The nobles of the Kaunas district also raised the delimitation issues of the GDL and the Kingdom of Poland. In the instruction, we find a complaint that the delimitation of the Brest Voivodeship and Podlachia and the delimitation of the Mozyr district and the Kyiv Voivodeship were not included in the constitutions of the Sejm, which caused damage. Thus, the deputies were to strive to have the limitations written into the constitutions of the Sejm. The nobles complained that these matters had not been resolved for a long time, and the deputies had to solve them without any delays and postponements.<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to note that delimitation questions, which started in 1569, were outdated and caused specific problems. As Tomas Čelkis noticed, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, disagreements arose between the inhabitants of the Podlachia border

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<sup>56</sup> H. Lulewicz, "Jan Ogiński, ok. 1582–1640, kasztelan mścisławski", <https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/jan-oginski-ur-ok-1582-zm-1640-kasztelan-mscislawski>.

<sup>57</sup> Kempa, *Wobec kontrreformacji*, pp. 286–287.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 286.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 5.

and the GDL. There were cases when the GDL nobles who wanted to collect taxes from the peasants of these lands expressed their claims to the territories of Podlachia.<sup>62</sup> In the 1580s and 1590s, the question of border delimitation was raised in the Warsaw Sejm several times (1581, 1589, 1591, 1596, and 1598). Special commissions were established to resolve that issue.<sup>63</sup> In 1598, the borders of the GDL were adjusted with the Crown lands of Kyiv.<sup>64</sup> However, as shown in the instructions of the Kaunas sejmik, delimitation questions were not yet finally resolved even in the mid-second decade of the seventeenth century.

Obligations also mentioned economic and tax issues. The deputies were obliged to raise the question of the Tatar tribute payment. According to the instruction, the Tatars had to pay tribute in furs according to the Constitution of the Sejm. However, it seems that they did not pay the tribute. Deputies were instructed to strive for the implementation of this constitution.<sup>65</sup> Also, the deputies were to discuss the issues of money mint and alcoholic beverage taxes (*czopowe*).<sup>66</sup>

## Pre-Convocation Sejmik of 1632

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the nobles of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had to experience the interregnum more than once. In the first decades after the Union of Lublin, the nobility had to learn how to live and solve issues at the state and local levels and ensure the functioning of state institutions when no ruler was on the throne. In 1632, the nobility of the Commonwealth faced interregnum for the fourth time.

After the death of King Sigismund III Vasa (30 April 1632), the most important issues of the state were discussed at a meeting of the Senate convened by Archbishop of Gniezno Jan Wężyk, and attended by five senators of the Commonwealth: Lew Sapieha, Aleksander Gosiewski, Mikołaj Kiszka, Albrecht Stanisław Radziwiłł, and Paweł Stefan Sapieha. This Senate meeting took place on 3–9 May 1632, and it was decided that the Convocation Sejm would take place on 22 June, and the pre-convocation sejmiks on 3 June.<sup>67</sup> The meeting and its decisions were already known in Vilnius a few days later, so on 15 May, on the initiative of Krzysztof Radziwiłł, senators, deputies of the Tribunal and the nobility of the GDL gathered at the convocation. The convocation discussed internal and external security

<sup>62</sup> T. Čelkis, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės teritorija: sienų samprata ir delimitaciniai procesai XIV–XVI amžiuje*, Vilnius, 2014, p. 296.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 296–297.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 297.

<sup>65</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 621, fol. 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Wisner, “Litwa po zgonie Zygmunta III”, pp. 46–47; Сагановіч, “Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага”, pp. 207–219.

maintenance and other relevant interregnum issues. The Vilnius convocation's decision restored the so-called "hooded court" (*sąd kapturowy*, commonly called *kaptur*) (an institution established in 1587 to maintain order during the interregnum), and on 14 June 1632 a General Sejmik was scheduled at Slonim (Pol.: *Slonim*).<sup>68</sup> The district sejmiks were given the right to discuss issues related to the courts, announced the necessity to correct the Lithuanian Statute and the GDL Tribunal, and discussed state security questions.<sup>69</sup>

It is important to emphasise that this Vilnius convocation took place before the district sejmiks, not after them, as was the custom, and without the knowledge and consent of the Archbishop of Gniezno and the senators, which was formally in contradiction with the Lublin Union.<sup>70</sup>

The pre-convocation sejmik of the Kaunas district was held on 3 June (only a few sejmiks were held at other times – the sejmiks of Brest and Vilckmergė were held on 4 June, and the sejmik of Trakai – on 5 June).<sup>71</sup> The instruction of the Kaunas district sejmik of 1632 is an interesting source of information about the political mood and positions of the nobility of the district after the death of King Sigismund III Vasa. In the instruction, we find 17 points or obligations that touch on various issues of local and state life. Thematically, the obligations can be divided into several groups: (1) political and state management issues, (2) legal issues, (3) economic issues, (4) regional defence issues, and (5) issues of arrival and participation in the Sejm sessions of the Lithuanian nobility in Warsaw.

The first group of obligations is related to political and state management issues. In the first point, we see that the local nobles were concerned about the question of the General Sejmik. By sending deputies to the Convocation Sejm, the nobles of Kaunas district were obliged to remind them that there must be a General Sejmik before the Sejm. In 1632, Gniezno Archbishop Jan Wężyk did not mention the General Sejmik in his universal proclamation.<sup>72</sup> The deputies had to seek that the order and law of the General Sejmiks were determined at the Convocation Sejm.<sup>73</sup> As far as it is known, the General Sejmik of the GDL was described in the Third Statute of Lithuania.<sup>74</sup> The General Sejmik in Slonim is also mentioned in the instructions of other district sejmiks. For example, the

<sup>68</sup> Kaczorowski, *Sejmy konwokacyjny i elekcyjny*, p. 44; Сагановіч, "Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага" pp. 207–219.

<sup>69</sup> Сагановіч, "Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага", pp. 207–219.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>72</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, 1039, Universal of Archbishop of Gniezno Jan Wężyk after the death of Sigismund III Vasa, announcing the assembly of the Convocation Sejm and Sejmiks, Warsaw, 5 May 1632 (extract from Vilnius registry books); BCzart, MS 124, fols 177–182.

<sup>73</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Статут Вялікага княства Літоўскага 1588 года. Тэксты. Даведнік. Каментарыі*, Мінск, 1989, p. 117.

deputies of the Ashmyany district sejmik were obliged to remind the General Sejmik not to be forgotten in future.<sup>75</sup>

The nobility of the GDL still dealt with the problems of life during the interregnum. This is shown by the fact that several points in the instruction are devoted to the issues of protection at that time. Senators and officers gathered in Vilnius discussed the defence of the state and the re-establishment of “hooded courts”. In the sejmik’s instruction, it is written that there are many cases of lawlessness, attacks, or even killings in various places. Therefore, the nobles of the Kaunas district instructed the deputies to ensure that the GDL nobles’ decisions regarding the “hooded courts” would be approved by the Sejm in Warsaw.<sup>76</sup> The establishment of the GDL “hooded courts” was announced, and the resolutions regarding the operation of the courts in the interregnum period were adopted at the Convention in Vilnius on 29 January 1587.<sup>77</sup> As already mentioned, even before the district sejmiks, the Vilnius Convocation on 15 May restored the functioning of the Lithuanian “hooded courts” formed in 1587.<sup>78</sup>

The instruction also included the issue of state security, emphasising the discipline of the army in the state. It was proclaimed that the army residing in the GDL would function only to defend the Lithuanian borders and ensure peace and tranquillity.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the deputies from Kaunas were obliged to have the election of the new ruler appointed as soon as possible. In the same paragraph, it was expressed that the deputies should emphasise not only the procedure for conducting this election but also that the new procedure was approved and valid for future times.<sup>80</sup>

The instruction shows that legal issues were very important to the nobility. The sejmik deputies and all other representatives were obliged to carefully monitor that the rights and freedoms of the nobility were protected in the Convocation Sejm. In addition, the deputies had to ensure that the new ruler would not

<sup>75</sup> Сагановіч, “Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага”, pp. 207–219.

<sup>76</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 1.

<sup>77</sup> O. Kanecki, *Sądy kapturowe Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (1572–1764)*, Sopot, 2020, pp. 75–84; A. Tyla, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės išdas XVI amžiaus antroji pusė – XVII amžiaus vidury, Vilnius, 2012*, p. 37; H. Lulewicz, “Funkcjonowanie sądownictwa szlacheckiego w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w okresie pierwszych bezkrólewí (1572–1576)”, in: *Z dziejów kultury prawnej: studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Juliuszowi Bardachowi w dziewięćdziesięciolecie urodzin*, ed. A. Rosner, R. Sobotka, M. Wąsowicz, A.B. Zakrzewski, Warszawa, 2004, p. 367.

<sup>78</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, 1040, fols 1–12, *Kaptur of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania adopted at the Convention of the Estates of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Vilnius Convocation), transformed from the Tribunal of the GDL, Vilnius, 15 May 1632*”; published as “Zjazd stanów WKsL. (konwokacja wileńska) w Wilnie (15 V 1632)”, in: *Akta zjazdów stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, vol. 1: *Okresy bezkrólewí (1572–1576, 1586–1587, 1632, 1648, 1696–1697, 1706–1709, 1733–1735, 1763–1764)*, ed. H. Lulewicz, Warszawa, 2006, pp. 315–324.

<sup>79</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 2.

increase or expand the rights of towns and that the unnecessary ones would be cancelled,<sup>81</sup> which stands as an example of the rivalry between the nobility and towns of those times.

One of the most important points related to the rights of the nobility was the approval of the new version of the Lithuanian Statute. The deputies had to ensure that the correction of the Statute was made before the coronation of the new ruler. For that purpose, the deputies from Kaunas and representatives of other voivodships and districts had to come to the convention to edit the legal acts.<sup>82</sup> An identical obligation was included in the 1632 instruction of the pre-convocation Vilnius sejmik. It says that the correction of the Lithuanian Statute and the laws of the Tribunal, which the nobles of the GDL have unanimously agreed upon at many Sejms, should be completed and drafted by the next Convocation Sejm and approved by it.<sup>83</sup>

After King Sigismund III Vasa approved the new version of the Statute of Lithuania in 1588, the nobility of the GDL continued to see the need to correct the norms of the Statute over the years. As far back as the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, the nobility often raised this issue in their Sejms, but to no avail.<sup>84</sup> Also, after the king's death, in the instructions of the pre-convocation sejmiks of 1632, the nobility of the GDL districts demanded that the correction of the laws be completed and the corrections approved by the Convocation Sejm.<sup>85</sup> The Convocation Sejm set up two separate commissions (Polish and Lithuanian) to deal with the law. Both commissions were composed of senators and one representative elected from each district. The Chairman of the Commission for the Correction of the Law of Lithuania was appointed Albrecht Stanisław Radziwiłł. The representative of the Commission from the Kaunas district was elected Marcin Piazdewski (at that time, Kaunas sub-judge [*podśudek kowieński*]).<sup>86</sup>

The Commission for the Correction of the Laws of Lithuania began its work on 20 October 1632. However, the Lithuanian senators felt that the problem was

<sup>81</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 2.

<sup>83</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, Supplement, no. 446, Instructions to deputies to the Convocational Sejm from the Vilnius Sejmik 1632; copy at: AGAD, AR, Dz. II, nr 1052, fols 1–7 (extract from the Vilnius registry book) and fols 14–16 (incomplete copy). Vilnius, 5 June 1632: *Korektura Statutu i Trybunału Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego na tak wielu sejmach zgodnie nemine excepto od stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego afektowana, aby tandem do skutku przywiedziona i nadal na sejm, da Bóg, z przyszłej konwokacji wygotowana i tam skutecznie aprobowana była.*

<sup>84</sup> W. Kaczorowski, "Korektura prawa na sejmach okresu bezkrólestwa 1632 roku oraz na sejmie koronacyjnym 1633 roku", *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, no. 3270, *Prawo*, 311 (2010), p. 161.

<sup>85</sup> A. Радаман, "Сістэматызацыя права ВКЛ і пытанне паправы Трэцяга Статута ВКЛ на сойміках Новагародскага ваяводства ў 1587–1632 гг.", *Журнал Беларускага дзяржаўнага ўніверсітэта. Історыя*, 2 (2018), pp. 21–31, here p. 28.

<sup>86</sup> Kaczorowski, "Korektura prawa", pp. 165–166.

so complicated that it could not be solved in the short term or even analysed in depth. Representatives of the GDL sejmiks demanded further deliberations of the Commission, arguing that the matter had been going on since the Sejms of 1611 and 1613. Despite this, the law was not corrected at this Sejm.<sup>87</sup> The need to revise the Statute was also stressed in the pre-coronation sejmiks of 1633; thus, the Coronation Sejm of 1633 also established a commission to correct the law. In this commission, the representative from Kaunas district was Chamberlain of Kaunas (*podkomorzy kowieński*) Krzysztof Piotr Szukszta.<sup>88</sup> However, this Commission for the Correction of the Statute also ended its work in 1636 without results.<sup>89</sup>

Several obligations in the instruction dealt with economic issues. Economic, social, and worldview changes in sixteenth-century Europe encouraged the nobility to participate in foreign trade. Due to the Nemunas and Neris rivers, Kaunas was an important town for the organisation of wholesale trade. However, to maintain stable transportation of goods by river, it was necessary to keep the waterways and ports repaired and cleaned. The nobles of Kaunas were worried about the situation at Kaunas port. The instruction said that the poor condition of the port brought much harm to people. More than sixty vessels had already sunk. In the opinion of the sejmik participants, improving the port condition could have brought a lot of profit to the GDL.<sup>90</sup>

Similar was situation of forests. According to the sejmik participants, forests in the area suffered great damage. Deputies were required to raise the question of forest protection and to ensure that auditors monitored the condition of the forests every year.<sup>91</sup> Other sources support that this opinion about forests was common in the late sixteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century. Forests that had been intensively exploited for over a century began to disappear. For example, in 1570, the nobles from Petrašiūnai (near Kaunas) agreed that some forests had to be unexploited for a set period, and after that time, the condition of the forest had to be assessed.<sup>92</sup> Of course, the nobles sometimes exaggerated, and, in this case, the situation was dramatised to a certain extent. In any case, it was realised that forest resources were not inexhaustible, and the issue of forest preservation at a higher level was sought.

The deputies of the Kaunas district were also obliged to seek the opening of a permanent mint at the treasury of the GDL.<sup>93</sup> The nobles of Kaunas aimed to allow the GDL treasury to manage the mint. The desire to have their mint and

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168.

<sup>88</sup> I. Lappo, *1588 metų Lietuvos Statutas*, vol. 1, part 2, Kaunas 1936, p. 436.

<sup>89</sup> Радаман, “Систематизация права ВКЛ”, p. 28.

<sup>90</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>92</sup> Kiaupa, *Kauno istorija*, vol. 1, p. 243.

<sup>93</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 2.



to be able to solve the monetary issues themselves was one of the examples of the declaration of independence of the GDL nobility. This obligation is also found in the instruction of the pre-convocation Vilnius sejmik of 1632, which states the necessity to put the monetary policy in order already during this interregnum.<sup>94</sup>

Another group of questions in the sejmik instruction deals with the regional defence of the GDL. Between 1551 and 1650, Lithuania was at war for 60 years or lived under the conditions of a short-term truce, which meant constant political, military, and economic tension in the state.<sup>95</sup> The district nobles instructed the deputies to remind them that at the previous Sejm, the Polish nobles had already committed to give 700,000 zlotys from the Polish treasury for the defence of the GDL borders against the Moscow army.<sup>96</sup> The same reminders of this sum for the defence of the Lithuanian borders can also be found in the instructions of the other district sejmiks (for example, in the instructions of the Lida sejmik<sup>97</sup>).

The district nobles were also concerned about the protection of the GDL border castles. The deputies were obliged to raise the question of maintenance, arrangement, and provision of cannons for the border castles in Polotsk, Smolensk, Daugavpils, and elsewhere. This was seen as a responsibility of the local starosts who had to reside in their castles; otherwise, they had to face sanctions (the loss of possession of those castles). Participants of the sejmik pointed out that in relation to border defence matters, the GDL treasurer had to send his auditors to assess the situation in border castles.<sup>98</sup> The nobles of the Kaunas district were involved in the security affairs of the entire GDL and realised that the security of the Kaunas area also depended on it.

Although Kaunas did not experience the invasion of foreign armies at that time, its army units and individual soldiers caused considerable trouble,<sup>99</sup> and during wars, acts of lawlessness by soldiers took place in the town and its surroundings; thus, the nobility tried to protect themselves as much as possible. The nobles of the Kaunas area complained that although several constitutions had been issued to ensure the army's discipline, they were not sufficiently enforced.<sup>100</sup> Sejmik's

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<sup>94</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, suplement, no. 446: *Jako Król Jego Mość świętej pamięci mynice Rzeczypospolitej darował, tak pilno się starać, żeby currente interregno sposób naprawienia monety stanął, żeby zaraz na początku nowego Pana nową monetę bez takiej, jakąśmy dotąd ponosili, w pieniądzech straty była.*

<sup>95</sup> Kiaupa, *Kauno istorija*, vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>96</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 2.

<sup>97</sup> A copy of Lida's instruction see AGAD, AR, Dz. II, 1064, fols 4–9: *Stany koronne na przeszłym sejmie sumę siedmiokroć sto tysięcy złotych na obronę granic Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego przeciwko moskiewskiemu do rąk Jego Mości pana podskarbiego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego z skarbu koronnego oddać obiecali, w tak pochlebnym czasie naszym ofiarowanego według sejmowej deklaracji piątnego ratunku upominamy się.*

<sup>98</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Kiaupa, *Kauno istorija*, vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>100</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 3.

instructions stated that the army's behaviour caused considerable damage. The deputies were obliged to ensure that soldiers did not take transport and lodging (the duty to provide transport and accommodation for the use of the authorities, called *podwoda* and *stancja*) from the nobles and their subordinates.<sup>101</sup>

Similar to these instructions of the Kaunas district sejmik, there were also obligations to the deputies of other sejmiks of that time. The instruction of the pre-convocation Ashmyany sejmik of 1632 shows that the primary concern of the nobility was internal and external security.<sup>102</sup> The nobles of the Ashmyany district demanded strengthening the GDL castles in the capital and on the eastern border. It also stressed the need to prevent the arbitrariness of armies and to order the hetmans to keep their troops on the border and not inside the state.<sup>103</sup>

In the instruction, we also find several points related to the arrival and session participation of the GDL nobles in Warsaw. It was demanded that the Sejm be held on the side of the Vistula River, which would be convenient for the GDL nobles, and that a bridge be built across the river.<sup>104</sup> The issue of arriving in Warsaw was an important one because the deputies of the GDL districts were often late to the Sejms due to the difficult journeys to Warsaw.<sup>105</sup> In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the situation was exacerbated because the first permanent bridge across the Vistula built between 1568 and 1573, was destroyed in 1603 due to ice accumulation.<sup>106</sup> The nobility of Vilnius district was also concerned about this issue. On 5 June 1632, in the instruction of the pre-convocation Vilnius district sejmik, it was written that the location of the Electoral Sejm should be on the convenient side of the Vistula River for the representatives of the GDL. If all the representatives cannot be accommodated on that side, then it is requested that a bridge be made out of boats to allow the representatives of the GDL to cross the river.<sup>107</sup> Another request was to ensure that the deputies coming to the Sejm in Warsaw were accommodated earlier.<sup>108</sup> This had to guarantee that the gathered GDL nobles could once again discuss important issues and align positions before the start of the General Sejm. The discussed obligations of the nobility to the deputies show that more than half a century after

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Сагановіч, “Інструкцыя паслам Ашмянскага”, pp. 207–219.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>104</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 3.

<sup>105</sup> W. Kaczorowski, “Rola Krzysztofa II Radziwiłła na sejmach konwokacyjnym i elekcyjnym w okresie bezkrólewia 1632 r.”, *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 3 (1989), p. 38.

<sup>106</sup> A. Kersten, *Warszawa kazimierzowska 1648–1668*, Warszawa, 1971, p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, Suplement, no. 446: *A iż jest przykład, że przedtym było to, i wygoda większej części Rzeczpospolitej tego potrzebuje, przeto starać się o to, aby miejsce elekcyji z tę stronę Wisły było naznaczone. A jeśliby z tę stronę wszyscy zmieścić się nie mogli, tedy na sztukach most kazać urobić dla snadniejszej przeprawy.*

<sup>108</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 3417, fol. 4.

the Lublin Union was established, the infrastructure issues of the General Sejm were still relevant.

## Conclusion

The instructions of the Kaunas district sejmiks of 1615 and 1632 provide important information about the political life of the nobility of the Kaunas district in the first third of the seventeenth century. During the sejmik of 1615, the nobles of the Kaunas district paid the most attention to the issues of foreign policy and regional defence. The nobles obliged the deputies to support the conclusion of peace with Moscow and the Ottoman Empire and to oppose the extension of the war with Sweden. The participants of the sejmik were also dissatisfied with the lawlessness of the army units and demanded that the constitutions of the Sejm regarding the discipline of the army be implemented.

The permanent state of war (with only short truces) led to the fact that in 1615 and 1632, Kaunas nobles raised regional defence issues. The instructions show that the nobles were concerned with arranging border castles (Polotsk, Smolensk, Daugavpils, and elsewhere) and providing the necessary ammunition.

During the fourth interregnum, the most critical issues for the nobles of the Kaunas district were political and state management issues (General Sejmik, special court in the times of interregnum [*sąd kapturowy*], the election of the new ruler), legal matters (correction of the Statute), issues of arrival and participation in the sessions of the GDL nobility in Warsaw.

### Szlachta powiatu kowieńskiego w sejmikach lokalnych lat 1615 i 1632 Streszczenie

Na podstawie instrukcji sejmików kowieńskich z lat 1615 i 1632, autor artykułu analizuje kwestie rozstrzygane przez szlachtę powiatu kowieńskiego, a także realia ówczesnego życia powiatu i Rzeczypospolitej. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na odzwierciedlenie w pracach sejmików różnych procesów i wydarzeń państwowych. Analiza instrukcji sejmiku kowieńskiego wykazała, że głównymi tematami poruszonymi przez miejscową szlachtę były: zagadnienia polityczne i związane z zarządzaniem państwem, kwestie prawne i gospodarcze, problemy obronności kraju, kwestie delimitacyjne Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego i Królestwa Polskiego, sprawy wspólnot wyznaniowych i religijnych oraz osobiste prośby szlachty. Instrukcje sejmików kowieńskich pierwszej tercji XVII w. są szczególnie ważnym źródłem wiedzy o działalności politycznej lokalnej szlachty.

## The Nobility of the Kaunas District in the Local Sejmiks of 1615 and 1632

### Summary

Based on the instructions of the Kaunas sejmiks of 1615 and 1632, the article's author analyses the questions resolved by the nobility of the Kaunas district and the reality of the life of the district and the Commonwealth at that period. A particular focus is given to how different state processes and events were reflected in the sejmiks of the Kaunas district. The analysis of the instructions of the Kaunas sejmik revealed that the main topics discussed by the local nobility were political and state management issues, legal and economic questions, regional defence problems, delimitation issues of the GDL and the Kingdom of Poland, problems of religious communities, and personal requests of individual nobles. The instructions of Kaunas sejmiks of the seventeenth century are a significant source that provides knowledge about the political activities of the local nobility.

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