

VISTULA UNIVERSITY

PhD Thesis

The university education of prelates
and canons of the Cathedral Chapter
in Płock during the Middle Ages

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Abstract

Cathedral chapters played a unique role in the life of the Church during the Middle Ages. Their members assisted the bishops in the administration of the diocese, oversaw the celebration of divine worship in the cathedral, and ensured an appropriate standard of education for the clergy and the state of religious life within the diocese. The chapter colleges were an important cultural hub, whose members were highly educated. Studies on cathedral chapters in medieval Poland emphasise that, within these chapters, prelates and canons constituted a group of the most intellectually educated and creatively minded members of the diocesan clergy, whilst also belonging to the medieval professional groups with the highest level of university education. The prevalence of university graduates among members of Polish cathedral chapters is a phenomenon highlighted in Polish historical scholarship. University studies, as one of the factors leading to the attainment of canonries and ecclesiastical promotions, are discussed both in monographs on individual chapters and in prosopographical studies concerning prelates and canons of various Polish cathedral chapters, as well as in separate works devoted to the chapter clergy.

The Płock Cathedral Chapter is one of the oldest cathedral chapters in Poland – alongside those of Poznań, Gniezno, Kraków and Wrocław. Over the past half-century, the Płock Chapter has been the subject of several important monographs discussing the history of this institution and its personnel during the Middle Ages, or more broadly during the pre-Tridentine period, written by Fr. Wojciech Góralski, Andrzej Radzimiński, Ewa Kobylińska and Fr. Christoph Wollka.

The first three papers are of particular significance to the topic under discussion. Fr. Wojciech Góralski's study discusses the legal basis for the functioning of the cathedral chapter in Płock, including the issue of the education of clergy as one of the elements of canonical commission, as well as promotions within the chapter. The author also highlighted the activities of university graduates within the Płock chapter, and also discussed various regulations concerning the studies of the chapter's members, access to the chapter's library, and the

establishment of the office of preacher and theologian at Płock Cathedral, who were to be recruited from among Płock's masters and doctors. He was also the first researcher to call for detailed research into the education of the chapter's members, particularly those clergymen who held academic degrees, broken down by whether they were of noble or commoner origin. At that time, Sister Aleksandra Witkowska also put forward a similar research proposal concerning the participation of Płock residents in the studies of Polish scholars abroad, drawing on information about university masters who sat on the Płock chapter in the 13th century. Both of these proposals formed part of a broader body of research initiated in the early 1980s by Jerzy Kłoczowski, concerning the Polish clergy of the late Middle Ages, including Polish chapter communities.

Research into the cathedral chapter clergy in medieval Poland, which began in the 1970s and 1980s, including the history of the Płock chapter, have resulted in two prosopographical studies by Andrzej Radzimiński and Ewa Kobylińska (the latter work has not yet been published), which contain a catalogue of all members of that chapter from the early 14th century to 1526, as well as source material on their activities, including their university studies and the academic degrees they held. The findings of these authors, verified against extant sources and supplemented by previously unutilised sources, form the starting point for this study. Given the significantly broader time frame of this study, it was necessary to expand the group of individuals studied by Andrzej Radzimiński and Ewa Kobylińska to include the prelates and canons of Płock from the 12th and 13th centuries, comprising a total of around 45 individuals mentioned in sources from that period. I presented this research, together with a review of previous findings by other authors, for the first time at a PhD seminar and published a preliminary version in a separate article. However, further research into the composition of the cathedral chapter in Płock made it possible to expand the group of clergy under study even further, as well as to verify information regarding their education.

When discussing the current state of research, it should be added that, apart from the aforementioned monographs by Fr. Wojciech Góralski, Andrzej Radzimiński and Ewa Kobylińska, several articles and chapters have also been published in monographs and edited volumes relating to the origins of the Płock chapter – the findings of Czesław Deptuła and Fr. Wojciech Góralski – as well as its development and staffing during the Middle Ages. Over the past two decades, several short studies have also been published on the Płock chapter as a milieu (circle) of intellectual culture and on the education of its members. Furthermore, the community of cathedral vicars in Płock from the 13th to the mid-15th century has been the subject

of a separate study by Andrzej Radzimiński, in which the Toruń-based historian examined, amongst other things, the studies and education of this group.

In view of the works mentioned here, one can fully agree with Ewa Kobylińska's assertion that research into the Płock cathedral chapter has for years enjoyed considerable success compared with other Mazovian chapters. However, many specific issues concerning this institution during the Middle Ages have not yet been fully explored. There is still a lack, amongst other things, of a comprehensive study on the university education of the members of the Płock chapter during the Middle Ages, the significance of this education for obtaining prebends in the chapter, and its impact on ecclesiastical promotions, as well as the broadly understood benefits deriving from the intellectual formation of the prelates and canons of Płock. This thesis is devoted to these issues; on the one hand, it forms part of the body of research on the cathedral clergy of medieval Poland, and on the other, to research into the intellectual culture of the secular clergy of that period, the benchmark achievement of which was undoubtedly Krzysztof Ożóg's work on the intellectual culture of the Kraków clergy in the 14th century.

The term 'university education' used in this paper, which is somewhat broader than the concept of 'university studies', is understood to mean the attainment of an academic degree in the liberal arts, canon law, Roman law, medicine or theology, or the completion of studies lasting one or more semesters, but without sitting an examination for a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree. As regards the group of prelates and canons of Płock discussed in this study, it refers only to those clergy who actually took up their posts in the Płock chapter, and not merely to those who were appointed to them. The time frame specified in the title means that the study covers those clergy who held their canonships and prelatures from the establishment of the cathedral chapter in the 12th century to 1500.

The dissertation aimed to compile all available source material on the university education of the prelates and canons of Płock up to the end of the 15th century and, on this basis, to make a general assessment of the level of education of the Chapter, as well as to discuss the socio-professional aspects and the culture-shaping role of this body in medieval Mazovia.

This study will examine the various relationships between members of the group of clergy under investigation and universities, the courts of the Dukes of Mazovia, and the bishops of Płock. An attempt will also be made to highlight the culture-shaping role of this community and its significance for the intellectual culture of medieval Mazovia, as Adam Vetulani had already argued before the war. The research methods that will enable the thesis to achieve its

stated objective are critical analysis of sources, the analytical-synthetic method, the comparative method, and the quantitative method, which will be used in the compilation and interpretation of statistical data.

The primary sources for this work are, above all, university registers and printed graduation records, as well as other university records, mainly relating to Prague (**Album seu matricula facultatis iuridicae Universitatis Pragensis ab anno Christi 1372 usque ad annum 1418**; **Liber decanorum facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Pragensis ab Anno Christi 1367 usque ad annum 1585**), published in the nineteenth-century series **Monumenta Historica Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandae Pragensis**) and Kraków (The Register of the University of Kraków from 1400–1508; The Oldest Register of Graduates of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Kraków from 1402 to 1541; *Conclusiones Universitatis Cracoviensis ab anno 1441 ad annum 1589*). A search of the University of Vienna's registers yielded no new findings; however, a register kept by the president of the doctoral college at the University of Bologna for students of canon law proved useful (*Liber secretus iuris pontifici dell'università di Bologna 1451–1500*).

The second group of sources consists of those relating to the activities of the Płock Cathedral Chapter during the period in question and its members. These include both archival sources and published sources. Among the unpublished sources, the research covered a collection of parchment documents held at the Płock Diocesan Archives and the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw. However, only isolated references to the findings previously made by other researchers were found. Furthermore, some information about certain members of the cathedral chapter has been found in the oldest records of the activities of the bishops of Płock and in a copy of the lost records of the Płock cathedral chapter from the years 1438–1445, as well as in the Norbertine Codex (a copy by Fr. Władysław Mąkowski), held at the Diocesan Archives in Płock. As for printed sources, the most important proved to be the extracts from the records of the Płock Cathedral Chapter, published in print at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by Bolesław Ulanowski, as well as the records of other cathedral chapters and those of the Collegiate Church of St John the Baptist's Church in Warsaw and the records of the officials. As regards Polish documents – whether of ecclesiastical, princely or royal origin – the collections comprising documents from Mazovia proved to be the most significant. In addition, the information used concerning the prelates and canons of Płock was found in diplomatic codices relating to Poland as a whole, to individual regions, and to Kraków Cathedral. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the search also covered Teutonic Order documents

and documents issued by the Pomeranian dukes. In addition to Polish ecclesiastical sources, a great deal of information has been gathered. Some of the researchers' previous findings have been verified, based on papal sources, primarily August Theiner's nineteenth-century publication, **Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae**, as well as the individual volumes of **Bullarium Poloniae** edited by Irena Sułkowska-Kurasiowa and Stanisław Kuraś, and other historians. Several minor points were established based on the documents of the Apostolic Chamber – Annals of the Kingdom of Poland in the 15th century (1421–1503) – published by Marek Daniel Kowalski as part of the *Monumenta Poloniae Vaticana* series. Historiographical sources, as well as autobiographical accounts and other notes preserved in the medieval manuscripts of the cathedral library (now lost), which Adam Vetulani had copied before the war, were also helpful.

This thesis adopts a problem-based structure, dividing the entire body of work into five chapters. Chapter One will present the most important information on medieval universities, focusing specifically on those institutions where clergy from the Diocese of Płock studied. To illustrate the dynamic nature of university development, the oldest Italian and French universities (Bologna, Padua, Rome, Paris) are discussed separately, as are the universities in Central and Eastern Europe (Prague, Kraków, Vienna). In view of the role played by the University of Kraków in the training of the Polish clergy, including prelates and canons from Płock. The re-establishment of the university in Kraków was of inestimable importance both for the history of the Church in Poland during the late Middle Ages and, more generally, for medieval Polish culture. Conversely, the role of the University of Kraków, which trained teaching staff for, amongst other institutions, the parish schools in the Diocese of Płock – where, at the beginning of the 16th century, nearly 95 per cent of parishes had schools, one of the highest in the then Gniezno Province, as Eugeniusz Wiśniowski pointed out some years ago.

Of the universities attended by the prelates and canons, those in Płock, Kraków and Prague were the most common. However, in both the 14th and 15th centuries, some people chose to undertake further studies at Italian universities, mainly in Bologna, Rome and Padua, from where they returned with law degrees. In this group, the majority held doctoral and bachelor's degrees awarded by decree. In the 14th century, as well as attending Italian universities, the canons of Płock also travelled to study in Paris and at the Curial University in Avignon; this is particularly worth highlighting, as this group of Polish students remains largely overlooked. From the time the University of Prague was founded, it dominated academic life in Mazovia, and it was not until the early 15th century that the University of Kraków took over

Prague's former position. Despite the University of Vienna's prominence in Central Europe, it was difficult to identify any members of the Płock Cathedral Chapter amongst its students. The same applied to the universities in Erfurt and Heidelberg.

The majority of members of the Płock chapter held bachelor's and master's degrees in the liberal arts. There were also quite a few – particularly in the 15th century – doctors of decretal law, and even a few doctors of both laws. As was the case with all groups of capitular clergy of that period, legal studies predominated, which was linked to opportunities to apply legal knowledge in ecclesiastical or administrative work. Many of the canons of Płock did not hold any academic qualifications. However, this may be due to a lack of source data. A separate group among the prelates and canons of Płock consisted of those who had pursued academic careers. However, the widespread practice of accumulating ecclesiastical benefices during this period meant that members of this group had no day-to-day contact with the Płock chapter, as they resided permanently in other centres (Paweł Włodkowiec, Andrzej Łaskarz and Arnolf of Mirzyniec). However, this did not affect the overall intellectual standard of the Płock chapter, which, through some of its members who had received a well-rounded education at Italian universities, as well as in Prague and Krakow – for example, Mikołaj of Mirzyniec and Dzierżaw of Karnice – represented a fairly high level of intellectual culture for those times.

Chapter Two is devoted to the Płock Cathedral Chapter as a church institution. It briefly outlines the establishment of this chapter, its development and organisation, as well as the structure and composition of the various prelatures and canons' colleges. Given the subject of this dissertation, education has been discussed separately as one of the factors influencing promotion within the chapter, as well as the functioning of the Płock cathedral school, for which the chapter was responsible, and the chapter (cathedral) library, where, during the Middle Ages, many valuable manuscripts were collected, having previously belonged to individual members of the chapter.

Chapter Three will summarise and discuss all the source material relating to the university studies of the prelates of Płock. In addition to gathering this information, an analysis was also carried out to identify the universities where the prelates from Płock most frequently studied, as well as the academic degrees they obtained from those universities. The academic careers of some of the Płock prelates have been discussed separately. Chapter Four has been structured similarly; it discusses the university education of the canons of Płock, taking into account the institutions where they studied, as well as the academic degrees they obtained. This chapter also discusses the academic careers of the canons of Płock.

The primary criterion for classifying a person as an intellectual with a university education was their inclusion in university registers, graduation registers or other documents confirming their enrolment as students, or the inclusion of information regarding their studies or academic degree. This practice was adhered to quite scrupulously in ecclesiastical sources, particularly those of papal origin. As virtually no such sources have been found for the 12th–13th centuries, the term ‘magister’—known from similar studies and appearing in sources dating from the 13th century onwards—was used to refer to the person in question, whilst excluding those who held the position of ‘magister scholarum’ in cathedral schools. Similarly, about several individuals from the 14th and 15th centuries, in the absence of other sources, the designation of a prelate or canon in documents as ‘magister’/master in documents – whilst attempting to verify this title against other sources – was taken as grounds for classifying them as intellectuals.

Based on the sources examined, whilst maintaining a critical interpretation of them and adhering to the adopted methodological criteria, it has been possible to identify by name 145 members of the Płock Cathedral Chapter (65 prelates and 80 canons), who, between the early 13th and late 15th centuries, had received a university education. In percentage terms, this represented 31.8 per cent of all members of the chapter. Taking into account Andrzej Radzimiński’s earlier calculations for the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century, in which he identified 77 people with a university education – that is, 26 per cent of the entire sample – the results obtained in this study are significantly higher. This was because not only had the sample size been significantly expanded – to a total of 456 people – but the broadening of the time frame also had an impact on this result. The research covered several dozen members of the chapter known from 13th-century sources, as well as a group of prelates and canons from the second half of the 15th century. Added to this was the growing trend in the 15th century towards the academic training of the diocesan clergy, including those who received a university education at the re-established University of Kraków. Ultimately, however, it must be clearly emphasised that the fact that 31.8 per cent of the prelates and canons of Płock were educated meant that the Płock chapter was on a par with the Gniezno metropolitan see in terms of the proportion of educated prelates and canons in its cathedral chapters.

Although the group of prelates and canons under study has been expanded compared with the group of 14th- and 15th-century canons studied by Andrzej Radzimiński and Ewa Kobylińska, the observations made by the former author remain relevant to this group. These records show that the canons of Płock usually began their university studies before taking up

their canonries. It did, however, sometimes happen that they did so whilst pursuing a career in the Church, but by taking up a canonry in Płock, which was often one of their many ecclesiastical benefices. In the case of the Płock prelates, their university studies often began when they were already canons of Płock. It followed that the canonical benefice provided them with the means to undertake such studies, most often at institutions abroad – until the early 15th century – which in turn meant that they studied only until they had obtained a bachelor's degree, or, less frequently, a master's degree, and often limited themselves to two or three semesters of study. A university education was one of the factors in their promotion to the prelacy, but not the only one. As Andrzej Radzimiński pointed out, territorial and family origins were also significant here, as were various connections with the ducal court and the local administrative elite. For the townspeople who sat on the cathedral chapter in Płock, a university education was the prerequisite for attaining a canonry; and there was only one instance in which a non-noble managed to rise to the ranks of the prelates, which was due to his connections with the ducal court.

Chapter Five is devoted to the influence of university education on the ecclesiastical and court careers of members of the Płock Cathedral Chapter, including their participation in the life of the cathedral chapter, in the administration of the diocese alongside the bishops and during periods of *sede vacante*, as well as – as is often emphasised in the literature on the subject – the connections between the cathedral chapter and the courts of the Dukes of Mazovia. Following the suggestions of Adam Vetulani, who had the opportunity to study the medieval manuscripts of the Płock Cathedral Library before the war, the cathedral chapter was discussed separately as an intellectual and culture-forming milieu. In addition to analysing the book collections of prelates and canons, efforts were also made to gather information on their literary output and their influence on the culture of medieval Mazovia.

The Płock cathedral community is also a culture-shaping institution whose influence on the intellectual development of the Church in Płock and the whole of Mazovia has been enormous. As already mentioned, Mikołaj of Mirzyniec, PhD and Dziersław of Karnice, PhD, held a unique position amongst Płock's intellectuals. As leading scholars of canon law in the 15th century, they contributed to the development of an academic atmosphere within the ecclesiastical community in Płock, particularly in the field of legal studies. Codification initiatives, as well as those relating to the translation of the statutes of ducal law, which originated amongst those associated with the ducal chancellery, also had links to the cathedral chapter. Unfortunately, the manuscripts from the Płock Cathedral Library that were lost during

the last war can only contribute to a limited extent to our knowledge in this area. The Płock cathedral community was also an institution where there was interest in many vital issues facing the Church, including Hussitism, conciliarist movements, and the need to codify canon law as a basis for church reform – traces of which have been preserved in the records of synodal legislation of the Diocese of Płock, but also – as Adam Vetulani attested – in the lost Płock manuscripts from the chapter/cathedral library. The works of medieval Polish poetry recorded in these manuscripts, whilst perhaps not as numerous as those in the manuscripts of the Jagiellonian Library, also demonstrate the breadth of interests within the Płock cathedral community.

This study enables us to write in greater detail than before about university education within the Płock cathedral community and the activities of the local intellectuals. It was precisely thanks to the university culture that was flourishing in Europe during the late Middle Ages that ecclesiastical Płock – as Adam Vetulani had surmised years earlier, and as Jerzy Kłoczowski also noted – in the 15th century reached an intellectual level that rivalled the ‘Płock Renaissance’ of the 12th century. In this case, however, this was not achieved through the exceptional personalities of the bishops and canons who had come to Płock from distant lands, but rather through the local clergy and intellectuals, who were members of the cathedral chapter. It seems that, for many of them, the chapter was not merely an opportunity to secure funds for their studies or to accumulate lucrative benefices, but also a community (an institution) for developing their scholarly passions and broadening the intellectual education of the local clergy and the administrative elites of Mazovia at that time.

Rafał Ujś