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Władysław Syrokomla as a Regional Researcher and Scholar of the Past

Summary

Aim of the Study

In examining Władysław Syrokomla (1823–1862), Ludwik Kondratowicz, a writer connected with the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, I identified gaps in existing research on his scholarly activity, in particular the absence of a comprehensive monograph and the coexistence of parallel scholarly discourses in three traditions: Polish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian. Therefore, I undertook the preparation of this dissertation, whose aim was to collect and organize knowledge about his historical and regional-research activity, to uncover new facts, and to resolve uncertainties or correct mistaken views.

Thesis of the Study

I also observed that in contemporary Poland Syrokomla is perceived primarily as the author of “gawęda” (narrative verse) and a “village bard.” Yet an analysis of nineteenth-century sources and of his own works reveals that he engaged in wide-ranging scholarly and regional-research activity, working to study and preserve Polish cultural heritage and producing scholarly works. On this basis, I formulated the thesis that Syrokomla was above all a researcher of the past and a regional researcher, and only secondarily a poet.

Methodology

To achieve my aims, between 2017 and 2025 I undertook in-depth studies of the scholarly literature, analyzed Syrokomla’s works, read his correspondence and memoirs, and carried out queries in nineteenth-century periodicals. Above all, however, I conducted archival research in Poland and Lithuania.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into three main parts. In the chapter *Development of Ideas*, I traced Syrokomla’s path from a “clerk” at the Radziwiłł court in Nieśwież to a scholar-antiquarian (“starożytnik”) and member of the learned community, including his involvement in research and cultural projects. This chapter serves as an introduction, showing the context in which his works arose

and the shaping of his scholarly outlook. The part entitled *Works* discusses Syrokomla's original writings related to history and regional research, serving both a descriptive and analytical function. In *Workshop*, I examined his preparation for historical and regional-research work, his working methods and resources, and analyzed his works in terms of sources and genres; this chapter has an analytical and bibliographical character. The *Conclusion* outlines directions for further research, while the *Bibliography* constitutes a bibliographic compendium of the writer's scholarly interests.

Main Findings

Among my key achievements are the description of previously unexplored areas of Syrokomla's activity, including his participation in B. M. Wolff's projects, his collaboration with J. K. Wilczyński and J. I. Kraszewski, and his work in the Vilnius Archaeological Commission. I also discovered and interpreted the *Note on Nieśwież (Notatka o Nieświeżu)* and poems on religious images from the *Vilnius Album (Album Wileńskie)*, as well as analyzed the historical sketch *Minsk* and the diary of August Zienowicz.

Original Contribution

I believe I have succeeded in demonstrating the thesis set out in the introduction and in accomplishing my objectives. The result is the first monograph devoted to Syrokomla's scholarly and regional-research activity. Its originality lies in the integration of biographical, literary, and historical approaches, in reliance on extensive archival research (including that conducted in Lithuania), and in engagement with Polish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian scholarship, especially the most recent studies from the twenty-first century. The dissertation introduces previously unpublished sources, updates earlier findings, offers reinterpretations of texts, and establishes a reliable source base. Its innovativeness rests already in the very undertaking of the topic and in presenting Syrokomla as a nineteenth-century scholar-antiquarian ("starożytnik") – through the analysis of his activities, his historical and regional achievements, as well as the reconstruction of the sources of his erudition. The structure of the bibliography is also original, designed to correspond closely with the content of the study.

Prospects for Further Research

Although my dissertation advances research on Syrokomla, it does not exhaust the subject. Many issues require further study, including searches in archives in Russia and Belarus and analyses of private collections, though some materials may, unfortunately, have been irretrievably lost. Still awaiting examination are the writer's extensive correspondence and numerous unpublished documents.