

The aim of this project is to determine and discuss the legal regulations between the nobility and the peasantry in the central Polish lands (Duchy of Warsaw, Kingdom of Poland, Free City of Krakow) in the period that started with the abolition of serfdom (together with the establishing of the Duchy of Warsaw) until the emancipation of the peasants (1864 in the Kingdom of Poland, whereas in the area of the former Free City of Krakow incorporated into Galicia 1848).

In the first half of the 19th century the Napoleonic Code, with its capitalistic character, was officially the fundamental source of civil law - it regulated the relations between individuals, regardless of their financial situation. Nevertheless, the relations between the peasantry and the nobility were still controlled by a number of institutions of a feudal origin, such as pańszczyzna and propination laws. It is worth mentioning that in France serfdom was abolished in the 1790s together with many feudal obligations, which practically meant the emancipation of the French peasantry. Thus, the goal is to present how the Polish reality affected the interpretation of the Napoleonic Code.

The project will result in a clear presentation of each of the peasants' ranks (włościanie, okupnicy, koloniści) together with descriptions of their legal status: rights and duties towards the nobility. This kind of a complex study linking history and law has not been conducted yet. Certainly, its results will be useful not only for legal historians but also those specializing in sociology and economy.

When it comes to the researched area (territory), it is limited to those lands where the Napoleonic Code was in force: preserved court and notarial files are relatively easy to compare. At the same time, the number of researched sources will fully cover the team's potential. For the reasons mentioned, other Polish lands (including the Prussian Partition, Galicia and Taken Lands) will not be a part of the study, although a separate projects covering those areas would be worth-conducting in the future. A comprehensive publication will be ready only after obtaining the research results for the main four jurisdiction areas of the 19th century Polish lands.

The peasantry issues have clearly been a matter of interest for many researchers, especially during communism. Yet, most historians focused on the social and economical aspects - the legal ones were not given that much attention. The studies performed over the period 1945-1989 are mostly determined by the communist ideology, which lowers their scientific value.

It should be emphasized that the archival sources covering the topic have not been a matter of interest for most of the researchers before. They are still waiting for a thorough analysis, which is the aim of this project - especially the civil court records from Kalisz and Krakow as well as the notarial files.