

Akty unii wileńskiej i mielnickiej (1499–1501). Dokumenty i studia. Ed. L. Korczak, with articles by M. Antoniewicz, W. Chorażyszewski, J. Kiaupienė, L. Korczak, R. Petrauskas, K. Pietkiewicz and J. Rogulski, Kraków-Vilnius: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2022, 405 p. ISBN (Polska Akademia Umiejętności) 978-83-7676-350-7, ISBN (Lietuvos istorijos institutas) 978-609-8314-16-8

The issue of the unions between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period has constantly aroused discussions among historians and in society from as far back as the 19th century. If we look deeper into the ages of annals and chronicles, we will find that different interpretations of this topic appeared as early as the 15th to 18th centuries. Questions regarding these states' mutual relations were being discussed by historiographers, publicists and scholars in those times (starting with Jan Długosz, Maciej Miechowita, Bernard Wapowski, and the compilers of the Lithuanian Chronicles, and ending with Augustus Ludwig von Schlözer, Franciszek Paprocki, and others). Even in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, researchers not only from Poland and Lithuania, but other countries as well, continue to analyse intensively one aspect of the union or another, leading to new insights, interpretations and matters for discussion.

When early sources started being published *en masse* in the 19th century, publications came to light that featured documents pertaining to the unions between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). They were supplemented or corrected in the 20th century by new publications of sources.¹ In 2002, at the initiative of the Lithuanian Institute of History, a series started being released entitled 'Lithuanian Foreign Policy Documents: 13th–18th Centuries'. The first book in this series published the original Act of the Union of Krewo of 14 August 1385 and its 1445

¹ *Zbiór praw litewskich od roku 1389 do roku 1529, tudzież rozprawy sejmowe o tychże prawach od roku 1544 do roku 1563*, wyd. T. Działyński (Poznań, 1841); *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, t. 2–3, wyd. A. Lewicki (Kraków, 1876, 1894); *Matricularum Regni Poloniae summaria, excussis codicibus, qui in Cartophylacio Maximo Varsoviensi asservantur*, cz. 1–3, oprac. T. Wierzbowski (Warsaw, 1905–1908); *Akta unji Polski z Litwą, 1385–1791*, wyd. S. Kutrzeba, W. Semkowicz (Kraków, 1932).

copy, as well as other pieces of Latin text from Medieval sources and their translations into Lithuanian, including researchers' original studies.² In 2013 another publication in this series appeared, this time devoted to documents relating to the Polish-Lithuanian unions, where, thanks to the combined efforts of Lithuanian and Polish historians, documents connected to the 1413 Union of Horodło and five scholarly articles were published to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the union.³

Scholars from both countries continued their cooperation, and in 2022 documents concerning the Vilna (1499) and Mielnik (1501) unions were published. This particular book consists of an introductory article, publishers' comments, the acts of the Union of Vilna and the Union of Mielnik, five research articles, catalogues of seals, photographs of documents, lists of abbreviations, sources and literature, and an index of names. Evidently, the publication principle used for the acts of the Union of Horodło was followed here, too. Nonetheless, while in the earlier collection of sources the documents are presented in their original language (Latin) and translated into Lithuanian and Polish, and the articles are given in Lithuanian and Polish, the present collection is aimed more at Polish-speaking readers. The introductory text explains that a bilingual publication (in Polish and Lithuanian) would have been difficult due to the complex financing scheme, as long sources and scholarly texts would have needed to be translated and edited (p. 10). There are plans for the Lithuanian Institute of History to bring out a Lithuanian version of this book soon.

In Part A, 'Acts of the 1499 Union of Vilna', five documents are published: 1) The authorisation issued in Grodno on 9 January 1499 by Alexander Jagiellon to envoys to negotiate with the King of Poland Jan Albrecht; 2) confirmation drafted in Krakow on 6 May 1499 by the lords and nobles of Poland and Lithuania of the 1413 agreement with the GDL's lords and officials; 3) a notice issued in Krakow on 6 May 1499 by the King of Poland Jan Albrecht in which he confirms the union agreement with Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania and the GDL; 4) a promise drafted on 14 May 1499 in Krakow by dignitaries and nobles of the Kingdom of Poland to the prelates and lords of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (or, as is stated in the document's text, the nobles) to issue new documents

² 1385 m. rugpjūčio 14 d. Krėvos aktas, ed. J. Kiaupienė, compiled by R. Čapaite, J. Kiaupienė, E. Rimša, S.C. Rowell, E. Ulčinaitė (Vilnius, 2002).

³ 1413 m. Horodlės aktai (dokumentai ir tyrinėjimai) = Akty Horodelskie z 1413 roku (Dokumenty i studia), eds. J. Kiaupienė, L. Korczak, P. Rabiej, E. Rimša, J. Wroniszewski, in the series *Lietuvos užsienio politikos dokumentai. XIII–XVIII a.* (Vilnius-Kraków, 2013).

regarding the union; and 5) confirmation signed in Vilnius on 24 July 1499 by the Council of Lords of the GDL of the agreement with Crown Poland. All of these documents have been published previously; however, the historians Krzysztof Pietkiewicz (documents 1 and 5) and Lidia Korczak (documents 2–4) present them anew in Latin with a Polish translation, based on the surviving originals or copies of them.

Part B, entitled 'Acts of the 1501 Union of Mielnik', has seven documents: 1) an authorisation issued in Grodno on 27 August 1501 by Alexander Jagiellon for envoys to participate in the election of the King of Poland, and to form the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's union with the Kingdom of Poland; 2) an authorisation issued on 9 September 1501 in Bielsk by the GDL's Council of Lords to five Lithuanian envoys who were sent to the Election Sejm (parliament) in Piotrków; 3) the act of union drafted in Piotrków on 3 October 1501 between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania issued on behalf of Cardinal Frederick Jagiellon and the Polish senators; 4) a notice written in Piotrków on 3 October 1501 by which the envoys of Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania and the Council of Lords renewed the union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the Election Sejm; 5) a decree issued in Piotrków on 3 October 1501 about the election of Alexander Jagiellon as King of Poland; 6) a notice written up in Mielnik on 23 October 1501 by which Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania accepted and confirmed the union's articles, and also guaranteed that they would also be ratified by the Lithuanian lords and nobles; and 7) an authorisation signed in Mielnik on 30 October 1501 by Alexander, the elected King of Poland, that the lords and nobles of the GDL will swear allegiance to the agreements made with the Kingdom of Poland. As in Part A, here too, all the documents have been published previously, but here they are presented again with originals and copies, and are given in Latin and Polish. All of them were prepared by Pietkiewicz, except for number 3, which was prepared by Korczak.

The documents are significantly enriched by the catalogues of seals used on the Vilna and Mielnik unions. The first was prepared by Jakub Rogulski, the second by Marcelli Antoniewicz. Regarding the Union of Vilna acts, Rogulski describes 37 seals and presents photographs of 30 of them (pp. 237–276). The rest of the seals have not survived. Antoniewicz describes 51 seals and also presents photographs of 30 of them. The other identified seals have likewise not survived (pp. 277–357). The seal catalogue was prepared according to the description example set by Edmundas Rimša, when an analogous catalogue of the 1413 Horodło acts

was being compiled; it is notable for being particularly informative. Thus, it is sure to become a helpful and important resource for every historian, and sigillography and heraldry specialist. The book also features photographs of seven of the published documents. They can be useful only as illustrative material, as their format does not allow for reading them as facsimiles.

The collection also has five scholarly articles presenting the results of the latest historical research. The first article 'Documents of the Polish-Lithuanian Union at the Turn of the 15th and 16th Centuries' was written by K. Pietkiewicz, the main compiler of the acts of the Vilna and Mielnik unions. In his article, the historian reviews the negotiations over the countries' mutual relations after Casimir Jagiellon's death in 1492 up to the drafting of the Union of Mielnik in 1501. Most attention is given not to solely historiographical discussions about the union agreements, but the actual agreement documents (where they were kept, earlier publications) and their contents. The authorisations of Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania to his envoys of 9 January 1499, 27 August 1501, and 9 September 1501, for preparing the new agreements for the union, are given special attention. These authorisations were written in Ruthenian in the Lithuanian Metrica, but before going to Poland they had to be translated into Latin. Comparing the differences in redaction in the Lithuanian and the Polish authorisations, Pietkiewicz reveals some important details. In the Latin documents, the language is more accurate and richer (pp. 90–94). The Vilnius agreement compiled on 24 July 1499 was, according to the historian, the result of negotiations that had been under way since 1493. It was based on the Horodło document of the Lithuanian nobility, which contained no references regarding the incorporation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the Crown of Poland, while the preliminary version of the document was a treaty prepared in 1496. In Pietkiewicz's view, the most important role in the drafting of this kind of treaty was played by the ruler's secretary Adam Jakubowicz from Kotra (pp. 95–99). When discussing the 1501 Mielnik acts, he discerns ten documents which, in his opinion, were either prepared in the Chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or else authorised delegates from the Lithuanian side, their scribes or secretaries participated in their drafting (p. 104). This question is not really developed further.⁴ The author makes an interesting

⁴ It would have been worth referring to the article by R. Ragauskienė 'Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės Kanceliarija ir Lietuvos Metrika XV–XVI a. pirmoje pusėje', *Susigražinant praeitį: Lietuvos Metrikos istorija ir tyrimai*, ed. A. Dubonis (Vilnius, 2016), pp. 51–70.

observation (p. 105) that when describing the treaties, terms like *смѣны* (*stupy*) and *записи* (*zapisy*) were used quite often. If the Latin equivalent of the former is clear (*inscriptiones* or *litteras inscriptiones*), then the first is explained by the historian as *foedera* (after *смѣнѹмъ*, *stąpić*, *porozumieć się*). Nonetheless, I would like to disagree with the Polish translation of the term *communitas* and *communitates* used in the union acts as *sejmik* (or dietine) (pp. 59, 71, 74, 116, 119). A more accurate variant would be 'community': *communitatum Magni Ducatus Lythwanie* (Grand Duchy of Lithuania community), *communitates notabiliores* (nobles' community). The formation of *sejmiki* (dietines) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an institution was finally complete only after the legal-administrative reforms of the 1560s. As Eugenijus Saviščevas has noted, before then the general political conjuncture in most districts (*powiats*) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was not conducive to the formation of parliamentary traditions. The nobles of the Vilnius and Trakai voivodeship districts, who lived at the state's centre, did not have separate land privileges. It was only in the elderships of Samogitia, Smolensk, Polotsk and Vitebsk, and other Ruthenian lands that had their own privileges and a Russian (Orthodox) legacy, that certain trends in local parliamentarism can be grasped. However, the wars against Moscow in the late 15th and 16th centuries in Ruthenian lands led to their weakening.⁵ Moreover, if we look at certain Polish sources, they also confirm that this term should not be translated here as *sejmik* (dietine).⁶

Whereas in his discussion about the unions Pietkiewicz writes briefly about the work of the chancellery of the ruler of the GDL, then in the article by Waldemar Chorążyczewski, 'Poland's Royal Chancellery during the Vilna and Mielnik Unions. Elements of Modernisation', the author goes into great detail analysing the modernisation of Poland's Royal Chancellery and its composition in 1492–1506. According to the historian, it was precisely the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries that was of fundamental significance in the formation of 'government institutions which formed the support for the central authority, described in the

⁵ E. Saviščevas, 'Początki parlamentaryzmu na Żmudzi w XVI wieku', *Studia historyczne*, r. LIX, z. 2 (2016), pp. 167–171. Petrauskas has written about the origins of parliamentarism in the GDL, 'Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės seimo ištakos: didžiojo kunigaikščio taryba ir bajorų suvažiavimai XIV–XV a.', *Parlamento studijos*, t. 3 (2005), pp. 5–21.

⁶ For example, in the confirmation by the Duke of Masovia in 1423 that Jan Balaaban was a free person, it is written *cetera communitates hominum oppidanorum sive villanorum libere fruuntur et gaudent. Kodeks dyplomatyczny księstwa mazowieckiego* (Warsaw, 1863), No CLX, p. 169.

broader sense as primary secretaries, later by the name Royal Chancellery' (p. 126). The author identifies who served as primary secretaries at that time, as the problem lies in the fact that they were often called simply secretaries. At the time of the Union of Mielnik, as many as five secretaries are mentioned: Mikołaj Krzycki, Jan Konarski, Jan Łaski, Wojciech Górski and Mikołaj Bartnicki. During the period mentioned, 27 royal secretaries were at work, of whom 13 can be attributed as 'union-related' (pp. 133–136). In addition to the chancellors, vice-chancellors and secretaries, the function of preparing these acts was also performed by the king's scribes (*notarii regii*). They also worked in fields such as foreign and internal politics, and in fiscal, military and court-related areas as members of royal commissions. The historian has collected information about 87 scribes from this time, with 44 being identified as 'union-related' (pp. 137–140). As the scribes from the Royal Chancellery were associated with a specific seal holder, this led to the formation of two chancelleries: the Grand (the chancellor's) and the Minor (the vice-chancellor's, in Polish *Podkanclerz*). This also relates to the fact that at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, two Metricas started being kept, that of the Crown and the Grand Chancellery. Even though much has been written about the course of the work of the Royal Chancellery, Chorążyczewski goes into much greater detail, basing his findings mostly on his own earlier research (the initiative and the course of the procedure for drafting a document, control, differences between *actum* and *datum*, confirmation by seal and signature, the issue of documents, and the particularities of royal documents). The historian also discusses the modernisation of the Crown Metrica, into which permanent and temporary documents would be entered, or, more narrowly, mandates, instructions to envoys, speeches and diplomatic correspondence, and Royal Court verdicts. According to the historian, this modernisation began after the compilation of the unions under discussion. His article presents a comprehensive account of the activities of the chancellery of the King of Poland; however, I think a more detailed correlation with the compilation of the union documents would be beneficial.

Lidia Korczak, in her article 'Among the Polish Supporters of the Union', looks at the process of how the unions were established through the prism of involving the Jagiellon dynasty and the Polish aristocracy in implementing their interests. As we know, the Jagiellons ruled in the GDL on the basis of patrimonial rights, while the right to the throne of the Kingdom of Poland had to be confirmed each time by the 'political nation of the *szlachta*' during an election (p. 168). After the death of

King Jan Albrecht, Cardinal Frederick Jagiellon became most intensely involved in the election process, taking the highest position in the King's Council as primate, in addition to being the kings' brother, with Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon of Lithuania also being quite involved. The author shows that the dynasty chose representatives it considered favourable for the union negotiations: the Archbishop of Lviv Andrzej Róža Boryszewski and the Bishop of Warmia Łukasz Watzenrode, who supported Alexander's candidacy, and lords from Lesser Poland, namely the Voivode of Sandomierz Jan Feliks Tarnowski, the Castellan (*Kasztelan*) of Krakow Spytek Jarosławski, and others who had an interest in liquidating the Turkish threat with the help of the GDL. They all occupied high-ranking political positions during the reign of Alexander, and also helped maintain the Jagiellons' situation, as according to the provisions in the Union of Mielnik, they had lost their patrimonial rights to Lithuania (pp. 175–176).

Rimvydas Petrauskas' summarising article entitled 'The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Union of Mielnik' reviews the circumstances behind the formation of the union and its outcomes. This analytical discussion is divided into parts, such as 'The Grand Duke of Lithuania', 'The Grand Duke's Court', 'Reforms' and 'Mielnik: Before and After (Poland and Lithuania in 1494–1503)'. The historian notes that when Alexander became the Grand Duke of Lithuania in July 1492, the GDL's Council of Lords simultaneously acknowledged the Jagiellons as the sole legitimate successors of the state of Lithuania. The rules for succession within the dynasty were also set out at this time. Alexander also introduced a monarchical ruling style (pp. 179–182). Note that the division of patrimonial authority among the Jagiellons had emerged earlier, as is reflected in their sovereign titles.⁷ It is known that Alexander Jagiellon's court as an institution was qualitatively new compared to what had developed in Vytautas' times, and Vilnius became a fully fledged capital. The ruler's chancellery, where the Lithuanian *Metrica* was written and kept, comes to prominence once again. Even though the number of scribes was not yet stable (in fact, neither was it stable in Poland, as Chorażyczewski's research shows), some did stand out by the role they played. Petrauskas mentions the great scribes or secretaries Erasmus Ciołek (in the Latin Chancellery) and Fedka Hryhoriewicz (in the Ruthenian Chancellery). These changes continued to formalise the chancellery's work, creating a more reliable

⁷ R. R. Trimonienė, 'Jogailaičių titulatura ir Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės paveldo problema (XV a. antra pusė–XVI a. pradžia)', *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės istorijos atodangos*, ed. V. Dolinskas (Vilnius, 2016), pp. 250–259.

system for the creation and control of documents. Other reforms from Alexander's times that the historian points out were monetary: the issue of a half-groat, the start of the mint's operations in 1495, and changes to the organisation of the GDL's army; at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, the offices of standard-bearer (*chorąży*) (p. 185) and hetman appeared in *powiats* (districts) (this is probably an error in the Polish translation, as at that time there were rural districts (*volost, włość*) not *powiats*), as well as a mercenary army, and the first army regulations were prepared in 1502. In Alexander's times, the granting of Magdeburg rights to cities also became a planned procedure. The new system of symbols of authority should also be noted, and the return to the idea of a Church union. When analysing the question of interstate unions, Petrauskas also places an importance on the Jagiellons' patrimonial rights in the GDL, competition between representatives within the dynasty, their relations with Lithuania's ruling elite, and the international situation at the time. In his assessment of the Union of Mielnik, he notes that the compilers of these documents avoided using the verb *incorporare*, choosing instead the 'one body' metaphor, which was later actively debated in discussions about the union. The term 'one body' was more about expressing the goal to create a political community that would henceforth have a common ruler, common sessions, a common monetary system, and mutual obligations regarding assistance (p. 196). The historian holds none other than Alexander Jagiellon and his circle guilty as the main 'destroyers' of the union. And one may well agree with his arguments.

The collection of articles ends with the article by Jūratė Kiaupienė 'The Functioning of Writings about the 1499 and 1501 Union in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland'. The historian asks 'Was this union an alliance, or just a union in the simplest sense?' Most of the article is devoted to discussing 'the most important works devoted to the processes of the union's revival and realisation and their outcomes' (p. 200). Historiography concerning the unions began with studies by Stanisław Kutrzeba, indicating his main conclusions, and highlighting the fact that he based his work on the original documents. This historiographical review continues by naming Oskar Halecki's achievements in formulating the theme of the 'Jagiellonians' idea' before moving on to the main points in Henryk Łowmiański's work *Polityka Jagiellonów*. Twenty-first century researchers of the Polish-Lithuanian union who are worth mentioning, according to Kiaupienė, are Grzegorz Błaszczyk, Dominik Szulc, Stephen C. Rowell and Robert Frost. She indicates the main theses they raise, and their questions for discussion. It appears that this article came

about when Mindaugas Klovas, in his review of the aforementioned 'Acts of the 1413 Union of Horodło (documents and research)',⁸ suggested that it 'would have benefitted greatly from an article dedicated to a review of the historiography surrounding the Union of Horodło'. And so in this new publication, such a review did appear. However, I doubt it will serve as a point of reference for further studies of the unions. Unfortunately, an answer to the question raised at the start of the article could not be found. The other part of Kiaupienė's article is aimed at registering the copies of acts from the union of the times of Alexander Jagiellon both in the Lithuanian Metrica (in its already published Books 5 and 6), and in the Crown Metrica. This kind of list and its discussion may serve well in historians' further research.

In summary, it may be said that the release of this new publication from the series 'Lithuanian Foreign Policy Documents. 13th–18th centuries' has facilitated a continuation of the publication of the treaties of union between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. We have a body of information many years in collation, analyses of material from the 1499 and 1501 union acts in Latin and their translation into Polish, research articles, seal catalogues, photographs of documents, a rich bibliography and indexes. It would be great if this publication is also brought out in Lithuanian. The publications from this series and the book under review here will be an excellent guide to historical research for future studies and academic discussions.

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⁸ M. Klovas. *1413 m. Horodlės aktai (dokumentai ir tyrinėjimai) = Akty Horodelskie z 1413 roku (Dokumenty i studia)*, eds. J. Kiaupienė, L. Korczak, P. Rabiej, E. Rimša, J. Wroniszewski, in the series *Lietuvos užsienio politikos dokumentai. XIII–XVIII a.* (Vilnius-Kraków, 2013), *Istorijos šaltinių tyrimai*, ed. A. Dubonis, vol. 5 (Vilnius, 2014), pp. 297–301.