Rūta Čapaite. *Gotikinis raštas Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio Vytauto raštinėje (1392–1430)*. Paleografinė studija. Daktaro disertacija [Gothic Script in the Chancery of Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas the Great (1392–1430). A Palaeographic Study. Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Vilnius, 1998. Pp. 206, 2 lent., 22 ill.

Every scientific research is heeded and appreciated if it attempts to provide an insight into an unexplored field of human knowledge. Such is Rūta Čapaite's dissertation which was defended on 26 November 1998 at the Lithuanian Institute of History. Čapaite is a researcher at the Institute Department of the History of the GDL. Her study is a result of the long lasting, time consuming and thorough work done with great perseverance.

In her dissertation, the researcher attempted to treat the script of the chancery of the GDL as an independent object of study, to illustrate the place of that script in the broader context of contemporary Gothic scripts. Chronologically, the study covers the period 1387–1430, i.e., it also includes the period before Vytautas became grand duke. The study is based on materials from Lithuanian, Polish and Latvian archives. Čapaite employed traditional palaeographic methods.

The dissertation comprises eight parts: 1) an outline of the study's aims, terms and contemporary scripts; 2) majuscule; 3) minuscule; 4) ligatures; 5) abbreviations; 6) numerals; 7) textual embellishment; 8) the peculiarities of the script of the grand-ducal scribes. The researcher presented the general characteristics of the late-medieval Gothic cursive script, and compared this with documents issued by the Grand Duke of Lithuania. A large part of the work contains a detailed analysis of majuscule and minuscule characters; an overview of the chronological change of these letters is given; the variety of forms used in the chancery at one and the same time are also analyzed. Presenting the most characteristic ligatures, the author notes that in the documents of Vytautas the Great these are not so frequent. Exploring the Grand Duke's letters, the researcher estimates the abundance and variety of abbreviations which depended on the language in which the document was written: Latin texts are full of abbreviations, while in the German texts they are rather less common. The differences between these groups of abbreviations, according to the scholar, are essential. As regards the numerals, she postulates that the Roman numerals were used but not often, because the figures were written out in full for the

most part. Studying textual embellishment, the author attempted to restore the alphabet of the initial letters. Revealing the peculiarities of the script of the Grand Duke's scribes, the researcher introduced the terms such as: *a script of the scribe* and *the individual hand*, and gave the description of the methods employed to fulfil this task. Seven groups of characters were distinguished according to the chosen criteria. They were discussed separately and further grouped into two graphical generations. The author made several conclusions, viz. the documents of Grand Duke Vytautas were written in Gothic cursive of varying elegance. Various graphic tendencies can be observed. The script of the grand-ducal chancery varied in both temporal and spatial aspects. Script variety is the main criterion used for determining the scribe's hand. The presence of script versions testifies to the fact that the chancery of the Grand Duke of Lithuania was open to a variety of the scripts.

Rūta Čapaitė is the first scholar to contribute a comprehensive study of fifteenth-century palaeography to post-war Lithuanian historical studies. It is of significance that she has introduced new Lithuanian terms (e. g., *straublio formos užlenkimas* = *Elefantenrüssel Anschwung*), etc.). All in all, the work was long-awaited, and it is very much needed. It is desirable to have this dissertation published in book form.

Agnius Urbanavičius