

DATA ON PARTICIPATION OF PEASANTS  
IN VIOLENT CRIMES OF THE NOBILITY  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REGISTRY  
BOOKS OF VILNIUS COUNTY CASTLE AND  
LAND COURTS

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Majority of peasants in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did not have any personal freedom and were subjects of their owners. Judging by the cases brought to Vilnius County castle and land courts, peasants took part in crimes perpetrated by the nobles in the eighteenth century Vilnius County both as perpetrators and the victims. There were several models of how peasants would participate in the crimes of nobles. First would be the direct violent actions of nobles and their peasants against peasants and nobles from other estates. This model is most often observed in massive, organized criminal acts, first of all raids. The second model (likely most common) was violence, perpetrated by nobles and peasants, or only the nobles, against peasants of other estates. The third, least common, was violence by peasants against nobles without participation of their lords. The fourth was violent actions between peasants from various estates, when owners of such peasants would not surrender or punish their subjects, sometimes even fostering the violence themselves. Peasants usually perpetrated crimes or were attacked in the suburban domain, usually by the way of beating, murder, raid and looting. Most often peasants are mentioned in the raids. In urban space peasants rarely participated in crimes, usually in cases of illegal imprisonment. There are several examples of court sentences against peasants, such as infamy (stripping of rights) and banishment (exile). There is little known about death sentences against peasants. Sometimes there were other sentences carried, such as quartering or decapitation. The complaints would usually emphasize the fact of direct order from the lord; however peasants often also showed initiative in crimes of the nobility.

Keywords: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilnius County, castle court, land court, nobility, peasants, crimes.