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Patrons and clients. The specificity of female clientelism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the turn of the seventeenth century. Research postulates.¹

Abstract: *Research into the issue of patronage in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, undertaken once by Antoni Mączak, is continuing to this day. However, researchers are focusing their attention primarily on the functioning of informal interrelations in the magnate and nobility environment of the seventeenth century. Although detailed studies have provided us with numerous findings, this remains a wide, extremely complex and rich subject, and researchers constantly stipulate the need for further studies. The vast majority of scholars focus mainly on male patron-client relations. They seek these ties in a court, military and dietine (sejmiki) environment. The subject of the male magnate court and its impact on society seems to be very significant to many historians. Interestingly, the male magnate court was also the place of patrons' private political actions. A substantial issue of cliental ties involved in the magnates' economy (latifundia) remains the focus of interest of researchers to this day. Some of them perceive clientelism as a religiously conditioned phenomenon (for example, ecclesiastical foundations), at the same time highlighted by cultural patronage and attempts to build the power of families based on a prestige policy. Research on clientelism in relation to the eighteenth century is not sufficient. The existing research does not cover these complex issues, particularly in relation to the Saxon period. Moreover, these works date back to the previous century and do not take into account any new findings. The Saxon era, when cliental ties became particularly important due to the dysfunctions of the most important state institutions, represents a rich source of research material. Unfortunately, studies on this period are too scarce and discouraging, and only a small group of researchers are currently examining the issue of clientelism in the Saxon era. Speaking of clientelism in the Commonwealth in general terms, one very important issue requires closer examination. This is the fact that while this problem is well recognized and defined in European historical science, in current Polish research there are almost no works which deal with the issue of female patronage and women's role in forming a cliental background. The few studies devoted to the issue of women's presence in the development of cliental ties in the Saxon era only indicate the need for further research on the phenomenon of female patronage. However, they do not present a thorough and multifaceted investigation. This is the very reason for our interest in female patronage and willingness to undertake in-depth research on this issue.*

Key words: *clientelism – female patronage – patron – client – broker – Saxon period – the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*

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Research into the issue of clientelism in the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, undertaken once by Antoni Mączak,² a pioneer in this field, is continuing to this day. However, historians are turning their attention primarily to the functioning of informal connections in the magnates and nobility environment of the seventeenth century. Detailed source research has brought many new findings, but this is still a highly extensive, complex and inexhaustible topic, and researchers constantly postulate the need for its continuation.

The vast majority of scholars focus their research and works on patron-client relations from the perspective of male patronage, and seek this interdependency in a legal court, military or dietine (*sejmiki*) environment (A. Rachuba,³ M. Wagner,⁴ M. Nagielski).⁵ It is possible to say that their priority seems to be the functioning of the male magnate court, which is considered a multifaceted formation influencing the province, but also an institution that represents a forum for the implementation of the private policies of magnates/patrons on a nationwide scale (U. Augustyniak,⁶ W. Tygielski).⁷ At the centre of scholars' interest is the significant issue of cliental bonds involved in the functioning of the magnate economy (e.g. *latifundia*). Some researchers perceive the phenomenon of clientelism as one that is conditioned by religion (e.g. ecclesiastical foundations, access to offices within one religious group), emphasized even more by cultural patronage and an attempt to build the power of families based on a prestige policy and

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- 2 Antoni MAĆZAK, *Klientela. Nieformalne systemy władzy w Polsce i Europie XVI–XVIII w.*, Warszawa 1994; IDEM, *Nierówna przyjaźń. Układy klientalne w perspektywie historycznej*, Wrocław 2003. Among the latest research on this subject, the following collections of studies are worth mentioning: Ryszard SKOWRON (ed.), *Dwór i kraj. Między centrum i peryferiami władzy*, Kraków 2003; Mariusz MARKIEWICZ – Ryszard SKOWRON (eds.), *Faworyci i opozycjoniści. Król a elity polityczne Rzeczypospolitej XV–XVIII wieku*, Warszawa, 2006; Ewa DUBAS-URWANOWICZ – Jerzy URWANOWICZ (eds.), *Patron i dwór. Magnateria Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 2006.
 - 3 Andrzej RACHUBA, *Klientela hetmańska w armii litewskiej z lat 1648–1667*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 23–36.
 - 4 Marek WAGNER, *Dwór wojskowy i klientela hetmańska Stanisława Jabłonowskiego w końcu XVII wieku*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 57–66.
 - 5 Mirosław NAGIELSKI, *Jerzy Lubomirski i jego wpływ w armii koronnej jako przykład patronatu wojskowego w XVII wieku*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 37–56.
 - 6 Urszula AUGUSTYNIAK, *Duchowni klienci Krzysztofa II Radziwiłła. Kondycja i funkcje duchowieństwa ewangelicko-reformowanego w dobrach radziwiłłowskich w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, *Miscelanea Historico-Archivistica* III, 1989, pp. 159–174; EADEM, *Dwór i klientela Krzysztofa Radziwiłła (1585–1640). Mechanizmy patronatu*, Warszawa 2001; EADEM, *W służbie hetmana i Rzeczypospolitej. Klientela wojskowa Krzysztofa Radziwiłła (1585–1640)*, Warszawa 2004; EADEM, *Stary sługa jako przedmiot badań nad klientelizmem magnackim na Litwie w XVII wieku*, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* VII, 2010, no. 1, pp. 71–85.
 - 7 Wojciech TYGIELSKI, *Politics of Patronage in Renaissance Poland. Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, his supporters and the political map of Poland, 1572–1605*, Warszawa 1990; IDEM, *Listy – ludzie – władza. Patronat Jana Zamoyskiego w świetle korespondencji*, Warszawa 2007.

thoroughly elaborated ideological and cultural programme (A. Betlej,⁸ T. Bernatowicz,⁹ R. Nestorow).¹⁰

To date, the area of research on clientelism in relation to the eighteenth century has been represented only to a very small extent (T. Zielińska,¹¹ M. Czepe,¹² K. Kuras,¹³ K. Stojek-Sawicka,¹⁴ A. Perłakowski).¹⁵ Nevertheless, the existing works do not cover complicated and broad issues even to the smallest degree, especially in relation to the Saxon era. What is more, these precursory works date back to the previous century and – with few exceptions – do not take into account the latest findings.¹⁶ And yet, the Saxon era, the period when cliental relations gained a unique significance owing to the dysfunctions of the most imperative state institutions, is a bottomless reservoir of data for research. Unfortunately, studies on this period are undertaken relatively rarely and reluctantly, and the issue of clientelism in the Saxon era is currently being investigated only by a small group of scholars.

A very important issue relating to the extensive subject of clientelism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is the fact that at the current stage of research there are hardly any studies addressing female patronage and women's role in shaping the cliental

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- 8 Andrzej BETLEJ, *Sibi, Deo, Posteritati. Jabłonowscy a sztuka w XVIII wieku*, Kraków 2010. See also Ewa DUBAS-URWANOWICZ – Jerzy URWANOWICZ (eds.), *Fundator i mecenas. Magnateria Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Białystok 2011.
 - 9 Tadeusz BERNATOWICZ, *Mitra i buława. Królewskie ambicje księżąt w sztuce Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej (1697–1763)*, Warszawa 2011.
 - 10 Rafał NESTOROW, *Pro domo et nomine suo. Fundacje i inicjatywy artystyczne Adma Mikołaja i Elżbiety Sieniawskich*, Kraków 2016.
 - 11 Teresa ZIELIŃSKA, *Magnateria polska epoki saskiej. Funkcje urzędów i królewsczyzn w procesie przeobrażeń warstwy społecznej*, Warszawa 1977; EADEM, *Klientela w otoczeniu Jana Klemensa Branickiego, kasztelana krakowskiego i wielkiego koronnego około połowy XVIII wieku*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 209–224.
 - 12 Maria CZEPE, *Kamaryla pana z Dukli. Kształtowanie się obozu politycznego Jerzego Augusta Mniszcha 1750–1763*, Kraków 1998; EADEM, *Na dworze biskupa Kajetana Sołtyka*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 225–230.
 - 13 Katarzyna KURAS, *Jan Mikołaj Cieszkowski – klient i współpracownik Augusta Czartoryskiego*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 417–128; EADEM, *Współpracownicy i klienci Augusta A. Czartoryskiego w czasach saskich*, Kraków 2010; EADEM, *Dwór królowej Marii Leszczyńskiej. Ludzie, pieniądze i wpływy*, Kraków 2018.
 - 14 Karolina STOJEK-SAWICKA, *Duchowna klientela Radziwiłłów nieświeskich w XVIII wieku*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 397–416.
 - 15 Adam PERŁAKOWSKI, *Kariera i upadek królewskiego faworyta. Aleksander Józef Sułkowski w latach 1696–1738*, Kraków 2013.
 - 16 K. KURAS, *Współpracownicy i klienci Augusta A. Czartoryskiego*; EADEM, *Dwór królowej Marii Leszczyńskiej*; Bożena POPIOŁEK, *Dobrodziejki i klienci. Z dziejów patronatu kobiecego w czasach saskich*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 385–396; K. STOJAK-SAWICKA, *Duchowna klientela Radziwiłłów*.

environment (W. Karkucińska,¹⁷ B. Popiołek).¹⁸ It has been quite a while since this problem was well recognized and defined by European historical science (K. Harness,¹⁹ S. A. Hickson, S. Solum).²⁰ The existing singular studies devoted to the issue of women's presence in the process of shaping cliental bonds in the Saxon era (A. Słaby,²¹ A. Penkała)²² require further investigation. There is no thorough study on the role of women in the process of shaping and building cliental bonds and background. What is more, the question of the functioning of the women's magnate court has not been investigated extensively, yet this cultural environment was entirely different from the men's court. The works by Słaby,²³ Jakuboszczak²⁴ or Markuszewska²⁵ are mere seeds of this research, but they do

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- 17 Wanda KARKUCIŃSKA, *Anna z Sanguszków Radziwiłłowa (1676–1747). Działalność gospodarcza i mecenat*, Warszawa 2000. Cf. Teresa KONDRATIUK, *Mecenat Anny z Sanguszków Radziwiłłowej*, Biała Podlaska 1986; Marta ZABOROWSKA, *Edukacja artystyczna w dobrach bialskich Anny z Sanguszków Radziwiłłowej*, *Ogrody Nauk i Sztuk* 6, 2017, no. 6, pp. 227–237.
- 18 B. POPIOŁEK, *Dobrodziejki i klienci. O patronacie kobiecym w XVIII w.*; EADEM, *Najniższy podnózek, sługa i więzień pański – klientalne listy prośbne czasów saskich*, *Krakowskie Studia Małopolskie* XVI, 2011, no. 16, pp. 151–166; EADEM, *Dobrzy chłopcy i źli panowie: kwestia opieki nad poddanymi w korespondencji Elżbiety Sieniawskiej, kasztelanowej krakowskiej*, in: Piotr Borek – Marcei Olma (eds.), *Epistolografia w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 6, *Stulecia XVI–XIX: nowa perspektywa historyczna i językowa*, Kraków 2015, pp. 265–278.
- 19 Kelly A. HARNES, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, Chicago 2006. See also Cynthia LAWRENCE (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs*, Penn State Press 1999; June Hall MACASH (ed.), *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, Athens – London 1996; Stephanie Fink de BACKER, *Widowhood in Early Modern Spain: Protectors, Proprietors and Patrons*, Leiden 2010; Andine AKKERMAN – Brigit HOUBEN (eds.), *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-waiting across Early Modern Europe*, Leiden – Boston, 2014; James DAYBELL – Svante NORRHEM (eds.), *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe 1400–1800*, London – New York 2017.
- 20 Stefanie SOLUM, *Women, Patronage, and Salvation in Renaissance Florence: Lucrezia Tornabuoni and the Chapel of the Medici Palace. Visual Culture in Early Modernity*, Farnham 2015.
- 21 Agnieszka SŁABY, *Rządząca oleszycka. Dwór Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej jako przykład patronatu kobiecego w czasach saskich*, Kraków 2014; EADEM, *Szlachcianki na politycznej scenie czasów saskich – polityka czy obrona interesów domowych?*, in: Anetta Głowacka-Penczyńska – Katarzyna Grysińska-Jarmuła – Monika Opiola-Cegiełka (eds.), *Wnuczki Pandory. Kobieta w społeczeństwie od starożytności do współczesności. Historie Nieobojętne*, vol. 1, Bydgoszcz 2016, pp. 71–83.
- 22 Anna PENKAŁA, *Przeciw prawu, tradycji i obyczajowi. Sprawy procesowe szlacheckich małżeństw w księgach sądów grodzkich z terenu województwa krakowskiego w czasach saskich*, Kraków 2017.
- 23 A. SŁABY, *Rządząca oleszycka*; cf. Andrzej K. LINK-LENCZOWSKI, *W kręgu dworu Sieniawskich w XVIII wieku*, in: E. Dubas-Urwanowicz – J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Patron i dwór*, pp. 201–208.
- 24 Agnieszka JAKUBOSZCZAK, *Sarmacka dama. Barbara Sanguszkowa (1718–1791) i jej salon towarzyski*, Poznań 2008; cf. Józef SKRABSKI, *Fundacje artystyczne Barbary z Duninów Sanguszkowej. Przyczynek do roli kobiet w wieku XVIII w Polsce*, in: Józef Skrabski – Barbara Bułdys (eds.), *Wokół Sanguszków. Dzieje sztuki – kultura*, Tarnów 2007, pp. 153–162; Marian BUTKIEWICZ, *Barbara z Duninów Sanguszkowa jako mecenas w schyłkowej epoce polskiego baroku*, *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny* XXXIV, 2015, no. 1, pp. 105–122 (URL: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332517806_Barbara_z_Duninow_Sanguszkowa_jako_mecenas_w_schylkowej_epoce_polskiego_baroku> [accessed 30. 8. 2019]).
- 25 Aneta MARKUSZEWSKA, *Kompozytorki i patronki muzyki w XVII i XVIII wieku. Wybrane portrety*, Warszawa 2017.

not take into account the specificity of female clientelism. Polish historiography hardly ever mentions the role of the women's court in association with upbringing and education of children,²⁶ its economic and material background, and the representative functions of its environment.²⁷ Little is known about women's activities in religious patronage of that period, yet those were times of declarations of profound piety, attachment to religion and outstanding foundations such as monasteries, brotherhoods, churches and chapels.

Meanwhile, the lack of a female royal court during the reign of King Augustus II paradoxically triggered mechanisms that allowed the magnate courts or wealthy noblewomen to take over some of the functions of a queen's court connected not only with raising and educating children, but also prestige, providing careers, lucrative marriages and family affinities. The relationships established in this way, both horizontal – within one social layer – as well as vertical – among the lower layers – gave women considerable creative opportunities from the standpoint of a cliental background. More or less formal contact with Augustus II and women's influence on his own and his advisors' administrative decisions, mainly the distribution of offices and benefits, turned out to be of great importance in this case. The royal court, a place of rivalry and clash of the influence of many royal favourites and mistresses, was never a politically or even socially homogeneous organism. The king-foreigner, initially poorly-informed in the political and administrative system of the state of nobility, did not intend to give up his distribution policy; however, he occasionally surrendered to his advisers.²⁸ Some female magnates (including Urszula Lubomirska née Bokum, Konstancja Mniszchowa née Tarło, Ludwika Bielińska née Morsztyn, Ludwika Rzewuska née Kunicka, Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska or Emercjanna Agnieszka Pocijowska née Warszycka), who had regular and individual contact with the king, became influential intermediaries and/or patrons in the cliental system of the Saxon era. However, this very phenomenon, which characterized the Saxon ruling period, was not a new thing. Women had been able to approach the throne with their pleas much earlier. Anna Franciszka Zamoyska née Gnińska (d. 1704), wife of the Crown Treasurer (*podskarbi koronny*), sought Queen Marie Casimire's grace for one of her brothers: "I asked Her Majesty the Queen and

26 Bożena POPIOŁEK, *Edukacja z za grobu. Testamenty staropolskie jako źródła do podróży edukacyjnych w XVII–XVIII wieku*, in: Dorota Żołędź-Strzelczyk – Małgorzata E. Kowalczyk (eds.), *Źródła do dziejów staropolskich podróży edukacyjnych*, Wrocław 2017, pp. 17–32.

27 R. NESTOROW, *Pro domo et nomine suo*. He devoted some of his work to artistic patronage of one of the most prominent women from the end of the seventeenth century.

28 See A. AKKERMAN – B. HOUBEN (eds.), *The Politics of Female Households*. On the role of women at the royal court in Poland in the seventeenth century see Karolina TARGOSZ, *Sawantki w Polsce w XVII w. Aspiracje intelektualne kobiet ze środowisk dworskich*, Kraków 1997.

others to give him the command, for I hope he will not be disregarded".²⁹ When Zamoyska could not speak to the queen herself, she used the services of other women who were closer to the royal court. In 1694, she wrote to Anna Stanisławska née Potocka, wife of the Voivode of Kiev (*wojewoda kojowski*), with a request for help in obtaining the vacant castellany of Kalisz for one of the *starostas*. However, Stanisławska, famous for her connections at the Sobieski's court, wrote back: "From the bottom of my soul I would wish to serve you, but a week prior to your writing it had been entrusted to Mr. Gałecki, the Crown Master of the Kitchen [kuchmistrz koronny – B. P.]".³⁰ Stanisławska's mediation skills enjoyed a great reputation. It was believed that whoever was protected by Stanisławska's patronage would certainly reap the benefits. Thus even Zamoyska, who remained in a good relationship with the queen, preferred to secure herself and use Stanisławska's intermediary services when she was applying for her brother's *starostwo*, even though she had direct access to the royal couple. She also urged her brother, Jan Krzysztof Gniński (died 1703), to immediately follow the queen 'to the waters' under the guise of restoring his health and 'for the service of Her Majesty' – all at the expense of Anna Stanisławska. In the meantime, the fate of a vacancy of a certain *starostwo* was at stake, and Zamoyska tried to convince her brother that "the Lord Chamberlain of Chełmno [podkomorzy chełmiński – B. P.] is also applying, but I dare say he will be rejected with a promise [...], but Mr. Goryński and Mr. Elbieński must be feared [...], hence, all effort of yours is required that you show yourself, without undue delay, because apparently Her Majesty the Queen, in a week, though this may be delayed, is leaving for Krakow, and you can better earn the *starostwo* by yourself".³¹ Over the years, Józefa Maria Sobieska, wife of Prince Konstanty, being from the Wessel family herself and strongly linked to Augustus II, raced to approach the king's advisers in order to gain support for her interests and to prepare the ground for further efforts to obtain the king's favours. Only then did she contact the monarch directly.³² Elżbieta Sieniawska, the wife of the Castellan of Kraków, had no qualms whatsoever in addressing the king for favours. In 1717, she asked for the Diocese of Kujawy for a certain individual, and at the end of her letter she put forward Jałowicki as a candidate for the Crown Secretary (*sekretarz*

29 A. F. Zamoyska to D. Gnińska [?], 12. 12. 1686, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie [the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw] (henceforth AGAD), Archiwum Zamoyskich [the Zamoyskis Archives] (henceforth AZ), 358, call no. 495, fols 23–24.

30 A. Stanisławska to A. F. Zamoyska, Żółkwia, 27. 3. 1694, AGAD, AZ 358, call no. 495, fol. 21. She mentions Franciszek Zygmunt Gałecki (1645–1711), Crown Master of the Kitchen from 1680, Castellan of Kalisz in 1694–1695, the Castellan of Poznań in 1695–1697, the Voivode of Inowrocław in 1697–1703, Voivode of Kalisz in 1703–1706, and Voivode of Poznań in 1709–11. Gałecki was also the *starosta* of Bydgoszcz.

31 A. F. Zamoyska to J. Gniński, Lublin, 30. 4. 1687, AGAD, AZ 358, call no. 495, fols 50–51.

32 See Letters of J. M. Sobieska to king Augustus II, by J. H. Flemming and H. Brühl, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (henceforth SächsStA-D), 10026 Geheimes Kabinett (henceforth GK), loc. 2099, no. 49.

koronny).³³ When Augustus II refused to grant the office of chamberlain for one of the clients of Ludwika Rzewuska née Kunicka, wife of the Voivode of Podlachia (*wojewoda podlaski*), she threatened the king with her refusal to send her daughter to the entourage of Habsburg Archduchess Maria Josepha, who was getting married to the king's son, Frederick Augustus.³⁴ The king's pressure did not help, because the mother had placed her daughter in a monastery. In view of these exemplary events, we approach an important question: To what extent was the cliental background of women/patrons opinion-forming so as to constitute a real pressure group with the power to influence the king and his ministers in the process of obtaining benefits for their clients.

An interesting and completely unrecognized phenomenon in this case was women's contact with foreigners – Saxon ministers and French, Hungarian, Russian or Swedish diplomats – and the possibility of building informal political connections and beneficial family ties based on this social group (e.g. Ludwika Bielińska née Morsztyn and her daughters – Marianna and Katarzyna, Konstancja Mniszchowa née Tarło, Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, Urszula Lubomirska née Bokum among others).

The Saxon period is the time when women ultimately transgressed the boundaries of the so-called private household space. It is also the time of significant political, economic and artistic activity, and a gradual break with psychological and environmental restrictions. This resulted in a number of important achievements, including foundations, educational development, economic initiatives, and political and cultural activities. The Saxon period can be also characterized by a progressive collapse of the central state organs and a decentralization of power – a phenomenon which favoured the formation of unofficial, highly hierarchical social and political systems. In such a situation, women who acted as an important link between the world of high politics and the province actively participated in creating provincial structures of power and economic dependency. Women – apart from their individual patronage – repeatedly played the role of intermediaries (brokers) in the process of building male cliental connections. What is more, they took the initiative to attract clients and maintain relations with the cliental circles of their spouses or other male patrons.³⁵ Such systems took on a three-level character and women, acting as intermediaries, were able to freely arrange these interdependencies and reap benefits from both sides – the patron and the client. A special honour surrounded the service to one of the most

33 "Si ce n'est trop d'aboutir de la grâce de Votre Majesté, je soupirai pour la charge de secrétaire de la couronne pour Mr Jałowiecki"; E. Sieniawska to Augustus II, Lublin, 11. 6. 1717, SächsStA-D, GK, loc. 2094/182, p. 43.

34 Augustus II to Ludwika Rzewuska née Kunicka, Dresden, 6. 6. 1719, SächsStA-D, GK, loc. 2094/135, p. 19.

35 On the role and functions of brokers-intermediaries see Sharon KETTERING, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth Century France*, Oxford, 1986; Andine AKKERMANN – Brigit HOUBEN (eds.), *The Politics of Female Households*, pp. 4–5; cf. A. MAŁCZAK, *Nierówna przyjaźń*, p. 17.

powerful women of those times, Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska (died 1729), wife of the Castellan of Krakow (*kasztelan krakowski*). Her influence extended far beyond the royal court. Hence, frequent requests put forward by her potential clients come as no surprise. “I take this boldness not in the hope for merits of mine, since I recognize them as vile, but in the hope for being gifted with Her Ladyship’s grace to accept my supplication and to put forward the instance to my Honourable Lord of Krakow [Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski – B. P.] of this half battalion under Mr. Elbieski, for being dangerously ill himself, if he were to die, my service to you shall be a lifetime benefit, as I know myself to be at the lowest veneration” – spoke one of the clients of Sieniawska’s husband, clearly highlighting his merits and services to patrons.³⁶

It seems that particularly strong mutual client-patron relations influenced several areas of public life such as applications for offices and benefits, tax reliefs and exemptions (*libertacja*), power of attorney for women and their presence in courts of justice during trials, shaping local politics within provinces for example by influencing the appointment of legal deputies and members of the *Sejm*, and finally, as a consequence, intervening in the activities of judicial courts or dietines (*sejmiki*). In this case, the tools and methods of acquiring new clients proved important. These included corruption, intimidation, formal and informal care, help in climbing the career and social ladder, and financial and political support. Sometimes the mere ‘name’ of the patron and the chance to ‘bask’ in the glory of her fame and possibilities brought splendour and attracted those willing to serve. The fact that women themselves did not participate in the process of distributing vacant offices was of no great importance, since they had the abilities to launch appropriate mechanisms so that their clients could receive the desired positions or dignities. This can be illustrated with the example of a letter from Anna Szembek née Leszczyńska (died 1756), who petitioned her uncle, the Crown Grand Marshal (*marszałek wielki koronny*), Józef Wandalin Mniszech, to promote a certain Kępski, who was “a good friend of ours, so that he, with such a noble instance of yours to Lord Treasurer [podskarbi – B. P.], could receive the post of the notary of the Krakow Chamber of the Commonwealth. He will, as will we, strive until his death to return your favour”.³⁷ It was not Anna’s first ‘instance’ to her uncle on behalf of a client, which indicates her extraordinary mediation skills as a broker.

36 Białyński to E. Sieniawska, 19. 3. 1714, Biblioteka Czartoryskich w Krakowie [the Princes Czartoryski Library in Cracow], MS 2738, fol. 36–36.

37 A. Szembek to J. W. Mniszech, Balice, 20. 5. 1729, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich w Wrocławiu [the Ossoliński Library – Ossolineum in Wrocław] (henceforth BOss), MS 2676/I, fol. 12. Anna Szembek née Leszczyńska (died 1756), 1v. Jan Gniewosz, Castellan of Zawichost, 2v. from 1711 wife of Aleksander Kazimierz Szembek (died 1756), Voivode of Sieradz. She was the daughter of Stefan Leszczyński (died 1722) and his first wife, Konstancja Mniszech, sister of Józef Wandalin Mniszech.

The economy was the area where a female patron's influence was particularly well-established. Women's activities in this field were supported by informal social ties, and the protective umbrella of magnate patronage covered townsfolk and people from lower classes. The formation of an administrative policy in their own estates by selecting managers, economists or by entering into lease agreements (*arendarz*) with leaseholders resulted in the social advancement of the less prominent nobility and the creation of local elites. In this case it was not an easy process due to natural disasters and the continuing state of war. It required considerable economic skills, an iron hand and at the same time a somewhat accommodating approach in order to meet the patron's expectations. Patrons' abilities to protect their own goods, servants and clients from the devastating toll of the war – contributions, requisitions, military stations or abuse of subordinates – were of significant importance during the Saxon period. Only exceptionally well-connected patronesses were able to ensure concessions and protection in such conditions. We can observe similar actions in the nobility's military career, where women had the power to obtain military ranks or services for their clients in prestigious magnate or royal banners.

Women gained significant influence – a subject which has yet to be thoroughly investigated – on a family policy: the education of their own and adopted children, the careers of their sons and husbands, family affinities, and social arrangements. One of the important areas of women's interest was matrimonial policy, which presented great creative opportunities for women (e.g. as matchmakers, patrons and benefactors of young couples, sponsors of dowries). Patrons of adolescent girls were usually well oriented in the financial status of their families, they possessed information about potential candidates for spouses, they knew the value of dowries, and even various flaws of potential newlyweds that were diligently hidden from the public eye. Their direct acquaintance and even intimacy between the mothers of the brides, originating from the times of their common monastic or court education, also played a significant role. Szwejkowski, the Potockis' client, persuaded Konstancja Szczuka née Potocka, the Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor's (*podkanclerz litewski*) wife, to use her 'former confidence' with Duchess Anna Radziwiłł (1676-1746), the Lithuanian Chancellor's (*kanclerz litewski*) wife, in order to persuade her to give away her older daughter to the Voivode of Kiev (*wojewoda kijowski*) – “*I assure you that there is no better way of showing love for your home as through the acquisition of this Lady with her great, God-given talents. I am not mentioning other benefits that are significant and, I dare say, indescribable.*”³⁸ Favourable marriages served to build a cliental background and expand the range of influence. Once caught in a cliental network of dependencies, a servant remained there for a longer time, and even became trapped indefinitely, unable

38 Szwejkowski to K. Szczuka, Lewartów, 30. 12. 1714, AGAD, Archiwum Publiczne Potockich [Public Archives of the Potockis], 163a, vol. 47, p. 154.

to even imagine the absence of his lady benefactor in moments crucial for his family, for example the birth and baptism of children, their education, funerals and further marriages. This was usually followed by promotion within a local environment and access to offices otherwise closed without the protector's support.

Women were very active participants in building the prestige of magnate families, and for this purpose they used their own clients. Female patronage – in the case of married women – usually entailed support and help for their husbands. Thus, it was not uncommon to establish a relationship with a woman to reach a direct patron, namely the woman's husband. In such cases, the role of a woman as a broker-intermediary was highly significant. In fact, it often happened that a woman was the party initiating all cliental contacts on behalf of her unsuccessful spouse. Teresa Lubomirska née Mniszech (died 1746), wife of the Voivode of Czernichów (*wojewoda czernichowski*), may serve here as a perfect example. Lubomirska, the daughter of the Crown Grand Marshal (*marszałek wielki koronny*), Józef Wandalin Mniszech, was perfectly aware that her husband would not be able to achieve any benefits without certain connections and cliental ties. And indeed, if it had not been for his compassion for his daughter and grandchildren, which motivated the Marshal to obtain the voivodeship for his entirely unambitious son-in-law, Józef Lubomirski would have remained the *starosta* of Cieszków until his last breath. Neither was his renowned name of any help in this matter, nor was his family particularly eager to support him. Teresa, in a letter to her father, lamented her husband's weakness when, after arriving 'at the courts' in Lublin, instead of seeking social and cliental contacts and winning deputies, the husband once again became indisposed: "*for as we are standing here, my husband is just suffering from a common unease, and so far he has been refusing to see anybody, since no dinner and no supper are without the presence of deputies and the Honourable Lords. I am persuading him, to swear for it, but this is the indisputable matter, all these adversities are taking not only health, but also life, and how long we will stay here, is impossible to say*".³⁹ For Lubomirska it was unimaginable that a nobleman with such connections would not use his influence and recruit clients, presenting himself as a generous gentleman and benefactor. Well acquainted with the realities of the provincial world, Lubomirska engaged herself in an intermediary-broker role without major problems and obtained several individuals for her husband's dealings, promising them her father's protection. "*With the lowest bow to my father's feet, I dare to supplicate, obligated to the Lord of Rawa, the younger Mr. Boski, and his command to address you with an instance, so that with his protection he could receive the Crown land [...]. I assure you that he will be able to serve you, as for our matters he did indeed prove his friendship, for we happily won one the other day, when without my husband's bother,*

39 T. Lubomirska to J. W. Mniszech, Lublin, 4. 5. 1732, BOss, MS 2644/I, fol. 61.

*having spent three Sundays here, and as he came, he is now leaving, not letting anybody see him*⁴⁰ – wrote the Voivode’s wife to Marshal Mniszech. In several subsequent letters, she did not fail to stigmatize the wretched attitude of her spouse. Lubomirska drew patterns of behaviour from her parents’ home. Her stepmother, Konstancja Mniszech née Tarło, was one of the most active patronesses of that period. Her unexpected demise ‘orphaned’ many clients, who immediately embarked on seeking her husband’s assistance. “*We are all mourning the death of the Lady Marshal, for she was the pillar of our House*” – wrote Anna Tarło, the Crown Master of the Kitchen (*kuchmistrzyni koronna*).⁴¹

Female patronage had its specific character, resulting from the different legislative and executive possibilities of its creators (e.g. no direct influence on the distribution of offices, legal and psychological constraints, separate areas of activities traditionally ascribed to women, questionable institutional support). On the other hand, such limitations could have a positive impact on the formation of unofficial social arrangements and behind-the-scenes women’s ventures.

The personality of a patroness, her social position, available material resources, abilities of influencing others, authority within the local and national environment, causative potential and mediation skills – all were highly significant features. Women were also able to take care of spheres not accessible or less enjoyable to men (e.g. education, interpersonal affinities, care, economy). On the other hand, in return they gained help in areas traditionally considered masculine (e.g. military and offices). It seems that the main difference, as was highlighted at that time, manifested itself in the far less formal relationships of female patrons with their clients than in case of men, where it is more difficult to differentiate formal dependency (e.g. in military or administration) from clientelism. There are several more features of female patronage which turned out to be important: the availability of patrons, or brokers-intermediaries, their knowledge of local systems, and limited (compared to men) territorial mobility. Some of them, though, for example, Elżbieta Sieniawska or Konstancja Mniszech, based their cliental interrelations on their extraordinary activities. Rapid changes of place and swift decision-making in this case were crucial elements in maintaining the cliental structure and its control.

Also worth emphasizing is the clients’ far-reaching loyalty towards their female patrons, which, similarly to male patronage, was associated with widespread subordination to the unofficial power of these women. The testimony of such relations is explicitly noticeable in female correspondence, where the instrumental character of the humility is visible and evident in the discourse of the letters. The bows, feet kissing, small gifts (‘bindings’),

40 T. Lubomirska to J. W. Mniszech, Lublin, 10. 5. 1732, BOss, MS 2644/I, fol. 67–67v.

41 A. Tarło to J. Tarło, Dębno, 20. 11. 1739, Centralne Państwowe Archiwum Historyczne Ukrainy w Kijowie [Central State Archives of Ukraine in Kiev], call no: fond 254, op. 1, spr. 140, k. 37.

wishes, expressions of humility and omnipresent servility had one goal – to melt the stone-cold heart of the protector and encourage her to grant favours and support. On the other hand, the requirements of common courtesy, respect for women, the necessity to keep an appropriate distance from a person of the opposite sex or position higher in the social hierarchy reinforced clients' belief that their fate and career were inseparably bound with their benefactor. Hence, deep loyalty was born within patron-client relationships. At the roots of such fidelity was also the protector's conviction that without her clients' help she would not be able to achieve her goals. Here we touch upon the essence of cliental relations, which can be seen as a system of mutual benefits. This element is particularly evident in case of widows who, having lost support in their spouses, took immediate action of renewing contacts with their clients and their own patrons. It should be noted, however, that the criterion for subordination/servility usually applied in vertical systems, where a powerful and wealthy protector was related to the clients from the lower layers of a social hierarchy. On the contrary, in horizontal patron-client systems, potential equality was manifested in both sides representing similar material and social status and sharing common interests. In the latter case, there is an evident change in the discourse of letters of supplication. And so 'a humble servant and brother' is certainly no longer 'the lowest footstool and unworthy servant' of the Lady, but a customer seeking temporary favours, who will keep her help and benevolence 'in a kind memory', and if the appropriate moment presents itself, he will return the favour in a similar fashion.

Considering the subject of female patronage, it is worth paying attention to the marital status of benefactors – an issue inseparably connected with the sex of patrons, which essentially influenced their creative possibilities. This, however, did not apply to male patrons. Widows and married women constituted the majority of female patrons. This resulted from their privileged legal and material status, as well as their highly developed self-sufficiency, especially amongst widows.⁴² Hardly ever were unmarried women members of this social circle; they were more likely to act as clients. As mentioned previously, what draws one's attention is the strong position of widows (Anna Franciszka Zamoyska, wife of the Crown Treasurer, Anna Katarzyna Radziwiłł, wife of the Lithuanian Chancellor, Konstancja Marianna Szczuka, wife of the Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor, Elżbieta Sieniawska, wife of the Castellan of Krakow, among others). Such women, despite their lack of a spouse, could not only survive in complex social networks, protect and maintain their strong position, but also undertake numerous various initiatives and actions (e.g. political or economic) in order to maintain their standard of living, provide care for their children, keep close to

42 Cf. S. Fink de BACKER, *Widowhood in Early Modern Spain*.

their former clientele and even take over the clients of their deceased spouse.⁴³ This raises the following questions: How strong were the cliental circles tied to women/patrons and what factors influenced the clients' decisions to stay with one protector. Another issue is the solidity of cliental bonds and the phenomenon of 'inheriting' the clientele in the event of death of either the protector or her husband. The problem of mutual relations within the clientele environment is also quite interesting. Fierce competition for favours among its members resulted not only in the denigration of opponents in the patron's eyes, but also in undermining the authority and trust of the patron herself in the eyes of other clients.

It seems that during this period many women perceived patronage as an important element of expressing their identity and a form of public activity, allowing for independent actions. It is certain that the female patrons' activities were not limited to politics or economy. Women's initiatives during the reign of Augustus II included a number of other spheres – educational (e.g. supporting monastic schools, education at the royal court, setting up parish schools on their own estates), ecclesiastical (contributors [*kolator*], founders, legacy bequeathers, initiators of religious institutions such as devotional brotherhoods), artistic (secular foundations, art and music), and cultural (salons, bibliophilia, science, information). Also, female philanthropy (hospitals for the poor) was often included in these activities. Such initiatives would not have been possible without the support of cliental circles, which, however, required availability, substantial material resources, personal values or an element of control from the patroness. We must not forget that cliental systems were based mainly on a voluntary principle and mutual, not clearly determined, commitment and services from patrons, in return for which they expected support and personal services of their clients.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the principle of limited trust motivated control over clients and servants' actions, which allowed them to maintain their loyalty towards their patron. Of a similar importance were some informal gestures which permeated into mutual patron-client relations, as well as customs and ceremonies of the nobility such as the acknowledgment of protection and the manifestation of belonging to the group of clients of the chosen patroness and the honour that resulted from such situations. Many customs were commonly accepted, for example solemn greetings of the patroness accompanied by falling to her feet and theatrical evidence of clients' submissiveness on her visit to subordinate estates, or ostentatious gestures on the occasion of her visit at dietines or the tribunal. The behaviour and activities of female patrons also included various gestures reflecting their grace – they participated in family ceremonies, their presence granted

43 Cf. Elise DERMINEUR, *Widow's political strategies in traditional communities: negotiating marital status and authority in eighteenth-century France*, in: J. Daybell – S. Norrhem (eds.), *Gender and Political Culture*, pp. 123–139.

44 Cf. A. MAĆZAK, *Nierówna przyjaźń*, p. 38.

prestigious support during weddings, baptisms and funerals, they provided their clients' wives and children with care, sent small gifts and letters of recommendation, or they let their clients 'help themselves' to refreshments during various meetings and gatherings. It is significant that both parties perfectly understood the mutual obligations that resulted from the informally arranged relations. Let the words of Anna Franciszka Zamoyska, wife of the Crown Treasurer (*podskarbi koronny*), serve as a good example of such events. She explained to her husband, Marcin Zdzisław Zamoyski (died 1689) that she would be late for the meeting, since the situation called for her presence at the wedding of a certain poor girl. Zamoyska felt responsible to the girl's father, a long-time client and servant of hers. So when the groom's family attempted to dissuade him from the marriage due to the insignificant dowry of the bride, Zamoyska decided to support the girl with her presence at the wedding: "*Therefore, so as to keep the honour of the poor man's father, so that he would not be so lightly esteemed that he is staying with us, I have to assist, but soon after that, we will hurry to you, and this poor girl, if she were to be in confusion, I would be greatly sorry for her, such a poor girl*".⁴⁵

Investigation of the issue of women's patronage requires posing a number of questions which arise due to the legal diversity of female protectors and the associated possibilities of their actions. One of the most important research challenges is the question of the identity of patronesses and the communities they originated from (identification of the research group), and – equally vitally – what social environments constituted the clientele's recruitment base and the associated scope of female clientelism: local, provincial or nationwide. If we assume that the influence of female patrons indeed spread over the royal court, then we need to realize that only a few of them had the opportunity to reach so high. The others wanted to gain a local clientele and secure their interests in the province. In these arrangements, the hierarchy of relations was important, not necessarily resulting from the offices or posts held by clients but from the intimacy of contacts with a protector, long-term service and favours provided for one another.

To sum up our deliberations, it is worth presenting a question concerning the specificity of female patronage. Can we really talk about two different categories of this phenomenon – female and male – or it is rather an internally consistent system, dependent solely on the political and social conditions which developed in modern countries? In the light of previous studies, it seems that the conviction about the need to maintain this kind of informal contacts was one of the basic factors underlying that social system. Trust in the patrons' help, care, promise of support and protection was deeply rooted in people's consciousness ('thou shall not enter Heaven without the help of saints'). In many cases, the provision of help by a wealthy male or female patron was more important than material or

45 A. F. Zamoyska to M. Z. Zamoyski, Zamość, 5. 2 1686, AGAD, AZ 358, call no. 495, fol. 17.

financial support. The psychological and emotional aspects of cliental dependencies were deeply ingrained in the social systems, and clientelism functioned as a formula for creating interest groups. The phenomenon of imitation of the elites' behaviour and the desire to transfer patterns from higher classes into the aristocratic environment is also important.

Further issues, only superficially simple, are areas associated with female patronage, means or tools (e.g. corruption, extortion, promises of promotion) engaged in the shaping of women-clients relations, and finally the scope of patrons' activities in this case. Equally interesting and difficult to resolve are the issues of the principles underlying women's patronage, whether each servant was at the same time a client, and where exactly one should draw the line between clients and people from the outside of cliental circles but still linked to patrons for example by work, lease agreement, closer or further family relationship etc. Hence, one more important question appears, namely about the hierarchy that existed among clients and the stability of developed connections. A. Mączak has already pointed to the fact of clients' simultaneous dependency on several patrons, which in case of female benefactors usually resulted in cooperation with their husbands and a sharing of cliental circles or extension of them to other male family members – father or brothers.⁴⁶ No less important is the question of the goals of female patronage and the personal, family and social motives of women's undertakings. Additionally, to what extent was female clientelism convergent with the actions of men, and above all, were female client circles real, opinion-forming pressure groups, and if so, what was their position within the power system of the Commonwealth? Could female patrons count on institutional support for their activities (from the court, church, devotional brotherhoods, military)? Or were their operations perhaps rather limited only to the private sphere? If this was the case, what were the political, economic, religious and cultural consequences of female patronage, and what benefits did women gain from having their own clientele?

The current stage of research does not allow for simple categorical statements. At the turn of the seventeenth century, in the Commonwealth, there was a large group of women who were vigorously involved in cliental activities. They acted mainly as brokers, rarely as independent and powerful patronesses. Most of them were tightly connected with the court of John III Sobieski and his wife Marie Casimire d'Arquien, where they received their education as young girls from the upper class. In their adulthood, they continued to maintain close contact with the court, which greatly facilitated their cliental dealings. Married to high-state officials and representatives of significant magnate families, they became embraced by the influence of Augustus II Wettin and other people associated with the court. The group of female patrons of the investigated era includes such figures

46 A. MAĆZAK, *Nierówna przyjaźń*, p. 93.

as Anna Franciszka Zamoyska, wife of the Crown Treasurer, Elżbieta Sieniawska, wife of the Castellan of Krakow, Anna Katarzyna Radziwiłł, wife of the Lithuanian Chancellor, Konstancja Marianna Szczuka, wife of the Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor, and Konstancja Mniszech, wife of the Crown Grand Marshal. The range of their activity was not limited to mediating or exerting pressure on their husbands to implement other people's plans, but covered conscious, sophisticated undertakings aimed at creating their own clientele, and prearranged actions in the political, economic and artistic spheres.

(trans. Anna Jurga)