Academic Library of the University of Latvia (former Bibliotheca Rigensis, founded in 1524) keeps documents that bear an interesting testimony to the fates of old books and manuscripts. The unique collection of Johann Christoph Brotze (1742–1823), teacher and regional ethnographer, is one of the most striking evidences of this valuable heritage.

Brotze was born in Görlitz, learned technical drawing, studied theology and philosophy at universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg. In 1768, he moved to Riga and worked as a tutor. In 1769, he started to teach at Riga King’s Lyceum where he has been working for 46 years.

Brotze collected historical materials and drew everything that seemed significant to him. He fixed everything with great preciseness and always added written explanations that sometimes were a few lines, but sometimes several pages long. Many of the objects drawn by Brotze perished or disappeared in the course of time, but information about them has been...
preserved in Brotze’s drawings and descriptions stored in the library.

Brotze’s drawings are gathered in his most significant work *Sammlung verschiedener Liefländischer Monumente...* in 10 big volumes bound in leather (3130 pages, page size 33x21 cm). Views of settlements in the Baltics, estate buildings, castles, public edifices, dwelling houses, churches, bridges; town and country dwellers, their clothing, belongings and depiction of work process; different technical equipment (waterline, etc.), monuments, armorial bearings, stamps and coins are depicted in these volumes. Brotze tried to gather as much evidence and facts about each town as possible: he drew the most significant buildings of the town, gave description of its history, furnished information on its economic and administrative situation, and gave facts about its inhabitants and their occupation. Thanks to the drawings of J. C. Brotze, we can visualize the demeanor of the representatives of 14 different nationalities that inhabited Riga at that time: the occupation, traditions and style.

In 1997, the Academic Library worked out a project supported by the Soros Foundation – Latvia and the Open Society Institute. The damaged volumes were restored and a digital archive of the ten volumes of Brotze’s *Monumente* was created. It consists of 3130 pages of high quality electronic images. It provides the information users with the possibility to analyse details of the considerably enlarged drawings and to get reproductions equivalent to the originals. There is great demand for this collection. In order to have free access to it, an on-line database of the *Monumente* was created in 2000 (http://www3.acadlib.lv/br0ce).
Since 1992 the Institute of the History of Latvia and the Academic Library have published the book Johans Kristofs Broce. Zimejumi un apraksti (Johann Christoph Brotze. Drawings and Descriptions). The four volumes have already been published, and they widely reveal pictures about Riga, its vicinity and regions of Latvia. The Brotze Estonica, prepared for publication by professor Raimo Pullat and his colleagues, was published in 2006.

The exhibition of Johann Christoph Brotze was presented in many European countries – Estonia, Poland, Finland, Austria, Germany, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Hungary and Belarus.

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The collection of Brotze Monumente


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