

***Circumspecti cives* – citizenship in Baltic Hanseatic towns. A comparative study**

At the heart of the project lies the concept of citizenship in medieval urban communities. The chronological frame is the Middle Ages (12th to early 16th century), whereas the geographical frame is the towns of the southern and south-eastern coast of the Baltic Hanseatic League: Lower Germany, Pomerania, Prussia and Livonia. Citizenship of the town was a legal and social distinction granted to members of the urban community. Associated with this status were certain rights, privileges and obligations, which varied regionally and temporally. These have not yet been the subject of systematic comparative research across the Baltic Hanseatic region, hence this project aims to address them. But citizenship was not just about legal labels: it was also a sort of a goal, a value and a social norm, an expected, created and reproduced model of urban life. Taking this approach to citizenship in the Baltic region means broadening the scope of our research questions. The citizenship in this project will be, therefore, analysed at three levels: formal and legal, the level of socio-political order (hegemony) and the level of ideas, models and mentality.

I. Who is the citizen?

As a result of the first level of research, the research team will create two Catalogues – A (Catalogue of Sources of Citizenship) and B (Catalogue of Sources on Citizenship). Catalogue A will fulfil the task of organising the formal and legal data on citizenship in the towns of the Baltic Hanseatic League throughout the Middle Ages to enable tracing the dynamics of the introduction of certain legal norms and records in individual towns, their transformation, the links between them and the ways in which these norms were introduced. In order for Catalogue A to fulfil its role, the researchers will, for each town, search for and compile all existing source data relating to admissions to the municipal law/body of citizens, exclusions from municipal law/citizens excluded, citizens' duties, and citizens' rights. Catalogue B will be a subsidiary catalogue. It will organise, in the form of a database, all historical sources found by researchers relating to the question of citizenship in the Baltic Hanseatic region.

II. What is the citizen's position in the politics of the town?

The second level of analysis aims at recognizing the actual position of the body of citizens in a given political system and observing changes to it over time. It is an innovative approach, as it goes beyond the understanding of citizenship only in the context of a power struggle: citizenship did not have to automatically assume participation in power as we understand it today.

III. What does it take to be a good citizen?

The third level assumes that citizenship as a spectrum of attitudes, more and less internalized norms, notions, and shared aspirations of members of a community, was a concept susceptible to change and influence. A person receiving a town charter and obtaining certain privileges connected with the status of a citizen of a given town became a part of the community, in which further existence required meeting conditions, generally aimed at making the citizen strive for a certain model of a good, decent, hard-working, honest citizen. It seems that this model could have been based on the ideal of common good. We would like to investigate the models and ideals of good citizen to a larger extent.

The topic of citizenship is now one that is taken up quite regularly by historians of towns, historians of the political system and historians of law. Despite the interest in this problem in various scholarly circles, no study of this problem in the thematic scope proposed in this project and encompassing the towns of the Baltic Hanseatic region has so far been undertaken; nor has there been a study with the systematic and comparative ambitions proposed in this project. The novelty of the project stems primarily from the geographical framework, analytical scope and methodological approach. The research team expects that during the project implementation we will establish how ideas and their modes of expression, models of community aspirations and criteria for acceptance and exclusion were modified and borrowed in and between the urban centres of the Baltic Hanseatic region. Since the aim of the project is, besides comparative studies of the understanding of citizenship in individual towns, also to trace the development of the idea of citizenship, its transformation, origins, reception between municipalities, our study is expected to become an important contribution to the development of research on the culture of the Hansa. The broad territorial scope of the planned research, covering towns belonging to different political circles (Vendish, Pomeranian, Prussian, Livonian), should provide an opportunity to grasp, on the one hand, the phenomenon of citizenship characteristic of the entire Hanseatic area, and, on the other hand, the local specificity of urban culture.

The focus and scale of the problem requires access to historical sources of a diverse nature, relating to the medieval history of the towns of the Baltic Hanseatic region: normative sources (charters, privileges, legal acts, statutes, protocols of brotherhoods and guilds) produced by territorial authorities and urban communities, historiographical sources (city chronicles and others belonging to the group of pragmatic writings), and other types of sources (such as court records, letters, official petitions or account books) alike. The implementation of the project tasks requires research in the Polish and German archives: Hamburg, Lübeck, Rostock, Braunschweig and Wismar.