

Today, it is still believed that the Polish nobility was characterized by a low level of consciousness and political activity. It is probably a result of the research of historians in the 19th century, who blamed the nobility for the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Meanwhile, the reality of the state of Sigismund III was different. The nobility actively participated in political life, participating in local assemblies (in sejmiks and conventions) and speaking out at the national forum (in parliaments and the Crown Tribunal).

In my research, I intend to analyse the careers of sejmik marshals, deputies, and tribunal judges, who were elected to perform these functions the appropriate number of times and distinguished themselves from the group of other activists. I decided to exclude noble sons from families belonging to the political elite of the then Commonwealth. Members of senatorial or dignitarian families had much better education and financial and protection opportunities than the representatives of the middle nobility. Besides, Polish historians have already described the issue of their activities. In my project, I will discuss several factors that influenced the career development of activists. These will be such issues as family origin, the size of the family property, the type, and nature of offices held by family members and activists, education, religion, the eloquence of the individual activist, and his health or length of life.

An interesting topic in my research will be the issue of client relations and the problem of protection granted to the nobility by members of the political elite. Historians have described clientelism to show the patron's perspective, primarily. In my research, I wish to focus on the middle nobility to picture how the protection of the power elite could – but did not have to – influence career development.

Analysing the issues mentioned above requires various types of sources: both acts (land and castle court books, sejmik files, tax registers) and narratives (private notes, correspondence). It allows me to carefully study the factors mentioned and apply an individualised perspective despite describing a large community.

Thus, my research will focus on issues related primarily to political and social history, such as early modern parliamentarism and the judiciary, research on provincial elites, genealogy of noble families, religious structure of society, and clientelism. The territorial scope of my studies will cover the borders of historical Lesser Poland, i.e., the voivodeships of Kraków, Lublin, and Sandomierz, as well as the principalities of Oświęcim and Zator. Even though the subject of my research focuses on local history, the strategies, and methods of analysing sources that I use will be innovative enough to influence the development of studies both in Poland and abroad by publishing articles.