

Material Culture of Lithuanian Burghers in the 17th and 18th Centuries

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By Stasys Samalavičius

Edited by Almantas Samalavičius

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I would like to thank Dalia Šatienė and Kerry Shawn-Keys for their translations, as well as Anthony Wright for copy-editing the present book and the previous volume. Thanks are due to Professor Aivas Ragauskas, who urged me to introduce the legacy of Dr. Stasys Samalavičius to an English-speaking audience and aided me in preparing and editing the first large posthumous volume of Samalavičius’ writings published in Lithuanian back in 2011. Thanks also go to Mrs. Irena Krivienė, the general director of Vilnius University Library, who kindly enabled the organization of an exhibition of Dr. Stasys Samalavičius’ intellectual legacy on urban historical research at Vilnius University Library in September-October 2020. Last but not least, I would also like to extend thanks to my brother, Prof. Narimantas Samalavičius, MD, for continuously sustaining my efforts in making Dr. Stasys Samalavičius’ writings available for publication.

Almantas Samalavičius
April 2025

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	<i>Akty Cechow Wilenskich 1495–1795</i> (collection of documents issued by Vilnius guilds, compiled and edited by Henryk Łowmiański, Maria Łowmiańska, and Stanisław Kościałkowski in Vilnius, 1939)
ASD	Archeographical collection of documents related to the history of northwestern Russia, published when Lithuania was part of the tsarist Russian empire
apr.	Description
AVAK	Documents published by the Vilnius Archeographical Commission during the period when Lithuania was part of the tsarist Russian empire
b.	File
f.	Fund
l.	Sheet
LVIA	Lithuanian State Historical Archives
MAB RS	Library of the Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts
PKI	Archives of the Paminklų konservavimo institutas (Institute for Monuments Conservation), Vilnius
v.	Verso
VUB RS	Vilnius University Library, Department of Manuscripts

A NOTE ON PROPER NAMES

Most of the archival sources from the 17th and 18th centuries referred to in the book were written in Polish. However, before 1990, all proper names mentioned in scholarly texts published in Lithuania were customarily Lithuanized according to both the rule and the practice that all publications followed.

When Stasys Samalavičius first wrote the chapters in this book, the majority of names of (important) historical persons were rendered in Polish and then Lithuanized in accordance with the existing rules and practices. During the translation and editing process, however, it was virtually impossible to reconstruct each and every name mentioned in the text without revisiting all archival sources.

As such, the editor has opted to leave all names as they were inscribed by the author at the time when the texts were written and published. Names in Polish or English are provided only where possible. The same practice was followed in previous publications of Stasys Samalavičius' works in Lithuania. Names of important historical persons are also transcribed in English for the purposes of this book.

Regarding the names of the geographical locations of cities and towns, for example, preference has been given to their present Lithuanian names. In some cases, their Polish names are mentioned in parentheses.

CHAPTER ONE

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This volume is a companion to a previous scholarly book by Stasys Samalavičius titled *Urban Culture and Everyday Life in Lithuania in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023).

Dr. Stasys Samalavičius (1930–1992) was a well-known Lithuanian historian whose interests encompassed material aspects of Lithuania's urban dwellers, architecture, and more general issues of urban culture, especially of the 17th and 18th centuries. Educated as an English philologist, he later embraced history and eventually became a leading researcher in the material culture of Vilnius burghers as well as a pioneer in the everyday life studies of Lithuanian urban dwellers. Having obtained his doctorate in history from Vilnius University (doctoral degree was awarded for his dissertation “Vilnius Builders' Guilds, 1595–1795”), Samalavičius eventually spent three decades as a senior research associate at the Institute of Monuments Conservation (Paminklų konservavimo institutas), where he focused on a variety of topics related to the history of cultural and architectural monuments while simultaneously pursuing his own research agenda in historical urban studies. From 1989 until his death in 1992, he worked as a senior research associate at the Lithuanian Institute of History and supervised historical research at the Vilnius Lower Castle Complex.

During his research career, Samalavičius wrote a significant number of academic articles and studies on various aspects of urban culture, especially of Vilnius burghers, covering the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. He published both academic research and essays aimed at a popular audience on a variety of aspects of urban culture and often appeared on national TV and radio, especially during the period of social and political transformations that resulted in the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990. Despite limited interest in both the material culture and everyday life of Lithuanian urban dwellers in Lithuanian historiography of his time, Samalavičius managed to establish these novel research fields in the context of Lithuanian historical research, becoming a pioneer and undisputed leader of the field.

As Anglophone readers can find more details about the research legacy of Dr. Stasys Samalavičius and the context of Lithuanian historical studies of the late Soviet era in my introduction to his *Urban Culture and Everyday Life in Lithuania in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, I would only like to add a few brief comments here on what topics and subjects were chosen for this companion volume.

It was not easy to structure the author's writings into these two volumes for several reasons. First, Stasys Samalavičius originally planned to publish at least two separate monographs based on his research and a number of specialized studies. The first of these monographs would contain his research on material culture, and the second would cover a variety of aspects of Vilnius burghers' everyday life during the 17th and 18th centuries. However, because of his perfectionist approach to research, neither of the two books was fully completed by the time of his untimely death in 1992. A large number of chapters, however, have been compiled by the present editor, including both published articles and unpublished texts. Most, yet not all, were eventually published in two collections of scholarly articles and studies in Lithuanian in 2011 and 2013, establishing his reputation as the founder of everyday urban studies in Lithuanian historiography.

Except for a couple of articles published in English in 1990 in the well-known international arts journal *Apollo*, Samalavičius' writings largely remained outside the reach of an English-language audience until the publication of his book *Urban Culture and Everyday Life in Lithuania in the 17th and 18th Centuries* in 2023. This first volume of Stasys Samalavičius' writings, however, included only a part of his impressive research legacy. Thus, the editor opted to compile a companion volume to include his research on material culture and the everyday life of urban dwellers in this single volume instead of limiting the collection exclusively to material culture.

There were strong reasons to go this way. Throughout his research career, Samalavičius was concerned with the urban culture of Lithuanian cities—first and foremost, Vilnius (Wilno), the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—primarily, yet not exclusively, of the 17th and 18th centuries. The previous volume contained his writings on guilds and their houses, the activities of carpenters and sculptors-carvers, religious brotherhoods that existed in Vilnius, shops, warehouses for transit goods, different types of urban inns and pharmacies, and the activities of musicians and the musical instruments used during this period. His essays for a popular audience on the merchant fleet, the dissemination of tobacco and smoking, as well as the consequences of plague in the Grand Duchy and its capital were also

included alongside some other profiles of urban life of the 17th and 18th centuries.

However, as a large number of articles and unpublished manuscripts were not included in the first English-language volume of Dr. Samalavičius' intellectual legacy for various reasons, the editor opted to compile another volume of his urban studies emphasizing his contribution to the study of the material culture of Lithuanian burghers, especially those of its capital city, Vilnius.

Thus, this particular volume includes Samalavičius' research on the houses of Vilnius burghers, mostly those that belonged to merchants, artisans, and members of the municipal ruling elite during the 17th and 18th centuries. It also accommodates his findings on what their dwellings looked like and what interior elements they contained. Paintings, wall coverings, chandeliers and other items of indoor lighting, carpets, and various types of furniture are thoroughly discussed in this volume. The book also contains his research on stoves and fireplaces in Vilnius burghers' houses, as well as the arrangements and peculiarities of craftsmen and merchant shops, signboards, and their symbolism in the 17th and 18th centuries. In addition, it accommodates his studies on public celebrations and festivities held during this period and his reflections on the culture of taverns and the consumption of mead in Vilnius. Chapters discussing these aspects of urban culture are more related to everyday life issues than the material culture of the period. However, they were included in this book as, in certain aspects, they do reflect the material culture of Lithuanian burghers during the 17th and 18th centuries.

This book contains the written legacy of Dr. Stasys Samalavičius, which has been unavailable in English until now, and showcases his studies of the material culture of Lithuanian burghers of the 17th and 18th centuries as well as some aspects of their everyday life. I do hope that both books now available in English will contribute to the existing scholarship on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its urban culture. Those who wish to have a more complete picture of Lithuania's urban culture of the period should also consult the previous volume of Stasys Samalavičius' writings titled *Urban Culture and Everyday Life in Lithuania in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. I have reason to believe that there might yet be another edited volume containing the rest of his research that remains outside the scope of this book for a number of reasons. As the editor of this volume, I hope it will be especially useful to those interested in the urban history of Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

CHAPTER TWO

HOUSES OF CRAFTSMEN AND TRADERS

A poor craftsman's hut was a small wooden building. It usually had one simple door made of pine boards. Through it, one entered the porch. In addition to it, there was a *pirkia* (living room) and a chamber. Such a hut had several tiny windows and a very small chamber window. A better hut could be covered with shingles, although most such buildings were covered with straw. In principle, they differed little from the peasant *pirkias* of that time.

Average craftsmen, small merchants, and otherwise not-too-rich burghers of other professions and businesses usually had houses in the suburbs or side streets and other places more remote from the central part of the city. Most of their houses were wooden or built half of wood and half of brick. They were mostly covered with shingles and less often with tiles. Such houses had foundations and usually brick basements. They faced the street but sometimes were built on the sides of it.

The entrance to the building was in the middle. Wealthier townspeople sometimes built a small porch near the door with carved wooden decorations. They were not complicated in terms of layout. In the middle of the building was a vestibule in which usually stood a stove and a bread oven, built of bricks. Above the stove was a hood and a chimney, which emerged above the roof. On both sides of the vestibule was a living room (*izba*) and a pantry. Sometimes, there were two living rooms (*izby*). Less often, there were houses in which there was a living room and two pantries on either side of the vestibule.

Normally, one end of the house was used for living, while the other was occupied by a workshop, tavern, or sometimes a shop. In cases where the house faced the street, another door was on this side. The customer entered the tavern, workshop, or shop directly from the street. On the opposite sides of the vestibule were doors leading to the storerooms (*izby*).

Usually, the doors from the street were more beautiful, often covered with decorative panels with strong metal fittings. The interior doors, as well as the doors from the vestibule to the courtyard, were of poorer quality and made of pine boards and rough carpentry.

The workshops of blacksmiths, foundries, potters, and many other craftsmen were located in separate buildings. Unfortunately, the available archival materials do not indicate the layout and equipment of these workshops. Wealthy guild masters, many merchants, and wealthy burghers of other professions had brick houses.

Regarding merchants, it must be said that they came in various ranks, ranging from the owner of a tiny shop to a large merchant with several shops who engaged in wholesale trade.

Large merchants usually had several houses, which could be located in different parts of the city and were different in size, purpose, layout, and other aspects. It is clear that in the central part of the city, merchants built brick houses, which were usually two-storyed and, in the 18th century, increasingly three-storyed. Brick cellars, which were accessed through metal or wrought-iron doors, were often used to store drinks and other similar goods. The premises on the first floor were related to trade. Here, with entrances from the street, there were stores and taverns. The doors of the stores were usually made of metal or covered with it. The windows had strong iron bars, and they were covered with massive wrought-iron shutters at night. Metal doors and shutters were painted in various colors (green, red, etc.).

Access to other rooms on the first floor was usually from the entrance side. If the entrance was through the middle of the house, then the entrances were on both sides. From the entrance, through a wooden door, one entered the porch, where there was a stove and a baking oven. This room served as a kitchen. Sometimes, such kitchens were paved with stones. However, most often, they had floors of brick, special ceramic tiles, or wood. On both sides of the porch were several rooms used for commercial and economic needs, as well as for living purposes.

The second floor usually served residential needs. Sometimes, there were stairs from the porch. There were often external stairs from the yard, and on the second floor, there was a wooden gallery. From it, one could walk to the living quarters.

Individual rooms on the upper floor and the attic were sometimes used for storing goods. Often, grain was stored in the attic rooms, which also partially performed the function of a fire prevention device. There are references to the presence of lifting mechanisms on the upper floors.

On the first and second floors, the floors of the rooms were often made of boards, bricks, and, less often, special ceramic floor tiles. In the individual rooms of wealthy townspeople, there were marble floors and parquet flooring.

The stoves and fireplaces made of decorative tiles in green, brown, white, and other colors that heated the rooms served not only a functional purpose but also had an important decorative significance, being the most important accents in the decoration of the rooms.

When decorating rooms, colored paneling and wall cabinets played an important role. It seems that rooms' doors, paneling, and wooden parts of wall cabinets were often painted in the same color(s). There is reason to assume that beams and other wooden parts were sometimes also painted in the same colors as door panels and wall cabinets. Green is especially characteristic.

In the 17th–18th centuries, townspeople's apartments contained benches, chairs, armchairs, stools, various tables, reclining sofas, “slide benches,” chest-beds, other chests of various purposes, cabinets, screens, baskets, clothes racks, and wall clocks.

Chests were often wrought iron and upholstered in leather. Chairs and armchairs were upholstered in various types of leather, including so-called “*kurdybany*,” i.e., leather with gilded embellishments and embroidered and unembroidered multi-colored materials. Leather upholstery was usually black or red. Benches, chairs, armchairs, chests, cabinets, beds, and other wooden furniture could be painted or unpainted. Most often, they were green, red, and yellow. In terms of the range of furniture, no significant differences are observed between merchants and craftsmen. However, craftsmen had less furniture, and it was simpler. Simple, rough-made furniture was located in hallways and other auxiliary rooms. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the furniture of Vilnius townspeople did not differ much in terms of styles, materials, decoration and probably the manner of furnishing rooms from the furnishings of townspeople in neighboring regions. This provides a basis for using more analogies in research and design.

Doors

In this section, we will try to provide data on the doors of houses of the period under consideration, briefly describing what materials they were made of and how they looked.

First of all, it should be noted that in many sources, we come across metal doors. For example, iron doors are mentioned in the inventory of the Mikolaj Kliczevski house of 1654 when it describes some rooms.¹ Some external and almost all internal doors were wooden. One was said to be of “carpentry work” and covered with decorative boards (“*futrowane*”), but nothing was said about the others. These should be considered ordinary doors of roughly worked boards.

Two iron doors and two shutters of the same metal are recorded in the inventory of [the house of] Jonas Fedorovičius, alias Bežyvačius, of 1658.² Meanwhile, another burgher's inventory of the same year indicates that he had five iron doors, two shutters, and three grilles.³

The inventory of Teodor Lyskevičius' [house] of 1658 also records five iron doors, three shutters and three iron grilles.⁴

The inventory of Rabcevičius' [house], which was compiled in 1664, records one old iron door and two tin-covered doors.⁵

The inventory of merchant Šostakas' [house] of 1666 records four iron doors. It is worth noting that one of them was foldable ("*skladane*").⁶ Two iron doors are recorded in the inventory of Jonas Cichanovičius' (Jan Ciechanowicz's) [house] of 1687.⁷

In the 1788 inventory of the Treasury Commission House [of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], there were also iron doors in the room used for making deposits.⁸

In 1791, in the house on the fish market [Pilies Street], which was rented by Jakub Slepinkowski, two rooms (*sklepy*) had iron doors. Of these, one was said to have a door with crossed metal bars ("*drzwi żelazne sztabami na krzyż opatrze*").⁹

In the 1700 inventory describing the two "*kroms*" in the stone house on the fish market, it was stated that the door on the street side of one of them was covered with iron ("*żelazem wszystkie z wierzchu pobite*"). The other "*kromas*" had an iron door on the courtyard side.¹⁰

The material presented here and other available materials provide grounds to believe that in the houses of wealthy townspeople, some rooms, usually related to storage, had iron and metal-forged doors. Sometimes, they were decorated with floral motifs and other decorations. When the doors were covered with tin, their hooks, hinges, and other fittings and details were often made of the same material. However, many external doors and almost all internal doors were wooden. Sometimes, they are not just mentioned in the sources but also described somewhat. For example, the inventory of the house of the Sulžitsi merchants, which passed into the hands of the Vilnius Basilian Monastery in 1692, mentions that there were painted doors leading from a small room to a large room ("*drzwi malowane stolarskiej roboty*"). Such doors also existed in the other room from the vestibule.¹¹

At the beginning of the 18th century, the foreign merchants' [guests'] house's rooms mostly had wooden doors. When describing them, it is stated that some were covered with decorative boards ("*drzwi futrowane drewniane*").¹² These were simple painted doors. However, most of the

doors in this building are described as “simple wooden doors,” which were apparently unpainted.

However, there were also iron doors in this building. When describing one room, it is stated that one iron door was taken out and taken away by the magistrate’s councilor, Teodozy Kuczarski, when he moved out of this house.¹³ These were not the only iron doors in this building. However, there were few iron doors in it.

From the inventory of Jonas Kozačenka’s house from 1720, we learn that, in addition to the doors of the house, which did not differ in materials and decoration, there were also others. First of all, there were oak doors leading from one room to another chamber. The premises were called the salt room (“*solnica*”); the doors leading (exiting) to Savičius Street were covered with decorative boards, and many nails were nailed into them (“*futrowane gozdziami żelaznemi nabiane*”).¹⁴ It can be assumed that the nails had a decorative function here.

The inventory of the Horodniczy house in Vilnius from 1738 states that several rooms had black-painted doors.¹⁵ It seems that the doors of most rooms were colorless because they are mentioned without any suggestion that they were painted.

In the house on Stiklių Street, which passed into the hands of the Bergmans in 1764, one room (“*sklep*”) had an iron door.¹⁶ Several cellars had wooden doors with wrought ironwork (“*drzwi drewniane okute*”).¹⁷ Other doors in the house were wooden. Sometimes, it is stated that they were covered with decorative boards (“*futrowane*”).

In 1788, in the Treasury Commission House [of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], one room had double doors, and the other had single doors. Many doors are only mentioned. Some of the doors were said to have been covered with decorative boards. Others were called doors with filings (“*drzwi dopłowne z filqgami*”).¹⁸ Some rooms had doors painted in gray (“*popielato malowane*”).¹⁹

In 1812, in the house belonging to the Basilian monastery, as the inventory of that year shows, there were only wooden doors. There were simple doors to the porch and some other rooms. It is said of the door of one porch that it was not covered with decorative panels (“*bez futrowania*”). However, when describing the doors of some rooms, it is indicated that they were covered with such panels.²⁰

Thus, the external and internal wooden doors of rooms and other rooms were quite diverse. Most often, the doors were made of pine, but there were also doors made of oak and other types of wood.

In the houses of wealthy townspeople, porches, utility rooms, etc. had simple doors, sometimes crafted by a carpenter. Rooms had beautiful carpentry

doors, often painted green, gray, black, or other colors. Quite often, doors covered with decorative panels (*“futrowane”*) are mentioned. Sometimes, the outer doors, as well as many entrance gates, were embellished by driving nails with decoratively crafted heads into them.

Windows

In this section, we will describe shutters and window grilles, discuss glazing methods using lead, wood, and putty, and try to determine the standard glass sizes used.

The inventory of the house of Mayor Mikalojus Kličevskis (Mikolaj Kliczewski) from 1654 shows that some of its windows were equipped with iron shutters. On the other hand, when describing the metal window hinges and some other details, this source states that they were tinned.²¹

The inventory of the house of the Sulžicai merchants, which passed into the hands of the Vilnius Basilian Monastery, from 1692 mentions shutters, which seem to have been wooden. When describing one room, it is stated that there were three shutters. Two windows had hinged shutters, while the third was slid from the side (*“zasuwana”*).²²

In the foreign merchants' [guests'] house, as can be seen from the inventory of 1701, the windows of most rooms had lattices.²³ Most of the windows were also put in wooden frames. Some windows were said to have been framed in wood and lead (*“w olów i w drzewo opravne”*).²⁴

From the inventory of the house on German Street of 1713, it can be seen that some of its windows had shutters, while others did not. The shutters were made of wood. When describing the pharmacy that was in it, the shutters of one window from the street side were indicated as being hinged (*“okienice od ulicy okowane”*). In addition, the windows of some rooms had lattices. Many windows were said to have been divided into four sections. Sometimes, it is added that they were glazed in lead (*“wołów opravne”*).²⁵

In the inventory of Jonas Kozačenka's (Jan Kozaczenko) house from 1720, the windows are described rather vaguely. However, the source shows that the windows of the rooms were glazed with lead. Most of them had iron grilles. They are mentioned for both the windows facing the street and those facing the courtyard. There is also mention of a window with grilles in the porch, which also served as a kitchen. However, whether it had glass is not stated. Shutters are also not mentioned. The same cannot be said about the windows of the rooms. Most of them had shutters. When describing the shutters of individual rooms, some are mentioned as being wooden. Double shutters are also mentioned. In the case of one room (*“sklep”*), it is said that

the window facing the street was covered by a shutter covered with decorative boards (*“okienica z ulicy drewniana futrowana”*).²⁶

The inventory of the house of Kotryna Gudelevičienė from 1722 states, when describing the rooms, states that their windows were glazed with lead.²⁷

From the inventory of the Bergmans' house on Stiklių Street from 1764, it can be seen that there were windows with and without shutters. It is said that the shutters of the corridor window was iron.²⁸ The shutters of other rooms were wooden. The windows were framed with wood. The most commonly mentioned are four-, six- and eight-part (*“kwater”*) windows. They had 30 or 48 panes each, although there were also windows with fewer panes. Judging by the description of individual porches, it seems that they had unglazed windows with bars.

The shutters of the house on Stiklių Street, which was rented by Kivelis Eliaševičius in 1787, were wooden. Only when describing the *“kromas”* on the first floor is it said that a single window shutter was covered with tin. Most shutters were double, but some windows also had single shutters. Some windows were said to have their glass framed in wood (*“w drzewo osadzonych”*), while others were described as having been framed with putty (*“w kit sadzone”*). The number of glass panes in individual windows ranged from 16 to 54 pieces. The glass panes were of several sizes. In this house, half-sheet (*“pularkuszowych”*) windows are most commonly found. Some windows were said to have small pieces of glass (*“szkła drobnego”*) but were not described in more detail.²⁹

In the 1802 inventory describing one of the trading rooms of the town hall, it is stated that above the door was a square window in a simple wooden frame, the panes of which were glazed in rods (*“szyb w laski sadzonych”*).³⁰ The size of the panes is not specified. As for another window, it is stated that it contained twenty “quarter” white panes (*“z szkła białego mające w sobie szyb czwartkowych dwadzieście”*). The same source indicates that the window of the cell of a house on Arklių Street, which used to be a prison, had panes of half a quarter sheet (*“z szyb pulczwartkowych”*).³¹ In the inventory of the house belonging to the Basilian monastery from 1812, its windows are described rather in passing. However, it is stated that all of them contained “quarter” panes (*“szyby czwartkowe”*).³²

In the 1826 inventory of the house belonging to the Franciscans, windows are mentioned in one place and described in another, indicating that they were double-leaf or single-leaf. In addition, the description shows that the windows had glass of different sizes. Half-quarter sheet glass is mentioned in most rooms. The windows of individual apartments had glass the size of a quarter sheet and a half sheet.³³ It is worth noting that there are

rooms where one window had glass the size of a quarter sheet and another had glass the size of a half sheet.

Based on the data provided and other available material, we can draw the following conclusions. The windows of townspeople's houses of the period in question usually had shutters, which were both single-leaf and double-leaf. However, it seems that there were more double-leaf shutters. In addition to wooden ones, iron and metal-clad shutters are often found. Such shutters were usually used in shops, warehouses, and other premises used to store more expensive items. Iron shutters, like metal doors, were sometimes decorated with forged reliefs of plant motifs and other decorations. When tinplate was used to cover the shutters, their window hinges and other fittings and details were also often tinned.

The windows of porches, which usually contained kitchens, chambers, and other auxiliary rooms, usually only had bars. Until the 18th century, window panes were usually framed in lead and wood. Sometimes, sources state that window panes were framed in "wood and lead." In the 18th century, especially in the second half of the century, putty was often used to glaze windows. The number of panes in windows was quite variable, ranging 16 to 54 *szyb* in one window. The number depended on both the window and the size of the panes.

Sources mention four standard sizes of window glass: sheet, half-sheet, quarter sheet, and half-quarter sheet. Sometimes, it is mentioned that the windows of houses had smaller panes than the ones mentioned above or that various non-standard panes were glazed. The latter were usually glazed with lead.

It is worth noting that individual windows of the same house very often not only had a different number of panes but were also glazed with panes of different sizes (one window of one size and others with panes of a different size).

Floors, Ceilings, and Walls

The available archival sources show that different materials were used for the floors of townspeople's houses. Quite a few houses had brick floors in all rooms, including porches. Moreover, this was true not just for the first floor of the building. However, different rooms in the same house often had different floors.

Porches usually had brick floors. However, stone paving was sometimes found in them, especially in the earlier period. There are cases when porches also had wooden floors. It should be added that kitchens were usually

installed in the porches. Only the houses of wealthy burghers sometimes had separate kitchens. The floors in them were usually made of brick.

In the houses of wealthy townspeople, in the beautiful rooms, which often had a representative significance, there was wooden parquet flooring, which usually is not described in more detail in the sources. The rooms where the family lived and other premises had plank or brick floors.

Only very rarely do we find mention of special floor tiles and marble floors in the sources. We can say even less about the ceilings. It is clear that in those premises where there were no vaults, there were wooden ceilings. Plank ceilings with massive wooden beams are often mentioned. In a house on Birżų Street 3 is a 17th-century beam with carvings. Similar carved beams from various Polish cities are presented in the comparative iconography index <...>. Unfortunately, decorated beams and ceilings are not mentioned in archival sources.

Descriptions of the walls of rooms in building inventories are rather scarce. Only in rare cases is it indicated that one or another room was whitewashed or what colors the walls of the rooms were painted in. However, it is not possible to establish any regularity from the available data. There is much more material about wall coverings.

Notes

¹ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5096, l. 663, 664.

² LVIA, f. SA, b. 5098, l. 164v.

³ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5099, l. 175v.

⁴ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5098, l. 54.

⁵ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5102, l. 546v.

⁶ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5104, l. 68.

⁷ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5115, l. 726.

⁸ LVIA, f. SA, b. 4232, l. 4187.

⁹ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5147, l. 715, 716.

¹⁰ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5119, l. 285–286.

¹¹ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5111, l. 1337, 1338.

¹² LVIA, f. SA, b. 5120, l. 1569, 1569v, 1580 etc.

¹³ Ibid. l. 1569, 156.

¹⁴ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5124, l. 234.

¹⁵ LVIA, f. SA, b. 3774, p. 22.

¹⁶ LVIA, f. SA, b. 4235, p. 4741.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 4742.

¹⁸ LVIA, f. SA, b. 4232, p. 4188 etc.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 4187, 4188 etc.

²⁰ LVIA, f. 1178, ap. 1, b. 401, l. 1–3v.

- ²¹ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5096, l. 663–664.
- ²² LVIA, f. SA, b. 5111, l. 1337.
- ²³ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5120, l. 1568–1577v.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.* l. 1570v.
- ²⁵ LVIA, f. SA, b. 58, l. 288–289.
- ²⁶ LVIA, f. SA, b. 5124, l. 232–235.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* l. 416–417.
- ²⁸ LVIA, f. SA, b. 4235, p. 4740.
- ²⁹ VUB RS, f. 4, b. A-530, dok. nr. 21613.
- ³⁰ LVIA, f. 458, ap. 1, b. 592, l. 6.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* l. 27.
- ³² LVIA, f. 1178, ap. 1, b. 401, l. 1–3v.
- ³³ VUB RS, f. 4, b. A-2465, l. 411–317v.

CHAPTER THREE

ATTRIBUTES OF THE HOMES OF VILNIUS BURGHERS

The furnishing of the homes of residents of the city of Vilnius, as well as that of residents of other Lithuanian cities, has actually not been researched yet. It has not been determined until now what kind of furniture the city's residents had, what the various pieces of their furniture looked like, and what materials they were made of. It has not been ascertained what colors were characteristic of them and whether they were always like that. It has not been elucidated what materials the furniture was upholstered in. It is not known whether the citizens of Vilnius used only locally produced furniture, or whether they also imported it from elsewhere. The purpose of individual pieces of furniture has not been investigated, nor the place of musical instruments in the furnishing of homes in the period under review.

The purpose of this article is to give answers to these questions. To this end, we used the sources stored in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (Lith. LVIA). Most of the material was collected from these Archives' old acts fond, which contains archival documents of the offices of the Magistrate of Vilnius and *Vaitas* (Pol. *wójt*)¹ (the highest official in a city which has the right of self-governance in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, appointed by the Grand Duke; head of a city's community). Among the various sources pertaining to the city and its citizens, there are also materials relevant to this topic, such as deeds of purchase, sale or transfer of buildings, deeds of taxation of constructions, wills of citizens, property inventories, and other documents.

In addition to the written sources, surviving furniture from the period under review was used for the research. The best part of it is stored in the National Museum of Lithuania. Unfortunately, only a part of it could be photographed. A fair number of pieces of furniture is kept in the Museum's auxiliary premises where other exhibits are also stored. The furniture is tightly packed, with various other items placed on top. In order to photograph individual pieces, they should be at least temporarily moved to

a specially prepared place. According to the Museum's management, currently this is impossible to do.

True, the card-index of sketch drawings² of the furniture prepared in the fonds of the Museum of Architecture,³ as well as drawings of furniture discovered elsewhere in Vilnius partially make up for that.

As for the furniture, it should be reminded that there is a lack of authentic information based on which it could be asserted that this or that specific piece of furniture was used by some specific citizen of Vilnius in the seventeenth–eighteenth century. What is important is that they are precise examples of the furniture that was used in Vilnius in the period under review, so if it was not exactly this or that furniture that Vilnius' citizens had, it was anyway similar.

During the research, examples of other countries' furniture were also used as comparative material, which were helpful in clarifying certain issues and filling in the gaps caused by using entirely local sources.

Benches

That the residents of Vilnius had used benches for sitting since long ago is a fact⁴ that needs no additional proving. All we have to do is to describe in greater detail what the benches of that time looked like, where they stood, and what colors they were painted.

The description of a house from 1720 reveals the presence of several benches in it. Some of them stood in the entrance hall, others—in the rooms. The benches in the rooms are said to have been carpenter work.⁵

Additional information about benches was found in the description of the masonry buildings of burgomaster Andrius Osipovičius of the Magistrate of Vilnius from 1721.⁶ The description of one dwelling (Pol. *izba*) notes that there were two different-size tables “around with benches” (*wkoło ławki*). Further, in the description of the big room (*izba wielka*), mention is made of cupboards and benches, yet the way they stood is not specified. Whereas the benches in the small room (*izba mała*) were “the size of half the room” (*ławki przez połowę izby*).

There are still more sources that mention benches when describing citizens' residential buildings and movable property. However, what they looked like, is mostly left unsaid, except that some benches in the rooms were “carpenter made.” Quite many benches must have been relatively rough carpenter work. Such benches usually stood in porches, kitchens, and other auxiliary premises, as well as the rooms of needy citizens.

In the rooms of wealthy citizens, there stood “carpenter made,” natural wood, or painted benches. They were mostly painted red and green, less often—white.

Interestingly, many sources do not mention benches whatsoever when listing furniture, which means the absence of benches in quite a lot of homes.

Chairs and benches

First of all, we should give an overview of the chairs that in the Polish written sources of the period under review are referred to as *zydle* and *zedle*, and *zedlye* in Latin written documents.

A smith who died in the mid-seventeenth century owned three painted chairs of this type, which came with armrests—*zydle farbowane z poręczami*.⁷ This type of chair with armrests was owned by merchant Juozapas Stefanovičius⁸ of Vilnius. Nothing is said about it having been painted, it is only indicated that it was worth 3 gold zloty. The inventory of founder Kristupas Revelis compiled in 1719 says that there were two household chairs in his house.⁹ It can be assumed that they were rough workmanship, since both were only estimated at 15 groats. It is not clear from the source whether they were with or without armrests. While taking a census of the property of a rich citizen of Vilnius in 1721, the presence of two long chairs without armrests in his house was indicated.¹⁰

Since not a single fact was found in the available documents from the period in question that would suggest chairs having been upholstered in leather or some other material, it can be concluded that they were wooden and not upholstered in anything. As often as not, they were equipped with backrests, could be with or without armrests, and, as well as benches, were painted or not.

Given that in the seventeenth century, the townsfolk in Poland, in addition to simple chairs for sitting alone, had two- and three-seater *zydle*,¹¹ and Vilnius sources bear mention of “long *zydle*,” we conclude that burghers in Vilnius, along with single-seaters, possessed chairs for several persons to sit on, which partially resembled benches. The available material gives us reason to believe that the aforementioned types of chair, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were very common both in the homes of the rich and the less well-off burghers.

A separate type consisted of chairs which in the Polish inventories and other sources of the time are referred to as *stolki*. For example, the inventory of *Vaitas* Andrius Gierkevičius of Vilnius from the second half of the seventeenth century mentions six leather and three textile chairs (*stolki*): all

of them are described as old and are estimated at 1 gold zloty and 15 groats.¹² Four old leather chairs of burgomaster Eustachijus Šperkovičius (Eustachy Szperkowicz) were estimated at 5 gold zloty in 1686.¹³ The inventory of Jonas Feltneris from 1691 notes that his six worn leather chairs were estimated at 3 gold zloty each.¹⁴ After the death of merchant Jonas Cichanovičius in 1687, six leather chairs found in his house were evaluated at 4 gold zloty each.¹⁵ The property inventory of burgomaster Petras Minkevičius (Piotr Minkiewicz) compiled in 1698 shows him to have owned 17 chairs of this type.¹⁶ In the home of Gabrielius Chilimovičius, two leather chairs were found in 1709, which were each evaluated at 3 gold zloty by the inventory compilers.¹⁷ The list of the belongings of citizen Dziáhilevičienė compiled in 1711 notes that “five leather chairs” burned during a fire that raged in the city.¹⁸

In the sources presented herein, “leather chairs” are mostly mentioned. Assumingly, chairs upholstered in leather were referred to under this name. Along with leather tanned in the ordinary way, suede, morocco, and leather with gilded embellishments were used. The fact that rich inhabitants possessed ornate chairs is evidenced by the property inventory of *Vaitas Bylinskis* of Vilnius drawn up in 1686. In his living premises, there stood one black leather chair, one “Prussian leather crooked chair,” and two “gilded leather chairs.”¹⁹ It is not clear from this statement whether only the wooden parts of the latter chairs were gilded or whether the chairs were upholstered in gilded leather, moreover that in the sources of the time, gilded leather was called *kurdyban*. The chair named as “crooked” should probably not be considered curved. Most likely, such a description was used for an imported elaborately shaped (“Prussian”) chair.

The following fact confirms that chairs used to be brought from abroad. Merchant Juozapas Stefanovičius of Vilnius had six chairs which were named as Königsberg-type (Lith. *karaliautiška*) (*stolków królewieckich*). The seats of three chairs were upholstered in leather, those of the other three—in woven material (*plotnem*). Despite the fact that the upholstery was different, they were estimated equally—at 4 gold zloty each.²⁰ We come across chairs upholstered in various materials in other sources of the period under review as well. For example, according to the property inventory of merchant and royal secretary Jonas Gavlovickis of Vilnius taken in 1712,²¹ he had four embroidered chairs (*stolki wyszywane*) and two chairs upholstered in velvet (*stolki aksamitne*). The property inventory of another merchant of Vilnius from 1716 reveals the presence of fourteen chairs in his home, which, by the type of the upholstery, are noted to have been upholstered in sky-blue unembroidered material, with embroidered upholstery, and upholstered in leather.²²

When taking the property inventory of burgomaster Petras Kosobudzkis of Vilnius in 1775, eighteen chairs were found:²³ two of them were upholstered in leather, four were needlework of woolen fabric (*suknem wyszywanym*), three—needlework of green fabric (*suknem zielonym*), and five—needlework of flannel. The remaining four are said to have been new, not upholstered chairs.

The sources mentioned above specify not only the materials of the upholstery, but also the colors of the chairs. It should be noted that even more facts about chair colors are available. For example, in the home of Mykolas. Reineris, there were six red leather chairs and two black leather “small chairs” in 1724.²⁴ After burgomaster Mikalojus Stročynskis of the Magistrate of Vilnius died in 1698, twelve chairs were found in his residence. The inventory of his property indicates²⁵ them to have been red color, upholstered in woven wall covering material (Lith. *špalerinės*) (*stolków szpalerowych czerwonych*).

Based on the aforementioned facts and other available material, it is concluded that the chairs called *stolki* in Polish were used widely by burghers in Vilnius. There used to be a few to more than a dozen of them in their homes in the period under review. More chairs are encountered in the homes of wealthy citizens. *Vaitai* (plural for *vaitas*) of Vilnius, members of the Magistrate, the richest merchants owned not only locally made ornate chairs, but those imported from Prussia and, possibly, from other countries as well.

The chairs from the period under review were upholstered in leather and different woven materials. Archival sources suggest that the percentage of chairs upholstered in leather in the homes of residents of Vilnius in the seventeenth century was higher than that in the eighteenth century, especially in its second half. In the eighteenth century, chairs with woven and embroidered upholstery were popular.

Woolen fabric, velvet, flannel and probably other materials were mostly used for upholstery. Green, sky-blue, red color upholstery is mentioned. Leather upholstery was mostly black and red color.

Along with the aforementioned types of chairs, residents in Vilnius had armchairs (*krzesło*). For example, burgomaster Eustachijus. Šperkovičius possessed one *krzesło* worth 5 zloty in 1686. His inventory notes it to have been a leather one.²⁶ A chair covered in woolen fabric (*krzesło sukienne*) was inventoried in the house of a resident of Vilnius who worked as a surgeon.²⁷ Mention is made of a red *krzesło* with armrests in a merchant's property inventory in 1711.

As regards armchairs, it should be noted that not only merchants, members of the Magistrate, surgeons and other wealthy citizens, but also craftsmen were in possession of them.

As an example, a mid-seventeenth-century property inventory of a smith notes him having possessed “a large chair with armrests.”²⁸ A master of cords, as can be seen from his property inventory compiled in 1670,²⁹ possessed an armchair with gilded leather upholstery worth 10 zloty.

The presented examples and other collected material bear testament to the presence of mostly a single armchair in the homes of residents of Vilnius in the seventeenth century, less often—several. Of course, we only have in mind those residents who possessed armchairs at all, because they were only present in the flats of well-to-do residents. The poor of the city of the time, apparently, had to make do with benches and cheap chairs of rough workmanship.

The armchairs increased in number in the homes of residents of Vilnius in the eighteenth century. Archival sources increasingly make mention of armchairs upholstered in various woven fabrics, which as often as not were embroidered. It should be noted that woven upholstery did not replace leather, which was used to upholster armchairs into the eighteenth century.

To give an example, according to the property inventory of Juozas Osipovičius taken in 1721, he possessed three leather-upholstered armchairs each of which was estimated at 4 gold zloty.³⁰ The list of burgher Mykolas Reineris’ furniture drawn up in 1724 shows him to have had a large embroidered armchair (*krzesło wielkie wyszywane*) and a small wooden armchair (*krzeselka drewniane*): the latter was estimated at 15 groats, and the large embroidered armchair—at 18 gold zloty.³¹ Five armchairs, four of which were upholstered in black leather, were inventoried in the home of burgomaster Povilas Hramovičius of the Magistrate of Vilnius in 1721.³²

While taking a census of the property of Jonas Kostrovičius, the royal secretary and burgomaster of the Magistrate, and his wife in 1765, six armchair “mattresses” upholstered in green woolen fabric and embroidered with wool threads were found in his home.³³

Vilnius merchant Petras Klementovičius, whose property inventory was compiled at the end of the 1770s, possessed six simple not upholstered armchairs, all of which were estimated at 18 zloty.³⁴

Chairs and armchairs are usually recorded, described and evaluated separately in the sources from the period under review, which is clear proof of those pieces of furniture to have been very different in their shape and dimensions. However, in the homes of individual citizens, there happened to be found armchairs that were not much different from the chairs referred to as *stólki* in the sources. We can see that in the property inventory of a

wealthy citizen taken in 1729, it says that he possessed twelve chairs, or armchairs (*stolków alias krzesłów*). It was the furniture made by sculptors-carvers, upholstered in woven fabric of two types.³⁵

Hence, armchairs, as well as chairs, in most cases had leather and embroidered or not embroidered fabric upholstery. Their upholstery was of color and seems to have been softer than that of chairs, and the furniture itself—bulkier.

Stools

As it turns out from the property inventory of merchant Danielius Moravskis taken in 1729, he possessed one stool which was estimated at 5 tympfs, or 6 zloty and 10 groats.³⁶ Burgomaster of the Magistrate, Petras Kosobudzkis had two stools, worth 4 gold zloty each, in 1775. Both had flannel upholstery.³⁷ Mention of stools is also made in some other property inventories of residents of Vilnius. The fact that stools are only mentioned in a few inventories makes us conclude that their usage was relatively scarce.

Tables

In the sources from the period under review with information about residents' furniture, mention is usually made of wooden tables. The tables themselves are mostly not described, indicating only their worth. In quite many cases, however, more information about the tables is provided; it is specified what kind of wood they are made of. Good quality tables were mainly made from linden and oak, while simpler ones—from pinewood. Sometimes, however, we come across sources with a mention of beech tables, such as, for instance, the property inventory of citizen Derengowski from 1725.³⁸

In addition to simple tables, as often as not there were other table types. To give an example, there were two tables in the home of a merchant's widow, Anastazija Gielevičienė in 1684. Her oak wood folding table was evaluated at 15 gold zloty, and the large linden table with drawers (*z szufladami*)—at 10 gold zloty.³⁹ The folding oak wood table of burgomaster Pranciškus Pejeris (Franciszek Udalrik Peyer) of the Magistrate (*stół składany dębowy*) was assessed at 3 thalers (Lith. *muštiniai taleriai*) in 1698.⁴⁰ The inventory of one craftsman had it that he had one folding table worth 90 zloty.⁴¹