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# THE POLISH LANDS VERSUS THE WEST

Studies on the Development of Mediaeval Europe

Edited by Sławomir Gawlas



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• Table of Contents •

SŁAWOMIR GAWLAS, Introduction .....	9
1. SŁAWOMIR GAWLAS, Commercialization as an Europeanization mechanism of the periphery on the example of Poland .....	27
2. MARIAN DYGO, The East and the West: European economy in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries .....	117
3. ROMAN CZAJA, The Baltic zone in the European economy of the thirteenth– fifteenth centuries, with special focus on Teutonic Prussia .....	195
4. GRZEGORZ MYŚLIWSKI, The Sudeten-Carpathian area. Position of Silesia, Little Poland and Western Ruthenia in the Western European economy (mid–thirteenth – early sixteenth century) .....	247
5. KRZYSZTOF OŹÓG, Position of Poland in the intellectual development of fourteenth–fifteenth–century Europe .....	321
SUMMARY: Sławomir Gawlas, Introduction 429 • Sławomir Gawlas, Commercializa- tion as an Europeanization mechanism of the periphery on the example of Poland 441 • Marian Dygo, The East and the West: European economy in the fourteenth–fifteenth centu- ries 442 • Roman Czaja, The Baltic zone in the European economy of the thirteenth–fif- teenth centuries, with special focus on Teutonic Prussia 444 • Grzegorz Myśliwski, The Sude- ten–Carpathian area. Position of Silesia, Little Poland and Western Ruthenia in the Western European economy (mid–thirteenth – early sixteenth century) 446 • Krzysztof Oźóg, Po- sition of Poland in the intellectual development of fourteenth–fifteenth–century Europe 447	

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INTRODUCTION

The question of development dependence of the Polish lands on contacts with the West has been under public discussion for over two hundred years. The debate started in the twilight years of the Saxon era in the mid-eighteenth century, when the Sarmatian self-satisfaction began to yield to more and more persistently propagated opinions about the necessity to elevate the country through the emulation of the other, better managed European states. The realisation made by the enlightened elites about a vastness of civilisation backwardness of Poland lent a more systematic character to these comparisons. An acceptance of the idea of 'constant progress of the human mind through history' (A. N. Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, 1794) assigned to the West the role of example-setter and became the starting point for drawing up the programmes of modernisation using the experiences of the enlightened republics. This necessity was openly though concisely stated by Stanisław Staszic in his eagerly recalled, dramatic warning: 'Poland only in the fifteenth century. The whole Europe is finishing the eighteenth' (*Warnings for Poland*, 1790). Since then, the problem of Polish civilisation backwardness has not lost its relevance and become a subject of constant disputes concerning the principles of desirable development. In the nineteenth century they were impacted by numerous factors: the loss of independence and searching for its causes, advancement of technological civilisation strengthened by the pressure of negative stereotypes in the image of Poland in Europe as the country of backwardness, the necessity to keep pace with changing intellectual currents, reflection on the undesirable effects of the industrial revolution — at the beginning under the influence of spreading ideas, then the own experiences. As a result, we observe a constant wavering between searching for more or less dramatic ways to speed up the development and formulating justifications for the historic role of Poland, morally boosting the situation of backwardness. The latter could

refer to the trend of criticism, also growing in the West, against the soulless and heartless materialism of urban life and industrial civilisation.

In the ideological disputes an active part was played by historians who again and anew explored the problem of the Polish lands belonging to Western Europe, genesis of our developmental anomaly and searched for the reasons for the partitions. There was a general concord of opinion that in the Middle Ages, from its Christianisation Poland had continually, albeit with delay, kept up with Europe. Only the early modern period enhanced the distinctness of political and social system. In principle, this opinion is still valid today. The burden of the questions posed before 1918 has kept its relevance after the regaining of independence. The change of situation brought about more optimistic evaluation of the past and more favourable institutional conditions for research, although a growing responsibility for factual documentation of historiographic constructs at the same time. This was induced by general development in understanding of historical mechanisms, separation of socio-economic research and growing requirements of the methodology. Though the intuitive opinions and political-ideological influences were not restricted to the field of journalism, nevertheless the state sovereignty was conducive to realistic attitudes towards the contemporary challenges and verified the possibilities of realisation of modernisation programmes. Also nowadays, after the catastrophe — brutally imposed but initially with certain hopes pinned to it in social dimension — of communist cure for civilisation backwardness, the external circumstances of European integration and globalisation leave little place for escape to the world of ideological fictions from the responsibility for decisions taken. The question about the character of the relationship between the Polish lands and the West provides a great abundance of interesting material for study of the past and present ideological disputes, nonetheless it is mainly of empirical character — although for the above reasons the full objectivity of research encounters some obstacles. In the scientific analyses of the chances for modernisation Poland stands after the changes in the political system, an important place is occupied by the historical roots of civilisation backwardness. There is no doubt that they extend well into the distant past.

The genesis of the Polish growth anomaly is generally ascribed to the consequences of a dualism which emerged in the development of late mediaeval and early modern Europe. In the West the economic growth led to the increasing importance of money and market, intensification of commodity production, capital accumulation, overseas expansion, the development of commercial capitalism. The eastern part of Europe was assigned the role of a supplier of raw materials and semi-manufactures, especially timber and forest products, and for the first time on the mass scale grain and other agricultural produce. In return, there was

an import of luxury products of the western crafts. The line of division is usually set on the Elbe River, which in reference to the northern area seems to correspond with the facts. During the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries the differences in the development directions became more intense. For Central Europe this division in its first phase meant upturn in the economy and economic growth. A sustained demand for corn brought about the development of noble manor and increased the serf-labour of the peasants. As a result, it led to political domination of the great landed estate, which is frequently called a 're-feudalisation'. In Poland it took a specific form because of the unfavourable evolution of parliamentary system and disintegration of political power. Undoubtedly, the actual economic processes of East Central Europe were much more complex than this scheme which suited best the sphere of influence of the Baltic zone, made up of very diverse regions. In the southern zone the dependence on the Western markets led to the development of the weaving manufacture and growth in the export of cattle.

The outlined issues have been the subject of multinational analytical research. In Poland the research was taken in the interwar period by Jan Rutkowski. After 1945, due to the political reasons, the problems of manorial system had become one of the central topics of historical debates. Despite their entanglement in ideological and periodisation schemes, the research has generated a vast literature and versatile observations. Since the 1970s the dispute has begun to die down and is continued only by individual authors. The accumulated knowledge allowed the researchers to build a comprehensive picture which, although has not been recorded in the form of collective summation, is presented to a certain extent by the textbooks and popular science books. The recent research into the origins of the manorial economy have provided a vital correction, indicating its older, late medieval roots, when there was a tendency to replace money-rent with labour services due to the difficulties in selling agricultural produce on local markets and the crisis of peasant income. The long-lasting domination of the manorial system became an element of self-stereotype of the Polish fate, and its negative influence is still apparent in the labour culture.

Less is known, however, about the earlier medieval stage of interdependence between the development of East Central Europe and civilisation centres of the West, partly due to the much sparser source material which does not allow to precisely track the phenomena. The longer time distance, on the other hand, suggests only a faint relationship between the processes of that time and the problems of the present. This deprives the research of updating stimuli, even if not quite rightly. Although the scientific literature on the subject has given a considerable amount of thought to the relations with Europe, a special attention

has been paid not to the mechanism of development interdependence but to the process of Poland's entering the civilisation of the Latin West. Even today the Middle Ages are seen as a time of reducing the distance which is mirrored in the name proposed for this region: 'Younger' or 'New Europe'. The turning point was marked by the Christianisation and the process of its social rooting. The second breakthrough fell on the thirteenth century, when due to the internal re-vamping modelled in a big part on the German colonization, the Polish territories became more strongly incorporated into the money economy and socio-political model of Western Europe. According to the widespread opinion, the peripheral location could have protected against the aftermath of the late-medieval crisis. For this reason the descriptions of the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries are weighted towards positive factors, with the emphasis laid on the sustainable demographic, cultural and political advancement of the region. The general picture is dominated by the problems of reception and adaptation, the long-lasting phenomena with blurred contours. The development correlations have been obscure and given little attention.

Taking note of the one-sidedness of the research conducted so far, within the research project entitled 'Poland at the turn of the first and second millennia' the State Committee for Scientific Research has formulated a theme of 'The development of the West as the effect of the relations with the Polish lands and all East Central Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries'. Its implementation was to overcome the limitations of the previous research focused mainly on the effects of Western expansion. To counterbalance the picture, there has been raised the question about the participation of our region in the processes of economic and political integration of the continent. For better understanding of the integration roots there was need to consider the impact made on the development of the advanced countries by their export to the east of industrial products, capital and technical thought, and what was the role of dependence on import of raw materials.

The present book is a result of the attempt to verify these assumptions, which were elaborated upon as the detailed research programme was formulated. Initially, the emphasis was put on making up the fullest possible catalogue of the interactions in the complex process of development of the European economic, social and political system in the late Middle Ages. It was accompanied by the demographic, economic and cultural advancement of the East Central Europe, mentioned above. Accordingly, the question was raised as to what extent the gradually increasing dependence of the economies of the peripheral countries on the relations with the most advanced Western regions could at the same time generate the development impulses for the core. The response was looked

for on three planes. The first one was related to the function of East Central Europe as a source of mass import of raw materials replenishing the exhausting resources of the economic centres: timber and forest products, metal ores, and food. The second plane pertained to the importance of this part of Europe as the outlet for Western urban products, thus stimulating the development of the manufacturing industry under the conditions of late mediaeval economic crisis and drastic fall in population after the epidemic of Black Death 1348–1350. The next plane of interactions could be looked for in the consequences of strengthening of the demographic and economic potential of Eastern Central Europe. This made possible a constant increase in the importance of this region for the European games of political powers and for ideological and intellectual life.

By stressing the development of the West and raising the question of a possible influence over it exercised by the peripheral countries, the perspective has been reversed which offered the chance to strictly verify the criteria of importance of the phenomena used for evaluating the development processes occurring in Poland and the possibility to overcome the limitations of the traditional formula of national history. Hence the emphasis was put on the attempt to renew and broaden the area under discussion through the comparative method. It had become evident in the course of research that an analytic–inductive approach used in searching for the answers to the vital questions concerning the development interrelations through the comparison of the manifestations of contacts and interactions of any type did not hold promise for further significant progress. Making of Europe as a one interlinked entity was an extremely complex process, occurring in a variety of historical spheres of reality. With the exception of foreign conquest and mass immigration, social phenomena are characterised by little mobility and slow dynamics. The spread of the Western model could be surveyed, but in general the process was lengthy and occurred in a selective way, adapting to local context. Also, it is difficult to perceive any significant indications of the influence in the opposite direction, from the periphery to the core. The growth of the unity of the Latin World is most perceptible in the sphere of religious and intellectual culture, but in fact it also amounts to the area of reception phenomena. The factual basis for the analysis of more far-reaching interactions was found only in connection with intellectual elites, thus only this problem has been further studied. It seems to be even more justified in the face of a recently published book by Jerzy Kłoczowski, in which the medieval process of incorporation of Younger Europe into the Christian civilisation is thoroughly presented (*The Younger Europe. East Central Europe in the Ambit of Medieval Christian Civilization*, 1998). It is worth noticing the most recent attempts to present the place of this region in the history of Europe (*The History of Central*

*Eastern Europe*, vols. 1–2, ed. by J. Kłoczowski, 2004; Ch. Lübke, *Das östliche Europe*, 2004). Many of the phenomena occurring here were provided with a new, innovative approach within the framework of comparative outline of the making of Europe and ‘Europeanization’ of its periphery presented by Robert Bartlett (*The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350*, 1993), translated into Polish. There is no need, therefore, to repeat the issues discussed in the recent literature.

This also relates to political history. However, it offers a wider range of analytical possibilities. It should be emphasised the general change in the position of East Central Europe brought about by the catastrophe of Byzantium and Russia after the Mongol invasion with its various consequences such as an advancement of Lithuania and growing threat of Turkish expansion. Of great importance for the contacts with the West were the changes in the German Reich, its territorialisation and transformation of the basis of the imperial power due to an increasing loss of income and search for a power base in the dynasty estates (*Hausmachtkönigtum*). It was a lengthy process that took place in the latter part of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth centuries. Although after the Great Interregnum Rudolf I of Habsburg did undertake a successful repossession of the powers and lands owed to the German king, yet in 1282 by ceding Austria and Styria to his sons as the fee of the German Reich he initiated both the process of shifting the centre of gravity of political power towards the East and the practice of taking advantage of imperial title to look for possibilities of enhancing the position of the dynasty here. Each successive election: of Adolph of Nassau, Albert I of Habsburg, Henry VII, Louis the Bavarian, Charles IV Luxembourg, was accompanied by the bargains and pacts with the prince-electors (*Kurfürsten*) which ruined the material basis of imperial power in the form of lands and revenues. This process was finally ended by Charles IV in 1373 who in connection with the purchase of Brandenburg for his family pledged and sold the so-called New Bohemia which had been created laboriously in the north of Bavaria. These changes and dying out of local ruling families involved the Central European monarchies in the dynastic rivalries in the Houses of Angevin, Luxembourg, Habsburg and Wittelsbach. Even before the fourteenth century dynastic interests were the primary mechanism of foreign policy. In the following century their role did not change much, although as the dualism of power and the structures of estate representation consolidated, the policy of ruler had increasingly to take into account the interests of the state. The role of Poland consisted in restricting the extent of dynastic rivalries. The Polish–Lithuanian Union of Krewo in 1385 and change of the status of Polish monarchy from the hereditary to elective led to actual exclusion of the Polish Kingdom from dynastic calculations. In

my opinion, it was of vital importance for putting the end to the mentioned above process of shifting the centre of gravity of the German Reich towards the East. None of the competing dynasties were able to permanently seize the Polish throne and the union strengthened this state, fundamentally influencing the distribution of forces in this region, and indirectly in Europe. But the broader significance of the factor should not be overestimated, since mediaeval Europe did not make an interrelated system of political forces. The universalistic claims of the emperors never corresponded with real possibilities of their realisation, and the internal territorialisation of the Reich seemed to prevent it permanently. The rivalries were confined to the regional levels and this was not changed despite all the efforts of the successive emperors: Sigismund of Luxembourg, Albert II of Habsburg and Frederic III. A gradual change did not take place until after ca. 1475 — after the end of the Hundred Years' War, in the face of the growing threat of Turkish expansion and, first of all, after the modification of the scale of Habsburg dynastic policy made after the takeover of the Burgundy inheritance. The change collided with the struggle of France for hegemony in Europe. The all-Europe system of international interrelations dates only to the end of the fifteenth century. The East Central European states were drawn into political alliances by the aspirations of the Habsburgs that were dangerous to them, but their participation in the rivalry was of marginal importance.

In the situation outlined above, the analysis of development interrelations could be made only on the basis of economic phenomena. These issues have drawn the attention of the research team who was able to refer to the great achievements of the Polish science, and especially to the Marian Malowist School being continued by Henryk Samsonowicz. It is easy to notice, however, that with reference to the Middle Ages the discussion has waned in the last thirty years and generally it has been confined to the problems that had been developed previously. A change of research priorities and shifting the focus of attention to other subjects is certainly an element of natural development of historiography. It could be seen as the result of exhausted cognitive appeal of the research formula used so far due to the achievement of satisfactory knowledge of the problems at the given stage. In the case of economic history, we deal with a more acute crisis, undoubtedly conditioned by ideological preferences for this type of research under 'real socialism'. Yet, it does not mean the expiration of the achievements made. There was, however, a certain discontinuity of research which has not found a sufficient continuation in younger generations of mediaevalists.

With regards to the main problem a conclusion has been drawn that it was possible to multiply the examples of participation of the Polish lands in the Euro-

pean economic development but it would not lead to any significant change in the picture of interrelations drawn so far. As is known, mediaeval Europe had two main economic axes. The first one was the Mediterranean Sea which throughout the whole analysed period was at a higher level of economic development, and generally was more innovative and advanced. The second centre had gradually grown from Carolingian times alongside the coast of the North Sea with the extension in the system of the Hanseatic towns located on the Baltic coast. Its geographic position was more advantageous to the extensive territorial expansion of trade, and especially to the access to natural resources. The northern zone serves as the main point of reference for the analysis of the development of the Central European periphery. Within this zone, there also developed the most important centres of the West. It is hard to define precisely its geographic boundaries. It can be roughly reduced to the region between the Loire and Rhine Rivers or to the axis of London – Milan. In the high and late Middle Ages grew the role of the centres of the hinterland area, while for Eastern Central Europe of special importance was the development of the southern German cities as the centres of manufacture and capital. The model constructed by Fernand Braudel most precisely and penetratingly describing the structures of economic relations reveals the complex interdependence and hierarchy of economic zones and cities – regional centres. Braudel points out the extent of the outer periphery: ‘the backward areas are not (...) situated solely on the true periphery. In fact, even the core regions are dotted with them. (...) To some extent all developed economies are perforated by countless number of such holes remaining outside the time of the world’ (F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*, vol. 3: *The Perspective of the World*, 1981).

In the reflections presented below the term ‘West’ denotes not only the geographical location but also a determinable social and economic model determining the expansive force of its centres. Robert Bartlett mentioned above has recently shown anew the vital role that the phenomena of expansion and colonization played in the process of formation of Europe. It should be accepted that although ‘the Europeanization of Europe’ meant a far-reaching uniformity, yet it was accompanied by a new diversity following from increasing dependence of periphery. The process of formation and development of European market through the subjugation of less-advanced territories is one of the most important aspects of Europe formation. Admittedly, it is difficult to imagine the expansion of the centres without the subjection of the peripheries that stimulate their development, but the answer to the question about the essential mechanisms of innovation and growth should be looked for in leading regions. It was their internal transformations that affected the economic conditions and demand for exter-

nal goods. It is possible, however, to speak about the dependence of the Western centres on the periphery, but only as a whole, the particular regions of which could have been replaced by the other ones. This applies to the goods imported from the Polish lands. For this reason their role in general changes corresponded with their place of little prominence assigned to them by the more recent synthesis in the broad picture of mediaeval economy. The example of Poland, on the other hand, allows the analysis of incorporation mechanisms of the peripheral countries into the European economy. In the research conducted so far this problem seems to be underestimated and reduced to general observations, whereas it is an important complement to the knowledge of the processes of European growth. With reference to Immanuel Wallerstein's theory, debatable in many respects, but difficult to challenge on general grounds, of the expansion of Europe into the world system, it is necessary to demand a more profound knowledge about the stage of internal expansion that preceded colonization overseas in which the territories of European periphery were made dependent and subjected to the core. In taking up the problem, it is necessary to pose the question as to what extent East Central Europe was an independent, interrelated region and how far its common features were derived from the peripheral location and dependence on the processes occurring in the Western centres. The issue was being discussed at the special conference held in Warsaw in 2002, and the papers presented by the participants were published in the book: *Ostmitteleuropa im 14.–17. Jahrhundert — eine Region oder Region der Regionen?*, edited by M. Dygo, S. Gawlas and H. Grala (Warsaw 2003). The material presented in the present book also suggests the necessity to subscribe to the latter opinion. While not denying various similarities between the particular countries of this part of Europe on the economic plane, there are to be seen clear disparities in responses to external influences and demands. Thus the research should allow for substantial diversity of the regions belonging to our economic zone and the way in which they joined in the international division of labour.

The approach to the subject adopted in the present study refers to the present state of the discussion about a formula of the history of Europe as a civilisation and economic whole. In their search for the place of Poland in the 'Europeanization' processes the authors have emphasised social circumstances of the development in the conditions of tightening contacts with the more rapidly developing centres. The purpose of the first chapter is to introduce to the research issues of the presented volume. Among other things, it outlines the development of the Western social model as a result of successive transformations: the so-called 'feudal revolution', development of autonomous commune–town, commercialisation of social relations, and beginnings of the juridisation

of relations between subjects and rulers. An expansiveness of this model was strengthened by numerous technical innovations, new forms of trade and a system of fairs extending over the majority of the continent. The role of intermediary was played by the German territorial lordship, the model of which was spread by German colonization. The modernisation influences included the Polish lands into a commodity–money economy, but in the conditions of priority for the fiscal interests of rulers who till the end of Piast Poland maintained considerable control over the majority of monetary circulation. A relatively late reform of rural relations favouring grain farming, poor quality of urbanisation and small quantities of money on the market, all increased susceptibility to the late mediaeval crisis of agricultural income. The second chapter presents a model analysis of the mechanisms of reaction to this crisis in the comparative context of the whole East Central Europe region. The basic research method adopted was the dichotomous analysis of market functioning: staple commodities that fulfilled elementary needs and luxury goods for ‘rich consumption’. Growing commercialisation of economy and consumer advancement of cities and towns in Western Europe increased the demand for better agricultural produce and average quality manufactures. The crisis imposed modification of production that, in general, evolved from ‘poor’ to ‘rich’ goods. In the fifteenth century the responses to a change in demand could be also seen in the countries of our region, both in the agricultural sector and manufacturing one. The effectiveness of this restructuring determined the position in the international exchange, export profitability and purchasing power of the country towards its import from the West. Compared with Bohemia and Hungary, the transformation of production in the Polish lands were of the most limited character; there still dominated the ‘poor’ sector, and a vast majority of export volume was, generally, confined to forest products and plain semi–manufactures. Increased external demand for basic foodstuffs came only on the threshold of the sixteenth century.

The next two chapters thoroughly analyse the structure of the commodity exchange with the West and its changes in the late Middle Ages. The third chapter sheds light on the process of incorporation of the Polish lands into the European economy through the Baltic zone. The author focused his attention primarily on the best documented and investigated territories of Teutonic Prussia. The symptoms of the crisis surfaced by the end of the fourteenth century: a breakdown of agricultural production, reorganisation of a domestic market, dropping out of the long-range trade of smaller towns, reduction in the range of exported commodities and increase of imported ones. The change of the function in international exchange brought about both a desire of the biggest cities to monopolise access to deeper hinterlands, and the penetration of foreign capital. In the fif-

teenth century, due to low profitability, there was only a current surplus sold on local markets, without more profound restructuring of the economy. The fourth chapter deals with relationships within the Sudeten–Carpathian area. The emphasis was put on the consolidating the area transit function of the region in international overland trade, which had increased in the fourteenth century. The most important role in commercial agency was played by the merchants of Wrocław (Breslau), Krakow and Lvov (Lemberg). The economic expansion of the southern German towns and cities brought about a dominance of Nuremberg. The present state of research, however, does not permit a more precise evaluation of the balance of commodity trade. The last, fifth chapter is dedicated to other issues, and it presents an analysis of conditions and process of joining in of Polish intellectual elites to the European intellectual life in the late Middle Ages. Of vital importance was the emergence of universities. The first one to grow in significance was Prague, the advancement of which was facilitated by a political interference in the discussions led at the Paris University during the Great Western Schism and emigration of Parisian professors. Its new wave was caused by the Hussite Revolution. In the fifteenth century, there developed several centres in Central Europe, including Krakow. The attractiveness of those new universities was further enhanced by their doctrinal openness. The civilisation advancement of the region meant that it no longer was a periphery in the sphere of intellectual culture. Krakow professors were most successful in the disciplines of theology, international law, mathematics and astronomy. The intellectuals were the first to be rightful partners in ideological disputes and scientific discussions of Europe.

The individual chapters of the book are authorial studies and they constitute separate wholes, attempting to make contemporary, replete with facts, summaries of the current state of knowledge about the selected subjects. At the same time, they differ slightly in regard to their detailed assumptions that mirror the individual research personalities of their authors. The structure of the book, however, has not been fully standardised and there are some, rare but unavoidable, iterations regarding the fundamental problems that only complement and enrich the picture, thus being advantage rather than its disadvantage. An attempt to succinctly summarise the book as a whole seems to be doomed to failure. As its editor and a leader of the research project I feel authorised to present a handful of reflections on the results of our research. Certainly, in the right are those who stress that backwardness is a phenomenon of long standing. The political fragmentation of Europe and formation of national states left more place than in other cultures for free development of economic and social phenomena, movement of standards, play of modernisation innovations and market forces.

This gave the integration the character of a process that in great part was objective and independent of European self-awareness. Peripheral location and late entrance into the Latin World did not determine the scale of the backwardness nor imposed on the development the mechanistic determination in reproducing underdevelopment. The civilisation progress, however, should be regarded as a whole. A specificity of Polish reaction to the early modern demand for corn resulted, to a large extent, from the modernisation of the thirteenth century. It had brought about a development of commodity–money economy, reception of the model of autonomous commune–town, and basic institutions of estate society. No doubt that, compared with the other countries of the region, the Polish territories had fewer assets in form of natural resources and fertility of land — especially when taking into account the importance of ore mining regarded as a developmental factor of those times. At the same time, the attention should be paid to the more selective reception and lowering of the standards of German colonization model that, at any rate, was a product of the underdeveloped territories east of the ancient limes.

The poorer quality of urbanisation and lower commercialisation of social life in Poland was not conducive to the processes of restructuring of agricultural and craft production in the adverse conditions of the late mediaeval crisis. The situation was better handled by the countries with stronger and well-developed domestic market, better consumption and, in general, of a higher level of civilisation progress. It could be seen how important role the distribution of social income played in making use of the surge in external demand: to what extent was it appropriated for luxury consumption of the elites, based on import, and to what degree did it leave a place for civilisation advancement of the broader population and its participation in consumption of not only basic commodities. Effectiveness of modernisation is determined to a large extent by the way of a country's participation in international trade. It is not sufficient to meet the challenge of the times by the elites only and to mobilise to this end a large part of social income if it is not accompanied by an increase in productivity and in living standards of the majority of society. Each new historical age opens new development perspectives, but at the same time it creates new dangers of their inadequate use. The authors hope that the presented analyses will be taken into account in the discussion about the mechanisms of forming of mediaeval Europe. We dedicate the book to Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, to whom it owes its existence.

*Slawomir Gawlas*

Slawomir Gawlas

Commercialization as an Europeanization mechanism  
of the periphery on the example of Poland

• SUMMARY •

The process of incorporation of the Polish lands and whole region of East Central Europe into the Latin European civilisation was accompanied both by the adoption of its achievements and levelling-out of differences, and by subjecting of the development to the needs of developing Western centres. The innovative potential of the Western social model was created through the accumulation of successive transformations: so-called 'feudal revolution', development of autonomous commune-town, commercialisation of social relations and rise of literate culture, beginnings of the juridisation of relations between subjects and rulers, the 'commercial revolution' of the thirteenth century and development of network of regional fairs encompassing the greater part of the continent. In East Central Europe the role of agent was played by German territorial lordship (*Landesherrschaft*) the model of which, from the twelfth century on, provided to the eastern neighbours of the German Reich the proven patterns for modernisation of the basis of the rule (*melioratio terrae*). Its instrument was German colonization, and the benefits from an influx of German merchants, peasants and minor nobility were monopolised by Piast princes. The modernisation influences of the West induced mainly the adoption of new standards of social life and incorporation of the Polish lands into the international trade system. The economic factors were gaining in importance along with the advancing commercialisation of internal social relations and power mechanisms. Its beginnings were marked by influx of foreign coins (Arabian, and after 970 Saxon), and the primary export commodity was slaves. The Polish state arising in the tenth century was incorporated into such international exchange that made it possible to support the *družyna* – 'team' of prince's guards, and to expand territorially. Presumably the actual monetarisation of internal relations began after the collapse of slaves export; it was imposed for the fiscal purposes and had a character of dramatic breakthrough related to mass minting of his own coins by Boleslaus the Bold after being crowned King in 1076. In the twelfth century the response of Poland to the accelerated monetarisation of European economy was a development of fiscal functions of the mintage, including increasingly frequent renewal of coinage (*renovatio monetae*), which after 1170 finally took on the form of bracteates. A shortage of silver coin was eased by intensifying peasant services and long survival of non-monetary media of exchange. The network of markets made it possible for the Piast princes to exert strict control over the circulation of

money. Its continuation was a model of complex German colonization — *Stadt–Landkolonisation*. It emerged in the less developed eastern areas of the German Reich at the early stage of money economy and was well-suited to the needs of peripheral countries. It involved, among other things: a large-scale forest clearing, setting up of market settlements (*villae forenses*), bracteates and *renovatio monetarum*, introduction of the three-field system and intensification of grain farming. In the case of the towns, the full control of commercial devices subjected the exchange development to the fiscal needs of the princes and hampered the economic independence. From the mid-thirteenth century a new model of town on the ‘Law of Magdeburg’ offered much better conditions and municipal autonomy, but the older *villa forensis* pattern of town incorporations on the German law, consisting in organisation of a ready market for agricultural products, maintained its vitality. By the end of the thirteenth century, an important change occurred as the result of monetary reform that introduced *grossus* (*grosz*). A leading role in the German colonization was played by Silesia which was not included in the Polish Kingdom re-united at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Only in this century the model of German colonization was used by the last Piasts for internal modernisation to restore the king demesne. The chances of more intense development of commodity–money economy based on the model of German colonization decreased with the lapse of time. The preference for grain production, coupled with the low urbanization and small amount of money on the market, made the economy of the Polish Kingdom vulnerable to the late mediaeval crisis of agriculture income and conducive to its evolution to the direction of *folwark* (a form of manorial estate adapted to the efficient use of villein labour services). It is not a matter of chance that in the early modern era such tendencies occurred in the almost whole area of German colonization east of the Elbe.

Marian Dygo

The East and the West: European economy in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries

• SUMMARY •

Due to the diversity in economic development of late mediaeval Europe the countries of East Central Europe might be regarded as fitting to the category of less wealthy or poorer. The unevenly developing regions of the continent were interlinked by commercial ties of various intensity. Thus the question arises as to whether the economic structure of the East Central European states structure was adapting to the needs of the wealthier countries of Western Europe.

This has been the opinion of historians who analyse the economic relations between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe on the basis of the paradigm of core and periphery. The renewed examination of the subject leads to the conclusion that the economic changes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Poland, Bohemia and Hungary progressed in their own pace conditioned on the difference of economic and social structures. In some cases, the changes went in a direction similar to that of Western Europe, while in others such similarity was not in evidence. The greater the convergence of the development, the greater the volume and value of trade between the given East Central European country and the Western European states.

The changes in the economy of late mediaeval Europe stemmed from the commercialisation of the economy in the eleventh–thirteenth centuries. This was accompanied by the meeting of the consumer needs of the urban and rural social elites for expensive food and luxury non–agricultural goods. Whereas the consumption needs of the lower orders were not met, or even more: elite consumption was made increasingly at the expense of the consumption of lower social groups. In the West, the climax of this conflict of interests fell at the turn of the fourteenth century. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Western European economy was restructured, which had far–reaching consequences both for the structure and geography of agricultural and non–agricultural production and distribution of goods. In connection to this restructuring consumption needs of the wider population were met, and not only on the basic level — ‘rich’ food and good–quality non–agricultural products became more accessible to them.

A similar revamping of the economy occurred, to various extent, in the countries of East Central Europe. Presumably, it was most advanced in the Kingdom of Bohemia; an extra stimulus was provided by a breakdown of the local mining of silver ores in the later part of the fourteenth century. The Bohemian economy was based on new products of the rural economy (winemaking, fish farming) and non–agricultural goods (cloth); these new products well satisfied the needs of not only native consumers, but also customers on the nearby Western markets (Austria, Southern Germany). There was also a restructuring of the economy in late mediaeval Hungary towards the ‘rich’ products (cattle farming, winemaking). It was these goods, and not raw materials (gold and copper) that formed the basis of the Hungarian export to the West in the fifteenth century. In Hungary, however, restructuring of non–agricultural production (cloth) was far less evident than in Bohemia. Evidence is mounting to suggest that the changes in the late mediaeval Hungarian economy were driven by domestic rather than foreign demand. Export provided an additional stimulus in this transformation.

In fifteenth-century Poland, on the other hand, a potential foreign demand for the produces of ‘new’ agriculture or goods of ‘new’ non-agricultural production was not responded to. The ‘poor’ cultivation and ‘poor’ non-agricultural manufacture still prevailed, and the commodities made here could not count on consumers from the West, nor from the countries of East Central Europe. This state of affairs allows the assumption that in thirteenth–fourteenth-century Poland the process of commercialization rested on weaker foundations. This is the reason why in the fifteenth century the nobility made the attempts to deprive the peasants of their economic independence, impose serfdom on them and to base the noble economy primarily on the *folwark* — a form of manorial estate tailored to the efficient use of unpaid labour services. Polish exports to the West was based mainly on raw materials (timber) and simple semi-manufactures.

The structure of imports to the countries of Eastern Central Europe depended on the level of restructuring of the local economies. Bohemia was getting many expensive food and manufacture goods. The top commodities for Hungarian imports were similar, although amongst the non-agricultural commodities (cloth) a bigger role was played by the goods of medium price. Imports to Poland, on the other hand, seems to be fairly ‘poor’ — it could not have been otherwise, since exports from Poland should be termed as such. The foreign trade situation of Poland improved only in the sixteenth century, when the prices revolution triggered in the West a demand for ‘poor’ products of Polish agriculture.

Roman Czaja

The Baltic zone in the European economy of the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries,  
with special focus on Teutonic Prussia

• SUMMARY •

The chapter presents the results of research focused on the relations between the long-range trade and the structure of the domestic market and agricultural production of the Teutonic state in Prussia. It discusses in turn: the geographic extent of the Prussian trade, its commodity structure, relationship between long-range commerce and the state economy and finally, the economic crisis of Teutonic Prussia at the turn of the fifteenth century. In the thirteenth-century commercial relations between the countries of the Vistula basin and the West participated both the merchants from Lübeck and Halle, and from Prussian towns, from Danzig, but also Polish traders. During the fourteenth century the Prussian merchants strengthened their influence in the Baltic and North Sea regions, the Atlantic Coast and in the territories of raw materials supply: the Pol-

ish lands, Russia, Slovakia. At the same time the number of participants in the commercial exchange between Prussia and Western Europe decreased. In the fourteenth century the trade was dominated by the entrepreneurs from the biggest Prussian cities: Gdańsk (Danzig), Toruń (Thorn) and Elbląg (Elbing), and in the fifteenth century the Prussian commerce was monopolised by Gdańsk. The author of the chapter argues against the opinion that as a result of the mid-fourteenth-century great plague there was a breakdown in the crop exportation from the Baltic zone to the West. The preserved sources indicate that from the latter part of the fourteenth century onwards, grain was one of the most important export goods of the Prussian trade. An analysis of the accounting books of the Teutonic Order reveals that at the turn of the fifteenth century in the western part of the Teutonic state and in Cuiavia there was a well developed system of grain purchase, a considerable element of which were the small towns along the Vistula River. The system was able to absorb a small surplus produced by the numerous minor nobility, monastic manors and probably even by peasants – that, in sum, in years of bumper crops amounted to a considerable quantity. In light of the present research, it seems that the demand for grain did not induce structural changes in the organisation of noble landed property and agricultural production nor growth of wealth of the producers. In the fourteenth century the long-range commerce stimulated the development of cloth manufacture in the Prussian towns and cities. Up to the end of the fourteenth century the Teutonic state was a receptive market for the cloth manufactured in the West as well as for spices and silk. Due to the crisis of the Hanseatic trade a majority of the small towns lost their direct contact with the long-range trade and their functions were restricted to local markets. From the end of the fourteenth century onward, local markets of the countries along the southern Baltic coast became an expansion target of Dutch and South German merchants who traded not only in luxuries but also in everyday commodities. Among the big cities, the effects of increasingly unfavourable conditions for the Hanseatic trade were mostly felt in Elbląg and Toruń. The author argues against the view that during the first half of the fifteenth century there was a strengthening of the relations between the Prussian trade and Polish hinterland. In his opinion, up to the middle of the fifteenth century, the greatest quantities of grain exported via Gdańsk came from Prussia and Cuiavia, just like in the previous century. Exportation of grain produced by the lands more distant from Prussia was profitable only at times of specially high prices. It was not until the end of the fifteenth century that in the Gdańsk trade appeared the small volumes of Sandomierz wheat and rye from around the central Vistula and from Lesser Poland.

Grzegorz Myśliwski

The Sudeten–Carpathian area. Position of Silesia, Little Poland and Western Ruthenia in the Western European economy (mid–thirteenth — early sixteenth century)

• SUMMARY •

The great trade route between the Netherlands and the Genoa colonies on the Black Sea that run through the Polish lands had developed between ca. 1240 and 1360. The links on the line between Lvov (Lemberg), Krakow and Wrocław (Breslau) were of crucial importance for maintaining the connections between Western Europe and its Eastern part and the territories protected by the *Pax Mongolica*. Already by the end of the thirteenth century merchants from Central Europe arrived with their goods in Bruges. In the late Middle Ages they participated in the fairs in Frankfurt on the Main, Erfurt, Bergen–op–Zoom and Antwerp, probably also in Venice. At the same time in Silesia, Little Poland and Red Ruthenia there developed a network of local markets which were incorporated into the system of markets of Western Europe. Various Oriental commodities arrived through Red Ruthenia to the West. For Western Europe, however, much more important were the goods traded in through the analysed zone from Central and Eastern Europe (pelts, copper, mercury, silver, vitriol, oxen, and red dye from Polish Cochineal — *Porphyropha polonica*). They were exported mainly to Germany, and also to northern Italy.

The Sudeten–Carpathian area was a receptive market for various commodities manufactured in the West: cloth, fustian, dyes and many Mediterranean and Oriental goods. Silesia, Little Poland and Red Ruthenia had their own export offer (in total 21 products). And in so far as in the thirteenth century the basic export products were the minerals (silver, gold, lead) and forest products (pelts, wax), so in the fourteenth century lead gained in importance and there began the export of salt, millwheels, hops and cheap cloth. In the fifteenth century the export of Ruthenian oxen, fustian and grain came to the fore (lead export was still ongoing). The consumers of those commodities were Germany, Flanders, Venice, England, Sweden and the Teutonic state in Prussia.

Purely financial relations with Western Europe stemmed from the Peter's pence paid to the Papal See. From the first half of the fourteenth century onwards, the merchants from Krakow and Wrocław took the collected sums to Bruges where the money was handed over to papal agents (for instance to the Bardis from Florence). It appears in evidence also that in the late Middle Ages there were in use the credit transaction: credit on goods and money credit. The traders from Wrocław, Krakow and Lvov tended more often to take up credits rather than to grant them. The main role was played by the entrepreneurs from Toruń (Thorn), the southern German cities (mainly Regensburg and Nurem-

berg), and also from Venice. In the early part of the fifteenth century in Silesia and Little Poland there was an adoption of bill of exchange.

The Sudeten-Carpathian area was also a region of intense immigration that had an impact on the economic life and connections with Western Europe. There were the Jews (present in the Polish lands from at least the tenth century), but of special significance were the newcomers from Germany and Italia (especially Genoa and Florence). Apart from trade and financial activities they were interested in leasing of the mines of precious metals, lead and salt. In Red Ruthenia the Armenians came into prominence, being the outstanding merchants and creditors. The development of Silesia, on the other hand, was influenced by weavers from Wallonia.

In the thirteenth century the balance of payments of the Sudeten–Carpathian zone could have been equal, but in the following century it became passive and changed into active only later on, with the increasing export supplies of mass goods to the West.

Krzysztof Ożóg

Position of Poland in the intellectual development  
of fourteenth–fifteenth-century Europe

• SUMMARY •

The emergence of the two greatest European universities in Bologna and Paris, then a number of smaller ones in France, Italy and England, brought about a great intellectual breakthrough in Europe of the twelfth–thirteenth century. The universities became centres of cultivation and dissemination of knowledge. As early as at the turn of the thirteenth century the countries of Central and East Central Europe entered the sphere of intellectual radiation of Paris and Bologna, because those attracted their students. Poland, at the time on the frontiers of the Latin World, was its most distant periphery in terms of intellectual culture. Till the second part of the fourteenth century functioned here, like in all East Central Europe, smaller intellectual centres connected to cathedral or mendicant schools. In the thirteenth century several of the clergymen from the Polish lands and associated with the Gnezno Metropolis marked their presence on the intellectual life of Europe in philosophy, optics, astronomy, physics, canon law, historiography, homilies and medicine. They were: Witelo, Franco de Polonia, Stephanus Polonus, Laurentius Polonus, Martinus Oppaviensis Polonus, Nicolaus Polonus and Thomas de Wratislavia. An enhancement of the intellectual life in Central and East Central Europe began after the establishment of a university in Prague (1348), Krakow (1364), Vienna (1365), Pécs (1367), Erfurt

(1379), Heidelberg (1386) and Cologne (1388). In the latter part of the fourteenth century the Charles University in Prague became the greatest intellectual centre in this part of Europe, and its role was strengthened as a result of the Great Schism of the West and crisis of the Paris university community. Since the development of the university in Krakow, founded by Casimir III the Great, was stalled after only few years of its establishment, large number of Poles went to study in Prague, where they worked as scholars as well. But doctrinal arguments at the Charles University and the crisis provoked by the Hussite Revolution led to the collapse of the Prague intellectual centre and migration of its scholars to the universities of Central and East Central Europe. At that time several Polish intellectuals marked their participation in the European philosophical and theological thought: Matthaeus de Cracovia, Henricus Bitterfeld de Brzeg, Nicolaus Magni de Jawor and Matthias de Legnica. The re-establishment of the Krakow University by King Ladislaus Jagiello in 1400 and immigration of scholars from Prague to Krakow led to the emergence of a significant intellectual community with international reach. After the collapse of Prague, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century in Central and East Central Europe developed a polycentric system in which an important role was played by the universities in Vienna, Heidelberg, Cologne and Krakow. In Vienna and Krakow there were favourable conditions for the cultivation of astronomy, mathematics and philosophy of nature, where the foundations were laid for the Copernicus Revolution. The Krakow University had two separate astronomy departments — of Johannes Stobner (from ca. 1405 onwards) and of Martinus Rex of Żórawica (from ca. 1450) that made it possible to conduct the research of the discipline. Amongst the most eminent Krakow astronomers ranked such names as: Martinus Rex of Żórawica, Martinus Bylica of Olkusz, Adalbert Blar of Brudzew, Petrus Gaszowiec, Johannes de Glogovia and Martinus Biem of Olkusz. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries they created here a school of astronomy, mathematics and astrology attracting scholars and students from throughout Central and East Central Europe. Many of the astronomers and mathematicians of the German Reich studied at the Krakow University. Several of Krakow scholars were lecturing on astronomy at the Bologna University, where they disseminated their scientific achievements. The great debates about ending of the Western Schism, thorough reform of the Church *in capite et in membris*, and the most important problems of Christendom held at, for instance, the councils of Pisa, Constance, Pavia–Siena and Basel, allowed for the Krakow University to creatively engage in the development of the European theological, philosophical and legal thought. The treatises and writings by Krakow scholars, among others Petrus Wysz, Paulus Vladimiri, Thomas Strzempiński and Jacobus of Paradyż, were widely read and discussed throughout all Europe.

*Translated by Grażyna Waluga*

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. St. Adalbert bishop of Prague standing against slave trade before Bohemian Prince Boleslav II — the bronze doors of the Gniezno Cathedral, last quarter of the 12th c.
2. Slaves in neck shackle, detail of the Fig. 1.
3. A rowing boat, St. Adalbert arriving in Prussia — the Gniezno Doors.
4. Pan scales, detail of the scene of weighing silver for buying back the body of St. Adalbert from the Prussians — the Gniezno Doors.
5. Bracteates of Mieszko the Old; a–b — the enthroned Prince with his ducal coronet on the head and a sword of justice and sceptre in his hands; in the rim an inscription: MESICO ADAL (St. Adalbert); c — the enthroned Prince with a ducal coronet and a sword of justice, in the rim a Hebrew inscription: MSZKA; d — a strutting lion, in the rim a Hebrew inscription: MSZKA KROL POLSKI [Mieszko King of Poland].
6. Forest clearing, the scene of Noah's Ark building — Czerwińsk, the Abbey Church of Canons Regular, first half of the 13th c.
7. Konin, a pole marking the 'road peace' — prince's protection of roads, in 1151 placed halfway between Kalisz and Kruszwica by comes palatine Peter, in the present place since 1818.
8. A stone of wax from the excavations at earth stronghold in Pultusk; the 2nd half of the 13th c. – 1st half of the 14th c.
9. Purchasing of a village, detail of purchase of Piotrawin from the triptych of Kobylin with scenes from the life of St. Stanislaus, ca. 1518.
10. A slab of Hungarian copper transported through Poland, lifted out by scuba divers.
11. Cog boat, a dominant means of sea transport in the 12th–14th cc. and a symbol of the merchant community of the Hanseatic League — the city seals of: a — town of Elbląg (Elbing), 1242, and b — secret city seal of Gdańsk (Danzig), 14th c.
12. Commodities exported from the Polish territories on a 'Hulc' boat, called Miedzio-wiec (Copper Ship), which sunk ca. 1424 near Gdansk (Danzig) due to a fire of pitch carried on the board: the oak barrels, slabs of copper, iron bars and slates of iron ore (*osmund* iron) exhibited in the Polish Maritime Museum in Gdansk (Danzig).

13. A bundle of iron bars, above: a board with a merchant's ownership mark (trademark).
14. A pile of oak planks for barrels, and nearby a bundle of iron bars.
15. View of Warsaw, engraving by Abraham Hogenberg, after 1586.
16. Vistula River boats, among others *galar* (lighter) and *dubas* (barge), detail of the Fig. 15.
17. Boats and floats on the Vistula River, the harbour and timber store near Krakow, detail of the Fig. 42.
18. View of Gdansk (Danzig), engraving by G. Braun, F. Hogenberg, 1572–1618.
19. Sea and river ships at the Gdansk (Danzig) Harbour (*byk* — flatboat and *galar* — lighter) — drawing by F. A. Lohrman, 1770.
20. Complaint about trading in fake furs with enclosed sample of the fur in question — a letter from the senior members of the Hanseatic League counter at Bruges to the City Council of the Old Torun (Thorn), from 16 February 1446.
21. Fur trading — a meeting between Hanseatic and Novgorod traders at the court of St. Peter in Novgorod, detail of the pews relief from the St. Nicholas Church in Stralsund, the 2nd half of the 14th c.
22. Gdansk (Danzig) *Żuraw* — harbour crane built in the mid–15th century on the city gate on the Motława River, state before 1939.
23. Iron model of an official length unit called 'Chelmno rod' from the mid–14th century on the west façade of the City Hall, shifted from the parochial church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, its length: 15 Chelmno feet a 0,288 m = 4,32 m.
24. The City Hall in Torun (Thorn), the south–east view. It was built in stages, starting from the merchant house after 1259, the tower — a symbol of municipal autonomy after 1274, a uniform building complex integrated in the 14th c., later rebuilt many times, it housed municipal authorities and commercial rooms.
25. Grudziądz — granaries on the Vistula River, the bottom Gothic parts, state before 1939.
26. Stoneware pitchers imported from Siegburg and Waldenburg, 14<sup>th</sup>–15th cc., discovered during archaeological works at Elbląg (Elbing).
27. Commodities packing, engraving from ca. 1511.
28. Commercial packaging at market place, wood engraving ca. 1480.
29. Loading of merchant ship, a drawing from the manuscript of the Trojan War, 1441.
30. Herring fishing at Scania coast, detail of the engraving, the 16th c.
31. Wine barrel.
32. Ownership mark on empty *osmund* oak barrel.
33. German merchant at the Hanseatic League counter in London with the tools of his trade, a portrait of Georg Giese by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1532, detail.
34. Commercial lump of lead, so-called 'piece', from Little Poland mines, weighing 11 hundredweights (almost 700 kilos), presumably from the times of King Ladis-

- laus I (the Elbow–High), 1320–1333, discovered in the Krakow marketplace by the team under the leadership of C. Buško.
35. Royal marks on the lump: a — the crown, a symbol of the Polish Kingdom; b — half an eagle and half a lion, coat of arms of the Piasts of Kujawy offshoot.
  36. Krakow Cloth Hall (Sukiennice), state before rebuilding, 1875.
  37. Great municipal scales: a scene from Adam Kraft’s relief with the weighting of merchant’s goods, Nuremberg, the end of the 15th c.
  38. Wroclaw City Hall, seat of municipal authorities and symbol of their autonomy, built from the end of the 13th c. on, late Gothic rebuilding after 1470.
  39. View of Wroclaw, 1740, detail.
  40. View of Lvov, A. Passarotti 1618, G. Braun, F. Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarum*.
  41. Foundation Charter of Krakow University by King Casimir the Great, 12 May 1364.
  42. View of Krakow, 1603–1605, G. Braun, F. Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarum*.
  43. Courtyard of the Collegium Maius (Great College) of Krakow University, end of the 15th — beginning of the 16th c.
  44. Foundation plaque of the Jerusalem Dormitory in Krakow founded by Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, with a date of 1453.
  45. The beginning of the University Register with student registrations for 1400.
  46. Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki kneeling before the Heavenly Mother — a drawing from the Charter Book of Krakow Chapter, ca. 1445.
  47. A title page of the manuscript called ‘Świętokrzyski’ of the *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae* (Annals or Chronicles of the Famous Kingdom of Poland) by Jan Długosz, beginning of the 16th c.
  48. Manuscript of the ‘Świętokrzyski Annals’, 15th c.
  49. Teacher explaining text to his pupils, with a rod in his hand, one of the students punished for indolence by putting a donkey head — Rodericus Zamorensis, *Spiegel des Menschlichen Lebens*, 1479.
  50. Scholar at work — tombstone of Filip Callimachus by Veit Stoss in the Dominican Church in Krakow, detail, ca. 1502.
  51. Codex of medical treatises, presumably Paris, ca. 1300.
  52. Students in clerical clothing listening to lecture, woodcut from 15th c.
  53. Book a working tool of scholar — a gloss in late mediaeval music treatise.