

Konrad Bobiatyński

# *THE LITHUANIAN HUSSARS IN THE ERA OF WARS AGAINST COSSACKS AND MOSCOW 1648–1667*

## *Abstract*

The article presents the participation of the Lithuanian heavy cavalry in fights against Cossack and Moscow armies during the wars under King Jan Kazimierz (1648–1667). The first part of the study presents an analysis of the changes that took place in this period in the internal structure of the Lithuanian armed forces, and resulted in a gradual loss of the dominant position of the hussars, replaced mainly with the light cavalrymen, and in time making only 5 to 7 per cent of the total army. The reasons for this change, both financial and logistic, are discussed, and selected examples show the difficulties caused by the organisation of these units in the second half of the seventeenth century. The second part of the article is an analysis of the participation of hussar banners or companions (Polish: *chorągiew*) in the most important battles during the wars with the Cossacks and Moscow State. Next, cases of the use of dismounted cavalry during assaults on town fortifications or fortified enemy camps are presented. Above all, however, the role of the hussar formations in the most important Lithuanian victories of the second half of the seventeenth century is demonstrated, such as the battles of Loyev (1649), Shklov (1654), or Polonka (1660). In these battles, the hussars showed that they still had a definite tactical advantage over the opponent's cavalry, representing the Eastern European style of fighting. Finally, attention is drawn to the importance of service in prestigious heavy cavalry units as a significant stage in the later military or political career of leading Lithuanian commanders or dignitaries of that time.