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## Introduction

The queen's court was modeled on the king's court and, as Marcin Kromer wrote in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the ruler "feeds, clothes and remunerates" of all his wife's courtiers (Kromer, 1984, 147), due to its role to merely serve its mistress, it could not be similar to the king's court in terms of its role in the state. It seems that due to this disparity, the actual role of the queen's court in politics, culture or the economy was mostly determined by her personality and ambitions on top of her relationship with her spouse, which increased or decreased her chances of making her court, or more precisely, the people associated with it, an important political factor. It is not surprising, therefore, that the attention of researchers was attracted to those Polish queens who stood out for their activity and influence on the state, for example, such as Queen Bona Sforza, while those who rarely or never went beyond the role of a royal consort remained in a deep shadow. Although it should be noted at once that there was an obvious change when the queen's spouse also became the queen mother – the need to secure the fate of her children, especially sons, generally motivated Polish queens and those immediately surrounding them, making their courts and the people associated with them active participants in public life (Sucheni-Grabowska, 2009, pp. 247–260). However, these issues did not receive separate attention.

Until the late twentieth century, attempts to look at the courts of Polish queens, both in structural-organizational terms and in their role at various levels of their functioning, were made occasionally or in the margins of studies on individual rulers and their reigns or in biographies of queens (e.g., Kolankowski, 1913, pp. 313–361; Pociecha, 1949, pp. 49–106; Bogucka, 2004, pp. 87–104). At the beginning of the 2000s, comments were made in Polish historiography that we know little about queens and their role in the state, or about their environment, and that the structures of the courts of Polish duchesses and queens remain outside the mainstream of research. Over the past two decades, the subject of the courts of Polish queens in the Middle Ages and the modern era has gained a body of researchers who initially focused primarily on the organizational aspect of the court, treated as a hierarchical structure of offices and positions.

Thanks to the methodology and workshop that Marek Ferenc's monograph on the court of King Sigismund Augustus (Ferenc, 1998) provided for the study of this issue, basic research for the courts of queens also began to develop (Marchwińska, 2008; Bogucka, 2009; Czwojdrak, 2012; Rutkowska, 2012). It seems that the study of the courts of queens, and of women in general – including duchesses or magnates – is also, to some extent, derived from the changes noted in Polish historiography in the field of women's history research, of which gender studies is the most recognizable branch, but not the only and not the most important one (Bogucka, 1993; Bogucka, 2000; Bogucka, 2005; Siwik, 2011 with a list of literature).

Polish researchers of women's courts are increasingly bold to go beyond inquiries of a structural-personal nature, and the subject matter of *queenship*, which this area of research involves, is visible not only in the studies on Poland by foreign scholars, but also already in Polish research. In recent years, some studies were published in Polish historiography in which the court was not viewed solely as a rather static structure made up of offices and functions to which names and dates were laboriously assigned (although, after all, it would be difficult to go further without this basic trend). Increasingly, it has been attempted to see it in the context of dynamic and multifaceted social relations, social networks, constant interactions, which prescribes the use of methods inherent in anthropology, social psychology or sociology in these approaches (Januszek-Sieradzka, 2017; Kuras, 2018; Skrzypietz, 2021, Januszek-Sieradzka, 2022). It is worth adding that research on queenship also includes the recently popular issue of cultural transfers and of interpretive interest linked to the European matrimonial market and the role of queens in cultural exchange (Kosior, 2019; Pastrnak, 2018; Pastrnak, 2020). The state of research in some areas also allows attempts at comparative outlines or studies showing the development of court-related phenomena over the long term (Kosior, 2019; Beem, 2020; Pietrzak, 2018). If we add a noticeable interest in Polish queens and queens of Polish descent along with their courts in studies undertaken by foreign researchers (Kosior, 2019; Beem, 2020, pp. 157–202; Pastrnak, 2018; Pastrnak, 2020; Niiranen, 2020; Máté & Oborni, 2020; Güttner-Sporzyński, 2021), which can (and should) provide a methodological impetus for domestic historiography, in addition to initiatives and research projects devoted to this topic, taking Polish themes into account (Bues, 2016; <http://www.marryingcultures.eu>, accessed: 30.09.2022; <https://ihpan.edu.pl/struktura/zaklady-naukowe/zespol-do-badan-nad-dworami-i-elitami-wladzy>, accessed: 02.10.2022), progress should be expected in research on queens' courts in the broadest sense, not just Polish and not just queens originating from Poland.

This is a good time to determine the current state of this research and to identify further research directions and opportunities. It is important to outline the historiographical starting point for further research, especially by identifying the achievements of Western historiographies, the methodology used, the range of sources analyzed, and the ways in which the queen's court has been approached. On the other hand, going beyond the problems of the structure, organization and composition of the court, it is important to look at the court as an environment – pulsating with life, changing not only because of personnel turnover, but mainly because of the constant interaction between the queen and the people who make up the court.

The still-open list of issues that contribute to this multi-faceted and interdisciplinary subject matter includes issues related to: the day-to-day functioning of the queen's court from its financing and upkeep to its provisioning, fashion, entertainment and mobility, religious life, cultural patronage and foundation activities, ceremonies and their significance for the queen's position, the real influence of the queen and her associates on decisions made by the king and his court, the change in a queen's status after her husband's death, or the paths and scale of cultural transfers (Januszek-Sieradzka, 2014). Articles presented in this volume respond to calls to further explore the subject matter related to queens' courts in the Middle Ages and modern era with themes that allow the topic to be seen in a broader perspective, both methodologically and thematically.

Two articles presented are devoted to historiographical issues. Professor Katarzyna Kuras (Jagiellonian University) discusses the genesis and evolution of the French queens' court. The queen's court, as the author noted, did not enjoy the interest of researchers until the 1990s, which had been directed almost entirely on the king's court. In French conditions, a breakthrough in the history of the institution of the queen's court happened during the reign of Anne of Brittany (1477–1514) and it has been she, as well as several other outstanding figures – Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589) and Anne of Austria (1601–1666) – who clearly dominate in French research. Doctor Matilda Urjasz-Raczko (University of Warsaw), who looked at the presence of the subject in Spanish historiography, noted that it did not emerge as a separate research issue, and that the output was based mainly on case studies of individual courts. The Spanish research, unlike in Poland, does not focus around organizational, personal or structural issues, but its main axis is the queen's role and social position, especially in the context of client networks. In this context, a recent manifesto by Maria López-Cordón, a leading Spanish women's historian is interesting. The scholar declared the end of an era of research on women as victims in a patriarchal society (López-Cordón, 2015). This approach

significantly influences the research issues concerning the courts, in which women's participation in power in a broad sense, including, for example, their role in behind-the-scenes diplomatic activities, occupies an important place. It would be beneficial if the articles by K. Kuras and M. Urjasz-Raczko became an incentive to look at the problem of the queen's court in other European historiographies, probably and especially Anglo-Saxon, German, Austrian and Czech ones, where the research is particularly intense and is bringing new methodological proposals.

Other texts included in this issue are devoted to detailed discussions of queenship as a certain structure or environment, and to the role, place and tasks of women in what could be described as the court's microverse (Januszek-Sieradzka, 2017). Marta J. Knajp, M.A. (University of Warsaw) in her article enquires about the daily lives of the servants of Hungarian Princess Elisabeth of Turin (1207–1231), declared a saint of the Catholic Church already in 1235. In light of the analyzed source, created for the canonization process and containing the testimonies of four of Elizabeth's companions, the author presents an evocative picture of the life of the saintly Hungarian's servants, subordinated in every sphere, especially religious and moral, to the choices of the mistress of the court. An analysis of the source shows that the realization of the Christian ideal of life promoted and practiced by Elizabeth, at least for some of the courtiers, was a reluctantly realized constraint. The article by Dr. Tomasz Rombek (Bytom) is devoted to the court of the royal child, which is very rarely undertaken in the Polish scientific literature, and the results of the study are all the more noteworthy because they concern not the court of a royal son, the heir, but a court of a monarch's daughter. Based on vast and varied sources, the author presented the structure of the court of Elizabeth Jagiellon (1482–1517), the youngest daughter of Casimir IV Jagiellon and Elizabeth of Austria, which functioned in 1505–1515. The article contains a number of findings on the personal composition of the royal court, which initially consisted mainly of people previously associated with her mother's court. Over time, Elizabeth's own initiative and that of her brother, Sigismund I the Old, king of Poland since 1506, became apparent in the selection of its members. The question of the composition of the Queen's court is also addressed in the text by Doctor Andrzej Gładysz (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin). Relying on the registers of courtiers and royal accounts, the author compiled a list of twenty equestrian courtiers of Queen Bona Sforza (1494–1557) and analyzed their military activity, primarily in the context of the use of their combat utility by Bona's royal spouse. As it turned out, the queen's courtiers served the monarch in military campaigns against the Tartars and Turks (1519 and 1524) and in the Prussian War (1520–1521). The article is an

interesting contribution to the research devoted to the interrelationships between royal couple's courts and the functional links between them. Professor Agnieszka Januszek-Sieradzka (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) looked at the issue of the mobility of Barbara Radziwiłł (1523–1551), second wife of Sigismund II Augustus and, for a short period of only six months, crowned queen of Poland, not only in a spatial context, but above all in a cultural and symbolic one. The author paid special attention to the fact that although Radziwiłł's travels should be considered as deviating from the European standard due to the confluence of several special circumstances, they are as much a part of European tradition and custom as possible in their symbolic layer. A special confirmation of this was the "honeymoon" journey to her husband's homeland, requiring the crossing of the largest number of borders, rich in symbolic meanings in the rites of passage (*rites de passage*). Doctor Aleksandra Barwicka-Makula (University of Silesia in Katowice) devoted her article to the recruitment process at the court of the Habsburg queens Anne (1573–1598) and Constance (1588–1631), wives of Sigismund III Vasa. The two Habsburgs took part in the selection of courtiers, evaluated their work, drew consequences, ensured proper living conditions and surrounded them with care – based on Munich models, they efficiently and skillfully managed the household. The author rightly pointed out that the Habsburg queens should also be seen as agents of cultural transfer, through which networks of dynastic ties of European courts were formed. Another research issue related to the operation of the court – the question of its financing – is addressed in an article by Prof. Aleksandra Skrzypietz (University of Silesia in Katowice). The author analyzes the Roman court of Mary Clementine Sobieski (1701–1735), the hapless wife of James Stuart. Her entourage of about twenty people was selected and supervised by her husband, and although it was his responsibility to finance the operation of the court, the sources cited in the article testify that Maria Clementine participated in the maintenance costs. With the help of European courts and the pope, however, Sobieska managed to win the right to her own entourage, money and the removal of her husband's unwanted favorites from the court.

The section devoted to the royal courts closes with an article by Dr. Sylwia Filipowska and Dr. Grażyna Zając (Jagiellonian University). The authors, applying the methodological and research assumptions and methods of feminist narratology, analyzed the memoirs of two daughters of Abdülhamid II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909. Şadiye Osmanoğlu (1886–1977) and Ayşe Osmanoğlu (1887–1960), as mature women, wrote their memoirs depicting the Sultan's court as a safe place, ordered according to a certain hierarchy of values which they fully accepted and completely obeyed. However, the authors drew attention to

understatements and omissions, the analysis of which made it possible to establish findings regarding how the two princesses constructed the world of their childhood and youth as well as numerous inconsistencies in their self-narration.

It is to be hoped that the presented articles, touching on only a few issues from the multifaceted problem of the queen's court in the Middle Ages and the modern era, will become a stimulus and encouragement to undertake further research embedded in this interesting subject.

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