Recently, we have seen more and more works on the legal history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Among them, the book by the Polish historian Andrzej B. Zakrzewski, which appeared in 2013 called *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie (XVI–XVIII w.). Prawo – ustrój – społeczeństwo*, Warsaw: Campidoglio, 2013. 324 p. ISBN 978-83-927476-6-6


Recently, we have seen more and more works on the legal history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Among them, the book by the Polish historian Andrzej B. Zakrzewski, which appeared in 2013 called *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie (XVI–XVIII w.). Prawo – ustrój – społeczeństwo* [The Grand Duchy of Lithuania (16th–18th c.). Law – System – Society] will occupy an extraordinary place. Its author is a University of Warsaw Faculty of Law and Administration professor, who until now was known more for his attention to problems of the history of the system of parliamentary government: he was the first to write a monograph on a particular GDL seimelis (assembly).\(^1\) This time, Zakrzewski appears in a different role, a shift from analysis to synthesis, and an attempt to summarise research on the history of GDL law and state order. The book consists of an introduction, 15 sections of various size from three to 38 pages (I State of Research; II The Periodisation of the History of State Order; III Reception of Law and Order; IV Territory and Administrative Division; V Society; VI System of Parliamentary Government; VII The Government of the Grand Duke; VIII State Rule, Posts; IX Treasury; X Army; XI System of Courts; XII Lithuania’s Statutes; XIII Law in Theory and Practice; XIV The Languages in which the Law was Manifested; XV Relationship between GDL and Poland in the 16th–18th Centuries), abbreviations, lists of sources used (printed and archival), and literature. The author states that he set himself the goal to deliver ‘some elements of old Lithuanian law and (state) order from the 16th century until 1791’. Incidentally, Zakrzewski chose the last date not considering it the year that the GDL lost its sovereignty (he sees that date as the last division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [PLC]), but for convenience, because it is problematic to assess the changes brought by the Four-Year Parliament, and the activities of the 1792 Confederation. However, looking at the wide range of subjects covered, one can conclude that in fact he has attempted to summarise the general history of research on GDL law. In the first part of the work, the author presents studies devoted to this problem, starting from the works of Tadeusz Czacki that appeared at the beginning of the 19th century, and ending with the most

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recent scholarly research of these days (including those printed in 2013, and even some only submitted for publication). Using a chronological approach, while also grouping them according to the national origins of the researchers and the particular schools of historians, Zakrzewski competently discusses and rates the most important publications, revealing the factors that led to some of the research topics and their quality. Such a review is invaluable for a law historian, because it also presents information gathered while maintaining close personal relationships with scholars from Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, so knowing very well ‘on what are living’ the scholars of those countries.

The author further analyses aspects that are provided in the titles of the sections. He seeks to show the development of GDL law, which occurs together with changes in the organisation of the government, changes in the social, economic, cultural and other spheres of life, and through the development of the state and society, and its institutions. He also tries to determine the place of the GDL in the Commonwealth from both a legal and a factual approach. The author argues that he is most interested in the period after the Union of Lublin, and he wants to draw attention to the greater than previously thought differences between the GDL and Poland (in this respect, the Polish researcher paradoxically extends the work of Adolfas Šapoka, inspired by specific historical circumstances and needs, begun during the interwar period, on the search for the separateness of the GDL from Poland\(^2\)). For example, the influence of Roman law was more significant in the GDL; moreover, in comparison with Poland, some decisions of state organisation and management were more rational (territorial division and others). In the work, the author also reveals a theoretical model of law, and next to it shows that in practical life not everything was so unambiguous.

Zakrzewski is one of the first to try to offer a periodisation of Lithuanian state management, especially in the period of the joint state with Poland. Having summarised the latest discussions, he comes to the conclusion that the terms used in the past of an estate monarchy or the caste oligarchy of noblemen are not suitable for describing the Commonwealth and even more GDL realities. Instead, he proposes to distinguish these periods: tribal (from the ninth/tenth to the 12th century), the formation of the Lithuanian state (from the 12th/13th to the end of the 14th century), of modernisation (the late 14th century to 1569), and the Republic (from the Union of Lublin to 1793, in the latter he also distinguishes the date 1764, after which the creation of a constitutional monarchy and faster unification proceeded). He proposes linking the periodisation of GDL law with the emergence of the Lithuanian statutes, thus distinguishing pre-statute (up to 1529), the validity of the statutes (relatively until 1840), and post-

\(^2\) See A. Šapoka, *Lietuva ir Lenkija po 1569 m. Liublino unijos* (Kaunas, 1938).