

# MUSCOVITES AMONG THE COURTIER OF THE LITHUANIAN GRAND DUKE SIGISMUND THE OLD: THE EVIDENCE FROM THE CENSUS OF 1509

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**Abstract:** The paper suggests a view on the migration from Muscovy to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the perspective of the composition of the ruler's court. The author focuses on the Census of Sigismund the Old's courtiers (1509) as the evidence of Muscovites' significant number among them.

**Keywords:** Muscovites, Migrants, Courtiers, Census of Courtiers of 1509, Sigismund the Old.

## МАСКВІЧЫ СЯРОД ДВАРАН ВЯЛІКАГА КНЯЗЯ ЛІТОЎСКАГА ЖЫГІМОНТА СТАРОГА ПАВОДЛЕ ПЕРАПІСУ 1509 ГОДА

**Анацыя:** Эміграцыя з Вялікага Княства Маскоўскага ў Вялікае Княства Літоўскае разглядаецца на аснове складу двара манарха. У цэнтры ўвагі аўтара знаходзіцца Перапіс дваран Жыгімонта Старога 1509 года, які сведчыць, што маскоўскія выхадцы ўтваралі значную іх колькасць.

**Ключавыя словы:** масквічы, мігранты, дваране, Перапіс дваран 1509 года, Жыгімонт Стары.

At the turn of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period, people of different social origin migrated from the Grand Duchy of Moscow to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Major scholarly attention was given to the migration of aristocracy as it had strong political ramification and was better documented. However, there are also numerous sources that provide evidence of minor nobility's emigration from Muscovy to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Most of them belong to the *Metrica* of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) – a vast collection of copies of acts issued by the grand ducal chancellery. One of such documents is of particular importance for the study of Muscovite immigration – the Census of the Grand Duke Sigismund the Old's courtiers dating back to 1509.

As it was noted in a few documents, Muscovites arrived to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania *on sovereign's name* (на имя господарское) i.e. they applied to the Grand Duke personally (Lietuvos Metrica, 1999: 165–166). Some of them were accepted into the service and got status of a ruler's courtier. Becoming personal servants of the ruler was a good way for immigrants to secure their position in the country they had just come to. Thus they could get protection, direct financial support and land possessions for their faithful service. It also opened career prospects for them.

At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the court of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes (one has to distinguish it from their Polish court as the Kings of Poland) wasn't something monolithic and stable. A part of those who were called *sovereign's courtiers* (дворяне господарские) permanently dwelt far away from the Grand Duke's residence and never comprised his actual entourage but served him when needed. Courtiers could act as ruler's representatives in different kind of affairs all over the country. For their service they got stipend (*отправы*) from Grand Duke's treasury paid in money or material values (furs, cloth, grains etc.) and were often granted modest estates or empty lands to establish one.

In times of war, the courtiers – together with their armed servants – also played a role of a military force. It was especially important for the ruler as he could use them as his personal servants on military purpose even if the Grand Duchy of Lithuania wasn't officially at war. For example, when Sigismund the Old as the King of Poland waged a war against the Moldavian ruler in 1509, Lithuanian political elite refused to join it, but a number of Lithuanian noblemen, including courtiers, participated in the conflict. Most likely, the main purpose for creation of *The Census of All the King's Courtiers in the Grand Duchy* (Попис дворян всех короля его милости у великом князстве) was ascertainment of their number, though many of courtiers were actually omitted (Кром, 2010: 128–129).

The *Census* belongs to the Eighth Book of Inscriptions of the GDL's *Metrica*, which embraces documents from 1499 to 1514 (Lietuvos Metrica, 1995:

163–165). It wasn't dated by the creators. The publishers of the book dated it 1512, though a number of scholars (Кром, 2010: 128; Русина, 1998: 165; Pietkiewicz, 1997: 80) disagree and suggest 1509 as the year of origin since the document includes an appendix listing the noblemen who volunteered for the campaign against Moldavia same year.

The *Census* is a register that consists of entries each corresponding to one person. An entry comprehensively includes a courtier's name and the number of *horses* (*коней*) he has which actually meant the number of his armed servants. The majority of listed individuals had 1–2 of them. Some entries also provide information on the size and location of a courtier's estates. Many of them didn't possess any. The total number of courtiers is 177. Together with their armed servants they made up a unit of 476 horsemen. Taking into account a comparatively small average size of the Grand Duchy's field army of that time, it was a significant military force.

The register is divided into several rubrics. The first one doesn't have a subtitle and starts right after the main title. The others are entitled *Courtiers from Bryansk who have estates*, *Courtiers who don't have estates* and *New Muscovites*. The last rubric names 18 individuals. Obviously, the word *new* refers to the fact that those noblemen had just arrived to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The total number of emigrants from Muscovy listed in the *Census* was twice as big. 16 more noblemen are mentioned among those who didn't possess estates. 6 of them are identified as immigrants due to the note *Tverian* (*тверитин*). There is also 1 *Muscovite* (*москвитин*) and *Olifer Novgorodian* (*Олифер новгородец*). Other source makes clear that Olifer came from Velikiy Novgorod, not from Navahradak in Belarus (Lietuvos Metrica, 1995: 429). Tver' and Velikiy Novgorod used to be independent powers until they were annexed by Muscovy in 1478 and 1485 respectively. 8 more persons – 4 *Veshnyakov* (*Вешняковы*) brothers, 3 of the *Pantusovs* (*Пантусов*) family (father and two sons) and *Senka Tolstiy* (*Сенка Толстый*) – are identified as Muscovites by other sources (Lietuvos Metrica, 1995: 334, 400). The rubric *Courtiers from Bryansk who have estates* gives us another 3 individuals whom we may conventionally add to the Muscovite emigrants. It's noted that they came from Ryazan', a principality which was under strong control of Moscow and about to lose its formal sovereignty which finally happened in 1521. At first, they had a permanent residence in Bryansk region, but after it was captured by Muscovy in 1500 they together with many others unwilling to subdue to a new power moved to the country's inner territory.

All of the listed individuals belonged to minor nobility which is evident from the numbers of their armed servants: none of them had more than 2. Simple calculation gives a total of 37 Muscovites out of 177 Sigismund's courtiers which makes approximately 21%. Such an impressive number pro-

vides a notion of the scale of emigration from Muscovy to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. We can also presume that the quantity of courtiers had been permanently increasing due to migrants both from Muscovy itself and from the lands just annexed by it.

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