

Taking Matters into Their Own Hands: Lithuanian Bakers in 1920s–1930s

Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė

Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of History, V. Putvinskio St. 23, Kaunas, Lithuania
e-mail: ugne.andrijauskaite@vdu.lt

Abstract. This article adapts the Hobsbawmian concept of *primitive rebels* and analyses Lithuanian bakers and their involvement in the labour movement and labour unrest in the 1920s–1930s. Ancient bakers' traditions like *wędrówka* (travel money) and *fajerantas* as a way to support the unemployed bakers are also presented. The article draws attention to bakers' cooperation which spontaneously formed as a response to poor working conditions and to symbolic acts of violence which happened as a response to poor factory management.

Keywords: workers, Lithuania 1918–1940, bakers, labour movement, social unrest.

Anotacija. Šiame straipsnyje remiantis Erico Hobsbawmano *primityviųjų maištininkų* koncepcija analizuojami Lietuvos kepėjai ir jų dalyvavimas darbo judėjime bei darbininkų maištuose XX a. 3–4-ajame dešimtmėčiuose. Pristatomos senovinės kepėjų tradicijos, tokios kaip *wędrówka* (kelionpinigiai), ir pagalba bedarbiams kepėjams, vadinta *fajerantu*. Taip pat straipsnyje atkreipiamas dėmesys į spontaniškai susiformavusias kepyklų darbininkų grupes, besirūpinusias solidarumu, kai prasidėdavo streikas, ar kolektyvinio maišto organizavimu dėl prasto kepyklos darbo organizavimo.

Esminiai žodžiai: darbininkija, Lietuva 1918–1940 m., kepėjai, darbo judėjimas, socialiniai neramumai.

Introduction

In the beginning of the 20th century Lithuania was an agricultural country. Most working people were employed in agriculture; therefore, urban population was relatively small¹ and the labour movement was rather weak. Despite this, there are a lot of stories to tell about how workers organised themselves in order to improve their working and living conditions during Lithuania's years of independence (1918–1940). Since the scope of workers' organisations was small, we may state that the labour movement did not reach the level of modern organised movement as it developed in other more industrialised European countries. It falls behind the classic pattern of labour unionism and cannot be analysed in the same way. However, it is possible to have a different approach and to look into the workers' organisations of Lithuania in the beginning of the 20th century as the pre-modern organisations whose members had kept quite a few craftsmen traditions.

A great investigation of craftsmen and industrialisation in the USA and Great Britain was carried out by Jeffrey Haidu in 1991². The insights made were very helpful while researching Lithuanian craftsmen and labour politics in the beginning of the 20th century. However, this article takes the concept of *primitive rebels* offered by Eric Hobsbawm in his book *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, which was first published in 1959, and uses it for the analysis of craftsmen and their acts in Lithuania in 1918–1940. This allows us to be more inclusive while researching the labour history of Lithuania and include more topics, in this case, non-organised labour movement, which would be (and were) dismissed by traditional labour historians. Current Lithuanian historiography has paid very little attention to labour history³. There were attempts to conduct research in this field of history before 1990, but it followed Marxist-Leninist clichés, and its dominant topic was the involvement of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LKP) in the labour movement, and the biggest attention was drawn to industrial workers. Hence, these studies are quite unrepresentative. Therefore, this article tries to give a deeper look into Lithuanian craftsmen in the 1920s and 1930s with the focus on a short case study of Lithuanian bakers. Since it is the first attempt of this kind, it is hoped that more research studies will be done on Lithuanian workers and their everyday life in the period of 1918–1940 in the future, and their results will be put into an international perspective.

¹ DRĖMAITĖ, Marija. *Progreso meteoras. Modernizacija ir pramonės architektūra Lietuvoje 1920–1940 m.* Vilnius: Lapas, 2016, p. 11.

² HAYDU, Jeffrey. *Between Craft and Class: Skilled Workers and Factory Politics in the United States and Britain, 1890–1922.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

³ In 2017 the author defended her PhD thesis *Urban Workers and Organised Labour Movement in Lithuania 1918–1940*. This publication was prepared as a side project since it concerns a non-organised movement. The research was funded by Vytautas Magnus University (MID-V funds for the implementation of cluster science projects, Rector's Order No. 200, 30 April 2018, Reg. No. P-H-18-04).

Primary sources which would allow us to have a broad analysis of the topic are rather poor and scattered. For the reasons unknown to the author, the documents of trade unions active in the period of 1918–1939 are basically non-existent in today's archives with a few exceptions (e.g. postal workers, drivers and print workers). One might guess that this could have happened because of the fact that in general the unions did not manage their paperwork in a proper way, or the documents were lost or destroyed during the Soviet occupation(s). That is why, this article relies on a few documented or referred accounts about Lithuanian craftsmen and their acts, and employs analytical and descriptive methods to tackle the problem and to provide the reader with a brief story of the life of craftsmen in a modern society and in modern factories.

Lithuanian bakers: from artisans to workers

Bakers represent one of the most outstanding cases among the craftsmen in the Lithuanian labour movement. In the 1920s and 1930s they had an official bakers' union, mutual aid and other associations; however, they had also preserved some of the older *primitive* (in a Hobsbawmian way) traditions, which will be presented in this paper. According to Eric Hobsbawm, primitive social movements were usually found where for some reason the organisations were secret, so they could keep their ancient traditions. That is why, this type of *primitivism* is common in revolutionary associations and workers' associations which had developed from qualified craftsmen guilds⁴. Thus, at first, we should understand what made Lithuanian⁵ bakers exceptional. In the late 19th and early 20th century the society was on the brink of changes; with the rise of individualism, modern intellectuals remembered the examples of communal ideas of the past, that is, the traditions of artisans and medieval guilds. As baking was an artisan craft, we can still grasp a few old traditions of guilds among the bakers' community in 20th century Lithuania.

Guilds developed in pre-Christian communities in Germany and they provided an alternative model for the society, that is, included both communal and hierarchical model of political organisation⁶, thus providing a balance of power. Through the years of their existence, artisan guilds became a counterbalance to economic liberalism and individualism; they also marked the rise of people's freedom and inspiration for resistance. According to historian Gervase Rosser, in the course of history guilds progressed into

⁴ HOBBSAWM, Eric. *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965, p. 153.

⁵ The term "Lithuanian" is used to refer to citizenship rather than ethnicity / nationality. There were Lithuanian, Jewish, Polish, Russian and German bakers who were involved in the organised labour movement or grass-roots activism in Lithuania between the two world wars.

⁶ ROSSER, Gervase. *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7–8.

trade unions⁷. Moreover, guilds helped to solve the problem of imbalance in the supply and demand for labour. In order to avoid the oversupply of labour force, “job conscious” artisans and craft workers developed the system of enforced apprenticeship training, which allowed them to protect their jobs, keep the wages from dropping down, etc.⁸

In Lithuania’s case, during the 19th century the traditions of Western European medieval guilds were mixing up with the traditions of workers’ associations of the Russian Empire since Lithuania was a part of it at that time. The first and largest trade unions in big cities of the Russian Empire were found by craftsmen, since they usually were educated, lived in urban environment for at least a few generations, mastered their skills as apprentices and started working at an early age. Spending a longer period of their lives in the workplace environment they had a chance to form their identity, learn about their rights, the role and influence of the state on their living and working conditions as well as to try communal activities and political activism⁹. However, workers’ organisations in the Russian Empire did not have a similar and powerful status and independence as their western counterparts. Even though trade unions and mutual aid societies of Russia were the descendants of artisan guilds, they had lost their influence over the production and workplace management. Yet, according to historian Victoria E. Bonnell, ‘the traditions of craft pride, rooted originally in the guilds and perpetuated by them, continued to have widespread appeal even among non-guild craftsmen’¹⁰. Some historians would argue that, in general, civil society in Tsarist Russia was weak. Bonnell also stated that mutual aid societies did not give workers an opportunity to participate in management, so all they could do was to teach people co-working and solidarity¹¹; however, I would like to agree with Joseph Bradley that ‘within the unavoidable constraints of autocratic power, Russian associations were by and large self-defined, self-organised, and self-managed bodies offering a free, that is, not coercive, sociability’¹². This statement can also be applied to workers’ organisations which were built from below. Moreover, sometimes people founded such associations without any previous knowledge and experience of self-management, so we might think that such practices emerged naturally in a modern society¹³.

⁷ ROSSER, Gervase. *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 20.

⁸ LAURIE, Bruce. *Artisans into workers. Labor in Nineteen-Century America*. New York: Noonday Press, 1989, p. 4–5.

⁹ ROSSER, Gervase. *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7.

¹⁰ BONNELL, Victoria E. *Roots of Rebellion. Workers’ Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914*. University of California Press, 1984, p. 74–75.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79–80.

¹² BRADLEY, Joseph. Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia. *The American Historical Review*, 107 (October, 2002), p. 1120.

¹³ NESS, Immanuel; AZZELLINI, Dario. *Ours to master and to own. Workers’ control from the commune to the present*. Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2011.

Within the same spirit the workers of historical lands of Lithuania also organised themselves in the beginning of the 20th century; they participated in the revolution of 1905 where they demanded an eight-hour working day for the first time¹⁴. They kept their ways during the times of independence of Lithuania (1918–1940). Social security and labour laws were not the priority of a young state; therefore, mutual aid societies played a big role: they provided their members with various benefits in case of unemployment, illness, death or accident. Some of these societies also helped in finding employment. An eight-hour day in factories and a ten-hour day in shops were established by the Working Day Length Act passed on 17 December 1919; however, it was only applied for the enterprises with three or more employees. Moreover, in June 1931 Lithuania ratified the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention created by the International Labour Organisation. Since the complaints about the length of working day kept on going, we may say that the implementation of these laws was not completely successful¹⁵. The Industrial Workers Employment Law came into force in November 1933 only. Until then, all workers' issues were dealt with according to the laws of the Russian Empire with a few changes made in 1921¹⁶. The Health Insurance Law was issued on 28 September 1926¹⁷, but its implementation actually started in 1928 only. Therefore, health and social security was mostly a personal responsibility or it was provided by a trade union for its members and their families.

The modernization of work, industrialization and growing tensions between employers and employees provoked actions, such as absenteeism, slowdowns, strikes, etc., which can also be seen as a way for workers to act together and reach a common goal¹⁸. Moreover, some craftsmen turned to militant industrial action when these changes had a negative influence on their wages and social status¹⁹. Generally speaking, in the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century all these trends of self-organisation were common among all wage workers, including bakers.

A look inside bakeries: hygiene and working conditions

In the end of the 19th century bread baking was mostly still a domestic or artisan craft: most bread was baked in small bakeries. These bakeries were usually poorly equipped –

¹⁴ BIELINIS, Kipras. *Penktieji metai. Revoliucinio sąjūdžio slinktis ir padariniai*. Niujorkas, 1959, p. 46–47.

¹⁵ AKELAITIS, Vincas. Socialinė apsauga Lietuvoje. In: *Lietuva 1918–1938*. Edited by Vincas Kemežys. Kaunas: Šviesa, 1990, p. 341–342.

¹⁶ Pramonės darbininkų samdos įstatymas. *Vyriausybės žinios*, 11 November 1933, No. 429–2966, p. 1–5.

¹⁷ Ligonių kasų įstatymą priėmus. *Socialdemokratas*, 7 October 1926, No. 40, p. 1.

¹⁸ LAURIE, Bruce. *Artisans into workers. Labor in Nineteen-Century America*. New York: Noonday Press, 1989, p. 6.

¹⁹ HAYDU, Jeffrey. *Between Craft and Class: Skilled Workers and Factory Politics in the United States and Britain, 1890–1922*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 4.

ovens were often built in the basement without sufficient light and ventilation. For that reason, bakers had poor health and a lower life expectancy, and bakeries were prone to bug and rodent infestations²⁰. However, this was about to change since the technology of baking was improving and bakeries were being modernised and mechanised. Even though some people (both bakers and consumers) complained that modern technology was ruining the dough, the productiveness of mechanised bakeries continued to grow, and the quality of machine-baked bread was higher than handmade bread²¹.

These changes were happening across Europe, including Lithuania. Pre-modern bakeries were based on manual labour and had poor hygiene (e.g. there were no facilities for bakers to wash their hands, so the dough could be contaminated)²². When the Parama cooperative opened its bakery in Kaunas in 1922, it was also based on manual labour. The bakers were able to bake a couple of thousand kilos of bread a month; therefore, there was a need to modernise the bakery and increase the amount of bread baked there. In 1929 the Parama cooperative built new ovens and mechanised a part of the baking process. After these changes the bakery was able to bake about 5,000 kg of bread a day²³.

In 1930 Parama sent their foreman to learn the craft of bread baking in Germany, so he could become the first bakery technologist in the country. In 1931 Parama opened its new modern and mechanised bakery in Kaunas, which could produce about 1,100 loafs of bread an hour²⁴. The new bakery had very high hygiene standards. All the workers of the bakery entered the facilities through the dressing room and showers, and his or her everyday clothes were left in a separate room. After the shower the workers put on their uniforms and started their working day; after work was over, they left the bakery through the shower room, so the area where bread was made left uncontaminated. The rules of the Parama bakery required specific personal hygiene of workers as well: male workers had to shave at least every second day, cut their nails short and remove all the dirt from under their fingernails. Moreover, every three months their health had to be checked for any contagious diseases²⁵. Hence, the bread baking business was changing from a craft to a modern industry, and it was seen both in the baking process, facilities and the view on workers.

Even though the conditions in bakeries were changing for the better, bakers were not always satisfied with the changes brought by modernity. In order to better understand why bakers sometimes got involved in labour unrest, we should also look at their wages and working hours. In the 1920s bakers did not have too many complaints about their wages, but the economic crisis led to the situation that unskilled workers quite often

²⁰ MARCHANT, John; REUBEN, Bryan; ALCOCK, Joan. *Bread. A slice of history*. The History Press, 2008, p. 132.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111–113.

²² LAUMAKYS, A. Įmonė, gaminanti Kaunui duoną. *Lietuvos aidas*, 18 June 1930, No. 136, p. 5.

²³ LAUMAKYS, A. Paramos 11 metų sukaktuvės. *Diena*, 30 March 1930, No. 12, p. 2.

²⁴ Pro vieną galą tešlos gabalai, pro kitą duona. *Lietuvos aidas*, 17 November 1931, No. 262, p. 6.

²⁵ RUDAITIS, L. Pirtys darbininkams. *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas*, 1 May 1934, p. 12.

were making more money than skilled employees of smaller enterprises. That is why, in 1934 Lithuanian governmental institutions, such as the Chamber of Labour, started to introduce the minimum wage for different jobs²⁶.

Bakers were among those skilled workers whose wages were too low compared to the unskilled ones. However, the introduction of minimal wages was not going as smoothly as expected. In 1935 the data were collected from the enterprises of Kaunas and the proposed minimum wage was rejected in 23 of them because it was too small²⁷. Bakeries were no exception: in April 1935 the owners of bakeries in Kaunas presented the numbers of minimum wages paid for their employees; however, it turned out that in reality they were not paying the listed amounts of money to bakers. The bakers asked to be paid 90 litas a week while the owners insisted on paying them 6–8 litas a day. A compromise was made: the minimum wage of Kaunas bakers was set at 60 litas a week²⁸. For example, Blechman's bakery paid 300 litas a month to its foreman, 60 litas a week to a pastry baker, at least 7 litas a day to a bagel baker, while their assistants earned 5.5 litas a day. Poliakas' bakery paid 60 litas a week to a pastry baker, 45 litas a week to a dough maker, 8 litas a day to a bagel baker and 2 litas a day to an apprentice. The baker of Buzas Giršas' bakery earned 65 litas a week, his assistant got 5.5 litas a day. Fišienė's bakery paid more than a minimum wage – 75 litas a week to its foreman baker and 33 litas a week to his assistant. Wages at Aškinazi Leiba's bakery were also bigger than required: the foreman baker earned at least 10 litas a day, pastry baker earned 70 litas a week and his assistant earned 37.5 litas a week²⁹. In comparison, in 1934 a daily labourer earned 4–6 litas a day in Kaunas³⁰, and the living wage in 1934 was about 60 litas a month for a single person and about 150 litas for a family of five. In 1935 the living wage was calculated to be about 53 litas for a single person and about 130 litas for a family of five³¹. Therefore, we can state that bakers' wages were sufficient to have a decent life in Lithuanian cities and that is why there were very few confrontations with their employers about the wages paid.

Hard Day's Night: bakers' traditions and unrest

Baker's work was usually done at night. In the 18th century fresh bread became more and more popular among the urban population; therefore, it was baked during the night

²⁶ Nustatytas specialistams minimalinis atlyginimas. *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas*, 6 October 1935, No. 31, p. 1.

²⁷ Įvairios žinios. *Darbininkas*, 30 March 1935, p. 4.

²⁸ Nepavyko nustatyti uždario normų. *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas*, 1 April 1935, No. 7, p. 10.

²⁹ Jau patvirtina kepyklų darbininkams uždario normas. *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas*, 15 April 1935, No. 8, p. 7.

³⁰ VINGĖLA, Henrikas. Kaip gyvena Kauno darbininkas. *Diena*, 6 May 1934, No. 18, p. 6.

³¹ VASKELA, Gediminas. *Lietuva 1919–1940 metais skaitmenimis*, 2002. [Accessed 09-10-2017]. Access via Internet: <<http://ls1919.esy.es/HTML/g016.htm>>.

before the market³². Baking bread at night became a common practice, and that is how work was carried out in the first part of the 20th century in Lithuania; bakeries worked overnight and people were able to buy fresh bread in the morning. However, night shifts had many disadvantages for bakers. For example, in 1925 the bakers of Vilkaviškis worked from 14 to 18 hours a day (including the night time), sometimes even 20 hours a day if there was a need for more bread (usually before holidays)³³. Consequently, in 1925 Lithuanian workers' press was filled with messages about bakers' issues and long night shifts, which led to the wish to change it.

In June 1931 Lithuania ratified two international conventions concerning night work; in October the same year a new law concerning night work in bakeries was implemented. This law banned the work in bakeries from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.³⁴ However, neither local nor international law could stop the owners of bakeries. In the summer of 1931 bakers still often worked 12-hour long shifts³⁵, even though the law concerning an 8-hour working day was adopted as far back as 1919³⁶. The main problem of this law was that it only applied to the enterprises with 3 and more employees, and small bakeries often had less workers than that³⁷. There were not so many strikes in the food sector, but low wages and long working hours would sometimes lead to them. Bakeries were not an exception. For example, on 31 March 1924, the bread bakers of Kaunas went on strike and demanded to increase their wages by one litas³⁸. On 20 August 1931, the bakers of Panevėžys city went on strike demanding to have an 8-hour working day and a day-off on Sundays³⁹. However, the situation did not tend to change for the better.

In December 1932 several bakeries were still working at night; therefore, the owners of Lonkė, Kapulskis (Lukšio st.), Melceris, Kapulskis and C. Mackelis (Town Hall sq.), Zalcburgas (Valančiaus st.), B. Joselevičius (Valančiaus st.), Meeravičius, Kapulskis (Jonavos st.) bakeries in Kaunas were fined⁴⁰. In February 1933 the bakers of Panevėžys city complained that almost all bakeries work during the night⁴¹, and in March the same year the labour inspector of Šiauliai ran a check-up of bakeries and found out that two of them carried out work at night⁴².

On 12 February 1933, the bakers and confectioners of Kaunas had a general meeting, where they discussed the working time. Even though, according to the law, all the

³² KAPLAN, Steven Laurence. *The bakers of Paris and the bread question, 1700–1775*. Duke University Press, 1996, p. 79.

³³ Mūsų žinios. *Socialdemokratas*, 1 October 1925, No. 39, p. 4.

³⁴ AKELAITIS, Vincas. Socialinė apsauga Lietuvoje. In: *Lietuva 1918–1938*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 1990, p. 342.

³⁵ Lietuvoje. *Socialdemokratas*, 25 July 1931, No. 30, p. 6.

³⁶ AKELAITIS, Vincas. Socialinė apsauga Lietuvoje. In: *Lietuva 1918–1938*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 1990, p. 341.

³⁷ TRAUPIS, E. Dėl darbo dienos ilgumo įstatymo. *Socialdemokratas*, 3 February 1921, No. 5, p. 1.

³⁸ Report to the Chief of Political Police, 31-03-1924, Kaunas. *LCVA*, f. 378, ap. 2, b. 7287, l. 4.

³⁹ Lietuvoje. *Socialdemokratas*, 29 August 1931, No. 29, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Nakties darbai kepyklose nesiliauja. *Socialdemokratas*, 3 December 1932, No. 49, p. 5.

⁴¹ Dirba naktimis. *Socialdemokratas*, 25 February 1933, No. 8, p. 4.

⁴² Visoje Lietuvoje. *Socialdemokratas*, 4 March 1933, No. 9, p. 5.

employees of bakeries had to work 8 hours, in reality bakers worked more than that; sometimes their shifts used to last 16 hours straight. Moreover, bakeries still worked at night and ignored the law forbidding this practice. Some workers tried to fight this injustice; however, they were easily dealt with: the owners either punished the workers by lowering their wages or firing those who complained or resisted⁴³. In December 1935 workers' press *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas* wrote about the bakers of Panevėžys city who demanded to improve their working conditions, i.e. stop the night work, allow to have days-off, and 12 vacation days a year⁴⁴. That is why, we can say that local and international law did not eliminate night work in bakeries since their owners found ways to ignore these limitations.

Night work was not the only problem faced by bakers; they also had to deal with unemployment. Even though organised labour movement in 1918–1920 was sparse due to the Lithuanian Wars of Independence, on 22 January 1920, the Trade Union of Workers of Panevėžys was established; it had about 1,000 members. During its first year of existence, the union established 9 sections, including the bakers' section. One of the main goals of the union was to deal with unemployment in Panevėžys city. The most impressive work was done by bakers: they opened a matzo factory which employed around 300 workers. The factory baked matzo for both Lithuanian and Latvian market⁴⁵.

In addition, the problem with unemployment among bakers was solved in a rather unusual way. Bakers kept some old craftsmen traditions, which became handy in the first part of the 20th century as well. One of such traditions was called *fajerantas* when an employed baker would allow an unemployed one to take over his job once a week, so that the latter could earn some money, or, in other cases, to give one day's wage to an unemployed baker and to support him financially. Even though this way of supporting each other theoretically could be useful, but in reality the bakers who did not have a wide social circle could not use the *fajerantas* system, since usually the chance to earn some money was given to one's friends or relatives⁴⁶. Nevertheless, it is really surprising to find these practices surviving into the 20th century.

Fajerantas was not the only old tradition kept among the bakers in Lithuania. Earlier it was believed that the mobility of workers developed mostly in the 19th century with industrialisation and urbanisation, but now it is agreed upon that the workers were traveling and looking for employment way before that⁴⁷. Tramping (*Wanderschaft*) became a common practice among the skilled workers between the 14th and 16th centuries already.

⁴³ Kepėjų susirinkimas. *Socialdemokratas*, 18 February 1933, No. 7, p. 1.

⁴⁴ ŽIBARTAS, Paulius. Panevėžio kepyklų darbininkai. *Darbininkų atstovybės balsas*, 1 December 1934, No. 9, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Iš darbininkų gyvenimo. *Socialdemokratas*, 17 March 1921, No. 11, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Iš Kauno kepėjų gyvenimo. *Socialdemokratas*, 14 May 1932, No. 20, p. 3.

⁴⁷ REITH, Reinhold. Circulation of Skilled Labour in Late Medieval and Early Modern Central Europe. In: *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy 1400–1800*. Edited by Stephan R. Epstein and Maarten Roy Peak. Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 114.

They were spending a period of time on the road looking for a permanent job or at least a temporary employment. Sometimes guilds made tramping compulsory, which allowed to solve oversupply and unemployment issues in the manufacturing business. Therefore, this mobility resulted in journeymen associations, which were firstly found in the Upper Rhineland and later spread all over Europe⁴⁸. This also resulted in the formation of the journeyman's identity: traditions, appearance, symbols, etc. There is little known about the history of tramping in Lithuania; however, one can find some proof of these traditions in fiction. In 1869 the book *Palangos Juzė* was published by Motiejus Valančius, a Catholic bishop of Samogitia, historian and one of the best known Lithuanian writers of the 19th century. In this book, a journeyman tailor, Juzė Viskanta, is telling stories about his four-year journey in Samogitia and Aukštaitija (Highlands). Therefore, we may guess that tramping could have been a known practice in 19th century Lithuania.

The bakers of Lithuania can also be used as an example of these pre-modern journeyman traditions. This practice among the bakers' community was called *wędrówka* [sic] (Polish word meaning *journey*)⁴⁹. Usually, the support for tramping journeymen was not institutionalised, so the money was collected on a voluntary basis⁵⁰. Lithuanian bakers also supported their counterparts who were looking for a permanent job and therefore traveled from one place to another until one would find a job with a small allowance. However, by the 1920s–1930s this old tradition had lost its previous meaning, since some bakers used the money intended for traveling for leisure purposes. That is why, in 1932 the bakers of Kaunas decided to find a mutual aid society where they paid 2 percent of their wages, and this money was used for journeymen bakers with the supervision of the board of the bakers' union⁵¹.

The above examples show that Lithuanian bakers kept a few traditions of primitive social movements. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the most important element of such movements was the form and the ritual. The oldest workers' organisations had a lot of these primitive traditions; some craftsmen still had strong connections to their past; therefore, they kept a few rituals till modern times⁵². In the case of the Russian Empire, guild artisans were the descendants of other skilled workers. Since they often resided in urban environment from generation to generation, they had formed a highly skilled elite, which had a privileged status among other urban workers, and had also preserved

⁴⁸ REITH, Reinhold. Circulation of Skilled Labour in Late Medieval and Early Modern Central Europe. In: *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy 1400–1800*. Edited by Stephan R. Epstein and Maarten Roy Peak. Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 116–117.

⁴⁹ Iš Kauno kepėjų gyvenimo. *Socialdemokratas*, 14 May 1932, No. 20, p. 3.

⁵⁰ REITH, Reinhold. Circulation of Skilled Labour in Late Medieval and Early Modern Central Europe. In: *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy 1400–1800*. Edited by Stephan R. Epstein and Maarten Roy Peak. Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 128.

⁵¹ Iš Kauno kepėjų gyvenimo. *Socialdemokratas*, 14 May 1932, No. 20, p. 3.

⁵² HOBBSAWM, Eric. *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965, p. 151–153.

a few guild traditions⁵³. During the times of Lithuania's independence, we can still see the legacy of it among bakers and their ways of solving labour conflicts. If the Labour Inspection and other supervising institutions like the Chamber of Labour did not intervene and try to solve these conflicts (or the workers were not satisfied with the solution), we know of at least a few instances when bakers looked for other formal or informal solutions. Of course, a strike was the most common way to show workers' disagreement with working conditions, but in bakers' case we can find some more creative ways of dealing with various issues at work.

In July 1926 the bakers of Panevėžys city went on strike, which led to the birth of the self-managed bakers' collective: the bakers collected ~900 litas and opened their own collective bakery⁵⁴, where they baked bread for the city and asked the residents of Panevėžys to support the striking workers – to buy their bread and boycott the bakeries which were breaking the strike⁵⁵. At the end of the month the owners of striking bakeries agreed upon nearly all the demands of the bakers (except for the demand that bakers would be hired and fired by the union)⁵⁶; therefore, the strike was successful. It is worth mentioning that the names of strike breakers were made public in the workers' press as a way to fight with them and maintain solidarity among bakers⁵⁷.

When it was not possible to resolve certain issues by strike or a legal action, bakers sometimes used rather straightforward ways of dealing with a problem. For example, in February 1929 the Parama cooperative bakery fired their baker Jurgis Strumskis because he had opened his own bakery. A new baker, Bagdžiūnas, took Strumskis' place, but he was not a successful baker. Being unable to perform his duties properly, Bagdžiūnas caused some damage and losses worth more than 100 litas. Therefore, Vaitkevičius, who was the foreman of the bakery, punished Bagdžiūnas by beating him up⁵⁸.

However, the most outstanding labour conflict between the bakers and their supervisors happened on 2 September 1933 in Kaunas. At around 1 p.m. the workers of the Parama cooperative bakery got the foreman Kontramavičius, put him into the flour bag (other sources say that a bag was put on his head and then he was thrown out⁵⁹), and left him on the street. Almost all the people who worked in the bakery participated in this ritual; some were carrying the bag, others were whistling, chanting and clapping their hands. The foreman later freed himself from the bag and went home⁶⁰. These kinds of

⁵³ BONNELL, Victoria E. *Roots of Rebellion. Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914*. University of California Press, 1984, p. 75.

⁵⁴ Iš Lietuvos. *Socialdemokratas*, 29 July 1926, No. 30, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Iš Lietuvos. *Socialdemokratas*, 15 July 1926, No. 28, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Iš Lietuvos. *Socialdemokratas*, 29 July 1926, No. 30, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Iš Lietuvos. *Socialdemokratas*, 15 July 1926, No. 28, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Report of the Head of Quota Section, 9 March 1929. *LCVA*, f. 378, ap. 2, b. 11467, l. 52–53.

⁵⁹ Darbininkai meistrą išmetė gatvėn. *Lietuvos žinios*, 5 September 1933, No. 201, p. 7.

⁶⁰ „Paramos“ meistrį išnešė kepyklos darbininkai nemokamai ant rankų į gatvę. *Lietuvos darbo balsas*, 9 September 1933, No. 8, p. 1.

rituals were not that common among the workers who were involved in “modern” social movements. Ritualism was getting weaker with urbanisation and such rituals survived only in the circles of artisans engaged in traditional crafts⁶¹. However, as stated by Jeffrey Haydu, the survived craft traditions were rather exclusive, arrogant and their influence on factory politics was ambiguous⁶². So even though such practices were unique and interesting, their actual benefit to the workers’ movement remains unclear.

The main reason for the aforesaid incident was the behaviour of Kontramavičius. He was hated by other workers because of constant nagging and poor management skills; his decisions would usually make bakers and other workers scapegoats⁶³. According to the workers’ newspaper *Lietuvos darbo balsas*, the bakers of Parama used an old method of workers’ fight against the oppressors, which was common in Tsarist Russia. Then workers usually dealt with an unbearable foreman by kicking him out of the factory and not involving the administration of the factory in the conflict. As the journalist stated, even the tsarist police did not get involved in this type of conflict resolution⁶⁴. These claims can be confirmed by the memoirs of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov who was a worker in a metal factory in Saint Petersburg in the end of the 19th century. Kanatchikov described how the workers plotted against their foreman because he mistreated them and lowered their wages, so they got him on his way to work and beat him up badly. The workers later were punished by ten days in jail⁶⁵. In the Parama case, in the 1930s the administration of the bakery decided to intervene in the conflict. As a result, the foreman and six workers were fired, and there were no more documented incidents of this type at this cooperative bakery afterwards: all labour conflicts used to be solved by modern labour institutions.

Conclusion

The fate of Parama bakers brings us to the conclusion that primitive workers’ traditions perished or were adapted by modern labour and/or socialist movement. Primitive social movements and grass-roots activism represented the earliest stage of workers’ movement. Craftsmen used to enjoy certain privileges and power which was getting weaker in the late 19th century because of the introduction of new machinery, changes in labour processes

⁶¹ HOBBSAWM, Eric. *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965, p. 161.

⁶² HAYDU, Jeffrey. *Between Craft and Class: Skilled Workers and Factory Politics in the United States and Britain, 1890–1922*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 59.

⁶³ „Paramos“ meistrį išnešė kepyklos darbininkai nemokamai ant rankų į gatvę. *Lietuvos darbo balsas*, 9 September 1933, No. 8, p. 1.

⁶⁴ „Paramos“ viešpačiai reikalauja, kad jų pavaldiniai prašytų malonės. *Lietuvos darbo balsas*, 16 September 1933, No. 9, p. 1.

⁶⁵ *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov*. Stanford University Press, 1986, p. 88–89.

and the actions of factory owners who wanted to cut the costs and increase the output⁶⁶. The changes came to the labour movement as well: in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries social movements grew larger and became modern; therefore, “the old ways” of craftsmen were forgotten or abandoned⁶⁷. In Lithuania’s case, the labour movement was already building itself on a modern foundation, so primitive traditions were already very rare. Independent trade unions were carrying their activities until the labour movement was institutionalised by the state in the mid-1930s when all workers’ issues were trusted to the governmental institution Darbo Rūmai (Chamber of Labour). It seems that only bakers were an interesting exception in Lithuania who kept some practices which were born in the times of guilds and craftsmen.

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Kepyklų darbuotojai XX a. 3–4 dešimtmečio Lietuvoje: tarp organizuoto darbo judėjimo ir tiesioginio veiksmo

Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė

Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Humanitarinių mokslų fakultetas, Istorijos katedra, V. Putvinskio g. 23, Kaunas, Lietuva
el. p. ugne.andrijauskaite@vdu.lt

Santrauka

Remiantis darbo istoriko Erico Hobsbawmano knygoje *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries* pateikta primityviųjų maištininkų koncepcija šiame straipsnyje taikant šaltinių analizės ir aprašomąjį metodus tiriami Lietuvos kepėjai ir jų dalyvavimas darbo judėjime bei darbininkų maištuose XX a. 3–4-ajame dešimtmečiuose. Pristatomos senovinės kepėjų tradicijos, tokios kaip *wędrówka* (kelionpinigiai), ir pagalba bedarbiams kepėjams, vadinta *fajerantu*. Taip pat straipsnyje atkreipiamas dėmesys į spontaniškai susiformavusias kepyklų darbininkų grupes, besirūpinusias solidarumu, kai prasidėdavo streikas, ar kolektyvinio maišto organizavimu dėl prasto kepyklos darbo organizavimo. Daroma išvada, jog *primityvūs* socialiniai judėjimai ir tiesioginis veiksmas buvo būdingas ankstyviausioms darbo judėjimo stadijoms. *Primityvūs* darbininkų tradicijos buvo adaptuotos arba nunyko besikuriant moderniam darbo judėjimui. Kepėjai, kaip ir kiti amatininkai, ilgą laiką naudojami sąlyginai išskirtinu statusu, kuris ėmė prarasti modernizuojant pramonę ir kepyklas. Todėl besikeičiant darbo pobūdžiui ir organizavimui, senosios viduramžių ir naujųjų amžių laikus menančios kepėjų tradicijos buvo itin retos ir galutinai nunyko institucionalizavus Lietuvos darbo judėjimą XX a. 4-ojo dešimtmečio viduryje.

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