Jūratė Kiaupienė, *Between Rome and Byzantium. The Golden Age of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Political Culture. Second Half of the Fifteenth Century to First Half of the Seventeenth Century*. Translated by J. Will, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019. 278 pp. ISBN 978-1644-691-46-5 (hardback); 978-1644-691-47-2

The author of this book¹ is a well-known researcher of Early Modern Period Lithuanian history. She has been analysing the political development and political culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in her work for several decades, making broad use of a comparative approach in her research. Jūratė Kiaupienė was one of the first historians in Lithuania to choose the broader spatial context of the Central East European region for the analysis of selected issues. She was also one of the first researchers to apply the political nation concept to the study of socio-political phenomena in Lithuanian historiography. The political nation describes the politically active part of a multinational society in the Early Modern Period. The historian has laid out and discussed the fundamental provisions of her research, and the most important questions in her fields of analysis, in numerous articles, and in a monograph published in 2004, *'Mes Lietuva'. Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės bajorija XVI a. (viešas ir privatus gyvenimas)* [*'We are Lithuania'. The Nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th Century (Public and Private Life)*]. Thus, the monograph under review may be considered the final result of many years of work, signalling a specific level of maturity in her research.

This is also evident from the spectrum of topics and the scope of the developmental stages of various political cultural phenomena discussed in her publication, revealing the chronology of the research. Ranging from the mid-15th to the mid-17th century, the chronology makes it possible not only to trace the origins of one or another element of the political culture, and its development and spread in the country's political community, but also to avoid having to constantly explain why certain processes began at the same time as in other European countries,

¹ The book under review is a translation of the Lithuanian monograph *Tarp Romos ir Bizantijos: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės politinės kultūros aukso amžius (XV a. antroji pusė – XVII a. pirmoji pusė)*, published in 2016.

while others happened later. This is because they can be viewed from a broader chronological perspective. The decision to use the 'Golden Age' metaphor to describe the period under discussion is somewhat ambiguous. According to the entrenched historiographical tradition, it almost obliges the author to talk about the chosen period as a time of flourishing. However, in this case, the metaphorical periodisation is used in a non-canonical way. Her decision is based on the aim to describe the whole period during which the political nation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania created and fostered a unique culture and uniformity in state governance and representation (p. xvi). Thus, the very way the political culture model unfolded is viewed as a special case of success, which had great significance for future generations.

The conceptuality of the research in this publication had to be ensured via two fundamental concepts, the 'political nation' and 'political culture', which were used as guidelines for the construction of the monograph's narrative. These concepts are noted for being rich in definitions and for having various applications in different humanities and social science studies. Thus, when defining the concept of political culture, the author chose a pathway commonly taken by other researchers, to align the concept of the term to the aims of the specific research being undertaken. The introduction to the book declares that the monograph will present an analysis of the political stance taken by the noble estate, the values circulating among the nobility that in turn defined the state, its governance and representation, laws, and other parts of the socio-political system, as well as the expression of these provisions in practice (pp. xi–xii). All these goals echo the researcher's rather broad understanding of the definition of political culture. It encompasses the theoretical and political provisions deemed relevant to the political nation, the socio-political and socio-cultural community in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, expressing the value-based orientation of its members and the entirety of their practical actions (p. xiv).

The author does not limit her construction of the theoretical definitions of the 'political nation' to just the introduction to her book. One of the first chapters in Part I of the monograph is dedicated to them: 'A Sociopolitical and Sociocultural Portrait of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania'. It presents a thorough analysis of the structure of the 'political nation', questioning the trend that has developed in historiography of identifying the political nation with the aristocratic estate, who made use of those political rights. She formulates the position that the nobility in its entirety can never be equated to the political nation, because

belonging to a country's political community first of all depended on an individual's decision to participate actively in state public life. That is why she deems belonging to be the fact of whether an individual worked in the governing, administrative or executive justice institutions, or participated in parliamentary structures, the activities of the diets and lesser diets, and whether they engaged in the multi-faceted creation and formation of the socio-political community's values, and state and civil self-awareness (p. 31). On the basis of these public activity criteria, in addition to the nobility, the researcher also names the most active clergymen from different confessions, and members of the cultural elite who were not nobles, even settlers from other countries, as also being members of the political nation. At this point, the methodological harmony with the concept of political culture may be highlighted, one of the components being the aforementioned entirety of practical actions, which in effect echoes the political activism imperative. However, the synonymous use of the political nation and political community concepts observed throughout the whole text raises a question regarding the relationship between these two terms, which remains unanswered.

The narrative strategy in this monograph was determined not just by the theoretical provisions of the research, but also by the main directions of the analysis. They were defined taking into account the general situation of this area of research in historiography in general: the topics being analysed, the questions that are raised, and the level to which they are examined. In line with this position, the author sets her main tasks as discussing the development processes of the Lithuanian political nation, showing the political culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an independent European cultural phenomenon, and revealing the similarities and differences compared to its neighbour and partner in the union, the Kingdom of Poland (pp. xvii–xix). The latter aspect receives particular attention throughout the book, with a verification of the prevailing positions appearing in Polish historians' works to see only strong unification processes after the 1569 Union of Lublin and to present the development of Lithuania's political culture as an independent historical phenomenon.

The monograph is in three parts, which are then further divided into smaller sub-topics. The first, 'The Landscape of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Political Culture', presents the varied context of the problem under analysis, and further develops certain theoretical provisions of the research. The first chapter in this part, 'The Geopolitical and Geocultural Space of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania', discusses fundamental features

of the state's development and the accompanying political processes over the broader perspective of several centuries. In her geo-political and geo-cultural description of the space of the Lithuanian state, the author rejects the model of the Central-East European region that has hitherto been promoted. Instead, she chooses the concept of the juncture of the Roman West and the Byzantine East zones. This choice is manifested clearly in the metaphor in the book's title 'between Rome and Byzantium'. The second chapter in the first part, 'A Sociopolitical and Sociocultural Portrait of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania', not only delves deeper into a theoretical description of the political nation concept, but also identifies the process by which the country's political community formed, analysing how and why this occurred and its outcomes (pp. 26–47). The first part ends with the chapter 'The Mythological Space of the Political Culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania', which is devoted to the mythology of origins as the formative basis of the ethno-political consciousness. Most attention is paid to the theory of Roman origins, which is named as one of the main ideological factors encouraging the integration of ethnically and confessionally different members of the political nation, the formation of the political identity, and the emergence of a collective historical consciousness (pp. 48–73). This part of the monograph may be viewed as a good starting point that lays the foundations for the future consideration of the development of political culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It also helps readers who are less familiar with the topic to understand the general political, social and cultural processes that steered the state's and society's developmental trajectories in the late Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Early Modern Period.

The basis of this research, as the author herself says, lies in the second part of her monograph, 'The Makeup and Manifestation of the Political Culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania'. Here, she analyses the formation of the political culture model that unified the political nation. This part also contains three chapters in which she discusses different aspects of the manifestation of the elements that make up the political culture in political life. The first chapter, 'Union – The Idea and Reality of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Political Culture', looks at the long process of how Lithuania and Poland grew closer politically. Beginning at the end of the 14th century, its final stage, the Union of Lublin in 1569, is given particular attention. There is a chronological discussion of the Lithuanian political nation's relationship with the idea of the union, and the different attitudes of the Polish and Lithuanian political communities towards a common future (pp. 79–116). In her analysis of

the sources conveying the political polemic and the close examination of the various stages of the Diet of Lublin where the fate of the union was deliberated, the author states on numerous occasions the firm stance taken by the leaders of the Lithuanian political community in defending the statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and in seeking equal positions in the future political compound uniting both states. These positions are regularly compared with the vision of Polish politicians who saw Lithuania as just another province of Poland. While there is no reason to really question these claims, we could nonetheless validly ask whether a monolithic unity really existed in the political community of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in all cases, especially since it is impossible to know the positions of all the members of the political nation, due to the nature of the available sources. They usually reflect only the position of the political elite. Due to a lack of information, which the author also acknowledges, it is difficult to confidently claim a knowledge of the manifestation of provisions of the political culture among the ordinary nobility.

The next chapter, 'The State in the Political and Legal Culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania', analyses the expression of the country's sovereignty in different spheres of public life. The analysis begins with a consideration of the problems existing in the state order, namely, the scope of the monarch's authority, and how he related to his subjects. She seeks to verify the provision, entrenched in historiography, that in Poland, and later on in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the ruler's authority weakened, the nobility and parliament assumed his powers. Based on texts reflecting the political thought at the time, which discuss the foundations of order in the state and its reform, the researcher substantiates her position as to why it does not automatically apply to Poland or Lithuania. Even after the Union of Lublin, the idea of a strong monarch continued to dominate in political polemical texts written in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, highlighting the difference with the Polish polemical space, where ideas of the unrestricted rights and freedoms of the nobility prevailed (pp. 117–128). This chapter also touches on the spread of ideas promoted by intellectuals among ordinary members of the political community. The author states that it is difficult to talk about the wide-scale reflection of political ideas in a general sense, as they would have to be meticulously picked out from separate sources. Such research has not been conducted so far; therefore, the identification of this problem can be treated as an important guideline for other researchers to pursue. The deliberation of ideas of statehood

in this chapter is supplemented by a narrative about the functioning of state symbols that signified sovereignty and the evolution of executive justice in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, highlighting the interaction between the legal and the political culture. According to the author, the codification of laws directly echoed the unique evolution of the political culture. In her opinion, the latter could be treated as one of the main factors explaining why the legal systems were not equalised in Poland and Lithuania after the Union of Lublin, despite the various attempts to do so. Looking at the differences between the legal traditions in both countries, we should note that in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the main digests of legal norms, the Lithuanian Statutes, were not only regarded as legal codes, but also as guarantees of the freedoms of the political community, uniting the members of the political nation (pp. 135–157).

The topic of unity in the political nation is discussed further in the last chapter in this part of the monograph, 'The Grand Duchy's Culture of Parliamentarism'. It gives an overview of the development of the Diet, the parliamentary structure in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which entrenched political representation and estate-based solidarity. The author searches for expressions of the political culture by analysing parliamentary rhetoric (pp. 158–165, 176–182). The lesser diets, as a structure which ensured local political activism, also receive her attention. An activity analysis of the lesser diets facilitates an understanding of things that were relevant to the ordinary nobility (matters of territorial integrity in the state, defence and legal reform issues), and to learn about their value provisions (pp. 183–191). Preserving statehood and the narrative echoing this idea of sovereignty were based on the firm unity in the political community. In the author's view, it was the strong traditions of clientelism in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that allowed the avoidance of internal splintering in the political nation, as they neutralised confrontation between the ordinary nobility and the political elites, the magnates. Rejecting claims of internal divisions in the country's political community, the author states that the image of a fractured political nation was actually formed by Polish historians, who applied the model of conflict-ridden relations between the nobility and the magnates in Poland to interpretations of parliamentary traditions in Lithuania (pp. 165–167). Without a doubt, the phenomenon of clientelism was noted for its strong influence over the political evolution in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and also the development of the political culture, where a considerable part of the nobility were engaged in client relations with the magnates, who thereby secured their loyalty. Nonetheless, when analysing the

issue of internal conflict within the political community, we might not only raise the question of disagreements between the nobility and the magnates, but also about confrontations between competing magnate families and the nobles who supported them. This was an issue that became particularly evident during the election of a new monarch. An analysis of these internal conflicts may form a somewhat more sceptical approach towards unity within the political community.

The research ends with the third part of the monograph, 'We, the Nation of Lithuania' – Uncovering the Values of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Political Culture', which is not divided into chapters. Here, all the attention turns to an analysis of the values of the political nation. The author analyses how the concepts of 'fatherland', 'love of the fatherland', 'patriotism', 'freedom' and 'statehood' were perceived by members of the political community. Amid the backdrop of these value categories, she discusses the statements made by Lithuanian political leaders in defence of the state's interests. This is supplemented by an analysis of the narratives created by intellectuals that formed idealised images of the fatherland and patriotism (pp. 194–204). While the discussion of this issue is viewed positively, an insight into the author's own reflections on the issue of pragmatic patriotism would have also been beneficial. As can be expected, the personal interests of the political elite hid under their grand declarations of love for the fatherland, as did the desire to hold on to their dominant position, in turn secured by preserving state sovereignty with regard to Poland.

Jūratė Kiaupienė's book on the manifestation of political culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania can be described generally as a comprehensive, synthesis-like study, discussing numerous fundamental socio-political and socio-cultural aspects of the development of Lithuanian society in the Early Modern Period. The historiographical contribution it makes to this field, the author's original insights, and the unresolved research problems she identifies define clear guidelines for future research.

Marius Sirutavičius
Vytautas Magnus University