INTRODUCTION

The authors of mega-histories have not paid much attention to the Baltic Sea region, and especially to its southeast edge, in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. Arnold Toynbee only mentioned Lithuania in his theory of civilisational (existential) challenges and responses.[1] An attempt was later made to present the region in the context of centre-periphery relations, portraying it as the frontier of Latin culture in European history.[2] These and other mega-stories may illustrate the historical role of the southeast and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea in a broader context, but they say very little about the history of societies in the region.

The current volume, all the articles and even the reviews published in it, is united by two key concepts, the southeast Baltic coast and social history. In the Baltic Sea region, the southeast coast is a small fringe, geographically covering the stretch between the river basins of the Vistula and the Venta. In one part, between the Vistula (Wisła, Weichsel) and the Neman (Nemunas, Memel), was Prussia, which in the first half of the 13th century became one of the dominions of the Teutonic Order, later a duchy, and later a kingdom. It was a heterogeneous entity, with a variety of names, starting from Royal (Polish) Prussia, and ending with (Prussian) Lithuania.[3] There was not a similar abundance of culturally and politically motivated territorial entities in the lands from the rivers Neman to the Venta (Windau), in the historic Žemaitija (Samogitia), and in the Duchy of Curonia. The very concept of the southeast (and east) shore of the Baltic is historiographical and conditional, rather than expressing the historical unity of the region.

The social history of this Baltic shore made its first claims in studies in the period between the two world wars. For example, it was at that time that the first steps in social history were taken in Lithuania.[4] However, for a long time, social history was viewed through a national lens, and after the Second World War it became very strongly committed to Soviet ideology. More was done in Germany and Poland in the

---

[1] TOYNBEE, Arnold. *A Study of History*. Vol. II. Oxford, 1934, p. 172. Cf. BUMBLAUSKAS, Alfredas. Dėl Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės civilizacijos pobūdžio. *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 1996, t. 3, p. 20–21.

[2] Cf. BARTLETT, Robert. *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350*. Princeton, NJ, 1993, pp. 73–75, 99–100, 301; BLOMKVIST, Nils. *The Discovery of the Baltic. The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (AD 1075–1225)*. Leiden, Boston, 2005, pp. 11, 14, 63.

[3] Cf. SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. *The Creation of National Spaces in a Pluricultural Region: The Case of Prussian Lithuania*. Boston, 2016, pp. 17–86.

[4] AVIŽONIS, Konstantinas. *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des litauischen Adels bis zur litauisch-polnischen Union 1385* (Historische Studien, Hf. 223). Berlin, 1932; IVINSKIS, Zenonas. *Geschichte des Bauernstandes in Litauen von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung des Bauernstandes in Litauen im Mittelalter* (Historische Studien, Hf. 236). Berlin, 1933.

field of social history during this period, especially studying the social and economic history of the former domains of the Teutonic Order in Prussia.[5] A number of works devoted to the social history of the northern part of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, including Žemaitija,[6] also appeared in communist Poland. After 1989–1991, overcoming the division of Europe was the most important issue. The development of the societies and economies on the southeast Baltic shore began to be presented in the contexts of Christianisation and Europeanisation. This was especially true for the Medieval period, when the whole region from Prussia to Livonia began to be perceived as the frontier of Western civilisation.[7]

This idea, it must be said, is not new. As early as the 20th century, historians perceived the southeast Baltic region as the frontier of Latin Christianity. At the beginning of the 21st century, a particularly widespread portrayal of the Baltic region as a frontier made it possible to imagine the context alongside a range of other European frontiers (the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, Cyprus, Scotland, and partly Ireland and Iceland) as a kind of oecumenes that Europe discovered not only during the period of the Crusades, but also due to trade and economic relations, the exchange of cultural ideas, and Christianisation.[8] The establishment of new political formations in the Baltic region (including Scandinavia) began to be perceived as the result of socio-economic relations and the development of society on the Christian frontier.[9] Lithuania joined the Christianised countries the last, but research on social structures in

---

5   Cf. the works arising from this research tradition: BOOCKMANN, Hartmut. *Der Deutsche Orden. Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte*. München, 1991; SARNOWSKY, Jürgen. *Die Wirtschaftsführung des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen (1382–1454).* Köln, Weimar, Wien, 1993; *Zakon krzyzacki a spoleczenstwo państwa w Prusach.* Red. Zenon H. NOWAK. Toruń, 1995; BISKUP, Marian, et al. *Państwo zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach. Władza į społeczeństwo*. Red. Marian BISKUP, Roman CZAJA. Warszawa, 2008.

6   ŻYTKOWICZ, Leonid. Rozwarstwienie chlopstwa a gospodarka na Żmudzi w 2 polowie XVII i w XVIII wieku. In *Społeczeństwo staropolskie: studia i szkice*. T. 2. Red. Andrzej WYCZAŃSKI. Warszawa, 1979, s. 229–314; ŻYTKOWICZ, Leonid. Z dziejów gospodarki czynszowej na Żmudzi w XVI–XVIII wieku. Rzekoma reforma ekonomii szawelskiej w 1640 roku. In *Studia nad gospodarką, społeczeństwem i rodziną w Europie późnofeudalnej.* Red. Jerzy TOPLSKI, Cezary KUKLO. Lublin, 1987, s. 95–118; BŁASZCZYK, Grzegorz. *Żmudź w XVII i XVIII wieku: zaludnienie i struktura społecna*. Poznań, 1985.

7   For a summary of the historiography, see: DYGO, Marian. Europäisierung des Ostseeraums im Hochmittelalter. Anmerkungen am Rande neuer Untersuchungen. In *Kultūra – ekonomika – visuomenė: sąveika ir pokyčiai viduramžiais ir ankstyvaisiais naujaisiais laikais Baltijos rytinėje pakrantėje*. Sud. Marius ŠČAVINSKAS. Klaipėda, 2015, p. 17–36. Cf. *Christianization of the Baltic region* (Castri Dominae Nostrae Litterae Annales, vol. I). Ed. by Jerzy GĄSSOWSKI. Pułtusk, 2004; *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*. Ed. by Alan V. MURRAY. Farnham, 2009; *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. Ed. by Marek TAMM, Linda KALJUNDI, Carsten Selch JENSEN. Farnham, 2011.

8   SOOMAN, Imbi; DONECKER, Stefan. Introduction: The many frontiers of the Baltic. In *The "Baltic Frontier" Revisited. Power Structures and Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Baltic Sea Region.* Ed. by Imbi SOOMAN, Stefan DONECKER. Wien, 2009, pp. 11–24.

9   Cf. POULSEN, Bjørn. Kingdoms on the Periphery of Europe. The Case of Medieval Scandinavia. In *Economic Systems and State Finance*. Ed. by Richard BONNEY. Oxford, 1995, pp. 101–122; *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*. Ed. by Nora BEREND. Cambridge, 2007.

recent decades has shown that it very quickly 'caught up' with the 'older members' of Latin Europe. By the Late Middle Ages, it had already become a European-style monarchy, with distinct changes in society. Contemporary historiography presents these changes as part of the broader developments in the Baltic region and/or Central Europe.[10]

How were societies on this part of the Baltic shore perceived in those days of Christianisation? We know that, having begun plundering in the Baltic Sea region, the Vikings turned the southeast edge into a bridgehead for abductions and waterways to Byzantium. This eastward direction was partly reduced by their turn towards the coasts of Anglo-Saxon England and the western Frankish Empire, which offered more prey and greater opportunities for trade and politics. As the Christianisation of the Vikings themselves progressed, the southeast shore of the Baltic was left as a land of unfulfilled geopolitical projects, and pushed into the background, to which the names of 'fire worshipers' and 'magician's country' soon stuck. These epithets created an image of the southeast shore of the Baltic as a harsh country, alien to the Medieval mentality, although in the 11th century, the chronicler Adam of Bremen wrote some beautiful words about some of the barbaric societies on the southeast coast: he called the Prussian Sambians *homines humanissimi*, although the Curonians were pirates who would not leave the west Baltic shores in peace.[11] Medieval scholars thus began to develop a spatial concept of the southeast shore of the Baltic, which was subsequently entrenched by fire and sword in the spirit of the Medieval crusades. They did not discard the image of 'naïve pagans' who should be Christianised. However, against the background of constant wars, violence and looting, the image of 'evil pagans' was more appropriate to the societies of the region. This image induced Medieval man to fight against God's enemies wherever there were Christians, both on the calm banks of the Rhine and in the marshy lowlands of Mecklenburg and Mazovia. Just as other chivalric orders and their helpers on the Iberian Peninsula considered they were carrying out God's struggle against the enemies of the faith, the Teutonic Order claimed to be conducting a holy war against the Baltic Saracens, the enemies of the cross of Christ.[12] How the Teutonic Order

---

[10] GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. *Lietuvos istorija*. T. I: *Nuo seniausių laikų iki 1569 metų*. Vilnius, 1999; PETRAUSKAS, Rimvydas. *Lietuvos diduomenė XIV a. pabaigoje – XV a. Sudėtis – struktūra – valdžia*. Vilnius, 2003; PETRAUSKAS, Rimvydas. Žemaičių diduomenė ir politinė padėtis Žemaitijoje XIV–XV a. pradžioje. In *Žemaičių istorijos virsmas iš 750 metų perspektyvos*. Sud. Antanas IVINSKIS. Vilnius, 2004, p. 151–172; PETRAUSKAS, Rimvydas; KIAUPIENĖ, Jūratė. *Lietuvos istorija*. T. IV: *Nauji horizontai: dinastija, visuomenė, valstybė. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1386–1529 m*. Vilnius, 2009; SAVIŠČEVAS, Eugenijus. *Žemaitijos savivalda ir valdžios elitas 1409–1566 metais*. Vilnius, 2012; BARASA, Darius, et al. *Vertybių transformacijos: Baltijos regiono rytinė pakrantė XIII–XVIII amžiais*: kolektyvinė monografija. Sud. S. C. ROWELL. Klaipėda, 2015.

[11] *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. T. I. Sud. Norbertas VĖLIUS. Vilnius, 1996, p. 189–192.

[12] JENSEN, V. Kurt. Crusading at the End of the World. The Spread of the Idea of Jerusalem after 1099 to the Baltic Sea area and to the Iberian Peninsula. In *Crusading on the Edge. Ideas and Practice of Crusading in Iberia and the Baltic Region 1100–1500* (Outremer. Studies in the Crusades and the Latin East, vol. 4). Ed. by Torben K. NIELSEN, Iben FONNESBERG-SCHMIDT. Turnhout, 2016, pp. 153–176.

contributed to this idea, and how it transferred it even further to Žemaitija, we learn from Gregory Leighton's contribution to this volume. The enemies of Christianity here were not considered honourable; they were portrayed as economically weak, living in slums, and even, according to Jan Długosz, not knowing what cotton clothes and wine were.[13] The whole image was to reinforce the 'savagery' of the pagans in the eyes of the Crusaders. In the broad sense of social history, all this is relevant not only as a set of images and stereotypes. The Teutonic Order created a unique social structure in its conquered areas that was typical for chivalric orders. It was to this new social structure that the Prussian nobles who capitulated in Christburg in the winter of 1249 were to adjust.[14]

The beginning of the Crusades in the Baltic region led to the establishment of the Teutonic Order in large areas of Prussia and Livonia. Lithuania remained independent in this context,[15] but for several centuries it had to participate in what researchers call the clash of different civilisations/cultures, Christianity and paganism, the challenge brutally proffered by Western Europe, and the response boldly accepted by the Lithuanians. With the establishment of spheres of influence and the physical positions of the Teutonic Order and the Grand Duke of Lithuania (regular campaigns, the *Reise*, to Lithuania, eternal crusades), the contours of the new relief in the social structure became clearer, which also increasingly separated the southeast and east shores of the Baltic. It is usual to believe that Christian culture and the norms of Christian life were established in the dominions of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia. At the same time, even though it had joined the large territories of former Kievan Rus' that belonged to the cultural space of Eastern Christianity, pagan Lithuania was seen through the eyes of both the Western and Eastern churches as a land of idolaters and devil worshippers. More significant social change was again inspired only by the rulers of the new generation who accepted Western baptism, Jogaila (Władysław II Jagiełło) and Vytautas. For the Teutonic Order, they dared to offer the fate of the Order of the Templars. However, there is still too much ideology and too little perception of real social change in the opposition between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania. This can be said about both the period before the Union of Kreva and the conversion of Lithuania and subsequently Žemaitija, and the period after. Marcin Sumowski's article in this volume shows (and previous work by other

10

---

[13] Cf. Jan Długosz's 'ethnographic' description of Lithuanian pagans: DYGO, Marian. 'Rudis illa nacio et pannosa': Concerning Jan Długosz's Description of Lithuania's 1387 Conversion in his Annals. In Verbum movet, exemplum trahit. *The Emerging Christian Community in the Eastern Baltice* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, vol. XXXIII). Ed. by Marius ŠČAVINSKAS. Klaipėda, 2016, pp. 99–119.

[14] Cf. DOBROSIELSKA, Alicja. *Opór, opurtunizm współpraca. Prusowie wobec zakonu krzyżackiego w dobie podboju*. Olsztyn, 2017.

[15] GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. *Mindaugas*. Vilnius, 1998.

researchers[16] confirms it) that Prussia ruled by the Teutonic Order faced a series of challenges engaging wider society in Christianisation and catechisation. There was a shortage of clergy with a command of local languages, and this was a challenge faced by Lithuania as well. As Christianisation progressed, Lithuanian-speaking clergy were a rare exception in the initial stages.

After the Union of Kreva, the Christianisation of Lithuania took place somewhat differently from the Christianisation of the so-called 'new Europe'. However, the differences were certainly not so great that Lithuania's conversion was treated as something specific. In addition, the Western Church itself was standing on the threshold of important changes: during the Christianisation of Lithuania and the establishment of the Diocese of Žemaitija, Jan Hus, the leader of the Hussite movement that laid the foundations for the Reformation, was burned at a church meeting in Konstanz. The idolatry of Lithuania (and Prussia) was now one of various insinuations and reflections by Renaissance humanists about the ancient paganism that once existed.[17] Lithuania approaching the cross was now portrayed not as a desperate struggle with the Teutonic Order (although the Battle of Grunwald remained part of the glorious memory), but as a conscious choice of 'naive pagans' to accept Christianity. It is an interesting fact that, in a fresco from the first half of the 15th century in the prominent Strasbourg Church of St Pierre-le-Jeune depicting the path of the European nations towards Christianity, we see Lithuania (Litavia), the last allegorical figure, walking towards the cross; but we see none of the lands on the shores of the Baltic that were Christianised much earlier, neither Prussia nor Livonia.

Understandably, approaching the cross also meant accepting the social processes and Christian culture that evolved in Western Europe.[18] After Lithuania's conversion, the Baltic region became one cultural and economic space as the frontier of Latin Europe. In Lithuania, too, the nobility, by legal means (Casimir's Code, the First Statute of Lithuania), established its supremacy over other social groups, and engaged in trading activities. Trade routes from the depths of Lithuania already led to the most important ports on the southeast and eastern shores of the Baltic, including Riga, Königsberg and Gdańsk, cities of the Hanseatic League that still dominated the Bal-

---

[16] Cf. KUBICKI, Rafał. Mendicant Orders in Medieval Prussia and Livonia: Pastoral Activities in Towns. In Verbum movet, exemplum trahit..., pp. 123–146.

[17] Cf. BRAUER, Michael. *Die Entdeckung des 'Heidentums' in Preußen. Die Preußen in den Reformdiskursen des Spätmittelalters und der Reformation* (Europa in Mittelalter: Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur historischen Komparatistik, Bd. 17). Berlin, 2011.

[18] ROWELL, S.C. Nusikaltę kunigai XV–XVI a. Žemaičiuose: nuo vaikžudžio Lauryno iki mušeikos Mažvydo. Bažnyčios teismo bylos kaip Žemaitijos christianizacijos etapo įrodymas. In *The Unknown Land of Žemaitija: the 13th to the 18th Centuries* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, vol. XXXIX). Ed. by Vacys VAIVADA. Klaipėda, 2019, pp. 169–194; cf. VAIVADA, Vacys. Krikščionybės įsitvirtinimo Žemaitijoje XV a. pab. – XVI a. vid. klausimas: parapijų tinklo raidos ir asmenvardžių kaitos aspektas. In BARASA, D., et al. Op. cit., p. 138–149.

tic Sea in the 15th century.[19] From the 15th century, various raw materials from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were transported through these ports, including wood, grain, wax and flax. In the 16th and 17th centuries, a number of marketplaces, inns and small towns developed near the emerging new and well-used old trade roads.[20] The social and cultural frontier of Latin Europe moved far beyond Pskov, Polotsk and Lutsk.

With intensive social changes progressing in Lithuania and Poland, the dominions of the Teutonic Order gradually entered a crisis in the 15th century.[21] The challenges faced by the Teutonic Order, constrained by the outcome of the Thirteen Years' War, prepared Prussia for new social changes that had already taken place in the 16th century. The picture of society in Prussia on the eve of these changes is revealed somewhat by the contribution by Dainius Elertas. He examines documents prepared for the eventual war with Poland at the beginning of the 16th century, which not only illustrate the situation in Prussia at that time, but also provide data on land ownership in the Memel (Klaipėda) Command. This command, like large areas of land in the western areas of Žemaitija in the north, to Masuria in the south, experienced a wave of new settlement in the 15th and 16th centuries. Migrants from Lithuania (Žemaitija) and Poland also took part. Thus, what were called Lithuanian and Polish districts in the 16th and 18th centuries eventually developed in Prussia. In the former areas of wilderness, a specific land ownership system and social structure had formed, and in the 16th century, a chain of new towns was founded. Dalia Kiseliūnaitė's article adds new meaning to Elertas' research, and captures the 'heat' point of the settlement process. Although the issues Kiseliūnaitė raises are primarily linguistic, they are relevant to our understanding of the broader nature of migration in the changing times of the Early Modern Period.

The secularisation of the Teutonic Order's dominions in Prussia, and their transformation to the Polish fiefdom for a hundred years, ensured peace for Prussia. The epicentre of the conflict moved to Livonia during the 16th century. Prussian and Žemaitijan societies, although politically separate, underwent fundamental change. This manifested itself not only as part of the Reformation and the Catholic revival later in Žemaitija, but also as change in the economic and social structures. The lack

---

[19] DOLLINGER, Philippe. *La Hanse (XIIe–XVIIe Siècles)*. Paris, 1964; *The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (The Northern World, vol. 60). Ed. by Justyna WUBS-MROZEWICZ, Stuart JENKS. Leiden, Boston, 2013.

[20] KIAUPA, Zigmantas. Žemaitijos miestelių ir miestų tinklo susidarymas XV a. – XVI a. pirmoje pusėje. In *Konstantinas Jablonskis ir istorija*. Sud. Edmundas RIMŠA. Vilnius, 2005, p. 155–170; SKURDAUSKIENĖ, Jolanta. Kształtowanie się posiadłości ewangelickich przybyszów (fundatorów kościołów) na Żmudzi w drugiej połowie XVI i na początku XVII wieku. In *Studia nad reformacją*. Red. Elżbieta BAGIŃSKA, Piotr GUZOWSKI, Marzena LIEDKE. Białystok, 2010, s. 75–98.

[21] Cf. BURGLEIGH, Michael. *Prussian Society and the German Order: An Aristocratic Corporation in Crisis c. 1410–1466.* Cambridge, 1984. For the progress of social change based on the case of a single command in the domains of the Teutonic Order, see VERCAMER, Grischa. *Siedlungs-, Sozial- und Verwaltungsgeschichte der Komturei Königsberg in Preußen (13.–16. Jahrhundert)*. Marburg, 2010.

of strong central government and the concentration of resources raised a layer of the nobility.[22] The shift to Early Modern society was irreversible. The transformations in the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are also witnessed by the change in the concept of legal marriage in the 16th century, an issue discussed by Andželika Polinkevičiūtė.[23]

In economic terms, not only Royal Prussia (the part of Prussia ruled by Poland from 1466), but also the Duchy of Prussia, especially during the 16th century, was closely connected with Poland and Lithuania. Nevertheless, the differences in these areas were significant. In the Duchy of Prussia, after the Reformation, the Church lost its lands, the duke granted control for life of a number of domains to the former Teutonic Knights; some were inherited. However, in the mid-17th century, the duke owned 48 per cent of all the land (measured in Hufen), 36.5 per cent belonged to the nobility, and 15.5 per cent was in the hands of freemen (the greater, the Kulm, the Prussian free). During the 16th and 17th centuries, the free people lost rather a large part of their holdings, especially in Oberland and Natangia, transforming them into peasants. Most of the lands belonging to the nobility were in Oberland (56.4 per cent). Natangia also accounted for a large share (40.5 per cent), but in the Samland region, and northern and eastern Prussia, as much as 81.8 per cent of the land belonged to the duke.[24] In Royal Prussia, the land remained in the hands of the King of Poland, the Catholic Church, and the nobility. In the second half of the 16th century, the king owned about 39 per cent of the land, the nobility about 31 per cent, and the Church about 19 per cent.[25] These data do not include Warmia, which was an ecclesiastical domain. The situation in Žemaitija was different. As in Royal Prussia, the Catholic Church remained a landowner, alongside the grand duke and the nobility. However, in the mid-17th century, the grand duke owned about 41 per cent of all hearth taxes, Church land accounted for about 7 per cent, and 51 or 52 per cent belonged to the nobility.[26] In the structure of society, there were slightly more nobles in Žemaitija than elsewhere in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but to a large extent they were petty and middling nobility. Despite repeated attempts in the 16th century to integrate Žemaitija further into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in

13

[22] SKURDAUSKIENĖ, Jolanta. *Palivarkinis ūkis privačiuose Žemaitijos dvaruose XVI amžiuje*. Disertacija. Klaipėda, 2011; SKURDAUSKIENĖ, Jolanta. Prisitaikyti prie ekonominių sąlygų: Solomereckių Kelmės valdos atvejis (1550–1591 m.) (I). In *Kultūra – ekonomika – visuomenė...*, p. 162–177.
[23] See also TRIMONIENĖ, Rita Regina. Bajorų luomo vedybinių ryšių atspindžiai Žemaičių Žemės ir Pilies teismų aktuose: XVI a. II pusė – XVII a. I pusė. In *Istoriniai tekstai ir vietos kultūra*. Sud. Janina ŠVAMBARYTĖ-VALUŽIENĖ. Vilnius, 2004, p. 167–178. For the political and social validity of Christian marriage among 13th-century Livonian converts, see: BRUNDAGE, James A. Christian Marriage in Thirteenth Century Livonia. In BRUNDAGE, James A. *The Crusades, Holy War and Canon Law*. Hampshire, 1991, pp. 314–322.
[24] HORN, Alexander. *Die Verwaltung Ostpreussens seit der Säcularisation. 1525–1875*. Königsberg, 1890, S. 260–261.
[25] MACZĄK, Antoni. Prusy w dobie rozkwitu gospodarczego i w okresie walk o zjednoczenie z koroną. In *Historia Pomorza*. T. II, cz. 1. Red. Gerard LABUDA. Poznań, 1976, s. 201.
[26] KIAUPIENĖ, Jūratė. *Kaimas ir dvaras Žemaitijoje XVI–XVIII a*. Vilnius, 1988, p. 35.

social terms, it remained a region where the differences between the relatively weak nobility and the relatively strong peasantry were often rather insignificant. Larger domains of magnates formed in Žemaitija, mainly due to donations from the grand duke, and the purchase and sale of land. Among such magnates, the Kęsgaila family stands out in the 15th century, later the Chodkiewicz family, and in the middle and the second half of the 17th century, the Sapieha and the Radziwiłł families.[27] In this volume, Jolanta Skurdauskienė and Gintautas Sliesoriūnas help us look at this society of Žemaitija from different angles of social history, rather specifically in terms of the regional context of the 17th and 18th centuries. Skurdauskienė examines the establishment of peasant transport duties in Church domains in the 17th century. Sliesoriūnas shows the influence these characteristics of land ownership in Žemaitija had on the political attitudes of the region's nobility in the internal struggles between factions of magnates.

14

The articles in this volume show the variety of approaches that characterise modern social history, and the diversity of issues that it addresses. They do not cover all corners of the region, and neither do they reveal every element of social change. The editors of this volume, however, did not set themselves that goal.

Marius Ščavinskas and Jolanta Skurdauskienė

---

[27] For more on these issues, see BŁASZCZYK, G. Op. cit.; KIAUPIENĖ, J. Op. cit.; VAIVADA, Vacys. Žemaitija XV–XVIII amžiuje. In *Žemaitijos istorija*. Sud. Alvydas NIKŽENTAITIS. Vilnius, 1997, p. 103–174.