

Noble Assemblies and Dietinies (Sejmiks)  
of the Navahradak (Nowogródek) Voivodeship in the years 1565–1632

In doctoral dissertation the author identifies the directions, trends, and peculiarities in the evolution of dietines (sejmiks) and other noble assemblies in three counties (powiats) of the Nowogródek Voivodeship (Nowogródek, Słonim, and Wołkowysk). He presents the organizational principles, legal foundations of functioning, competencies, and practices of various noble assemblies, explains the perspectives of nobility from different counties of the voivodeship regarding the main problems of domestic and foreign policy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, identifies the composition of county elite and county representation in the Sejm and state conventions; reconstructs the mechanisms of building noble careers in the studied areas; shows the mechanisms of interaction between political, social, religious groups and the main actors (political leaders) that influenced the development of instructions and decision-making at dietines; examines the social mobility of representatives of county elite, the realization of their professional aspirations, as well as the ways they conducted specific political activities. The doctoral candidate determined the competence of dietines, identified and revealed the patron-client relationships between representatives of county nobility, central officials of the Lithuanian state and magnates, as participants of dietine sessions, and characterized the main directions of activities of dietines and conventions of the Nowogródek Voivodeship as institutions of the parliamentary system and institutions of noble self-government.

The structure of the dissertation is determined by the nature of the research, subordinated to its goals and assumptions, and consists of a list of abbreviations, an introduction (general description of the work), five chapters in the main part, conclusion (findings), appendices, and bibliography (list of sources and literature used).

Chapter I describes the sources and current state of research on the subject.

Chapter II presents the administrative division of the Nowogródek Voivodeship, organizational principles, legal foundations, functions, and important aspects of the evolution of the Nowogródek, Słonim, and Wołkowysk dietines.

Chapter III discusses the composition of dietine participants, county elite of the Nowogródek Voivodeship, and patron-client relationships between representatives of county nobility, central state officials, and magnates as participants in dietine sessions.

Chapter IV shows the functions and directions of activities of dietines and other assemblies, mechanisms of interaction between political, religious, and local "statesmen" groups that influenced the development of instructions and decision-making at dietines, methods and options for social mobility of county elite representatives. The chapter presents the main features of the organization of dietines that were incorporated into the parliamentary system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Commonwealth (pre-Sejm and relational), county assemblies (dietines) preceding the main assemblies of the estates of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (convocation), dietines related to the administration of justice (electoral, deputy, and pre-convocation ("confederate")) and other dietines and assemblies not incorporated into the parliamentary and judicial system. It also describes methods for realizing the aspirations (political and "professional") of county elite representatives and ways they conducted specific political activities. The chapter includes the stance of nobility from different counties of the voivodeship toward legislation, domestic and foreign policy.

Chapter V defines the competencies and characterizes the main directions of activities of dietines and assemblies of the voivodeship as institutions of noble self-government in the counties.

The appendices include a list of parliamentary and relational dietines of the counties of the Nowogródek Voivodeship, including a list of marshals and directors of dietines, envoys to the Sejms of the Commonwealth, envoys to the main assemblies of the estates of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, royal envoys to dietines, confederate assemblies, the act of limitation of the Nowogródek county, and selected dietine acts.

According to the author, the evolution of dietine self-government in the Nowogródek county was closely connected to changes in the political and social system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the Lublin Union of 1569 and the activities of leading representatives of the Lithuanian executionist movement at the dietines of this region. During this period, Lithuanian and Ruthenian nobility actively developed their own concepts of the common Commonwealth and programs for its reforms and subsequent codification of statutory law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Already in the final years of the reign of the last Jagiellon, a significant part of the Nowogródek nobility was able to play the role of an independent entity in the ongoing power struggle. At the Union Sejm in Lublin, the envoy of this land, Malcher Snowski Grawż, was among the most active parliamentarians, presented an executionist program, and was a member of the commission that developed the final text of the Union act. Later, Snowski was not only

the leader of the Nowogródek nobility but perhaps of all the middle nobility of Lithuania, as in 1582 and 1583 he was elected the first marshal of the Main Tribunal. The dietine of this land was the first in the entire state to begin enacting local taxes. In Nowogródek one of the first confederations of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was formed during the first interregnum (in September 1572 the Nowogródek dietine faced the task of organizing the judiciary during the interregnum, and in 1573 it renewed the activity of local land and castle courts with an expanded composition under the confederate court).

The middle and petty nobility of the Nowogródek county clearly aspired to play an independent political role in the region and state, and in situations when magnate factions blocked each other, or when senators were not present at the dietine – the decision rested in the hands of their leaders, a significant part of whom belonged to the executionist movement. Behind the resolutions and decisions of the Nowogródek dietine stood representatives of specific noble families and houses and magnate families, which were internally differentiated religiously (the Evangelical-Reformed denomination was very strong there), socially, economically, having different expectations and aspirations.

During the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, local taxes were repeatedly enacted and noble self-government was strengthened at the dietines of the Nowogródek Voivodeship, and their activity significantly contributed to the development of the political and legal culture of middle and petty nobility, some of whom aspired to play a significant political role and influence the policy of the entire Commonwealth.