

SUMMARY

The nobility of Laukuva environs in the 16th–18th cent.-s */LAUKUVA I*

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The general (e.g. H. Łowmiański) or specific and structural (e.g. J. Ochmański, G. Błaszczyk, L. Truska) studies predominate in the social researches of the nobility of Lithuania. The research of several families of the nobility of the Laukuva district according to the local aspect has more advantages. This research is dedicated to the largest layer of the Samogitian nobility – the gentry. The aim of this research is to explain the features of the gentry through the social mobility: social status, marriages, client relations, cultural activity and everyday life details in the 16th –18th centuries. We have used the data of the families of Drukteniai, Kontautai, Kelpšos and Silvestravičiai which lived in small rural district of Laukuva in Pajūris region in this research.

During the research we have found out that the mentioned period can be divided into two parts in respect of the gentry's social mobility. The first period covers the 2nd half of the 16th – the beginning of the 17th centuries. The gentry strongly felt the legal and economic limitations as the result of the Reform of the Valakai during this period. The gentry developed to the new offshoots then what the antroponimic system gives evidences. The Laukuva's gentry was related with the neighbouring gentry though there were some exceptions. The noblemen of Laukuva's rural district were able to achieve the lowest position in the district using the client relations – *vaznys*. The gentry was suitable for the positions of *tijūnai* and *tarnybininkai* in the private estates of the magnates and landlords. The cultural activity of the gentry was limited to the foundations of the churches and the responsibility to sign the needed documents.

The second period begins with various social changes in the beginning of the 18th century. The gentry of Laukuva has introduced the relations with the middle nobility – the new elite during this period. This has helped them to receive higher positions of the local level (regent, hunter, rotmister) and to join the middle nobility. The mode of life and clothes has become more luxurious. The political and economic activities increased and the cultural life was changing. The descendants of the Laukuva's noblemen participated in the life of the salons, took part in the intellectual activities: they have become the poets, collectors of the folk-lore, composers.

The gentry is the layer not yet appreciated from the social, economic and cultural point of view and this urges us to involve in to the deeper research.