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Territorial administration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the management of the natural resources of the grand-ducal domain in the 15th and 16th centuries (formation and function)

Streszczenie: Struktura administracyjna i zarząd terytorialny Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (WKL) uległy znaczącym zmianom na przełomie XIV i XV w. Ukształtowanie grupy urzędników administracji i sądownictwa, zależnych od władcy WKL, stało się priorytetowym celem w okresie panowania wielkiego księcia Witolda Kiejstutowicza. Procesy te dały początek nowym typom urzędników, których kompetencje zostały włączone do istniejącego systemu administracyjnego WKL. W XVI w. nastąpiła nowa faza przemian, intensywna w okresie panowania ostatnich Jagiellonów. Opracowano wówczas nowy model eksploatacji, kontroli i ochrony zasobów naturalnych WKL. Odejście od tradycyjnych form zarządzania wymagało czasu, a także chęci dostosowania się rządzących do faktycznej efektywności i rzetelności litewskiej administracji terytorialnej. Eksploatację lasów i zasobów wodnych na rzecz wielkiego księcia oraz akcję kolonizacji puszczy litewskich nadzorowali urzędnicy administracji terytorialnej. Szerokie kompetencje w tym względzie posiadał starosta, który nadzorował kluczników i hajowników (pod ich nadzorem pozostawali bartnicy i dystrybucja miodu oraz wosku), bobrowniczych (zajmujących się połowem bobrów) oraz mistrzów rybackich (niewodniczy), którzy prowadzili połowy na wodach wielkookszańskich. Urzędnikami niezależnymi od starostów stali się leśniczowie. Odpowiadali za organizację wykonywania powinności łowieckich i leśnych przez osoczników oraz strzelców. Nadzorowali także gospodarkę leśną. W XVI w. powołano rewizorów wielkookszańskich do bezpośredniej kontroli nad lokalną administracją terytorialną i zarządem dobrami wielkookszańskimi.

Słowa kluczowe: administracja terytorialna, Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie, zasoby naturalne, domena wielkookszańska

The former administrative structure and the territorial jurisdiction of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) underwent significant changes at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. The socio-economic development of the GDL contributed to the emergence of local Lithuanian solutions which were partly modeled on the administrative structure of

the Kingdom of Poland and the Teutonic State¹. In this respect, the changes implemented during the reign of the Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania played a key role. The establishment of a group of administrative and court officers who were dependent on the ruler of the GDL became a priority that potentially enabled successful transitioning to a centralized state². The regulations that had been laid down by King Casimir IV Jagiellon also exerted a significant impact on administrative changes³. These processes gave rise to new types of officers, including voivodes, starosts (headmen) and tenants whose competences were incorporated into the existing administrative system in the GDL⁴. It is also worth noting that the gradual changes in territorial administration caused frequent overlaps in the powers of grand-ducal officers, which was largely due to the complex and heterogeneous territorial structure of their districts. For example, the terms *poviat* (district) and *włość* (estate) were used interchangeably in the documents of the grand-ducal chancellery at the beginning of the 16th century.

The above problem concerned the administrative and judicial functions of the territorial units of the GDL. However, these overlaps were less pronounced in economic management. The term „estate” (manor estate) was clearly indicative of economic activity, and the relevant competence disputes were far less frequent⁵. The territorial administration of the GDL was highly unstable in the 16th century, and the economic structure and spatial distribution of grand-ducal property had emerged as the first effective organizational framework⁶.

At the beginning of the 16th century, separate officers were appointed to manage the administration and exploitation of natural resources – forests and waters owned by the GDL. These tasks had been previously assigned to territorial administration officers. However, in areas lacking extensive forests, lakes or rivers for profit-generating activities, such solutions were not introduced and old customs prevailed.

¹ J. Ochmański, *Ruskie wzory organizacyjne w państwie litewskim XIV–XV wieku*, in: idem, *Dawna Litwa*, Olsztyn 1986, pp. 75–78; A. B. Zakrzewski, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie (XVI–XVIII w.). Prawo-ustrój-społeczeństwo*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 38–57, 131; G. Białuński, *Zarys osadnictwa na Mazurach*, „Echa Przeszłości” 2019, XX/1, pp. 335–346.

² R. Petrauskas, *Litošškà znac u kancy XIV–XV st. Sklad-struktura-ulada*, Smalensk 2014, pp. 154–155; K. Pietkiewicz, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie pod rządami Aleksandra Jagiellończyka. Studia nad dziejami państwa i społeczeństwa na przełomie XV i XVI wieku*, Poznań 1995, pp. 76–80; L. Korczak, *Litewska rada wielkosiązkąca w XV wieku*, Kraków 1998, pp. 40–41.

³ K. Pietkiewicz, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, pp. 66–75; L. Korczak, *Monarcha i poddani. System władzy w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w okresie wczesnojagiellońskim*, Kraków 2008, pp. 45–57.

⁴ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Urzednicy zarzadu lokalnego na Litwie. Tytulatura zarzadców powiatowych przed reformą administracyjną z lat 1565–1566*, „Studia Źródłoznawcze” 1979, vol. 24, pp. 139–146.

⁵ K. Pietkiewicz, op. cit., p. 66; Z. Wojtkowiak, *Lithuania Transwilniensis saec. XIV–XVI. Podziały Litwy Północnej w późnym średniowieczu*, Poznań 2005, pp. 28–33; L. Korczak, *Monarcha i poddani*, pp. 94–95.

⁶ E. Gudavičius, *Lietuvos europėjimo keliais. Istorinės studijos*, eds. A. Bumblauskas, R. Petrauskas, Vilnius 2002, pp. 87–179; Z. Wojtkowiak, *Lithuania Transwilniensis*, pp. 33–34; L. Korczak, op. cit., pp. 48–49; A. Dubonis, *Lejci vālikāga knāzā litošškāga. Z gistoryi rannih dzāržaiūhyh struktur litošškāga gramadstva*, Smalensk 2015, pp. 79–84.

In the new land management system, officers became subordinate to the voivodes (in Samogitia, this position was held by the starosts). The voivodes quickly replaced dukes. The voivodes of Vilnius and Trakai were designated, and the Castellans were appointed at the Sejm (session of Parliament) in Horodło on 2 October 1413⁷. The voivodes had different competencies in the Crown and the GDL due to significant variations in the political and legal systems of both countries⁸. The voivodes were tasked with commanding military troops in their respective districts. They also exercised judicial and administrative authority on behalf of the Grand Duke (hospodar) and represented the boyars in the Grand Duke's Council⁹.

The governor-starosts or the starosts were lower ranking officers of the territorial administration system which was introduced in the GDL as early as at the end of the 14th century. They exercised judicial power in the respective districts and managed parts of their voivodeships (some of which had been formerly granted the status of appanage principalities) independently of the voivodes¹⁰.

Any attempts to reconstruct the officers' competences and obligations following from administrative, economic and ownership changes in the GDL at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries raise many ambiguities¹¹. It should be noted that disputes regarding the division of powers and competences were commonplace in the era.

Beginning in the second half of the 15th century, the Latin term *capitaneus* had already had an established meaning and referred to governors who managed county estates and supervised lower ranking governor-starosts and the *ciwuns* (Latin: *tivunus*)¹². The starosts were in charge of the respective administrative and judicial districts. They managed economic operations, held courts and issued verdicts in cases within their jurisdiction (excluding magnates who were exempt from court jurisdiction)¹³. Foremen held jurisdiction over various classes of peasants, burghers who were exempt from the Magdeburg law, magnates, boyars and other landowners who performed compulsory military duty¹⁴. Larger districts (*starostwo*) were often divided into manors which, in turn, comprised several bailiwicks administered by village governors¹⁵. Village governors supervised the fulfilment of statutory obligations towards the Grand Duke, including serf duties and

⁷ R. Petrauskas, op. cit., p. 157.

⁸ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Urzednicy zarzadu lokalnego*, p. 139–144.

⁹ М. Любавски, *Областное дзлене и мястное управлене литовско-русского государства ко времени издания первого Литовского Статута*, Москва 1892, p. 80.

¹⁰ R. Petrauskas, op. cit., p. 158; J. Bardach, *Studia z ustroju i prawa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego XIV–XVII w.*, Warszawa 1970, pp. 326–330.

¹¹ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Urzednicy zarzadu lokalnego*, pp. 139–146.

¹² *Urzednicy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Spisy*. vol. I, *Województwo wileńskie XIV–XVIII wiek*, ed. A. Rachuba, Warszawa 2004, pp. 10–11.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁴ М. Любавски, op. cit., pp. 782–810.

¹⁵ *Urzednicy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Spisy*. vl. I, XXVII–XXXII, pp. 41–52.

transport dues (*podwoły*). The governors also assisted starosts in the protection of forests and water bodies. It should also be noted that the estates were the smallest economic and administrative units.

Similarly to the voivodes, the starosts supervised the construction and repair of municipal fortifications and were responsible for defending the administered territories. Therefore, the starosts enjoyed broad authority, but not without limitations. They did not have the authority to allocate vacant land (*pustowszczyzna*) to new developers without the ruler's consent. In some cases, the starosts and the voivodes transferred parcels with the attached serf duties upon the hospodar's consent. The donation was not binding if it was not authorized by the hospodar. The starosts also made land requests on behalf of third parties, most of which were approved by the hospodar. In most cases, the voivodes and the starosts were tasked with finding new tenants for the hospodar's property. They were responsible for verifying whether land donations could be made without infringing on the hospodar's interests.

If a donation could be made, the hospodar would instruct the voivodes and the starosts to bind the recipient to the newly acquired property by an act of indenture (*uwiązanie*)¹⁶. Indenture was sometimes carried out by specially appointed royal envoys, especially when the donation was the results of a court ruling, but the envoys generally consulted their decisions with the voivodes or the starosts. In practice, indenture was enacted by the emissaries of starosts and voivodes (*uwiązczy*) who mapped the donated area, defined the tenants' duties and notified the local peasants of the transfer of ownership.

The starosts and voivodes also supervised transactions involving the sale, exchange or transfer of local land, and they resolved property disputes. However, in accordance with the First Statute of Lithuania of 1529, the voivodes and the starosts were only authorized to pass decisions on hereditary land. The remaining categories of land were managed exclusively by the Grand Dukes. These provisions were incorporated into the First Statute of Lithuania, but they were most certainly based on older customs¹⁷.

The starosts were not authorized to collect taxes on spirits (*kapszczyzna*), issue permits for forest felling or use grand-ducal waters. Under the First Statute of Lithuania, the starosts (and tenants) were obliged to collect and return to the treasury all fees and charges due to the hospodar¹⁸. They were also responsible for organizing new settlements,

¹⁶ *Lietuvos Metrika* (LM). *Knyga Nr. 225/6 (1528–1547). 6-oji Teismų bylų knyga (XVI a. pabaigos kopija)*, eds. A. Bumblauskas, E. Gudavičius, M. Jučas, S. Lazutka, I. Valikonytė, Vilnius 1995, No. 291, p. 211.

¹⁷ *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas. Tekstai senaja baltarusiu, lotynu ir senaja lenku kalbomis*, eds. S. Lazutka, I. Valikonytė, E. Gudavičius, vol. 1, Vilnius 1991, p. 77.

¹⁸ LM. *Knyga Nr. 7 (1506–1539). Užrašymų knyga 7*, eds. I. Ilarienė, L. Karalius, D. Antanavičius, Vilnius 2011, No. 297, p. 515; *Акты относящиеся к истории Западной России, собранные и изданные Археографическою комиссиею*, т. 2, Санктпэтербург 1848, pp. 195–199.

issuing *town and village charters*, and managing the Grand Dukes' financial interests in subordinate administrative units in collaboration with the voivodes and tenants¹⁹.

The starosts juggled numerous administrative and judiciary duties relating to the management of forests and water resources in their subordinate units. They monitored forests to ensure that forest resources were not depleted. Forest supervision was a challenging task. In principle, every village, settlement and town had the right to use the designated hay meadows, forests, tree hives, rivers and lakes adjacent to the settlement²⁰. The privileges granted to the tenants included the right to harvest free timber and firewood from the hospodar's forests²¹.

Despite their obligation to protect the forests, the starosts could not make independent decisions regarding the harvesting and processing of forest resources. Other managers in the hospodar's estate were obliged to assist the starosts in procuring and floating timber during operations that were approved by the ruler²².

The starosts also prepared royal hunts, provided provisions, transport and accommodation services to the ruler and his court during their stay in the *starostwo* (or in outposts that were specifically designed for this purpose during royal visits). A detailed description of these duties can be found in a 1514 statute addressing the Grodno starost Jerzy Radziwiłł²³. Other starosts were probably bound by similar duties to the hospodar.

As mentioned earlier, the starosts also supervised water bodies in grand-ducal estates. The starosts monitored dragnet fishing in lakes in winter, and they transferred two-thirds of the catch or the corresponding amount of money to the Grand Duke's treasury. The starost was entitled to the remaining one-third of the proceeds. The voivodes and the starosts could receive individual permits from the hospodar to use the resources for their own benefit²⁴.

In general, the starosts and the voivodes had nearly identical rights, obligations and sources of income. The voivodes exerted greater authority only in military terms²⁵.

¹⁹ Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas, p. 120.

²⁰ М. Ф. Довнар-Запольский, *Западно-русская сельская община в XV веке*, Пётрбург 1897, p. 39; A. Kołodziejczyk, *Podziały administracyjne i urzędy na Podlasiu i Grodzieńszczyźnie w XV–XVI wieku*, in: *Puszcze wielkooksiężęce na północnym Podlasiu i zachodniej Grodzieńszczyźnie w XV–XVI wieku (podziały, administracja, służby leśne i wodne)*, ed. Józef Słowiński, Olsztyn 2007, pp. 318–319; A. Michno, *Wielkooksiężęcy zarządcy litewskiego Merecza od schyłku XV do początku XVII wieku*, „Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie” 2011, No. 2, p. 300.

²¹ H. Łowmiański, *Wchody miast litewskich*, in: *Dwa doktoraty z Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego w Wilnie*, Poznań 2005, vol. 1, p. 389; J. Bardach, *Ustrój miast na prawie magdeburskim w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim do połowy XVII wieku*, in: idem, *O dawnej i niedawnej Litwie*, Poznań 1988, p. 111; K. Pietkiewicz, op. cit., pp. 181–182.

²² LM. *Knyga Nr. 225/6 (1528–1547)*, No. 291, pp. 207–211; H. Obuchowska-Pysiowa, *O handlu drewnem w Polsce w XVI wieku*, „Sylwan” 1964, No. 4, p. 60.

²³ LM. *Knyga Nr. 7 (1506–1539)*, nr 349.^a, s. 569 (20.04.[1514]).

²⁴ Ibidem, No. 297, p. 515; LM. *Knyga Nr. 225/6 (1528–1547)*, No. 291, pp. 207–211; M. Любавски, op. cit., pp. 770–771.

²⁵ В. И. Пичэта, *История литовского государства до люблинской унии*, Вильно 1921, pp. 56–58.

The voivodes and the starosts received various types of customary incomes and bonuses for performing their duties, including life tenures or tenures that were guaranteed until promotion to a higher post.

Similarly to governors-tenants, the voivodes and the starosts initially resided mostly in the former manors of the ruling princes that constituted the main administrative centers in the respective districts. They managed ducal rural estates in return for a share of the crops. The periods between the ruler's visits to district manors were most profitable for the supervising officers.

The voivodes and the starosts were remunerated for mapping land that was leased to peasants, for appointing managers in new properties and establishing temporary lease of vacant land (*pustowszczyzna*). They could also charge small fees from members of subordinate communities for officially validating changes in property or social status. Starosts who leased the administered properties from the hospodar were responsible for paying the associated dues until the lease had been repaid in full²⁶.

The governor-tenants and the *ciwuns* ranked below the governors in the newly formed structure, and they were responsible for administration and the judiciary in the managed estates and smaller administrative districts. They were subject to the judicial and administrative authority of the voivodes and starosts despite the fact that the office of the governor-tenant had been established in the 14th century, and it predated the offices of the voivode and the starost²⁷. The new system of territorial administration in the GDL was developed in the 15th and the early 16th century, and it undermined the authority of the governor-tenants and the *ciwuns*. Their role was reduced to the assisting the voivodes and starosts in the internal matters of grand-ducal estates. The governor-tenants acted as a link between the grand-ducal peasants, tenants and the administration. This above was particularly true of the *ciwuns* who represented the ruler in the administration of grand-ducal estates. Their main duty was to supervise the Grand Duke's farms and to collect taxes and duties from local settlers. The governor-tenants were assisted by the *ciwuns* in their daily operations, and they enjoyed a higher rank in the system. Both types of officers were tasked with managing ducal property, but the governors-tenants acted as supervisors, and they rarely worked side by side with the *ciwuns*²⁸.

The governor-tenants were not only managers of household estates, collectors of taxes and dues owed to the grand-ducal treasury, but they also acted as commanders of fortifications, heads of the local armed forces, and judges who resolved property disputes

²⁶ J. Bardach, *Człobicia i poklony: kartka z dziejów administracji Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XV–XVI wieku*, in: *Wieki średnie: prace ofiarowane Tadeuszowi Manteufflowi w 60. rocznicę urodzin*, Warszawa 1962, pp. 307–315; K. Pietkiewicz, op. cit., pp. 196–198.

²⁷ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Urzednicy zarządu lokalnego na Litwie*, pp. 141–142.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 144–145.

in the supervised districts. The governor-tenants presided over trials of local peasants and noble boyar landowners in their administrative units.

Acting on the hospodar's instructions, the governor-tenants also selected properties in the grand-ducal estates that were appropriate for donations. They set the value and type of charges to be levied on land that was made available to new settlers. However, only the hospodar could change the nature of the levied charges. Above all, the governor-tenants were expected to act in the interest of the treasury²⁹. In practice, the governor-tenants often strayed from this requirement when allocating vacant land. They made various excuses to justify the mismanagement of ducal property and blatant acts of self-interest, and they often placed the blame on the small acreage of boyar land. Boyar properties were enlarged under the pretext of eligibility for military service. These practices were formally banned by King *Sigismund I the Old*³⁰. These measures did not prevent the governor-tenants from distributing the estates arbitrarily. The ruler generally authorized such donations, and legal offenses were sanctioned under the pretext of acting for the common good.

In exchange for their services, the governors-tenants were entitled to one-third of the crops and, from 1529, to a quarter of the vegetables harvested in their estates. They were allowed to consume garden produce as they saw fit, excluding during the hospodar's visits. In counties where fish were caught for the Grand Duke, the governor-tenants were entitled to one-third of the catch³¹. In fact, the only difference in the incomes generated by the governors-tenants, the voivodes and the starosts resulted solely from the economic potential of the managed estates.

The privileges granted to the governor-tenants differed across districts. The governor-tenants had hunting privileges in districts that were abundant in forests, such as Kamieniec or Grodno. Fishermen were always allowed to catch fish for their governor-tenants. The governor-tenants was also entitled to every tenth fish caught by burghers and tenants who set fish traps in grand-ducal rivers or lakes.

During the reign of Sigismund I, the term „governor” became less frequently used to denote grand-ducal officers who were subordinate to voivodes and starosts. Grand-ducal officers were referred to simply as „tenants”. In the First Lithuanian Statute (1529), governors were not mentioned, whereas tenants were described as lower-rank judges who reported to the voivode as the higher authority³².

The new administrative system preserved the rank of the *ciwun*, but *ciwun* rights and position had evolved. Offices such as the *ciwun*, equerry, steward, gamekeeper, beaver hunter originated in the same era as appanage dukes. Following Ruthenian custom,

²⁹ LM. *Knyga Nr. 225/6 (1528–1547)*, No. 291, p. 211.

³⁰ LM. *Knyga Nr. 7 (1506–1539)*, No. 297, pp. 514–517 (20.01.1529).

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Z. Wojtkowiak, *Urzednicy zarzadu lokalnego na Litwie*, pp. 145–146.

the *ciwuns* performed specific tasks on the estate and were authorized by the ruler to judge and sentence peasants. The office of the *ciwun* became widespread in the GDL in the 13th and 14th centuries due to the rapid development of ducal estates. The *ciwuns* usually lived in manors situated in the center of the managed estate³³. During the reign of Casimir and Alexander Jagiellon, the *ciwuns* who were appointed by the rulers themselves from among young courtiers or lords were independent of the governor-tenants. Over time, the Grand Dukes of Lithuania disbursed their property to an ever-increasing number of representatives of the boyar families for whom the office of *ciwun* and the associated income were not highly attractive. For this reason, the *ciwuns* were replaced by governors, especially in Vilnius and Trotsk districts. The office of the *ciwun* was retained only in Samogitia, mainly because the magnates were weakly represented in the local boyar community³⁴.

In the First Statute of Lithuania (1529), the office of the *ciwun* had been largely replaced by the term „tenant”, but tenants were not authorized to prosecute boyars who had the right to attend trials voluntarily upon the mutual consent of the involved parties. The *ciwuns* were responsible for supervising grand-ducal estates, and they were assisted in their duties by specialized workers (*zakaznicy, prystawowie, soroczniczy, gumiennicy*) who organized field labor, distributed duties and levied rents. These workers supervised the payment of duties and taxes not only on behalf of the Grand Duke, but also in the interest of the peasants³⁵.

The *ciwuns* assisted governor-tenants in managing and administering ducal property. They communicated directly with the peasants, they were familiar with the peasants' duties and the allocated land, and they settled local disputes. According to the First Statute of Lithuania (1529), the *ciwuns* were to be nominated by the tenants from among the „well serving” peasants³⁶.

Under Jagiellonian rule, territorial administrators were responsible for the rational management of forest and water resources, local settlement, and the generation of revenues for the Grand Duke³⁷. Territorial units were headed by starosts (governor-tenants). The starost supervised bee masters (*klucznik* or *hajewnik*), beaver masters (*bobrowniczy*) who culled beavers, and fishing masters (*niewodniczy*) who managed fishing operations in grand-ducal waters³⁸.

³³ M. Любавски, op. cit., p. 683.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 421.

³⁵ LM. *Knyga Nr. 225/6 (1528–1547)*, No. 291, p. 210; M. Любавски, op. cit., p. 420.

³⁶ LM. *Knyga Nr. 7 (1506–1539)*, No. 297, pp. 514–517 (20.01.1529).

³⁷ E. Wroczyńska, *Eksploatacja lasów na Podlasiu w XVI w.*, in: *Studia nad społeczeństwem i gospodarką Podlasia w XVI–XVIII w.*, ed. A. Wyrobisz, Warszawa 1981, p. 147; O. Hedemann, *Dawna administracja leśna*, „Echa Leśne” 1932, No. 8, pp. 10–11; W. Pałucki, *Drogi i bezdroża skarbowości polskiej XVI i pierwszej połowy XVII wieku*, Wrocław 1974, pp. 23, 122–145.

³⁸ A. Kołodziejczyk, *Regulacje prawne dotyczące wykorzystania zasobów wodnych w dobrach wielkosiężnych Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego za Jagiellonów*, „Echa Przeszłości” 2010, vol. 11, pp. 43–51; J. Ochmański, *Historia Litwy*, Wrocław 1969, pp. 64, 127–131; M. Любавски, op. cit., pp. 669–672, 849–853.

Bee masters collected honey contributions and directly supervised the beekeepers. The bee master was a low ranking officer who was initially subordinate to the starost³⁹. He issued written and sealed licenses to beekeepers and obliged them to keep tree hives in good condition. Beekeepers who refused to pay the rent or donate vats of honey (*rqczka miodu*) were forced to relinquish their tree hives, trees marked for future honey production, hay crops and beekeeping rights to the Grand Duke. Beekeepers who continued to use tree hives illegally were seized by battue hunters (*osoczник*) on the bee master's orders and imprisoned in a castle tower, for example in Grodno⁴⁰. Their tree hives were distributed to other beekeepers.

Dedicated cellars (*podklity*) for storing honey contributions from the estate were built in the most prominent ducal manor houses in Vilnius and Trakai that were visited by the princes. The cellars were managed by bee masters (*kluczник*), and they were also used to store supplementary cash donations, tax revenues and other goods, such as fox pelts, wax, cloth and salt.

In Vilnius, Trakai and Lutsk districts, the bee masters gradually acquired a similar official status to the *ciwuns*, while maintaining their original duties of collecting honey contributions. The collected honey supplied the needs of the court, and it was also distributed to the clergy and other officers. In these districts, the bee masters were assisted by deputies (*podkluczник*)⁴¹.

A *hajewnik* played a similar role to the collector of honey contributions. According to some researchers, the *hajewnik* was the actual supervisor of beekeeping operations in forests, and he was probably also tasked with judicial responsibilities regarding beekeepers. Beginning in the 16th century, the *hajewniki* became responsible for supervising all beekeeping operations in the grand-ducal forests. This is evidenced by historical records documenting land grants made to the nobility, in which the *hajewnik* was requested to attest that such a bequest was in the interests of the hospodar and his treasury.

The *hajewnik* managed tree hives in the hospodar's forests which were harvested by the peasants on behalf of the hospodar or for own needs. The peasants were expected to contribute a part of the harvested honey. In the second half of the 15th century, the *hajewnik* answered either to the governor-tenant or to the starost, depending on the unit of territorial administration. The *hajewnik* was a lower-ranking officer relative to the starost, and the *hajewnik* court was lower in rank than the starost court⁴².

³⁹ М. Ф. Довнар-Запольский, *Государственное хозяйство Великого Княжества Литовского при Ягеллёнах*, vol. 1, Киев 1901, p. 245, f.n. 1.

⁴⁰ W. Rosiecha, *Królowa Bona (1494–1557). Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia*, vol. 3, Poznań 1958, p. 143.

⁴¹ М. Любавски, *op. cit.*, pp. 844–848.

⁴² *Археографический сборник Документов относящихся к истории Северо-западной Руси издаваемый при управлении Виленского Учебного Округа*, vol. 1, Вильна 1867, No. 17, p. 17.

The beaver master (*bobrowniczy*) supervised beaver lodges and managed the cull of beavers for the Grand Duke, but only a handful of documents describing this office have survived to this day. Source materials listing beaver masters by name are also rare. Paweł Skirmin was a beaver master in Podlasie region in 1513–1514⁴³. The document in which Queen Bona awarded senior beaver hunting privileges in Gródek in 1544 is one of the most important reports regarding the office of the beaver master. According to the document, the beaver master reported to the starost, paid an annual levy of seventy *grosz* and donated ermine on Christmas⁴⁴.

Fish farms (*niewodnictwa*) were established in ducal estates with supportive environmental conditions. Commercial lake fisheries were geared towards profit maximization⁴⁵. Areas abundant in water bodies were consolidated, and they were managed by fishing masters (*niewodniczy*)⁴⁶. Benesz Młynarewski, a tenant of Molawica, was the first documented fishing master in Grodno⁴⁷. Fishing masters were in charge of performing farming operations and supervising net fishing on the lakes, including with the use of drag nets. They managed large groups of fishermen. More than seventy fishermen were employed in the Grodno fish farm in the mid-16th century⁴⁸.

Fish farms witnessed numerous changes in the 16th century, especially during the reign of the last Jagiellonians. Resource management in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was gradually reformed with the aim of implementing a new system of operation, control and protection, maximizing production efficiency and revenues. The departure from traditional forms of management required time as well as the rulers' ability to adjust to the actual effectiveness and reliability of Lithuanian territorial administration⁴⁹. The development of administration and control over grand-ducal property in the GDL contributed to effective governance and minimized fraud committed by territorial officers⁵⁰. According to estimates, the office of the forester (*leśniczy*) was established

⁴³ *Urządnicy podlascy XIV–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, eds. E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, W. Jarmolik, M. Kulecki, J. Urwanowicz, Kórnik 1994, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Рэвізья пушч и перэходов зверинных в бывшем Вэликом Княжэстве Литовском [...] составлена старостою мстибоговским Григорием Богдановичэм Волловичэм в 1559 году*, Вильна 1867, pp. 352–353.

⁴⁵ A. Kołodziejczyk, *Ryby i rybolówstwo w świetle XVI-w. gospodarczego piśmiennictwa polskiego*, „Echa Przeszłości” 2013, vol. 14, pp. 49–59.

⁴⁶ *Ustawa na woloki gospodara korolia ego milosti u-wo wsem Welikom Kniazstwe Litovskom. Leta Bożego Narodzenia 1557, meseca aprelia 1 dnia 1914*, in: *Литовская Мэтрика. Книги публичных дэл*, vol. 1, in: *Русская Историческая Библиотека*, vol. 30, Юрьев, p. 86.

⁴⁷ *Urządnicy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Spisy*, t. II, *Województwo trockie XIV–XVIII wiek*, eds. A. Rachuba, H. Lulewicz, P. P. Romaniuk, A. Haratym in cooperation with A. Macuk, J. Aniszczanka, Warszawa 2009, No. 1855, p. 278; M. Ф. Довнар-Запольский, *Государственное хозяйство*, p. 76.

⁴⁸ *Писцовая книга гродненской экономики с прибавлениями, изданная Виленскою Комиссиею для разбора дръвних актов*, p. 2, Вильно 1882, p. 323.

⁴⁹ *Lietuvos Istorija. Nauji horizontai: dinastija, visuomenė, valstybė. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1386–1529 m.*, vol. IV, eds. J. Kiaupienė, R. Petrauskas, Vilnius 2009, pp. 312–320.

⁵⁰ M. Ф. Довнар-Запольский, *Государственное хозяйство*, pp. 257–268.

already in the second half of the 15th century (the first documented sources date back to 1513) to support the Grand Duke's starosts and tenants⁵¹. During the reign of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, Zub Migowicz was the Grodno forester who reported to the Grodno starost Stanko Sudiwojewicz⁵².

The economic changes that took place in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th century had a significant impact not only on commodity farming, but also on internal trade and the export of forest goods. The demand for wood products and forest goods such as potash or tar had been growing on foreign markets (especially Western Europe) since the mid-15th century, and it encouraged intensified production of forest goods in the GDL. The forest was an important asset that needed to be protected and exploited sustainably. In the 16th century (particularly in the 1550s and 1560s), sustainable forest farming practices became more widespread, especially among the Lithuanian owners of the largest forests in the GDL⁵³.

The laws introduced by the Voloł Act of 1557⁵⁴ and the Second Lithuanian Statute (1566)⁵⁵ intended to restore the rulers' sole ownership of the grand-ducal forests. The main aim of these laws was to restrict access to GDL forests and the associated privileges. The forest audit conducted by *starost* Grzegorz Bogdanowicz Wołłowicz in 1559 was a milestone event. The audit was performed to regulate forest ownership and land consolidation, and it laid the groundwork for future changes⁵⁶.

The efforts aiming to regulate the management of forests in the GDL were crowned with a royal act entitled „The Act of His Majesty the King addressing huntsmen in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” (referred to as the Forest Act) which was proclaimed in Knyszyn on 27 April 1576⁵⁷. Large forest complexes were removed from the care of the starosts and were entrusted to foresters (*leśnicy*) who were independent of the starosts. The foresters were responsible for hunting and forestry services, where the *osoczniks*, archers and beaver masters played a major role⁵⁸.

⁵¹ K. Heymanowski, *Siła robocza w gospodarce leśnej na Mazowszu w okresie przedrozbiorowym (od połowy XV w.)*, „Sylwan” 1978, No. 8, p. 21–25; A. Kołodziejczyk, *W sprawie sporu o kompetencje i powinności grodzieńskiego urzędu leśniczego (w świetle dokumentu z 1512 roku)*, in: „Olsztyńskie Miscellanea Historyczne. Prace Źródłowe”, vol. 1, ed. Józef Śliwiński, Olsztyn 1998, pp. 22–25.

⁵² L. Korczak, *Marszałkowie ziemscy w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XV wieku, Cracovia, Polonia, Europa: studia z dziejów średniowiecza ofiarowane Jerzemu Wyrozumskiemu w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę urodzin i czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej*, ed. Krzysztof Baczkowski et al., Kraków 1995, pp. 373–376.

⁵³ A. Pytasz-Kołodziejczyk, *The evolution of the laws regulating access to forests and aquatic resources of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania until the mid-16th century*, „Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski” 2020, vol. XI/1, pp. 13–22.

⁵⁴ *Ustawa na wolołki*, pp. 73–91.

⁵⁵ *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas*, pp. 243–257.

⁵⁶ Рэвізья пушч, *passim*.

⁵⁷ *Forest Act of 1568*, „Athenaeum” 1844, vol. 6, pp. 5–11.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

Autonomous forest districts were developed around settlements whose residents provided additional workforce. This mode of development contributed to significant progress in forest management in the GDL⁵⁹.

Foresters were tasked with protecting the forest resources of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, in particular areas that were used as hunting grounds. Offenders who damaged forests, cleared woods for farming or other purposes were brought before the starost court⁶⁰. Foresters who captured poachers were entitled to a share of the imposed penalty (*polcina*). Foresters also supervised the hunting duties of the *osocznyks* and resolved disputes to protect the interests of the *osocznyks* during the performance of forest duties. In the remaining cases, the *osocznyks* were subject to the jurisdiction of the *starost*. The foresters also set timber and fuel wood quotas for the Grand Duke's subjects. Timber and fuel wood could be harvested only if they did not cause damage to the forest, and the foresters were prohibited from charging a fee on the allocated quotas under the penalty of ten thousand *grosz* (*sto rubli groszy*) and the loss of office⁶¹.

The foresters took care of the woods and the new settlements established in the supervised district. It was their duty to ensure that peasants did not cut trees and collected only dry fallen wood⁶². Peasants inhabiting the estates belonging to the magnates, boyars and the church did not enjoy such privileges. Rivers, lakes, hay meadows and tree hives were also managed by the foresters. The foresters supervised local workers who were allowed to conduct income-generating activities in strictly designated areas to protect the forest stand and the animals.

The forester protected the forest against poachers and archers who abused their privileges. Peasants and individuals were prevented from entering the forest without the forester's consent. The foresters received a salary and generated additional income from taverns and peasant rents. They were also entitled to nine units (*voloks*) of land, including three for own use and six for the peasants working on their farms⁶³.

Autonomous forestry districts were managed by foresters who acted independently of the starosts, and these districts were often transformed into separate leaseholds. Some Lithuanian magnates combined the held offices with forester duties. In many cases, magnate foresters did not reside in their forestry districts and merely derived an income from the supervised properties⁶⁴. A forestry district leased out by the Grand Duke to the tenant was often managed by a deputy or his representative (*podleśny*) who worked in the for-

⁵⁹ M. Butkiewicz, *Dobra szlacheckie w powiecie tykocińskim*, Lublin 1998, pp. 48–49; W. Jarmolik, *Powstanie województwa podlaskiego, „Białostoczczyzna”* 1989, No. 4, p. 9.

⁶⁰ A. Kołodziejczyk, *W sprawie sporu o kompetencje*, pp. 19–25.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 23–24; A. Żabko-Potopowicz, *Lasy wielkksiążęce za panowania Zygmunta Augusta i ich gospodarze*, in: *Twórcy i organizatorzy leśnictwa polskiego*, pp. 24–27.

⁶² *Forest Act of 1568*, p. 7.

⁶³ *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych*, *Metryka Koronna*, 410, pp. 1492–1493.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 1014.

estry district on a daily basis. Forestry districts were sources of considerable income for the landlords (tenants). Only a small share of that income was transferred to the Grand Duke's treasury. This practice became widespread after 1588 when forestry districts were pledged or leased for an appropriate fee⁶⁵.

In the 16th century, auditors were appointed to control the administration and management of the grand-ducal property, in particular the exploitation of natural resources⁶⁶. The auditors' powers and duties were described in detail in the Voloĳ Act of 1 April 1557. Additional regulations to the act were introduced on 20 May 1558 in the Instructions for Auditors and Land Surveyors (*Instrukcja dla Rewizorów i Mierników*)⁶⁷. According to the Voloĳ Act, the auditor inspected the operations of grand-ducal estates and the generated incomes. The auditor supervised the administrators to ensure that grand-ducal fodder was not sold at a profit or distributed at no charge, and that the agreed amounts of hay were harvested from grand-ducal meadows. In forest districts where settlements were established, the auditor inspected the allocation of land for farming and set the period during which the settlers were exempt from rent (5 to 10 years)⁶⁸. In forest estates, the auditors supervised landlords to prevent the illegal appropriation of land, in particular developed land, during land surveys. The auditors also inspected grand-ducal forests⁶⁹. They supervised the operations of individuals who utilized the resources in grand-ducal forests and lakes, and they monitored the payment of the relevant fees to the treasury. The auditors surveyed the number of tree hives and honey contributions⁷⁰, and they inspected the official beekeeping registers⁷¹. They monitored the subjects' observance of timber quotas and wood deliveries to manors and castles (including timber)⁷².

Further changes in the structure of territorial administration were introduced during the administrative reform of 1564–1566. Districts became the basic administrative units of the state (30 districts were created), voivodships were restructured (the number of voivodeships increased from eight to thirteen), and new administrative officers were appointed⁷³. The reform did not exert a significant impact on the management of grand-ducal assets (forests, rivers and lakes) and natural resources. It failed to protect these resources from further exploitation, and it did not prevent the destruction of the

⁶⁵ B. Dederko, *Polityka leśna Litwy za Zygmunta Augusta*, „Las Polski” 1926, o. 12, pp. 600–607.

⁶⁶ A. Kołodziejczyk, *Properties' Auditor of regality of The Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the XVI century. Methodological remarks*, in: *History–Archive Studies–Information Science: methodological issues*, eds. K. Narojczyk, M. Świgoń, M. Wolny, Olsztyn 2010, pp. 59–61.

⁶⁷ *Ustawa na woloki*, pp. 230–280.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

⁶⁹ М. Ф. Довнар-Запольский, *Государственное хозяйство*, p. 322.

⁷⁰ *Ustawa na woloki*, p. 89.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 100–112; В. И. Пичэга, *Аграрная реформа Сигизмунда Августа в Литовско-Русском государстве*, выд. 2, Москва 1958, pp. 186–187.

⁷² *Ustawa na woloki*, p. 88.

⁷³ G. Błaszczuk, *Litwa na przełomie średniowiecza i nowożytności 1492–1569*, Poznań 2002, pp. 121–125.

most valuable forest regions. Deforestation and economic progress destroyed forest habitats and reduced the species diversity of forest animals. Water resources and fish were better protected, but valuable species were also lost. These assets were largely transferred to private owners or tenants.

The last legal act aiming to protect grand-ducal assets, or their remnants, was the Ordinance on royal land revenues in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (*Ordinatio o prowentach Krolewskich w Wielkim Xięstwie Litewskim*) which was passed by the Sejm during the reign of Sigismund III Vasa⁷⁴ and created the administrative provinces (*ekonomie*) of Grodno, Szawel, Olita, Brest, Mogilev and Kobrin⁷⁵.

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⁷⁴ *Акты относящяшчэся к истории Западной России*, т. 4, Санктпэтербург 1848, pp. 1–3.

⁷⁵ *Volumina Legum*, ed. J. Ohryzko, vol. II, Petersburg 1859, p. 289.

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Territorial administration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the management of natural resources of the Grand Duke's domain in the 15th and 16th centuries (formation and function)

Summary: The administrative structure and territorial judiciary of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) underwent significant changes at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. The establishment of a group of administrative and judicial officials allegiant to the ruler of the GDL became a priority during the reign of Grand Duke Vytautas. These processes led to the emergence of a new class of new civil officers whose competencies were incorporated into the existing administrative system of the GDL. The 16th century marked a new period of changes which were further accelerated under the reign of the last Jagiellonian monarchs. During that time, a new model was proposed for exploiting, controlling and protecting natural resources of the GDL. The departure from traditional forms of management required time and the rulers' willingness to accept the idiosyncrasies of Lithuanian territorial administration. The exploitation of forests and water resources for the benefit of Grand Duke and the colonization of Lithuanian forests were supervised by territorial administration officials. The starost enjoyed considerable authority, and he supervised key masters (*klucznik*), forest rangers (*hajewnik*) (who supervised the production and distribution of honey and wax), beaver masters (*bobrowniczy*) and fishing masters (*niewodniczy*) who managed fishing operations in grand-ducal waters. Foresters (*leśniczy*) became independent from the starosts. They were responsible for organizing hunting and forestry services involving battue masters (*osocznik*) and shooters. Foresters also supervised forest management. In the 16th century, grand ducal auditors were appointed to supervise and control the territorial administration and management of grand ducal estates.

Keywords: territorial administration, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, natural resources, grand ducal domain