

INTRODUCTION

The reason why I undertook research on the earliest history of the Potockis is obviously because of the acute shortage of studies of the sources on the history of this prominent family, which for several centuries decisively affected the domestic and foreign policies of the First Polish Republic, thus contributing to its modern history. Surprisingly, as one of the few families from the close elite of old Poland, the Potockis do not have a documentarily verified genealogy which would shed light on their medieval origins.

This shortage is not counterbalanced either by older heraldry studies or by newer literature, where mentions of the Potockis are frequent yet limited to the participation of individual family members in political, particularly military, events. At the same time, there has hardly been any information at all on the family, its origin and estate, including the information on its dynamics and methods of economic development, which are of special interest.

Because the medieval and early modern court books of the Kraków Voivodeship have luckily been preserved, it seemed to me that the full query should include the reconstruction of the Potocki family tree reaching back at least to the late 14th c. The temporal caesuras of the study are drawn wider, however, so that the social and economic processes by which the Potockis have been affected and to which they have contributed could be analysed from a longer temporal perspective and in this way a fuller picture of the transformations could be obtained. Thus, the investigation covered the story of the family until the 1630s, which is when the last representative of the generation born and raised in the 16th c. had died.

Insofar as the medieval material did not bring expected information on the origins of the family and it was necessary to resort to formulating a hypothesis, the later sources exceeded my expectations and enabled many mistaken views and established opinions, well grounded in scholarly literature, to be verified, and the family tree and family property situation to be reconstructed.

The research concentrated on two major issues – the family history and material foundations of its subsistence, leaving aside the question of the

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participation of the Potockis in public life, although I frequently found it necessary to refer to many of these public events in the course of the book.

The material I have obtained during my research made it possible for me to analyse the settlement patterns and to attempt to establish family ties within the medieval Pilawa clan as well as to formulate a hypothesis on the origin of the Potockis and finally to present the stories of the first three generations of the family, including its forebear, the Chamberlain of Halicz, Jakub Potocki (†1551). The maps of the geographical situation of the estates of particular family members and the family tree supplement the information contained in the study and assist the reader in its understanding and analysis. The study concludes with a summary concerning internal family mechanisms, marriage policies, family onomastics, as well as economic strategies, characteristics of estate divisions, estate building strategy, and finally an attempt to analyse the structure of production in the family estates.

Apart from source publications and historical studies, the research comprised mainly court material – hardly utilised so far in the studies of the Potocki family, either in its early or much later history. All the land and castle court books and royal court books stored in the Kraków National Archives have been examined, as well as books of the Rus Voivodeship, mainly those from Halicz, Trembowla, Lwów and Przemyśl found in the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lwów, the land, castle and town books of Kamieniec Podolski from the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kiev and record books of Crown Metrica. Statistical and treasury records have been used too, especially tax registers and vetting records of royal estates, survey registers of royal troops and regal invoices from the Crown Treasury Archives and the Military Archives. Information was also sought in family archives: the Potockis in Tulczyn, the Zamoyskis in Kiev, the Potockis in Krzeszowice, the Zamoyskis in the Old Court Books Archives, Princes Czartoryski Library etc., from where some court and epistolographic records have been drawn.

The initiative to study the family story came from Stefan Potocki from Montreal and Krzysztof Potocki from Warsaw, who asked me to write it a few years ago, while the costs of many research visits over the years as well as the printing itself was covered by Jan Franciszek Potocki from Bracka Street in Kraków, to whom I hereby express my deep gratitude.