

The project's aim is to undertake research on the functioning of the authority in Hanseatic cities of Prussia and Livonia in the High and Late Middle Ages. By "functioning" we understand the aspects such as creation of branches of municipal authority, legitimization of council's rulership, exercising power and its representation within urban community and to external entities. The chronological scope extends from the first half of the 13th century to 1520s. The research covers the great Prussian cities (Toruń, Chełmno, Elbląg, Braniewo, Königsberg, Gdańsk) and the largest Livonian cities (Riga, Tallinn, Tartu). The research will focus on administrative and organizational instruments, and instruments and means of communication and representation of power. Taken into account are four elements: a. rights and competences of councils regarding their political, judicial and administrative power and control of the urban life; b. the administrative apparatus and team of urban ministers by whose operations city councils were able to rule; c. the development of pragmatic literacy which was the indispensable instrument of exercising power; d. self-representation of municipal rulership by the use of rituals, texts and iconography.

The analysis of the way the communal authority worked in these two regions would help indicate the general features, characteristic of the whole Hanseatic zone, and specific features, typical of regional or local urban landscape. By this token, the project shall contribute significantly to development of typology of cities in the Baltic region and distinguishing the cultural circles in the Hanseatic zone.

The previous researchers studying the medieval European cities did not employ the newest methodological approach. The obtained findings shall result in including the Prussian and Livonian region in the discussion on the political order of cities in Europe in the preindustrial era and origins of the European republicanism. The research conducted within the project will be completed with a monograph, dedicated to the topic of municipal rulership in Prussian and Livonian cities in the Middle Ages, as well as with a joint publication of case studies.

Essential for the planned project is the fact that the preserved source material makes it possible to employ the research inspirations and methodology that is used in the newest studies on representation of city, social communication and standardization of social life and social disciplining. Due to the analytic character of the research indispensable are academic visits in libraries and archives. The scientific research shall include both printed sources and archival material. Apart from national archives in Toruń, Gdańsk and Olsztyn, the search will be carried out in the foreign archives (Berlin, Riga, Tallinn).