



T raveling in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–17th Century. Mobility Conditions and Travellers' Everyday Life

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Abstract

The article analyses traveling conditions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–17th century. It is aimed at establishing the reasons for the mobility of the GDL citizens in the period in question which were effected by social and economic changes as well as those related to the development of the urban network in the country. Several types of journeys have been distinguished which is indicative of the intensity of population mobility. The general road condition was far from excellent which affected their usability, particularly in wet spells. Attempts to ensure road maintenance and repairs were not equally distributed and not always timely. This was one of the factors accountable for the pace and comfort of traveling. The research also dwells on the everyday life on the road that both the citizens of the country and its visitors experienced as well as issues related to attacks on travellers and highway robberies.

Rezumat

Articolul de față analizează condițiile de călătorie în Marele Ducat al Lituaniei din secolele al XVI-lea și al XVII-lea. Acesta are ca scop stabilirea motivelor pentru mobilitatea cetățenilor din Marele Ducat în perioada avută în vedere care au fost afectate de schimbările sociale și economice intervenite, precum și de dezvoltarea rețelei urbane din țară. Au fost identificate câteva tipuri de călătorii, ceea ce indică intensitatea mobilității populației. Starea generală a drumurilor a fost departe de a fi excelentă, ceea ce a afectat capacitatea de utilizare a acestora, în special în perioadele cu umiditate accentuată. Asigurarea lucrărilor de întreținere și reparații a drumurilor nu a fost realizată într-o manieră unitară iar muncile nu au fost întotdeauna efectuate în timp util. Acesta a fost unul dintre factorii responsabili pentru ritmul și confortul călătoriei. Cercetarea investighează, de asemenea, viața de zi cu zi pe trasele pe care s-au deplasat atât cetățenii țării, cât și vizitatorii acesteia, precum și aspectele legate de atacuri asupra călătorilor și jafuri la drumul mare.

Keywords: Grand Duchy of Lithuania, historical geography, traveling, roads, guides, robbers.

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European historiography can boast of a wealth of research on the concept of traveling in the Middle Ages and the early modern period¹. Both – trips to faraway lands and the mobility of local population have been studied. The late 15th c. marked the beginning of Europeans' trips to unexplored regions in search of new continents and trade routes. Renaissance witnessed the formation of the concept of the "Grand Tour" when well-off and most often rather young people would go on a sightseeing or educational trip or a pilgrimage². Thus was their way of testing themselves and learning more about the world. In the contexts of the worldview of those times travel accounts were a kind of mental maps which allowed other people or travellers to form a clear view of the lands they had not yet visited³. Traveller's memoirs and itineraries offer ample information on traveling in the 16th-17th c.⁴. They convey not only the traveller's

¹ For example, see Albet C. Leighton, *Transport and Communication in Early Medieval Europe AD 500–1100* (David Charles: Newton Abbot, 1972); *L'Homme et la route en Europe occidentale au Moyen Âge et aux temps modernes. Centre culturel l'abbey de Flaron deuxième journées internationales d'histoire 20-22 septembre 1980* (Auch, 1982); Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Le noble désir de courir le monde. Voyager en Asie au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, Fayard, 2002); *Straßen- und Verkehrswesen im hohen und späten Mittelalter (Vorträge und Forschungen, Bd. 66)*. Hrsg. Schwinges Rainer, Ch. (Ostfildern, 2007); *Géographes et voyageurs au Moyen Âge. Sous la direction d'Henri Bresc et d'Emmanuelle Tixier du Mesnil* (Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2012).

² For more information see John Towner, "'The Grand Tour". A Key Phase in the History of Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research* 12, 3 (1985): 297–333.

³ See François Demotz, 'L'homme des IX^e–XI^e siècles face aux plus hautes montagnes d'Europe. Espace connu, espace imaginé et espace vécu dans les récits de traversée des Alpes du nord', in *Géographes et voyageurs au Moyen Âge. Sous la direction d'Henri Bresc et d'Emmanuelle Tixier du Mesnil*. (Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2012): 100–105. Historian Rustis Kamuntavičius analysed how certain views of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and its inhabitants in the 16th-17th c. were spread via the accounts of West European travellers. See Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*. Daktaro disertacija, humanitariniai mokslai, istorija (05H), (Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, Kaunas, 2002): 33–109; Rustis Kamuntavičius, 'Memoirs of French Travellers: A Source of Lithuanian History in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 3, 1998: 27–48.

⁴ For example, *Sigismund von Herberstein: Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand Basel 1556 und Wien 1557*. Unter der Leitung von Frank Kämpfer erstellt von Eva Maurer und Andreas Fülberth. Redigiert und herausgegeben von Hermann Beyer-Thoma (München, 2007); *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel. Aus drei Handschriften*. Hrsg. Haszler Konrad Dietrich (Stuttgart, 1866); François Paulin Dalairac, *Les anecdotes de Pologne ou memoires secrets du regne de Jean III du nom*, t. 2 (Amsterdam, 1699); *Poselstwo polsko – litewskie do Moskwy w roku 1678 szczęśliwie przedsięwzięte, opisane przez*

impressions but also traveling related everyday routines which were subject to the climate and geographic conditions in a particular region. In the 16th–17th c., European countries and cities attracted people from peripheral regions of the continent, however, trips from Western Europe to Eastern Europe were rather rare. For the most part these were business trips, which included envoys of the Pope and foreign monarchs and merchant trips to purchase goods⁵. In such cases the destination usually was capital cities of the region, such as Vilnius or Moscow.

At that time, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) covered a vast territory, therefore travellers would often have to visit or cross it. Nevertheless historiography contains little data on trips to the GDL, their conception, and circumstances. Therefore this information has undergone little adaptation in historical accounts. The reason for this most probably being the fact that very few integrated sources, i.e. travel itineraries or journals, which would facilitate the research of the scope of traveling in the GDL and speak about the travellers themselves, have been preserved. Thus European traveling related historiography sheds little light on traveling realities in the GDL. It seems that a greater variety of sources, for example, court files, might facilitate a more thorough analysis and reconstruction of everyday life on the road. Although relevant data recorded therein are rather episodic, coupled together they may lead to valuable conclusions. This particular approach is used in the article whose object of research is the everyday life on the road in the territory of the GDL in the 16th–17th c.

The research aims at implementing the following objectives: 1) identifying the reasons for people mobility in the GDL in the 16th–17th c. and typologizing trips; 2) dwelling on the communication – road condition in the GDL as it was accountable for the pace and comfort of traveling; 3) reconstruction of traveller's everyday life in the GDL; 4) establishing threat

naoczego śiadka Bernarda Tannera. Opr. Strojny A., Rzepiela M. (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze Historia Iagellonica, 2002); Teodoras Jevlašauskis, *Atsiminimai*. Parengė Vilimas D., iš senosios gduų kalbos vertė Pranckevičiūtė-Lūžienė N. (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 1998).

⁵ See Tomas Čelkis, 'Kaip keliauta Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XV–XVII a.?', *Liaudies kultūra*, 4, 2015: 6–14.

and risk factors when traveling – was it dangerous for people to travel in the country?

The geographic area of the research matches that of the GDL in the 16th-17th c. This was determined by the sources as travel accounts and other sources bespeak of the country as a whole. There were few traveling related regional peculiarities in the GDL in the 16th-17th c. as communication infrastructure was more or less the same nationwide⁶. The only limitation, however, would be the uneven population density accountable for road condition and various facilities (more inns, safer journey)⁷. Similar reasons have determined the chronology of the research – the 16th-17th c. – as this was the period that saw the maturity of the country's communication infrastructure and development of the most important mobility routes.

The viability of the research is suggested by the state of historiography. As it has already been mentioned, European historiography on traveling in the 16th-17th c. is ample, whereas studies that would similarly regard people mobility and traveling in the GDL are few and far between. One of the most comprehensive analyses was written by historian Antoni Mączak⁸. It dwells on traveling in Europe in the early modern period with a more extensive account of mobility in the Kingdom of Poland and beyond, touching upon traveling related topics in the GDL. In his research of the image of Lithuania in French and Italian writings of the 16th-17th c. historian Rustis Kamuntavičius dwelled on the experience and impressions of foreign travellers that were recorded following their visits to the GDL⁹.

⁶ See Tomas Čelkis, 'Vieškelių tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1, 2019 (Vilnius, 2019): 33–77.

⁷ For more information on the uneven population of the territory of the GDL see Otton Hedemann, *Dawne puszcze i wody* (Wilno: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1934); Otton Hedemann, *Dzieje Puszczy Białowieskiej w Polsce przedrozbiorowej (w okresie do 1798 roku)* (Warszawa: Instytut Badawczy Lasów Państwowych, 1939); Anthony R. French, 'The Historical Geography of the Forests of Byelorussia in the Sixteenth Century', *The Journal of Belarusian Studies* 1 (3), 1967: 168–183.

⁸ Mączak Antoni, *Travel in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

⁹ Rustis Kamuntavičius, 'Memoirs of French Travellers: A Source of Lithuanian History in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century': 27–48; Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*; Rustis Kamuntavičius, 'XVI a. pirmosios pusės imperatoriaus pasiuntinys Frančėskas Da Kolas, Lietuva ir tarpininkavimo misija Maskvoje', in *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės istorijos kraštovaizdis*. Sud. Šmigelskytė–

Historians Raimonda Ragauskienė¹⁰ and Deimantas Karvelis¹¹ touched a little upon the topics of the traveller's everyday life. Whereas historian Seweryn Wysłouch¹² in his book dwelled on such issues as travel arrangements, road maintenance, duties imposed on transported goods, and provision for travelling officials in the GDL in the 15th-16th c. Tomas Čelkis has also published several similar articles on the topic¹³. The lack in historiography suggests of meagre explication of the topic. This might be accountable for the fact that there is little data on traveling in the GDL in the works of scholars working on traveling and mobility related topics.

The analysis of the research subject is based on the primary archival and published sources. Relevant information can be expected in documents of more or less all categories. The author makes a wider use of narrative sources – memoirs of 16th-17th century diplomats containing traveling data and travel accounts – as well as relies on the archives of the GDL Chancellery, the so-called Lithuanian Metrica, as materials pertaining to court matters contained therein is a source of information on people mobility: complaints about attacks on the roads are recorded, traveling related circumstances indicative of reasons and nature of mobility are described. Similar data can also be detected in the court books of the

Stukienė R. (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2012): 239–253; Русис Камунтавичюс, 'Падарожжы па Літве XVI–XVII ст.: досвед італьянцаў і французай', *Беларускі гістарычны агляд*, 10, 1 (18), Менск, 2003.

¹⁰ Raimonda Ragauskienė, „Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika“, *Istorijos šaltinių tyrimai*, 3. Sud. D. Antanavičius (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2010): 85–111.

¹¹ Deimantas Karvelis, *Iš Radvilų giminės istorijos: Biržų kunigaikštystė ir jos visuomenė 1547–1655 m.* (Vilnius: Lietuvos edukologijos universiteto leidykla, 2015).

¹² Seweryn Wysłouch, *Posługi komunikacyjne w miastach W. Ks. Litewskiego na prawie Magdeburskiem do połowy XVI w.* (Wilno: Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej, 1936).

¹³ Tomas Čelkis, 'Stan drog lądowych i struktura systemu połączeń w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w końcu XV–XVII wieku', *Zapiski Historyczne*, 79 (zeszyt 3), 2014: 39–61; Tomas Čelkis, „Valdovo keliai“ Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės teritorinės struktūros sandaroje XV–XVI amžiuje, in *Lietuvos Statutas ir Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės bajoriškoji visuomenė. Straipsnių rinkinys*. Sud. Valikonytė I., Steponavičienė L. (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2015): 247–259; Tomas Čelkis, 'Kaip keliauta Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XV–XVII a.?: 6–14; Tomas Čelkis, 'Vieškelio tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.?: 33–77.

administrative units of the GDL. Although the said information is rather formal, taken as a whole it allows certain insights into mobility in the GDL.

Reasons for People Mobility in the GDL in the 16th-17th Century

In the 16th-17th c. people mobility in the GDL increased significantly as compared to previous centuries. This was due to changes in their social life. The country's administration in the 16th c. was for the most part based on the powers of officials traveling around the country, rather than the practice of the traveling sovereign¹⁴. The former were tasked with the administration of local territories on behalf of the sovereign. However, the links between these officials and the sovereign's court had to be rather tight¹⁵. And not only for the good of the proper functioning of the executive power but also because of the aspiration of the noble officials to maintain close relations with the sovereign as the nobility were concerned with their career, expected favours and privileges from the sovereign. The territorial administration of the country and the emergence of the local administration encouraged people to move around the territory for practical reasons. They had to take tribute to the sovereign's manors or fulfil certain traditional obligations which included maintenance of the sovereign's castles, shipment of construction materials or transportation of the sovereign's officials and their luggage from one place to another¹⁶. The functioning of courts also encouraged mobility of local population as people would appeal to judges and local officials (administrators) to execute justice¹⁷. The codification of the

¹⁴ See Rimvydas Petrauskas, *Lietuvos diduomenė XIV a. pabaigoje – XV a. Sudėtis–Struktūra–Valdžia* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2003): 153–167; Tomas Čelkis, '„Valdovo keliai“ Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės teritorinės struktūros sandaroje XV–XVI amžiuje': 247–259.

¹⁵ See Rimvydas Petrauskas, 'Kształtowanie się instytucji dworu wielkksiążęcego w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim (koniec XIV – połwa XV wieku)', *Pismo Wydziału Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Politeja*, 2 (16), Kraków, 2011: 156–185.

¹⁶ See Мітрофан Довнаръ-Запольскій, *Государственное хозяйство Великаго Княжества Литовскаго при Ягеллонахъ*, т. 1 (Кіевъ, Типографія Императорскаго Университета св. Владиміра, 1901): 584–789; Edvardas Gudavičius, 'Lietuvių pašauktinės kariuomenės organizacijos bruožai', *Karo archyvas*, 13, Vilnius, 1992: 43–118.

¹⁷ See Иван Иванович Лаппо, 'Подкоморский суд в Великом Княжестве Литовском в конце XVI и начале XVII в.', *Журнал Министерства Народного Просвещения*, часть 324, С. Петербургъ, 1899: 341–403; Иван Иванович Лаппо, 'Гродский суд в Великом кн

First Statute of Lithuania (1529) resulted in the inclusion of the generally accepted norm that if the court required evidence and reasoning, written documents were considered better and more trustworthy evidence than witness statements¹⁸. Therefore people tended to conclude property related agreements and conflict resolutions in writing and have them legally approved by a judge or a local official. Written documents acquired legal power. This way closer contacts between local people and officials were established, thus resulting in the need for a more intense mobility. On the other hand, no structural government of the country would have been possible save for such connections. Here the established network of overland roads came in handy as inland waterways were more intended for trade than for public life¹⁹.

Another important factor that induced mobility in the GDL in the 16th c. was changes in the social life. An increase in the functions that the nobility had developed in the 15th c. was observed. The clergy, whose representatives were in charge of pastoral care in their parishes and participated in the public life, is also attributable to the nobility as most of its representatives were from noble descent. In general, at that time the basis of the nobleman's status was landownership which in the 16th-17th c. underwent significant expansion as it was accompanied by the processes of peasants' enslavement which started back in the times of Grand Duke Vytautas²⁰. As a reward for military service, the latter would give noblemen lands with the peasants that inhabited them which in their own turn became legally "bound" to that land – not free but owned by the landlords. Thus in

Литовском XVI столетии', *Журнал Министерства Народного Просвещения, Новая серия*, часть 13, С. Петербургъ, 1908: 51–113; Darius Vilimas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės žemės teismo sistemos formavimasis (1564–1588)* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2006).

¹⁸ *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas. Tekstas senąja baltarusių, lotynų ir senąja lenkų kalbomis*, 2 (1). Parengė Lazutka S., Valikonytė I., Gudavičius E. ir kt. (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991): 220–222 (8 skyrius, 4 straipsnis).

¹⁹ For more information on the network of highways see Tomas Čelkis, 'Vieškelio tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.': 33–60.

²⁰ See Jurginis Juozas, *Baudžiavos įsigalėjimas Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1962): 58–169; Jūratė Kiaupienė, Rimvydas Petrauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Nauji horizontai: dinastija, visuomenė, valstybė. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1386–1529 m.* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2009): 286–298.

the 16th c. it became established that one of the centres of public life in a local area was the nobleman's manor with dependent lands and peasants' villages.

The 16th c. witnessed an intense process of internal colonization in the GDL – forested lands were cleared and used for peasants to settle. Changes in the historical landscape were for the most part affected by the Vokok Reform implemented in 1547 (in order to increase the effectiveness of agriculture 21.4 ha size farms with a strict three-field system for crop rotation were established)²¹. The Reform had an impact on the country's urban structure – highlighted the distinction between rural and urban areas²². Changes in the network of settlements resulted in changes in the system of communication with the emergence of private roads around manors²³. A new network of cities and towns was established in the GDL in the 16th-17th c.²⁴. The cities, however, were rather agrarian in their nature as alongside "urban" businesses most citizens kept their "rural" businesses. The example of towns in the Duchy of Biržai suggests that townsmen owned land outside the town and would go to work on it²⁵. Thus, to meet the demand for such short-distance trips the network of local roads in the area was established. The parish was an important axis of public life in the GDL. Not only people would go to churches, clergymen were also quite mobile. At that time there

²¹ See Владимир Иванович Пичета, *Аграрная реформа Сигизмунда-Августа в Литовско-Русском государстве* (Москва: Издательство АН СССР, 1958).

²² For more information see Juozas Jurginis, 'Valakų reformos reikšmė Lietuvos miestams', *Lietuvos TSR Mokslų akademijos darbai, A serija*, 3 (52), 1975: 75–87; Elmantas Meilus, 'Lietuvos miestų ir miestelių išsidėstymo raida (XVII a. antroje pusėje – XVIII a.)', *Urbanistika ir rajoninis planavimas*, 15, 1988: 60–106; Kazys Šešelgis, *Lietuvių liaudies architektūros paminklai 5. Gatviniai ir vienkieminiai Aukštaitijos kaimai* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1998): 9–42; Zigmantas Kiaupa, 'Žemaitijos miestelių ir miestų tinklo susidarymas XV a.–XVI a. pirmojoje pusėje', *Konstantinas Jablonskis ir istorija. Sud. Rimša E.* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2005): 155–170.

²³ Tomas Čelkis, 'Vieškelio tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.': 44.

²⁴ See Stanisław Alexandrowicz, *Studia z dziejów miasteczek Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2011): 19–93.

²⁵ See Deimantas Karvelis, *Iš Radvilų giminės istorijos: Biržų kunigaikštystė ir jos visuomenė 1547–1655 m.*: 164–180, 403–412.

was a shortage of priests in the GDL parishes, therefore quite a few of them had a visiting priest who would serve two or more churches²⁶.

Such local trips can be denominated as “minor trips” when only short distances were covered moving around the local area – going from towns (settlements) to mills, marketplaces, courts or churches. Whereas another type of traveling – long trips when long distances were covered and highways were used to travel from one urban centre to another – may as well be called “major trips”. Such were travels that transcended the local spaces or state boundaries. Not only citizens of the GDL but also foreigners would set out on such journeys. They were mercantile in their nature – local and foreign merchants were trading in the towns and cities of the GDL. However, this type of traveling also applies to diplomatic envoys tasked with certain foreign affairs related missions as well as educational trips (*grad tur*) when well-off noblemen would leave the GDL for foreign universities or cities²⁷. There were travellers – the so-called roamers (usually from abroad) who would travel the world without any clear pragmatic or educational purposes, driven by a certain quest of adventure²⁸. It seems that the trip itself was their goal and hobby especially when the financial circumstances would allow that.

The Better the Road the More Comfortable the Journey – the State of Overland Roads in the GDL

Travel possibilities in the GDL were subject to climate and geographic conditions which had a great impact on the local mobility of the population as well as the whole of their everyday life. As suggested by travel accounts, in the 16th–17th c. foreigners from Western Europe viewed the

²⁶ See Reda Brūžaitė, *Vilniaus ir Žemaičių vyskupijų parapinė dvasininkija XV–XVI a. trečiajame ketvirtyje*. Daktaro disertacija, humanitariniai mokslai, istorija (05H) (Vilniaus universitetas, 2012): 96–138, 203–229.

²⁷ For more information see Milda Kvizikevičiūtė, *Vakarų Europa XVI a. antroje pusėje–XVIII a. Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kelionių raštijoje*. Daktaro disertacija, humanitariniai mokslai, istorija ir archeologija (H 005) (Vilniaus universitetas, 2019): 33–56.

²⁸ For example, Samuel Kiechel's visit to Vilnius: *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel. Aus drei Handschriften*: 99–103.

GDL as a densely forested marshy land of harsh climate²⁹. The research carried out by historian Wolfgang Behringer suggests³⁰ that back in 1965 Hubert Lamb had established that a certain warming was observed in Europe in the High Middle Ages (around 1000–1300) (source data were compared to the statistics of 1931–1960). At that time the climate that prevailed on the continent was characterized by hot and dry summers and mild winters which on average were 1–2°C warmer and further to the north might as well have been warmer up to 4°C. However, in the late 13th (early 14th) c. the climate all around Europe started to change – it was getting cooler and wetter and in the 14th c., with the beginning of the so-called Little Ice Age which continued up to the 19th c., was becoming even colder. It is believed that the peak of the cold spell was reached in the 17th c.³¹. The said climate changes were characteristic of all Europe. However, foreigners who visited the GDL in the 16th–17th c. noted cooler and damper climate in the country. Another feature that would catch their eye was tenebrous, densely forested, and barely urbanized landscape. What amplified these negative impressions was the obvious economic underdevelopment as compared to Western Europe. For example, in the early 17th c. British traveller Fynes Moryson wrote that Lithuania was extremely marshy and densely forested with settlements up to 20 German miles apart, therefore it was not recommended to travel around the country in summer, only in winter when everything froze³². In fact, the quality of traveling and mobility in general in

²⁹ For more information see Henryk Zins, *Polska w oczach Anglików XIV–XVI wiek* (Lublin: Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej (ed 2), 2002): 209–210; Kęstutis Gudmantas, ‘„Miškų ir pelkių kraštas“, Keletas pastabų apie Lietuvos įvaizdį XIII–XVII a. raštijoje’, *Pelkė lietuvių kultūroje. Inter studia humanitatis*, 7, 2008: 94–113; Adriaan Verhulst, *Le paysage rural: les structures parcellaires de l’Europe du Nord-Ouest* (Turnhout, 1995): 20–82.

³⁰ Wolfgang Behringer, *A cultural history of climate*. Translated by P. Camiller (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010): 74–76. The finding was supported by historian Artūras Dubonis. See Darius Baronas, Artūras Dubonis, Rimvydas Petrauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. XIII a.–1385 m. valstybės iškilimas tarp Rytų ir Vakarų*, t. 3 (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2011): 21–22.

³¹ See Wolfgang Behringer, *A cultural history of climate*: 86, 88, 93–98; Arūnas Bukantis, *Neįprasti gamtos reiškiniai Lietuvos žemėse XI–XX amžiuose* (Vilnius: Geografijos institutas, 1997): 14–43.

³² Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Yeers Travell through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England,*

the region was subject to the existing system of roads. As it has already been mentioned, changes in the social and urban life in the GDL contributed to the maturity of the communication infrastructure. The network of roads that existed in the 16th-17th c. was well-established and rather dense³³. Its smallest links were short-distance roads connecting villages and farmsteads which served the local community but were not particularly comfortable and the bridges across the rivers were poorly constructed and rather unstable. Other roads covered longer distances as they connected settlements with towns and played an important role in the country's public life. Most of them were used by traveling merchants. These roads were of much better condition as the powiat's local authorities were in charge of their maintenance. The emergence of major landownership and the network of economic centres, i.e. manors, was accompanied by the construction of long-distance private roads commissioned by noblemen. The principal arteries of land communication were public roads, otherwise known as highways. These were long-distance routes that connected urban, economic, and political centres. Smaller roads would lead to highways. Highway routes were used by the absolute majority of the population and foreign visitors. For example, at times merchants would be purposefully instructed to take certain highway routes so that they would trade and purchase wherever the authorities wanted them to, and this practice was regulated by law³⁴. Today, it would be logical to assume that the distances of traveling routes should be based on the time-distance proportion so that the traveller reached the destination as fast as possible. However, in the period under consideration this logic was not always applied. For example, in the 16th c. the city of Trakai – the old capital of the GDL – was off the important trade route between the two metropolises – the Vilnius-Kaunas highway. Therefore in his privilege to Trakai issued in 1516 the sovereign of the GDL instructed all

Scotland & Ireland, t. 4 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons Publishers to the University, 1908): 68.

³³ Čelkis Tomas, 'Vieškelio tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.': p. 42–46.

³⁴ See Zigmantas Kiaupa, 'Rygos miesto partneriai Lietuvoje nuo valstybės susidarymo iki Livonijos karo pradžios', in *Istorijos akiračiai. Skiriama profesoriaus habilituoto daktaro Antano Tylos 75-mečiui* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2004): 58.

merchants traveling from Vilnius to Kaunas to make a detour to Trakai and trade there³⁵.

Foreign diplomats and envoys of certain states would take the largest and at times some of the smaller roads. In the 16th c., certain routes even had special names suggesting of their abovementioned function, for example, the “Old Envoy and Foot-messenger Route”³⁶, the “Great Envoy Route”³⁷, etc. In fact, highways were favoured by travellers as most of them were controlled and guarded by the sovereign’s officials³⁸. Highways were traditionally regarded as roads that served the sovereign’s needs³⁹. Therefore the sovereign had to ensure that envoys and travellers would safely reach their destinations. Despite the dense network of roads their condition was rather poor, thus slowing the pace of traveling and making trips less comfortable. First of all, this was due to the GDL being a swampy and wet land. Cartographic sources of the 18th c., though for the most part focusing on the better cultivated landscape, evidence that the country was densely forested and rather marshy⁴⁰. This again is suggested by the sources that make a distinction between seasonal “summer” and “winter” roads, thus adjusting to the relief⁴¹. Summer roads were more enduring, mostly used in the warm and wet season, however, they were longer as the road had to lead around

³⁵ *Lietuvos Metrika. Knyga Nr. 9 (1511–1518). Užrašymų knyga 9*. Parengė Pietkiewicz K. (Vilnius: Žara, 2003), nr. 553. (15): 306; Lietuvos magdeburginių miestų privilegijos ir aktai, t. 6. Trakai. Sud.. A. Baliulis (Vilnius: Mokslo, 2008), nr. 238: 279; nr. 104: 227.

³⁶ *Lietuvos Metrika. Knyga Nr. 14 (1524–1529). Užrašymų knyga 14*. Parengė Karalius L., Antanavičius D. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 2008), nr. 905: 391: *до Москвы старою дорогою, на Борисов и на Друческъ, а ие на Могилевъ [...] старая дорога посломъ и гонцом бывала на Борисовъ и на Друческъ. [...] дорогу новую на Могилевъ закладываемъ.*

³⁷ *Ibid*, nr. 849: 360: *здавна дорога гончая великая з Вилни до Новагородка лежала на Каменку, и на Колодези а на имена его милости на Кзераноины Мурованые.*

³⁸ Tomas Čelkis, ‘„Valdovo keliai“ Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės teritorinės struktūros sandaroje XV–XVI amžiuje’: 247–259.

³⁹ See Sławomis Gawlas, *O kształt zjednoczonego Królestwa* (Warszawa: DIG, 2000): 19–23

⁴⁰ See Giovanni Antonio Rizzi-Zannoni, *map of Poland 1772 m.*, in igrek.amzp.pl/details.php?id=11764710 (last viewed: 14/07/2019); *Lietuva žemėlapiuose*. Sud. Bieliūnienė A., Kulnytė B., Subotniekienė R. (Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus, 2002): 120 (A 19th century map of the eastern part of the former territory of the GDL, a number of swamps marked on its north-eastern part).

⁴¹ Tomas Čelkis, ‘Vieškelio tinklo struktūra Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVII a.’: 43.

the impassable wetlands. Winter roads would emerge in the cold season, after the marshes and rivers had frozen. For example, if local people were unable to transport the resources they had accumulated (feeds, wood) during the summer, they would leave them where they were and wait for the winter to take them home⁴². It can be noted that most foreign diplomats would travel in the region in the cold season as traveling then was faster and easier. They claim that in winter the beds of frozen rivers would turn into perfect “motorways” with no uphill or large obstacles and that by taking one you could be sure to always reach the intended destination⁴³. For example, in 1516–1517 Sigismund von Herberstein was crossing the GDL in winter to get to Moscow⁴⁴, whereas the envoy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Bernard Tanner travelled to Moscow in February-March of 1678⁴⁵. However, there were cases when travellers would not take the season into consideration, for instance, the visit of German traveller Samuel Kiechel in 1586⁴⁶. In any case, envoy trips were planned with regard to the political situation when certain urgent state-related issues had to be resolved. Similarly, merchants' trips could also not wait for a more comfortable season.

State officials were tasked with monitoring the condition of the most important roads and highways of the GDL, as this was the decisive factor in the intensity of the country's public life as well as efficiency of territorial administration and trade. If a road was in a bad state, merchants would refuse to travel along it to visit a town and would rather take a nearby more

⁴² In the 1504 description of the boundaries of lands allocated by the sovereign to Vosylis Glinskis in Dubičiai area (outside Varėna) there is a reference to a “winter road” accross a swamp, as people could only carry hay across the swamp after it had frozen: *Lietuvos Metrika. knyga Nr. 5 (1427–1506). Užrašymų knyga 5*. Parengė Baliulis A., Dubonis A., Antanavičius A. (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2012): nr. 558, p. 373. Another case of reference to a “winter road” dates back to 1568 and pertains to the demarcation of land near the castle of Vitebsk: *по полянки Лебедевы ж Кисловские, и по дороге зимнюю, и тым дорожищом зимним з Боровицы: Lietuvos Metrika. knyga Nr. 51 (1566–1574). Užrašymų knyga 51*. Parengė Baliulis A., Ragauskienė R., Ragauskas A. (Vilnius: Žara, 2009): nr. 146: 202.

⁴³ Tomas Čelkis, ‘Kaip keliauta Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XV–XVII a.?’: 8.

⁴⁴ *Sigismund von Herberstein: Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand Basel 1556 und Wien 1557: 447–453.*

⁴⁵ *Poselstwo polsko – litewskie do Moskwy w roku 1678 szczęśliwie przedsięwzięte, opisane przez naoczego śiadka Bernarda Tannera: 107–110.*

⁴⁶ *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel. Aus drei Handschriften: 99–103.*

comfortable road. At times the sovereign would encourage the town community to fix their roads as it was obvious to his administration and the townsmen that such situation was to the prejudice of their trade-related interests⁴⁷. The central authorities also made efforts to ensure proper road and bridge maintenance. Usually repair works on local roads were carried out on the initiative of local officials. There is evidence that in the 16th-17th c. the GDL voivodeships employed bridgemen⁴⁸. Their function was to fix bridges and to rally people for such tasks. However, it is obvious that they were unable to take care of all the bridges, they focused their attention on the most important ones. Wooden bridges across rivers (which were in an overwhelming majority across the country) were most likely to suffer in spring when the floating ice would severely damage or even destroy them. This caused inconveniences not only to travellers but also to the locals. For instance, in 1529 parishioners complained to the priest that their way to Dubičiai (outside Varėna) church had been extremely dangerous and professedly several had even drowned while crossing the river⁴⁹.

In spring, swollen rivers would often flood passages. For example, in the 16th c. envoy Sigismund von Herberstein indicated that while traveling from Vilnius to Moscow they had to take an uncomfortable and difficult road through melting snow and ice, among pools and lakes and near Opokai, in order to continue their journey, they even had to build a bridge across some pools and a river (*colonorum nimirum multitudine praemissa, qui quaelibet impedimenta arboresque incidendo submovere, paludes ac fluvios pontibus sternere*

⁴⁷ In 1647 the sovereign of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Władysław IV Vasa ordered the citizens of Simnas to cut some trees in his forest and make pavements around the town as the town was located in a hollow where roads after the rain were impassable. *Lietuvos magdeburginių miestų privilegijos ir aktai, t. 8. Lazdijai. Simnas*. Sud. Drungilas J. (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2013), nr. 48: 179–180

⁴⁸ A few examples: bridgeman Mr. Jan Mayczak is mentioned in the instruction of the Brest sejm of 1670, see *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 4. Акты Брестского городского суда* (Вильна, 1870), № 249: 84; bridgeman from Polotsk Jonas Boleslovaitis Svyriškis is mentioned in a court file of 1566, in: *Lietuvos Metrika (1565–1566). 50-oji Teismų bylų knyga*. Parengė Steponavičienė L., Valikonytė I. (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2014), nr. 70: 171–172.

⁴⁹ See Reda Brūžaitė, *Vilniaus ir Žemaičių vyskupijų parapiinė dvasininkija XV–XVI a. trečiajame ketvirtyje*: 206.

coguntur)⁵⁰. There were no possibilities to fix all the bridges in time and at times the works would not start due to unresolved financial issues as no one wished to pay for the repairs. Such disputes would at times even end up in court. For example, in 1547 the sovereign's subjects from Sudervė volost (outside Vilnius) complained to the vicegerent in Vilnius that the noblemen residing in the area refused to help them with the maintenance of a bridge (exact location not indicated) as it was time to clean the silt, fix the bridge, and provide materials⁵¹. An attempt was made to lay the noblemen under the obligation to take a hand in the bridge maintenance works as they were also using it. In other cases, when there were no bridges, rivers were crossed at fords or passings where floats were used to get to the other bank of the river⁵².

Passage through marshes was even more difficult. Here *medgrindos* – laid out reinforced logs wide enough for two carriages to pass – proved very helpful⁵³. Such structure would stretch for dozens of kilometres. The evidence can be found in the account of the Emperor's diplomat Francesco Da Collo's trip to Moscow in June of 1518 where he stated that having passed Brest they found themselves in the vast moorland which they crossed going along the "wooden road" for the rest of the day⁵⁴. In other cases, in less marshy locations wet places were passed using less expensive techniques, i.e. by laying down bunches of tree branches, the so-called *kamšos*⁵⁵. In

⁵⁰ Sigismund von Herberstein: *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand Basel 1556 und Wien 1557*: 452–453.

⁵¹ *Lietuvos Metrika (1546–1548). 19-oji Teismų bylų knyga*. Parengė Valikonytė I., Viskantaitė-Saviščeviėnė S., Steponavičienė L. (Vilnius universiteto leidyklas, 2009), nr. 122: 159.

⁵² See Laimontas Karalius, 'Upių keltų rinkliavos Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės muitų sistemoje XVI a. I pusėje', *Mūsų praeitis*, 6, 1999: 3–22. In 1542 the monarch issued a privilege to the voigt and burgermeister of Vilnius and all the citizens to collect duties on floats that carried people across the Neris and the Žeimena rivers. See *Lietuvos Metrika 12-oji Teismų bylų knyga*. Parengė Valikonytė I., Šlimienė N., Viskantaitė-Saviščeviėnė S., Steponavičienė L. (Vilnius universiteto leidykla, 2007), nr. 244: 207.

⁵³ See Laimontas Karalius, 'Tiltai, pervažiuojamieji perkolai, kamšos, pagrandos, mediniai grindiniai, pylimai Lietuvos Didžiosios kunigaikštystės sausumos keliuose XVI amžiuje', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1, 2008 (Vilnius, 2009): 14–15;

⁵⁴ See Rustis Kamuntavičius, 'XVI a. pirmosios pusės imperatoriaus pasiuntinys Frančeskas Da Kolas, Lietuva ir tarpininkavimo misija Maskvoje': 264.

⁵⁵ The document dating back to the 1540s issued to the noblemen of Skaruliai of Kaunas powiat to confirm their dominion and define its boundaries, makes a reference to a swampy

particularly lively places embankments with log flooring in the width of two horse-driven carriages and stretching for up to 200 metres were erected⁵⁶. Structures that facilitated communication were expensive, therefore they would mostly be built on central roads and highways where the traffic was heaviest. They would catch the travellers' eye not only because of their architecture but also because of the duties that were often collected in order to pass⁵⁷.

Everyday Life on the GDL Roads

It has already been mentioned that 16th-17th c. trips in the GDL can be classified as "major trips" and "minor trips", based on their distances, destinations, composition of traveling groups, and other distinctions. However, when an attempt is made to understand the practical side of a trip and its everyday routine, it is necessary to speak about these trips in general, as if synthesizing the available data, as everyone who travelled at that time would sooner or later face most of the peculiarities of such journeys. Such approach to the reconstruction helps avoid distorting the general image of the research, moreover, makes it more thorough, discloses preparations made before traveling, the proceedings, and various obstacles that travellers would face.

Local people who would take short-distance ("minor") trips left no accounts of the same as it was a part of their everyday life that no one would give much prominence. Whereas foreign envoys and merchants who travelled across the GDL would record their experience and part of their

section on the road which is called *камша: привели насъ тою дорогою на мостак, Комъшею зовуть, от тое Комъшы привели нас на дорогу Соленицкую*. See *Lietuvos Metrika (1540–1543). 12-oji Teismų bylą knyga*, nr. 177, p. 158; Laimontas Karalius, 'Tiltai, pervažiuojamieji perkolai, kamšos, pagrandos, mediniai grindiniai, pylimai Lietuvos Didžiosios kunigaikštystės sausumos keliuose XVI amžiuje': 16–17.

⁵⁶ *Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, Rīga*, F. 7404, Apr. 1, l. 2193, p. 27. See also Tomas Čelkis, 'Stan drog ładowych i struktura systemu połączeń w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w końcu XV–XVII wieku': 39–61.

⁵⁷ For more information on customs duties in the GDL see Laimontas Karalius, 'Privatūs muitai XVI a. Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystėje: dar viena bajorų ekonominio aktyvumo sritis?', in *Tarp istorijos ir būtovės: studijos prof. Edvardo Gudavičiaus 70-mečiui*. Sud. Bumblauskas A., Petrauskas R. (Vilnius: Aidai, 1999): 263–276.

texts have been published⁵⁸. Such accounts were popular in Western Europe as they helped learn more about little explored lands and travellers' experiences⁵⁹. Meanwhile, detailed travel descriptions prepared by diplomats served as a kind of methodological means in the diplomatic work of their successors. Thus one learned about geography, traditions, and possible dangers in remote countries.

Diplomats who would go on long-distance cross-border trips were usually people of higher social status, mostly noblemen. In their everyday life they were also more mobile as periodically visited their manors scattered across the GDL. Based on R. Ragauskienė's calculations, at that time, if needed, some noblemen would cover up to 600 or even 1000 km⁶⁰. Whereas common people of the GDL, such as peasants, lead rather sedentary lives and would only move in their local area. Although there were exceptional cases when they were required to fulfil the duty and offer a lift to the sovereign or a lord (carry tributes, goods), thus visiting more remote towns and castles situated as far as 120 km⁶¹. Townsmen (tradesmen) were much more mobile as they would take long-distance journeys covering 150–600 km⁶².

⁵⁸ For more information see Tomas Čelkis, 'Kaip keliauta Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XV–XVII a.?' : 6–9; Milda Kvizikevičiūtė, *Vakarų Europa XVI a. antroje pusėje–XVIII a. Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kelionių raštijoje*: 52–61, 100–109.

⁵⁹ See Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*: 33. There is a manuscript booklet stored at the Manuscript Department of Vilnius University Library (written in 1615–1620), listing various roads across Europe, including those leading to the GDL, for example: Warsaw – Vilnius, Riga – Vilnius, and indicating distances in miles. See *Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius*, F. 3–2429, l. 286–311.

⁶⁰ Raimonda Ragauskienė, '„Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika': 104.

⁶¹ See more Raimonda Ragauskienė, '„Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika': 94; Jan Jurkiewicz, 'Powinności podwodowe włościan Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim (XVI–XVII w.). Z Zagadnień ich terminologii i klasyfikacji', in *Istorijos akiračiai. Skiriama profesoriaus habilituoto daktaro Antano Tylos 75-mečiui* (Vilnius, 2004): 101–126.

⁶² Raimonda Ragauskienė, '„Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika': 94.

The size of the escort was subject to the purpose of the trip and the status of the traveller – the higher his status, the larger his escort⁶³. Diplomats would be escorted by security guards and servants. Security guards would also escort noblemen's carriages⁶⁴. Merchants made attempts to form larger groups⁶⁵. An additional security option when traveling abroad was to request a guarantee letter – the safe-conduct document (*Freies Geleit*) – from the sovereign of the country you were about to visit, thus ensuring security in the lands under his rule⁶⁶. These documents could be secured at the highest level – monarchs (their chancelleries) would address each other to request one. An eloquent example could be the safe-conduct document issued in 1560 in the environment of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I in favour of diplomat Valentin Saurman who went to the GDL and lived there for a while. It includes a request: *we strictly instruct our subjects and those of the Holy Roman Empire and benevolently urge and kindly request all others not only to let the aforementioned envoy together with his escort and servants, horses, carriages, and all their items to freely, safely, and without any hindrance go, pass or stay at any place or location, but also to assist him and mediate in the provision of security guards, guides, horses, carriages, and all other items necessary to accelerate the journey for which he will pay the required and proper price*⁶⁷. This reveals a lot

⁶³ In some cases, for example in the Grand Envoy of Lew Sapieha of 1600–1601 the escort consisted of nearly a thousand men, see *Elijas Pilgrimovijus, Didžioji Leono Sapiegos pasiuntinybė į Maskvą, 1600-1601 m.* Parengė Kiaupienė J. (Vilnius: Žara, 2002): 5–14.

⁶⁴ Raimonda Ragauskienė, „Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika: 99.

⁶⁵ 16th c. merchant Martin Gruneweg gives evidence of the fact, see *Мартин Груневез (отец Венцеслав): духовник Марины Мнишек. Записки о торговой поездке в Москву в 1584–1585 гг.* Состав. Хорошкевич А. Л. (Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 2013): 151–246.

⁶⁶ The permit issued in 1469 by the King of England and Ireland Edward to Aleksandras Soltanas from the GDL to freely travel around the country, see *Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, F5-A25-4489. 1496 m. (?)*; the safe-conduct document issued by the sovereign of the GDL to the envoy of Moscow with the description of the route across the GDL: *Źródła dziejowe, t. 10, Sprawy Wotolskie za Jagiellonów.* Wyd. Jabłonowski A. (Warszawa, 1878), Nr. 10: 65. In the 1580s GDL nobleman Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (the Orphan) when making preparations for his trip to Jerusalem also had a safe-conduct document. See *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, F. 354 (Archiwum Radziwiłłów), D. 11–97, l. 1.*

⁶⁷ *Valentino Saurmano laišakai imperatoriui Ferdinandui I iš Žygimanto Augusto Vilniaus dvaro (1561–1562 m.). Lietuvos didžiųjų kunigaikščių rūmų studijos IV.* Sud. ir parengė Antanavičius D., Gerulaitienė V., Kiaupienė J. (Vilnius: Lietuvos pilys, 2009): 239.

about the preparation for the trip. Protective letters were issued not only to diplomats, but also to merchants trading on a larger scale. In 1528, merchant from Constantinople Gaslan Karamant indicated at the Brest castle court that he had a guarantee letter signed by the King of Poland allowing him to safely transport goods across the GDL to Vilnius⁶⁸.

There is a reference to guides in the above-cited Emperor's letter. These people were much needed and very helpful. They knew the correct and safe route and places where travellers could stop overnight, replenish their supplies, and feed the horses. There was a great risk of getting lost if one did not know the way. Therefore diplomats would accurately describe the routes they followed so that other envoys traveling later might use them⁶⁹. According to R. Kamuntavičius, at the end of the 17th c. texts describing traveling peculiarities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and even indicating distances between cities were published around Europe⁷⁰. This material was very handy to merchants who were constantly on the move. In the 17th c. the city of Riga – a major commercial port on the Baltic Sea – was concerned with speeding up merchants' journeys, therefore special signs – several metre high wooden poles indicating distances and directions – were erected alongside the major roads⁷¹. They would feature Riga's coat of arms and indicate the distance left to the city. However, in order to avoid getting disorientated in the network of roads, one needed a guide. Unfortunately, they were rarely mentioned in travellers' itineraries, most probably due to the fact that few resolved to travel unexplored roads without a guide. The letter written in 1561 by the GDL envoys in Moscow to

⁶⁸ *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 5: Акты Брестского и Гродненского гродских судов, с присовокуплением привилегий на землевладение в Брестской и Кобринской экономиях* (Вильна, 1871), № 424: 12.

⁶⁹ One of the most comprehensive accounts is envoy of the Holy Roman Empire Siegmund von Herberstein's description of his trip to Moscow. See *Sigismund von Herberstein: Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand Basel 1556 und Wien 1557*.

⁷⁰ See Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*: 33.

⁷¹ *Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, Rīga*, F. 2909, Apr. 1, l. 91, p. 2. See also Tomas Čelkis, 'Stan drog łądowych i struktura systemu połączeń w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w końcu XV–XVII wieku': 51.

the King of the GDL Sigismund Augustus once again suggests that traveling without guides was complicated⁷². It was stated in the letter that following unsuccessful negotiations the envoys were urged to leave the territory of the state of Moscow in twelve days. Although the envoys of the GDL asked the Muscovites to assign a guide, their request was disregarded. The time allocated to cross the border of the GDL was insufficient, therefore the crazy haste resulted in the horses falling exhausted along the way, as the envoys risked their lives if they failed to leave the country on time.

It was not only the guides that were part of the escorts of some important people. Cooks are at times mentioned among other servants. The secretary of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Petras Veževičius in his travel account written in 1635 makes numerous references to meal times as well as what and where he ate each day⁷³. In 1678 the envoy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Moscow B. Tanner also had a cook⁷⁴. They were not only tasked with cooking but before setting out had to make an estimate of how much supplies they would need as in the sparsely populated GDL, especially its eastern regions, there were no possibilities to regularly replenish supplies⁷⁵. Therefore travellers had to carry larger amounts of provisions. Foreign envoys who travelled across the GDL in the second half of the 15th c. would note that the country was densely forested with few settlements⁷⁶. Alongside the roads they would spot camps with bonfires and firewood left by those who travelled before them. There were tramps on the roads, so guards were keeping watch when camping overnight. The sources offer no information on how and what the horses were fed during the trips, though an assumption can be made that travellers would carry hay and oats purchased in villages and inns along the way.

⁷² Valentino Saurmano laišakai imperatoriui Ferdinandui I iš Žygimanto Augusto Vilniaus dvaro (1561–1562 m.): 43.

⁷³ *Археографический сборникъ документовъ относящихся к исторіи Северо-западной Руси*, т. 4 (Вильна, 1867), № 51: 92–100.

⁷⁴ *Poselstwo polsko – litewskie do Moskwy w roku 1678 szczęśliwie przedsięwzięte, opisane przez naocznego śiadka Bernarda Tannera*: 107–138.

⁷⁵ See Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*: 34, 36.

⁷⁶ Čelkis Tomas, 'Kaip keliauta Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XV–XVII a.?: 10.

In his itinerary Sigismund von Herberstein, who in 1516–1517 crossed the GDL to get to Moscow, would more often than not indicate distances in miles between towns and settlements⁷⁷. For example, eight miles across a forest separated Narew (Podlachia) from Krynki, where the officials of the GDL sovereign were awaiting him to accompany to Vilnius. This envoy described the GDL as densely forested. It was also indicated that on his way from Vilnius to Polotsk he passed numerous lakes, swamps, and vast forests stretching for fifty German miles⁷⁸. Nevertheless, the traveller noted that, judging by the vegetation, the soil in this part of the country should be quite fertile. The road from Vilnius to Moscow was uncomfortable and difficult, covered in melting snow and ice and leading across pools and lakes⁷⁹. Not only the trip was tiresome but the travellers had difficulties finding proper shelter to spend the nights. German traveller Samuel Kiechel visited the GDL in 1586⁸⁰. On his way from Königsberg he came to Grodno and then continued to Vilnius. He wrote that when the city was about three hours away they entered a dense and tenebrous forest, the road suddenly started winding uphill and from above the travellers could see a long valley punctuated by numerous towns and villages, around thirty of which were inhabited by Tartars. He spent eleven days in Vilnius and made friends with a merchant who was on his way to Riga. The merchant had hired two Tartars for four guilders to carry his goods. The traveller, however, pointed out, that the Tartars did not inspire much confidence neither in him nor in the merchant. Therefore, for confidence reasons they were asked for a guaranty – an oath, which, it was claimed, was a common practice in such cases.

In the 17th c. the GDL was still viewed as a country offering little convenience to travellers. In 1636, apostolic nuncio Mario Filonardi described the trip from Vilnius to Warsaw as difficult and noted that the road

⁷⁷ *Sigismund von Herberstein: Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand* Basel 1556 und Wien 1557: 447.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*: 451.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*: 452.

⁸⁰ *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel. Aus drei Handschriften*: 99–103; Геннадий Саганович, 'Вильна в описании немецкого путешественника Самуэля Кихеля (1586 г.)', *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra. 6 Knyga. Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos sąveika: kultūrinė Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis* (Vilnius, 1998): 193–197.

winded through forests of high pines with few villages along the way⁸¹. An almost identical account is offered by Philippe Avril who in 1687–1689 transited to Moscow⁸², whereas in 1688, French serviceman François Paulin Dalairac made a remark about the harsh climate in the region (*c'est un climat trop rude*)⁸³. The abovementioned envoy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth B. Tanner had a very difficult journey to Moscow in February-March of 1678⁸⁴. It was constantly raining along the way and with the melting snow it was so damp that the travellers had difficulties making fire. At times the road was impassable and horses would stick in the mud. It is no wonder that these travellers were trying to keep warm by consuming alcohol – beer and vodka with honey – when spending the nights at inns owned by local Jews. It is no secret that to set out on a trip like that one required a great deal of stamina and good health. Even more so as there were few possibilities to have a rest and spend the night at an inn as they were few and far between even at the central highways. According to R. Kamuntavičius, inns in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were rather poor, not at all times serving food, therefore travellers tried to take as much provisions as they could⁸⁵. To ensure better comfort, even beds were at times carried when traveling. In his account *Apie kelionę per Lietuvą* (About the Trip across Lithuania) issued in 1560 the GDL intellectual and priest Petras Roizijus (Pedro Ruiz de Moros) mockingly noted that spending the night at an inn was not much different from spending the night in a cattle-

⁸¹ Tereza Chynczewska-Hennel, 'Pobyt Maria Filonardiego w Wilnie (1636 r.)', *Barok. Historia-Literatura-Sztuka*, 5/2 (10) (1998): 51.

⁸² *Voyage en divers Etats d'Europe et d'Asie, Etrepris pour découvrir un nouveau chemin à la Chine. Contenant Plusieurs Remarques curieuses de Physique, de Geographie, d'Hydrographie & d'Histoire. Avec une description de la grande Tartarie, & des differens Peuples qui l'habitent* (Paris, 1692): 237–238.

⁸³ François Paulin Dalairac, *Les anecdotes de Pologne ou memoires secrets du regne de Jean III du nom*: 357–359.

⁸⁴ *Poselstwo polsko – litewskie do Moskwy w roku 1678 szczęśliwie przedsięwzięte, opisane przez naocznego śiadka Bernarda Tannera*: 126–127, 138.

⁸⁵ Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*: 34. See Иван Гаврилович Прыжов, 'Корчма. Исторический очерк', *Русский архив*, Вып. 7 (С.-Петербург, 1866): 1053–1064; Bohdan Baranowski, *Polska karczma. Restauracja. Kawiarnia* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk: Ossolineum, 1979): 7–44.

shed⁸⁶. Moreover, alcohol consumption at inns would at times lead to fights and thefts⁸⁷. The journal of P. Veževičius' envoy to Moscow of 1635 dwells not only on the lodging conditions in wayside inns but also on the possibilities to change horses⁸⁸. Tending for horses and giving them the possibility to rest was very important as this was one of the conditions of a successful journey. This is well revealed in merchant Martin Gruneweg's,⁸⁹ who in 1584–1585 travelled from Poland to Moscow via Kiev, account of the trip as he would time and time again emphasize the horses' rest and describe their pastures.

Little is known about horse-drawn carts and sledges which were used as a means of transport. The sources offer little information on their construction, though most probably wooden four-wheel carts were used⁹⁰. According to R. Ragauskienė, various carts were usually locally produced, though noblemen would at times purchase carriages made by foreign craftsmen⁹¹. Some of the carriages were robust in construction, iron-trimmed, fully or partially covered⁹². Based on the analogy with Poland, it is obvious that in 16th–17th c. journeys the most popular means of transport were four-wheel fully covered carts and carriages pulled by several pairs of

⁸⁶ See Petras Maureus Roizijus, *Rinktiniai eilėraščiai*. Sud. Narbutas S. (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2008): 236–237; Rustis Kamuntavičius, *Lietuvos įvaizdžio stereotipai italų ir prancūzų XVI–XVII a. literatūroje*: 34.

⁸⁷ Zigmantas Kiaupa, 'Karčema prie karčemos. XVI a. vaizdai', *Ritualas. Blaivybė. Kultūra* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1989): 7–24.

⁸⁸ *Археографический сборникъ документовъ относящихся к исторіи Северо-западной Руси*, т. 4, № 51: 92–100. Valstybės pareigūnai arklius kartais keisdavo pastotėse, gyventojai juos turėdavo duoti kaip prievolę. See also *Акты Литовско-Русского государства (1390–1529)*, вып. 1. Изданные Довнар-Запольским М. (Москва, 1899), № 171: 194; Seweryn Wysłouch, *Posługi komunikacyjne w miastach W. Ks. Litewskiego na prawie Magdeburskiem do połowy XVI w.*: 13–126.

⁸⁹ See *Мартин Груневег (отец Венцеслав): духовник Марины Мнишек. Записки о торговой поездке в Москву в 1584–1585 гг.*: 151–246.

⁹⁰ *Z Kroniki Sarmacyi europejskiej Alexandra Gwagnina z Werony (Hrabie Pałacu Laterańskiego, Rycerza Pasowanego i Rotmistrza J.K.M.) Opisanie Polski, W. Ks. Litewskiego, Ziemie Ruskiej, Ziemie Pruskiej, Ziemie Inflantskiej, Ziemie Żmudzkiej* (Kraków, 1860): 355–356.

⁹¹ Raimonda Ragauskienė, '„Dingę istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika': 95.

⁹² See Neringa Dambrauskaitė, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaištystės bajorų namai XVI a. – XVII a. pirmoje pusėje* (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2019): 126–127.

horses⁹³. Drawings produced by the Emperor's envoy Augustin Freiherr von Meyerberg, who in 1661–1662 travelled across the GDL to Moscow, depict towns and villages as well as one-horse four-wheel peasants' carts and fully covered carriages pulled by a team of horses and accompanied by groups of horsemen on the roads⁹⁴. In winter horse-drawn sledges were used⁹⁵. Horses were driven by the driver sitting in the sledge, though there were cases when the driver would sit on horseback. Vehicle breakdowns and wheel breakages were considered a great misfortune when traveling⁹⁶. This would require repair works or would even lead to purchasing new carriages.

In general, it can be stated that traveling in the GDL was far from easy. Road condition was rather poor and travellers were not always lucky to find a place to spend the night. Those who set out on a trip had to be particularly patient and ready for the unexpected.

What Could Not be Foreseen – Dangers and Adventures on the Roads of the GDL

The experience of West European travellers suggests that it was not only the objective difficulties, such as hardly passable road sections, that awaited them on the roads – robber attacks were a common feature of traveling in the 16th-17th c.⁹⁷. That was the time when the phenomenon of the so-called highwaymen came into existence. Most probably this can be coupled with the increasing mobility of better-off people (merchants, landlords, etc.) as the early modern period in Europe is associated with

⁹³ See Lech Zimowski, *Geneza i rozwój komunikacji pocztowej na ziemiach polskich* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Komunikacji i Łączności, 1972): 77–90.

⁹⁴ See Саулведис Янович Цимерманис, 'Альбом путешествия И. Р. Штурна 1661–1662 годов как источник изучения истории материальной культуры Латвии', in *Источниковедческие проблемы истории народов Прибалтики* (Рига: Зинатне, 1970): 75–107.

⁹⁵ Герберштейн и его „Записки о Московии“. Ред. Ругел Ю. (Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 2010): 162.

⁹⁶ See Raimonda Ragauskienė, '„Dinge istorijoje“: XVI a. LDK privačių archyvų dokumentų dinamika': 100.

⁹⁷ For more information on the topic in historiography see Michael Billett, *Highwaymen and outlaws* (London: Arms and Armour, 1997): 152; Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates. The making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009): 71; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).

economic growth and increasing standard of living⁹⁸. The GDL also underwent similar changes, though less intensive. Unfortunately, no consistent investigation into the criminogenic situation and the phenomenon of highway robberies in the GDL at that time is available. This would really facilitate the analysis of risks that travellers faced on the road. However, the available sources (court cases) suggest that there were certain dangers. Even more so as the country, especially its eastern territories, was sparsely populated and nature in those days was considered a source of mysteries and danger⁹⁹. Therefore, travellers had to brace themselves for the unexpected.

The legislation of the GDL – the First Statute of Lithuania (1529) – defined the assault and robbery committed against a traveller as a specific crime as the most important roads and highways were a place of public life¹⁰⁰. For example, in 1540 Senka Pavlovičius brought an action against Ofanasas Ivaškevičius in the land court of Grodno. The former claimed that at night he heard that the accused Ofanasas was driving across his ray field beside his homestead (in Labenskiiai village). His attempt to reduce the trespasser to discipline resulted in a fight. Senka himself took a hit or two but when his wife and neighbours raced to rescue him, Ofanasas ran away leaving his horse and cart. Ofanasas, however, testified in front of the court that he got lost at night and accidentally drove off the highway into the fields, but was desperately looking for his way back to the highway. That was when he was attacked and even robbed by Senka. The judge, having heard the statements, observed that the incident occurred on private land rather than on a highway (public space). Thus the landlord could manage his possessions as he wished and the claim had to be heard as a dispute with

⁹⁸ See more Darius Žiemelis, 'XVI–XVIII amžiaus Abiejų Tautų Respublikos palivarko ūkis marksistiniu bei neoinstitucionalistiniu požiūriu', *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 27, 2011: 11–38.

⁹⁹ See François Demotz, 'L'homme des IXe–XIe siècles face aux plus hautes montagnes d'Europe': 101–104.

¹⁰⁰ *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas. Tekstas senąja baltarusių, lotynų ir senąja lenkų kalbomis*: 204–206 (7 skyrius, 16 straipsnis), 206 (7 skyrius, 18 straipsnis), 208 (7 skyrius, p. 21).

regard to damaged property, rather than a highway robbery (which would have been prejudice to public interest)¹⁰¹.

No information about attacks on diplomats and foreign merchants traveling along the GDL roads and highways when on their “major trips” can be detected in the sources. Most probably due to the fact that they would travel in groups, accompanied by security guards, and carrying the sovereign’s guarantee letters. In his memoirs nobleman Teodoras Jevlašauskis claims that when in 1586 he was traveling from Vilnius to Kaunas and spending a night at a wayside inn he was attacked by robbers. Fortunately, a group of merchants soon arrived at the inn and scared the robbers away¹⁰². The ample materials related to the 16th-17th c. court matters suggest that there was almost no serious organized robbery on the roads of the GDL as preventive measures were implemented against such criminal activities. Sources dating back to the 15th c. indicate that there was a special obligation in place for the noblemen to ensure security on the most important roads¹⁰³. Whereas an inscription in the Brest castle book of 1693 suggests that following merchants’ complaints with regard to highway robbery, captains of horses (*Rittmeister*) were appointed to guard the roads and catch offenders¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰¹ Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 17, Акты Гродненского земского суда (Вильна, 1890), № 568: 210.

¹⁰² Teodoras Jevlašauskis, *Atsiminimai*: 52.

¹⁰³ In 1449 the sovereign of the GDL Sigismund Jagiellon laid the noblemen of Vilkaiviškis under the obligation to guard the roads as it was done in Vytautas’ times, the squad consisted of ten people; see *Литовская Метрика. Книга третья записей, Русская историческая библиотека*, т. 27 (С. Петербург, 1910), № 26: 104. The ruling of the sovereign of 1499 also makes a reference to road guarding, stating that the road was guarded for weeks and once supplies were provided for traveling officials. See *Акты Литовско-Русского государства (1390–1529)*, вып. 1. Изданные Довнар-Запольским М. (Москва, 1899), № 69: 93–94; *Литовская Метрика. Книга вторая судныхъ делъ 1506–1523, Русская историческая библиотека*, т. 20 (С. Петербург, 1903), № 109: 144.

¹⁰⁴ Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 4. Акты Брестскаго гродскаго суда, № 302: 208: *panów rotmistrzów, obywatelów woiewodztwa tego po traktach naznaczone: w trakcia Kamienieckim – wielmożnego imci pana Ludwika Pocięcia – podkomorzego woiewóztwa Brzeskiego; w trakcie Brzeskim – imci pana Krzysztofa z Konopnice Grabowskiego – sędziego ziemskiego Brzeskiego; w trakcie Prużanskim – imci pana Reynalda Sadowskiego – podstolego Brzeskiego; w trakcie Kobryńskim – imci pana Stanisława Rusieckiego – kasztelanica Mińskiego.*

Sources provide little information on dangers that travellers faced when on their “major trips”, but there are ample data on attacks and robberies during short-distance trips. This might be due to the fact that the latter trips were made almost exclusively by the locals who would travel alone or in very small groups. Therefore they had fewer chances to hold the field against a larger group of better-prepared attackers. At times these assaults were pre-planned as one had to know who, when, and where was carrying valuable goods. For instance, the court case of 1566 suggests that at the land court of Slanim two ladies – Nastasija Meleškova and Nastasija Vasiljevna Tiškoviča together with Andriejus Jackovičius (driver) lodged a complaint against gentlemen Abramovas Danilevičius Meleška, Stanislovas Raguvska and their accomplices¹⁰⁵. The claimants testified that at dusk they were traveling in Slanim powiat from Devetkovičiai to Buserai carrying two chests of money and valuables (gold pieces, pearls, luxury clothes) and were attacked on the highway by the aforementioned individuals. They were beaten up, injured, and robbed of the cart, horse, and all the valuables. It was obvious that information about the victims had been collected, they had been followed. Undoubtedly, negligence of the noblemen was also to blame as it was irresponsible to travel a remote road at dusk carrying valuable things. Another example is the complaint of Duke Petras Timotiejavičius Puzina of 1559 stating that when traveling from Bistryčia (outside Astravas) to Vilnius at midnight he and his servants were attacked by Duke Lukas Bolka and his numerous accomplices who beat them up and chased when they tried to run¹⁰⁶. Information derived from court files suggests that most often such attacks were carried out by noblemen with their accomplices making use of subordinate peasants. In a more general contexts, however, major robberies were rare.

Not all the offences had been pre-planned, there were cases of spontaneous conflicts between travellers who would accidentally meet on the road. Despite being strangers, they would almost always start a

¹⁰⁵ *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 22. Акты Слонимского земского суда* (Вильна, 1895), № 302, с. 297–298.

¹⁰⁶ *Lietuwoos Metrika (1559–1563). 40-oji Teismų bylą knyga*. Parengė N. Šlimienė, I. Valikonytė (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2015), nr. 14: 46–47.

conversation¹⁰⁷. These conversations would oftentimes escalate to quarrels and then fights which resulted in the losers being robbed of their valuable possessions. Usually people under the influence of alcohol would get involved into such conflicts. Most of them would be on their way home from towns and cities, mills and markets and having paid a visit to the local inn. The fact that most such incidents would happen at weekends and in broad daylight suggests of the same. Material derived from court matters also allows the assumption that people at that time were rather hot-tempered, did not avoid conflicts and displaying arrogance or superiority – this is especially true when speaking about the nobility. For instance, a case of 1556 in the land court of Grodno where foresters of Navahrudak powiat gentlemen Sebastojanas Dybovskis and Motiejus Želegovskis claimed that on the highway leading from Grodno to Naujadvaris on the Nemunas they were attacked by the sovereign's Tartar from Grodno powiat Milkomanas Miskovičius and his accomplices who injured not only them but also their white horse¹⁰⁸. Tartar Milkomanas, however, testified that he was waiting for his people at the roadside near the bridge as he noticed the two claimants coming towards him. As he was standing there mister Želegovskis urged his horse directly at him and when he asked why he was doing that he urged

¹⁰⁷ An extract from the book of Brest castle court of 1621: official of Brest voivodeship Mr. Kristupas Briūkas Slavinskis filed a complaint against Zemanas Orlė Abramovičius and other Jews from Šerševas stating that on St. John's Day he was traveling in a cart along the Prūžanai – Šerševas highway being heavily drunk. Not far from the church of Starovol he met the Jews and asked where they were going. Whereas the Jews, seeing that he was under the influence and quite wealthy, without saying a word came up to his cart, started beating him with poles and took away his sword worth seven auksinas. See *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 5. Акты Брестского и Гродненского гродских судов, с присовокуплением привилегий на землевладение в Брестской и Кобринской экономиях: № 426, 16–17*. In 1540 the land court of Grodno was hearing a case where the subject of the sovereign Mykolas Jankavičius filed a complaint against another subject of the sovereign Jonas Kukulavičius stating that the latter came up to him travelling along the road at night, stopped him, climbed into his cart, started searching his pockets until he found a sack of 40 groschen. The defendant took the sack and started punching and pushing the claimant about. The claimant started shouting and the people who were nearby came to his rescue. The defendant, however, tried to defend himself by lying that he did nothing like that and was himself attacked and beaten up by the claimant. See *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 17. Акты Гродненского земского суда: № 491: 181*.

¹⁰⁸ *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 21, Акты Гродненского земского суда (Вильна, 1894), № 291: 180–181*.

the horse even harder. That was why the Tartar unsheathed his sword to protect himself and his wife. Such spontaneous and unpredictable behaviour was part of everyday life on the road.

Violence and attacks were rather common during “minor trips”. Travellers could be beaten up or even murdered. At times the assaults were associated with revenge and travellers were attacked but not robbed¹⁰⁹. The timing when the target was on the road was chosen purposely as the victim was far from home and could not quickly find help, so the offenders would hit and run. Travellers would usually be robbed of horses, carts, money, valuable items, and clothes¹¹⁰. For example, in 1542 Jonas Vaitkevičius testified in court that his daughter and her carriage driver were traveling along the road and near Karklėnai village were attacked by Griška Mikolajevičius' people who beat them up and took their horse and cart¹¹¹. Another example indicates that in 1575 people of the canon of Vilnius carrying animal pelts were ambushed by a company from Olizaravas manor, beaten up and robbed of their carts with the goods and money¹¹². Documents of the castle court or the land court which dealt with criminal cases always described the loss suffered and detailed the lost items. A curious robbery

¹⁰⁹ A complaint to the elder of Drahyčín of 1532 stating that citizens of Drahyčín Feliksas and Mikalojus Prigotskis suffered Baltramiejus Poniatovskis' wrongdoings. As it can be seen, the latter had trespassed the boundaries of their lands, thus igniting a conflict. Moreover, the conflict escalated to such extent that Baltramiejus Poniatovskis, most probably in a fit of rage and seeking revenge, attacked the third brother of the former two Stanislovas when he was traveling along a highway and beat him to death. See *Lietuvos Metrika. Knyga Nr. 17 (1533–1536). Užrašymų knyga 17*. Parengė Karalius L., Antanavičius D. (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2015), nr. 172: 195.

¹¹⁰ The report of the investigator at the court hearing of the Brest castle court in 1625. An incident in the dominion of Mr. Jonas Verešiakas in the village of Podolė where on the highway outside the village of Stryjai his subjects were attacked by the King's peasants from Kobryn and beaten up following a fight. The fight was a severe one as there were not only injuries inflicted but wisps of hair torn out and women were beaten up. Various items and pieces of clothing were taken away, including overcoats and expensive caps that cost 6 groschen each, and one auksinas. See *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею, т. 6. I. Акты Брестского гродского суда (поточные); II. Акты Брестского подкоморского суда; III. Акты Брестской магдебургии; IV. Акты Кобринской магдебургии; V. Акты Каменецкой магдебургии (Вильна, 1872), № 78: 113–115.*

¹¹¹ *Lietuvos Metrika (1528–1547). 6-oji Teismų bylų knyga*. Parengė Lazutka S., Valikonytė I. (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 1995), nr. 373: 255–256.

¹¹² *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskiių biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius F43-17268, l. 1.*

testimony can be found among court documents of 1541¹¹³. Noblemen of Vitebsk voivodeship claimed that they were carrying tribute to the sovereign – eight and a half barrels of flour. On the highway in the vicinity of Rūdninkai (outside Vilnius) drunk officials of the sovereigns' forests Petras and Martynas left an inn and together with their accomplices attacked them, beat them up, took three horses and carts and even took off one nobleman's boots. The defendants, however, in response presented a different side of the story. They claimed that the noblemen of the Voivode of Vitebsk stopped at a ditch beside the road and made a fire thus waking a bear that was sleeping in the ditch. One can presume that the beast got out and attacked them so they ran away leaving the carts behind. All the accused admitted that they could not resist the temptation to rob the unattended carts but swore to God that this was their only wrongdoing. Thus the bear not only became one of the "eyewitnesses" but also a kind of a scapegoat for all the harm suffered. Foreign travellers would note that in the densely forested GDL there were lots of wild beasts that travellers should beware.

Traveling in the territory of the GDL was not dangerous. There were no organized gangs of robbers that would rampage in the country. Although there is evidence of isolated cases when merchants would complain about the threat of being robbed, most attacks on the roads become evident from court files when dealing with the locals' complaints with regard to injuries suffered when traveling. These offences, however, were rather spontaneous in their nature, instigated by accidental conversations, quarrels, and conflicts among fellow travellers.

Conclusions

1. Public mobility in the 16th-17th c. GDL was rather intense. Territorial government and local administration encouraged people to move around the area due to practical needs. Another factor that stimulated mobility was the functionality of local courts. The said period witnessed the emergence of the network of land roads that connected settlements with noblemen's manors (economic centres) as

¹¹³ *Lietuvos Metrika (1541–1542). 27-oji Užrašymų knyga*. Parengė Valikonytė I., Čelkis I., Steponavičienė L. (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2016), nr. 6: 32–33.

well as newly established towns and cities. Roads connecting urban centres with their surroundings were established. The axis of public life in the GDL was the church visited by all the inhabitants of an area.

2. The local movement of people inhabiting a certain area and covering short distances to travel from settlements (towns) to mills, markets, courts or churches can be denominated as “minor trips”. Journeys of a different kind – “major trips” – would include traveling long-distances along highways, crossing not only the local areas but, if needed, even state borders. Not only citizens of the GDL but also foreign merchants and diplomats would set out on such journeys. Educational trips when well-to-do noblemen would leave the GDL to go to foreign universities and cities can also be attributed to this type of journeys.
3. The quality of traveling in the GDL in the 16th-17th c., was subject to the climate and geographic conditions. Visitors from Western Europe viewed the GDL as a gaunt, densely forested, marshy, and little urbanized country. The locals, however, left no similar comments. Traveling conditions were subject to the state of the road network which in the period in question was well-established and quite dense. It consisted of four types of roads. The smallest local roads connected villages and served the needs of the local communities. Longer-distance roads connected settlements and towns, were part of the public life and thus better maintained. With the formation of the network of manors, noblemen would build private roads. The most important roads were the large highways that connected distant urban centres and that had other roads leading towards them.
4. Road condition in the GDL was rather poor and caused travellers certain inconveniences. Wet weather made traveling difficult, there even existed seasonal “summer” and “winter” roads. The latter would emerge when the swamps froze, thus allowing travellers to shorten distances by taking a more direct route along a swamp or another water body. The central government was concerned with the state of the roads and was engaged in their maintenance and repairs.

Reinforced structures of logs were laid down and embankments were erected in impassable boggy sections. In spring, the floating ice would damage most and destroy some of the bridges. Repair works were slow, so travellers faced lots of inconveniences and at times even had to build their own bridges.

5. Better-off and higher-ranked people would travel with large escorts: security guards and service staff (servants, cooks, etc.). Oftentimes additional security when traveling abroad would be the guarantee letter issued by the sovereign of the destination country which served as legal protection. Guides who knew accurate and safe routes, safe places to spend the night, and wayside inns as well as settlements where travellers could replenish their supplies and feed the horses were very important.
6. In the eyes of foreign visitors the 16th-17th c. GDL was a traveller-unfriendly country – densely forested, with few settlements, and harsh climate. Local people would not note these factors as shortcomings. However, they would also indicate that in spring part of the roads were impassable. Foreigners would complain about poor quality of inns as they were few along the highways and rather poor and cold. At times they would serve no food, only spirits. Alcohol consumption would often result in fights and thefts, therefore such inns were not a very safe place.
7. It was not particularly dangerous to travel in the GDL. There is no evidence in the sources about attacks on diplomats and merchants who crossed the GDL during their “major trips”. The most important highways were guarded. However, there are data about attacks and robberies of the locals during their “minor trips”. Most probably this was due to the fact that they were traveling alone or in small groups, thus being an easy target. At times highway robberies were pre-planned as one had to know when, who, and where would be carrying valuable goods. There is evidence of spontaneous conflicts that would arise following an accidental encounter of travellers. In most cases such conflicts involved people under influence on their way home from inns.

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