Urban Culture and Everyday Life in Lithuania in the 17th and 18th Centuries
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By
Stasys Samalavičius

Edited by Almantas Samalavičius
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All these articles are re-published in the present book with permission from the journal. All works by Stasys Samalavičius published in this volume were translated into English by Dalia Šatienė and Kerry Shawn Keys. The translations of other chapters are mine.

Thanks are due to Dalia Šatienė and Kerry Shawn Keys for their translation, as well as to Anthony Wright for copy editing the present book. I would also like to thank Professor Aivas Ragauskas, who urged me to introduce the legacy of Dr. Stasys Samalavičius to an English-speaking audience.

Almantas Samalavičius
January 2023
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACW</td>
<td><em>Akty Cechow Wilenskich 1495–1795</em> (collection of documents issued by Vilnius guilds, compiled and edited by Henryk Łowmiański, Maria Łowmiańska, and Stanisław Kościalkowski in Vilnius, 1939)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Archeographical collection of documents related to the history of northwestern Russia, published when Lithuania was part of the tsarist Russian empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>apr. Description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AVAK</td>
<td>Documents published by the Vilnius Archeographical Commission during the period when Lithuania was part of the tsarist Russian empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. File</td>
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<td>f. Fund</td>
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<td>l. Sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>LVIA</td>
<td>Lithuanian State Historical Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAB RS</td>
<td>Library of the Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Archives of the Paminklų konservavimo institutas (Institute for Monuments Conservation), Vilnius</td>
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<td>v. Verso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUB RS</td>
<td>Vilnius University Library, Department of Manuscripts</td>
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A NOTE ON PROPER NAMES

Most of the archival sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries referred to in the book were written in Polish. However, before 1990, all proper names mentioned in scholarly texts published in Lithuania were customarily Lithuanized according to both the rule and the practice that all publications followed.

When Stasys Samalavičius first wrote the chapters in this book, the majority of names of (important) historical persons were rendered in Polish or sometimes in English. During the translation and editing process, however, it was virtually impossible to reconstruct each and every name mentioned in the text without revisiting all archival sources.

As such, the editor has opted to leave all names as they were inscribed by the author at the time when the texts were written and published. The same practice was followed while previously publishing writings of Stasys Samalavičius in Lithuania.

Regarding the names of geographical locations for cities and towns, for example, preference has been given to their present Lithuanian names. In some cases, their Polish names are mentioned in parentheses.
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF URBAN LIFE AND
THE LEGACY OF STASYS SAMALAVIČIUS

Everyday life consists of the little things one hardly notices in time and space. The more we reduce the focus of vision, the more likely we are to find ourselves in the environment of material life: the broad sweep usually corresponds to History with a capital letter, to distant trade routes, and the networks of national or urban economies. If we reduce the length of the time observed, we either have the event or the everyday happening. The event is, or is taken to be, unique; the everyday happening is repeated, and the more often it is repeated the more likely it is to become a generality or rather a structure. It pervades society at all levels, and characterises ways of being and behaving which are perpetuated through endless ages. Sometimes a few anecdotes are enough to set up a signal which points to a way of life. […] Through little details, travellers’ notes, a society stands revealed. The way people eat, dress, or lodge, at the different levels of that society, are never a matter of indifference.¹

Thus Fernand Braudel insisted in his highly acclaimed study *The Structures of Everyday Life*, which had a huge impact on historical research during the second half of the last century and beyond. His pioneering work focusing on the everyday life of ordinary people instead of the preeminent forces of society opened new vistas for historical research and has gained a large following in numerous countries both inside and outside Europe.

Sometime later, this way of looking at society’s past was taken up by a group of German scholars who created a social history movement eventually known as the history of the everyday (*Alltagsgeschichte*), led by such scholars as Alf Ludtke and Hans Medick. This group of German historians was especially interested in studying the experience of the “ordinary people,” an experience that was largely ignored and often bypassed by adherents of other schools of historical thought who were more

interested in macro-level analysis and maintained a far more abstract approach toward the objects of their studies. As Andreas Eckert and Adam Jones observed while discussing the legacy of everyday life studies:

Minor and apparently irrelevant details can sometimes be more interesting than the “hard historical facts” that had been keeping these particularities out of sight. Thanks to those small details, the so-called significant events, which from a historical perspective may appear to be important, received additional proportion; a humanity. For historians, the events become more tangible and believable. The study of family relations, everyday life, the issue of gender – in general anthropologising approaches – place the subjective aspect of experience and perception to the foreground. They generally endeavour to return the meaning of an individual in the history, providing an analysis of the perspective “from below” and “from within.”

This different approach toward understanding history has gained even more currency in recent decades, despite the fact that it is still occasionally met with a certain distrust or skepticism among practitioners. Nevertheless, many professional historians have given up their skepticism and turned to this exciting and promising domain, opting to study various aspects of everyday life that were previously considered hardly worthy of serious historical scrutiny. As an outcome of this novel view toward history and the possibilities of historical scholarship, there was a change in perspective in historical research, especially after Braudel developed his renowned studies focusing on material life in early modern society. His groundbreaking research was extremely helpful in validating the studies of everyday life in many parts of the world. The success of everyday life studies, also known by its original title Alltagsgesichte, as well as the groundwork laid by its French predecessors, has paved the way for ongoing interest in the field that is generally known today as historical studies of everyday life. This particular approach is now firmly established and pursued by historical researchers from various countries, regions, and continents.

Things were different in the eastern European realm when Stasys Samalavičius set out to develop his early scholarly interest in material culture and the everyday life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. By this point, the country had been taken over by the Soviet Union, and its Communist Party supervised and controlled all spheres of its intellectual and public life, including academic research.

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Most of the historical studies pursued by Stasys Samalavičius during the several decades of his professional career in Soviet Lithuania were related to the examination of the material life of Lithuanian burghers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as to the inquiry into various aspects of their everyday life. In many cases, his focus was Vilnius (Wilno), the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, though he also researched aspects of the urban culture of other Lithuanian cities, like Kaunas (Kovno) or Kėdainiai (Kejdany).

Before presenting an overview of his research topics and findings, a brief discussion of the context, including the political and ideological climate of the second half of the last century when Lithuania was still a part of the Soviet Union, is, perhaps, needed.

It should be remembered that historical research under the Soviet regime was controlled and supervised by the Communist Party (CPSU) and the political establishment that set the “rules of the game” every five years during the CPSU’s rallies in Moscow. History was viewed as a very important discipline and, accordingly, was highly politicized. It is not surprising that historians were expected to conform to the ideological framework set by the almighty ruling Party. Thus, first and foremost, historians who aimed to conduct serious studies of the past inevitably faced limits set on the discipline by the Soviet authorities.

Lithuania ceased to exist as an independent state in 1940 when it was occupied and eventually colonized by the Soviet Union. Most of the Lithuanian historians who grew up in the first half of the last century and were active during a brief period of independence from 1918–1940 were forced into exile at the end of WWII. If they stayed, they risked falling victim to the Soviet People’s Republic, established in 1940 and reconstructed in 1944 when the Nazi regime was dismantled and the Red Army recaptured Lithuania. By staying in the country, they could have been deported to Siberian Gulags or been otherwise silenced or forced to accept the official view of history after being indoctrinated into Marxism-Leninism – the official ideology of the Soviet state. Those few professional historians of the pre-Soviet era who, for different reasons, chose to stay in the country soon realized the rigid ideological limits set on historiography and historical studies. Aurimas Švedas, who has studied the development of historical scholarship during the Soviet period, suggests the following:

The understanding of Marxism as an unavoidable evil in Soviet-era Lithuanian historiography encouraged “internal emigration” processes. In order to avoid any direct association with the ideology or servitude to the Party’s demands, historians often chose either “strategic” or “tactical”
means of resolving this problem. In the first case, historians would choose to examine topics from a much earlier period. For example, the Middle Ages, compared to the 19th or 20th centuries, were a relatively “safe” period, guaranteeing relative freedom during the research process.3

Of course, not every scholar opted to study the earlier periods of Lithuanian history (i.e., those before Lithuania fell prey to the imperial ambitions of tsarist Russia and other European superpowers who demolished the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century) simply because this perspective was “safer,” as Švedas unilaterally claims. Some were just interested in one period or another that had not been sufficiently researched by their predecessors.

Stasys Samalavičius (1930–1992) was one of the small group of Lithuanian historians who focused on Lithuania’s social and cultural developments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His firm and life-long focus was on urban culture, material studies, and, eventually, the everyday life of the local burghers. He had no intention of compromising his historical research by paying lip service to the Soviet ideology for reasons closely related to his upbringing, family, and education. His father, Liudvikas Samalavičius, had spent some 33 years in the United States of America before coming back, marrying, and settling in Lithuania in the southern town of Seirijai, where Stasys was born. Until 1940, his family enjoyed a rather prosperous life because Liudvikas made good use of his knowledge of English, established friendly relations with a US consul residing in Kaunas (Lithuania’s temporary capital), and provided legal advice to his compatriots who had served in US Army after emigrating to America and were entitled to financial compensation for their military duties.

Toward the end of WWII, when German troops retreated from Lithuania and the Red Army entered, Stasys opted to flee the country. Together with his friend and class-mate, he tried to leave the country occupied by the Russian troops and attempted to reach the zone controlled by the Allies. However, both were forced to go back after realizing that Königsberg was under the Red Army’s complete control and that physical barriers had been established preventing anybody from crossing the borders. His friend who had joined him in this failed attempt to emigrate joined the anti-Soviet guerillas in southern Lithuania, but Stasys decided to continue his studies. Soon, however, his younger brother Jonas was detained, imprisoned, and relocated to a Siberian Gulag for anti-Soviet

activities. Avoiding the inevitable interrogations and persecutions, Stasys Samalavičius moved to Kaunas, where he graduated from his gymnasium (secondary school) and eventually entered Vilnius University in 1949, enrolling in the Faculty of History and Philology, curiously, to study English language and literature. The fact that he did not study history as an undergraduate during the period when historical studies were most heavily indoctrinated eventually turned out to be a blessing as he avoided the ideological stereotypes to which students of history were subjected.

After graduating from Vilnius University in 1954, he could not find an educator’s job for some time. As such, he chose to spend a year working in construction (supervised by a close friend from Seirijai, who graduated in construction and engineering) and then taught English language and political economy at an accounting college in Klaipėda for a few years. Simultaneously, he taught English at the Maritime Academy in this port city. At this time, he also married Stasė Okunauskaitė, with whom he had studied at the University of Vilnius.

After returning to Vilnius with his wife, he was employed as a researcher at the newly founded Scientific Restoration Workshop. For a brief period (from 1962 to 1964), he taught English at Vilnius University before finally entering the postgraduate (doctoral) Lithuanian history program at Vilnius University, choosing Juozas Jurginis, a member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, as his doctoral thesis advisor. This proved to be a wise and timely decision because Jurginis was a rather liberal scholar by the standards of the day. A well-known, influential, and respected historian who was also popular among the general readership, Jurginis stood in opposition to the mainstream and orthodox views that were perhaps best represented by Juozas Žiugžda, who headed the Institute of Lithuanian History – the main scholarly institution operating under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences in Soviet Lithuania. As Švedas emphasizes, “Urging others to investigate always new mysteries of the past, Jurginis was himself a very dynamic specialist whose interests ranged from specific issues in medieval history that only specialists could comprehend to attempts at popularizing science amongst the broader public.”

Stasys Samalavičius maintained friendly and mutually respectful relations with his thesis supervisor for the rest of his life, and the latter expressed his satisfaction with the scholarly achievements of his former student on numerous occasions. Jurginis’ dedication to the public sphere and broad audiences might have provided an impetus for Samalavičius to realize the importance of educating the general readership. He seems to

4 Ibid., 131.
have realized quite early in his scholarly career that history is somewhat different from other scholarly disciplines. If historical research does not attract the broader public, a large part of its meaning and educational potential is lost. Thus, like his mentor, Samalavičius did not confine himself to publishing exclusively for academic or professional audiences; it was no less important to him to interest general audiences in historical topics and share his findings with the broader public. On the other hand, urban culture and studies of material life were generally outside the mainstream of historical research throughout the Soviet period. There were only a few academic historical journals in the country, and they were all dominated by the mainstream view that was quite hostile to themes and topics outside the research paradigm of the day. Thus, Samalavičius opted to publish many articles and essays in cultural and popular journals that were much more open to the issues with which he was concerned. In these cases, however, most editors required him to give up scholarly apparatus (references, footnotes and endnotes, etc.) to make the discourse more understandable to non-specialists.

After completing his doctoral studies at Vilnius University, Samalavičius worked for some time as the secretary of the Heraldry Commission at the Ministry of Culture. However, this employment soon ended as the activities of this institution drew suspicion from the ideological authorities in Moscow – inquiry into this sphere was seen as a danger of reviving memories of the pre-colonial past. After his contract was terminated, in 1969, Samalavičius returned to the Scientific Restoration Workshop in Vilnius, which was soon reorganized to become the Institute for the Conservation of Monuments. This important scholarly institution operated under various names for several decades and was the leading state organization in Soviet Lithuania that performed research on architectural and urban heritage and implemented restoration works.

In 1973, he finally obtained his doctorate in historical sciences from Vilnius University, which was awarded for his dissertation titled “Vilnius Builders’ Guilds, 1595–1795.”

While working at the Institute for Monuments Conservation (Paminkly konservavimo institutas), Samalavičius focused on the material culture of Vilnius burghers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He also gave up much of his time to researching the history of cultural and architectural monuments of that particular period as the institute was expected to supply evidence required for further restoration of historical architectural buildings. As a Senior Research Associate, Samalavičius headed the institute’s historical research department for a period, but he did not find the administrative work attractive and eventually chose to continue his
research work in the capacity of Senior Art Historian. Most of his work during this period appeared as scholarly articles in the annual scientific periodical Architektūros paminklai or otherwise remained unpublished and survived as scholarly reports until the bulk of his work became available to professional and non-specialist readers in two volumes published post-mortem.5

During his time at the Institute for the Conservation of Monuments in Vilnius, Samalavičius published two small yet important books aimed at the general public. These were based on his research work and contained a considerable amount of previously unknown material on the history, culture, and artistic development of Vilnius: Baroko šedevras (Masterpiece of the Baroque, 1976), which was also published in English, Russian, and German languages,6 and Vilniaus rotušė (Vilnius Town Hall, 1981).7 The former was a brief study of the history and decoration of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul (later developed into a lengthy monograph), and the latter was a historical overview of Vilnius Town Hall as an architectural edifice and institution. This small book also covered many aspects of the city’s everyday life.

At the same time, he completed a number of research projects and published 13 lengthy scholarly articles based on his research on the material culture of Vilnius burghers. Spending a lot of time in the archives and examining the primary sources, Samalavičius focused on such previously almost unexplored topics as the houses of burghers and their interiors (furnaces, fireplaces, wall hangings, furniture, lighting equipment, paintings, carpets, curtains, dishes, and sideboards), as well as musical instruments, clocks, etc. He also studied shops and markets, guild halls, pharmacies, archives, libraries, and many other subjects.

While working as an architectural and urban researcher, he wrote and published numerous articles and essays in cultural journals (of which there were quite a few) that were aimed at a broader audience: Mokslas ir gyvenimas (Science and Life), Mokslas ir technika (Science and Technology), Statyba ir architektūra (Construction and Architecture), Kultūros barai (Domains of Culture), etc.

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His research on the everyday life of Vilnius burghers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries embraced various topics and issues overlapping with material culture: the development of the city of Vilnius, transformations to its structure, advertisements and public signs, street lighting, etc. He also studied the categories of burghers and their privileges, the shifting number of inhabitants, relations between proper burghers and inhabitants of the suburbs, Vilnius’ ethnic composition, and languages of urban dwellers from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. His further interests were related to burghers’ families, their children’s upbringing, and urban dwellers’ public life. His notebooks contain numerous references and comments to the writings of such scholars as Norbert Elias or Philippe Aries; however, he did not risk mentioning these authors in his publications as they were classified at the time as “dangerous bourgeois authors.” (It should be added that historians and other humanities scholars in general were strongly discouraged from referring to Western researchers until perestroika or were supposed to criticize and denounce them as deviating from a truly Soviet line, represented exclusively by Marxism-Leninism.)

Samalavičius was also concerned about what Lithuania’s burghers ate and drank, what kind of clothing they wore, what kind of inns they attended, when they came to use tea and coffee, or, say, using forks and toothbrushes, what public festivities took place in Vilnius, and who organized and attended them. His ambitious project also included the study of the epidemics and fires that broke out during this period, as well as sanitary conditions and the activities of doctors, surgeons, barbers, and bathers. Other aspects of everyday life, such as burghers’ travels, adventures, and means of traveling, were among his study objects, as were crime and punishment, including the activities of municipal courts (some aspects of which were discussed in Vilnius Town Hall). His research during the last several years of his life focused on the books and libraries Vilnius burghers possessed as well as on the weapons they stored and used.

He planned and revised two scholarly monographs, Material Culture of Vilnius Urban Dwellers in the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries and Everyday Life of Vilnius Burghers in the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries, based on his long-term research interests. However, neither of them was fully complete at the time of his death and, for a number of reasons, remained unpublished until 2011–2013. Some highly interesting research materials survived in draft or sketch format.

Having dedicated his professional life to the history and urban culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, he did not cut off his relations with
Editor’s Introduction

English. He was repeatedly invited to teach at the Department of Lithuanian History of Vilnius University by Stasys Lazutka, a professor of history, former vice-rector of Vilnius University, and a loyal Communist Party member who eventually did important research on Lithuanian statutes. However, he declined these calls as Robertas Žiugžda, the son of the most influential mainstream historian of the Soviet era, Juozas Žiugžda, a staunch communist and the then head of department, was strongly biased against his research focus on the Church of SS. Peter and Paul. As Samalavičius, unlike most mainstream historians, was not a member of the Communist Party, he believed he might become an easy target due to his non-conventional research and unorthodox views. Instead, he accepted an invitation to teach a course on the history of England at the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University, which he taught for more than a dozen years to his satisfaction and was well thought of by his students and colleagues.

In 1988, he accepted an invitation to move to another research institution and soon started working as a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Lithuanian History. Because of his qualifications and specialization, he was assigned to the newly founded research group on the Lower Castle (of the Grand Dukes), which was soon reorganized to become the History of Castles Department. There, he headed the historical research section and worked on the archival sources that were later used for the rebuilding of the Palaces of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. His expertise was in great demand there, and he spent several years researching the related historical material in the archives of Vilnius, Grodno, Minsk, Lviv, St. Petersburg, Kraków, and elsewhere. During this period, working practically alone with just occasional help from assistant researchers (because of a lack of sufficient funds; funding for research, regardless of its importance, was extremely scarce in the first post-Soviet decade in Lithuania), he published several scholarly articles that were important for the reconstruction of the Palace’s history.8

Public interest in history grew enormously during perestroika, initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, giving impetus to the establishment of the Sąjūdis movement, which finally led to the re-establishment of Lithuania’s independence in 1990. Samalavičius received numerous invitations to discuss various issues of Lithuanian and Vilnius history on public radio and national TV. He was asked to recap different episodes of Lithuania’s history on national radio and made regular broadcasts in 1989 on these issues. Inspired by the huge interest in these radio talks, he wrote a brief

history of Lithuania in English for an international audience that was published after his death in 1995 and is still used in some North European universities as an introductory text to Lithuania’s history and culture.9

During this period, he published two essays (co-authored with Almantas Samalavičius) in Apollo, one of the leading UK journals of art and antiquities history.10 His scholarly monograph on the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in Vilnius, the most important architectural monument of Lithuanian Baroque architecture (co-written with Almantas Samalavičius from 1984–1988), was published post-mortem in 1999.11

After Lithuania’s independence was re-established, Lithuanian historians entered into relations with the international historical community. Lithuanians joined some of the most important international organizations in the field, and in 1991, Samalavičius was elected the first General Secretary of the Lithuanian National Committee of Historians. In early 1993, he was due to spend a period at Oxford University as Visiting Senior Scholar; however, he unexpectedly died on December 12, 1992, leaving much unpublished research and multiple incomplete manuscripts in his archives.

For a number of reasons, the general picture of his research was only formed more than two decades after he passed away when the two books containing his articles and studies on the material culture and everyday life of Lithuanian urban dwellers made his life-long work available to academic and general audiences. There is no doubt that Stasys Samalavičius was the forerunner of those fields of research in Lithuania. His legacy was commemorated in different ways: Vilnius Pedagogical University and the Institute of Lithuanian History organized a national academic conference dedicated to his legacy in 2005, one of the streets of Vilnius – his life-long subject of scholarly research – was named after him, and Vilnius University Library held a memorial exhibition of his life and research in 2020.

Even so, some of his work is still waiting to be examined and published. This book is only the first volume of his work on seventeenth-

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and eighteenth-century urban life, now finally available in English, and will most likely be followed by another volume. Consequently, this book contains only a part of his research on Vilnius burghers’ material culture and everyday life and some aspects of Lithuanian culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nevertheless, I do hope it will be useful to scholars studying these issues as well as readers who are interested in Eastern European, Baltic, and Lithuanian history and culture.

**Works Cited**


INTRODUCTION

SOME NOTES ON LITHUANIAN URBAN CULTURE IN THE SIXTEENTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

If we understand culture as a set of material and spiritual values accumulated and shared by society, then the culture of urban dwellers comprises a very important part, perhaps, in fact, even determining its nature and future development. True, urban culture has played different roles in the general context of culture in different periods of human development, but it is quite obvious that its “comparative weight” kept increasing with each century. Although the role of the urban class in Lithuania did not lead to major changes in the economic and political life of Lithuanian society during the period of feudalism, the general level of the country’s culture largely depended on its urban culture.

When it comes to the culture of urban dwellers, as with culture in general, one cannot overlook the receptivity guaranteed by training and upbringing. Traditional cultures, to which the culture of cities of the feudal period also partly belong, are passed on to future generations more by living word and practical example, but school, which also plays a vital role, is gradually becoming one of the most significant factors in the progress of society’s culture and as an indicator of its level.

The first school in Vilnius (Wilno) was established near the cathedral. It is mentioned in a writ of May 9, 1397 by Bishop Andrius of Vilnius, which states that a plot of land in the territory of the Lower Castle is to be granted to the school. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, schools were established in Kaunas, Varniai, and Trakai. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a second school in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania opened its doors near the Church of St. Johns.

Church singing was mainly taught in early urban schools, and some students became professional church singers. Hence, these schools were, in fact, the cradles of professional choral music and the forerunners of music schools. One should also not forget that Latin was taught in these
schools from the beginning of their existence; it is assumed that, when it was taught, it was most likely not possible to get by without some knowledge of the Latin language. Latin was of great importance – without it, it was impossible to continue any kind of learning, study at the universities, or get to know more about Western European culture.

The number of church or parochial schools increased in later centuries, more subjects were included in their curricula, and the number of students grew; accordingly, the importance of these schools to public education also increased.

There were also some schools that might be called “higher schools.” It is known that a higher school established by Abraomas Kulvietis was active in Vilnius from 1539. A school of civil law operated for some time in the second half of the sixteenth century in Vilnius, near the Church of St. Johns. A seminary for Unitarian priests was established in the Lithuanian capital as early as 1582. A school of theology was also founded near the Church of the Holy Spirit in the seventeenth century, and there were more in Kaunas, Kražiai, Merkinė, and other towns.

The training of artisans, which acquired an organized character from the fifteenth century, was of considerable importance to the culture of urban dwellers. In order to start his own workshop, a craftsman had to stay with the master of his craft and work as an apprentice for a certain number of years until he obtained the necessary qualifications. These varied depending on the nature of the craft.

There is no available data in the guild statutes of Lithuanian cities on whether students were taught to write. However, Arnoldas Endzinas, who has researched the history of specialized education in Lithuania, pointed out that “the specifics of the goldsmiths guild required the master to know how to write and count because it was necessary to determine the fineness of silver and gold articles, fulfill the imposed obligation, check the amount of gold and silver in the articles of artisans who did not belong to the guild, polish the gem according to a diagram drawn in advance on paper, calculate the composition of the alloy to be prepared, and do the business’ accounting.”¹ Blacksmiths, watchmakers, booksellers, and other artisans had to know how to write.

Mandatory trips of the apprentices were included in their education. They lasted from one and a half to six years for craftsmen from the guilds of Lithuanian cities. These trips were not limited to Lithuanian cities. There is no doubt that working with masters in other cities and foreign countries allowed apprentices to adopt the technical practices of the time,

acquire various artisan skills, and improve their qualifications in more general terms. In addition, apprentices traveling to foreign countries could and were made to learn the languages of those countries and to get to know their customs and traditions, their ways of life, and, to a greater or lesser degree, their cultural values.

Not only did artisans from Lithuanian cities travel to foreign countries, but many foreigners went to Lithuania as well. The artisan guild system created the value of traveling and favorable conditions for it. We should also take into consideration that there was occasionally a surplus of craftsmen in the countries of Western Europe. As such, more of them went to Lithuanian cities from the West than from the East, as in the West, in general, the development of production was extensive due to historical conditions. Thus, many Lithuanian towns and cities, especially Kaunas and Vilnius, were constantly supplied with skilled craftsmen. Of course, they also brought with them their respective countries’ technological achievements and cultural values, which were gradually integrated into the culture of the inhabitants of Lithuanian towns and cities.

It was not only craftsmen who arrived in the country. Foreigners were often invited to lead and undertake projects to construct churches, monasteries, noblemen’s palaces, and country residences, which were all being built in Lithuania at that time. Quite a few of them arrived from Italy and other European countries. There was an especially high amount of such constructions in Vilnius and other large cities.

It is sufficient to mention that in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Church of St. Anne was built by the Italian Giovanni Cini in the area of the Lower Castle. Foreign architects Job Breitfus and Friedrich Unsterfl worked on the castle’s construction during the reign of Sigismund II Augustus (1544–1572).

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the maintenance of Vilnius’ castles was entrusted to the Flemish architect Petrus Nonhart. An architect from Kraków, Jan Zaor, was the designer and supervisor of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in the second half of the seventeenth century. He also helped to build the palace of the Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Voivode of Vilnius (now at 35 Didžioji Street, Vilnius). Both buildings were finally completed by the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Frediani. The world-class stucco decorations in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul were created by the Italians Pietro Pertì and Giovanni Maria Gallì from the Como area with the help of local artisans. The Italian A. S. Capone helped to complete the interior decoration. Decorative paintings in churches and noblemen’s palaces were created by such well-known artists as Michelangelo Palloni, Delbene, Pietro Rossi, and many others.
Some of the architects and painters who completed these commissions in Lithuania eventually returned to their homelands or left to work elsewhere. However, quite a few, like Pietro Perti, who can be considered a leading European sculptor and decorator, stayed in Lithuania for the rest of their lives and engaged with the region’s cultural life.

Of course, it would have been difficult to implement large-scale constructions and ornate installations without qualified local specialists. Their existence is evidenced by a number of facts. For example, in 1595, the Vilnius Masons’ and Carpenters’ Guild statute required that a mason wishing to become a master perform a “theoretical” work as well. The latter consisted of sketching a project containing rooms with groin vaults according to a task set by the masters of the guild. Thus, inevitably, a master mason had to have some knowledge of design. Eventually, this requirement was replaced by that of being able to read drawings prepared by highly qualified specialists and work according to them.

Following the drawings prepared by the architects, the carpenters and (wood-carving) sculptors who belonged to this guild created church auditoriums, pulpits, and altars and worked on highly sophisticated wood-finishing works in the residence of the ruler of the Grand Duchy and in the luxurious palaces of the nobles. In 1684, the sculptor Andrius Hancevičius made the altar for the Church of St. Johns. In 1718, a man named Pertzelis, a sculptor who lived in the suburb of Antakalnis, built two altars and other wooden sculptures in the same church. In 1722, Jonas Pertzelis the Elder and Jonas Pertzelis the Younger (most probably father and son) created another altar, and Jonas Kurtauskas carved the sculptural decorations of the organ in 1731. A year later, sculptor Jonas Karolis Frezeris created as many as 22 statues for this church. In 1719, sculptor Friedrich Kvecer from Vilnius designed and built the altar of the Most Holy Mother of God in the church of Barúnai. Thus, it can be concluded that the artisans of the local guilds not only performed works as part of foreigners’ projects but also carried out their own. The preparation and creation of projects and important objects indicates the professionalism of the craftsmen and, at the same time, speaks of their solid contribution to Lithuanian art and architecture.

The establishment of a type of university institution in Vilnius in 1579 was a significant event. The university’s foundation could not but affect the cultural life of the city. Poor students were hired as private teachers for the children of rich urban dwellers, sang at the funerals of urban dwellers, and actively participated in various city celebrations. In addition, a university education became available not only for the children of the nobility but also for many other urban dwellers. Many of the university’s
former students later became a vaitas (wojt in Polish, vogt in German), that is, the governor of a town or city, as well as members of the magistrates, office clerks, and merchants.

City merchants not only had to be quite literate but also generally sophisticated and educated people. This was especially true for the bigger merchants. For trade purposes, they visited various towns and cities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as well as Russian and Polish centers of commerce. They often went to Riga and Königsberg and reached Gdańsk (Danzig), Bern, Nuremberg, and other Western European cities. Most of them spoke several foreign languages and were familiar with the customs of the people of foreign countries and with the townsfolk’s way of life, tastes, and latest fashions, which they would often disseminate in their own country.

The merchants of those times sold various household products, weapons, jewelry, other luxuries, and, in today’s terms, cultural goods. Carpets and wall coverings were imported from abroad, as were mirrors, clocks, musical instruments, and other valuable items, which, while satisfying utilitarian needs, also had considerable aesthetic and cultural value for urban life.

Reproductions of the works of the most famous Western European artists, as well as original works, were among the goods imported to the Grand Duchy. These items were purchased and hung next to the artworks of local artists not only by the nobles and the clergy but also by ordinary (yet sufficiently wealthy) urban dwellers.

Although the townspeople of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries were not yet interested in the authors of the works of art they had (they were much more interested in their monetary value, thematic issues, etc.), the proliferation of works of art did not remain insignificant in the homes of urban dwellers. When property inventories and other documents were listed, attention was often drawn to the presence of “good paintings” by artists from Italy, Germany, and other countries, which were considered valuable elements of interior decor. Throughout the eighteenth century, urban dwellers hung certain genres, like still lifes, in their dining rooms and nudes in their bedrooms.

The musical life of the cities was also quite lively. The citizens of Vilnius during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often listened to music while gathered in the city’s market square, in front of the town hall, in whose tower the church bands hired by the Magistrate played on holidays and other occasions. Professional church bands were maintained by Vilnius Cathedral, the Church of St. Johns, the Basilian Church, and probably other churches and congregations. They also existed in Kaunas
and other larger cities. They primarily served the churches but were also hired to play during various holidays, secular celebrations, feasts, and other occasions. They included professional musicians, who were often masters of musical instruments, and singers. Musicians were also hired for the funerals of wealthy burghers.

On the other hand, some educated townspeople played music themselves. Judging from the surviving property inventories, there were not only violins and banduras but also spinets, portable organs, harpsichords, and clavichords in the houses of urban dwellers in the eighteenth century. This fact is evidence of the extraordinary musical sophistication peculiar to some of the urban dwellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The theater had a significant impact on the life of the townspeople. The theater that operated in the Vilnius Royal Manor during the time of Władysław IV Vasa (1632–1648) was only accessible to representatives of the highest city authorities and perhaps did not have any noticeable influence on the citizens. However, this was not the case with the school theater fostered by the Jesuits, which aimed at influencing wider layers of society. This theater, which started operating in the second half of the sixteenth century and was highly cherished by Vilnius Jesuits during the academy period, existed in certain places as late as the nineteenth century. (For example, in Kražiai, it existed until 1843.) Public theatrical performances were held in city squares, which were attended by large crowds. Many people were also attracted by picturesque church processions, which were prepared by the best available experts in literature, theater, and music. Schools, universities, monasteries, church fraternities, guilds, and many other townspeople actively participated in these events.

Lithuanian cities have long maintained favorable conditions and contacts for cultural expansion and diversification, breaking down the closedness of the different cultures of the social groups, and therefore their cultural development was faster and integration of cultural values greater than outside them.

Work Cited

CHAPTER ONE
THE GUILDS AND THEIR HOUSES

The history of artisan guild houses has hardly been analyzed. It has not yet been ascertained whether all the guilds that operated in Vilnius had houses of their own and where their headquarters were located if they had no guild house of their own. Were there requirements establishing where their houses were supposed to be, and were these requirements always complied with? Nor has it been ascertained if all artisan guilds only had a single house or if there were guilds that possessed several houses at once. Nor is it known if guild leaders were based in all of the houses that belonged to these organizations. In other words, should each house a guild possessed be considered a “guild house”? As such, an overview of what took place in “guild houses” and what was kept in them and where is needed. Of course, we must also ascertain which artisan guilds possessed houses, where they were located, and what they looked like in an effort to describe their typical features.

A guild is a well-organized association of artisans of one trade or a few related trades in a feudal city. Guilds aimed to organize the production of individual artisans through competition among the members of a guild, thus ensuring their high professional preparation and high-quality products, as well as, in case of need, to aid members who faced difficulties or had become impoverished. In Vilnius, the first guilds – of goldsmiths and tailors – were founded in 1495. Tanners, shoemakers, producers of malt, weavers, cap-makers, and many other artisans followed their example. By the late sixteenth century, Vilnius’ guilds encompassed artisans of 27 trades. In the next century, 21 new guilds were founded in the city. New guilds were also formed in the eighteenth century, albeit at a slower pace. Vilnius’ guilds were active until 1893, though by this time their functions had changed. According to the feudal city tradition, guilds had to have their own house.

Let us first try to ascertain what requirements were set for guild houses, what was held in these houses, and what took place in them.

The November 27, 1614 statute of the processors of red and black hides states that ordinary meetings of the members of a guild shall take
place with an elder in whose house the guild’s coffer is held. There is no doubt that election meetings during which elders were elected for the next year were also held at the guild house. The statute, however, does not specify where such an elder was supposed to reside.

However, the statute of the butchers’ guild of April 15, 1596, states that the guild’s coffer cannot be kept with a master who lives in a suburb. Instead, it must be kept within the part of the city surrounded by the city’s defensive wall for safety reasons. We come across similar facts in the statutes of other guilds as well.

The statute of the weavers’ guild required the guild’s coffer with its statutes and money to be safely kept with a settled townsman within the jurisdiction of the Magistrate. This person was supposed to live in the territory of the city (jurydyka). Such a requirement is also part of the July 22, 1633 statute of the decorators’ guild, which specifies that, after electing four elders, the guild’s coffer with its privileges, rights, and everything else (“i innemi munimentami”) must be safely kept with one of the elders. Additionally, it says that the coffer can only be kept in the jurydyka of the Magistrate.

The statute of the weavers’ guild, which the Magistrate approved on May 28, 1639, gives instructions for the guild to keep two cash coffers: one for keeping money for church needs, the other for keeping funds for other needs, its privileges, statutes, and other important documents. The statute also states that the coffers must be held “within the city’s jurisdiction.”

According to the 1663 statute of the glasscutters’ guild, holding the coffer was the remit of the Magistrate for safety reasons. Among other things, the statute states that the guild members can quietly convene their meetings there.

The statute of the fishers’ guild of May 28, 1664, states that the coffer must be kept in the jurydyka of the Magistrate surrounded by the city’s defensive wall. The March 30, 1672 statute of the tanners’ guild also...

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1 ACW, d. 1, no. 144, p. 159, § 4.
2 ACW, d. 1, no. 144, p. 158, § 1.
3 ACW, d. 1, no. 95, p. 118, § 14.
4 ACW, d. 1, no. 60, p. 76, § 17.
5 ACW, d. 1, no. 184, p. 185, § 1–2.
6 ACW, d. 1, no. 216, p. 218, § 2.
7 ACW, d. 1, no. 274, p. 267, § 4.
8 ACW, d. 1, no. 279, p. 292, § 4.
states that the elders must keep the coffer within the jurisdiction of “a settled master” in the city “without taking it to the outskirts.”

The agreement concluded between the locksmiths’ guild and the guild of blacksmiths, cauldron-makers, sword-makers, and knife-makers on January 27, 1698, provided for keeping the originals of the guilds’ privileges in the chapel of the Church of St. Johns in a common coffer. Apparently, this referred to the chapel maintained by these guilds. The two guilds had to content themselves with keeping just the transcripts of the Magistrate-approved privileges in their coffer. However, this coffer, as can be seen from the guilds’ agreement of October 22, 1698, was supposed to remain “in the city within the jurisdiction of the Magistrate.”

Hence, guild member meetings were supposed to be convened in the Magistrate’s jurydyka enclosed by the city’s defensive wall. The guild treasury coffers were also supposed to be kept here. They served for keeping not only money in them but also sovereign-granted privileges, guild statutes, and important weapons. Guilds possessed other wealth as well.

The November 13, 1578 statute of the weavers’ guild provides for a newly joining member to acquire a helmet, a pair of cuffs, and a poleax, as well as for them, on their arrival in the Magistrate, “to accept the law of the city.” The August 16, 1669 statute of the tanners’ guild (“kuszners”) states that “each tanner must have a saber, a musket, and other weapons for the defense of the city and annual observances [military exercises, S.S.].” The January 18, 1680 statute of the guild of the tanners of white hides, suede, and glove-makers (“rękawicznego”) required guild members to arrive armed with muskets and sabers to the Feast of Corpus Christi processions, meetings of sovereigns, bishops, and voivodes, as well as when on guard.

The guilds’ requirement for their members to possess weapons is a clear fact. There is also no doubt that the craftsmen held personal weapons at home.

However, in the documents pertaining to these organizations, we come across information not only about the craftsmen’s personal weaponry but also about weapons at the disposal of the guilds.
For example, the Vilnius fishermen guild’s statute of 1664 states that the
guild must have a flag, weapons in order, and other military equipment
for military exercises and meetings of sovereigns. The butchers’ guild
statute of 1647 requires each new member to give the guild a rifle. The
decision of Vilnius Episcopal College on October 8, 1604, regarding the
tailors residing in its jurydyka, required each tailor who joined the guild to
give it four kapas of Lithuanian groats. The statute of the processors of
maroquinerie (leather tanners’ guild), which the Magistrate approved on
March 6, 1666, required each member to keep a musket and a saber at
home. The guild, for its part, was supposed to do its best to have a flag,
drums, spears, muskets, cartridge bags, cartridges, and gunpowder.
Paragraph 22 of the July 22, 1633 statute of the decorators’ guild
prohibited non-guild members from engaging in the maroquinerie trade.
Non-compliers faced the confiscation of their products and instruments,
half of which went toward the guild’s weaponry and other needs (“na
armatę i ozdóbę cechową”). A new master who joined the same guild, in
addition to having a personal musket, was supposed to donate one musket
“for the guild’s treasury.” This requirement is repeated in this guild’s
statute of October 1, 1688.

The presented facts bear obvious testament to guild members having
been armed. Normally, they held personal weapons at home. In addition to
personal weapons, the guilds had various common weapons and military
articles. All this, beyond doubt, was kept on the premises of the guild
itself. We can reasonably state that guilds that did not possess a house kept
their weaponry where they convened their meetings and dealt with other
matters. Guilds that had their own building apparently held their weaponry
in this building. In addition to guilds’ cash books, flags, drums, weapons,
and other property that were kept and safeguarded in their buildings,
diverse entertainment events took place there as well.

For example, the supplement to the 1509 statute of the guild of Vilnius
surgeons, barbers, and hairdressers states that an apprentice who has
married a guild member’s widow, when ascending to the position of
master, must prepare a lunch for the masters and apprentices at the guild
elder’s home. Two assessors of the Magistrate were supposed to be there

15 ACW, d. 1, no. 115, p. 37, § 11. Lithuanian groats were counted in kapas (60
units).
16 ACW, d. l, no. 313, p. 334, § 1.
17 ACW, d. l, no. 184, p. 188, § 22.
18 ACW, d. l, no. 184, p. 187, § 14.
19 ACW, d. l, no. 443, p. 446, § 15.