
Eligijus Raila, today’s leading researcher into the Age of Enlightenment in Lithuania, has written another treatise on the issues of the era. In 2010, Aidai published his monograph *Ignotus Ignotas: Vilniaus vyskupas Ignotas Jokūbas Masalskis* that was based on his dissertation successfully defended on 16 January 1996 in the Faculty of History at Vilnius University. This 236-page illustrated historical biography contains a preface, three major research components (the political activities of Masalskis: between tradition and reform; the cultural activities of Masalskis: the fate of the Educational Enlightenment; the economic activities of Masalskis: the configuration of physiocracy in Lithuania), a list of sources and a bibliography, and name and place name indexes. The book does not have a summary in a foreign language. Although the study is aimed primarily at a Lithuanian-reading audience, the history of Lithuania as a Central/East European state and its historiography is interesting and relevant to specialists in Western humanities and social sciences who are interested in studies of the past carried out in post-communist countries. A pleasant coincidence is that in the year of the publication of Raila’s book, in one of the most prestigious U.S. periodical publications, *The American Historical Review*, there was a forum of historians ‘New Perspectives on the Enlightenment’, showing the reactualisation of research on the Age of the Enlightenment. Unfortunately, 

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2 These include Raila’s first study of the Enlightenment era: E. Raila, *Apie 1791 gegužės 3-iosios konstituciją* (Vilnius, 2007).


for a historian not reading Lithuanian, but investigating and comparing Enlightenment phenomena in different countries, the original insights set forth by Raila about this epoch in Lithuania will remain unreachable.

The best evaluation of the book for its author is the continued academic discussion from various perspectives, and this book is definitely worthy of it. In this article, we will look at the monograph from the perspectives of the theory of history (Chapter I) and economic history (Chapter II). With the help of the latter (in particular I. Wallerstein’s capitalist world system [CWS] theory), we will try to articulate in more detail, as well as expand the

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6 The CWS is one of the branches of comparative historical sociology. For more than 50 years it has established itself as a subdiscipline of the science of Western history, the foundations of which were laid by the fundamental works of R. Bendix, C. Tilly, I. Wallerstein and T. Skocpol. The most important advantage of comparative historical sociology access is the extension of the horizon of historical thinking with a regional and subcontinental perspective responding to the challenges of changing social, political and geopolitical realities, a new interpretation of the past of one’s region in the local and world contexts of history. In Lithuania, historical research based on it is still an exception. Worthy of mention are the works of Z. Norkus (*Nepasiskelbusioji imperija: Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštija lyginamosios istorinės imperijų sociologijos požiūriu* (Vilnius, 2009); ‘The Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Retrospective of Comparative Historical Sociology of Empires’, *World Political Science Review*, 3, iss. 4 (2007), pp. 1–41; ‘Imperium Litewskie w międzyjednostkowych społecznościach i systemach politycznych: studium przypadku’, *Politeja*, 2, no. 16 (2011), pp. 129–154; S. Pivoras, *Lietuvių ir latvių pilietinės savimonės raida: XVIII a. pabaiga – XIX a. pirmoji pusė (lyginamasis aspektas)* (Vilnius, 2000); K. Antanauskas, ‘Sovietinė Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos nomenklatura (1953–1990 m.). Dėsningumai ir ypatingumai’, Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Kaunas, 2001) and D. Žiemelis ‘Abiejų Tautų Respublikos socialinė ekonominė raida XVI–XVIII amžiuje: feodalizmas ar periferinis kapitalizmas? Istoriografinė analizė’, Unpublished doctoral dissertation University of Vilnius, (2009); *Feudalism or Peripheral Capitalism?: Socio-Economic History of*
arguments about the aspects of Lithuania’s social and economic history in the 16th to the 19th centuries, mentioned in the third part of the monograph (the economic activities of Masalskis: the configuration of physiocracy in Lithuania).

I. The specifics of historical biography as a genre. Looking at the monograph through the prism of the theory of history, first of all one has to state that it is in the genre of historical biography. The goal was not a narrow and plain approach, but one interpreting the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* layers\(^7\) of Masalskis which is realised in the biographical reconstruction of this historical figure, not only as an 18th-century Lithuanian nobleman and bishop of Vilnius, but also as a conduit for the ideas of the Age of the Enlightenment, through the prism of the three major segments forming society, political, educational and economic. This structure of the work shows the problematic principle of teaching historical materials which allows the author to make clear in a more articulated and differentiated manner the diverse activities in the life of the discussed historical figure. On the other hand, this structure of the work also has its price: the first part of the book devoted to political history ends with the funeral in Vilnius of Masalskis, who was hanged during the 1794 uprising in Warsaw, and this reduces the intrigue in reading the work’s subsequent parts.

The theoretical methodological principles of biographical research in the book are not articulated explicitly. One can deduce about them from the author’s statement: ‘After all, every reconstruction is not the reconstruction of standard barracks, but the restoration of a person’s individuality’\(^8\). In order to understand better the metaphorically defined methodology of the study and ‘translate’ it into the language of science, it is necessary in broad steps to explicate the theoretical methodological principles of (historical) biographical research. Thanks to them, we will understand better into what conceptually awkward situation the author of a book falls into by seeking to write/reconstruct the biography of a personality who has become part of history.

*the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th to 18th Centuries* (Saarbrücken, 2011)). The CWS theory acquires a comparativistic manner due to the system’s division into core, periphery and semi-periphery geo-economic zones. At the same time there is the different structural position of CWS consuming countries geopolitical and economic interaction and an analysis of their typological distinctive features. For greater detail on the CWS theory, see D. Žiemelis, ‘Immanuel Wallersteino kapitalistinės pasaulio sistemos teorija’, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 16 (2005), pp. 65–81.


\(^{8}\) Ibid., p. 12.
In Lithuanian historiography there are conceptual discussions about biographical method (e.g. Z. Norkus, I. Šutinienė, and S. Kraniauskienė). According to how biographies are treated in historiography and what is considered a matter of biographical research, the two main orientations of the biographical method are allocated: ‘generalising’, relying on the provisions of positivistic methodology, and ‘individualising’, representing the positions of knowledge, phenomenological sociology and hermeneutics. The first uses biographies as an instrument to study social-structural processes. The understanding of the world by an individual person is only interesting to the extent that it is determined by socio-economic structural relations. The ‘individualistic’ biography direction, as opposed to ‘generalising’, analyses a person’s understanding of him/herself, the symbolic construction of the world, as well as the specific features of identification, while there is an interest in social phenomena as facts of a certain world-view. In which direction does the book written by Raila go? An analysis of the book shows that in it there are features of the ‘generalising’ direction, which are exposed most in trying to understand the Age of the Enlightenment in Lithuania based on the biography of a historical figure. Masalskis is considered not only as an 18th-century Lithuanian nobleman and bishop of Vilnius, but also as one of the main creators of the Age of the Enlightenment in Lithuania. According to Raila in the 18th-century ideology and its propagation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was not an automatic process. It became inevitable because Lithuania’s and Poland’s first ‘members of the

9 Looking through the prism of a historian at the conceptions of history by the currently most important theorist of historical historiography, the German historian J. Droysen and his countryman, the cultural historian and philosopher W. Dilthey, Z. Norkus discussed the methodological principles of biography provided by these historians. See Z. Norkus, *Istorika. Istorinis įvadas* (Vilnius, 1996), pp. 56–68, pp. 143–149; idem, ‘Droizeniškieji istorijos metodologijos metmenys’, *Istorija*, 34 (1996), pp. 159–170.

10 The sociologist I. Šutinienė, who investigated the experiences of people in the Soviet period on the basis of autobiographies, explained the opportunities and limits provided by the biographical method in investigating the memoirs of witnesses in this period. See I. Šutinienė, ‘Biografių ir istorijų autobiografių interpretavimas kintant politinims rėžimams’, *Istoriko atsakomybė: straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. N. Asadauskienė, E. Kriščiūnas, A. Ragauskas (Vilnius, 2002), pp. 69–78.


12 For a broader view, see Kraniauskienė, ‘Biografinis metodas, pp. 81–86.

13 Ibid, pp. 86–89.
Enlightenment’, belonged to the state’s political elite, and were able to create a cultural network in which Enlightenment ideas were conveyed to other layers of society. One of the creators of the network, especially the educational system, in Lithuania was Bishop Masalskis of Vilnius. The author of the book reveals the individual biography of Masalskis in more general social-value structures and the processes occurring in them.

Nevertheless, in the book there are more ‘individualistic’ than ‘generalising’ biography genre features. The main object of the book is the biography of the 18th-century Lithuanian nobleman and Bishop of Vilnius Masalskis. There is an interest in the social phenomena of the period so far as they affect the world view of the hero of the book. A biography of a person is an illustration of the process of identification. Identity is not given directly, it needs to be reconstructed. According to Raila, this reconstruction has no end. The author undertakes the heaviest and most complicated task of the knowledge of history, to know the individuality of Masalskis. Coincidentally, W. Dilthey considered biography to be the highest form of historical study, the ‘peak of historiography’. The author of the book, knowing that Masalskis has received most varied historical evaluations in historiography (from the moralising condemnations of a historiography sick with ‘didactic anemia’ to patriotic hagiographic pathos, from a despicable traitor to a martyr for the Lithuanian nation) does not try to defend any of the existing evaluations, but wants to understand who this historical figure truly was. The very title of the first component of the book of (Unknown Ignatius) appeals to the unknowable historical reality of a person and its never-ending discovery. Nevertheless, the following sentences help to understand the hermeneutic research positions of Raila the most: ‘... the aim to reveal the ‘unlit’ side of the personality of Masalskis – unnoticed, unheard and sometimes even concealed in historiography. 

Raise the hem of the bishop’s mantle. Or the heavy draperies of history (my emphasis – D.Ž.)

For this, not only the abundant personal correspondence of Masalskis is used, but also the very broad database of sources covering the period, as well as works by other researchers on this historic personality. I have to agree with the comment of D. Burba in the review of the book that it does not have the consideration of the used sources and literature so necessary for scholarly research.

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14 Raila, Ignotus Ignotas, p. 11. For a broader view of this, see the second part of the book: pp. 99–163.
15 For more information, see Norkus, Istorika, p. 147.
16 Raila, Ignotus Ignotas, p. 11.
Consequently, the criteria for their selection remain unclear (note that in the dissertation there is a review of sources and literature\(^\text{19}\)). One can only speculate on what determined this decision by Raila. Perhaps the chosen scholarly risky path of not discussing the sources and literature used (as, incidentally, no conclusions are presented) was determined by the author’s intention to give the reader a less academically rigorous text of looser form, or perhaps this selection was inspired by the contrast of a biographical with a monographic narrative (J. Droysen\(^\text{20}\))? In the absence of a critical review of the sources and literature used, the historiographical dispute between the supporters and opponents of Masalskis remains on the sidelines of the book. Raila resolves the so far existing contrapositions of the assessments of this historical personality consistently and in detail by explaining in a positive, negative and controversial way the evaluations of the actions of Masalskis in the context of the era in which he lived. One can see this clearly in this quote:

The support of the Petersburg court very greatly strengthened the political union of the Czartoryskis and Masalskis. In this place one would like to draw attention to one important possibility of pro-Russian activities. The frequent researcher of this historical period, particularly the Polish tradition of historiography, saw and continues to see in such actions by the Republic’s nobles a betrayal of state interests and, applying the criteria of moral evaluations, condemns them for a second time. However, money, gifts and bribery were an integral part of the diplomatic game. Western Europe propagated this game very actively and creatively in the whole Enlightenment era of the 17th century. The Enlightenment era fundamentally changed the structure of society, the relationships between the court and the nobility, between cities and villages, so there began to emerge new rules of the diplomatic game and political intrigues. After the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 in Western Europe, long-term competition began not at the courts of kings and their backstage, but by the already formed models of two countries, France and England. This was the convergence of diplomatic art to the understanding of modern diplomatic practice and theory. The caste-consciousness of the court developed accordingly in the direction of civil-state consciousness. In the states of Poland and Lithuania, this deep process was significantly delayed. Most of the nobility still thought in the particular categories of castes, which to a great extent determined one or another political commitment by the nobleman. To take any position and satisfy personal ambition for the frequent nobleman seemed to have been more important than the fate of the political state.\(^\text{21}\)

II. Contribution to research on the history of Lithuania’s economy

However, the greatest value and originality of this book is not its genre (in this area in Lithuania, E. Aleksandravičius, T. Bairauskaitė, V. Dolinskas,  


\(^\text{20}\) For more information, see Norkus, Istorika, pp. 66–68.

\(^\text{21}\) Raila, Ignotus Ignotas, pp. 26–27.
V. Merkys and R. Ragauskienė have been successful 22), but the research on the economic activities of Masalskis (the third part of the monograph ‘The economic activities of I.J. Masalskis: configuration of physiocracy in Lithuania’), which, I think, deserves much attention from contemporary historians. Why are these studies so relevant? In modern Lithuanian historiography, there has appeared a certain one-sidedness in the research: the socio-economic history that was important in the Soviet era is ignored. In rejecting Marxism, all the problems of agricultural and socio-economic history have been abandoned (for ‘more fashionable’ topics), even though there have been significant problems in this history, a deeper examination of which the limited Marxist methodology impeded.23 We can state that Raila, by choosing the historical biography genre for the economic activities of the 18th-century Lithuanian nobleman and Bishop of Vilnius Masalskis, has not only made it relevant but also provided an impetus for research in Lithuania on these questions.

As we know, in traditional Marxist historiography the concept of the second serfdom was called the refeudalisation process in the 16th to 18th centuries in Central and Eastern Europe (including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). According to this concept, internal causes (the relationship between village and estate) determined the socio-economic order and political developments in the 16th to 18th centuries in Central and Eastern Europe. The CWS theory suggests looking at the phenomenon of the second serfdom from a global perspective, emphasising external causes, and considering it a manifestation of peripheral capitalism in Central Eastern Europe. What was the second serfdom in Central and Eastern Europe (especially in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth): refeudalisation or peripheral capitalism?24 To answer this question, it is necessary to find out whether the term second serfdom is applicable to the social and economic order of the Grand Duchy


23 Notable exceptions to this in the context are S. Pameneckis (Aagrarinų santykiių raida ir dinamika Lietuvoje: XVIII a. pabaiga – XIX a. pirmoji pusė: (statistinė analizė) (Vilnius, 2004)), G. Vaskela (Lietuva 1939–1940 metais: Kursas į valstybės reguliuojamą ekonomiką (Vilnius, 2002); Žemės reforma Lietuvoje 1919–1940 m.: Analizuojant Rytų ir Vidurio Europos agrarinės raidos XX a. III–IV dešimtmečiais tendencijas (Vilnius, 1998); Lietuvos kaimo gyventojai 1920–1940 m. (socialinės ir ekonominis aspektas) (Vilnius, 1992)) as well as the research by Z. Norkus (‘Kapitalizmo raidos Lietuvoje bruožai ir etapai (iki 1940 m.) postmarksistinii požiūriu’, Lietuvos istorijos studijos, 29 (2012), pp. 9–36).

24 For a more detailed justification of this problem, see Žiemelis, Feudalism or Peripheral Capitalism?, pp. 6–28.
of Lithuania in the 16th to 18th centuries (and how). The interpretation of the economic activity of Masalskis by Raila provides a huge stimulus to resolve this problem.

From the second half of the 20th century in traditional Marxist historiography, the opinion based on new studies that the term second serfdom should not be used to describe agricultural relationships in the 15th to 18th centuries for some countries, most of all Poland and Lithuania, became stronger. In the opinion of the proponents of this approach (J. Topolski, J. Jurginis, W. Hejnosz, Z. Janel, A. Kahan, J. Kiaupienė) there was a continuous process of making peasants serfs here for which the period of flourishing coincided chronologically with the apogee of the new feudal reaction in typical countries of the second serfdom. These researchers distinguish the western edge of the Central and East Europe area, especially the territory of East Germany, where one may indeed talk about the strengthening of the second stage in the relations of serfdom in the 15th to 18th centuries and call this process the second serfdom, but all the rest of the range (where the entrenchment of serfdom was primary), a natural extension of the development of feudal relations. One can state that up to now in historiography the term the second serfdom was not applied to the socio-economic order of the GDL in the 15th to 18th centuries. However, looking at the interpretation of the economic activities of Masalskis provided by Raila through the prism of the essential component of the CWS theory, the concept of peripheral capitalism, one can see clearly the features of the


26 According to CWS theory, the distinguishing feature of peripheral capitalism is the use of forced labour (of slaves, serfs). Weak statehood from a political and military point of view, or colonial and semi-colonial dependence can be characteristic of a peripheral political organisation. Owners of serfs and landowners whose estates are capitalist enterprises producing products for sale and export make up the peripheral capitalist class. In the world division of labour, the role of extracting raw materials and providing agricultural produce to the core zone countries falls to peripheral capitalism. For more, see I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World–System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World–Economy in the*
second serfdom in Lithuania from the second half of the 18th century to the second half of the 19th century (i.e. until the abolition of serfdom in 1861) 27.

First of all, historiography notes that, as in other Central and East European countries, in Lithuania, from the middle of the 17th century until the second half of the 18th century due to political and demographic crises 28, bondage was replaced with feudal land rent. However, from the second half of the 18th century a paradoxical trend became clear: there was once again a return to the extensification of the corvée farmstead economic system, by increasing the norms of labour rent and establishing new farmsteads 29. In Marxist historiography, this phenomenon is described as a renaissance of the farmstead economy, which is associated in Western Europe with the again developed conjuncture favourable for producers of grain and other agricultural products in Central and Eastern Europe. With this renaissance of the farmstead economy, the most difficult period of serfdom in Lithuania began 30. One researcher into this period, S. Pamerneckis, one of the few people to investigate the development and change in agrarian relations in


27 This statement was made for the first time in historiography by the author of this article in his earlier studies. See first of all: D. Žiemelis, ‘XVI–XVIII amžiaus Abiejų Tautų Respublikos palivarko ūkis marksistiniu bei neoinstitucionalistiniu požiūriu’, _Lietuvos istorijos studijos_, 27 (2011), pp. 11–38. It is determined that in addition to the feudal serfdom relations prevailing in the socio-economic structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th–18th c. there existed elements of peripheral capitalism (the continuous realisation of the remaining farmstead production and the appearance of factories producing for the market), the influence of which in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth gradually increased. For a broader view of this, see idem., _Feudalism or Peripheral Capitalism?_ However, they are limited to the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It remained undisclosed how after the Third Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth when the conditions changed essentially (Lithuania lost its sovereignty completely, and being incorporated into the composition of the Russian Empire, became subject to its state serfdom policies, and joined the economic system of the European part of the Empire) in Lithuania until the middle of the 19th century the feudal serfdom economy intensified. Thus, the research does not reflect the structural changes in the system of the serfdom economy through its whole 1557–1861 lifetime in Lithuania.

28 GDL experienced two major demographic crises in the 17th–18th centuries. In the middle of the 17th century it lost about 48 per cent of its population, and at the beginning of the 18th century, not yet having recovered from the first crisis, again lost 35 per cent of its population. See Z. Kiaupa, J. Kiaupienė, A. Kuncevičius, _The History of Lithuania before 1795_ (Vilnius, 2000), p. 254.


30 See D. Žiemelis, ‘XVI–XVIII amžiaus Abiejų Tautų Respublikos palivarko ūkis marksistiniu bei neoinstitucionalistiniu požiūriu’.
Lithuania in late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century statistically, stated that the increase in the peasants’ obligations from the end of the 18th century to the 1820s–1830s reached the extreme development of the corvée farmstead system. He is inclined even to talk about the apogee of feudal serfdom relations during this period, rather than the disintegration of serfdom and the conversion of the farmstead to the capitalist economy (the Marxist point of view) in Lithuania (M. Jučas proved this). From the interpretations of the economic activities of Masalskis provided by Raila, we can see that in Lithuania in the second half of the 18th century there were attempts to reform the farmstead economy based on the economic theory of physiocracy. Its reception in Lithuania is tied to the wave of the ‘new agriculture’ that arose at the junction of the 17th and 18th centuries in the county of Norfolk in England, which reached the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from France somewhat delayed. According to the statement by Raila, Lithuanian nobles, after visiting many countries in Europe and becoming acquainted with some of the most advanced economic models of the second half of the 18th century on their estates only imitated the principles of Western activities, i.e. they tried to insert the ‘pliable’ principles of Enlightenment entrepreneurship and individual labour into the stagnant corvée farmstead economic system. Masalskis considered economic reform not to be a method of improving economic capacity, but a mechanism for the repayment of his debts. So the structure of serfdom that denied personal freedom and guaranteed a strict hierarchy in society, in principle, was unable to release the economic potential based on the labour and responsibility of the free individual. One of the Lithuanian noblemen who represented the mentioned spread of the economic process was A. Tyzenhauzas, who ‘intensified’ the farming of royal estates by using serf labour. Raila very aptly defines such ‘intensification of the farm’ as ‘the reanimation of the corvée farmstead system using some of the technology of Western Europe and the latest farming methods’. That was the real second serfdom, with which began the most difficult period of serfdom in Lithuania. This process was extended after the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth when Lithuania became part of the

33 Raila, *Ignotas Ignotas*, p. 171. The analyst notes that the reception of this theory was encouraged not so much by the unique view of the elite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth toward this product of political economy thought as one of the possible options for European culture, but as the total invasion by the culture of France bringing this physiocratic idea as an integral element of this culture. See ibid., p. 166.
34 Ibid., pp. 196–197.
35 Ibid., p. 188.
Russian Empire. From the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century Lithuania, together with the Belarusian territories, were the most ‘conserved’ corner of serfdom relations in the European part of the Russian Empire. A comparative analysis of Lithuania’s economy in the 16th to 19th centuries with its typologically similar (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany east of the Elbe) and contrasting national economies (especially in England) would further deepen these observations.

To conclude, one can state that in the context of the meagre research into 18th-century history, Raila’s new monograph is a significant part of the historiography of the GDL and without doubt will be viewed as fundamental research, which no scholarly work devoted to the Age of the Enlightenment will be able to ignore. The work offers many new facts and original interpretations, which in the future, according to new theoretical approaches, will be expanded and adjusted. Not only the high quality of the scholarly text, and the concise, smooth language, but also the tasteful design of the book, create a pleasant impression.

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