

‘Our Gracious Benefactors’: The Charitable Activities of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

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Abstract. Using the acts of the cathedral chapter and annual income-expenditure registers, this article focuses on the charitable activities of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The first section of the article is concerned with the chapter’s support for charitable institutions (hospitals, a dowry fund, a home for aged and infirm priests) under its patronage. The second section focuses on the patterns of occasional almsgiving.

Keywords: charity, poor relief, cathedral chapter, Vilnius, hospitals, 16th–18th centuries.

Anotacija. Straipsnyje, remiantis kapitulos aktais ir metiniais pajamų bei išlaidų registrais, nagrinėjama labdaringa Vilniaus katedros kapitulos veikla XVI–XVIII a. Pirmojoje straipsnio dalyje analizuojama kapitulos parama jos globojamoms labdaringsoms institucijoms (špitolėms, fundacijai, iš kurios lėšų netekėjusioms moterims būdavo suteikiami kraičiai, senų ir nusilpusių kunigų namams). Antrojoje dalyje nagrinėjamos nereguliaros išmaldos dalijimo praktikos.

Esminiai žodžiai: labdara, vargšų globa, katedros kapitula, Vilnius, špitolės, XVI–XVIII a.

Introduction

As was usual throughout the medieval and early modern Europe, cathedral chapters formed a clerical, political, economic, and cultural élite. Also, as senior clergymen, prelates and canons – and the secular élites as well – were under the moral obligation to provide for their poorer sisters and brothers. Thus, cathedral chapters, with their vast

possessions and abundant wealth, played an important role in the provision of poor relief¹. The prelates and canons of Vilnius were no exception. Although Catholic charitable institutions in Vilnius remained unconsolidated and the control over them was divided among several convents, parishes, brotherhoods, and provosts, its wealth and influence allowed the chapter to become benefactors of the local paupers and important organisers of poor relief.

The chapter's composition, property, organisation, internal conflicts, and other related topics, with a focus on the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, have already been studied by Polish and Lithuanian historians, such as Jan Kurczewski, Jerzy Ochmański, Tadeusz Kasabuła, Wioletta Pawlikowska-Butterwick, and Liudas Jovaiša². Nonetheless, the chapter's charitable activities have hitherto received almost no attention. However, studying the chapter's involvement in the provision of poor relief reveals the diversity of the chapter's charitable activities, their extent, and significance to the local poor. Since historians have not yet emphasised the role of the cathedral chapter as the providers and organisers of poor relief, studying it also contributes to a better understanding of public indoor and outdoor poor relief as well as occasional almsgiving in early modern Vilnius³.

¹ LEPINE, David. Cathedrals and Charity: Almsgiving at English Secular Cathedrals in the Later Middle Ages. *The English Historical Review*, 2011, Vol. 126, No. 522, p. 1066-1067.

² KURCZEWSKI, Jan. *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*. Cz. 1. Wilno: Nakład i druk Józefa Zawadzkiego, 1908; OCHMAŃSKI, Jerzy. *Powstanie i rozwój latyfundiów biskupstwa wileńskiego (1387-1550): ze studiów nad rozwojem wielkiej własności na Litwie i Białorusi w średniowieczu*. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 1963; OCHMAŃSKI, Jerzy. *Biskupstwo wileńskie w średniowieczu: ustrój i uposażenie*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1972; KASABUŁA, Tadeusz. *Ignacy Massalski, biskup wileński*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1998. For most recent contributions on the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius, see PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta. 'Lithuanians', 'Foreigners' and Ecclesiastical Office: Law and Practice in the Sixteenth-Century Grand Duchy of Lithuania. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2017, Vol. 68, No. 2, p. 285-305; PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta; JOVAIŠA, Liudas. *Vilniaus ir Žemaičių katedrų kapitulų statutai*. Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2015; PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta. Clergymen on the Move: Journeys by Vilnian Canons and Prelates in the 16th Century. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis*, 2014, t. XXIX, p. 75-97; PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta. A 'Foreign' Elite? The Territorial Origins of the Canons and Prelates of the Cathedral Chapter of Vilna in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century. *Slavonic and East European Review*, 2014, Vol. 92, No. 1, p. 44-80; ŠEDVYDIS, Laurynas. Vilniaus vyskupo Pauliaus Alšėniškio klientų veikla Vilniaus kapituloje XVI a. 5-6 dešimtmėčiais. In: *LDK dvasingumas: tarp tradicijos ir dabarties*. Sudarytojos Vaida Kamuntavičienė, Aušra Vasiliauskienė. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2010, p. 21-43.

³ For most recent contributions, see MAROSZEK, Józef. Wileńskie przytułki-szpitaly w XVI-XVIII w. In: *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi... Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu*. Pod redakcją Cezarego Kukli, Piotra Guzowskiego. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004, s. 191-218; RAGAUSKAS, Aivas. Iš Vilniaus miesto socialinio žemėlapiu XVII a. pirmojoje pusėje - XVIII a.: elgetų organizacijos pobūdis. *Istorija*, 2007, t. 67, p. 15-23; ROWELL, Stephen C. The Role of Charitable Activity in the Formation of Vilnius Society in the 14th to Mid-16th Centuries. *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2012, Vol. 17, p. 39-69; FRICK, David. *Kith, Kin, and Neighbors: Communities and Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013, p. 322-355.

As pointed out by David Lepine, prelates and canons had a dual relationship with charity: personal and institutional⁴. Undoubtedly, as individuals, they gave alms to anonymous beggars and assisted their struggling friends or impoverished subordinates. However, personal charitable activities were mostly spontaneous, unsystematic, irregular, and thus rarely well documented⁵. Whereas institutional documentation reveals the charitable activities of the chapter as a corporate body, this article focuses on the rather well documented institutional charity and seeks to reveal the chapter's involvement in charitable activities – the support for charitable institutions under its patronage as well as the practices of almsgiving. It is important to stress that traditionally the works of mercy were motivated primarily by the biblical imperative of neighbourly love and the giver's hope of achieving salvation⁶; however, the sources are silent on religious (or any other) motivations to perform acts of kindness towards the poor. Thus, this article primarily deals with the material aspects of the chapter's charitable activities.

This article uses the acts of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter (*Acta Capituli Vilnensis*) and the annual income-expenditure registers covering the period from the beginning of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The *acta* reveal the chapter's decisions regarding the functioning, financing, and control of charitable institutions and other related issues. The annual income-expenditure registers give information on the cathedral chapter's common income and expenditure, including payments to charitable institutions and sums distributed as occasional alms.

It should be noted that, although the chapter's properties extended well beyond the city limits, the sources show that prelates and canons directed their charitable initiatives mainly towards poor relief institutions in Vilnius and the local poor. The first section of this article looks at the relationship between the cathedral chapter and the charitable institutions under its supervision, while the second section discusses the patterns of almsgiving.

Prelates, Canons, and Charitable Institutions

The statutes of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter did not specify any formal obligations or duties to assist the poor⁷; however, prelates and canons not only distributed occasional alms (as will be discussed in the following section) but also established, supervised, and supported a range of charitable institutions that provided indoor and outdoor relief.

⁴ LEPINE, David. Cathedrals and Charity: Almsgiving at English Secular Cathedrals in the Later Middle Ages. *The English Historical Review*, 2011, Vol. 126, No. 522, p. 1069, 1080.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 1081.

⁶ GEREMEK, Bronisław. *Poverty: A History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, p. 17.

⁷ See the statutes of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter, PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta; JOVAIŠA, Liudas. *Vilniaus ir Žemaičių katedrų kapitulų statutai*. Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2015, p. 291-341.

Among them were three hospitals⁸, a home for aged and disabled priests, and a fund providing dowries for poor unmarried women. Although prelates and canons hardly ever assisted the poor personally, however, their efforts, through financial and organisational support for charitable foundations, to ensure the wellbeing of the city's poor were, nonetheless, also an expression of their charitable incentives and Christian brotherly love.

The chapter had a diverse relationship with the three hospitals. The Hospital of SS Job and Mary Magdalene (later – St Mary Magdalene), the very first hospital in Vilnius, was founded by the canon and medical doctor Marcin of Duszniki in 1518⁹. From the very beginning it functioned as the ‘capitular’ (*capitularis*)¹⁰ hospital and was controlled by the chapter, which was entitled the right of patronage and collation. The chapter had a similar relationship with the Hospital of SS Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus established in 1631 outside the Aušros (Ostra) Gate. For the first few decades the hospital was supervised by the city's magistrate; however, the chapter was entitled the right of patronage and collation (*jus patronatus, et collationis*) in the second half of the seventeenth century¹¹. Nevertheless, this hospital was never referred to as ‘capitular’ or ‘cathedral’. The third hospital associated with the chapter was originally established by Jan Jarołowicz and several Franciscan Tertiaries Eremites (*Ordo Sancti Francisci Eremitarum Tertiae Regulae*) who all perished in the Great Plague of 1709–1711. In 1713, the bishop of Vilnius Konstany Kazimierz Brzostowski, together with the cathedral chapter, re-established and reformed the institution and transferred its control to the newly founded Merciful Brothers of St Roch (*Fratres Misericordiae sub titulo S. Rochi*), also known as *rochitae* or *rochici*¹². The brothers were accountable directly to the bishop and, to a lesser extent, to the cathedral chapter; therefore, the hospital was known as ‘cathedral’ (*cathedralis*)¹³.

The chapter exerted collective control and influence over the hospitals through a variety of ways. As patrons and collators of charitable institutions, prelates and canons shaped the organisational structure of the hospitals by appointing the provosts (*praepositus*) who celebrated Mass, administered sacraments, and managed the day-to-day affairs of the hospitals, such as admitting new paupers, distributing weekly alms to the inmates,

⁸ In total, there were eleven Catholic hospitals established in Vilnius in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

⁹ ROWELL, Stephen C. The Role of Charitable Activity in the Formation of Vilnius Society in the 14th to Mid–16th Centuries. *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2012, Vol. 17, p. 44, 51.

¹⁰ For instance, ‘[...] una domo capitulari hospitali [...]’ (13 October 1522), see 1502–1533. Acts of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter (hereafter, AVCC). *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius* (hereafter, LMAVB RS), f. 43, b. 210, t. 1, f. 56v.

¹¹ 1739–1744. AVCC. LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 234, p. 25.

¹² NN. O Szpitalach Bonifratelow i Rochitow w Minsku. Przedstawienie kommissyi wyznaczoney do uporządkowania szpitalów mińskich Bonifratelskiego i Rochitańskiego, od członka jey Prałata Szantyr przysłane dla pomieszczenia do Dziejów Dobroczynności. *Dzieje dobroczynności krajowej i zagranicznej z wiadomościami ku wydoskoleniu jej służącymi*, 1821, nr. 3, s. 280–282.

¹³ For instance, ‘[...] Fratrum Rochitae dictorum, in xenodochio cathedrae [...]’ (1733), see *Relationes Status Dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*, Vol 1: *Dioecesis Vilmensis et Samogitiae*. Edidit Paulius Rabikauskas. Roma: Academia Lituana Catholica Scientiarum, 1971, p. 123.

maintaining buildings and properties. The chapter also made decisions concerning their finances and properties, and from time to time inspected the institutions themselves to ensure their steady functioning and appropriate provision for the poor.

However, besides the collective efforts to ensure the steady functioning of the hospitals and to maintain their internal order, the chapter's commitment to the poor was primarily reflected through the financial support of charitable institutions. Through the distribution of annual sums as well as occasional payments the members of the cathedral chapter retained close, albeit usually indirect, links with the inmates of the hospitals. The chapter's financial support for hospitals served a dual purpose of both providing their inmates with additional funds and expressing the compassion and generosity to their poorer brethren and sisters. Throughout the period the chapter supported the charitable institutions under its direct patronage as well as the Pasvalys Parish Hospital, which belonged to the chapter's property, and the Hospital of St Stephen in the Rūdninkai (Rudniki) suburb of Vilnius. Although until the late 1730s the latter hospital was supervised by the city's magistrate, which elected the annual overseers (*provisor, prowizor*) to manage the institution's property¹⁴, the chapter supported it with occasional payments already in the seventeenth century and later provided the hospital with regular financial assistance.

Prelates and canons gave to the hospitals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the payments were irregular and varied in value from several to 100 or more zlotys¹⁵. It was only in the 1710s that a pattern of regular support for charitable institutions began to emerge in the annual income-expenditure registers. In the years 1716-1728, equal, albeit growing, sums were distributed by the chapter to the hospitals of SS Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and St Stephen¹⁶. At least in 1742-1743, when the chapter's income-expenditure registers became more formulaic and laconic, fixed payments for certain hospitals were introduced. With one exception, they remained unchanged for more than five decades (see Table 1).

¹⁴ RAGAUSKAS, Aivas. *Vilniaus miesto valdantysis elitas XVII a. antrojoje pusėje (1662-1702 m.)*. Vilnius: Diemedis, 2002, p. 334-335; 1516-1770. The lists of annual councils of Vilnius. *Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas*, f. SA, b. 5324, ff. 27v-32.

¹⁵ For instance, in 1579-1580, the chapter distributed ten *kopy* of groszys for the provost and the poor of the St Mary Magdalene Hospital, 1579-1580. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 452, f. 30, whereas, in 1672-1673, prelates and canons donated twenty zlotys to the hospitals of St Stephen and SS Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, 1672-1673. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 647, f. 1.

¹⁶ 1716-1717. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 756, f. 3v; 1717-1718. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 757, f. 3v; 1724-1728. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 318, b. 10890, ff. 19v, 24v, 29v.

Table 1. Sums (in zlotys) distributed yearly (1742–1795) to the hospitals of SS Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (A), St Stephen (B), St Roch (C), St Mary Magdalene (D), Pasvalys Parish Hospital (E), payments to hospitals in total (F), percentage of total annual expenses distributed as financial support for hospitals (G)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1742–1743	52,15	52,15	-	-	-	105	n/a
1750–1751	-	52,15	70	-	-	122,15	0,13 %
1752–1753	52,15	52,15	140	-	-	245	0,22 %
1754–1756	52,15	52,15	140	-	14	259	0,24 %
1757–1759	52,15	52,15	140	56	14	315	0,26 %
1770–1774	52,15	52,15	840 / 720	56	14	1015 / 895 ¹⁷	0,59 %
1785–1789	52,15	52,15	840	56	14	1015	0,5 %
1790–1791	52,15	52,15	840	56	14	1015	0,46 %
1793–1795	52,15	52,15	840	56	14	1015	0,8 %

Source: LMAVB RS, f. 318, b. 12703, 173, 17135, 17136, 12782, 171, 12783, 12784, 176, 12818, 12803, 12742, 188, 174, 12744, 169, 25174; f. 43, b. 968, 1224.

Steady income collected from the common property, or *mensa communis*, individual prebends, and interest rates enabled the chapter to provide regular support to the hospitals. Although the chapter's income grew significantly in the second half of the eighteenth century¹⁸, the payments did not increase. The only exception was the Hospital of St Roch; the surviving income-expenditure registers reveal that its funding increased considerably (from 140 to 840 zlotys) in 1770. However, this change could have happened a few years earlier, because the sum of 700 zlotys came from the bequest (*ex legatione*) of the bishop of Vilnius Michał Jan Zienkowicz who died in 1762¹⁹. At that time, the Hospital of St Roch was certainly the largest in the city and provided medical care for dozens of patients infected with various internal and venereal diseases²⁰. Thus, the decision to support this hospital probably represented the pressing needs of a large hospital: the demand for large amounts of medicines and rations for patients as well as wages for the medical personnel, nursing staff, and labourers. Other hospitals, however, functioned as almshouses and provided care for only a few aged and / or disabled individuals. Un-

¹⁷ In the year 1772–1773, see 1772–1773. IER. LMAVB RS, f. 318, b. 176, f. 7v.

¹⁸ JAKULIS, Martynas. Vilniaus katedros kapitulos pajamos XVI a. antrojoje pusėje – XVIII a., pajamų–išlaidų registrų duomenimis. *Istorijos šaltinių tyrimai*. Sudarė Artūras Dubonis. 2014, t. 5, p. 181.

¹⁹ 1762. The will of Michał Jan Zienkowicz. LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 26750.

²⁰ For instance, there were sixty-eight patients on 22 June 1788, see 1788. The report on the St Roch Hospital. LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 20590, f. 1.

fortunately, there are no continuous data on the income of the St Roch Hospital (and the other two as well); therefore, it is difficult to assess what part of the annual revenue was donated by the chapter. The only surviving income-expenditure register covering the period from 14 December 1786 to 19 September 1787 reveals that the hospital collected 13,953 zlotys and 22 groszys of income. The chapter's contribution amounted to 2,520 zlotys, or more than eighteen percent of the total income. However, that year the chapter paid off its debts for three years (840 zlotys annually). Thus, the figure does not reflect the actual significance of the chapter's financial support²¹.

The annual payments to the hospitals usually constituted less than a half percent of the chapter's total annual expenses. Nevertheless, this should not be understood as a sign of the chapter's reluctance to give to the poor. It must be stressed that the hospitals had several sources of income: resources provided by the founders as well as occasional bequests in the wills and other charitable donations by lay and ecclesiastical benefactors. Thus, the sums distributed by prelates and canons, although important to the institutions, did not constitute the principal source of income. However, the chapter's financial support for the hospitals was not limited to annual payments. Confronted with unbearable hardships, the hospitals' inmates had the possibility to approach prelates and canons for immediate relief. For instance, in 1715, only a few years after the Great Plague ravaged the city and the country, the destitute inmates of the St Mary Magdalene Hospital appealed to the chapter - 'our gracious benefactors' (*dobrodzieie nasi miłosciwy*) - asking for assistance in time of acute need²². Their voices were indeed heard, and the poor received ten zlotys to alleviate their misery, for which they, as usual, promised to pray for the members of the cathedral chapter. This instance of the poor speaking up for themselves is important not only because of its rarity, but also because it demonstrates that the inmates clearly understood their relationship with the prelates and canons who were considered to be the principal benefactors ensuring their wellbeing.

Whereas hospitals were charitable institutions where the poor and the sick were provided with assistance of a more diverse nature, other charitable foundations focused their activities on a specific category of the poor. The chapter supervised a fund, universally known as the 'St Nicholas' Chest', that provided poor unmarried women with dowries. The acts of the cathedral chapter reveal that the initiative to establish the fund came from canon Ambroży Beynart who bequeathed a sum of 1,000 *kopy* of groszys and obligated the chapter to provide dowries for poor unmarried women²³. Afterwards, the fund was endowed with additional resources by the bishops of Vilnius²⁴. The research by

²¹ 1786-1787. The income-expenditure register of the St Roch Hospital. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 20589, f. 1.

²² 1715. A letter to the chapter from the inmates of the St Mary Magdalene Hospital. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 20579, f. 1.

²³ 1602-1624. AVCC. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 216, ff. 374v-375.

²⁴ KARPINŃSKI, Andrzej. Wileńska skrzynka św. Mikołaja z XVII wieku i jej podopieczne. In: *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi...: Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu*. Pod redakcją Cezarego Kukli, Piotra Guzowskiego. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004, s. 221.

Andrzej Karpiński demonstrates that the chapter provided marital and convent dowries for 330 poor females in the first half of the seventeenth century (1620–1654), and up to ten women were supported every year²⁵. As the income-expenditure registers reveal, in the later period the patterns of chapter's support for women shifted, and a modest dowry, usually consisting of eighty zlotys, was provided for only one woman every year. Only in 1747–1748, 400 zlotys were distributed to several women²⁶. Undoubtedly, such minor financial obligations, which were inconsistent with inflation, allowed the institution to function steadily. As the officials inspecting the poor relief institutions in Vilnius noted in 1790, dowries were provided punctually, 'because every year the chapter pays fifty zlotys from its treasury to a maiden, known for her exemplary life'²⁷. Undoubtedly, there were many more women in need of a dowry, so the chapter's support only meagrely improved their lives. Nonetheless, regular payments were a sign of the chapter's concern, at least nominal, with their material and moral condition. As noted by Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, in post-Tridentine Catholic Europe, providing young poor women with dowries served a double purpose of not only improving their social status but also of preventing them from falling into prostitution and disgrace²⁸.

As senior clergymen of the diocese, the prelates and canons, together with the bishop, were responsible for the wellbeing of priests burdened by old age, disability or poor health. In a capitular session on 20 February 1617, bishop Eustachy Wołłowicz proposed a plan to establish a home for aged and infirm priests²⁹. Five years later, canon Marcin Szulc donated two houses in the Skapo (Skopowa) street, which belonged to the chapter's jurisdiction, 'to build an asylum (*ptochodochium*) for infirm priests'³⁰. It seems that several years later the asylum was already functioning near the Church of the Holy Cross³¹. Although too little is known about the activities of this institution and the number of inmates, multiple subsequent endowments to poor priests by bishops and canons reflect the internal solidarity of the clergy and reveal yet another charitable initiative of the cathedral chapter.

Undoubtedly, prelates and canons were involved with the hospitals and other poor relief institutions not only collectively as members of the cathedral chapter but also as

²⁵ KARPİŃSKI, Andrzej. Wileńska skrzynka św. Mikołaja z XVII wieku i jej podopieczne. In: *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi...: Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu*. Pod redakcją Cezarego Kukli, Piotra Guzowskiego. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004, p. 221–222.

²⁶ 1747–1748. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 899, f. 3v.

²⁷ 1790. A concise report on the hospitals in Vilnius. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 3641, f. 10v.

²⁸ GRELL, Ole Peter; CUNNINGHAM, Andrew. The Counter-Reformation and Welfare Provision in Southern Europe. *Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe*. Edited by Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, Jon Arrizabalaga. London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 13.

²⁹ 1602–1624. AVCC. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 216, f. 305.

³⁰ Ibidem, f. 426.

³¹ MAROSZEK, Józef. Wileńskie przytułki-szpitala w XVI–XVIII w. In: *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi...: Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu*. Pod redakcją Cezarego Kukli, Piotra Guzowskiego. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004, s. 218.

individual benefactors. However, the collective support certainly had a more considerable impact. More or less regular contributions from the chapter's common treasury ensured a modest but substantial and, most importantly, permanent financial support.

Pauperibus supplicantibus: Occasional Almsgiving

In addition to the chapter's annual contributions to various charitable institutions, the prelates and canons of Vilnius also distributed occasional alms to struggling individuals. Considering the unsystematic character of such payments and the scarcity of sources, it is almost impossible to quantify the portion of the annual expenses that went to alms. Nonetheless, 110 mentions in the financial records and the chapter's *acta* reveal that occasional alms constituted a very small fraction of the chapter's expenses. Usually, alms came from the chapter's treasury, whereas in the 1780s and 1790s funds were also collected from fines imposed on prelates and canons for being absent at the vesper service in the cathedral³².

In most cases, the chapter's financial records present only a summary of annual expenses; therefore, it is hardly possible to tell whether alms were distributed on some specific days or feasts. However, some more comprehensive accounts suggest that alms were usually distributed at the time of the chapter's annual general sessions, when prelates and canons gathered in Vilnius on 8 May (martyrdom of St Stanislaus) and especially on 27 September (translation of St Stanislaus's relics)³³. Certainly, prelates and canons also gave alms on Christmas, the Holy week, Easter, Pentecost, and other major feasts; however, they must have done that as private individuals, because there are no mentions about such actions in the chapter's acts or financial records.

The available data suggest that in most cases payments were usually distributed once to every single individual, which confirms the unsystematic, spontaneous character of this type of charity. However, there are several exceptional cases of repeated almsgiving. For instance, Tomkowiczówna, an unmarried woman, received three złotys in 1695 and two złotys in 1696³⁴. Meanwhile, in 1698, Owłoczyńska, a noblewoman (*szlachcianka*), was given two and five złotys on separate occasions³⁵. Undoubtedly, there should have been many more similar cases, but the lack of evidence makes it difficult to provide any far-reaching generalisations.

³² For instance, see *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, cz. III: *Streszczenie aktów kapituły wileńskiej*. Oprac. J. Kurczewski. Wilno: Drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego, 1916, s. 374, 379, 381, 382, 386, 391.

³³ PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta. Regarding the Sixteenth-Century Statutes of the Cathedral Chapters of Vilna and Samogitia. In: PAWLIKOWSKA-BUTTERWICK, Wioletta; JOVAIŠA, Liudas. *Vilniaus ir Žemaičių katedrų kapitułų statutai*. Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2015, p. 185.

³⁴ 1695–1696. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 691, f. 7v.

³⁵ 1697–1698. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 692, f. 12v.

Table 2. Alms distributed to individual recipients

Sum (in złotys)	1-5	5-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	>50
Number of cases	35	13	4	2	2	1	8

Source: LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 647, 691, 692, 756, 757, 899; f. 318, b. 174, 189, 10890, 12703, 12782, 12783, 12784, 12803, 17135; *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, cz. III: *Streszczenie aktów kapituły wileńskiej*. Oprac. J. Kurczewski. Wilno: Drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego, 1916.

There were no fixed rates for alms, and usually the poor received from one to ten złotys (see Table 2). Thus, it is obvious that paupers could not rely on prelates and canons as their sole benefactors and had to ‘migrate’ between churches, convents, and hospitals to survive.

The entries in the chapter’s records rarely provide more information on the causes of poverty. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a correlation between the causes of poverty and the sum given to a certain individual. However, scarce evidence suggests that larger sums were distributed to individuals who found themselves in extraordinary circumstances, especially after their conversion to Catholicism, when they broke ties with their kin and community. Therefore, these payments had a dual function of relieving the converts’ hardships as well as sustaining their hopes and expectations of a new life, thus preventing them from apostasy. The records show that Jewish as well as Protestant converts received single payments amounting from twenty to sixty and even a hundred złotys. For instance, on 21 May 1674, the chapter paid twenty złotys to an orphan (*virgini derelictae*) convert (*nuper conversae*) Rodówna³⁶. A Jewish convert received sixty złotys ‘for clothing’ (*na odzienie*) in 1713³⁷. That same year, an anonymous female Calvinist convert received a sum of 100 złotys³⁸.

In other cases, larger sums were distributed to ailing and destitute diocesan priests. For example, in 1639, a paralysed (*paralitico*) priest Grzegorz Swirewicz was paid two *kopy* of groszys³⁹. Another old and infirm priest, Mikołaj Fames, received a sum of 100 złotys on two occasions in 1713⁴⁰. Moreover, infirm priests were supported not only by occasional distributions in cash but also by paying for their hospital stay. For instance, in October 1713, the chapter paid for the treatment of two ailing priests, Stankiewicz and Kazimierz Piasecki, at the Fatebenefratelli hospital⁴¹. These examples reflect not only the

³⁶ 1673–1681. AVCC. LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 225, p. 38.

³⁷ *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, cz. III: *Streszczenie aktów kapituły wileńskiej*. Oprac. J. Kurczewski. Wilno: Drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego, 1916, s. 289.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 288.

³⁹ 1639–1640. IER. LMAVB RS, f. 43, b. 563, f. 27v.

⁴⁰ *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, cz. III: *Streszczenie aktów kapituły wileńskiej*. Oprac. J. Kurczewski. Wilno: Drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego, 1916, s. 288.

⁴¹ 1709–1748. The Fatebenefratelli hospital’s registry of patients. *Vilniaus universiteto bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius*, f. 5, b. F-32428, ff. 107–107v.

internal solidarity of the clergy, which motivated the establishment of a home for aged and infirm priests in Vilnius, but also other forms of assistance to poor priests.

Considerably smaller sums, from one to ten zlotys, were distributed to other individuals, about whom little is known except their names. Limited evidence suggests that some of them were 'usual' relief recipients, such as widows⁴² or individuals crippled by old age⁴³. Unfortunately, most entries do not reveal any additional details, and it is impossible to tell what caused them to turn to begging.

Thirty mentions in the *acta* as well as financial records of the chapter reveal that large sums, varying from 100 to even 1,000 zlotys, were distributed to the anonymous 'poor' (*pauperibus supplicantibus, ubogim*). For instance, the chapter gave 100 zlotys on 22 October 1745⁴⁴ and 1,000 zlotys on 29 October 1767⁴⁵. However, the recipients, the exact sums of cash they received individually, and the number of paupers who were supported with these generous payments remains unknown. Only meagre mentions reveal some very imprecise details on the number of recipients. For instance, on 21 October 1768, priest Józef Gradowski was distributing alms to a 'numerous crowd of begging paupers' (*numerosa turba pauperum supplicantium*)⁴⁶. Nonetheless, such a deed, as one description in the acts of the chapter suggests, must not have been as chaotic as it could appear. On 11 October 1785, 110 zlotys and 19 groszys were distributed to the poor, but by 'judging the quality of persons, and their indigence' (*attenta qualitate personarum, et eorum indigentia*)⁴⁷. Thus, it could be claimed that the generosity of the cathedral chapter was not unlimited, and canons practised discrimination in almsgiving by differentiating between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' poor⁴⁸.

⁴² For example, see 1716-1717. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 756, f. 4; 1717-1718. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 757, f. 3.

⁴³ For example, see 1724-1728. IER. *LMAVB RS*, f. 318, b. 10890, f. 30.

⁴⁴ 1744-1752. AVCC. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 235, p. 89.

⁴⁵ 1767-1777. AVCC. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 237, f. 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 76.

⁴⁷ 1784-1788. AVCC. *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 240, f. 40.

⁴⁸ For more on the distinction between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' poor, see GEREMEK, Bronisław. *Poverty: A History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, p. 25-26; JÜTTE, Robert. *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 11.

Table 3. Recipients of occasional alms

Recipients		Number of mentions
Female		49
	Unmarried women	11
	Noblewomen	9
	Converts	6
	Widows	4
	Unspecified	19
Male		31
	Nobles	6
	Converts	6
	Soldiers	4
	Priests	3
	Burghers	3
	Unspecified	9
The 'poor'		30
In total		110

Source: sources for table 2, *LMAVB RS*, f. 43, b. 453, 484, 493, 503, 563, 585.

As mentioned above, inscriptions in the chapter's records provide information on the recipients' gender. Table 3 demonstrates that most paupers receiving alms were female, which is hardly surprising. Unfavourable social and economic conditions, limited opportunities to work and provide for themselves outside the family economy were the decisive factors that aggravated women's situation⁴⁹. Therefore, women, usually widows, constituted the majority of individuals receiving outdoor and indoor poor relief⁵⁰. How-

⁴⁹ HUFTON, Olwen. *Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century*. In: *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood*. Edited by Jan Bremmer and Lourens van den Bosch. London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 127; LANZA, Janine M. *From Wives to Widows in Early Modern Paris: Gender, Economy, and Law*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 183-184; WIESNER-HANKS, Merry. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Third edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 114-118.

⁵⁰ For Poland, see KUKLO, Cezary. *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej. Studium demograficzno-społeczne*. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998, s. 184-187. For Vilnius, see JAKULIS, Martynas. *Špitolės Vilniuje XVI-XVIII a. Daktaro disertacija*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas, 2016, p. 138-147.

ever, what is striking in this case is that almost one-fourth of recipients were unmarried women. Previous research on early modern England by Amy Froide shows that unmarried women, usually still young and able-bodied, albeit destitute, were perceived as the 'undeserving' poor and were expected to provide for themselves, whereas widows had much more opportunities to receive public relief⁵¹. This seems to have been the case in Vilnius as well, because unmarried women, excluding the disabled, were rarely admitted to the hospitals⁵². Although the sums distributed to unmarried women were very modest (from one to five zlotys), occasional alms and systemic provision of dowries demonstrate the chapter's effort, albeit very limited, to alleviate the misery of struggling young women and thereby save them from the many dangers of destitution.

Conclusion

As this article makes clear, the prelates and canons of the Vilnius Cathedral were involved in a wide range of charitable activities from supporting hospitals, a dowry fund and a home for aged and infirm priests to occasional almsgiving to common beggars or newly converted Catholics. Hence, the chapter, as a collective body, assisted a highly diverse group of individuals drawn from different social and economic backgrounds, who became destitute because of accidental and structural causes.

The sources reveal that the pattern of financial support for hospitals shifted significantly from irregular payments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to systemic, regular assistance in the eighteenth century. This shift probably reflects the emergence of a more rational, premeditated approach towards the chapter's responsibility to provide for the inmates of the hospitals. However, the number of dowries provided for poor unmarried women annually changed significantly from up to ten in the first half of the seventeenth century to only one in the eighteenth century.

The chapter's financial support for charitable institutions was, to say the least, modest. Despite considerable growth of the chapter's income from common property, it never exceeded more than one percent of its total annual expenditure. Moreover, the sums remained fixed despite significant inflation. And yet, this modest financial support, alongside other sources of revenue, constituted an important share of the hospitals' annual income because of its stability and continuity over the long term.

It is difficult to assess whether the chapter's charitable activities met the needs of the city's poor and had a considerable impact on their lives. On the one hand, the hospitals of St Mary Magdalene and SS Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus functioned

⁵¹ FROIDE, Amy. *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 35-36.

⁵² JAKULIS, Martynas. *Špitolės Vilniuje XVI-XVIII a.* Doktoro disertacija. Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas, 2016, p. 142.

as almshouses and provided care and shelter for only a few infirm or aged individuals. Although alms distributed by prelates and canons remained a source of income to the city's begging poor, paupers could not rely on the chapter as their sole benefactors due to the irregular nature of almsgiving. On the other hand, the chapter's support for the large Hospital of St Roch which provided medical assistance to dozens of poor patients infected with various internal and venereal diseases represented an active attempt to respond to a pressing public health issue.

The charitable activities of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter were not only a response to the pressing social issues but also served additional purposes about which the sources are mostly silent. As the early modern poor relief was traditionally based on the Christian imperative of neighbourly love, giving to the poor was considered as a means to ensure the salvation of the benefactors' souls in the afterlife. Moreover, as pointed out by Marco van Leeuwen, the involvement in poor relief enhanced the givers' social prestige and legitimised their privileged position in society⁵³. Thus, prelates' and canons' charitable initiatives enabled them to form a mutually beneficial spiritual link with the poor and solidify their status as generous benefactors.

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„Maloningieji mūsų geradariai“: labdaringa Vilniaus katedros kapitulos veikla XVI–XVIII a.

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Santrauka

Vilniaus katedros prelatai ir kanauninkai pasižymėjo ne tik kaip reikšmingi bažnytinio ir politinio gyvenimo veikėjai, bet ir kaip geradariai. Neabejotina, kad Vilniaus katedros kapitulos nariai asmeniškai dalindavo išmaldą ir kitaip paremdavo sunkiau besiverčiančius žmones, vis dėlto ši prelatų ir kanauninkų labdaringos veiklos pusė beveik nepastebima šaltiniuose. Taigi šiame straipsnyje, remiantis kapitulos posėdžių protokolais (aktais) ir metiniais pajamų bei išlaidų registrais, siekiama atskleisti Vilniaus katedros kapitulos kaip dvasininkų korporacijos labdaringos veiklos bruožus XVI–XVIII a.

Nors labdara nebuvo pagrindinis Vilniaus katedros kapitulos rūpestis, visgi tyrimas parodė, kad labdaringa prelatų ir kanauninkų veikla apėmė kelias sritis. Kapitulos globojamos špitolės buvo remiamos pajamomis, surenkamomis iš bendros kapitulos nuosavybės. Neturtingas moteris kapitula aprūpindavo kraičiais, kad jos galėtų ištekėti arba įstoti į vienuolyną, o senais ar neįgaliais Vilniaus vyskupijos kunigais buvo rūpinamasi vyskupo ir kapitulos iniciatyva įsteigtuose kunigų emeritų namuose. Pagaliau iš bendro kapitulos išdo dalijama išmalda padėdavo elgetaujantiems Vilniaus vargšams išgyventi dar vieną dieną.

Nepaisant to, kad kapitulos pajamos nuolat augo, iš jos išdo kasmet labdaringoms institucijoms mokamos sumos buvo sąlyginai nedidelės (išskyrus Šv. Roko špitolę). Vis dėlto šios išmokos kartu su kitais špitolių pajamų šaltiniais sudarė reikšmingą pajamų dalį, nes būdavo mokamos daugiau ar mažiau reguliariai. Tyrimas parodė, kad XVIII a. pirmojoje pusėje pasikeitė ir išmokų špitolėms tvarka: nuo nereguliarių, skirtingo dydžio išmokų buvo pereita prie pastovių sumų. Šis pokytis atspindėjo racialesnę, geriau apmąstytą kapitulos narių požiūrį į savo įsipareigojimus labdaringoms institucijoms ir jose globojamiems vargšams.

Kapitulos labdaringa veikla ir jos reikšmė sprendžiant skurdo problemą vertintina nevienareikšmiškai. Viena vertus, Šv. Marijos Magdalenos ir Šv. Juozapo Arimateičio ir Nikodemo špitolėse buvo globojama vos po keletą senų ar neįgalių individų. Nors kapitulos dalijama išmalda buvo vienas iš pajamų šaltinių elgetaujantiems vargšams, vis dėlto ji būdavo dalijama nereguliariai, todėl jiems reikėdavo ieškoti ir kitų alternatyvų. Kita vertus, svarbu įvertinti kapitulos paramą didelei Šv. Roko špitolei, kurioje buvo gydomi neturtingi žmonės, sergantys įvairiomis vidaus ir venerinėmis ligomis. Tai jau liudijo prelatų ir kanauninkų siekį prisidėti prie aktualių socialinių problemų sprendimo.

Įteikta / Received 2018 06 28
Priimta / Accepted 2018 09 13