

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE BIOGRAPHER AND THE DESCRIBED PERSON
IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE OF THE
17TH CENTURY GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

Summary

The subject of the article comprises works of the biographical genre written in the 17th century Grand Duchy of Lithuania (further – GDL). The number of such life histories is over 30, but most of them are hagiographical. The most important of those 9 biographies, which are not hagiographical, are discussed in this article. Because of their genre specific, biographies present a very interesting source for analyzing relations between the patron and the client, the direct contracting authority (or the person described) and the writer; therefore these compositions are primarily regarded in this respect by the author of this article. Problems of motivation, literary and non-literary purposes and goals of the biographer, the addressee and the future reader (public), closely related to the adopted aspect of analysis, have also been taken into account. Despite of the literary variety of compositions comprising this flexible genre and the fact that no predominant type or pattern of the biography had been formed, the performed analysis allows us making certain generalizations and discerning the main types of such relationship.

The chief character or the described person in the majority of the considered biographies is a nobleman, to whom the author is related by more or less binding personal ties, therefore attempting to maintain or win his favor in terms of relationship, which could be regarded as cliental. According to the existing tendencies, the biographic compositions could be divided into several groups (mostly with regard to the personal attitude of the author rather than in respect of carrying out the requested order). The *first* group would include works describing the person, who had been personal patron of the author, thus the biographical composition presents payment of the moral debt, or tribute to his memory (e.g. *Vita illustrissimi ac reverendissimi domini d. Simonis Rudnicki episcopi Varmiensis, Brunsbergae, 1645*, by Jonas Rivockis [Rywocki], *Memoriał Świętej Pamięci X. Imci Albrechta Radziwiłła*, a manuscript by Stanislovas Tokarskis written before 1696). The *second* group would comprise the representative

biographies, which had been written in response to the direct or indirect request from the noble families. The chief character in such compositions is a nobleman, but the personal attitude of the author towards this person is unspecified and remains "formal". While describing and exalting the life of the prominent person, the literary form of the biography is used in order to spread information about him among the wide European readership, therefore the "suitable" image is created, thus most probably earning favors from the family as well (e.g. the panegyric biography of Sapiega by Rivoockis *Idea magni herois sive Illustrissimus dominus d. Leo Sapieha [...] panegyricae descriptus*. Antverpiae, 1645; and the unpublished manuscript by several authors, composed approximately since 1560, and describing life of Boguslovas Radvila). In all the *remaining* cases, both panegyric and ideological or apologetic goals can also be pointed out, being closely intertwined with the historiographic interests of the authors. The shape of the compositions approaches either the historical narrative (e.g. the work by Samuelis Venslauskis [Węśławski] describing the field hetman of the GDL Vincentius Corvinus Gosiewski, *Victor et victus Vincentius Corvinus Gosiewski*, Vilnae, 1691) or genealogy (like the manuscript collection of Radvilas' biographic outlines by Saliamonas Risinskis [Rysiński, Rysinius], *De origine gentis Radiviliae syntagma*, completed approximately in 1623).