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## SANTRUMPOS

ATL - Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje

MADA - Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademijos darbai.

A serija

SRP - Scriptorum rerum prussicarum oder die Geschichtsquellen der Preussischen Vorzeit bis zum Untergange der Ordensherrschaft

SRL - Scriptorum rerum livonicarum = Sammlung der wichtigsten Chroniken und Geschichtsdenkmale von Liv-, Ehst- und Kurland.

# LITHUANIAN WOODEN CASTLES BY DATA OF WRITTEN SOURCES

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## Summary

The castles of Lithuania played an important role in the epoch of battles with the crusaders and contributed to consolidation and upholding of Lithuania's statehood, as well as served as important defensive and administrative centers. Lithuania was a country of wooden castles. Stone castles appeared here in the 14th century, as an exception proving the rule. How wooden castles looked like, little is known, therefore, analogies with other countries may be useful. The castles standing in Ruthenia, Lithuania and territory of other Baits formed a castle region connected by close ties and many common traits. The castles of Lithuania experienced Ruthenian influence and brought their own influence on Ruthenian castles. The Lithuanian word "dailide" (carpenter) even entered the Ruthenian language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as the present Belarusian language. Some facts speak about influence of Lithuanian castles on Russian castles (In the middle of the 15th century in the Duchy of Tver an island castle was built named *Troki*; the Lithuanians were mentioned as taking part at construction of Siberian castles in the 17th century).

The written sources of the 13-15th centuries mention 71 castle or castle site in the territory of ethnic Lithuania of that time. 64 castles were wooden (See Annex). However, they made only a part of the whole castle network. The Act on Division of South Curonia listed 82

castles, from which about 60 were located in the small area of the present territory of Lithuania, but they were not Lithuanian castles in a sense of those times.

Not all castles mentioned in sources may be easily localized nowadays. The place and even names of some of them may be established only hypothetically. The Article proposes new locations for some unclear castles. All castles mentioned in sources are mapped (Fig. 1). The castle *Xedeyctain*, which was attacked in Samogitia in 1329, may be related by march route to Šiauduva - a Samogitian district center. The name of the castle *Sisditen/Sirditen* mentioned in the Medininkai countryside in 1314 should be corrected as *Siraiten* and the castle itself should be related to the Šiuraičiai hill-fort on the edge of the Medininkai district. The *Pilėnai* castle, which was heroically defended in 1336, is localizable in the Pilėnai hill-fort near Kaltinėnai. This hill-fort dominated by its size in the region defended by Duke Margins, who died in battle in the Pilėnai castle. Jean de Préis in his description of the march of 1329 mentioned the castles of *Galidaine* and *Ycoine*, which should be identified as the castles of Gediminas and Aukaimis mentioned in another description of the same march. The Bebirvaitė castle burnt by the crusaders in 1308 in Karšuva ought to be near the Bebirvytis stream (the affluent of the Bebirva River) in the environs of Šimkaičiai. Nevertheless, no hill-fort is

known presently in that locality. The *Skronaitė* castle, committed to flames at the same time, most likely stood on the Eržvilkas hill-fort. The castles attacked in 1348 in the Šiauliai land cannot be easily localized, in particular that of *Businne*. Instead of the latter name, the name *Bulinė* is proposed associating it with a similar microtoponym from the present town of Šiauliai. This castle may be also localized in the hill-fort of Šiauliai by the march route of 1348 (The castle was standing between Kuliai and Dubysa). During the same march attacked castle's name was *Ceila* or *Zela*, most likely twisted designations for the land center - Šiauliai. However, it ought to be related not to the present town of Šiauliai which in the 13th century was on the border of Samogitian and Semigalian tribes, but to Šiaulėnai and to the neighboring Kudinaĩ hill-fort called as the Šiaulė hill. In the land of Šiauliai one should search for the *Tvirimantas* castle once belonging to Vykintas, the Samogitian duke of the 13th century. In historiography this castle was associated with the Tverai locality. However, the castle name should be related to the personal name Tvirimantas, which left no traces in the present toponymy. Vykintas is associated with the land of Šiauliai (He took the lead of the Šiauliai battle in 1236). The most suitable hill-fort for the Tvirimantas castle might be the Kubiliai hill-fort in midcourse of the Dubysa River, nevertheless, no proving data are available.

The *Medraba* castle burnt by the crusaders in the lower reaches of the Nemunas River in 1291 should have been not far from Veliuona. In 1422 here was mentioned the Medinai or Rusteikiai hill (*Medyny alias Rusteyki*), which can be associated with this castle and with the Žuklijai hill-fort on the left bank of the Nemunas River, opposite the Rūstekonys village. The *Kolainiai* castle with the elder Surminas, assaulted at the Nemunas River in 1290, is associated with the present town of Jurbarkas. Such localization is seconded by mention of the Surminas hill-fort in Jurbarkas in 1411.

Assaults on castles of Aukshtaitija were carried out later, mostly after destroy of castles in the lower reaches of the Nemunas River (below Kaunas). The place of the *Visvalde* castle (mentioned since 1385) standing in the lower reaches of the Nemunas River is not quite clear in historiography, but, following descriptions of the crusaders' ways, should be related to the Karmėlava hill-fort. This is the same castle without any name mentioned by Jogaila in the Privilege of 1387 as a "new castle at the Neris River opposite Šatijai". The *Sunerpil* or *Simmerpil* castle destroyed in 1381 in the Trakai Duchy should be associated with Semeliškės (Semelpilis). It was never rebuilt.

The most important castles of Aukshtaitija were mentioned in the "List of Ruthenian Castles" (Merkinė, Kernavė, Kaunas, Vilkmėrgė, Maišiagala, Vilnius, Old

Trakai, New Trakai Peninsular and Island castles, Medininkai, Gaišia, Lyda, Punia, Perloja and Rodūnia). Misleading is a tendency in Russian historiography to date unreasonably this source to 1387-1392 (M. Tichonov) or even earlier, to 1375-1381 (V. Janin). Dating by archaic elements, one should also rate conditions of the Middle Ages where a synchronous list of castles of the whole East Europe was unthinkable. In fact, the castles mentioned in this list reflect the situation formed at the end of Vytautas' ruling, most likely about 1421-1425. Information about the Trakai castles and dating given in other annexes to the chronicle of Naugardas I of new edition ("List of Ruthenian Castles" being the only annex dated to the earlier period) proves it.

Most disputes in historiography rose on Mindaugas' castle *Voruta* mentioned in 1251, which was unreasonably regarded by many researchers as the capital of Mindaugas. The most recent researches allow to consider the Šeimyniškieliai hill-fort, called as the Varutė hill, the most plausible site for the Voruta castle. Not far away from this place on the Palatavis hill-fort at the Latava stream there was a *Latava* manor belonging to Mindaugas and associated with the crowning of Mindaugas in 1253 (*in Lettowia, in curia nostra*). This manor was regarded as a castle as well what was evidenced by mention of the Latava hill-fort (*borchval, nomine Lettow*) at the end of the 14th century.

All sources of the 13-15th centuries taken together enable to reconstruct some picture of a wooden castle. Wooden castles usually were built very quickly, sometimes even in a week, so they ought not to be rather complex structures. Defenders defended the castle standing on its walls, by lances, swords, pickets etc. Often walls suffused with blood. It shows that defensive galleries of the Middle Ages were mostly open, while in later wooden castles the defense went on only through shooting holes. In the course of battles with the crusaders the structure of wooden castles improved with time, drop-log construction of walls (Fig. 2) disappeared and castles fitted for active defense. Some sectors of castle were more fortified. When in 1336 the crusaders invaded the Pilėnai castle, they had to fight more than an hour with Duke Margiris who defended in such a sector. This sector is known to have a basement-hideout.

The castle usually was linked with the remaining part of the defensive complex by bridge. It is doubtful whether the Lithuanian castles had drawbridges. Bridges were usually not hoisted but dropped into a castle ditch. Sometimes bridges were defended not to let the enemy destroy them. All depended on the strategic position of the bridge, on the ratio of attacking and defending forces, the strength of castle and other circumstances. If sallies from the castle were planned, then the bridge ought to be saved. In the

14-15th centuries drawbridges were mentioned only in the southern lands of the GDL (Lutsk, Kamenets) where Poland exerted its influence. In the lower reaches of the Nemunas River at the castles sometimes peculiar bridges-foreworks were installed. They were fortified by towers (*propugnacula*) and hindered the crusaders from sailing along the Nemunas River (New Kaunas, Paštuva).

At the castles there were more or less fortified baileys (*suburbium, preurbium, hachelwerc, vorburg*). Here the castle garrison lived with their families. They backed up to the castle only in case of enemy's attack. In the very castle only representatives of nobility and their bodyguards slept. The bailey was the place to keep animals and to stock provisions. When a greater army concentrated in the castle fully quartering the whole castle and bailey, then camps were set out outside the castle. The more important castles needed not small plots around. Some castles had two baileys: at the foot of the main hill-fort and on a separate hill-fort (Veliuona).

Baileys were weaker than castles and often were burnt down. Afterwards they were hastily rebuilt as an indispensable component of the castle. In 1315 the subcastle of Veliuona was twice burnt in a near month (on September 8 and October 12). Sometimes the sources mention uninhabited fortifications-foreworks outside the castle. In Veliuona a small forework was installed simply on a slope of the hill-fort (mentioned as a small *ante-murale* in 1363).

Castle stockades formed a large network. The written sources of the 13-14th centuries show that various stockades (*terrae defensiones, Landwehren, hegene, indagines*) fenced territories of lands, countrysides, field communities. Often stockades were made from piled trees and sometimes no efforts were spared to make mounds. Simplest stockades were made by warriors, who felled trees in the course of military actions. Stockades as such were long known in the Baltic lands. As early as 935, viking Egil pirating in Curonia was entangled in stockades and captured by the Curonians. Numerous stockades traversing the landscape were useful for farming, therefore, they remained for a long time after losing of their defensive significance. Even at the end of the 19th century some fields were fenced in Samogitia.

Wooden castles were built and used until the 16-17th centuries. Sources shed more light on their exterior, however, these data are little investigated. We may find a short description of late wooden castle in the inventory of 1553 of the *Daugėliškių* castle. The inventory of 1549 describes more exhaustively the *Radoškoviči* castle standing near the ethnic border of Lithuania in the ethnically mixed territory (Fig. 3). The inventory of 1585 describes in short the *Plateliai* castle falling into decay.

In 1563 and 1566 in the occupied GDL land of Polotsk Ivan the Terrible, the tsar of Russia, built 9 wooden castles which were burnt by the army of Stephen Batory in 1579. S. Pachlovicki painted six of them theretofore. On the basis of these paintings B.D. Kavalieri made plate engravings, which survived until nowadays and are the oldest authentic images of wooden castles (Fig. 4). Images of wooden bridges may be seen in the plate engraving of *Grodno* of 1568 where the stone castle of Grodno is represented (Fig. 5).

There remained more exhaustive data about wooden castles of Russia from the 17th century. The remnants of five wooden castles (towers, walls) remained in Siberia. They make a valuable source for reconstruction of earlier castles. A characteristic feature of Siberian castles from the 17th century is oblams (Russian *обламы*). Oblams are bigger upper timber frames of towers and walls, with horizontal openings between them and main timber frames. They remind of brattices and machicolations of stone castles, rather popular since the crusades (Fig. 6). The investigators of wooden castles of Ruthenia often transfer actually oblams to reconstruction of wooden castles of the 11-12th centuries. However, they could not appear earlier than the 13-14th centuries when castles passed from passive to active defense. Most likely even then wooden castles contained no oblams, since we do not see them in plate engravings of 1579 of castles standing in the Polotsk land.

#### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Distribution of the Lithuanian castles in the 13-15th centuries: 1 – wooden castles mentioned in written sources, 2 – hill-forts (castle sites) mentioned in sources of the 14-15th centuries, 3 – stone castles, 4 – approximate borders of Lithuania Proper and GDL of the 14th century, 5 – present borders of states.

Fig. 2. Drop-log construction of walls.

Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the *Radoškoviči* castle by data of the inventory of 1549.

Fig. 4. Castles of Polotsk land in plate engravings of 1579 by S. Pachlovicki: 1 – Turovlya, 2 – Suša, 3 – Krasna, 4 – Kozyana, 5 – Sokol, 6 – Sitna.

Fig. 5. Stone castle of Grodno and wooden bridges in the painting of 1567 by Hans Adelhauser. Fragment of the plate engraving of 1568 by Mathes Zündt.

Fig. 6. Installations of machicolation-type: 1 – stone tower with wooden brattice, 2 – stone tower with machicolation, 3 – section of wooden castle gate tower with oblam (Yakutsk).

Annex. Mentions of Lithuanian wooden castles and their places in written sources (1250-1450).