Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the case of the castle: context, problems, perspectives
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One of the main problems of the historiography of Lithuania are the issues of social and spatial structures. Soviet historiography was focused only on the ideological relations between the nobility and peasants. This point of view was based on the primitive Marxist-Leninist methodological background. Nowadays, that is, in the last twenty years, Lithuanian history is renewing and looking for new theoretical approaches and themes which had been forgotten (and had had to be forgotten) for about fifty years. In 1982, the main ideologist of Lithuanian Soviet historiography thus expressed the whole situation of Lithuanian historiography, especially the problem of the medieval castle: “...it is not allowed to be interested in castles because it is a ‘united stream’.”* 

Almost all articles which have been written about the medieval castles of Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) are factographic and do not analyze the issue of social space which was constituted by the castle and its structure: micro and macro spaces inside (internal) and outside (external) the area of the castle. On the other hand, it is not clear what has belonged (in the sense of jurisdiction, territory, administration, and household) to a particular castle: which territories, villages, manors. All these problems are related with the local social contingent (i.e. the different categories of nobility and peasant and their duties).

The other set of problems is posed by the heterogeneity of GDL. It involves both social and territorial questions. As far as we know, the situation and position of the castle was determined by the local society (we can split GDL in a few different territories: Lituania propria – the core of the state, Samogitia – the west and most archaic part of the state, Ruthenian lands – Kiev, Podolia, Volhynia, Smolensk, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Podlachia). All these regions had a local and different structure, so called Verfassung. Because of that all these regions and especially their castles have to be analyzed separately but at the same time in the context of the “classic” feudalism, its transformations and local variations.

Furthermore, the castle concerns the question of territorialization. What was the policy of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the role of castles within it? How can we compare GDL and its castle policies for example with the policies of the Polish king Casimir III the Great or of the Hungarian king Stephen I? On the other hand, the question about the genesis of the castle in GDL is open. We know that in Western Europe the feudal revolution was one of the main factors which caused the rise of local power centers as fortresses. Therefore, this phenomenon is not strictly associated with GDL. This could be a promising way to discuss the comparative history of the castle in the whole of Europe or just in some regions of the continent.
We can approach the study of castles in GDL from various perspectives and at different levels:

- a particular castle and its inner territory,
- the castle with its constituted external territory and structure,
- regional castle structures (defensive systems, complexes of private castles etc.),
- specific features of castles in the various provinces of the state,
- the distribution of castles in the entire territory of the state.

* "United stream": in Soviet times the term denoted those historians, or scholars in general, who were blamed of expressing a bourgeois point of view or discussing problems which weren’t relevant etc.