THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF GRAND DUKE VYTAUTAS OF LITHUANIA ACCORDING TO CONTEMPORARY CORRESPONDENCE

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ABSTRACT This article is devoted to the everyday life of Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania. The following areas of activity of the everyday life of the ruler are discussed: his frequent trips to each of his estates (mobility of the court), his intensive interaction with people (arriving and departing guests and envoys, their reception, and the solemn and expensive feasts organised), the gifts given, court pastimes (musicians, jesters, dwarves, and hunting), and news of their health. The realia of the grand duke's everyday life are examined in the context of the models of the everyday life, interaction, and behaviour of late-medieval rulers and their inner circle.

Information about the everyday life of Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania is found in various sources: chronicles, annals, the royal accounts of King Jogaila of Poland, the expense ledgers of the Teutonic Order's treasurer, and the letters of Vytautas and his contemporaries. The everyday life of the GDL ruler is mentioned episodically by historians when they analyse his political activities and describe his personal character. The realia of the everyday life of the grand dukes of Lithuania have not been thoroughly studied in the context of the everyday life of late-mediaeval rulers and their inner circle in Lithuania or other countries. This article seeks to focus on this topic, although only certain areas of Vytautas' everyday activities have been selected: the reception of guests, activities, gifts; court pastimes (musicians, jesters, and hunting); and news of people's health.

The article has been written on the basis of the published epistolary legacy of the grand duke of Lithuania and his correspondents.¹

¹ A. Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi magni ducis Lithuaniae (1376–1430)*. *Monumenta medii aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, 6 (Cracow, 1882) (hereafter *CeV*); F. G. von Bunge, *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch*, t. 4 (Reval, 1859), 6 (Riga, 1873) (hereafter *LUB*); F. Palacky, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges in den Jahren 1419–1436*, 1.

The facts found in the letters illuminating the everyday life of the grand duke are supplemented by material from the court accounts of King Jogaila of Poland and the expense ledgers of the Teutonic Order's treasurer,² and the 1434–1435 report of the Polish envoy, Lasocki, that was intended for the representatives sent by the King of Castile to the Ecumenical Council in Basel.³

The correspondence of the grand duke of Lithuania and his correspondents reveals the tensions, dynamics, and life of a late medieval ruler painted in distinct and contrasting colours, i.e. frequent trips to each of his estates, intensive interaction with people (arriving and departing guests and envoys, their reception, diplomatic negotiations and their sidelines, which resemble a complex chess game, and the solemn and expensive feasts that were organised), the jesters and dwarves who entertained at the court, the musical notes that rang out, the hunts, the everyday life of the military campaigns, etc.⁴

von den Jahren 1419–1428, 2. von den Jahren 1429–1436 (Prague, 1873); *Liber Cancellariae Stanislai Ciolek. Ein Formelbuch der polnischen Königskanzlei aus der Zeit der hussitischen Bewegung*, ed. J. Caro, 1, [=Archiv für österreichische Geschichte 45] (Vienna, 1871), 2, 1875, [=Archiv für österreichische Geschichte 52] (Vienna, 1875).

² *Rachunki dworu króla Władysława Jagiełły i królowej Jadwygi z l. 1388–1420*, ed. F. Piekosiński (Cracow, 1896); *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch. Jahre 1399–1409*, ed. E. von Joachim, I (Königsberg, 1896).

³ For the possibility granted me of using the entire text of the report of Lasocki, both in the original language and in translation (the full version has so far not been published), I thank Professor S. C. Rowell of the Lithuanian Institute of History. For more about this source, see the article by S. C. Rowell, 'Du Europos pakraščiai: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės ir ispanų karalysčių ryšiai 1411–1412 ir 1434 m. tekstuose' *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis* 2003/1, (Vilnius, 2004), pp. 149–188.

⁴ A. Prochaska, *Ostatnie lata Witolda* (Warsaw, 1882), pp. 19, 20, 35, 50, 60, 62, 69, 76–77, 110, 141, 162–165, 164, 165, 185, 189, 193–196, 203, 221, 238, 243, ff.; idem, *Szkice historyczne z XV wieku* (Cracow–Warsaw, 1884), pp. 79, 89–81, 98–104, 109–113, 128–130, 145; idem, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy* (Vilnius, 1914), pp. 116–124, 371; idem, 'Zjazd monarchów w Łucku', *Przewodnik naukowy i literacki* 2 (1874), 1, pp. 274, 378; Z. Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija. Iki Vytauto Didžiojo mirties* (Vilnius, 1991) p. 332; idem, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', *Vytauto Didžiojo kultūros muziejaus metraštis*, 1 (Kaunas, 1941), pp. 160–167, 177; M. Kosman, 'Kancelaria wielkiego księcia Witolda', *Studia źródłoznawcze*, 14, pp. 102, 115; idem, 'Dokumenty wielkiego księcia Witolda', *Studia źródłoznawcze*, 16, pp. 139–140, also n. 2, pp. 165–167; J. Krzyżaniakowa, *Kancelaria królewska Władysława Jagiełły. Studium z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski w XV wieku*, cz. I (Poznań, 1972), pp. 56, 208, 209, 234–235; cz. II (Poznań, 1979), pp. 112, 116, 120; *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.* (Warsaw, 1997) (hereafter *Kultura Polski*), pp. 89, 90, 93.

The mobility of the court of late-mediaeval rulers, i.e. the frequent trips around their domain and to each of their estates, was a part of the ordinary realia of their life. Jogaila was constantly making trips,⁵ sometimes accompanied by his queen, sometimes without her; the Hungarian king, Sigismund von Luxemburg, used to ride around his huge domain. The Grand Duke of Lithuania with his entourage frequently used to travel to each of his estates. On the basis of the dates and places of the letters written by Vytautas, it is possible to mention several episodes of such trips. For example, Vytautas wrote letters to the grand master of the Teutonic Order on 5 August 1430 '[...] at our hunting estate in Varėna [...]',⁶ on 8 August, in Daugai,⁷ on 13 August, in Alytus,⁸ on 17 August, in Darsūniškis,⁹ on 24 August, in Kaunas,¹⁰ and on 8 September, in Trakai.¹¹ Due to his frequent trips, Vytautas used to tell those wishing to meet him or intending to send envoys, where and when he planned to travel, his itinerary, and where and how long he thought he would stay,¹² and he used to receive envoys and guests at various estates. Sometimes the envoys or guests who arrived had to accompany Vytautas, who had decided to travel on to various estates, so that everyone used to travel together.¹³ The Commander of Balga told the Marshal of the Teutonic Order in a letter written at Rumšiškės about such an envoy who visited Vytautas in November 1413. Envoys visited Vytautas and King Jogaila of Poland, who was present in Lithuania at the time, at Trakai on 19 November. From there (from Trakai) they had to accompany Vytautas and Jogaila on their trip on terrible roads. Fragments of the negotiations rendered

⁵ A. Gąsiorowski, *Itinerarium Władysława Jagiełły 1386–1434* (Warsaw, 1972); *Kultura Polski*, pp. 48, 86, 90; idem, 'Podróże panującego w średniowiecznej Polsce', *Czasopismo prawnoprawno – historyczne*, 25 (1973), pp. 41–68.

⁶ *CeV*, no. 1426, p. 919: ... *in unserm jagithoffe czu Worani*. He used to erect wooden hunting lodges near hunting areas. These provided lodging and a stopping place for the ruler and his entourage when travelling or hunting. Other rulers also had such estates. Thus hunting estates were a reality of that time and this 'term' was used by Vytautas himself and is found in scientific literature. See *Kultura Polski*, p. 72

⁷ *CeV*, no. 1427, p. 920.

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 1429, p. 921.

⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 1426, p. 925.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 1435, pp. 926, 927.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 1440, pp. 932, 933.

¹² *Ibid.*, no. 858, p. 462.

¹³ *Ibid.*, no. 547, p. 271.

in the form of a dialogue in a letter testify that intense political conversations took place on the trip; Vytautas and Jogaila temporised, putting off answering until the next day (i.e. the second day of the legation). The envoys also avoided their responsibilities in defending the interests of the Order. According to an envoy, on the third day of the legation, they were asked various questions over dinner and a fairly hot political discussion took place. Since both sides firmly maintained their opinions, the third day, so the envoy stated, also came to nothing. The commander related that when they were preparing to return home and bidding farewell, Vytautas suggested they stay longer, saying, 'I would still like to talk to you; don't leave us.' The envoy stated that the king, queen, and Vytautas were prepared to travel at that time to Vilnius but they (the envoys) bid them farewell. The King further ordered them to give his regards to the grand master's aide and Vytautas requested permission to hunt freely in an uninhabited area belonging to the Order. In concluding, the commander stressed that the envoys were received especially warmly at Vytautas' court and the entourage of both Commanders (of Balga and Ragnit) were completely taken care of.¹⁴

Against the background of the intense political negotiations described above, the suggestion to the envoys to stay longer may seem trivial. But if they wrote about it, it means that it was fairly important. Hypothetically it is possible to see in this offer by the grand duke the rules of etiquette and elements of courtesy, i.e. showing a guest (in this case, the envoys) respect and hospitality by detaining them and inviting them to stay longer.¹⁵ Similar patterns of behaviour, only in more emphatic (sometimes fairly passionate) forms, are revealed as well at the courts of other rulers in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.¹⁶

Envoys and distinguished guests visited the estate of the GDL ruler very frequently.¹⁷ Jogaila especially frequently stayed in

¹⁴ Ibid., no. 567, pp. 271–273.

¹⁵ J. Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza* (Warsaw, 1992), pp. 68–70.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *CeV*, no. 204, p. 60; no. 214, pp. 64, 65; no. 277, p. 94; no. 279, p. 94; no. 316, p. 113; no. 366, p. 147; no. 367, pp. 147, 148; no. 396, pp. 172–174; no. 467, pp. 216–218; no. 471, p. 220; no. 482, pp. 225, 226; no. 513, pp. 249, 250; no. 529, pp. 256, 257; no. 566, pp. 270, 271; no. 567, pp. 271–273; no. 651, pp. 331–333; no. 660, p. 337; no. 726, p. 383; no. 746, p. 395; no. 796, p. 420; no. 828, p. 443; no. 895, p. 493; no. 1206, pp. 708, 709; no. 1207, p. 710; no. 1229, pp. 725, 726; no. 1230, p. 729; no. 1231, pp. 729, 730; no. 1269, p. 757; no. 1286, p. 771; no. 1312,

Lithuania.¹⁸ Thus it is not surprising that the visiting envoys used to meet not only the grand duke of Lithuania but also the king of Poland. Thus envoys from the Master of Livonia who returned from Lithuania in 1411 informed the master that Jogaila spent Whitsun with Vytautas pleasantly. Together with them were also a papal legate and envoys from the king of Hungary: an archbishop and one noble.¹⁹

An inseparable part of life of the courts of rulers and dukes was the reception of guests and envoys as well as the elaborate rich feasts they held. The more important the event (such important events included weddings, christenings, coronations, etc.) and the higher the station of the guests and envoys, the more solemnly they were received and the more bounteous was the feast that was held. Vytautas was famous as a hospitable and generous host who received guests grandly.²⁰ One would need the gift of eloquence of a Virgil or a Cicero to tell of the grand duke's generosity, asserted the humanist Francesco de Comitibus Aquae Vivaie in a letter to Vytautas.²¹ However, one historian has said of Vytautas that 'alongside thrift, big splurges of material wealth were characteristic of Vytautas, especially when he was wont to show off for guests. [...] A fondness for impressing other people with great generosity and hospitality was a characteristic feature of Vytautas and his court'.²² In the context of the models of everyday life, interaction, and

pp. 789, 790; no. 1337, pp. 806–808; no. 1338, pp. 808, 809; no. 1380, pp. 865, 866; no. 1383, p. 868; no. 1397, pp. 887, 888; no. 1436, p. 927; no. 1460, p. 949; S. C. Rowell, 'Vienos XV amžiaus ideologijos pasisavinimas', *Europos idėja Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis*, ed. D. Staliūnas (Vilnius, 2002), p. 21.

¹⁸ *CeV*, for ex.: no. 279, pp. 94, 95; 1299, p. 781; no. 1336, p. 806, etc; Gąsiorowski, *Itinerarium Władysława Jagielly 1386–1434*; J. Pficneris, *Didysis Lietuvos kunigaikštis Vytautas kaip politikas* (Vilnius, 1989), p. 162; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', pp. 157, 158; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 366; A. Baliulis, S. Mikulionis, A. Miškinis, *Trakų miestas ir pilys* (Vilnius, 1991), p. 39.

¹⁹ *CeV*, no. 382, p. 225.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 277, p. 94; no. 316, p. 113; no. 366, p. 147; no. 367, p. 147, 148; no. 529, p. 256; no. 547, p. 271; no. 1337, p. 807–808; Prochaska, *Dzieje Witolda*, p. 114; idem, *Witold ks. Litewski. W pięćsetną rocznicę Unii Horodelskiej*, (s. I. s. a.), pp. 532, 533; idem, 'Zjazd monarchów', pp. 274, 378; P. Klimas, 'Ghillebert de Lannoy. Dvi jo kelionės Lietuvon Vytauto Didžiojo laikais (1413–1414 ir 1421 metais)', *Praeitis*, 2 (Kaunas, 1933), p. 114; I. Lappo, 'Istorinė Vytauto reikšmė', *ibid.*, pp. 7–9, 45; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', pp. 175, 177; *Trakų miestas ir pilys*, pp. 39, 40.

²¹ *CeV*, no. 1394, pp. 879–885; Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 532; idem, *Dzieje Witolda*, pp. 364, 365; Klimas, 'Ghillebert', p. 139.

²² Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 379.

behaviour of late-medieval rulers, such an assessment is debatable. At the same time it invites the following questions: How did the generosity and hospitality of the grand duke appear in the context of the everyday life of the rulers of that time? Was this only connected with the character of the grand duke and was that characteristic of only the court of Vytautas? And perhaps that was only the characteristic behaviour and the norms and forms for interacting, which formed models of behaviour that were regulated by certain requirements, for late-medieval rulers and their entourages? It is possible to answer these questions only by comparing the everyday life of Vytautas and his court with the realia of the courts of other rulers of that time.

Receiving distinguished guests properly was obligatory. It not only gave a ruler respect and honour but also raised the prestige of his court. Contemporaries paid a great deal of attention to it, often writing about it in letters, which are variously reflected in the chronicles and annals.

Thus on 9 April 1425 in a letter to the master of Livonia among other things the grand master stated his concern that he was lacking the money to receive the kings of Poland and Denmark properly.²³ Depending on the occasion and where it was written (a letter, occasional speech or chronicle), the description of the hospitality of a ruler and the prism, through which it (the hospitality of the ruler) was seen, differed. In a letter of 28 August 1417, the master of Livonia wrote to the grand master that Vytautas had celebrated his granddaughter's²⁴ wedding for a week.²⁵ It is necessary to mention here that the celebration time mentioned in all probability was usual since, as sources witness, late-mediaeval rulers used to celebrate weddings, christenings, and coronations for almost a whole week. Thus the coronation celebration of Jogaila's wife, Sofia, lasted almost an entire week (Długosz indicated five days.) and every day during that time there were feasts, tournaments during the day, and dancing at night.²⁶ The Order's envoys at the Lutsck Congress stated in a letter to the grand master that they could not write enough about

²³ *CeV*, no. 1192, p. 695.

²⁴ This was the wedding of Anastasia (the daughter of Vasilii I, Grand Duke of Moscow, and Sofia, the daughter of Vytautas) to Olelka (Aleksandr) son of Vladimir, the Duke of Kiev.

²⁵ *CeV*, no. 739, p. 392.

²⁶ *Kultura Polski*, pp. 95, 102.

the multitude of smartly dressed envoys, guests, lords and prelates, who had come to the Lutsk Congress from various countries, and their splendour,²⁷ thus accenting the richness and power of the ruler of the GDL and his guests. The pageantry of the assembled guests and feasting, described in a more or less exalted tone, can also be connected with huge striving for beauty and a more splendid existence, which was characteristic of fourteenth-fifteenth-century society and which manifested itself in very diverse areas and forms.²⁸

But besides this, generosity and hospitality were also characteristic and necessary virtues for the ideal Christian ruler. For example, Lasocki mentions the generosity and hospitality of Vytautas alongside such qualities as 'a wonderful stature, will, and magnanimity'.²⁹ In comparison, it is possible to mention that the descriptions of the character of King Jogaila of Poland (as an ideal Christian ruler) that are given by his contemporaries, list almost the same literary clichés: piety, hospitality, and unheard of generosity.³⁰ On the other hand, moralists, ascetics, preachers and such like condemned the extravagance (overly flamboyant and expensive clothing and the gifts distributed), the feasts held, and other courtly pastimes (such as dances and hunts) of the rulers and their closest followers³¹.

Protocol regulated the greeting, reception, and feasting of guests and envoys, sometimes down to minor details. In addition, the reception of envoys and one's behaviour with them were also one of the ways of exhibiting one's diplomatic language, political relationships, and attitudes, the forms of which were diverse.

Some details of the reception ceremony for envoys and guests are mentioned in the letters of Vytautas and his correspondents.

Who used to greet envoys and guests, when, and how was determined by the status of those arriving, the importance of the visit, and various other circumstances. Sometimes representatives

²⁷ *CeV*, no. 1337, p. 807–808.

²⁸ H. Fichtenau, *Mensch und Schrift in Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1946), pp. 200, 201; Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza*, pp. 9, 29–31, 48, 53, 62, 63, 65, 68–70.

²⁹ See above n. 3.

³⁰ J. Krzyżaniakowa, J. Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiello* (Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdańsk–Łódź, 1990), p. 12; K. Biedrowska–Ochmańska, J. Ochmański, *Władysław Jagiello w opiniach swoich współczesnych. Próba charakterystyki jego osobowości* (Poznań 1987) (hereafter *Władysław Jagiello w opiniach*); Lasocki also speaks of this, see above n. 3.

³¹ *Kultura Polski*, pp. 36, 92; *Władysław Jagiello w opiniach*; Lasocki also speaks of this, see above n. 3.

sent by Vytautas used to greet those arriving even on the road and escort them (the guests) to the where the grand duke was staying. Vytautas wrote in a letter to the grand marshal of the Order that he (Vytautas) had instructed Kešgaila, the starosta of Žemaitija, to await the grand master, who was coming to the coronation celebration, at the border near Jurbarkas and escort him (the head of the Order) 'to our', i.e. the grand duke's place of residence. In addition, he (Vytautas) wished to send his brothers, Dukes Švitrigaila and Žygimantas, and the other dukes one after another to meet the grand master in person and receive him respectfully. Meanwhile he, himself, as Vytautas stated, wished to ride out from Trakai to personally meet him (the grand master).³² The Order's envoys, who had already arrived at the coronation celebration of Vytautas, wrote to the grand master, who was still preparing to come, that, as the grand master had instructed, Vytautas would await him at Semeliškės.³³ On the other hand, Jogaila, who was coming to the coronation celebration, was met one mile outside Vilnius by Vytautas, accompanied by his wife and entourage, the grand master of the Order, who had already arrived, the dukes of Moscow, Tver, and Riazan with their suites, standard-bearers, etc.³⁴

The host himself used to meet and escort those arriving. In telling about the reception of Commander Markward von Salzbach of Ragnit, Vytautas stated that when the commander arrived he rushed to meet him even as far as the Neris, took him by the hand, and led him to the castle³⁵. The envoys of the grand master who visited Vytautas in 1426 stressed that the grand duke received them quickly and very favourably. This was described in detail by the commander of Balga in a letter to grand master Paul von Russdorf. Here are some examples. When they arrived, the envoys did not find the grand duke in Trakai since he was at the new castle (*der Nuwehoff, Nuwenhof*),³⁶ over a mile distant from Trakai. After learning of their arrival, Vytautas together with the palatine travelled

³² *CeV*, no. 1428, p. 921: ...und wir selber in unser persona wellen von Traken gegen im usreiten.

³³ *Ibid.*, no. 1452, p. 940.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1460, p. 949.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 396, p. 173: ...und wir nomen in bei der hant und furten in mit uns hen of.

³⁶ The brick island castle at New Trakai was probably being called the new estate. See: *Trakų miestas ir pilys*, pp. 15, 19–20, 24, 29–30, 37, 39, 40, 54; Klimas, 'Ghillebert', p. 120.

to Trakai. Besides other signs of his favour, the commander detailed and at the same time accented that while they (the envoys) were sitting at a table with the palatine, the grand duke sent his envoys to them to say that the Order's envoys were invited the evening of the same day to come to the new castle. When they arrived, Vytautas favourably received them and the same evening gave them an audience.³⁷ The Order's envoys who came to the Lutsk Congress (on Sunday after breakfast) met the grand duke's council and other important persons. They had hardly dismounted their horses, according to the envoy, when: 'the grand duke sent for us' and they were immediately escorted to him.³⁸ In the accounts of Vytautas and the envoys, his rushing to meet them is stressed and the swift reception of those arriving is judged not only through the prism of political realia but also in the context of the etiquette of that time. In the second instance, it is necessary to note that other authors, who have studied late-mediaeval etiquette (only using different sources), also accent this rushing to meet guests.³⁹

Attention should be called to one more detail, i.e. the gestures in welcoming those arriving. At the court of late-mediaeval rulers, this was also a part of ceremony and etiquette. It is not known how this was done at Vytautas's court or on what occasions. Only a few details are revealed on this topic in letters. Vytautas, in meeting Commander Markward Salzbach of Ragnit, took him by the hand and led him to the castle. At his meeting with Vytautas, which is described in Jogaila's letter, (when the king came to his cousin's coronation celebration) it is said that Vytautas greeted him in a pleasant voice and they kissed one another.⁴⁰

It was a great honour for envoys and guests to be invited to sit at the same table as the ruler. Only a few references about this are encountered in letters. Vytautas, in describing to the head of the Order a conflict with Commander Markward Salzbach of Ragnit and at the same time answering a comment by the grand master about the poor reception of his (the grand master's) envoy, stated that he did not know where he had shown disrespect to the envoy since he had behaved as befitted him. He (the grand duke) met the envoy,

³⁷ *CeV*, no. 1229, p. 725.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 1337, pp. 806–807: *...und andere siene wegesten endkegen gerethen.*

³⁹ Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza*, p. 69.

⁴⁰ *CeV*, no. 1460, p. 949.

took him by the hand, and led him to the castle (court); the envoy sat with him at the table, and he (Vytautas), as far as he was able, displayed respect and friendship to the envoy. He had invited him to eat with the grand duke a second time but the envoy had refused and he (Vytautas) had acted in accordance with his will. After reciting this, the grand duke ‘asked’ the grand master to explain where he had transgressed, ‘...so that nothing more would befall us in respect to him (Markward Salzbach) or any other of your envoys’.⁴¹ In evaluating the sharp retorts uttered by both the Order’s envoy and Vytautas at the time of the negotiations and the political context that was still forming, one can see where Vytautas ‘cloaked’ the diplomatic tension and conflict that had appeared with formally observed diplomatic etiquette (i.e. regard and hospitality were formally shown to the envoy).⁴² When the envoys of the grand master said in 1426 how favourably Vytautas received them (in addition to the favourable political decisions and attitudes expressed in respect to the Order), they stressed that the grand duke had received them several times (that, for example, in Trakai they again ate with the grand duke).⁴³

In the accounts of Vytautas and the envoys it is deliberately stressed that they were invited to his table not once but several times. The number of invitations was a very important part of etiquette; it was mandatory to invite envoys and guests to one’s table more than once. Otherwise, especially if they were envoys or guests of high rank, this was considered to be disrespectful. Jan Długosz wrote that King Václav had not shown suitable courtesy to the Polish envoys who visited Prague in 1410 since he invited them to his table only once whereas according to convention the guests should have been invited several times.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 396, pp. 172, 173: *Idoch wir bitten euwir erwardikeit, das ir uns des well[et] v...richtin) wor an wir ken im gebrochin hetten, wir wellen uns czum andern mole bas bewaren, das uns solchis nicht wedirfaren solde kegen im noch kegen andern euwirn bot*; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne z XV wieku*, pp. 109, 110.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 105–110; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 334.

⁴³ In my article, R. Čapaitė, ‘Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio Vytauto kasdienybė pagal jo ir jo amžininkų korespondenciją’, *Alytaus miesto istorijos fragmentai* (Alytus, 2001), p. 19, the account of the envoys was conveyed incorrectly. They were not talking about a specific invitation to the grand duke’s table but about the fact that the grand duke had received them several times and that they had dined together with him: ‘Und als hewten sin wir mit dem grosfursten uff die molczeit ken Tracken wedir komen...’, *CeV*, no. 1229, pp. 725, 726.

⁴⁴ *Kultura Polski*, p. 102.

We have no information about the time breakfast, lunch, or dinner was eaten at Vytautas' court. The number of tables used for a feast at Vytautas' court and the order of their layout are unknown. All of this depended on the importance of the feast, the number of guests, and their rank. References in letters testify that guests were invited and seated at the grand duke's table but probably the ruler also used to eat at a separate table (perhaps surrounded by his closest followers) with the most distinguished guests, and in some instances he used to sit on a platform. The Order's envoys wrote about their reception at Lutsk that the ruler allowed them to be elevated to his table.⁴⁵ In this case, it is difficult to say what they had in mind, whether they spoke this way because of the honour granted them or because the table was actually elevated. It is only possible to note that during a feast the ruler's table stood apart on a platform and that the ruler eating or feasting at a separate table (alone or surrounded by only his closest followers) was usual in the Middle Ages.⁴⁶

We have no information about what dishes were served on a daily basis for the grand duke's breakfast and dinner. It is only possible to mention that besides meat, fish, and other locally grown food, they ate rice, figs, and raisins. Their spices included pepper, ginger, cloves, liquorice, cinnamon, saffron, nutmeg, almonds, sugar, and salt. They drank Greek and Rhine wines as well as beer.⁴⁷ It is also not known how everyday food differed from that which used to be served the envoys he received, who had come for an ordinary visit, or at feasts. However an abundance of food was a matter of prestige and an expression of the ruler's power and generosity. Prior to the Vorksla campaign the tables were kept covered with food for an entire week in Kiev for the knights who had come.⁴⁸ Vytautas promised an abundance of Lithuanian wine (*lithauwischen wainen*) when he invited Paul von Russdorf to a coronation feast⁴⁹. In the annals the quantities of food consumed at the Lutsk Congress ever increase with new products being included. For example, depending on the source, it is indicated that at the Congress 300, 500, or even 700 kegs of mead were drunk besides various wines and other

⁴⁵ *CeV*, 1337, p. 807.

⁴⁶ *Kultura Polski*, p. 102, ill. no. 131, p. 104, ill. no. 132.

⁴⁷ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, pp. 961–971.

⁴⁸ Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 532

⁴⁹ *CeV*, no. 1427, p. 920.

drinks.⁵⁰ According to Długosz, Jogaila served over 100 dishes during one feast he held. It has been noted that this number could be exaggerated but this clearly shows the importance of abundance at feasts in the eyes of his contemporaries.⁵¹

There is little information about the settings used at the grand duke's table. It is known that gold, nickel, and silver dishes and flatware (for example, table knives) were used.⁵²

In the Late Middle Ages, an important component of the courts of rulers was musicians, artists, jesters, and dwarves. Our knowledge of their presence at Vytautas' court is fragmentary. Various sources testify to their existence at the court of the grand duke: the account books of the Order's treasurer, the epistolary heritage, etc. Lasocki states that the grand duke 'at his court ... maintained among his men five hundred trumpeters, pipers (*fistulatores*), jesters, jongleurs (*histriones*), and heralds', whom even Sigismund von Luxemburg wished to see'.⁵³ The information of Lasocki is doubtlessly exaggerated. The aforementioned sources, however, testify that at the grand duke's court there were musicians and, in addition, his musicians often visited the grand master's court. On the of the master's orders, Vytautas' trumpeters (*pfifern*) were given four marks and another time eight marks.⁵⁴ At the end of the fourteenth century *fistulatores* travelled from the court of the king of Poland to the court of Vytautas and in 1393 two musicians and a trumpeter received two *griviny* each for the trip to the court of Vytautas.⁵⁵ The grand master sent Vytautas three trumpeters, for whose trip three marks were allotted, and he sent Grand Duchess Ona artists and musical instruments: a clavichord, and a portatif.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *Lietuvos metraštinis: Bychovco kronika*, tr. R. Jasas, (Vilnius, 1971), pp. 114, 270, see explanation no. 20.

⁵¹ *Kultura Polski*, pp. 100, 103; Krzyżaniakowa, Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiello*, p. 13; *Władysław Jagiello w opiniach*, p. 38.

⁵² *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, p. 961.

⁵³ Rowell, 'Du Europos pakraščiai', p. 183: *Quis preterea crederet ipsum habuisse in curia sua de tubicinis, fistulatoribus, ioculatoribus, histrionibus, aroldis ultra quingentos, cuius potencia et magnificentia imperator modernus audita querebat modum secum conveniendus, ut eum videret.*

⁵⁴ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, pp. 961, 970.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 961, 969, 970, 973; *Kultura Polski*, pp. 97, 98; J. Trilupaiteienė, 'Apie Lietuvos vėlyvųjų viduramžių muzikos istorijos šaltinius', *Menotyra*, 2001, no. 3 (24), pp. 18, 19; R. Petrauskas, 'Vytauto dvaras: struktūra ir kasdienybė', *Naujasis židinys / Aidai*, 2003, 1–2, p. 43.

⁵⁶ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, pp. 972, 973.

There is little information about the jesters at the court of Vytautas and what there is is fairly contradictory. It is stated that no jesters are known at the court of Vytautas⁵⁷ and it is also indicated that he did have some and several names are mentioned.⁵⁸ The most frequently mentioned is the grand duke's favourite jester, Henne.⁵⁹ However it is stated erroneously that he was Vytautas' court jester.⁶⁰ Henne was both a jester and a scout of Paul von Rusdorf and it seems that the head of the Order used to 'lend' him to Vytautas.⁶¹ In addition he was a literate man – at the time of one visit to Vytautas he wrote a letter to the head of the Order.⁶²

Vytautas requested several times that the jester be sent, his arrival and behaviour at the ruler's court being mentioned in correspondence between Vytautas and the head of the Order⁶³. Here should be mentioned one more debatable assertion that Henne (in presenting him as the jester of Vytautas) served the grand duke before lunch as a knight and after lunch as a jester.⁶⁴ In truth, in letters he is called a knight or a knight until lunch and a jester after lunch.⁶⁵ The 'demand' of the jester that he be called a knight is recounted in the letters of Vytautas to the head of the Order. The grand master also asked Vytautas how the knight Henne was faring. Vytautas told Paul von Rusdorf that Henne had been 'improving' his knightly skills while staying with him and in leaving did not want to take a letter of recommendation (*ein briff unser vordernusse*) Vytautas had written for him since he had 'demanded' that he be called a knight in the letter without the addition of 'jester (fool) after

⁵⁷ Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, p. 253.

⁵⁸ Idem, *Witold ks. Litewski*, pp. 539, 540; idem, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy*, p. 371.

⁵⁹ Idem, *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 253–269; Lappo, 'Istorinė Vytauto reikšmė', p. 45; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, pp. 371, 372; Petrauskas, 'Vytauto dvaras', p. 41.

⁶⁰ *Kultura Polski*, p. 90.

⁶¹ *CeV*, no. 1292, pp. 774–775 no. 1323, p. 795; no. 1329, pp. 798–800; no. 1330, p. 801; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 253–269; Lappo, 'Istorinė Vytauto reikšmė', p. 45; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, pp. 371, 372.

⁶² *CeV*, no. 1329, p. 798; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 253–269; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 372.

⁶³ *CeV*, no. 1292, pp. 774–775; no. 1323, p. 795; no. 1330, p. 801; Prochaska, 'Trefnis Henne u Witolda', *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 250–268; Ivinskis, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 372; *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kasdienis gyvenimas*, ed. A. Baliulis and E. Meilus (Vilnius, 2001) (hereafter *LDK kasdieninis gyvenimas*), p. 20.

⁶⁴ *Kultura Polski*, p. 90.

⁶⁵ *CeV*, no. 1292, p. 775, no. 1330, p. 801.

lunch'. He (Vytautas) 'had' to give Henne the letter the latter wanted and the jester continued to demonstrate his mischief.⁶⁶ In a letter written in Smolensk on 15 August 1428 to the grand master, the jester wrote, 'Henne, knight until lunch, jester (fool) after lunch, and servant of your court'.⁶⁷ Nevertheless it is unlikely that this is connected with being a knight in the literal sense. It is more likely that this was the continuation of some foolery and the ambiguous names of jesters are also encountered at other courts. For example, Piotrus, a jester at the grand master's court, was called king of the Danes.⁶⁸

Events had an impact on the 'kighthood' of Henne. During one Henne's stay at the grand duke's court, Vytautas struck the jester. The latter 'judged' the blow received as an elevation to kighthood. Thus when he arrived the next time, as recounted by Vytautas in a letter to the grand master, 'the knight Henne [...] no longer wished to play the fool. He also assured us that if we elevated him to a knight, we would no longer consider him a jester. Thus he cast aside his jester's coat...' and did not do anything to entertain them until he was threatened with a 'lady stick'. Afterwards he began to act like a jester. A way out was found for the 'situation that had arisen'. Henne, according to Vytautas, could 'be a knight before lunch and must act properly, be intelligent and think perceptively and after lunch until evening be a fool'; in addition the grand duke ordered 'another jester's coat with ears, pockets, and pleats' to be sewn for him.⁶⁹

They also had dwarves (*cropil, kroepel*⁷⁰) for special occasions at the courts of rulers. It is asserted that the Order was first in this regard⁷¹ but they were also fashionable and popular at other courts⁷² and there were some dwarves at the court of Vytautas.⁷³ They are mentioned in the letters of the grand duke and the head of the Order as well as in the account books of the Order's treasurer. Vytautas also used to offer them perhaps as gifts and used to send

⁶⁶ Ibid., no. 1292, p. 775; no. 1330, p. 801.

⁶⁷ Ibid., no. 1329, p. 799: *Henne, vormittage ritter nachmittage geck, euwer hovgesinde.*

⁶⁸ Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 540.

⁶⁹ *CeV*, no. 1292, p. 775; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 261–266; *LDK kasdieninis gyvenimas*, p. 20

⁷⁰ *CeV*, no. 901, p. 497; no. 980, p. 539; no. 984, p. 541, Appendix, no. III, p. 973.

⁷¹ Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, pp. 539, 540; *Kultura Polski*, p. 90.

⁷² Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza*, pp. 47–48.

⁷³ Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, p. 250.

these people to the head of the Order. The latter himself also used to request them and was grateful on more than one occasion for a shipment.⁷⁴ In 1421 the grand master elaborated:

In addition to everything else, your Majesty has written to us about a Russian dwarf, who is now of sufficient age and does not know Lithuanian, who you have kindly ordered to be sent to us if we so wish it, etc. Dear Sir! We have been told that you have a tidy and clean dwarf, who can ride at the present but we do not know which dwarf you mean. Nevertheless whatever your Grace sends us will be dearly received by us and we will be very grateful.⁷⁵

In turn, the grand master also used to send Vytautas dwarves. Sums of money allotted for the trip to Vytautas and some of their names are indicated in the account books of the Order's treasurer.⁷⁶ For example two marks were allotted to a dwarf called Niccla by the Order's treasurer⁷⁷ while a horse blanket sent to the grand duke cost five marks.⁷⁸

Gifts were indispensable for the reception of guests and envoys, hunts, etc. The grand master gave expensive gifts to Grand Duchess Ona when she visited the Order.⁷⁹ Sigismund's arbitrator, Benedict Makra, was elevated to knighthood during a feast and given a gold belt, spurs, expensive furs, and other costly items.⁸⁰ The Order's envoys wrote that the entire multitude of guests and rich envoys from many countries, who gathered for the Lutsk Congress, wished to express their respect for the grand duke and to give gifts.⁸¹ Thus gifts were given at various events and, in addition, they were used

⁷⁴ CeV, no. 901, p. 497; no. 980, p. 539; no. 984, p. 541.

⁷⁵ Ibid., no. 980, p. 539: *Ane das alles schreibt uns euwir grosmechtikeit von eime kropel der itczunt wol alt und ein Rewsze ist und nicht konne littauwisch, den in uns gerne wellet senden, ap wir des begerten etc. Lieber herre! Uns ist wol gesagt, das bei euch sei ein sewberlich und reinlich kroepel, der wol itczunt reiten konne, ap ir den meinet adir nicht, des wissen wir nicht. Idoch was euwir durchluchtikeit uns derart sendet, das sal uns ernstlich anneme sein und wol czu dancke.*

⁷⁶ CeV, Appendix, no. III, p. 973.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 979.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 961–963; Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 539; *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, t. 21, pp. 113, 114.

⁸⁰ Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, pp. 526, 527; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', p. 174; *ibid.*, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 346; *Trakų miestas ir pilys*, pp. 39, 40.

⁸¹ CeV, no. 1337, pp. 807, 808.

to repay services, show regard, and influence people. In addition, this was a part of etiquette and interacting with people, thus it was necessary to give gifts. The station of the giver and recipient regulated the value of the item given. It was necessary to give kings and dukes expensive furs (sables and ermine) and fabrics (silk and velvet). They, in turn, also gave gifts corresponding to the rank of the recipient. For example, fox and marten furs used to be given to courtiers of lower rank.⁸² The jester Henne, whom Vytautas gave magnificent marten furs, can be such an example.⁸³

Vytautas used to exchange gifts with Jogaila, King Sigmund and his wife Barbara (for example, a ring with a large emerald)⁸⁴ as well as the grand master of the Order and other of his officials. Without a doubt, there were also other gifts given or received by the grand duke, which are now unknown.

The grand duke was given exquisite, expensive weapons, fabrics (such as silk) armour, pieces of armour (such as helmets with gilded ornaments), a silver armour belt, magnificent steeds (studs and geldings mentioned), saddles, hunting dogs, wild animals (a lion, and three camels Bactrian, which contemporaries called *drummedarii* or *camelos*), live sables and so forth. Among the beverages, Rhine wines and Wismar beer were sent.⁸⁵ The accounts of the Order's treasurer contain an entry that *Wismers bier* was purchased, two casks of it being sent to Vytautas and two to the grand master.⁸⁶

Vytautas used to give trained falcons (they are called *handfalken* in the account book of the Order's treasurer.), hawks, hunting dogs (beagles), magnificent steeds (studs and geldings), wild animals (aurochs), expensive weapons, fabrics (silk), sable furs, fur coats made of expensive furs or lined with furs, jewellery, etc.⁸⁷ In 1406, while Vytautas was away on a military campaign in Briansk, the grand marshal of the Order sent a fine stallion. The grand duke, in

⁸² Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza*, pp. 29, 31, 32, 80; *Kultura Polski*, pp. 43, 48, 55, 93.

⁸³ *CeV*, no. 1329, p. 798.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1373, p. 859.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 828, p. 443; *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, pp. 973, 972; Prochaska, *Ostatnie lata Witolda*, pp. 9, 14; *idem*, *Witold ks. Litewski*, pp. 532, 533.

⁸⁶ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, p. 973.

⁸⁷ *CeV*, no. 707, p. 369–70; no. 708, p. 370; pp. 961, 965, 970; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, p. 64; *idem*, *Witold ks. Litewski*, pp. 533, 535, 536; *idem*, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy*, pp. 367, 368, 370; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', p. 164; *idem*, *Lietuvos istorija*, pp. 327, 328, 332.

gratitude and having learned that the grand marshal's falcons had disappeared, sent him 'two fine falcons'.⁸⁸ The Commander of Brandenburg in 1407, after seeing a falcon intended by Vytautas for the Commander of Elbing, acting grand master, wrote that the bird flew well.⁸⁹ As is seen, steeds were a popular gift. Lasocki, who has already been mentioned, asserts that Vytautas 'had at least ten thousand horses near his residence, which no one used since they were intended as gifts to foreigners and precisely for this reason they were called 'gift (*donativi*) horses'.⁹⁰ The information presented about the number of steeds kept at the court of the grand duke is probably exaggerated. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is not clear which residence he had in mind. Was that the estate of the ruler where he was at that time; did he mean his more or less regular residence: for Vytautas, that was generally Vilnius and Trakai; or was he speaking about 'estate' in the broadest sense, i.e. including all the estates. In considering this, it is necessary to mention that the estate of the grand duke could be famous for steeds in various senses: both those being kept in the stables of the court, which was his residence, and also the meanings mentioned above. Letters of the Order's officers, describing some details of the fire of Vilnius and the losses experienced by the grand duke during the fire, refer to these steeds,⁹¹ in a letter to the grand master, Henne also indicated the large number of steeds given to Vytautas. Švitrigaila gave him 90, Vytautas' brother Žygimantas 210, and unnamed donors even 2,007 steeds. In truth, there were also gifts of 5, 12, 20, and 30 steeds.⁹²

The officers of the Order used to give precious things to Grand Duchesses Ona and Julijona, sending sweet Rhine and Italian wines, Greek malmsey wine (which was very expensive at that time), sweets, grapes, and so on.⁹³ To Novgorod were shipped 'two casks

⁸⁸ *CeV*, no. 348, p. 132.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 367, p. 148.

⁹⁰ Rowell, 'Du Europos pakraščiai', p. 182: *Quis enim crederet illum principem in curia sua habuisse ad minus decem milia equorum, quos nullus hominum insedit, qui solum deputati erant ad donandum forensibus, et propter ea donativi appellabantur?*

⁹¹ *CeV*, no. 828, p. 443; no. 840, p. 450; M. Baliński, *Historia miasta Wilna*, I (Vilnius, 1836), pp. 194–195.

⁹² *CeV*, no. 1329, pp. 798, 799; Prochaska, *Szkice historyczne*, pp. 263, 264; S. Sužiedėlis, 'Vytauto galybės laikai', *Vytautas Didysis* (Kaunas, 1930, phot. repr. Vilnius, 1988), p. 136.

⁹³ *CeV*, no. 702, pp. 365, 962; Prochaska, *Ostatnie lata Witolda*, pp. 27, 76; Prochaska, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 539.

of expensive sweet wine from Rastenburg, a sign of the respect and regard ... from the grand master to the wife of Vytautas'. The shipper that brought it returned to Marienburg bringing various things in return, which, it is stated in the accounts of the Order's treasurer, the 'lady gave our grand master'.⁹⁴

Both men and women used to be given gloves, caps and hats, fabrics, furs and fur coats, and jewellery. It is not difficult to notice that Vytautas and his contemporaries exchanged very similar or even analogous gifts. These were also practical things necessary for everyday life, which were connected with the etiquette of the interpersonal relationships of rulers and those around them and with the universal everyday fashions that spread at the courts of late-medieval kings and dukes. The grand master used to send the king of Poland falcons as gifts (*pferde falcken* are mentioned) and used to give him pieces of armour, such as a silver and gold-plated helmet encrusted with precious stones, and to give the queen of Poland wines, jewels, etc.⁹⁵ Jogaila in turn also used to give the head of the Order presents, for example, falcons.

Fashionable clothing and expensive clothing were not the same thing in the Middle Ages but both were most likely necessary at court. The cut of clothing and the material, from which it was sewn, was a code of communication, which showed a person's status at court (it distinguished a squire from a knight, a jester from a courtier, etc.), thus clothes had to meet the requirements raised for them.⁹⁶ At court rulers and their entourage wore expensive clothing, regardless of their sometimes very modest personal inclinations (for example, Jogaila liked to dress modestly daily and rarely wore flamboyant clothing). At official events, they used to stress the splendour and expensiveness of the clothing all the more; members of the royal family and the dukes would wear fur coats sewn from the most expensive furs: ermine, sable, as well as clothing sewn from satin, silk, velvet, damask, and cloth of gold (*altembas*).⁹⁷ It is not known

⁹⁴ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, pp. 971, 972.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 971: *Item III/2 marc eime furmanne der II. logen reinfals von Rastenburg bis II. milen off ienesite Nawgarten furte, domete unser homeister herczoge Wytawten frawe erete und der selbe furman von dannen weder bis ken Marienburg einen husen und toepte (?) furte domete di frawe unsern homeister erte.*

⁹⁶ *Kultura Polski*, pp. 48, 93, 94; '*komutatyvinis kodas*' was mistakenly written instead of '*komunikacinis kodas*' in Čapaitė, 'Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio Vytauto kasdienybė', p. 23.

⁹⁷ Huizinga, *Jesień średniowiecza*, p. 29; *Kultura Polski*, pp. 48, 93, 94.

how the grand duke of Lithuania dressed every day. It is stated that his clothing was cut according to Western styles but it is not discussed in greater detail;⁹⁸ it is possible to think that he liked splendour and luxury. Vytautas' ornate and expensive weapons and armour are mentioned, some parts of which, at the request of Vytautas, the grand master ordered the masters of Elbing to make⁹⁹. Grand Duchess Ona of Lithuania wore clothing sewn from very expensive fabrics and adorned herself with expensive furs and jewellery.¹⁰⁰ Lasocki shows the splendour and abundance of the clothes of the Lithuanian ruler. He asserts, injecting doubt about 'who would believe' that the grand duke 'kept at his estate and palace at least three hundred seamstresses skilled in sewing silk clothing and furriers' who sewed clothing just for him.¹⁰¹

Accessories, such as gloves, caps, hats, and belts, were very important. The fur or fabric, from which the caps and hats were sewn, also showed one's station. Specially manufactured silk and pearl-studded gloves were a prized gift in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The grand master gave gloves and jewellery to Grand Duchess Ona and her ladies-in-waiting (*iungfrauwen*), who were visiting the Order, for which things he paid Samuel, a resident of Toruń, eight marks.¹⁰² In 1408 Vytautas, as a sign of regard, sent a hat and a pair of gloves with his letters to the grand master.¹⁰³

Keeping up with the fashions that dictated the way of life determined the prestige of the estate. A gift of wild animals or exotic birds was probably connected with the fashion of keeping exotic animals and birds at the courts of rulers and their closest followers, which was widespread in the late Middle Ages, being one of the most popular forms of collecting of that time. A hunting park was created near the residence. Kęstutis had a hunting park at Trakai and

⁹⁸ Prochaska, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy*, p. 359.

⁹⁹ Idem, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 526; idem, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, *Witold ks. Litewski*, p. 540; idem, *Dzieje Witolda W. księcia Litwy*, p. 371.

¹⁰¹ Rowell, 'Du Europos pakraščiai', p. 182: *Quis crederet principem illum habuisse in curia et in domo sua ad minus .ccc. operarios pannorum de serico et pellium, qui vestes pro persona faciebant dumtaxat ducis.*

¹⁰² *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, p. 962. Ibidem 52 marks: *gerete und cleinod das groskomptur vorgab als herzoge Wytowds frouwe czu marienburg was.*

¹⁰³ *CeV*, no. 386, p. 164; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', p. 164, *Kultura Polski*, p. 93.

Vytautas also had a menagerie.¹⁰⁴ Jogaila kept wild animals at Wawel.¹⁰⁵ They strove to collect animals that were as exotic as possible for the menageries. In 1406 an official of the king of Poland intensively corresponded with the government of Florence concerning a shipment of lions. The correspondence was successful and the same year an excellent pair of lions reached Cracow together with thorough instructions on how to care for them so that they would have offspring.¹⁰⁶ In 1407 the grand master sent Vytautas a live lion, which was brought by Hanus Survila, for which he received 9 score of Czech groats from the head of the Order¹⁰⁷. A request in 1409 from the grand master to Vytautas to send a white hawk was perhaps also connected with this fashion. Vytautas sent a white hawk and four falcons: ‘... two from us and two from the ladies of our house’.¹⁰⁸

One of the most beloved and popular pastimes at the court was hunting. Both Vytautas and Jogaila hunted and after they had reached a respectable age, often together. Chroniclers assert that Jogaila knew no moderation in hunting.¹⁰⁹ In 1409, when there were already tense relations with the Order, the king of Poland reminded the head of the Order in a letter about his permission to hunt.¹¹⁰ Vytautas used to hunt not only in his domain but also along the border with the Order or in the Order’s territory. The permission of the grand master was necessary in order to hunt in the Order’s territory. He used to request permission by letter or through the Order’s envoys who visited him. The head of the Order also used to offer his permission¹¹¹. When Jogaila intended to hunt together (with Vytautas), the grand duke sometimes requested permission not only for himself but

¹⁰⁴ Ivinskis, ‘Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis’, pp. 177, 181; *Trakų miestai ir pilys*, pp. 19, 40.

¹⁰⁵ *Kultura Polski*, pp. 72, 89, 90.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

¹⁰⁷ *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, p. 972.

¹⁰⁸ *CeV*, no. 393, p. 170: *czwene van unsir und czwenen van unsir husfrawen* there is an entry, which is probably about this, in the accounts of the Order’s treasurer, *CeV*, Appendix, no. III, p. 973.

¹⁰⁹ L. Kolankowski, *Dzieje Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego za Jagiellonów*, I (Warsaw, 1930), p. 199; *Władysław Jagiello w opiniach*, pp. 7, 56–60; Krzyżaniakowa, Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiello*, pp. 14, 17; *Kultura Polski*, p. 100.

¹¹⁰ *Kultura Polski*, p. 100.

¹¹¹ *CeV*, no. 191, p. 56; no. 205, pp. 59, 60; no. 207, p. 60; no. 276, p. 94; no. 496, p. 216; no. 547, pp. 271, 273; no. 611, p. 303; no. 614, pp. 305–306; no. 615, p. 306; no. 617, pp. 306, 307; no. 618, pp. 307, 308; no. 652, p. 334; no. 755, pp. 398–399; no. 788, p. 415; no. 875, pp. 478–479.

also for the king of Poland, notifying him when the latter intended to come and how long he thought he would stay in Lithuania.¹¹² During the hunts they also discussed or resolved current political issues. Hunts were a constituent part of receiving distinguished guests and the recreation organised for them. There are a number of letters sent by the grand duke from hunting estates and he used to receive envoys there. More than one important political event is connected with hunting. In order to accumulate a resources of meat they hunted before the war of 1410; while hunting in Lithuania Jogaila discussed with Vytautas the future marriage of the king of Poland with Sofia; and they used to give the game they killed to important guests.¹¹³

When necessary, Vytautas and his correspondents used to write about what they needed, requesting that their wish be fulfilled if possible. We can speak of Konrad von Jungingen, who, having been sick for a long time, requested from Vytautas a small pacer, on which he could ride when he felt better. In a letter, he wrote:

My dearest lord, we are gladly writing you about our health, ... Almighty God in His grace is still helping us so that we in this manner at times feel healthy and sometimes fall ill. Due to this we would like to stay in bed for some time until we get better and ask with great desire that you, our dear lord, might able to send us a small pacer, which we could saddle ourselves since when we are strong enough, we would like to go riding.¹¹⁴

As compensation, the person who brought the pacer had to select from the grand master's steeds the two most suitable for Vytautas to ride and lead them home to the grand duke. In 1407 Vytautas asked the marshal of the Order to send a mason.¹¹⁵

For the ruler of the GDL and his contemporaries, a highly diverse correspondence had become both mandatory and an everyday

¹¹² Ibid., no. 191, p. 56; no. 205, pp. 59, 60; no. 207, p. 60; no. 652, p. 334.

¹¹³ Prochaska, *Ostatnie lata*, p. 221; idem, 'Zjazd monarchów w Łucku', pp. 274, 288; *Kultura Polski*, p. 100;

¹¹⁴ *CeV*, no. 362, p. 143: *Ouch lieber besunder herre, schreiben wir euch gerne von unser gesundheit, sunder got der almechtige tut bi uns noch sinen gnaden, das wir uns also hin betragen iczunt gesunt, iczunt krank. Dorumm so haben wir willen uns of eine czeit ein legir czunemen, ab is mit uns bessir mochte werdin und bitten euch liber herre mit fleissiger begerunge, das ir uns geruchet ein klein czellen pferd czu senden, das werden wir zu unserm zatil halden, wen wir czu stunden so stark sint, so wellen wirs selbir riten.*

¹¹⁵ Ibid., no. 369, p. 150; Ivinskis, 'Trakų Galvės ežero salos pilis', p. 165.

aid to interacting with people. Thus both the grand duke and the people he wrote used to mention their own health (illnesses, recovery) and that of other rulers and high officials. Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen, who was ill a long time, used to mention his poor disposition, weakness, and ailments in letters to Vytautas¹¹⁶ and the officers of the Order also wrote to the grand duke about this¹¹⁷. After Jogaila fell ill, in 1426 the commander of Elbing, besides other important political news, reported to the grand master that: 'For some time the great disease and weakness of the king's legs have been observed, so that he had to be carried off the ship; we also know everything about his other afflictions since his grace has become weaker within a brief period'.¹¹⁸ The disease of the king's legs was most likely a leg broken during a hunt (Sigismund in a letter of 18 March 1426 expressed his sympathy to Jogaila due to his broken leg; Długosz related that Jogaila had broken his leg in hunting a bear¹¹⁹) and, perhaps due to this, general weakness also followed. In 1427 Vytautas and Julijona fell ill. In a letter from the grand duke to Paul von Russdorf, he writes:

Thus on Friday [which has already passed] it has been three weeks that we have been ill but now (already) with God's help we have improved so that we are already walking, standing, and sitting but we are still suffering somewhat from a fever. Thus our most radiant, dear lady of the house (*di irluchte unser libe hausfrawe*) is once more sick but we expect the Lord God to aid her recovery.¹²⁰

Both recovered in April since Vytautas informed the grand master: '[...] we, by the grace of God, are entirely healthy and are already riding out on hunts and [...] our lady [...], also with God's help, has

¹¹⁶ *CeV*, no. 326, p. 120; no. 362, p. 143; no. 392, p. 168.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 349, p. 133.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 1222, p. 720: *An dem herren konige uff die czeit sogen grosse krankheit und swacheit der beine, das man in och dem schiffe tragen muste, von andern den sinen sine swacheit ouch wol vornomen die sine gnoden binnen korzen cziten sere hat geswechet.*

¹¹⁹ Palacky, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, no. 394, p. 441; *CeV*, no. 1217, p. 717; no. 1222, p. 721.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 1270, p. 759: *Auch sint is am freitage drei wochen [gewest] daz wir krank woren, sunder nu mit gottes hulfе ist uns bas wurden, also daz wir nu geen, steen und sitzen, alleine daz wir noch ettwas bei innen hiczcze leiden. Auch so i[st] di irluchte unser libe hausfrawe noch krank, sundir wir auch ir besserunge czu gotte getrawen.*

already completely recovered'¹²¹. In 1428 Russdorf fell sick. Vytautas in a letter intended for the grand master rejoiced about his recovery, about which the head of the Order had himself informed the grand duke.¹²²

From the references in the letters it is difficult to determine what the illness was. Eye and internal diseases, fevers, and weakness are frequently mentioned or it is directly stated that they are sick. Rarely are there comments about treatment but physicians are mentioned. After hearing about good physicians worthy of one's trust or simply famous physicians or when they knew or had known some, they used to recommend them to one another or request one be sent back. In 1401 the account book of the Order's treasurer contained an entry that an eye doctor, who the grand master had sent to Vytautas, be given three marks.¹²³ In 1426 Jogaila requested the grand master to send him the eye doctor, Heinrich.¹²⁴ The physicians themselves used to offer their services. When Konrad von Jungingen did not recover for a long time, the physician, Bartholomew, expressed his doubts on the manner of the treatment of the grand master to the marshal of the Order and offered his own services. After listening to him, the marshal advised the grand master to use the services of both physicians since 'One might perhaps know something [...] which the other does not'.¹²⁵ According to the Commander of Brandenburg who was dining with Vytautas (in 1407), many spoke about Čupurna and his weakness; the physicians doubted whether they could help him.¹²⁶ In 1426 Vytautas requested Grand Master Paul von Russdorf, after Grand Duchess Julijona had been sick almost an entire year, send a physician as soon as possible. He (Vytautas) had heard that there was one in Toruń who was highly praised. However, as the Master is in a better position to know this, let him send the better one¹²⁷. The head of the Order sent the physician, Heinrik. The health of the grand duchess recovered but

¹²¹ Ibid., no. 1273, pp. 761, 762: *und [wisset von] gotes gnaden wir sein wol gesund und [uff] die jahit iczund reiten und .. ynnen und unser ...desgleich ouch mit gotis hulfe sich iczund wol bessert.*

¹²² Ibid., no. 1330, p. 800 (Vytautas' letter).

¹²³ Ibid., p. 962.

¹²⁴ Ibid., no. 1222, p. 720.

¹²⁵ Ibid., no. 359, p. 141: *Der eine mochte villichte das wissen, das euch nucz und fromelich czu euwir krankheit were, des der andere nicht enwoste.*

¹²⁶ Ibid., no. 367, pp. 147, 148.

¹²⁷ Ibid., no. 1213, pp. 713, 714.

Vytautas requested the grand master allow the physician to remain with them for a while longer. Paul von Russdorf allowed him to stay until the grand duchess had completely recovered.¹²⁸

The mobility of the court of the Grand Duke of Lithuania (frequent trips to each of his estates), bounteous feasts and munificence organised in receiving guests and envoys, expensive gifts given and received, and frequent hunts in the Late Middle Ages were ordinary and even mandatory for a person of his rank. This conforms to the general models of everyday life, interaction, and behaviour of late-mediaeval rulers and their inner circle. In this respect, in speaking about the everyday life of the grand duke of Lithuania, it was important to be included and to participate in the Latin-based European communications system of that time.

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¹²⁸ Ibid., no. 1216, p. 716; Prochaska, *Ostatnie lata Witolda*, pp. 60, 62.

LIETUVOS DIDŽIOJO KUNIGAİKŠČIO VYTAUTO KASDIENYBĖ PAGAL JO IR JO AMŽININKŲ KORESPONDENCIJĄ

Santrauka

RŪTA ČAPAITĖ

Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio kasdienio gyvenimo realijos vėlyvųjų viduramžių valdovų kasdienio gyvenimo kontekste nedaug nagrinėtos neintegruotos į jų bendravimo ir elgesio modelių tyrimus, tai mėginama atkreipti dėmesį šiame straipsnyje. Pasirinktos tokios Vytauto kasdienės veiklos sritys: susirašinėjimas (adresatai, kalbos, kuriomis rašyti laišakai, susirašinėjimo intensyvumas, laiškų pobūdis, jų temos); dvaro gyvenimas (svečių priėmimas, vaišės, dovanos, pramogos, medžioklė, žinios apie sveikatą).

Intensyvus dydžiojo kunigaikščio susirašinėjimas, platus adresatų ratas, įvairi laiškų paskirtis ir turinys liudija, kad laišakai Vytautui buvo ir viena iš kasdienio reikalų tvarkymo, ir privataus bendravimo priemonių. Laiškus didžiajam kunigaikščiui įteikdavo įvairiu laiku ir įvairiomis aplinkybėmis, itin svarbius – netgi nepaisant paros laiko, pavyzdžiui, vėlai vakare ar naktį. Apie laiško svarbą ir skubumą įspėdavo adrese įrašytos tai nusakančios formulės. Į gautus laiškus ir Vytautas, ir jo korespondentai atsakydavo tą pačią ar kitą dieną, po kelių dienų, po savaitės ar kelių, kartais visai neatsakydavo. Delsimo ar neatsakymo priežastys įvairios: pašliję, įtempti politiniai, o kartais ir asmeniniai santykiai ir t. t.

Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio ir jo korespondentų susirašinėjimas atskleidžia itin dinamišką, įvairiapusę ir spalvingą vėlyvųjų viduramžių valdovo kasdienybę: dažnas keliones, intensyvi bendravimą su atvykstančiais svečiais ir pasiuntiniais, priėmimus, iškilmingas turtingas puotas, pramogas ir pan. Didysis kunigaikštis su svita dažnai keliaudavo po savo dvarus ir tai buvo įprasta to laiko valdovų kasdienio gyvenimo kontekste. Todėl norintiems su juo susitikti ar atvykstantiems pasiuntiniams Vytautas nurodydavo, kur ir kada planuoja keliauti, kelionės maršrutą, kiek laiko ketina užtrukti.

Didysis kunigaikštis garsėjo kaip vaišingas, puikiai svečius priimančias ir apdovanojantis šeimininkas – tai buvo taip pat privaloma valdovų ir kunigaikščių dvaro gyvenimo dalis. Drauge tai teikė valdovui garbę ir šlovę, kėlė jo dvaro prestižą. Svečių sutikimas priklausė nuo atvykstančiųjų statuso, vizito svarbos, kitų aplinkybių. Kartais atvykėlius sutikdavo pats valdovas, kartais juos palydėdavo pas laukiantį kunigaikštį. Pasiuntiniams ir svečiams buvo didelė garbė sėdėti prie vieno stalo su valdovu. Labai mažai duomenų išliko apie stalo etiketą ir patiekalus, nežinoma, kaip skirdavosi kasdienis maistas nuo patiekiamo puotose. Minima, jog be mėsos, žuvies ir kito maisto, valgyti ryžiai, figos, razinos. Naudoti prieskoniai: pipirai, imbieras, gvazdikėliai, saldymedžio šaknis, cinamonas, šafranas, muskatas, migdolai, cukrus, druska. Valdovą ir svečius linksmindavo muzikantai, artistai, juokdariai, neūžaugos. Viena mėgiamiausių dvaro pramogų buvo medžioklė. Vytautas medžiojo ir sulaukęs garbaus amžiaus, neretai drauge su Jogaila, medžiojantiems talkindavo šunys, dresuoti paukščiai.

Svečių, pasiuntinių priėmimai, medžioklės ir kt. neapsieidavo be dovanų, kuriomis atsilygindavo už paslaugas, rodydavo dėmesį, lenkė į savo pusę. Be to, tai buvo etiketo ir bendravimo dalis, tad jas teikti buvo privalu. Vytautas teikdavo ir gaudavo dovanas iš Jogailos, karaliaus Zigmanto ir jo žmonos Barbaros, Ordino didžiojo magistro ir kitų jo pareigūnų. Vytautas ir jo amžininkai vieni kitiems teikė panašias dovanas, daugelis jų buvo praktiški, kasdieniam gyvenimui reikalingi daiktai, susiję su valdovų ir jų aplinkos etiketu, universaliomis vėlyvųjų viduramžių karalių ir kunigaikščių dvaruose plitusių madomis. Didžiajam kunigaikščiui dovanodavo brangius audinius (šilką), puošnius ginklus ir šarvus ar šarvų dalis (pvz., šalmus paauskuotomis puošmenomis, sidabrinį šarvų

diržą), žirgus, medžioklinius šunis, laukinius žvėris, siuntė Reino vyną, Vismaro alų. Vytautas dovanodavo dresuotus sakalus, medžioklinius šunis (skalikus), žirgus, laukinius žvėris, brangius ginklus, brangių kailių kailinius, brangenybes ir kt. Didžiosioms kunigaikštienėms dovanų siųsdavo saldžius Reino, itališkus ir graikiškus vynus, saldu-mynus, vynuoges, brangenybes ir pan.

Didysis kunigaikštis ir jo adresatai laiškuose užsimindavo apie savo ar kitų valdovų, aukštų pareigūnų sveikatą. Todėl žinome, kad dažnos buvo akių bei vidaus ligos, karščiavimai. Reta pastabų apie gydymą, tačiau korespondentai informuodavo vienas kitą apie gerus, vertus pasitikėjimo ar tiesiog garsesnius gydytojus, prašydavo tokių surasti ir atsiųsti.

Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio ir jo adresatų laiškuose išryškėjusios LDK valdovo gyvenimo detalės leidžia Vytauto kasdienybėje atsekti universalius vėlyvųjų viduramžių valdovų bendravimo ir elgesio modelius bei teigti, kad bendraujant tarpusavyje jų buvo laikomasi.