

WOMEN'S WORLD HIDDEN IN WORDS: COMMUNICATIVE AND SPATIAL HORIZONS OF POLISH FEMALE MAGNATES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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Abstract: The article focuses on the women's communicative and spatial horizons in early modern Eastern Europe; this topic has been poorly studied in the scientific literature. The main research objective is the quantitative and qualitative analysis of epistolographic material belonging to a typical representative of the seventeenth-century female elite in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the establishment of her geographic horizons in terms of the space in which she moved physically (mobility related to her lifelong travels) and mentally (geographic space close to her perceptions and far from them). Quantitative analyses were carried out mainly on the basis of correspondence from the period from 1620 to 1642 belonging to Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska, and, where possible, the results of the studies were compared with the findings of other researchers.

Keywords: Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska (1600–1642), magnate, woman, correspondence, communication, travel, spatial horizons, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 17th century

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Introduction

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, i.e. the Polish-Lithuanian state located in Eastern Europe, was characterized by a strong position of the nobility holding numerous class privileges. As early as the fourteenth century, the nobility's local self-government and the associated judiciary began to take shape in the Kingdom of Poland, and from the end of the fifteenth century the nobility sought to exert more and more influence also on politics and the state system. These patterns were gradually adopted by the other constituent part of the Commonwealth, i.e.

the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.^[1] The political system of the Commonwealth, just like that of any other European country, entitled only male representatives of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility to participate in political and military life. For the duration of their husbands' absence, women took over the supervision of the home and property; thus, their position in society gradually strengthened. In the early modern times, the informal role of women of noble birth in political life was also discernible (Bogucka, 1995; Bogucka, 1998 – an extensive bibliography of Western European works; Charewiczowa, 2002; Kuchowicz, 1990; Wyrobisz, 1992: 405–421; Wyrobisz, 1995). Women's public activity mainly concerned influential representatives of the magnate and royal elite (including the broadly understood female royal court). Women, using the means available to them within so-called soft diplomacy, attempted to influence the shape of the public life at the time; however, they always acted from behind the scenes, within the framework imposed on them by men. This was because their political ambitions aroused great resentment among the male representatives of the nobility, just like that of any other European country; the men's prevailing view was that women should not go beyond the framework imposed on them in their private lives, i.e. family, religion or possibly administrative and economic tasks (Kupczewska, 2018).

Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska (1600–1642) did not go down in history as an exceptional female personality of her time. Her life and related activities fell within the typical activities of a seventeenth-century female magnate. She was born into a very wealthy family with exquisite traditions, as one of three daughters of Aleksander Ostrogski, voivode of Volhynia, who died in 1603, and his wife Anna Ostrogska née Kostka (for the only popular science article devoted to her, see: Płatek, 2013: 34–38). In 1620 she married one of the richest magnates of the Crown, Tomasz Zamoyski (1594–1638), the second owner (ordynat) of the Zamość estate (Kupczewska, 2013: 287–293).

Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska deserves attention mainly because of the correspondence belonging to her. It has been preserved to an exceptional degree for women's correspondence from the first half of the seventeenth century in the Commonwealth. These are letters both written by Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska and addressed to her. A total of 224 such documents have survived to the present day (Kupczewska, 2018: 24–51; Wiśniewska, 1990: 169–172 – mainly a linguistic analysis of 37 letters of the magnate addressed to her husband from 1620–1632). They are, for the most part, deposited at the

[1] Against the background of early modern European countries, the number of the nobility, who, depending on estimates, accounted for between 5.5% and 6.5% of the total population of the Commonwealth, was a rarity comparable only to the situation in Hungary and Spain. In other European countries, the nobility included no more than 1–3% of the population (Augustyniak, 2008: 256; Markiewicz, 2002: 138).

Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw in the Zamoyski Archives. The documents include the originals of 219 letters and information about three others; their originals have not been preserved, but their copies are known from the inventories.^[2] Another three copies of letters can be found in the collection of Tomasz Zamoyski's correspondence (copies) from the Zamość Ordinance Property Library located in the resources of the National Library in Warsaw.^[3] Single letters by Katarzyna Zamoyska have also been preserved in other archives, such as the Raczyński Library (1 letter)^[4] or Riksarkivet Stockholm (1 letter).^[5] In addition to the preserved epistolographic material belonging to Katarzyna Zamoyska, we know of the existence of another 89 letters. Although they have not survived to the present day, we have learned about them indirectly, both through information from the aforementioned archival inventories and through mentions of the correspondence sent contained in the surviving correspondence (86 mentions).

Based on this epistolographic collection, we have created a database that allows us to describe the magnate's letter contacts. Our primary research objective was to determine the communicative and spatial (geographic) horizons of a representative of the seventeenth-century female elite in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. An analysis of the preserved resources resulted in quantitative studies of, among other things, the frequency of correspondence at different stages of the magnate's life (broken down into letters received and sent), a breakdown by gender, social groups or types of people with whom she communicated, or, finally, the geographical extent of her correspondence circle. Above all, however, the gathered material allowed us to establish her perceptions of space, her awareness of what was close and familiar, and what was distant and on the horizon of interest. We combined this with the information about the trips she took in order to be able to assess the degree of mobility between her getting married and her death. Notably, Katarzyna Zamoyska did not act in the private sphere only, but represented the magnate house, which can be compared to the numerous small principalities in Europe and especially in the Holy Roman Empire (Kowalski, 2013). We assume that Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska was a typical representative of the female elite in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Starczenko, 2024: 235–296).^[6]

[2] The correspondence in question can be found at the Central Archives of Historical Records (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych) [hereinafter: AGAD], the Zamoyski Archives (Archiwum Zamoyskich) [hereinafter: AZ] in folders with reference numbers: 10, 412–424.

[3] The National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa), the Zamość Ordinance Property Library (Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamoyskich), 1602.

[4] The Raczyński Library, 80.

[5] Riksarkivet Stockholm, Exteranea IX Polen, 112.

[6] Comparing the marriage of Tomasz Zamoyski and Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska to the unions of the social elite in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, we obtain almost ideal values.

Research on geographic horizons and female mobility in the early modern era has not yet been conducted for the area of Eastern Europe.^[7]

Letters

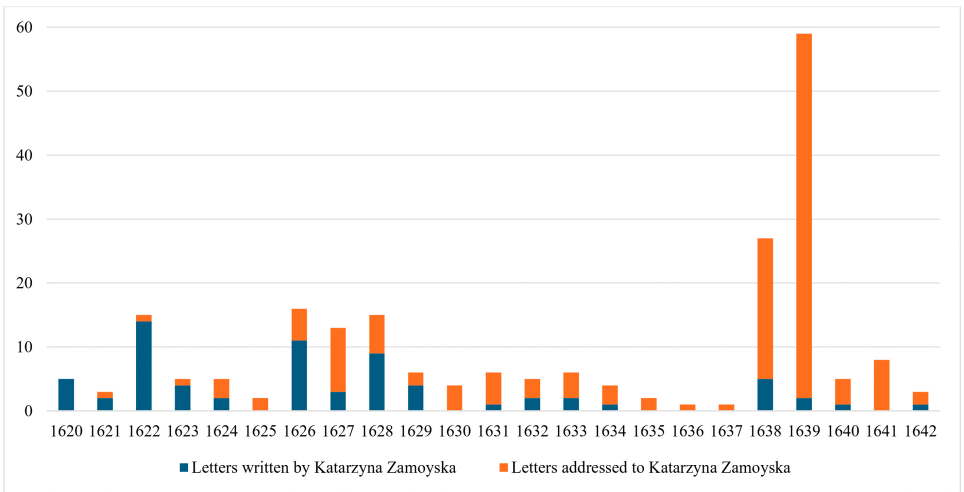
To answer the questions posed above, we had to create a dataset, which was next analysed quantitatively; we also superimposed the obtained materials on a geographic grid to get a mental picture of the space of a typical seventeenth century aristocrat. Obviously, we realize that this is a small part of the exchange of correspondence in which Katarzyna Zamoyska participated. However, against the backdrop of the era, this collection that came into being in the first half of the seventeenth century is one of the largest surviving for women living in Eastern Europe. Only documentation related to queens and princesses can equal this collection.^[8] It is only in the eighteenth century that we see a huge increase in the extant correspondence, in which the senders or addressees were noblewomen, especially magnates. Comparable to the correspondence of Katarzyna Zamoyska, only slightly less numerous is the correspondence of Tomasz Zamoyski's mother, Barbara Zamoyska née Tarnowska, preserved in the Zamoyski Archives, covering the years 1592–1610. It consists of 192 letters; hence it will be used in this study as comparative material for analysis (the correspondence was compiled by Tyszką, 2015).

Completely different values are recorded in England and France, as well as in the German Holy Roman Empire (comparative data are provided in parentheses). First, the average marriages in which children were born lasted 16.6 years; the marriage of Katarzyna and Tomasz lasted less than 18 years (25/25.5/27). On average, a female magnate married at the age of 19; Katarzyna was 20 (19.5/20/22). First married couples who lived to have offspring had an average of 3.3 children; in the relationship under scrutiny three children were born (5.1/6.15/–). However, Katarzyna's life expectancy deviated from the average, as she was 42 at the time of her death, while the median age of death for adult women was 47. On the other hand, the breakup of a magnate family in which the husband was the first to die was a typical situation (Liedke, 2016: 105, 112–113, 122, 144, 292–293).

[7] There are studies of early modern peasant mobility with the Kraków land as an example (Wyźga, 2019), as well as numerous studies devoted to the travels of the nobility in Western Europe (i.a.: Mączak, 1984; Tygielski, 2019). Unfortunately, in no way do they cover a lifetime analysis of women's mobility or their geographic horizons (see: Samsonowicz, 1990: 69–75).

[8] For example, the correspondence of princess Anna Vasa of Sweden, which was exchanged continuously from 1598 until her death in 1624, is estimated to be about 300 letters (Saar-Kozłowska, 2018: 78–79, 95–96; Łopatecki – Dąbrowski – Krawczuk – Walczak, 2022).

FIGURE 1. NUMBER OF PRESERVED INCOMING AND OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE FROM KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA NÉE OSTROGSKA IN 1620–1642



Note: The compilation includes 216 letters (including three letters not preserved, but known from the inventories), since the dates of 11 letters (seven received and four sent by Katarzyna Zamoyska) cannot be ascertained.

Source: see footnote 2–5; own calculation.

The correspondence under scrutiny falls within a 22-year time frame covering the years 1620–1642 (from marriage to death). The source base is not scattered and its vast majority is the legacy of the Zamoyski family, hence it can be assumed that the destruction of the epistolographic material is accidental and proportional (see: Smith – Moody – Morgan, 2017: 78–99). Figure 1 reflects the intensity of the correspondence. Three periods of growth in the number of letters written by Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska are clearly discernible. The first spike can be observed in 1622 and was associated with a serious threat to the southeastern lands of the Commonwealth, which was related to the Turkish expedition and the siege of Chocim (1621), the devastating Tatar invasions (Gliwa, 2013: 233–266) and the confederations of the unpaid soldiers. The second spike comprises the time frame of 1626–1629 and is connected with the war expedition and diplomatic involvement of Tomasz Zamoyski during the Polish–Swedish War for the Vistula estuary (Paradowski, 2020; Jarmiński, 1980: 113–138). The first two periods of more frequent correspondence are due to the prolonged absences of Katarzyna Zamoyska’s spouse from the family home. The years 1638 and 1639 are of particular interest. In early January 1638 Tomasz Zamoyski died, and Katarzyna, who had entered into an “advitalitas” agreement (lifetime use of the entire estate in the event of

the death of the spouse) on her husband's estate,^[9] in view of the minority of her only son Jan, took over the management of the property. The huge increase in correspondence was not only due to the fact that Katarzyna received condolences and funeral-related correspondence, but first and foremost she had to establish contacts with clients as well as with large magnate families and her subjects. Still enjoying relatively good health, Katarzyna took over her late husband's duties until the marriage of her eldest daughter Gryzelda Konstancja to Jeremi Wiśniowiecki taking place in early 1639 (precisely on 27 February 1639, see Czamańska, 2007: 221). At that time, the son-in-law relieved Katarzyna of some public, legal and economic matters, especially those related to estates located in Ukrainian territories. A similar situation related to the rapid increase in correspondence during the period of widowhood referred to Barbara Zamoyska. After Jan Zamoyski's death in 1605, over the five-year period of her widowhood, the number of letters written by Barbara increased nearly one and a half times, while the number of letters addressed to her nearly seven times (Tyszk, 2015: 24–25).

When analysing the structure of Katarzyna Zamoyska's correspondence over the years, it is easy to grasp the imbalance. While in the first period of her life it was she who was mostly the sender of the letters, in the last four years her being the recipient was far more discernible. This can be explained in a simple way, given the way correspondence was collected and archived. Most of the letters (97%) were kept in the Zamoyski estate, thus inbound post obviously dominated. On the other hand, the overrepresentation of Katarzyna's own handwritten letters in the first period is related to the fact that she kept sending them to her husband, hence they could be preserved in the collection that forms the source basis of this article. The preserved disparities indicate that few letters written by women during the period under scrutiny have survived to the present day.

We have analysed the correspondence circle of Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska, breaking down the senders and recipients of her letters by gender and isolating marital correspondence as a separate category. It turns out that the main addressee of her letters – not surprisingly – was her husband. Noteworthy, however, is the huge disparity in the surviving marital exchange of letters: 57 written to two received. It seems that these differences cannot be related to the possible different way of storing letters. Moreover, when we juxtapose these data with the extant correspondence of her mother-in-law, the results are very similar (Barbara wrote 33 letters while her husband Jan addressed correspondence to his wife twice). It can be inferred from the surviving correspondence that not only Jan Zamoyski, but unfortunately also Tomasz Zamoyski were very concerned about their privacy, hence they asked their wives to destroy the letters they wrote, usually by burning them (Tyszk, 2015: 21–31). This seems to be a feature of

[9] AGAD, AZ, n. 716, p. 16–18, Tomasz Zamoyski to Katarzyna Zamoyska, Tarnopol, 24 IX 1622.

magnate relations in the Zamoyski family in the seventeenth century, when sensitive correspondence addressed to the wife was supposed to be destroyed. This may demonstrate the social imbalance between the husband and wife even among the social elite. In the Zamoyski family, the former not only decided the fate of the correspondence that he received but also made decisions as to what to do with the correspondence addressed to his wife. At the very least, handwritten letters that most likely contained confidential information, including those containing declarations of love for his wife, were destroyed on the husband's orders.

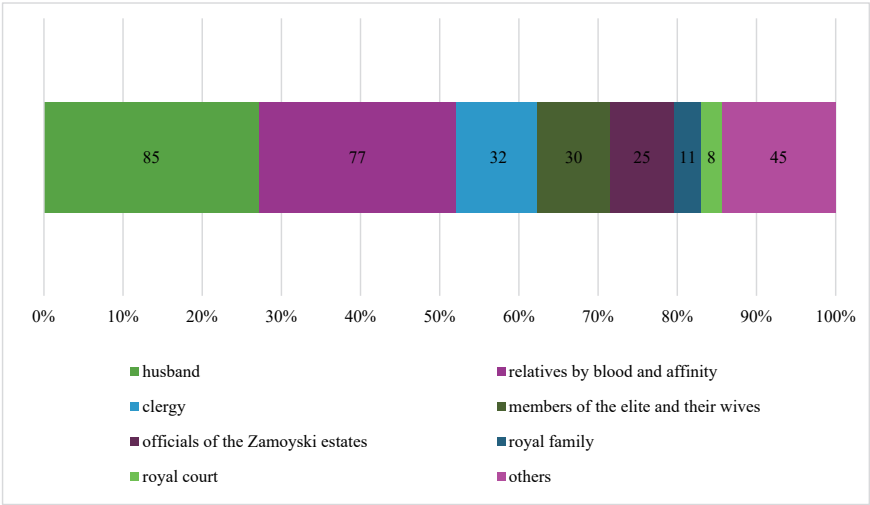
However, it can be inferred from an analysis of Katarzyna Zamoyska's surviving outbound correspondence that it was almost quantitatively identical given the gender of the correspondents (47% written to women). A slightly greater disproportion, yet not overwhelming, concerns the correspondence addressed to Katarzyna. 62.5% of the letters were written by men, and 37.5%, respectively, by women. There are not enough data showing the correspondence of magnates, but survey analyses indicate that female correspondence occurred marginally and did not exceed 3–10% of letters sent or received. Thus, it can be concluded that it was gender that determined the circle of people with whom correspondence was maintained. However, even in this group, letters written by women were in the minority, which may have been caused by the higher illiteracy rate among women than among men.

Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska wrote all her letters to her husband with her own hand, in careful small ductus without deletions. The letters often contained very personal content of an emotional nature, hence it was inappropriate to entrust them to a court secretary. Independent writing by women was not taken for granted in the Commonwealth. Princess Anna Vasa of Sweden considered it dangerous for a woman to write for six weeks after giving birth, viewing this activity as very taxing (Dumanowski – Garbacz – Krawczuk – Svensson, 2002: 74). In contrast, letters other than marital correspondence were mainly written by secretaries of the Zamoyski court chancellery and only signed by Katarzyna. At times the letters sent to the royal court were written by Tomasz himself and sometimes he dictated them to Katarzyna.

If we classify correspondence by social groups or types of people with whom Katarzyna Zamoyska communicated, the role of correspondence in maintaining marital ties becomes apparent (Figure 2). As much as 27% of all correspondence was an exchange of information and feelings with Tomasz Zamoyski. A slightly lower percentage involved contacts with relatives by blood and affinity (25%). Both of these categories yielded 52% of all resources. Among the social groups, the clergy and members of the magnate elite and their wives predominated (about 10% for each group). The first group demonstrates the role of religion in Katarzyna's life, and also the importance of the house of Zamoyski as patron of church institutions of various faiths in their family estates. The second group of letters exchanged with other magnate houses that were not directly related

comprises few items, as the houses may have had little in common, let alone the cost of sending and receiving letters. This further exposes the role of family ties: consanguinity and affinity in the social contacts of the time. Slightly fewer letters (only 8%) written by officials of the Zamość estate have survived. In addition, the correspondence includes some contacts with the royal entourage, significant as they are: both with the royal Vasa family themselves (4%) and the royal court (3%), accounting for a total of 7% of the letters. Other correspondents made up a large group, comprising more than 14% of the people writing letters. The group consisted mainly of correspondents representing the nobility (land officials, the Zamoyski family's clients, court servants) as well as the townspeople (including the guilds of bakers or innkeepers) and subjects from the Zamoyski estates, and in two cases letters exchanged with the Moldavian voivode Bazyli Lupu have also survived; they were thus sent outside the territory of the Commonwealth.

FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF LETTERS BY SOCIAL GROUP OR TYPE OF PERSON



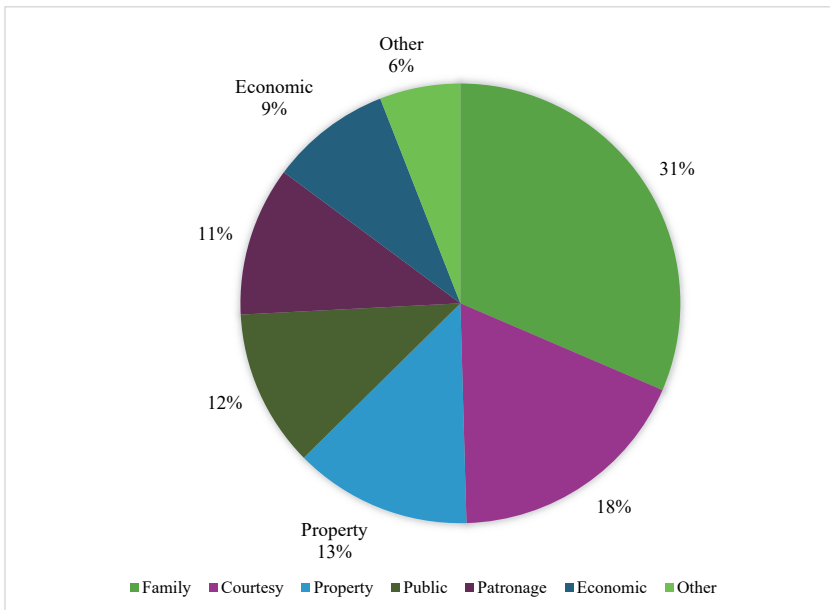
Note: Only 227 extant letters or their abstracts are included in the compilation. The table takes into account the preserved correspondence (direct) as well as correspondence, the existence of which is confirmed in the letters (indirect).

Source: see footnote 2–5; own calculation.

We have assigned at least one feature to each of the seven categories of letters known in full: economic (in the sense of administrative management of property), property (including litigation and property disputes), patronage (including client letters and letters requesting financial support), public (on political and military topics), courtesy (of a social and polite nature), family, and other unclassified.

For different issues, we allowed for several categories in a single letter, and the collected material is compiled in Figure 3. It shows that nearly half of the letters had personal content related to maintaining contacts. In two thirds of the cases, the dominant topic was the family element, which was based on maintaining close relations with the husband, mother, children, sisters (Anna Alojza Chodkiewiczowa née Ostrogska, Teofila Ostrogska), aunt (Katarzyna Sieniawska née Kostka) and relatives (Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł, Jeremi Michał Wiśniowiecki or Jerzy Zasławski). Courtesy letters are of particular interest. They are often overlooked by historians because they do not actually contribute any information. However, from the vantage point of maintaining relationships with others, such non-committal letters must have been particularly pleasing to the recipients. It should also be noted that frequently the most important information was not written down but rather communicated directly by messengers. Against this background, courtesy letters lent credibility to the messenger and enabled the communication of sensitive information, or perhaps just plain gossip and titbits about family life (Łopatecki – Dąbrowski – Krawczuk – Walczak, 2022: 52–62).

FIGURE 3. SHARE OF INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES OF CORRESPONDENCE BY KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA NÉE OSTROGSKA IN THE YEARS 1620–1642



Note: Only surviving letters or their abstracts are included in the analysis. One or more categories could be assigned to a letter.

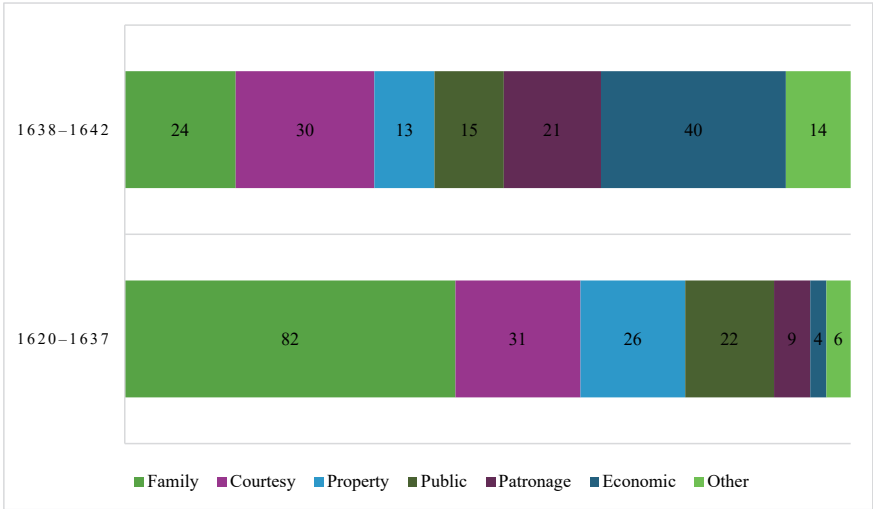
Source: see footnote 2–5; own calculation.

The second part of the letters covers practical issues. This is correspondence about administrative (economic and property) issues in the broadest sense, in total accounting for one-fifth of the entire surviving epistolographic resources. A very interesting and equally numerous group of letters is the one that deals with public and patronage issues. The letters include information on vacant positions and requests for the support of political and court affairs, especially security issues related to Tatar invasions and military operations mainly in Ukrainian territories and the Polish-Moldovan borderlands.

On the other hand, the arrangement presented above changes significantly in the short period of 1638–1642, when Katarzyna Zamoyska was head of the family after her husband's death (see Figure 4). The compilation demonstrates the difference in the type of inbound and outbound correspondence. Katarzyna, Tomasz Zamoyski's wife, exchanged slightly different letters than during the last less than five years of her life, when, as the owner of the estate for life, she was the head of the family. In the first period, family topics accounted for 46% of the correspondence, and in the second period only 15% of the letters referred to family life. Given that Tomasz Zamoyski was the main addressee and sender of private letters, the change in proportions seems obvious. On the other hand, the percentage of courtesy correspondence changed slightly in favour of the first period of Katarzyna's life (19% to 17%). The same goes for patronage letters (12% to 10%). Interestingly, letters on public topics tend to be of lesser importance in the period of widowhood, covering 14% of the correspondence in 1620–1637, to occupy only 8% of the space from 1638 until Katarzyna Zamoyska's death in 1642.

The biggest differences can be seen in the economic sphere, as evidenced by the number of letters revolving around economic and property issues. The rates of the raised economic issues in the periods under scrutiny are 5% and 13%. For property issues, the proportions are even higher, accounting for 2% and 25%, respectively. The rate of the various topics in the letters described as other matters also changed in favour of the period of widowhood (3% to 9%). This least numerous topic group mainly contains lists of clergymen of various religions from the estates owned by the magnate. The legal and property position of widows led to women having to adapt to the male world, including in the sphere of communication. It can be concluded from the presented analyses that in the first period of her correspondence activity Katarzyna Zamoyska was almost exclusively focused on maintaining family ties, while in the second period she became a full-fledged economic and political partner, to whom many people wrote letters as well, with courteous information, sometimes only reminding of their existence.

FIGURE 4. DIFFERENCES IN THE CATEGORIES OF ISSUES RAISED
IN THE CORRESPONDENCE IN THE PERIODS 1620–1637 AND 1638–1642

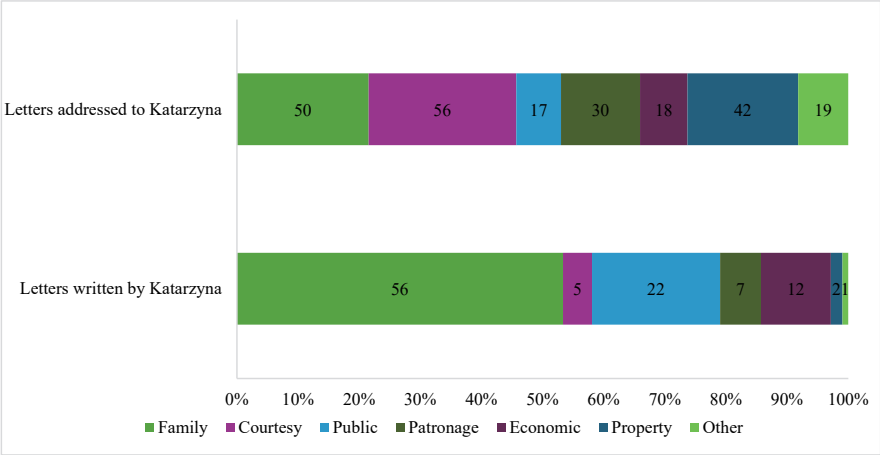


Note: Only 227 extant letters or their abstracts are included in the compilation. One or more categories could be assigned to a letter.

Source: see footnote 2–5; own calculation.

If the letters sent and received by Katarzyna are separated, it turns out that the differences were significant, but not fundamental (see Figure 5). Private issues prevailed by one fifth in materials written by the magnate, with percentages of 58% and 46%, respectively, of all the topics covered. The difference appears to be insignificant; yet, given the percentage share broken down by type as family and courtesy letters, fundamental disparities can be seen. Family letters encompassed more than half of the topics brought up in the magnate’s personal correspondence (53%), while in the letters written to her the family topic appeared in only one-fifth of them (22%). However, the proportions are reversed for courtesy letters and amount to 5% of the letters written by Katarzyna Zamoyska versus 22% of the letters addressed to her. The other two categories, public and patronage issues, had an overall ratio of 29% to 20%, and administrative (property and economic) issues 13% to 26%. There was a definitely broader thematic catalogue of issues coming to Katarzyna, as she herself occasionally brought up topics other than the usual ones (at just 1%), while in inbound letters, other topics such as those related to patronage issues accounted for as much as 8%.

FIGURE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF CATEGORIES OF LETTERS WRITTEN BY KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA AND RECEIVED FROM DIFFERENT ADDRESSEES



Note: Only 227 extant letters or their abstracts are included in the compilation. One or more categories could be assigned to a letter.

Source: see footnote 2–5, own calculation.

Mobility

One of the main differences between noblemen and noblewomen in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the mobility of both groups. Travelling was an inherent part of the lifelong activities of men. Already at the stage of education, most of the young male magnates and some of the representatives of the middle nobility headed off to domestic and, above all, foreign universities and grammar schools. Later, their political, military and economic activities (managing *latifundia*) necessitated very distant and time-consuming travel. We should also add to that the popular hunting, socializing, pilgrimages or health trips to spa resorts (Wierzbicka, 2013: 37–47; Samsonowicz, 1990; Augustyniak, 2021).^[10]

Women representing the social elite for the most part could not participate in public activities, as they were intended for men. Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska was no exception in this regard; yet, a closer look at her mobility shows the impact of her husband’s career on this aspect of female activity (see Figure 6).

[10] Research on the mobility of magnates and more broadly the nobility has been almost non-existent. Exceptions include the itinerary of Bogusław Radziwiłł (1620–1669) prepared by Tomasz Wasilewski. It recorded more than 760 documented changes of residence. For example, in 1662, a typical year, this magnate visited as many as 66 localities (cf.: Radziwiłł, 1979: 235–259).

Her life was certainly not traditional; she was not confined to the family mansion and the surrounding private estates where she would spend her leisure time. We have recorded at least 31 trips in which she participated between 1620 and 1642. These were mainly larger and longer trips; the small ones to the relatively close vicinity of Zamość must have been even more numerous. We divided the trips into four types by their purpose: family (including welcome trips), subsistence (escape from the plague, health issues, economic duress), social, religious and public, hence those related to the political activity of Tomasz Zamoyski.

Katarzyna Zamoyska, from her marriage ceremony until the birth of her last child in 1627,^[11] spent most of her time in the capital of the estate, Zamość, and for periods from winter to spring left with her family to other private estates – Krzeszów and Kraśnik – or, when escaping from the plague that was rampant in them, went to the Volhynia estates, mainly Tarnopol. Trips to these places were relatively long, sometimes lasting even several months. She made short trips, usually for a few days, unaccompanied by her husband and children, only to her hometown of Jarosław, where her mother and youngest sister lived. Another type of family trip from the period up to 1627 was escorting or greeting Tomasz Zamoyski going to or returning from public service, which generally took place in the vicinity of Lublin. While religious trips were not recorded in the 1620s, they had occurred at least three times from 1630 (including one abroad to Italy), which was related to her husband's increasingly failing health. Religious destinations were usually combined with other destinations (see Map 1).

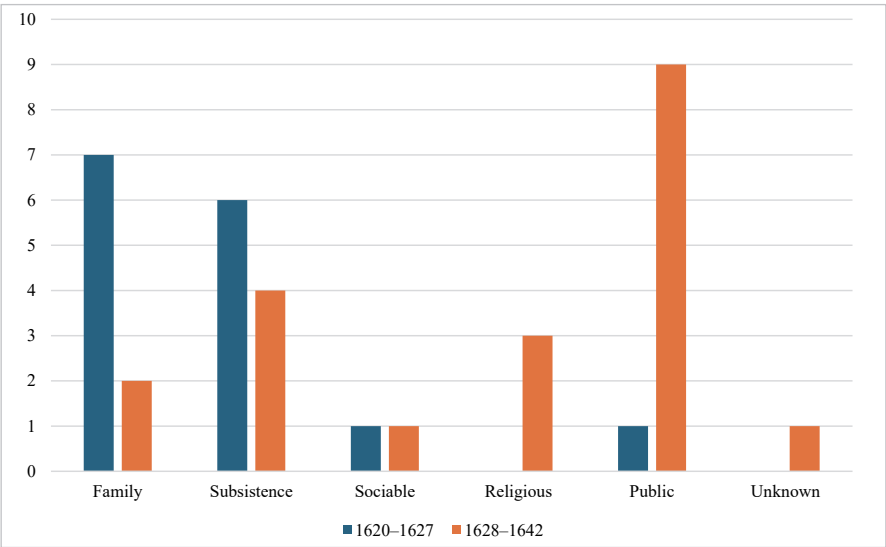
Thus, Katarzyna's life was not only focused on her ancestral nest, Zamość. She embarked on trips every year from 1620 to 1636, although the nature of her travels changed over the years. Pregnancy or the need to care for or raise minor children did not constitute an obstacle (cf.: Penkała-Jastrzębska, 2019: 69–82). Moreover, it can be said that in the years associated with the birth of her children (27 April 1623, 12 April 1624, 9 April 1627) she travelled the most. These are surprising findings given the belief that pregnant women, in order to protect their own health but also the life of the foetus, were expected to stay in seclusion and avoid all exertion, especially that involving long-distance travel. Katarzyna Zamoyska travelled extensively and enjoyed accompanying her husband. In her record years of 1621 and 1628, she went on four trips that lasted a total of about three months. It was only from 1637 onwards that she stayed in Zamość almost all the time (with one trip in 1639 and an unfulfilled plan to visit the shrine at Jasna Góra Monastery near Częstochowa in 1638).^[12] It is almost certain that the surviving travel information does not reflect all of her activity; yet, the available

[11] Gryzelda Konstancja was born on 27 April 1623, Joanna Barbara on 12 April 1624, and Jan "Sobiepan" on 9 April 1627.

[12] This is the only instance of a trip that was planned but it never materialized. Exactly on 25 July 1638, her plans to leave for Częstochowa, with Kraków as a stopping point were noted.

data indicate that her stays outside of her main residence were often long. It would be prudent to assume that a fifth of her time was spent outside of Zamość. The longest departure took place in the period from 1625 to 1626, when Katarzyna Zamoyska left Zamość on 13 August, only to return six and a half months later (see Map 1). Her most exotic and only foreign trip took place in 1633, when she and her husband travelled to Italy for about four months. She went for longer two- to three-month stays in Krzeszów (1621–1622), Lublin and Warsaw (1629), or Knyszyn (1630). Compared with her husband or other male representatives of magnate families, her journeys were modestly represented, but against the background of a typical noble family the scale was impressive.^[13]

FIGURE 6. DISTRIBUTION OF TRIPS MADE BY KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA BY THEIR PURPOSE



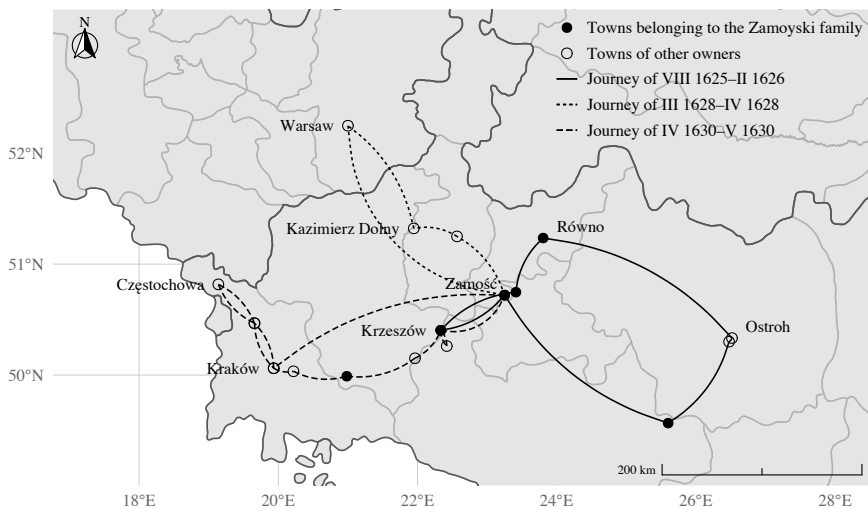
Source: see footnote 2–5, own calculation.

Note: In three cases of trips the purpose was mixed.

However, it was a pilgrimage season, hence the roads were crowded and inns tended to be inaccessible. This is why the trip was probably cancelled.

[13] By a standard noble family, we mean people who took care of their landed property rather than being involved in military or diplomatic affairs.

MAP 1. THREE JOURNEYS OF KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA NÉE OSTROGSKA



Note: The dates before the name of the locality indicate the arrival date, and the dates after indicate the departure date. Italics indicate localities managed by the Zamoyski family.

The first trip (1625–1626) was related to her family in Volhynia: *Zamość* (13 August 1625) – *Tarnopol* (15 November) – *Międzyrzecz* near *Ostroh* – *Ostroh* – (29 November) *Rivne* – (12 December 1625) *Horyszów Polski* – (15 January 1626) *Krzeszów* – (26 February 1626) *Zamość*.

The second journey (1628) was public with Warsaw as its destination, where the centre of the country's political life was located: *Zamość* (23 March 1628) – (24 March 1628) *Lublin* – (25 March 1628) *Kazimierz* on the Vistula River – (26 March 1628) *Warsaw* – (6 April 1628) *Zamość*.

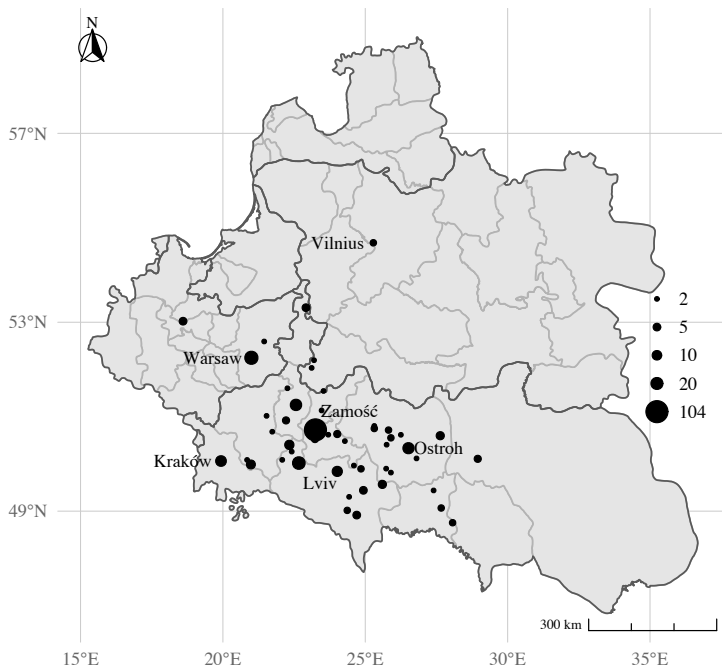
The third trip (1630) had a religious purpose: *Zamość* (4 April 1630) – (10 April 1630) *Kraków* (19 April 1630) – *Pilica* – *Częstochowa* – *Pilica* – (27 April 1630) *Kraków* (1 May 1630) – *Niepołomice* – *Tarnów* – *Głogów* – (7 May 1630) *Krzeszów* – (8 May 1630) *Leżajsk* – *Krzeszów* – *Zamość*.

Source: see footnote 2–5.

How did the level of her mobility and participation in political activities while accompanying her husband affect her spatial horizons? What was close and familiar to her, what, on the other hand, did not evoke her interest and was distant? To answer these questions, we extracted the geographic names appearing in the correspondence (226), and we also took into account the place of the addressed letters (256). As a result, we obtained Katarzyna's geographical horizon and her

idea of the world (the Commonwealth). We compiled these data (482) to reconstruct the extent of the space in which the female magnate moved (physically and mentally). For this purpose, we created Map 2.

MAP 2. GEOGRAPHICAL HORIZON OF KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA NÉE OSTROGSKA PLOTTED ON A MAP OF THE COMMONWEALTH



Note: Only the points noted at least twice were plotted. Voivodships are isolated and the borders of the three provinces are bolded on the map: Greater Poland – Lesser Poland – Grand Duchy of Lithuania (fiefdoms and territories with special legal status were left outside the provinces).

Source: see footnote 2–5.

It is not surprising that her centre of life interests was in Zamość, which was noted 104 times. This represents as much as 21.6% of the total geographic information collected and shows that Zamość was an unquestionable point of reference for Katarzyna; yet, she had many other areas of interest.

The most important city after Zamość was Warsaw (26), which in the times under scrutiny was the venue of the Sejm, and from 1611 onward had been the place where the royal court stayed almost permanently (Wrede, 2019: 24–26, 348). Although it was a relatively remote city located on the Vistula River in Mazovia,

229 kilometres away from Katarzyna's home, its unquestionable cultural and political role was the strongest geographic reference point for her.

The next two locations were relatively close, 75 and 89 kilometres from Zamość. The first was Lublin (17), an important administrative (voivodship capital), political and judicial centre. This is because it was here that the following courts deliberated: the land court, the castle court and, most importantly, the Crown Tribunal, which was a court of appeal before the noble and ecclesiastical courts (Bednaruk, 2008). It was a place that Katarzyna knew very well, as she had stayed there many times in 1621, 1622, 1626, 1628, 1629 and 1639. This location was a permanent point on the way to the north, primarily to Warsaw.

The second location was Jarosław, located southwest of Zamość (23). It was an exceptionally wealthy town owned by the Ostrogski family. It mattered to Katarzyna Zamoyska for two reasons. First, it was here that she spent her youth, and her official relocation to Zamość after she married Tomasz Zamoyski took place on 17 May 1620. She viewed Jarosław not only in a sentimental context, but also in terms of invariably maintained family ties. This was mainly the place where events of key significance for the Ostrogski family (weddings, funerals or family reunions) were held. Moreover, it was the location where the most important fairs in the entire Commonwealth were held; at that time in Central Europe, they were second only to the Frankfurt am Main fair. Tens of thousands of people arrived here three times a year, and merchants brought goods from Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Republic of Venice, the Tsardom of Muscovy and the United Provinces of the Netherlands (Starowolski, 1976: 92).

Another town with family ties to Katarzyna was Ostroh, located in Volhynia, 235 kilometres away from Zamość (16). It was the capital of the Ostrogski family Ordinance Property, one of the richest magnate complexes in the Commonwealth. It belonged to Janusz Ostrogski, the brother of Katarzyna's father Aleksander, and then to his heirs.^[14] It was also an alternative centre of life of the Ostrogski family, where the most important family celebrations took place (Żojdź, 2020: 991–1009). Also, after Janusz's death (1620) it was the centre of activities related to the inheritance proceedings for this largest estate of the Commonwealth, which obviously attracted Katarzyna Zamoyska's attention.

The other localities were even more closely associated with Katarzyna, as they were located within the Zamość Ordinance Property owned by her husband, Tomasz, or she brought them into the marriage as her dowry (*wiano*). Those

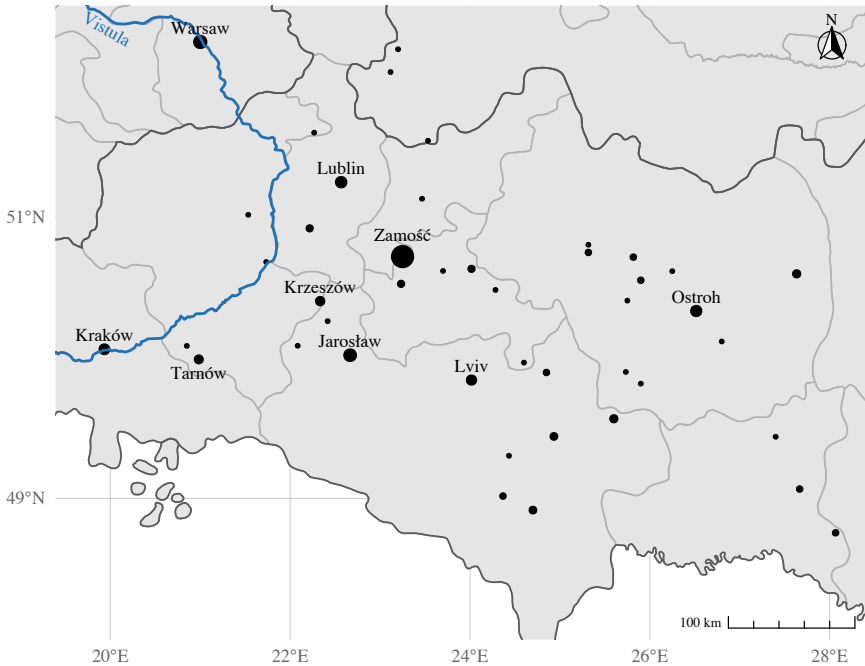
[14] The Ostrogski family Ordinance Property included half of the town of Ostroh, Międzyrzecz, Dubno, Stepań, Konstantynów and 20 other towns, as well as 592 villages. Janusz Ostrogski's death on 12/13 September 1620 was followed by a lengthy process of taking over the deceased's estate, first by the underage Franciszek Zasławski-Ostrogski (son of Aleksander Zasławski and Eufrozyna Zasławska née Ostrogska), and then by Władysław Dominik Zasławski-Ostrogski (Łopatecki, 2016: 263–289).

localities included Krzeszów (9), belonging to Zamoyski, 69 kilometres away from Zamość. It was the town where Tomasz Zamoyski's mother Barbara spent her last widowhood years, but it was also often the place where Katarzyna Zamoyska stayed for a long time when she wanted to leave the capital of the Zamość Ordinance Property. As a rule, this happened in the autumn and winter seasons, and on an ad hoc basis the Zamoyski family also took shelter there from epidemics haunting the town. Tarnopol (6), a town formerly owned by the Ostrogski family and located in the Ruthenian voivodship, 211 kilometres southeast of Zamość, played a similar role. Tarnów (8), another estate owned by Katarzyna's descendants and located 180 kilometres southwest of Zamość, served a somewhat different purpose. Katarzyna Zamoyska stayed there more than once during her trips to Kraków, when her husband – as the starost, i.e. district governor, of Kraków – performed judicial duties assigned to his position in that city.

After Warsaw and Lublin, the next royal city that provided a reference point was Lviv (12). It was the capital of the Ruthenian voivodship, situated only 111 kilometres away from Zamość. It served as an economic base, in particular for the regular army units (*wojsko kwarciane*) stationed in the southeastern area of the Commonwealth. It was also a place where merchants from the Orient arrived and sold their goods, and one of the main centres of cultural life in the Ruthenian lands at the time (Zubyk, 1930). Another important centre was the state capital, Kraków (9). Kraków's role diminished during the reign of the Vasa dynasty, yet kings were crowned, and coronation assemblies were held there. Despite Katarzyna Zamoyska's lack of family ties with the city and the considerable distance from Zamość, as far as 245 kilometres, Katarzyna Zamoyska – due to the fact that her husband had held the office of starost since 1628 – visited the city at least five times. At the same time, for most of her confirmed stays there, Kraków was only a stopping point in the onward journey.

Another point of reference, although not as important, was Ukraine (8) which could be spatially identified with the Kyiv voivodship during that period. Notably, Tomasz Zamoyski was Kyiv voivode until 1619, and therefore these lands were of interest to his wife. Other territories were mentioned only occasionally; there was information about Royal Prussia three times, and also Vilnius was mentioned three times. Vilnius was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; the Ruthenian lands appeared in the correspondence only once. Another distinctive reference point, the Vistula River, was also mentioned five times. It should be noted that Katarzyna travelled by boat on the Vistula River, including on the Kazimierz Dolny – Warsaw route. Other localities were recorded less frequently; they included: Belz (4), the capital of the voivodship and the place where local assemblies (*sejmik*) were held, and where her husband had the greatest political influence, Borek near Zamość (4), Brzeżany (5) belonging to the House of Sieniawski, Knyszyn in Podlasie, a Crown territory district (*starostwo*) in the possession of Tomasz Zamoyski (5).

MAP 3. GEOGRAPHICAL HORIZON OF KATARZYNA ZAMOYSKA NÉE OSTROGSKA



Note: Only the points noted at least twice were plotted.

Source: see footnote 2–5.

In general, spatial sensitivity can be interpreted in three spheres. The first covered the immediate vicinity of Zamość, which was within a 90-kilometre radius of the town. It could have been either owned property or administrative centres. Next followed the most important locations in political and ancestral terms, which could have been up to 250 kilometres away. They formed a certain spatial structure which could be called Katarzyna's geographical horizon. Outside this zone, there were basically only "islands" with isolated, contextually detached locations, such as Warsaw (Mazovia), Knyszyn (Podlasie), Vilnius (the Vilnius province), Toruń (the Chełmno province), Kotelnia (the Kyiv province).

Areas located further away were viewed very enigmatically and episodically, being outside Katarzyna's horizon of interest. Such places included Ukraine, Royal Prussia or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (with the exception of the lands of the Brest-Litovsk voivodship bordering the Crown). If we translate this distribution into an administrative structure, the neighbouring three voivodships of Belz,

Ruthenia, and Volhynia played the key role in Katarzyna's life. They all belonged to the province of Lesser Poland but were located in its "Ruthenian" part. The three voivodships that were Lesser Poland proper, i.e. the voivodships of Kraków, Sandomierz and Lublin, as well as the southeastern voivodship of Podolya were the furthest possible area of her interest. In other words, Katarzyna was not interested in anything outside the province of Lesser Poland, except for Warsaw, located in Greater Poland.

Katarzyna Zamoyska cared about the localities as long as they were properties held by Tomasz Zamoyski or connected with her house of Ostrogski. The following largest localities of the Commonwealth were an exception to this rule, yet they played an unquestionable political and cultural role: Toruń, Vilnius, Lublin, Lviv. Towns that were voivodship capitals appeared as long as their location was not far from Zamość, for example Belz or Lutsk. On Katarzyna's mental map cities such as Gdańsk, Riga, Elbląg, Poznań, or Lithuanian localities (except Vilnius) were missing. Noteworthy are Warsaw, where the royal court resided permanently at the time, and the capital of the Commonwealth, Kraków. Katarzyna Zamoyska completely ignored any information about other countries, as if international affairs were not of interest to her at all, which seems incomprehensible in the context of her trip of several months to Italy.

The spatial configuration of the points indicates that her interests outside her life centre, which was Zamość, were not evenly distributed. Obviously, the locations extended eastward freely but were limited in other directions. Two such borders are clearly discernible: the Vistula River in the west and the border with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the north. The national border in the south should be added to this.

Conclusion

An analysis of the letters belonging to Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska, a female magnate, covering the years 1620–1642 (from her marriage to her death), demonstrated great interpretative possibilities for the communication and geographical horizons and mobility of a typical representative of the female elite in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1. An assessment of Katarzyna Zamoyska's quantitative letter contacts helped confirm the importance of widowhood for women's correspondence activity. In the last nearly five years of her life as a widow, she received more letters than during the entirety of her less than 18-year marriage (excluding her main correspondent, Tomasz Zamoyski). Similar circumstances related to the rapid increase in correspondence during her widowhood also occurred in the case of her mother-in-law, Barbara Zamoyska née Tarnowska. This implies that the legal and property position of widows forced women to adapt to the male world, including in the sphere of communication. This is also reflected in the circle of correspondents.

In the first period of her correspondence activity, Katarzyna Zamoyska was most focused on maintaining family ties, and in the second period she became the possessor of the ancestral magnate estates, their full-fledged administrator and patron for her subjects.

2. An analysis of the degree of women's mobility based on the example of Katarzyna Zamoyska's correspondence demonstrates that travel should not be considered the exclusive domain of men. Women tended to be highly mobile, often accompanying their husbands on their journeys around the country. Neither pregnancies nor obligations towards minor offspring were obstacles in this regard for Katarzyna Zamoyska. Her life was by no means traditional or confined to the estate located in Zamość – the capital of the family's ordinance property – and the surrounding manors where she spent her time. In comparison with Tomasz Zamoyski or other male representatives of magnate families, her travels were obviously limited; yet, against the background of a typical noble family their scale was impressive.

3. A more detailed study of the mobility of the female magnate Katarzyna Zamoyska née Ostrogska indicates the impact of her husband's career path on this aspect of her activity. The increased number of journeys that Katarzyna Zamoyska went on during Tomasz Zamoyski's tenure in offices requiring flexibility and mobility supports the argument of the informal role of women in political activity in the Commonwealth. Thanks to the available correspondence, we know that she participated in the social life of the royal court as well as religious and secular ceremonies. Katarzyna Zamoyska's mobility diminished dramatically with the death of her spouse. Hence, a conclusion can be drawn that she did not act only in the private sphere, but publicly represented the magnate house, which can be compared to the numerous small principalities in Europe, and especially in the Holy Roman Empire. It also furnishes further evidence of the not uncommon in the early modern period so-called soft diplomacy conducted by women with aspirations and influence. This is also reflected in the topics addressed in the correspondence under scrutiny, when, with the promotion of Katarzyna Zamoyska's husband to ministerial office, the number of patronage and courtesy letters sent to her, as well as the number of those in which public topics were discussed, increased. This trend reversed with the death of Tomasz Zamoyski.

4. The resources that were collected and analysed made it possible to obtain a mental picture of the space of a typical aristocrat of the first half of the seventeenth century in terms of awareness of what was close and familiar to Katarzyna Zamoyska, and what was distant and did not evoke her interest. Based on the geographical names used in the correspondence (both the places where the letters were addressed and the locality names derived from the content itself were used and combined with information about her mobility), the extent of the space in which the magnate moved (physically and mentally) could be reconstructed. Her spatial sensitivity essentially encompassed three spheres. The main one referred

to Zamość itself and its immediate surroundings within a perspective of no more than 90 kilometres from the town. It could have been their own property, places associated with their origin, or local administrative centres. These were, in turn, Kraśnik and Krzeszów (important ordinance property estates), Jarosław (a place of family ceremonies) or Lublin (voivodship capital, a place where the court deliberated). The second sphere encompasses the key locations in political and ancestral terms, which could be up to 250 kilometres or more away. The most important city following Zamość was Warsaw, which in the times under study was the centre of the political and social life of the royal court, providing the strongest geographical reference point for Katarzyna. Kraków, the country's original capital and the second most important city of the Polish Crown after Warsaw, was slightly further down the list. Both of these cities were associated with the political activities of Tomasz Zamoyski, and they strongly influenced the geographic horizons of his wife Katarzyna. Next in this group were Katarzyna's family estates located farther away from the ordinance property estates, such as Tarnów and Tarnopol. This was her primary geographic horizon. Distant provinces that were part of the Commonwealth fell into the third category and were hardly mentioned. Such places include Ukraine, Royal Prussia, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In contrast, she completely ignored the information about other countries.

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