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About the terms concerning the ruler and the state in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the epoch of Mindaugas` reign*

Annotation: The article deals with the terminology that can characterize the image of the ruler and the state in the epoch of Mindaugas` reign. The controversial character of the problem is pointed out. The necessity of the complex methodological approach to the investigation is highlighted. The terms found in the narrative sources relating Mindaugas and his state are analyzed. The synthesis of traditions of the ideas of the power and of the state as well as their unfixed character in the early Grand Duchy of Lithuania is shown.

Key words: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Mindaugas, state, ruler, land, sovereign, king, power, tradition.

О терминах, касающихся правителя и государства в ВКЛ в эпоху правления Миндовга

Аннотация: Статья посвящена терминологии, характеризующей представления о правителе и государстве в период правления Миндовга. Указывается дискуссионный характер проблемы. Подчеркивается необходимость комплексного методологического подхода к изучению вопроса. Анализируются понятия, используемые в нарративных источниках в отношении Миндовга и его государства. Показывается синтез представлений о власти и государстве и неоформленный характер терминов, используемых в отношении монарха в раннем Великом Княжестве Литовском.

Ключевые слова: Великое Княжество Литовское, Миндовг, государство, правитель, земля, государь, король, власть, традиция.

O terminologii dotyczącej władzy i państwa w Wielkim księstwie Litewskim w czasach rządów Mendoga

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcono problemom terminologii, stosowanej dla określenia władcy i państwa w okresie rządów Mendoga. Podkreśla się w nim złożoność problemu oraz potrzebę

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interdyscyplinarnych badań nad nim. Przeanalizowana została terminologia, występująca w źródłach narracyjnych dla określenia Mendoga i jego państwa. Przeprowadzono także syntezę sformułowań odnoszący się do władzy i państwa oraz ukazano luki w terminologii wykorzystywanej dla charakterystyki monarchy w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim na początkowym etapie jego istnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: Wielkie księstwo Litewskie, Mendog, państwo, ziemia, władca, książę, król, władza, tradycja.

The images of power, the identification and self-identification of rulers in the process of political genesis in Western European lands have been thoroughly examined by many generations of historians. At the same time, these issues considering the early period of the development of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the epoch of its first rulers, are still the object of polemics among the representatives of various national historical schools. The period of the foundation of this state, the conditions and circumstances of its formation, as well as all the details of the rule of its first ruler, Mindaugas, are especially „dark”.

Despite the fact that today one can find numerous studies on the era of Mindaugas` reign in Belarusian, Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and even Russian historiography, these works mainly consider the foreign and internal policy of Mindaugas in the context of the state development of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania¹, the relations between the ruler and the Teutonic Order, Poland and other neighbors², the phenomenon of internal political struggle or particular aspects (social, cultural, religious) of the reign of the first ruler of the emerging state³. At the same time, these works, focusing the main attention

¹ Some of older works: В. Б. Антонович, *Очерки истории Великого княжества Литовского до половины XV столетия*, Киев 1878; H. Paszkiewicz, *Litwa przed Mendogiem*, [in:] *Pamiętnik V powszechnego zjazdu historyków polskich w Warszawie. 28 listopada do 4 grudnia 1930 r.*, vol. 1: *Referaty*, Lwów 1930, pp. 246–258; H. Paszkiewicz, *Początki Rusi*, Kraków 1996; H. Łowmiański, *Studia nad dziejami Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, Poznań 1983; E. Ochmański, *Dawna Litwa. Studia historyczne*, Olsztyn 1986; idem, *Historia Litwy*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1990; E. Gudavičius, *Polityczny problem Królestwa Litewskiego w połowie XIII w.*, [in:] *Ekspansja niemieckich zakonów rycerskich w strefie Bałtyku od XIII do połowy XVI wieku. Materiały z konferencji historyków radzieckich i polskich w Toruniu z r. 1988*, red. M. Biskup, Toruń 1990, pp. 61–84; E. Gudavičius, *Mindaugas*, Vilnius 1998; В. Насевич, *Пачаткі Вялікага княства Літоўскага. Падзеі і асобы*, Мінск 1993; Г. Семянчук, А. Шаланда, *Да пытання аб пачатках Вялікага княства Літоўскага ў сярэдзіне XIII ст. (яшчэ адна версія канструявання мінуўшчыны)*, „Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne”, 1999, no 11, pp. 5–20; V. Makauskas, *Lietuvos Istorija*, Kaunas 2000; T. Baranauskas, *Lietuvos valstybes istakos*, Vilnius 2000; А. Краўцэвіч, *Жыццёнік Вялікіх Князёў Літоўскіх. Міндоўга. Пачатак вялікага гаспадарства*, Мінск 2005; idem, *Гісторыя Вялікага княства Літоўскага, 1248–1377 гг.*, Вроцлав 2015; Ю. Бардах, *Штудыі з гісторыі ВКЛ*, Мінск 2010.

² O. Halecki, *Polska i Litwa wobec Rusi w jej epoce dzielnicowej*, [in:] *Dzieje Unii Jagiellońskiej*, vol. 1: *W wiekach średnich*, Warszawa 1919; G. Błaszczuk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności*, vol. 1: *Trudne początki*, Poznań 1998; А. Дубонис, *Проблемы образования Литовского государства и его отношений с Галицко-Волыньским княжеством в новейшей историографии Литвы*, «Княжа доба: історія та культура», 2008, вип. 1, pp. 142–157.

³ Э. Гудавичус, „Литва Миндоуга”, [in:] *Проблемы этногенеза и этнической истории балтов*, под ред. Р. Ваулкайте, Вильнюс 1985, pp. 219–227; S. C. Rowell, *Pagans, peace and the Pope 1322–1324: Lithuania in the Centre of European Diplomacy*, „Archivum Historiae Pontificiae”, 1990, vol. 28, pp. 63–98; M. Kosman, *Od chrztu do chrystianizacji*, Warszawa 1992; S. C. Rowell, *Lithuania ascending: a pagan empire within east-central Europe, 1295–1345*, Cambridge 1994; S. C. Rowell, R. Griskaite, R. Rudis, *A history of Lithuania*,

on specific issues of the internal or foreign policy of the new polity, practically leave aside the image of the ruler himself, as well as the ideas of the monarch and the state during the time of the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Of course, the investigation of this problem is complicated by the paucity and the controversial character of the information contained in the sources that have survived to these days. Unfortunately, there are no early Belarusian-and-Lithuanian annals describing the rule of the first grand duke of Lithuania, and the main data can be found in the Old Russian and European, in particular, the Polish and German narrative traditions, as well as a few act documents, the authenticity of some of which is doubtful⁴. At the same time, the analysis of the data contained in the narratives, as well as an integrated approach to different types of sources, can help highlight not only the socio-political circumstances of the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but also answer the question of Mindaugas' self-identification as the ruler of a new state, as well as to discuss, though with a high degree of probability, the concept of the ruler and the state at the first stage of the foundation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania⁵.

Thus, the aim of this work is to analyze the ideas of the ruler and the state of the early Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the reign of Mindaugas through the prism of the title and the terminology considering the monarch and his possessions that can be found in various sources. To achieve this goal, the author found it appropriate to divide the work into two logical parts, reflecting, at first, the idea of the state during the first stages of the foundation of the GDL, reflected in the terminology characterizing the new policy; secondly, the image of the sovereign through his identification by the contemporaries and the descendants as well as his self-identification.

The author is aware of the paucity of reliable information directly related to the office of Mindaugas or the data of chroniclers – the contemporaries of the analyzed events originating from the Belarusian-and-Lithuanian lands. At the same time, a deep analysis of the general trends taking place in the European world during this time, the study of the information of the narrative sources created in the adjacent territories, which means they were witnesses or heirs of the events (with reference to the socio-political circumstances

Vilnius 2002; Т. Баранаускас, *Месца каранацыі Міндоўга = Место коронации Миндаугаса, „Спадчына“*, 2002, no 5–6, pp. 26–31; А. Жлутка, *Каранацыя Міндоўга і заснаванне першага біскупства ў дакументах XIII ст.*, „Наша Вера“, 2003, no. 2 (24), pp. 36–44; E. Rimša, *Ar Mindaugo majestotinis antspaudas? „Lietuvos dailės muziejaus metraštis“*, 2005, no. 6, pp. 35–44; Р. Петраускас, *Правлящий род и знать: к вопросу о предпосылках формирования литовского государства*, „Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana“, 2012, no. 1 (11), pp. 95–116.

⁴ *Міндаў кароль Літвы ў дакументах і сьведчаньнях*, уклад., падрыхт. да выд., пераклад А. А. Жлуткі, Менск 2005; *Летописец великих князей литовских*, [in:] Полное Собрание Русских Летописей [hereafter: ПСРЛ], т. 35, Москва 1980; *Супрасльская летопись*, [in:] ПСРЛ, т. 35; *Новгородская летопись старшего и младшего изводов*, [in:] ПСРЛ, т. 3, Москва–Ленинград 1950; *Ипатьевская летопись*, [in:] ПСРЛ, т. 2, Санкт-Петербург 1908; *Kronika halicko-wołyńska (Kronika Romanowiczów)*, D. Dąbrowski, A. Jusupović (ed.) in cooperation with: I. Juriewa, A. Majorow and T. Wilkuł, Kraków–Warszawa 2017; *Chartularium Lithuaniae res gestas magni ducis Gedeminne illustrans. Gedimino laiškai*, ed. by S. C. Rowell, Vilnius 2003; *Livländische Reimchronik*, Stuttgart 1844; Hermann von Wartberge, *Die Chronicon Livoniae*, Leipzig 1863; P. von Dusburg, *Chronicon terrae Prussica*, Leipzig 1861; M. Strykowski, *Kronika polska, litewska, żmódzka i wszystkiej Rusi*, M. Malinowski (ed.), Warszawa 1846.

⁵ See: Я. А. Рьер, *Первые правители ВКЛ в немецких источниках*, „Studia Historica Europae Orientalis = Исследования по истории Восточной Европы“, 2018, вып. 11, pp. 7–18.

of the creation of these sources), as well as the investigation of the complex of studies that deal with the early history of the GDL, give us possibility to make the further conclusions.

The first rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were of Baltic origin. Nevertheless, the ideas about the ruler and the state during the process of state formation were largely influenced by the traditions that existed on the lands of Rus', which became the part of the new polity. Considering the era of Rus', the state was not only the sovereign's power over everything that belonged to him, but also the possessions of the ruler, firstly, the lands and the inhabitants⁶. To a certain extent this trend was preserved during the epoch of the foundation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the sources, related to this period, the term „land” in the meaning of the ruler's „possessions” is highlighted.

The „land” was one of the first terms to refer to the concept of „state”, used in the GDL and preserved until the 15th century. At the same time, occasionally in the 15th century the terms „statehood” and „power” were used to denote the concept of „state”. These terms with similar semantic content also came from the lexicon of the Old Russian language⁷.

In the Belarusian-and-Lithuanian annals the term „land” as applied to the GDL is found up to the era of Vytautas' reign. So, in the in the „Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania” (also known as „Letopisec Litovskii”) it is stated:

„Самъ же князь великы Витовѣтъ возвратися в Литовскую землю”⁸.

The same terminology can be found in the other narrative sources, for example, the Suprasl Annals:

„И сожалився князь великыи Скиргайло, поиде с братию своею, со великымъ княземъ Витовтомъ и Константиномъ, и с Корибутомъ, и со Семеномъ Лыенгвенемъ. И поменуша слово божие, еже рече: «В ноже мѣру человекъ мерить, отмирится ему, а что посеетъ, то и пожнетъ. Мы, рекоша, никоего зла ему не сотворихомъ, а онъ с нами в докончани буда, переступив крестное целование и докончание, нашу землю воюетъ и кров хрестяньскую проливаетъ”⁹.

The similar terminology is also used in the „Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia”:

„И дал листи мистровы Гендрикови крижаков прусских, в которыхъ пишет, иж от крижаков помочик в речахъ великихъ от нихъ вспоможенъ былъ, а за тое держави земли своей, мяновите Жъмонт, Ятвяги, Куров, Вязму и всю землю Литовскую...”¹⁰.

⁶ В. А. Воронин, *Термины, использовавшиеся для обозначения понятия „государство” в Великом княжестве Литовском в XIV–XVI вв.*, [in:] *Lietuvos Statutas ir Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės bojariškoji visuomenė: straipsnių rinkinys*, sud. I. Valikonytė, L. Steponavičienė, Vilnius 2015, pp. 236–238, 242.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁸ *Летописецъ великихъ князей литовскихъ...*, p. 65.

⁹ *Супрасльская летопись...*, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Летаписы і хронікі Беларусі...*, p. 422.

That means that for the chroniclers of this period the concept of the state was often associated with the name of the land. The term „Lithuanian land”, synonymous with the concept of „state”, begins to appear in documents created on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the end of the 14th century. In the sources created at this time this concept is used in the broad sense and is identical to the term the „Grand Duchy of Lithuania”. Moreover mostly the term „Lithuanian land” cannot be interpreted as a specific geographic and territorial region of the GDL. First of all it seems to be a state-political concept, denoting the state in general¹¹.

But this applies to the period of time when state-forming processes in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were completed. How can these concepts be applied to the epoch of its state formation? What is the chronological frames to the use of this terminology relating the GDL and is it applicable to the time of Mindaugas` reign?

One should point out that it seems almost impossible to analyze the proper terminology that characterized the concept of the state in the epoch of Mindaugas using just the Belarusian-and-Lithuanian annals. But it seems expedient to study the terminology used in the documents relating to the period of his reign, as well as the information contained in the Order chronicles. Of course, one should take into account the fact that the European chroniclers often relied on the realities of their socio-culture. At the same time, it is obvious that the tradition that survived on the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century had deeper roots, could not be interrupted during the reign of Mindaugas, since it had the foundation in an older, ancient Russian culture, which means it can be applicable to the time of his reign.

So, in the overwhelming majority of the sources related to the early history of the GDL, and exactly – the middle of the 13th century – the prevailing term characterizing the emerging state is „Lithuania”¹². Moreover, it was Lithuania, Lithuanian land, which the GDL was called by the chroniclers of the Teutonic Order. For example, in „Chronicon terrae Prussica” by Peter of Dusburg it is mentioned that:

„fratres domus Theutonice predicti contra gentem illam potentem et durissime cervicis exercitatumque in bello, que fuit viinior terre Prussie ultra flumen Memele in terra Lethowie habitans”¹³.

However, one should note that the term „land” itself has a broader meaning and may also refer to a particular territory. Therefore, appealing to this concept, it is necessary to take into account the socio-political circumstances of the source creating, as well as the chronological framework of the described event. So, in earlier sources, for example, in the „Livonian Rhymed Chronicle”, while describing the events of the pre-state period, the term „land” is also used – „in Littouwen lant”¹⁴.

Evidently, the term „Lithuania”, „Lithuanian land” were not the fixed concepts applicable only to the GDL and could often used relating the pre-state formations on the Lithuanian territory. It is reflected in the other narrative sources.

¹¹ В. А. Воронин, *Термины, использовавшиеся для обозначения понятия „государство”*, pp. 237–238.

¹² *Летапісы і хронікі Беларусі. Сярэднявечча і раньнемадэрны час...*, p. 427.

¹³ P. von Dusburg, *Chronicon terrae Prussica...*, p. 146.

¹⁴ *Livländische Reimchronik...*, p. 74.

So, even when describing the events preceding the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the „Galician-Volhynian Chronicle” mentioned that „ЛИТВА ЛАХЫ ВОЕВАША”¹⁵. This tendency was continued during the reign of Mindaugas:

„Данило ж[е] | и Васил[ь]ко послата в литвоу, помощи просаща, и посла | на быс[ть] шг[ь] Миньдога помощь”¹⁶.

It is „Lithuania” that is the main political term applicable to this state formation during the reign of its first ruler:

„Литва ж[е] роздоу | мав[ь]ше и воеваша, гнѣвъ дръжаще”¹⁷.

It is interesting that other Old-Russian principalities are called by the annalist as the lands:

„Наугрѣа же плениша всю землю новогорд[ь] | скоую”¹⁸.

Hermann of Wartberge in his „Chronicon Livoniae” also calls Mindaugas and his state as „Lithuania” and the „king of Lithuanians”:

„Huius tempore Mindowe rex Letwinorum et Marta uxor eius baptismum susceperunt et coronam regni in Lethovia”¹⁹. At the same time we cannot make any particular conclusion here as both the sources use also the term of the „land” relating the GDL of Mindaugas – „in terram Letwinorum”²⁰.

In this regard one of the most illustrative example can be the text of the Mindaugas` charter to the Teutonic Order in 1257. Despite the fact that historiography considers this document to be falsified, it can be a vivid evidence of the realities of Mindaugas` epoch and a reflection of the perception of his power²¹. So, the charter begins on behalf of Mindaugas who is called „dei gracia rex Littowie”. In addition, the document also mentions „terra Lettowie”²².

Thus, we can say that in the epoch of Mindaugas` reign there was still no fixed term that could name the new state, which would later be called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Moreover, the fragmentary information contained in the chronicles allows us to say that the official name of his state was not significant for the medieval inhabitant of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the first stages of the state formation. Nevertheless, the data of narrative

¹⁵ *Kronika halicko-wolynska...*, p. 131.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274-275.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁹ H. de Wartberge, *Die Chronicon Livoniae...*, p. 130.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²¹ See the text in: *Міндаў кароль Літвіі ў дакументах і сьведчаньнях...*, p. 34, no 7. The problem of the authenticity of the document is discussed in: I. Daniłowicz, *Skarbiec diplomatów papieżkich, cesarskich, krolewskich, książęcych*, vol. 1, Wilno 1860, p. 94; W. Kętrzyński, *O dokumentach Mendoga, króla litewskiego*, „Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział Historyczno-Filozoficzny. Seria II”, 1907, t. 25 (50), pp. 206–208; K. Maleczyński, *W sprawie autentyczności dokumentów Mendoga z lat 1253–1261*, „Ateneum Wileńskie”, 1936, t. 11, pp. 44–47.

²² *Міндаў кароль Літвіі ў дакументах і сьведчаньнях...*, p. 34.

sources show the use of two terms in relation to the emerging statehood – „Lithuania” and „Lithuanian land”. That means that in the era of Mindaugas the state was perceived as not just the possession of this or that monarch, but as the land inhabited by the people, which were connected with their ruler by a specific type of relationship. This statement is reflected in the worldview of medieval man, in his attitude to the monarch, often based on personal obedience and service.

Adverting to the place of the ruler in a medieval society during the foundation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania it will be appropriate to emphasize the personal nature of the relationship between representatives of the supreme power and the society. First of all, it was not the power of the monarch over the state as a territorial integrity, but over the population, over the people. The concept of „land” was equivalent to the concepts of the „state” and the „people”. As noted above, in the annals or chronicles it was repeatedly mentioned that the „land” leaves for a military campaign²³. Naturally, the so-called „people” are understood as a certain group of society – the military-service population, the boyars, the military servants. It was this group that later finally consolidated into the political class, the „political nation”²⁴. The hierarchical relationship between the ruler and the ordinary population can be described as an agreement between two persons – the „senior” and the collective „vassal”.

Moreover, two types of relationships found in the narrative sources can be distinguished. On the one hand, this is the direct submission based on historically established relations between the monarch and his men. On the other hand, the chronicles constantly mention their „friendship” due to the common interests and reinforced by actions or gifts. This „friendship” did not contradict submission, but rather complemented it. By establishing such a relationship, complementing the attitude of vassalage, it was possible to maintain and strengthen political stability in the society²⁵.

Personal relations between the ruler and the subjects began in the era of chiefdoms, when the latter, by personal authority and example, and often by force, directed his population in one direction or another. When such a personal connection was broken, the chain of interaction between the ruler and society was broken too. It led to the appearance of the new leader found by the people. The chief and later the ruler was not only a sacred figure vested with power, but first of all – a guarantor of stability and security of the population. It was such a tradition that was characteristic of the epoch of Mindaugas’ reign, because the GDL during this period of time was, in fact, a compound chiefdom following the path of state formation²⁶.

The personal connection between the ruler and society remained for a long time and began to weaken only with the growth of territories and the institutionalization of the administrative apparatus. The perception of the early monarch was reflected, inter alia, in the title of the rulers of the emerging state, mentioned in the annals and being not only the evidence of their self-identification, but also allowing us to judge the degree of recognition and authority of the ruler in the eyes of the population.

²³ Супрасльская летопись..., р. 64.

²⁴ В. А. Воронин, Термины, использовавшиеся для обозначения понятия „государство”..., pp. 238–241.

²⁵ Р. Петраускас, Правящий род и знать..., pp. 95–116.

²⁶ Я. Г. Риер, Очерки становления средневековых европейских государств в контексте общиесторических процессов: природная среда и социальное развитие, Могилев 2016, p. 347.

However, one should understand that the title of the same ruler in several sources may differ. Therefore, when studying this phenomenon, three types of the titles can be noted, while the analysis of each of which allows us to put together a mosaic of ideas about the monarch into a single whole.

So, we can distinguish the title that was used by the monarch in the documents of his office, and therefore reflected his self-identification; the title that was used in international correspondence in relation to the ruler, which means that he could testify to his international recognition, authority, etc., and besides – the title used in narrative sources and expressing not only the attitude of society to him, but also reflecting the socio-political conditions in which it was created²⁷.

The development of statehood in the GDL was greatly influenced by exogenous factors, which could be found both in the administrative organization in language borrowings to indicate a higher political rank of the ruler and justification of the legitimacy of his rule. The terms that changed over time and differed in different territories are of no small importance in the study of the political structure of the early state. This tendency is characteristic not only for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but also for other state entities on the East Slavic lands²⁸.

It is necessary to take into account the fact that in the process of state formation the titles of the rulers changed, and in the sources of different countries and periods they could vary differently.

Speaking about the title of the first rulers of the future GDL, it should be noted that the first mention of more or less significant Lithuanian leaders dates back to the first half of the 13th century. This could indicate the limitation of their power and authority until a specified period of time. The famous Lithuanian historian Edvardas Gudavičius pointed out the presence of princes in Lithuania in the 12th-13th centuries and told that it was, first of all, regional rulers who controlled small territories²⁹. But from the beginning of the 13th century „elder” princes appeared. They played a significant role in the political and military life of the emerging political entity³⁰.

Nevertheless, it was Mindaugas who became the ruler whose name the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania will be associated with. One of the first evidence of the existence and political activity of this ruler is his mention in the „Galician-Volhynian Chronicle” in the list of senior „Lithuanian princes”:

„Бахъ ж[е] имена литов[ь]ских[ь] князей се: стар[ь]шій, Живиньбоуд[ь],
Довьатъ, Довьспруйнк, брат[ь] его Мидогъ, брат[ь] Довьаловъ
Виликаиль”³¹.

It is difficult to describe precisely the history of his power elevation. But it is obvious that by the 40s of the 13th century Mindaugas united the Lithuanian lands and became a strong enough ruler.

²⁷ В. Т. Пашуто, *Образование Литовского государства*, Москва 1959, p. 30.

²⁸ П. Андерсон, *Переходы от античности к феодализму*, Москва 2007, p. 224.

²⁹ Э. Гудавичус, *История Литвы*, Москва 2005, p. 36.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³¹ *Kronika halicko-wotyńska...*, pp. 71-72.

The „Livonian Rhymed Chronicle” created at the end of the 13th century, calls Mindaugas „Myndowe, hoeste konic, der Littowen kunic rich” that indicates the consolidation of the territories and changes in the structure of the political system³². In 1251, to achieve his ambitious goals, the ruler adopts Christianity, and two years later he is crowned. After this event in European narrative sources he appears as the king of Lithuania³³. It is this title – „Dei gracia rex Letthowie” or „rex Litwinorum” that can be found in the documents of his office from 1253 to 1261, as well as in many Order chronicles³⁴.

Of course there are a number of issues regarding the Mindaugas` office. There is still no clear certainty whether it was at the court of the ruler, or he used outside service if necessary. But most researchers agree that there could be Latin monks at the ruler`s court who corresponded with representatives of other states, as well as compiled the state acts³⁵. Naturally, being familiar with the structure of the Western European Chancellery, it is logical that they could keep documentation according to this model.

Among the chronicles that can be the evidence of the evolution of the title of the rulers of the future GDL, it is necessary to note the Livonian rhymed chronicle. As it was mentioned above, the author often calls Mindaugas „richen kunic Myndowen”³⁶, although in the overwhelming number of cases he is still called by the chronicler simply „kunic Mindowe”³⁷. Obviously, for the chronicler, not only the high position of Mindaugas in the political hierarchy of the Lithuanian society, but also his material status, which, perhaps, allowed him to rise among other senior princes, were of great importance.

It should be noted that European sources, especially those created on the territory of the German Order, are characterized by Western European titles of the „kings” considering the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in contrast to the „grand dukes”, „dukes” found in Eastern-Slavic, and in particular, Belarusian-and-Lithuanian annals. So, the Polish historian of the first half of the 20th century – Jan Adamus – and after him the Belarusian historian Oleg Diernovic emphasized that before the Union of Krewo in 1385, the Lithuanian rulers in European sources were characterized by the title „king of Lithuanians”, which correlated with the „grand duke” in the Eastern-Slavic tradition³⁸. That means they were synonymous. We can agree with this thesis. Representatives of the Western European world recognized the royal title of Mindaugas which was understandable and accepted in their diplomacy, and addressed him in correspondence in the same way. Thus, Pope Innocent IV and Alexander IV addressed to the Lithuanian

³² *Livländische Reimchronik...*, p. 97.

³³ Т. Баранаускас, *Месца каранацыі Міндоўга...*, pp. 26–31.

³⁴ J. Adamus, *O tytule panującego i państwa litewskiego parę spostrzeżeń*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, 1930, vol. 44, no. 1, p. 330; А. І. Дзярновіч, *АВ ОВО: Што з`явілася спачатку – Вялікі князь Літоўскі ці Вялікае княства Літоўскае?*, „Studia Historica Europae Orientalis = Исследования по истории Восточной Европы”, 2009, вып. 2, p. 30.

³⁵ M. Kosman, *Orzeł i Pogoń. Z dziejow polsko-litewskich, XIV–XX w.*, Warszawa 1992, p. 105; H. Łowmiański, *Z zagadnień spornych społeczeństwa litewskiego w wiekach średnich*, „Przegląd Historyczny”, 1950, vol. 11, p. 106.

³⁶ *Livländische Reimchronik...*, p. 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94, 97.

³⁸ J. Adamus, *O tytule panującego i państwa litewskiego parę spostrzeżeń*, pp. 321, 327; А. І. Дзярновіч, *АВ ОВО: Што з`явілася спачатку...*, p. 31.

ruler as „illustri rege Lithowie / illustri rege Lethovie / illustri rege Lectovie”³⁹. But as noted above, the Western-European title didn't fix in relation to the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and it was the „duke” who became the final title assigned to the ruler of the state by the beginning of the 15th century⁴⁰.

It also must be pointed out that Mindaugas is addressed to with the title of a „king” even before his official coronation, which can once again emphasize the analogy between the „duke” in the Eastern-Slavic tradition and the „king” in the Western-European one. But the baptism and adoption of Christianity undoubtedly contributed to his recognition by the European political society and religious chroniclers. It is in connection with baptism and coronation that he was first mentioned in the vast majority of the narrative sources. This indicates the significance of these events in the eyes of European society⁴¹.

The mention of Mindaugas can also be found in Gediminas' letter to Pope John XXII of 1322. In this document the Lithuanian ruler states that his

„predecessor noster rex Myndowe cum toto suo regno ad fidem Christi fuit converses”⁴².

Another noteworthy evidence reflecting the title of the first ruler of the GDL is the Mindaugas' charters, possibly forged by the crusaders for their own interests, since according to them the king granted the Order part of the lands of the GDL. However, there are legends „MYNDOWE DEI GRA REX LETTOWIE” and „MYNDOWE DEI GRA REX LITOWIE” on the seals holding the copies of documents of 1392 and 1393⁴³. Obviously, even their falsification that should have been done according to all the norms and traditions that were characteristic for the epoch of Mindaugas' reign and should have taken into consideration the real examples of the documents of his office can show us not only the high level of self-identification of Lithuanian ruler as a supreme sovereign but his recognition as the monarch in the neighbors' eyes.

As for the Old Russian annals, in the „Galician-Volhynian Chronicle” after his coronation Mindaugas is called „великий княз[ь] литов[ь]ский Мин[ь]довг ь, самодрь | жец[ь] быв[ь] всей земли литов[ь]ской”⁴⁴. A very indicative information on this issue is contained in the *Novgorod First Chronicle*. Besides the title of the ruler of the GDL, one can find the eloquent characteristics of the Lithuanian princes Mindaugas, Tautvilas and Vojszalak:

„Убиша князя велика Миндовга свои родици, свещавшеса отаи всех. Того же лета роспревшеса убоици Миндовгови о товар его, убиша добра князя Полотьского Товтвила, а бояры полотьския исковаша, и просиша у полочан сына Товтвилова убить же; и он вбежа в Новгород с мужи своими;

³⁹ The documents of Mindaugas' office can be found in: *Миндаў, кароль Літвіі, у дакумэнтах і сьведчаньнях*.

⁴⁰ J. Adamus, *O tytule panującego i państwa litewskiego parę spostrzeżeń...*, pp. 330, 332.

⁴¹ *Incipiunt Descriptiones Terrarum...*, p. 24; А. І. Дзярновіч, *АВ ОВО: Што з'явілася спачатку...*, p. 32.

⁴² *Chartularium Lithuaniae res gestas magni ducis Gedeminne illustrans...*, p. 38.

⁴³ *Миндаў, кароль Літвіі, у дакумэнтах і сьведчаньнях...*, p. 45.

⁴⁴ *Kronika halicko-wolyńska...* p. 437.

Тогда Литва посадиша свои князь в Полотьске; а полочан пустиша, которых изымали с князем их, а мир взяша. <...> Воишелг <...> позна истинную веру хрестьянскую <...> По убиении же отца своего, не хотящу ему сего створити, но Богу попущью на них, на поганую Литву, за хрестьянскую кровь, вложи сему в сердце, соимя с себе ризу, обещаю Богу на три лета, како прияти риза своя, а устава мнишьского не остая; съвкупи около себе вои отца своего а приятели, помолився кресту честному, шед на поганую Литву, и победи я, и стоя на земли их все лето. Тогда оканьным взда Господь по делом их: всю бо землю оружием поплени, а по хрестьянской веселие бысть всюда"⁴⁵.

As you can see, the Lithuanian princes are characterized very positively. Negative characteristics are given only to their competitors. The latter are presented as an example of pagan hypocrisy and baseness in the annals. The Orthodox Vojszalak does not just avenge his father – he is the punishing sword of God „за хрестьянскую кровь"⁴⁶. This idea reflects the perception of a ruler in the Christian narrative tradition.

The idea of a ruler was inextricably linked with the concept of „sovereign” („государь”) or „gospodar” (“господарь”) that can also be found in the annals. This title is associated with the Old Russian heritage, preserved by the rulers of the Belarusian principalities in the 13th century and kept in the political tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the beginning of the 15th century. The word „господарь” meant „master, owner” in Old Russian language⁴⁷. Andras Zoltan suggested that the appearance of this title was influenced by the synthesis of Slavic and Latin languages and the diplomatic traditions that took place in the GDL. Moreover, this term itself can be considered as a translation of the Latin term „dominus”, which came from the Western-European office and that was assimilated by local rulers⁴⁸.

While describing the policy of Vojszalak after Mindaugas` murder the „Halician-Volhynian Chronicle” mentions that

„Литва ж[е] вса пріаша и съ радостію великою. своег[о] | госпвдичича"⁴⁹.

However, it is premature to talk about the applicability of this terminology to the era of Mindaugas` reign. In the narrative sources these concepts are reflected vividly only in the era of Gediminas, which can indicate the completion of the state formation process, the achievement of a certain level of consolidation of the lands included in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the perception of the monarch as the only legitimate ruler.

Thus, the problem of the idea of the ruler and the state in the era of the formation of the GDL – namely during the reign of Mindaugas – is one of the most controversial issues in historiography. Its analysis is complicated by the paucity and ambiguity of the information contained in the narrative sources. One of the most evidential and substantial elements that

⁴⁵ *Новгородская летопись старшего и младшего изводов...*, p. 84.

⁴⁶ *Kronika halicko-wolyńska*, p. 437.

⁴⁷ В. А. Воронин, *Термины, использовавшиеся для обозначения понятия „государство”...*, p. 241.

⁴⁸ А. К. Золтан, *К предыстории русского „государь”, [in:] Из истории русской культуры*, сост. А. Ф. Литвина, Ф. Б. Успенский, т. 2, Москва 2002, pp. 560–561.

⁴⁹ *Kronika halicko-wolyńska*, p. 448.

allow us to create an idea of the ruler and the state in the emerging Grand Duchy is the terminology used in various types of sources in relation to the monarch or his possessions. The data from the sources allow us to conclude that at the early stages of state formation in the GDL there was no fixed term denoting this policy. Its formation was going under the influence of a synthesis of the name of the pre-state Lithuania and the Old Russian tradition of naming the state as the land. Moreover, in the epoch of Mindaugas the state was perceived primarily not as the possession of the monarch, but as the land inhabited by the people connected with their ruler by special relations of service and friendship.

As for the perception of the ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, there is also a certain dualism. Firstly, it is necessary to talk about the absence of a clear term denoting its place and status. It changed depending on the annalistic tradition that created a narrative and named the ruler according to the norms that existed in this particular socio-cultural community. The documents that probably came out of the office of Mindaugas were also based on the traditions of the addressee and were subordinated to the same rule. At the same time, the status that occurs both in documents of the ruler's era and in later narratives indicates a high level of his self-identification as a ruler, as well as recognition of him as such by neighboring states. Although, of course, it would be premature to talk about the completed idea of Mindaugas as the supreme ruler of a united state, since the period of his reign marked only the beginning of state formation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the process of institutionalization of the ruler's power was completed only during the reign of Vytautas.

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