

The aim of this project is to analyse the organisation of the Polish royal court of Stephen Báthory and its functioning as a fundamental political centre of the state and the everyday life place of the monarch and his entourage. In the Modern Age we could notice a significant change in the position of the royal court in comparison to the Middle Ages. It became a heart of the political power, marginalising the local centres. It was the best place for pursuing a career in administration and also for a relatively quick enrichment. Moreover, the rulers used their courtiers to establish their own political factions owing to which they could implement their intentions more effectively. In addition to that, the court became a symbol of power and prosperity.

From the point of view of transitions of the political system in the Polish-Lithuanian state, the period of reign of the Transylvanian prince seems to be very interesting. He was, *de facto*, the first monarch chosen at the free election (*wolna elekcja*) who actually ruled the Commonwealth – the episode of Henry de Valois on the Polish throne could not have left any lasting traces due to his short period of governing. Stephen Báthory had a chance to influence a new structural shape of the Commonwealth. It is important to note that in this period, between the death of Sigismund II Augustus and the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, a few key changes took place in the political system, having an important impact on the future history of the country. The change can be observed also in the area of the monarchical court. In connection to this, a very interesting issue emerged from creating by Báthory from scratch a court of a monarch chosen through free election in the Commonwealth – this was a very rare phenomenon in Europe at that time. We must remember that the immediate circle of the ruler was the basis of his governance in the Modern Age state. Due to the origin of King Stephen and his governance of Transylvania, it is interesting to see how the Hungarian (Transylvanian) resolutions were transferred to the Polish royal court and what the participation of Báthory's countrymen was like in the shaping of the closest entourage of the Commonwealth's ruler. The next aim of the project is to answer the question: how much of the Jagiellonian tradition remained during Báthory's reign and is it possible to speak of its direct continuation and how long the model of the court was lasting during his rule. Was it altered and continued by its successor?

The reasons for taking up the topic outlined above are several. With regard to the problem of the organisation of a monarch's closest circles in the Modern Age, we have at our disposal only a few publications from the Polish historiography. They refer to the royal courts of: Alexander I Jagiellon, Sigismund II Augustus, as a separate account, of his wives and the court of Sigismund III Vasa. This project would fill the historiographical gap between the last Jagiellon and the first Vasa ruler; thereby, it would be possible to trace the changes which took place in the organising of the royal court in the Commonwealth in the 16th century. Another reason is the peculiarity of Batory control, when new institutions and phenomena developed in the Commonwealth. This is closely related to the continuation of the Jagiellonian tradition and the creation by the kings of the new elements in the organization and functioning of the court in the Commonwealth. It seems that the role of Batory in this process was significant.