

**Między historyzmem oświeceniowym a romantycznym. Rzecz o powieści
Franciszka Salezego Jezierskiego Rzepicha**

**Between the historicism of the Age of Enlightenment and of Romanticism.
A study on the novel Rzepicha by Franciszek Salezy Jezierski**

SUMMARY

The paper deals with the historicism of the Age of Enlightenment, which in a sense can be identified with historical revisionism. It was manifested in the Age of Enlightenment through the critique of the existing history, which was based on the accounts of mediaeval chroniclers. These accounts served the long-standing "Sarmatian" republicanism and they strengthened the conviction about the inviolable privileges of the nobility. The chroniclers' accounts also carried genealogies of noble families, which frequently went back to Japheth, which was supposed to strengthen the privileged position of the noble estate.

The writers of the Enlightenment, mainly Ignacy Krasicki and Adam Naruszewicz, questioned the mythical and legendary motifs in the works of the chroniclers and they did so at a time when Poland's independence was being seriously threatened. Their aim was to give Polish history credibility in the spirit of the latest European and novel domestic tendencies, and to make the average nobleman aware of the divide separating the mythical from the authentic, historical facts. It was also one of their objectives to change the noble estate's destructive opinion of the inviolability of the Polish Commonwealth and to engage it in the struggle for constitutional-political and social reform.

Franciszek Salezy Jezierski, one of the most eminent political writers of the Four-year Sejm, wrote a novel entitled *Rzepicha matka królów...* [*Rzepicha, mother of kings...*] (two editions 1790, 1794), in which, making use of wide-ranging historical, moral and social digressions, he presented views corresponding with the basic tenets of the Age of Enlightenment (an equal natural right to freedom, tolerance, condemnation of war, approval for the role of the monarch as protector), but unlike the opponents of Poland's mythical past, he accepted the myths. He emphasized the folk provenance of the legendary accounts, recognized them as true and attributed a new role to them. The legends and myths were supposed to consolidate the nation's in its identity. He elaborated the myth of the peasant origins of the Piast dynasty. In vindicating legends and myths, he thus took a stance which came close to the attitudes of the Romanticists. During the period of partitioned Poland, the legendary accounts in the writings of the Romanticists allowed people to preserve hope in national rebirth, and such tendencies were especially conspicuous in literary genres with a historical tinge. It is therefore possible to put forward the hypothesis that Jezierski was a forerunner of the Polish Romanticist historicism as early as in the 1790s.