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PhD Thesis

**Episcopal towns in the light of the 1650
inventory of the Płock bishopric estate**

Abstract

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Episcopal towns in the light of the 1650 inventory of the Płock bishopric estate

The urbanisation of centers belonging to the estate of the Płock bishopric took place, with varying intensity, between 1327, that is, the granting of a town charter to Górzno, and 1528, the granting of a town charter to Andrzejewo. Of the seven towns discussed, three received their charters in the fourteenth century, one in the fifteenth century, and the last three in the sixteenth century. This corresponds to the chronology and dynamics of town foundations in Mazovia, with only one difference: the process of establishing Mazovian towns continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The last such foundation took place in 1791.

The term “episcopal towns” in the title refers to seven towns located within the territory of the then Diocese of Płock which formed part of the endowment of the bishops of Płock. These were: Andrzejewo, Brok, Czerwińsk, Górzno, Pułtusk, Raciąż, and Wyszaków.

The aim of this dissertation is to determine the status of these seven episcopal towns, as well as the episcopal urban residences in the early modern period, based on the 1650 inventory of the Płock bishopric property. The inventory has rarely been studied so far, despite being a rich source for research on large area of Masovia, as well as demographic, social, and economic phenomena within the then Płock bishopric. The discussion is presented basing on the achievements on the subject and preservation and content of the Płock bishopric inventories from the 16th to 18th centuries. The results are also compared with the state of research on the royal towns of Masovia.

For the dissertation source material from the archival collections of the Diocesan Archives in Płock was used, inventories (inspections of bishops’ estates) from 1595, 1650, 1693, 1773 and 1785, as well as visitation records and the Central Archives of Historical Records. Printed collections containing studies of historical documents, adding numerous studies dating from the 19th century and, mostly, from the second half of the 20th century to the present day, were also helpful.

The description of inventories from the 16th to 18th centuries, as well as the time, circumstances, and course of the 1650 inspection, conducted at the initiative of the bishop of Płock, Karol Ferdynand Vasa, from May to December by four selected cathedral canons commissioned by the Płock Chapter. Each of the subsequent chapters from the second to the eighth, is devoted to seven episcopal towns in Masovia. For each of them, the following are discussed: an outline of the history, the background of their

incorporation, the privileges, endowments, and municipal rights obtained, their size, settlement activities, the status and life of the townspeople, the structure and organisation of municipal authorities, demographic and economic changes, trade and crafts, the religious and parish life of their inhabitants, and educational and cultural aspects. The differences in the functioning of these bigger and smaller towns, were highlighted, resulting from their geographical location, natural environment, local and regional communication capabilities, connections between them and the manors and villages of the six centres in the bishops' estates to which they belonged to, and the burdens to which they were subjected. An important supplement was the consequences of the natural disasters recorded in Mazovia in the 16th – 18th centuries. The results of the mid-17th century lustration, the relations between the municipal government and the bishop, and the annual sums of income and rents took up key sections in the chapters. The Płock bishopric belonged to the Old Polish towns were among the most well-endowed, after the Archbishopric of Gniezno and the bishoprics of Kraków and Kujawy.

The material contained in the surveys concerns a significant area of Mazovia and a significant population, where Płock diocese was the most important beneficiary of these lands, bringing financial and material benefits to their owners. Each of the studied towns had its own, unique character.

Oppidum Andrzejewo, located on the site of the village of Wronie, owed its name to its founder, Bishop of Płock, Andrzej Krzycki; Brok, surrounded by the White Forest, was an important river port and played a significant role in grain trade. Czerwińsk was an example of complex ownership relations, belonging to the owners: the abbot of Czerwińsk, the monastery, and the bishop of Płock, with its impressive complex of regular canons towering over the city and the cult of Our Lady of Czerwińsk. Górzno was picturesquely situated in the Dobrzyń Land, in the smallest episcopal estate, to which the bishop of Płock had drawn the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Pułtusk, the second most important centre in the Płock was important for local and regional trade, with a collegiate church and Jesuit college. Raciąż was the meeting place of the Płock voivodship regional assemble, the court, and the place where the militia was encamped. Wyszaków, situated on the Bug River, surrounded by the Biała and Kamieniecka Forests, had a well-developed transportation network and the cult of St. Giles. The dissertation also aimed to investigate the causes of the slow decline of Masovian towns from the first quarter of the seventeenth century after their heyday in the 16th century. Chapter nine is devoted to six urban residences, to which the bishops of Płock paid special attention. Located on the

outskirts of towns, they served as places for summer recreation, entertaining guests, fulfilling pastoral duties, concerning the clergy, administering the diocese, and managing extensive estate. They satisfied the needs and ambition of the bishops, simultaneously emphasizing their position: the magnificent palaces in Pułtusk and Brok, the residential complex in Wyszaków, and the manors in Górzno, Czerwińsk and Raciąż. A comprehensive analysis, with a comparative static approach, constitutes the original approach to the research project.

The 1650 inventory of episcopal estates offers extensive research opportunities in a wide range of areas.

The estate complexes of the episcopal estates consisted of towns, demesne farms, and villages. The capital of the bishopric was Płock, located in the Płock estate complex, but during the period of the First Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the Bishop of Płock no longer possessed ownership rights over that town. The urban centers episcopal ‘oppida’ and ‘civitates’- lay in other estate complexes. None of the towns discussed here, however, lay outside the diocese, for example in the Gródek estate complex in Podlasie. In the Brok estate complex the bishop owned Andrzejewo and Brok; in the Wyszaków estate complex, Wyszaków; in the Raciąż estate complex, Raciąż; in the Pułtusk estate complex, Pułtusk; and in the Górzno estate complex, Górzno. In the Czerwińsk estate complex, Czerwińsk belonged to the episcopal estates only in part. The Bishop of Płock was therefore the owner of these seven towns. By comparison, the bishops of Kuyavia owned only Raciążek and Wolbórz.

The inventory contains descriptions of the towns belonging to the bishops of Płock which are, to a large extent, comparable. Villages and demesne farms were inventoried dissertation, the inventory is examined exclusively with regard to towns. Villages and demesne farms have deliberately been omitted, since they were described differently and functioned under a different legal framework. Only where nearby demesne farms were closely connected with towns or episcopal residences are they given somewhat more attention. The inventory contains descriptions of the towns belonging to the Bishop of Płock which are, to a large extent, comparable. Villages and demesne farms were inventoried according to a detailed form repeated in the descriptions of all estate complexes.

The key research problem is to answer the following questions: by 1650, had the episcopal towns developed typically urban economic and social structures, with only a rural hinterland, or had they remained urban-rural centers? Were there visible symptoms

of their decline, widely discussed in relation to Mazovian towns between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries? Did these towns, distinguished according to the criterion of ownership, possess special features in comparison with other towns, or did they share common features not observed elsewhere?

The aim is to analyze descriptions of the towns in the light of the valuable and rich source that is the 1650 inventory of episcopal estates, and to discuss them in the individual chapters of the dissertation. Previous studies and works concerning the episcopal towns of the Diocese of Płock used the inventory only episodically and fragmentarily. As already mentioned, older town monographs also presented their image in a biased way. In the descriptions prepared for this dissertation, a uniform form has been used, taking into account the information contained in the source concerning municipal land, the obligations of townspeople, craftsmen, mills, municipal self-government, and the overall sum of revenue. The inspections contained in other inventories of the estates of the Płock bishopric from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century have been used as a supplement for an in-depth comparative analysis of each town.

The location of the estate complexes within the estates of the Płock bishopric was highly favourable, which can be demonstrated in many research aspects. The administration of this extensive landed estate was facilitated by communication possibilities. The Pułtusk estate complex lay on the lower Narew; the Wyszaków, Brok, and Gródek estate complexes lay on the Bug; and the Jabłonna, Czerwińsk, and Płock estate complexes lay on the Vistula. The remaining estate complexes, Raciąż and Mąkolin, located one or two days' journey from Płock, were connected by road routes. The location of the Górzno estate complex, however, offered unsatisfactory conditions for rapid communication. Górzno was two or three days from Toruń and one day from Brodnica, situated on the Drwęca. Efficient communication facilitated the movement of people and the transport of goods and agricultural produce. It stimulated trade and services in connection with fairs and markets. It is also worth noting that, in the period under study, the estate complexes were distributed in such a way that they essentially formed one fairly coherent belt stretching through the central part of the then vast diocese. Certain exceptions were the estates in Podlasie — the Gródek estate complex — Górzno in the Dobrzyń Land, and the estates in the region of the far northern town of Grajewo.

Detailed research questions concerning episcopal small towns and townlets focused on determining their condition, size, ownership and lease holding, the types of municipal and vogt land, their model of functioning and main forms of economy — that is, crafts

and trade - their endowments and burdens, legal framework and municipal system, economic and agrarian history, the burgher and clerical estates, settlement, social relations and demographic changes, religious and parish life, as well as onomastics. In order to emphasize the distinctiveness of the functioning of episcopal towns, references are made to an outline of their history, foundation, privileges obtained, geographical location, natural environment, and local communication.

Chapter One is an introduction to the critical analysis of source texts concerning the subject of the dissertation. The surviving inventories of episcopal estates from inspections carried out between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries provide a solid basis for studying the history of all episcopal towns. The inventories from 1595, 1650 - in both the original and a copy - 1692-1693, 1753, 1773, and 1785 are characterized in detail, also with regard to their state of preservation and the editions of the written texts. It was also important to take into account their territorial scope. Owing to differences in this respect, not all urban centers can be analyzed throughout the entire period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, in the light of only partially preserved data which often refer only to the part of the estates situated on one side or the other of the Narew, since this was the criterion most frequently applied by the inspectors. The chapter also includes important information about inventories that are unknown and not preserved, or not found, and only very rarely mentioned.

Chapter Two presents the town of Andrzejewo in the Brok estate complex, today a village and 'sołectwo', whose origins go back to the Middle Ages. Andrzejewo is an example of the interesting genesis and transformations of small towns, of which there were many in mid-seventeenth-century Mazovia. It was founded under Chełmno law on the initiative of the Bishop of Płock, Andrzej Krzycki, from whose first name it took its own. It was well connected by trade routes. The text of the episcopal foundation privilege, preserved thanks to a copy, is quoted. It therefore provides information about the privileges, endowments, exemptions, and obligations that the Bishop of Płock granted to the townspeople of Andrzejewo, but also - and importantly - about the foundations of the creation of urban infrastructure and administration. In the mid-seventeenth century Andrzejewo was facing progressing economic stagnation. The inspection is distinguished by a list of twenty-four peasant settlers who, for a fee, obtained the status of townsmen. Andrzejewo faced competition from episcopal Brok, as well as from Nur and Czyżew. Did Andrzejewo fully exploit the opportunities resulting from the privileges granted to it?

Chapter Three presents the history of Brok on the River Bug, a centre in the Brok estate complex which played an important role in the grain trade and was an important river port. It was located on the trade route connecting Pomerania with Kievan Rus'. The Bug marked a river trade and transport route. The town, with its castle — the episcopal summer residence - surrounded by the White Forest, became famous in the works of the Jesuit poet Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, whom the Bishop of Płock, Stanisław Łubieński, gladly and frequently hosted there. The town was peripheral, yet endowed with numerous privileges. It had an urban-rural character, but no revenues from which urban development could be financed. Significant income, however, went to the bishops of Płock, for whom the Brok estate complex was one of the richest. Brok had to contend with competition from Andrzejewo and other centres of the Nur Land. Did the town maintain its status as a local center and an important episcopal residence?

Czerwińsk on the Vistula, presented in Chapter Four, was in 1650 an example of complex ownership relations. Urban areas were partly in the possession of the abbot of Czerwińsk, the monastery of the Canons Regular, and the Bishop of Płock, as part of the Czerwińsk estate complex. On the map of Mazovia, Czerwińsk was better known for its impressive monastic complex with a Romanesque basilica rising on the Vistula escarpment. The town was well known for the gathering in its vicinity of Polish cochineal, a source of red dye and a valuable export commodity. It lay on both river and road trade routes. It was often visited by kings; Władysław Jagiełło stayed in the town and prayed in the monastery four times. Czerwińsk was an example of a pilgrimage town with a Marian sanctuary. The episcopal part looked modest in comparison with the monastic part. In 1650 it was a town of limited potential, dominated by agriculture and animal husbandry. Its inhabitants could profit from pilgrimage traffic by providing accommodation and food. Apart from the monastic section, Wyszogród and Zakroczym may have constituted competition. The town nevertheless generated considerable income, and the Bishop of Płock, Karol Ferdynand Vasa, decided to build a new residence there. Did the presence of the Czerwińsk monastery protect this 'oppidum' from decline? In what direction - development or degradation - was the modest part of the town belonging to the bishops heading?

Chapter Five contains a detailed analysis of the town of Górzno, the capital of the Górzno estate complex and the northernmost urban center of the episcopal estates, already located in the Dobrzyń Land. It was a town whose streets turned into routes that enabled only local trade, which consolidated its peripheral location and considerable distance

from the main trade routes. The parish and nearby churches were administered by the Order of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As a hospitaller order, the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre ran a hospital and almshouse there. The bishops probably established their seat and built a residence there because of the picturesque location among forests and lakes, but also in order to emphasise their authority over the estates. The inspection of Górzno includes a detailed description of its inhabitants, different from that of the other estate complexes, using the term “poor peasants”. A rare feature in the descriptions is a mention of the local church. In 1650 Górzno was a small town, poorly connected, where townspeople engaged in agriculture. Since 1327 it had not lost its municipal rights. Did local trade in Górzno allow it to maintain its urban status?

Chapter Six discusses Pułtusk in the Pułtusk estate complex, the oldest town among those located in northern Mazovia. This town has by far the largest number of studies among all the centers examined, which in a sense makes it difficult to provide a synthetic description at the same level as in the case of the other towns. The analysis includes the rich history of this center on the Narew, with its preserved unique urban layout. The town had rich traditions of regional and long-distance trade, as well as of floating grain and timber to Gdańsk. As the seat of a collegiate chapter and archdeaconry, Pułtusk was also the second most important center of the Płock bishopric after Płock. It housed the most important residence outside the diocesan capital: the impressive Pułtusk castle. The municipal law of Pułtusk served as a model for the foundations of Andrzejewo and Wyszaków. Diocesan synods or partial synods for the archdeaconry were held in Pułtusk, the last in 1634. The system and creation of municipal self-government in episcopal towns were analogous to that of Pułtusk. Municipal authority - the mayor with the town council and the vogt with the bench court - as well as craft guilds with their privileges and guild elders, built the identity of the townspeople.

The mid-seventeenth-century inspection produced a detailed description in the inventory, providing a basis for in-depth analysis. Among the very numerous group of craftsmen there were those who practiced elite and costly crafts, including artistic crafts. Pułtusk goldsmithing, for example, was known throughout Mazovia. In 1650 only one hospital was still being paid for from the municipal treasury, whereas earlier there had periodically been two more. Doctors, barber-surgeons, and apothecaries resided there. The town already had a collegiate church, expanded in the Renaissance style by Giovanni Battista of Venice. There were also two monastic churches in the town. A Jesuit college had been established there. Mid-seventeenth-century Pułtusk escapes the comparative

scale applied to the other episcopal towns in every respect. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the century its economy had slowly been declining. Royal towns, above all the dynamically growing Ostrołęka or Zakroczym — the capital of the land — might have appeared as competitors to Pułtusk, although comparative analyses of the inspections did not confirm this. Did the special care shown to the town by the bishops of Płock since the fifteenth century manage to halt the processes of urban degradation?

Chapter Seven concerns Raciąż, the capital of the Raciąż estate complex, which, as the only episcopal town in the diocese, was the place where regional assemblies met and also the seat of the land court. An analysis of source materials and available studies, including the most recent one, shows Raciąż as a place known throughout the surrounding area. The nobility of the Płock voivodeship gathered there in large numbers, which increased the rank and importance of the episcopal town. The history of Raciąż is long and reaches back to the tenth century. Its founder, the Bishop of Płock Erazm Ciołek, acquired the town by exchange and, together with the estate complex, significantly enlarged his estates, seeing in his far-reaching plans both financial and prestige-related benefits. Over time, these also brought political advantages because of the possibility of influencing the nobility gathered at the regional assembly. Musters of the noble levy and church ceremonies in three churches acted as magnets for merchants and the surrounding population. Like every flourishing episcopal town, Raciąż also gained a residence, and even several of them, although by the mid-seventeenth century only one remained again. Raciąż stood out among the other episcopal towns thanks to its privilege of markets and fairs. Nine fairs were held there, each of which could last up to nine days. The image of the townlet in the mid-seventeenth century, however, already differed from such a description. What were the reasons behind the gradual transformation of the town from a craft center into an agricultural one?

Chapter Eight contains an analysis of the last of the episcopal towns, Wyszaków, which has held municipal rights continuously since 1502. Picturesquely situated on the River Bug and surrounded by the forests now known as the White Forest and the Kamieniecka Forest, it attracted episcopal attention, which resulted in the foundation of the town and the construction of a rather extensive residential complex. Wyszaków played the role of another trading center on the Bug route, where a customs chamber was located and stopping places were organized. It was a convenient place for local and regional trade. The forest provided desirable goods obtained through forest management, and the river facilitated their distribution. The bishops of Płock had funded churches for this place since

the eleventh century. In 1650 Wyszaków brought high income to its owner, yet little remained of a center that had aspired to become a craft and trade town in the seventeenth century. Crafts, apart from brewing, slowly began to disappear. The town struggled with competition from the royal towns of Ostrów Mazowiecka and Kamieńczyk. As an episcopal town, it had the highest level of corvée imposed on its townspeople: counting from each 'włoka' of land, they were required to perform twelve days of foot labour per year. This town was particularly favoured by Karol Ferdynand Vasa, who died there in 1655. Were the Bishop of Płock Karol Ferdynand Vasa and the inhabitants aware, from the perspective of 1650, of the town's slow decline?

Chapter Nine is, in a sense, an attempt to capture the role and position of the bishops of Płock as landowners through the prism of the urban, and sometimes rural, residences they built: palaces and more modest manors on the outskirts of towns. These were places of summer recreation, longer and shorter stays during journeys connected with pastoral service, and the performance of administrative duties by successive hierarchs of the Diocese of Płock. For the splendour of the episcopal court, it was essential to erect places worthy of the bishop's position and adapted to receiving distinguished guests, often monarchs and people from their entourage. The chapter contains separate analyses of each residence. The most impressive was the episcopal castle in Pułtusk, originally a Gothic building erected by Paweł Giżycki, whose Renaissance reconstruction was due to three bishops of Płock: Rafał Leszczyński, Andrzej Krzycki, and Andrzej Noskowski. During the inspection, the castle remained an important episcopal residence; it was in good condition and had rich facilities sufficient for efficient functioning.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the palace in Brok did not yield to the Pułtusk episcopal seat in terms of condition, architectural form, or furnishings. Naturally, they differed in size and in the status of the town itself. The Brok residence, built in the style of an Italian urban villa, owed its character to Bishop Henryk Firlej. On the Bug, the bishops of Płock also had a manor, and even several manors, in Wyszaków; it was therefore an entire residential complex, including even a chapel. Karol Ferdynand Vasa ensured its representative appearance, and in the final years of his life he settled there almost permanently.

The wooden manors in Górzno, Raciąż, and Czerwińsk were more modest and, by the mid-seventeenth century, should be regarded as declining. Only two masonry residences - in Pułtusk and Brok - appeared magnificent in 1650, with the splendour desired by their owners, while the wooden residence in Wyszaków was already more modest. Andrzejewo

had no residence. All the residences, except Czerwińsk, had chapels. This is the first such comparison of the residences, their condition, and their impact on urban space, which further emphasises the originality of the entire project and fills a research gap in this area. What fate befell the residences of the bishops of Płock after 1650, and to what extent did they influence the urban space of the centers analyzed?

The material collected through a critical analysis of the 1650 inventory became the basis for the comparative analysis of all the phenomena studied, presented in Chapter Ten. The episcopal towns are depicted in the key areas of their functioning. The processes of foundation and the background to the granting of municipal rights, the municipal system and self-government, the endowments and burdens imposed on townspeople, and the economy of the episcopal towns are compared.

The extensive methodology made it possible to analyze the phenomena under study from many perspectives and to discuss the issues formulated as research questions concerning the functioning of the towns of the Płock bishopric in 1650.

It was based on a critical analysis of the source and, in detail, on qualitative and quantitative methods, both general and specific. The analyses and descriptions were adapted to the adopted principles of data collection and processing, the characteristics of the collected material, and the specific nature of the phenomena studied. All were standardized according to the availability of inventory data in order to ensure the clarity and comparability of the results obtained. Comparative studies of source materials were made possible by archival and library research.

The greatest value came from research conducted in the Diocesan Archives in Płock, where all the inventories of the estates of the Płock bishopric are held, including the 1650 inventory, which is the basic source for the research. Comparative analysis was necessary in order to juxtapose the differences and similarities of the phenomena studied, taking into account many variables. The methods used also included induction, deduction, and analogy, the latter being helpful in studies concerning municipal administration and systems. Critical analysis was applied to source texts, scholarly publications, and available literature. The quantitative method was used in compiling and interpreting statistical data concerning the size of towns, demography, and trade in episcopal towns.

It proved interesting to compare the number of episcopal towns against a broader comparative background. In the sixteenth century, out of a total of 702 towns in the Crown, 121 centers, or 17.2%, were ecclesiastical property. In the two voivodeships extending over the territory of the Diocese of Płock - the Mazovian and Płock

voivodeships - the situation was different. In the Płock voivodeship in the sixteenth century there were sixteen towns and only one ecclesiastical town: episcopal Raciąż. In the Mazovian voivodeship, out of sixty-three towns, five were episcopal. Thus, in total, out of seventy-nine towns, six ecclesiastical towns constituted 7.6% of the whole. This was therefore a lower percentage than in the Crown as a whole. There were no ecclesiastical towns other than episcopal ones. Episcopal towns, given their generally lower proportion than in the rest of the Crown, should therefore be regarded as rare and significantly distinctive within Mazovia in terms of ownership.

The foundation processes of episcopal towns took place through the granting of municipal rights to existing settlements by means of a foundation privilege, with specified endowments and burdens for the townspeople. The process of transforming settlements into towns was at the same time connected with the process of separating towns from villages. Urbanisation occurred through the expansion of existing towns, as in the case of Pułtusk, the establishment of new ones, or the transformation of villages into towns, as in the cases of Andrzejewo and Wyszaków. All episcopal towns experienced accelerated development in the sixteenth century, which was never again to be repeated, but in terms of the degree of urbanisation they lagged far behind the towns of Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, or Royal Prussia. The burghers of almost all these centers, except Pułtusk, did not possess capital that would allow them, as serious merchants, to become involved in long-distance trade or to conduct the floating of grain. They were therefore forced to play the role of local markets.

Recognition of a settlement as a town required that it possess municipal law. The next step was the granting of the formal name 'oppidum' or 'civitas'. This marked the beginning of its development. The bishop allocated hides of land to the newly founded towns. This was important because, when opportunities for development were lost, townspeople could live in a way typical of the countryside, that is, cultivate land and engage in animal husbandry. This was not uncommon, since in all the towns of the Płock bishopric some townspeople engaged in such activity and combined crafts or trade with agriculture. Among municipal rights, an important issue was obtaining the privilege to hold markets. This made it possible to sell not only local goods, but also attracted merchants and craftsmen from outside the estate complex. The dates of fairs were often aligned with indulgence feasts and religious holidays, which in towns that already had churches multiplied the number of arriving pilgrims and faithful. Municipal law also regulated the economy of towns through endowments and burdens imposed on

townspeople, which were intended to ensure self-sufficiency in terms of food and to provide a foundation for the development of crafts and urban trade. In foundation documents, the bishops of Płock granted towns endowments in land, defined by the number of 'włókas'.

The episcopal towns of the mid-seventeenth century were mostly built of wood, and therefore all experienced fires. In varying proportions, their inhabitants engaged in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Small towns, however, were characterized mainly by agricultural activity. They had a short burgher tradition, and their inhabitants had a limited ability to adapt to change. Townspeople also lacked cultural models characteristic of towns, and with the boundaries between town and village blurred, these centres more closely resembled earlier settlements. Their identity often leaned towards the image of the peasant and episcopal subject.

This dissertation addresses the issue of private Mazovian towns in the light of the 1650 inventory of the estates of the Płock bishopric. Their socio-economic situation shows many similarities in the mid-seventeenth century. All of them, with the exception of Pułtusk, had lost their potential for further development in a slow regression that had begun half a century earlier. Pułtusk remained exceptional in this respect.

Andrzejewo lost its prospects for urban development, which was also determined by external factors, such as the loss of trade routes as a result of the incorporation of Mazovia into the Crown. The rapid development of the town with the participation of craftsmen did not succeed. Only the brewing and distilling industries had a secure outlet on the local market and brought income to the town. The privileges granted by Bishop Andrzej Krzycki did not translate into the economic success of the founded 'Andreas Civitas'.

In 1650 Brok served as a transit trade center. The local market was dominated by brewers and distillers, but agriculture was the key branch of the economy. The economy of the Brok estate complex and the White Forest was profitable, and it was on this that the bishops of Płock based their investments. The town owed its splendour to the scale of the episcopal palace and church that had been built there. The recently completed Italian-style villa still gave the town a residential character and was willingly visited by the bishops of Płock. The slow decline of the town was to begin in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Episcopal and monastic Czerwińsk were never united, despite persistent efforts by the bishops of Płock on the one hand and the abbot of Czerwińsk on the other. The development and condition of the center were stimulated above all by the presence of the

Czerwińsk abbey, while the episcopal town lived in its shadow. The presence of the bishops of Płock in the town was dictated by the prestige of the place, the Marian cult, and its importance as a pilgrimage site on the map of Mazovia. The year 1650 did not yet foreshadow decline, although the town showed only modest potential. The Swedish invasion that was to follow and the simultaneous loss of importance of Vistula transport affected the whole of Czerwińsk. The episcopal town declined, and the monastery became impoverished and slowly lost its significance.

Górzno, situated on the periphery of the Płock bishopric, was to base its economy on local trade. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, warfare significantly slowed the town's development. The result was a decline in demand for weekly markets, and in 1650 it turned out that they had disappeared. Provincial Górzno shifted to a self-sufficient economy.

A well-established urban tradition and a developed economy based on crafts and regional trade elevated Pułtusk above all the other episcopal towns of the Płock estates. It was already a 'civitas', and successive owners systematically cared for both its economic and religious potential. Emerging crises and the effects of natural disasters were quickly overcome. In 1650 the town was still successful in urban and demographic terms and, to a decreasing extent, also economically; thanks to the unwavering care of the bishops of Płock, it served as the second capital of the diocese. It was the richest episcopal town, with a castle, a collegiate church, and a Jesuit college. It was not threatened by depopulation, since it was supported by a continuous influx of clergy as well as pupils and students seeking education. It was thoroughly urban, with a clearly defined social structure.

The foundation privilege granted Raciąż and its inhabitants generous rights that could have made it a leading center of trade and crafts. In the mid-seventeenth century this type of economy still predominated, but it was rather sustained by the large numbers of people arriving in a town that performed key functions for the voivodeship and county. Cutting the townspeople off from sources of income connected with serving and accommodating visitors would have revealed the slow process of its transformation into an agricultural town.

When Bishop of Płock Karol Ferdynand Vasa took over the bishopric, he noticed the picturesque location of Wyszaków, which resulted in the expansion of the existing residence. The hierarch was not interested in investing in the town. He treated it rather as a hinterland for the manor. In 1650 he resided there permanently and, in all probability,

knew the condition of the town well. This may explain the rather general description contained in the inspection, which focused on a detailed report concerning the users of forty-three 'włókas' of land, of which the town itself used only twelve.

The episcopal residences shared the fate of the towns. Pułtusk castle, the pride of the town and its owner, was completely ruined in 1655. Reconstruction did not restore the residence to its original appearance. The forgotten and unrepaired country house of Andrzej Noskowski in Górki no longer existed in 1655. The palace in Brok continued to be embellished and restored for at least the next fifty years. The only devastation concerned the furnishings of the residence, mainly the palace chapel, from which valuable furnishings and treasury items were stolen. The manor in Wyszaków was kept in good condition through the efforts of the bishops and was regularly renovated. Particular care was taken of the chapel, the interior elements, and its decoration. The manor in Górzno, probably ruined during the Swedish Deluge, was rebuilt by Andrzej Chryzostom Załuski. The manor in Raciąż was still kept in use, although it was used less and less often by the bishops and resembled a demesne farm. The manor in Czerwińsk, built last, retained its condition and function. Subsequent natural disasters and the confiscation of episcopal property after the Third Partition of Poland ultimately contributed to their gradual decline. The key research areas were demography and economy.

Estimating the population on the basis of all sources and premises, although carried out very carefully, remains hypothetical. The number of taxed houses and the corvée performed, using various multipliers, proved to be the most reliable indicators. Periodic demographic crises left empty plots. The inspection descriptions in the 1650 inventory of the estates of the Płock bishopric, for each of the towns, showed that the activity of the townspeople was concentrated on trade, crafts, and agriculture, which for the researcher meant reconstructing their economic life. The number of craftsmen, their production, and their burdens proved most important in defining a town as a craft-agricultural center. In every episcopal town, the cultivation of land and animal husbandry were almost indispensable for securing the needs and livelihood of the townspeople and their families, as well as of craftsmen in the food sector. This had already been anticipated by the founders of the towns - the bishops of Płock - when they granted land for their use. The agrarianisation of towns was a secondary process. The highest percentage of non-agricultural population, that is, people not using arable land, was recorded in Pułtusk.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the most prosperous and most numerous group of craftsmen in episcopal towns were brewers and distillers, although the inspectors did not

address the alcohol trade. Craftsmen with guild privileges appeared in Pułtusk and Brok. Rare craft specialisations emerged only in Pułtusk.

The process of the slow decline of small Mazovian towns and townlets, beginning at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the impoverishment of the townspeople remain facts. It affected royal and episcopal towns to the same extent. The common point linking almost all centers of northern Mazovia was the process of their degradation.