

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
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# The Seal in Courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th– 18th Centuries

**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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This dissertation was written between 2015 and 2019 at the Lithuanian Institute of History.

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The text of this dissertation can be accessed at the libraries of Vilnius University and the Lithuanian Institute of History, as well as at the Vilnius University website: [www.vu.lt/lt/naujienos/ivykiu-kalendorius](http://www.vu.lt/lt/naujienos/ivykiu-kalendorius)

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## SUMMARY

The legislation related to seals and the seals themselves was different in each state and in different historical periods. As Andrea Stieldorf, a German historian, has put it very vividly in her book, by sealing a document a seal holder would assume long-term obligations, but notwithstanding the great significance of a seal, there was no global seal legislation that would be uniformly applied and defined in a written document, a kind of "Constitution of Sphragistics". Some regulations have been found that controlled what kind of documents could have a seal, and by whom and when they could be stamped, although they were period- or region-specific and thus were possibly different. In order to learn about these regulations and norms, the practice of seal use is analysed by looking at documents sealed by a specific group of persons from a specific region over a selected time period.

In this dissertation, the concept of seal legislation is defined by examining the following four points:

1. Region: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships and their nine districts).
2. Seals: the seals used in land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.
3. Period: second half of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century, or more precisely, from 1565 to 1792.
4. Key criterion: the correlation between law and practice, i.e., were legal provisions actually implemented in real life.

During the 1565–1566 court reform in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the following courts were established: land courts (for civil proceedings), castle courts (for criminal proceedings) and chamberlain courts (for land boundary disputes). Land and castle courts also performed a notary function while the castle court also carried out state-related functions within the district. The Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania was established in 1581 (the first session was

on April 30, 1582) to hear appeals from the land, castle and chamberlain courts. The documents of these courts were certified with seals.

### Research Object

The administrative reforms of 1564 to 1566 had divided the entire territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into voivodeships and districts, thus introducing new territorial units, or more precisely, 12 voivodeships and the Samogitian Elderate that was later referred to as the Duchy. In 1566 to 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had 13 voivodeships and 30 districts, while from 1569 to the end of the 18th century only nine voivodeships and 22 districts remained. The Palenkė (Podlasie), Voluinė (Volhynia), Kijevas (Kiev), Podolė (Podole) and Braclavas (Bratsław) voivodeships came under Polish rule following the Union of Lublin. This administrative division remained in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania until the end of the 18th century. It is not possible to examine the entire court system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as it would be physically impossible to collect a sufficient amount of court seals. Therefore, not the entire court system but just a part of it was analysed from both the institutional (seals used in the land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania) and the geographical (Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships and their nine districts) aspects. The selection of these two voivodeships for full-scale research was determined by the higher availability of materials kept in Lithuanian archives and manuscript departments in libraries. Vilnius voivodeship, which included the capital city, had five districts: Vilnius, Ašmena, Lyda, Vilkmėrgė (present-day Ukmergė), and Breslauja. Trakai, Gardinas, Kaunas, and Upytė districts were part of the Trakai voivodeship. Incidentally, document samples from other districts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania not included in the scope of this research were used to show that the development of seals in those districts was similar to that of seals used in Vilnius and

Trakai voivodeships. Material related to the seals used in other district courts was also used in this research when the available material related to Vilnius and Trakai was quite fragmentary, and supplementing it with materials from the district courts not included in the scope of this research could be useful.

Research object: seals used by the land, castle and chamberlain courts and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (in Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships and nine of their districts) from 1565 to 1792.

### Research Goals

This dissertation has two research objectives:

First – to examine the legal norms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that regulated the use of court seals and, most importantly, to establish how these norms were implemented in practice.

Second – to research the seals used by the land, castle and chamberlain courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (in Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships and their nine districts) and in the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania, and to present their heraldic and sphragistic analysis.

### Research Objectives

The following objectives are to be completed in order to achieve the goals mentioned above:

1. To briefly introduce the land, castle and chamberlain courts and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania that were researched and to discuss their establishment, activities, composition and development. To determine the kind of seals (institutional and/or official) that were used at each court. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the regulation of court seals in the Second Statute of Lithuania (1566), the Third Statute of Lithuania (1588), the provisions of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania and the Diet, to examine the actual enforcement of these regulations in practice.

2. To analyse unpublished archive sources previously not researched by historians for an in-depth examination of the seals used in Lithuanian courts.

### Relevancy and Problem of the Topic

From the 16th to the 18th centuries, there were many groups of people and institutions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that had their own seals, such as rulers, nobles, courts, cities, guilds, Church representatives, monastic orders, and many others. Some of these seal groups and institutions have been researched in detail, such as seals used by rulers and cities, but the seals of the district courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania have most probably received the least attention in both Lithuanian and foreign historiography.

This study aimed to determine whether the legal provisions regulating the court seals were indeed implemented in real-life in that period. Another purpose was to determine whether the development of court sphragistics was completely distinctive or whether it was influenced by innovations introduced in the sphragistics of rulers and noblemen. This is the first time in historiography that such a large volume of material on court seals from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships and their nine districts) was collected and compared. It was especially important to supplement this field of research with new material and to consider this problem from new points of view that have not previously been discussed in modern historiography.

A successful collection and analysis of the seals used at the district courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania will allow comparing them to seals used at the Polish courts in future studies. Lithuanian historiography features different views on the level of influence the Polish courts exerted on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, given the fact that Poland already had a well-established court system. In future, it will be possible to compare the seals of district courts in



Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in order to substantiate the hypothesis on the influence of Polish courts, or perhaps to propose an opposite statement that the seals used by the district courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania developed independently and were a unique creation of their time.

This research aimed to confirm that sphragistics, being one of the auxiliary historical sciences, can reveal great amounts of important material not only about the seals themselves, but also about the courts. Specifically, sealed documents served as a means of contact between the courts and society. Seals reflected the power of these institutions. This research also analysed issues related to the other auxiliary historical sciences, such as heraldry and to an extent, genealogy.

### Chronological Range

The selection of the specified period was determined by the features of court system development and the state of the surviving sources. An administrative and judicial reform took place in the 1560s (1565–1566). The land, castle and chamberlain courts gradually started their activities and had their stamps created. The chronological time frame chosen for the start of this research is 1565, the year of the earliest institutional seal used by one of the land courts. The research ends in 1792, when the courts under examination were dissolved. A longer period of analysis makes it possible to identify the development of seals and to determine the key stages. This chronological range of the research was also determined by the condition of the unpublished archive sources. The condition of the court seals being researched was not completely clear before the study began, nor was the number of well-preserved seals known, therefore a narrower research period was not considered as being feasible.

## Research Methods

Sphragistics has many research methods that are close to those of heraldry. They were combined according to the objectives of this study. The following research methods were employed in this dissertation: descriptive, synthetic, analytic, historical comparative, chronological and statistical.

The descriptive and synthetic methods were used for a brief description of the establishment of courts and their functions and for generalisation of the obtained results. The main and most important research methods used in this dissertation were the analytic and historical comparative methods. Both these methods were applied in the analysis of court seals. The application of the historical comparative method facilitated a consistent demonstration of the development of court seals and their place within the structure of other seals. The chronological method was employed to determine periods during which essential changes to the use of court seals took place. It is also important for dating seals (stamps). The statistical method was employed for the generation of comparative tables.

### Historiography and Sources. Historiography

Many prominent historians from Lithuania and other states have shown an interest in sphragistics and have written some valuable historical studies. European countries have deep-rooted traditions of research in the field of sphragistics. Edmundas Rimša is beyond any doubt the most authoritative author of important research on sphragistics, heraldry and genealogy published in Lithuania. The topic researched in this dissertation has yet to receive proper attention from foreign historians. On the other hand, it was important to analyse what has been done on this topic in historiography, what points of view were researched, and what were directions and trends of both foreign and Lithuanian historians. Also, it was important to

determine what direction of research would be more useful for and specific to this topic, what would be their benefits and shortcomings.

In conclusion, it can be said that the fragmentary notes on seals used at courts were mostly integrated in summarising studies on courts. Notwithstanding individual important studies, the types of seals used in courts is a topic that still remains on the margins of judicial historiography. It is worth noting that there are no consistent studies on the legal regulation of seals used by the courts or their transformation. Several dozen court seals have been published, mostly as photographic images or drawings. The published seals were redrawn from seal impressions (stamps) and some from seals. They may contain inaccuracies, some of them (especially those in 19th-century publications) have no archival references or descriptions. This fact does not diminish their significance however, as these publications are the only source of knowledge about some of these seals. As historiography shows, reviews published by historians were mostly limited to the institutional seals used by courts and lacked any wider summarising insights on official court seals that were also used by the courts. The seals used by land courts have been researched the most and the least amount of information is available on chamberlain court seals. It should be mentioned that various studies conducted in different periods in European countries and Lithuania were influenced both by the political and the ideological situation of the period and the specificity of the studied topic. The historiographical review revealed that a dissociated examination of individual problems has left many questions that have still been unanswered.

Lithuanian, German, Polish, English, Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian literature sources were used in this dissertation, along with some Latin and Ruthenian texts. The historiographical analysis is divided into five parts. The first part considers the function of court seals in foreign and Lithuanian research that studies the courts themselves. The second part discloses the points of view from which

foreign historians studied court seals. The third part discusses why research of court seals conducted by several Polish historians is so important. The fourth part examines the state of court seal research history in Lithuanian historiography. The fifth part lists the main historiography sources used in this dissertation.

## Sources

The sources used in this research can be divided into two groups: published and unpublished historic sources stored in the collections of Lithuanian and Polish libraries and archives.

*Published sources:* Only larger sets of published sources were considered, as their analysis has the most significant impact on this research. In the analysis of the regulation of land, castle and chamberlain court seals, the following published sources were used: the Lithuanian Statutes of 1566 and 1588. There is still no modern scientific publication of the Second Statute of Lithuania (1566), therefore this study uses a 2003 reprint of the 19th-century publication of the Second Statute of Lithuania in Ruthenian and a publication from 1900 by Piekosiński in Polish and Latin. Articles related to court seals and stamps were compared. The articles used to determine the use of seals by the courts (land, castle and chamberlain) were translated from Polish for this dissertation (based on Piekosiński's publication from 1900), but the same article was referred to in multiple languages: Ruthenian and Latin. The discrepancies between the 2003 and 1900 publications of the Second Statute of Lithuania were noted in the footnotes. A Statute of Lithuania (1588) published by I. Lappo was also used in the research of articles related to court seals. This is a reliable publication of high scientific value. This group of published sources was the main and most important reference used in this dissertation. The appendices contain a comparative table of articles of the Second and the Third Lithuanian statutes related to court seals and stamps.

The provisions of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania of 1581 were used to study the regulation of seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania in the legal system. The appendices contain a comparative table of provisions related to the seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.

In the 17th to the 18th centuries, the use of court seals in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was additionally regulated by the Diet Constitutions. These main published sources allowed a detailed analysis of their regulations related to the use of court seals.

Due the specificity of the topic, the following sources were useful in the search for data related to court seals: the published proceedings of the land, castle and chamberlain courts and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.

The published books of the Lithuanian *Metrica* were also used as a source. The published Lithuanian *Metrica* does not contain descriptions, publications, etc., related to court seals. It was useful for checking the real-life functioning of regulations of the Lithuanian Statute at the time, and whether any court proceedings related to the use of court seals were recorded.

It is important to take a fresh look at how historians have already read and interpreted courts seals. For this reason, some of the seals already discussed in historiography were considered again in this research.

*Unpublished archive sources:* Unpublished archive sources have been the largest and most important body of references for this research. The period from the second half of the 16th century to the second half of the 18th century was not consistently peaceful across the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Battles, plagues and fires occurred, along with other events that took place at the courts themselves and affected, among others, the operations of the courts, which was why the materials that are available which are related to court activities are inconsistent. We must not forget the events that took place in Lithuania in the 19th through to the 20th centuries,

along with two World Wars, the first and second Soviet occupations, and reorganisation of the archives themselves when some material was assigned or moved to other territories currently belonging to Lithuania's neighbouring countries, which means that the future discovery of new and unique material is entirely possible if research along these lines shall continue.

Briefly about the documentary material produced by the courts: This included court books, summons, statements, resolutions and other types of documents; not all were suitable for the selected research however. A seal would be used on the original copies of the document issued by the district court, mostly summons, transcripts from the court books, resolutions, and other documents. These documents were the foundation of this research.

In the search for sources, an effort was made to collect consistent materials related to the Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships from the second half of the 16th century to the second half of the 18th century. Most of the required sources are stored in the manuscript collections and archives of Lithuanian libraries. Several hundred archive collections were perused in the material collection stage of the research. This dissertation uses sources from the Manuscripts Department of Vilnius University Library; the Manuscripts Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences; and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The author also tried to look for sources in archives in Krakow and the manuscript collections kept in Polish libraries.

The empirical part of this dissertation consists of more than several hundred seals used by the courts and their officials in the Vilnius and Trakai voivodeships from the second half of the 16th century to the 18th century that have never been published or mentioned in any scientific context. The availability of materials from these voivodeships kept in Lithuanian archives and manuscript departments at libraries was relatively high. The dissertation also

lists several dozen seals used in the other district courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in order to demonstrate that similarities can be found across the entire territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In their research of seals, many historians face certain problems. There were also several problems that hindered the collection of materials for this dissertation. First of all, there are no special collections that store only those deeds that bear seals. The collections of the land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives are an exception; however, they mostly contain court books, protocols and other material that is not relevant to the topics considered in this dissertation. In general, there are few deeds with seals that are in an adequate condition. The available material is in an extremely scattered condition. Deeds bearing seals can be found in a wide variety of sets of personal and church documents, collections owned by families, private persons or institutions, as well as other collections. The search for seals is made more difficult by the fact that collection inventories are not always well-preserved, the same problem quite often occurs with the file descriptions themselves, which makes it impossible to know in advance if the document being ordered bears a seal or not. To gain a better understanding of the situation, on average about fifty deeds were reviewed each day, of which just one or two seals were suitable for the dissertation; very often, the seals were of poor quality or detached, which made them unsuitable for this research. The second problem was the preservation of seals on the documents themselves – an absolute majority of court seals were in a very poor condition. This is especially the case with seals from the 17th century that are over 300 years old. The documents with poorly preserved or missing seals have not been included in the total list of sources.

It must be noted that the material collected for the purposes of this research is not consistent; most of the collected material is related to seals from the second half of the 16th century to the first

half of the 17th century and the 18th century; the material from the second half of the 17th century is the most fragmentary. The level of use of published and unpublished archive sources in this dissertation is different. Chapter I mostly uses published sources, while unpublished sources are used only occasionally, to support a certain hypothesis or statement. Chapter II is built on unpublished archive sources. It is important to look at the seals used by the land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania from a wider point of view. Not only can these sources be used in sphragistics research, they can also be useful for historians focused on other areas and researching daily life, social, economic, ecclesiastical and other fields of history.

### Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation has a foreword, two subject parts, the conclusions, a list of references and an appendices section. The foreword introduces the research object, outlines the purposes and objectives of this work, the methods employed to complete this task, the relevancy and problem of this topic, the chronological range, limitations, sources and references.

This dissertation is built around the problem instead of following a chronological structure, although individual parts follow the chronological approach. The first chapter of this dissertation provides a brief introduction to the courts that were studied (the land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania) and discusses their establishment, activities, composition and development. The order in which the courts (land, castle and chamberlain) are introduced in Chapter I does not impact on the examination of the topic; only the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania that was established in 1581 was selected to be discussed last. This chapter also reveals what kind of seals (institutional and/or official) were used at each court. It also answers questions on legislation regarding court seals in the Second Statute Lithuania



(1566), the Third Statute of Lithuania (1588), the provisions of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania and the Diet, and provides a detailed examination of the actual enforcement of these regulations in practice. The core of the research is contained in the second part of this dissertation. The second chapter uses unpublished archive sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the seals used at courts. The types of visual images used on the seals is established: the appearance of the state coat of arms on the seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania and how it changed over the time; the objects that were displayed on the seals of court officials and in what way; and what makes the seals of court officials an interesting and very important source for the research of genealogical self-awareness among officials. This research analyses the coat of arms shield, the coat of arms helmet, the helmet crest, the shield supporters, the crowns and caps of rank, mantles and other decorative elements. The inscriptions and legends as well as the orthography of the dates was also analysed. The shape and size of court seals, corroboration and signatures, seal material and colour and the act of placing a seal on deeds was discussed.

The dissertation ends with conclusions providing answers to the goals formulated in the foreword. A list of sources and references is attached. Individual institutional or official seals found to be in the best-preserved state are published to illustrate, corroborate or explain certain problems. The seals are arranged in the same order they were affixed to the document, both in the footnotes and in the images. That is, the land court deeds were always sealed by the judge on the left and by the deputy judge on the right. If a castle court deed was sealed by multiple officials, then it was sealed by the deputy elder on the left, for example, and always by the judge on the right. Chamberlain court deeds bore a single seal.

## Research Limitations

The selected research has a broad chronological and problematical range, therefore analysis of some topics has intentionally not been included. The analysis did not include seals from those courts that were active before 1564 or from the assessors, landowners' or the Spiritual Tribunal courts, the seals of beadles (who were accessories at the courts) or seals of other courts or the stamps used by the analysed courts. The condition of their preservation is fragmentary, and their research will require long hours spent at the archives. The footnotes are limited to several different examples from various districts and periods to corroborate certain statements. Otherwise, dozens of examples could be referenced, making the footnotes excessively detailed.

## Key Definitions

In scientific historiography, the term “seal” has been divided into “seal” (*sigillum, das Siegel, pieczęć, pečamb*) and “seal stamp” (*der Siegelstempel, das Petschaft, tlok pieczętny, umamn*), or just “stamp”. The stamp is the tool for making a seal impression, and the seal is the result of the use of a stamp.

Multiple types of seals were used at land, castle and chamberlain courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania: institutional and court officials seals (private and official) were used at the land court; institutional and court official seals (private and official) were used at the castle court; court official seals (private and official) were used only at the chamberlain court; institutional seals were used only at the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.

Below are the terms used in this research to avoid mentioning the titles of all the analysed courts:

*Institutional court seals* refers to the institutional seals of the land and castle courts, and the court of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.

*Court official seals* refers to the seals used by land, castle and chamberlain court officials.

*Court seals* refers to the institutional and court officials' seals in all the analysed courts.

A *coat of arms* is a hereditary distinctive emblem created according to the rules of heraldry and approved by a law or another legal act.

## Conclusions

The outcomes of the research allow stating that the goals formulated in the foreword of this dissertation have been attained. The key conclusions are as follows:

1. Following the court reform of the 1560s (1565–1566), different types of courts were established in each district: the land court (to handle civil cases), the castle court (to handle criminal cases) and the chamberlain court (to handle cases related to disputes over land boundaries). All the courts also performed notarial functions. The Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania was established in 1581 to hear appeals from the land, castle and chamberlain courts. These courts changed the very essence of the legal system in the second half of the 16th century. Analysis of unpublished archive sources has revealed that the regulations for the use of seals at courts set out in the Second Statute of Lithuania (1566), the Third Statute of Lithuania (1588), the Diet and the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania were followed in court practice in that period, and that seals representing those courts were indeed used. From the 1560s (1565–1566) until 1764, each land court in any district had its own institutional stamp, plus the judge's and the deputy judge's stamp. In this period, land court summons were issued with the title of the sovereign and the institutional seal of

the land court. All other deeds of the land court bore the seals of the land court officials, such as the judge and the deputy judge and were signed by the land court scribe. The use of land court officials' seals (the judge and deputy judge) was discontinued after the reform of 1764, and until 1792 each land court of the district used one specific land court stamp for certifying all types of deeds (summons, transcripts and any other deeds).

2. From 1588, all the issued court book transcripts and statements had to bear the signature of the sworn castle scribe and the seals of the voivodes or elders, or their court officials such as the regent or a deputy elder, and the castle judge. As real-life findings show, castle court deeds were commonly sealed just by the deputy elder and were signed by the castle court scribe of that district. From the first half of the 18th century, institutional seals of the castle court were used on castle court deeds.

3. From 1566 to 1588, deeds issued by the chamberlain courts of each district would bear the chamberlain's seal, while from 1588 to 1792, deeds issued by the chamberlain court bore a signature beside the seal.

4. Since its establishment at the start of the 1580s (1581), the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania used the stamp of the land court of the relevant district. For example, Vilnius Land Court seal was used in Vilnius, Navahrudak Land Court seal was used in Navahrudak, Trakai Land Court seal was used in Trakai, and Minsk Land Court seal was used in Minsk. The use of separate institutional stamps of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania started as early as the beginning of the 18th century in Vilnius, Minsk and Navahrudak (and from the end of the 18th century in Hrodno).

5. The Second Statute of Lithuania (1566) and the Third Statute of Lithuania (1588) established a variable fee for the use of court institutional and official seals and also provided regulations for the storage of court books (land court books had to be kept in chests sealed with seals of the officials). Unfortunately, sources are

insufficient regarding this matter making it difficult to establish whether these regulations were followed. From 1566 to 1588, land court officials were involved in drawing up the last wills and testaments of the nobility, although the use of their seals was not yet regulated by law. From 1588, castle court officials were allowed to be involved in drawing up the last wills and testaments along with land court officials. In cases where officials were involved in drawing up the last wills and testaments, both the subject of the will and the witnesses were expected to seal and sign the document if they were literate. Strict penalties applied for the forgery of seals and stamps in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the second half of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century: forgers risked execution or being burned at the stake. On the other hand, not a single source has been found to confirm any cases of burning at the stake as punishment for the forgery of seals or stamps.

6. From the perspective of visual heraldry, all court institutional seals can be classified into three groups: 1. Seals containing just the state coat of arms. This type of heraldry is found on institutional seals of the land court and seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania. 2. Seals containing the state coat of arms below which the coat of arms of the district scribe is located. This type of heraldry is found on institutional seals of the land court and seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania. 3. Seals containing the coat of arms of the castle court official below which was the coat of arms of the castle court scribe. This type of heraldry is found on institutional seals of the castle court. From the perspective of visual heraldry, all seals of court officials can be classified into the following groups: 1. A figure of coat of arms with no shield. 2. A single coat of arms. 3. A single coat of arms against a shield with a decorated heraldic helmet above the shield. 4. More than one coat of arms or a quartered coat of arms against a shield. A quartered coat of arms on the seals of court officials is an important source for research on genealogical self-awareness. In the 16th to the 18th centuries, the figures of the state

coat of arms had already been established on both the land court institutional seals and the seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania, but their depiction was different.

7. The shapes of shields visible on court seals were governed by the traditions of depiction of shields of that period. They changed over time, but shield images from previous periods were also used in the 18th century. Court officials extensively used helmet images from the second half of the 16th century to the second half of the 17th century, but these became quite uncommon in the 18th century. The barred heraldic helmet was located in different positions on the institutional seals of the courts and officials, and it was introduced at different times. It was common for court officials to locate the helmet crest above the heraldic helmet. Feathers were the most common crest. Over time, heraldic helmets were replaced by crowns and caps of rank. They were increasingly used on institutional seals of courts and officials from the second half of the 17th century, but their introduction and development was different at each individual court, following both the traditions of that period and the wishes of the owner of the seal. The use of shield supporters and mantles was not common on court institutional seals and court official seals. They were introduced quite late. Shield supporters start to appear from the first half of the 18th century and mantles are found from the second half of the 18th century. The visual structure and decorations show that floral motifs and military attributes were introduced in the second half of the 17th century.

8. Institutional land court seals tended to increase, almost doubling in size from the second half of the 16th to the 18th century. Land court seals increased from small round shapes under 30 mm in the second half of the 16th century to 72 mm in the second half of the 18th century. Institutional seals of the castle courts and the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania tended to increase in size from the beginning to the end of the 18th century. The size of seals used by castle and chamberlain court officials also tended to almost double from the

second half of the 16th to the 18th centuries. The earliest institutional seals of land courts had a round shape, the oval shape was introduced in the second half of the 17th century and was established in the 18th century putting the round seals behind. The castle courts used both round and oval shapes for their institutional seals. The Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania commonly used an oval shape for its seals from the beginning of the 18th century right up to the second half of the 18th century. The round shape was only used at the end of the 18th century. Meanwhile the officials of land, castle and chamberlain courts used multiple shapes: round, oval and octagonal seals from the second half of the 16th century to the 17th centuries, round and oval seals in the 18th century.

9. The legends of institutional court seals were not established in the 16th century through to the 18th century. Renaissance lettering (*humanistic capitala*) appeared on the legends, most of which were written in Polish, sometimes very rare Latin inclusions can be found. The seals of court officials were classified as private or official, depending on their inscription. 1. Private seals had two letters (denoting the first name and the last name of the court official) or three letters (denoting the first name, paternal name and last name of the court official) above the coat of arms. 2. Official seals had two or three letters as in private seals, with one additional Latin inscription of a Polish capital letter on the left and right side of the coat of arms. These letters denoted the abbreviated position of the official and the district where this position was held. Official seals are further classified into two subgroups: initials only, or legends and initials. Dates were introduced on court seals in the second half of the 16th century and remained until the end of the 18th century. They were commonly placed at the end of the legend, less commonly on the visual area. Most of the dates on institutional court seals indicated when the stamp was produced, while on the seals of court officials, they could specify when the official started working at the court, the date of manufacture or when the stamp had been renewed.

10. Corroborations, or the formula according to which a seal was impressed, were used at all courts. Their contents and time of introduction were different depending on the type of deed. They specified the name of the institution and type of seal used, but corroborations were not motivated, recording only the fact of sealing. The location and language of the scribe's signature on deeds were also different; with some exceptions, it was found from the second half of the 16th century and remained through to the end of the 18th century. The seal material and its colour was not established from the second half of the 16th century to the 18th century, the period and traditions of its use were different. A press-sealing method was mostly used with the institutional seals of courts and court officials. Only a few seals affixed with a cord were found. Two groups of paper protection of seals and four different methods of sealing can be distinguished depending on the type of court seal, institutional or court official, seal that was used on the document. As the volume of deeds increased from the 17th to the 18th centuries, they started to be bound. Seal threads of various colours were used.



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION

Justina Sipavičiūtė was born in 1990 in Vilnius. In 2009–2015 she studied at Vilnius University in the Faculty of History where she earned a Bachelor's degree in history and a Master's degree in history. She has been a PhD student at Vilnius University and the Lithuanian Institute of History in 2015–2019. In 2019 she was awarded a scholarship from the Research Council of Lithuania for her academic achievements.

## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

1. J. Sipavičiūtė, Lietuvos žemės teisė ir žemės teismų pareigūnų antspaudai 1564–1764 m.// *Antrasis Lietuvos Statutas: Temidės ir Klėjos teritorijos*. A collection of articles, compiled by I. Valikonytė and N. Šlimienė, Vilnius, 2017, pp. 189–201. ISSN 1822–4016.
2. J. Sipavičiūtė, Pieczęcie sądów ziemskich w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w latach 1564–1792// „*Rocznik Lituanistyczny*“, T. 3, Rok 2017, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 27–45. ISSN 2450–8446.

## FORUM

1. Participation in an international heraldry forum at the Lithuanian Presidential Palace in Vilnius, June 14, 2018. The presenters included scientists from Finland, France, Georgia, Belgium, Latvia and Lithuania. Presentation topic: Valstybės teismų antspaudų heraldika Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI – XVIII a. [Heraldry of state court seals in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–18th centuries].

## CONFERENCES

1. Participation in an international scientific conference "Antrasis Lietuvos Statutas: Temidės ir Klėjos teritorijos" on November 17–18, 2016 at the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The presentation took place on November 18. Presentation topic: Žemės teismų antspaudai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVIII a. [Land court seals in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–18th centuries].
2. Preparation of a presentation for the scientific conference "Genealogija ir lokalinė istorija: šaltiniai, tyrinėjimai, sklaida" in Panevėžys on March 23, 2018. Presentation topic: Valstybės teismų pareigūnų antspaudai – svarbus šaltinis Lietuvos XVI–XVIII a.

genealogijos tyrimams [State court officials' seals – an important source for Lithuanian 16th–18th-century genealogy research].

## SEMINARS

1. Participation at the seminar for doctoral candidates from the Department of History of Vilnius University and the Lithuanian Institute of History on November 9, 2016. Presentation topic: Žemės teismų ir jų pareigūnų antspaudai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI – XVIII a. [Land court and their officials' seals in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–18th centuries].
2. Participation at the article review seminar held at the Department of History of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the Lithuanian Institute of History on March 1, 2017 (the article was submitted to *Rocznik Lituanistyczny*, a Polish journal).
3. Participation at the 9th National Seminar for History Doctoral Candidates at Klaipėda University on April 26, 2018. Presentation topic: Lietuvos Vyriausiojo Tribunolo antspaudai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVI–XVIII a. [Seals of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th–18th centuries].

## EXCHANGE PROGRAM IN KRAKOW

Program duration: 10 days (from June 18 to June 27, 2018). Purpose of the exchange: to search for sources and historiography to be used in this dissertation. The following libraries and archives were visited: Biblioteka Naukowa Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności i Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie; Biblioteka XX. Czartoryskich w Krakowie; Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie; Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie. Seals necessary for the dissertation were found, photocopies of articles and books were made.

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