

Did Silesia constitute an economic region between the 13th and the 15th centuries? A survey of region-integrating and region-disintegrating economic factors

Abstract:

This article constitutes an attempt at answering the question of whether Silesia, aside from being a distinct historical region, was also a distinct economic region. The author starts with Robert E. Dickinson's theory of economic regions, the basic assumptions of which are shared by contemporary researchers of regional economies.

Economic resources, the similar economic policies of Silesian rulers in the 13th and 14th centuries, high levels of urbanization in comparison to neighbouring regions and the centralizing capacity of Wrocław are considered to be the forces which bound together Silesian as an economic region. Factors retarding the economic cohesion of Silesia were analyzed as well. Those included natural disasters, invasions, internal strife, criminal activity along trade routes and a crisis in the mining industry beginning in the middle of the 14th century. Beginning with the final years of the 13th century, Silesia stabilized as an economic region containing Upper Silesia, Lower Silesia and Opava. This was not, however, a perfect cohesion, as Lower Silesia was economically superior to the other regions, which themselves had strong ties to Lesser Poland. Despite that, the crisis that took place from about 1350 until 1450 did not break the economic bonds between these three constituent elements of Silesia.

In comparison to every historical and economic region on its borders, Silesia was distinguished by its advanced gold mining industry, the export of a red dyeing agent (*marzanna*) as well as the highest number of cities with a populations of between 3,000 and 14,000. Further distinct properties of the Silesian economy are noticeable when contrasted with other historical regions.

Keywords:

cities, trade, mining, agriculture, economic policy, demography, economic region

The concept of economic region and its application

The question of whether medieval Silesia constituted an economic region is ambiguous and complex. The aim of this article therefore is to answer two questions: 1. Did the formation of an economic region ever take place in Silesia and, if so, to what extent? 2. What were the economic specificities of this region? Our final answer needs to be preceded by an analysis of the factors and circumstances which might have been conducive to the integration of Silesia, as well as of the conditions and causes that might have hindered it or even prevented it from happening. What further complicates the answer to the key question is our intention to present the dynamics of the region within a period of ca. three hundred years – it would simply be nonsensical to assume in advance that there

were no variations in the degree of Silesia's economic integration or disintegration in such a long period.

Although the key question of this article has been asked throughout history by numerous historiographers, so far none of them has managed to answer it affirmatively. In 1935 Ludwig Petry expressed the opinion that Silesia had once had an opportunity to become an independent economic region ('ein eigenes Wirtschaftsgebiet') with Wrocław as its centre.¹ According to the German historian, its transformation was fostered by the fact that in the 15th century Wrocław was part of the Hanseatic League and that it had strong connections with the principal city of southern Germany, Nuremberg. Silesia had the potential to become a key link in the far-reaching chain of connections between the north and south and the east and west. The economic autonomy of Silesia – according to Petry – was based on the fact that Silesian cities acted as exclusive intermediaries between the remote countries of Europe. His negative answer to our question is grounded in the argument that in the 16th century Silesians (especially residents of Wrocław) had to hand over part of their land to expanding merchants from Nuremberg. Within the pioneering reflections of the German researcher there are, however, certain conspicuous weaknesses. Firstly, Silesia (especially Wrocław) has never been the only central European link in the area of long-distance trade between the north and south and the east and west. Other reservations regarding Petry's view include him limiting his perspective to the sphere of trade (mainly transit and re-exportation) and disregarding the question of Silesian manufacturing and exportation of its products. What is, however, of great importance is the very fact of him addressing the issue of the economic autonomy of Silesia, drawing attention to the role of Wrocław in the possible process of the formation of a Silesian economic region, as well as formulating clear conclusions on the subject.

An analysis of economic factors which can both integrate and disintegrate a region needs to be preceded by a definition of an economic region. Polish scholarly literature defines a region as 'an area characterized by a number of common features'.² For the purposes of our research let us add that these may include economic features. This definition needs to be further elaborated, since we need to establish certain criteria that, if they were met, would allow us to confirm that Silesia was an economic region for at least part of the period between the 13th and 15th centuries. Many theories on the division of economic space have been created and applied by medievalists. However, these theories mostly relate to areas much larger than geographical and historical regions. The notion of 'an economic historical region' has also been coined.³ However, one serious weakness of this is the fact that, for the purposes of this notion, the issue of a particular region's

¹ Ludwig Petry, *Die Popplau. Eine schlesische Kaufmannsfamilie des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, Breslau 1935 (=Historische Untersuchungen, vol. 15), p. 135.

² Antoni Mączak, Henryk Samsonowicz, *Z zagadnień genezy rynku europejskiego: strefa bałtycka*, 'Przegląd Historyczny', 55 (1964), p. 198.

³ Jerzy Topolski, *Pojęcie regionu historycznego. Cechy odrębności historycznej Wielkopolski*, [in:] *Dzieje Wielkopolski*, vol. 1, ed. Jerzy Topolski, Poznań 1969, p. 24.

economic specificities was examined not before but after researching the history of other spheres of activity of that region's community, and after claims had been made regarding its regional autonomy. In line with this approach, each region had simply been prejudged to constitute an autonomous economical unit. With this in mind, I do not assume *a priori* that Silesia was certain to constitute an economic whole, independent from its neighbouring territories. One must remember that historical studies proved years ago that economic territorial divisions often did not overlap with political, administrative or simply regional ones.⁴ Of all the studies on these issues which are familiar to me, the most useful and up-to-date are, in my mind, the findings of Robert E. Dickinson on the economic regions of Germany.⁵ This is not only due to his devoting one chapter to Silesia,⁶ but because he presented a coherent and versatile and hence a universal theory of the concept of an economic region. Dickinson understood this type of region as a geographical unit inhabited by a community unified by means of internal economic links which are stronger than the community's relations with the inhabitants of neighbouring regions. The English scholar identified three universal aspects that bind every economic region: 1. the primacy within the region's boundaries of certain complementary branches of economy (in cases where we are dealing with several different branches), and which (if there are only one or two of them) determine the economic character of the whole region; 2. the economic dominance of one or more cities within the region's limits, which also perform the function of communication junctions; and 3. traditional (non-economic) political and cultural links which influence the region's economy.⁷ The economic unity of a region should therefore come as a result of mutual connections and the mutual economic interests of its citizens which are, let us add, maintained over a longer period of time. At this point I must declare that in this article I refrain from analyzing any type of non-economic region-related relationships which are the subject of research of the other participants of the *Cuius regio* project. The advantage of limiting research to the economic sphere only enables me to examine whether the economy integrated the territory of Silesia or, perhaps, maintained its divisions. Medieval Silesia was divided into three subregions – Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia and Opava Silesia (*Opawszczyzna*).⁸ Dickinson's old thesis has not lost its validity and harmonizes with the latest definitions of economic regions analyzed in the context of market economies at the outset of the third millennium. The criteria fostering the formation of a region as an autonomous entity include factors that lead to the integration of a region's centre, similarities between the components of a region's economy, the dominance of internal connections within this

⁴ Marian Małowist, *Wschód a Zachód Europy w XIII – XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych*, Warszawa 1973, p. 6.

⁵ Robert E. Dickinson, *The Regions of Germany*, London 1945.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 156–166.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁸ For the relationships between this particular land and other lands of the region see R. Żerelik, *Dzieje Śląska do 1526 roku*, pp. 17–18.

region over external ones and the possession of a unique regional economic profile.⁹ With this in mind, a region is defined as ‘a group of neighbouring territories, distinct from all other adjacent territories by common characteristics’.¹⁰ Hence, it will also be necessary for us to examine the issue of the possible economic specificities of Silesia in the later Middle Ages, i.e. the potential economic differences from its neighbouring regions – Bohemia and Moravia (viewed as a whole), Lusatia, Greater Poland and Lesser Poland.

Geographical and historical conditions of economic activity

Of all the factors that helped foster the formation of Silesia as a distinct economic region, we must once again mention its relative **geographical and historical distinctiveness** as described by G. Kosmala above. It is worth supplementing his geographical characteristics by noting that historians have sometimes highlighted the amorphousness of certain borders of the Silesian region, inclining more towards defining them as borderlands rather than as distinct borders. It was assumed that Silesia was separated to the west by an area stretching between the Kwisza and Bóbr rivers.¹¹ What has also been highlighted was the amorphousness of the border dividing Upper Silesia and Lesser Poland following research into the inter-diocesan and inter-diaconal divisions, the range of frontier-castellanies as well as the rapidly changing outline of state borders in the Late Middle Ages.¹² While defining the eastern borders of the economic region of Silesia we should also take into consideration the number of galena deposits exploited at that time for their lead and silver content. Galena deposits were also located further to the east from the main mining centres, Bytom and Tarnowskie Góry. The strip of deposits stretched beyond the Czarna Pszemsza river as far as the nearby areas of Będzin and Zagórze.¹³

The flat landform of most of the territory of Silesia and the dominance of the extensive Silesian Lowlands was conducive to the flow of people and goods, especially on the east–west axis. It was not without reason that the area of Silesia was crossed by one of the most important trade routes of cismontane Europe, the Via Regia – and in particular the ‘High Road’ (*Hohe Strasse*). This road led from the Netherlands through, most notably, Legnica, Środa, Wrocław, Brzeg, Opole and Bytom as far as Lesser Poland and further on to Red Ruthenia.¹⁴ We can say that a whole range of factors, including

⁹ Stanisław Korenik, *Region ekonomiczny w nowych realiach społeczno–gospodarczych*, Warszawa 2011, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹¹ In line with the views of Jan Muszyński, *Krosno Odrzańskie. Przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, Warszawa–Poznań 1972, p. 72; R. Żerelik, *Dzieje Śląska do 1526 roku*, p. 17; W. Korta, *Historia Śląska do 1763 roku*, oprac. Marek Derwich, Warszawa 2003, p. 15.

¹² See W. Korta, *Historia Śląska*, p. 15; Jerzy Rajman, *Pogranicze śląsko–małopolskie w średniowieczu*, Kraków 2000 (2nd edition), pp. 56–75 (especially p. 69).

¹³ See Danuta Molenda, *Górnictwo kruszcowe na terenie złóż śląsko–małopolskich do połowy XVI wieku*, Wrocław 1963, p. 35.

¹⁴ To view the course of the entire route, see Friedrich Bruns, Hugo Weczerka, *Hansische Handelsstraßen. Textband*, Weimar 1967, pp. 467–470, 539–548, 550–552, 568–570, 681–690; Grzegorz Myśliwski, *Wrocław w przestrzeni gospodarczej Europy (XIII–XV wiek). Centrum czy peryferie?*, Wrocław 2009,

favourable geographical and territorial conditions, resulted, in the 13th–14th centuries, in the Silesian section of the *Hohe Strasse* joining the older route which, at least from the times of Abraham ben Jacob's visit (962–965) up to the 1240s, had stretched from Kiev as far as Prague, via Cracow and the Moravian Gate.¹⁵ Simultaneously, from at least the 12th century the Pomerania–Bohemia trade route cut through Wrocław.¹⁶ It was not, however, the only route of great international significance linking northern and southern Europe via Silesia.¹⁷ As Janina Nowakowa's research has shown, the territory of the Silesian region was quite densely covered by a network of land routes.¹⁸ Apart from the urban centres located on the *Via Regia*, another city that played a particularly important communication role was Nysa. After Wrocław it was the second most important transport junction of Silesia, enjoying the customary staple right perhaps even earlier than the Silesian capital.¹⁹

The growth of economic cohesion within Silesia was favoured by an extremely important element of its geographical environment – the Odra river. The gradual slump in trade with Western Pomerania carried out via this river, which intensified between ca. 1253 and the second quarter of the 16th century, is immaterial here.²⁰ For the whole period of

pp. 75–80. For the beginnings of the route in the Netherlands see Wim Blockmans, *Das westeuropäische Messenetz im 14. und 15. Jh.*, [in:] *Brücke zwischen den Völkern. Zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Messe*, vol. 1: *Frankfurt im Messenetz Europas. Erträge der Forschung*, eds Hans Pohl, Monika Pohle, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 47. To view the route of *Via Regia* in Silesia see especially Stefan Weymann, *Ćła i drogi handlowe w Polsce piastowskiej*, Poznań 1938, pp. 113–116; Janina Nowakowa, *Rozmieszczenie komór celnych i przebieg dróg handlowych na Śląsku do końca XIV wieku*, Wrocław 1951, p. 54–69, 78–87, 96–99.

¹⁵ Hermann Aubin, *Die Wirtschaft im Mittelalter*, [in:] *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 1, ed. Hermann Aubin, Stuttgart 1961 (3rd edition), p. 410; Henryk Samsonowicz, *Przemiany osi drożnych w Polsce późnego średniowiecza*, 'Przegląd Historyczny', vol. 64, 1973, issue 4, p. 701.

¹⁶ Marta Młynarska-Kaletynowa, *Wrocław w XII–XIII wieku. Przemiany społeczne i osadnicze*, Wrocław 1986, p. 38.

¹⁷ See i.e. Heinrich Wendt, *Schlesien und der Orient. Ein geschichtlicher Überblick*, Breslau 1916, pp. 53–54; J. Nowakowa, *op. cit.*, p. 99; Henryk Samsonowicz, *Handel dalekosiężny na ziemiach polskich w świetle najstarszych taryf celnych*, [in:] *Spółczesność – gospodarka – kultura. Studia ofiarowane Marianowi Małowistowi w czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej*, eds Stanisław Herbst et al., Warszawa 1974, pp. 292, 294–295, 299–300; Józef Kaźmierczyk, *Czasy najdawniejsze*, [in:] *Opole. Monografia miasta*, eds Władysław Dziewulski, Franciszek Hawranek, Opole 1975, p. 33. For the Moravian Gate see i.e. W. Korta, *Historia Śląska*, p. 15. Cf. Jörg K. Hoensch, *Geschichte Böhmens. Von der slavischen Landnahme bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1997 (3rd edition), pp. 16, 17.

¹⁸ J. Nowakowa, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

¹⁹ Józef Leszczyński, *Zarys dziejów miasta do roku 1740*, [in:] *Miasto Nysa. Szkice monograficzne*, eds Janusz Kroszel, Stefan Popiołek, Wrocław 1970, p. 28. For the Nysa staple right see Krystyna Stachowska, *Prawo składu w Polsce do 1565 r.*, 'Sprawozdanie z posiedzeń czynności Akademii Umiejętności', Wydział Historyczno-Filozoficzny, 51 (1950), No. 9, pp. 587, 589.

²⁰ See, among others Konrad Wutke, *Die Versorgung Schlesiens mit Salz während des Mittelalters*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 27 (1893), pp. 246, 253; K. Stachowska, *op. cit.*, p. 590; Wolfgang Kehn, *Der Handel im Odraraum im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, (=Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Pommern, Series V) Köln-Graz 1968, pp. 153, 197, 210; Benedykt Zientara, *Odra: droga czy bariera?*, 'Przegląd Historyczny', 61 (1970), pp. 112–119; recently Grzegorz Myśliwski, *Początki związków Wrocławia i Hanzy niemieckiej*, [in:] *Europejczycy. Afrykanie, inni. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Michałowi Tymowskiemu*, eds Bronisław Nowak, Mirosław Nagielski, Jerzy Pysiak, Warszawa 2011, pp. 80–81.

the Late Middle Ages²¹ and the beginnings of the modern era the Odra river played the role of one of the main communication and trading arteries on a regional scale. Timber transportation by water to Wrocław thrived both in the later Middle Ages and in the following era. At the beginning of the 16th century Barthel Stein wrote about the vast amounts of wood, cut down in the forests of the Sudetes and in the Western Beskids, that regularly flowed to the centre of Silesia.²² The town of Racibórz also played an important role, being the place where transport ships and rafts were constructed.²³ More problematic was the issue of transport along the Odra river on the section between Wrocław and Krosno Odrzańskie. Max Rauprich opined that even at the end of the 13th century there had been trade between the centres of Lubiąż and Krosno Odrzańskie, though only by means of small ships.²⁴ Yet, from the 14th century onwards, travelling along the section of the Odra located north of Wrocław became, according to him, impossible due to numerous weirs and watermills whose construction was strongly opposed by John of Bohemia (1337) and his heir Charles IV (1349, 1355).²⁵ According to a census carried out before 1375 those constructions existed, among others, in Lubiąż, Dziewin, Ścinawa, Chobienia, Głogów, Bytom Odrzański, Kielcz and finally in the town of Krosno Odrzańskie.²⁶ The same census confirms, however, the simultaneous functioning of custom houses in certain localities by the Odra section outside Wrocław: Ścinawa, Głogów, Bytom and Krosno Odrzańskie. These units collected two types of tolls: either per ship (Ścinawa, Bytom) or *ad placitum*. At the same time, the toll collected in Ścinawa was called *inconsumetum*, which indirectly proves its relatively short history. All the aforementioned source data show the durability of the shipping industry on the section between Wrocław and Krosno Odrzańskie in the second half of the 14th century. The subsequent political events and the revocation of the staple right in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1375 (which lasted until about 1415)²⁷ seem to yield evidence that the whole section of the Odra river located within the territory of Silesia was navigable, despite the existence of weir facilities and toll-customs houses.

In this context, the Via Regia and the Odra river, together with the regional land routes, could be viewed as constituting a communication and transportation network

²¹ Hermann Markgraf, *Zur Geschichte des Breslauer Kaufhauses*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 22 (1888), p. 272; Max Rauprich, *Breslaus Handelslage am Ausgang des Mittelalters*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 26 (1892), p. 25.

²² Józef Burek, *Dzieje Raciborza od czasów piastowskich do 1741*, [in:] *Racibórz. Zarys monografii miasta*, ed. Jan Kantyka, Katowice 1981, p. 56.

²³ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, eds Roman Heck, Ewa Maleczyńska, Wrocław 1961, p. 7.

²⁴ M. Rauprich, *Breslaus Handelslage*, p. 25.

²⁵ *Ibidem*. Cf. Mateusz Goliński, *Wrocław od połowy XIII do początków XVI wieku*, [in:] Cezary Buśko, Mateusz Goliński, Michał Kaczmarek, Leszek Ziątkowski, *Historia Wrocławia*, vol. 1: *Od pradziejów do końca czasów habsburskich*, Wrocław 2001, p. 142; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 100–101.

²⁶ J. Nowakowa, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

²⁷ Andrzej Grodek, *Handel odrzański w rozwoju historycznym*, [in:] *Monografia Odry*, eds Andrzej Grodek, Maria Kielczewska-Zaleska, August Zierhoffer, Poznań 1948, p. 387.

which connected the regions of Silesia and were conducive to its potential economic integration.

Native resources and dominant economic features

Besides their demographic potential, the significance and specificity of each state and region in the pre-industrial era were mostly shaped by a second production factor which, according to recent approaches, is defined as ‘natural resources’ in a much broader sense than the traditional concept of ‘land’.²⁸ It is mainly on this basis that the main industrial branches of Silesia, or dominant economic features of the region, were formed and developed in the Middle Ages.²⁹

A presentation of the native resources and leading industrial branches of Silesia should be opened with a description of its soil conditions and natural products (*naturalia*). In the Middle Ages Silesian soils were quite diverse and, moreover, on average their quality was much higher than that of the soils of most of the remaining lands of Poland. The most fertile ones were generally found in the following areas: to the left of the Odra river, especially between Pszczyna and Bolesławiec, including the territory of the Sudetes Foothills (loess soils); directly on the banks of the Odra and its tributaries and in several soil enclaves (near Głogów and Wrocław); and, more rarely, to the right side of the river (near Trzebnica, Chełm).³⁰ These favourable conditions gave rise to the development of **agriculture**, which had begun earlier (from the 12th century) and was more intense than in the case of the other Polish lands.³¹ Crop production fulfilled mainly the internal needs of the region (i.e. of its numerous and populous cities, see Table 1), though this claim is particularly thought-provoking when juxtaposed with the aforementioned fact of transporting grains along the Odra river, at minimum to Bytom Odrzański (around 1375) and, sporadically, to Lusatia and Toruń in the second half of the 15th century.³² However, the dynamic development of crop production influenced the formation and development of another branch of the natural products sector – **brewing**, where a key role was played by **barley** and **wheat**.³³ Even though beer production was nothing unusual either

²⁸ Carlo M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution. European Society and Economy 1000–1700*, New York – London 1994, pp. 53, 91–96.

²⁹ S. Korenik, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³⁰ Julian Janczak, *Środowisko geograficzne Śląska w rozwoju historycznym*, [in:] *Historia chłopów śląskich*, ed. Stefan Inglot, Warszawa 1979, pp. 9–10; Benedykt Zientara, *Heinrich der Bärtige und seine Zeit*, translation: Peter Oliver Loew, München 2002, p. 116–117.

³¹ Zofia Podwińska, *Zmiany form osadnictwa wiejskiego na ziemiach polskich we wczesniejszym średniowieczu. Żreb, wieś, opole*, Wrocław 1971, p. 367.

³² *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 49; Horst Jecht, *Zur Handelsgeschichte der Stadt Görlitz im Mittelalter*, [in:] *Oberlausitzer Forschungen. Beiträge zur Landesgeschichte*, ed. Martin Reuther, Leipzig 1961, p. 122.

³³ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 1, eds Waclaw Hołubowicz, Karol Maleczyński, Wrocław 1960, p. 381.

in the case of cismontane Europe including Silesia,³⁴ where it was used to satisfy mainly local needs, in some urban centres (Świdnica, Wrocław, Głogów, Opava) its importance extended far beyond regional limits. This was proven by the export of their produce to the countries of central Europe.³⁵ Moreover, the cultivation of **grapevine** and the **wine-making** it gave rise to, although fulfilling mainly local consumption needs,³⁶ also provided produce for the needs of the regional market and long-distance trade. Also worth mentioning is the regular, one suspects, transport of local wine (*land win*) to Wrocław in the first half of the 14th century.³⁷ Among the wines of Silesia which were in great demand outside the borders of the region we must mention the produce of both Lubsko,³⁸ and, especially, Krosno Odrzańskie. These found purchasers in the neighbouring Greater Poland and (Western?) Pomerania,³⁹ in Lubeck (1368), Berlin (1504–1517)⁴⁰ and also in Toruń in the mid-15th century.⁴¹

One of the key and most unique resources of Silesia was **madder**. It was used for the production of precious red dye⁴² for the textile industry. Madder was grown by peasants near Wrocław, Środa Śląska, Brzeg and Strzelin.⁴³ Even at the close of the Middle Ages it was exported to Frankfurt am Main, Greater Poland and Prussia, and perhaps even further west via Gdańsk.⁴⁴ However, it probably did not find application in the native **textile industry**, especially in cloth making, which started to develop from the 14th

³⁴ On popularization of beer production in villages from the 15th century see *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 43. For the main centres of Silesia see J. Kaźmierczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 50; Marian Haisig, *Podstawy gospodarczego rozwoju miasta. Jego przywileje i herb*, [in:] *Legnica. Monografia historyczna miasta*, ed. Marian Haisig, Legnica 1977, p. 39; Rościsław Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, [in:] *Głogów. Zarys monografii miasta*, ed. Krystyn Matwijowski, Wrocław-Głogów 1994, p. 114; Stanisław Kotełko, *W średniowieczu – od początków miasta do 1526 r.*, [in:] *Świdnica. Zarys monografii miasta*, ed. Waclaw Korta, Wrocław-Świdnica 1995, pp. 66, 72.

³⁵ It mostly concerns beer from Świdnica, to a lesser extent beer from Wrocław (H. Wendt, *op. cit.*, p. 30) certified in Cracow and Poznań, but also in Toruń and Buda. Beer from Głogów, too, was exported to the Kingdom of Poland (R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 114), whereas beer from Opava was marketed to Toruń (Krzysztof Kopiński, *Gospodarcze i społeczne kontakty Torunia z Wrocławiem w późnym średniowieczu*, Toruń 2005, p. 121).

³⁶ W. Kehn, *Der Handel*, p. 62.

³⁷ *Breslauer Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1 (hereafter referred to as BUB.), ed. Georg Korn, Breslau 1870, No. 122 (1327), p. 113 (pt. 19).

³⁸ Wolfgang Kehn, *Der Oderraum und seine Beziehungen zur Hanse im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Pommern und Mecklenburg. Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Städtgeschichte*, ed. Roderich Schmidt, Köln-Wien 1981, p. 95.

³⁹ J. Muszyński, *op. cit.*, p. 68. Unfortunately, the author did not specify whether the wine was delivered to Western or Gdańsk Pomerania.

⁴⁰ Rolf Sprandel, *Von Malvasia bis Kötschenbroda. Die Weinsorten auf den spätmittelalterlichen Märkten Deutschlands*, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 42, 116, 147, 157.

⁴¹ *Księga kamlarii miasta Torunia (1453–1495)*, eds Krzysztof Kopiński, Krzysztof Mikulski, Janusz Tandecki, Toruń 2007, p. 272.

⁴² For the value of red dyes and technological issues arising in the process of their production see Irena Turnau, *Historia europejskiego włókiennictwa odzieżowego od XIII do XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1987, p. 66.

⁴³ Marian Wolański, *Schlesiens Stellung im Osthandel vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Der Aussenhandel Ostmitteleuropas (1450–1650). Die ostmitteleuropäischen Volkswirtschaften in ihren Beziehungen zu Mitteleuropa*, ed. Ingomar Bog, Köln-Wien 1971, p. 133.

⁴⁴ Konrad Bund, *Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter (1311–1519)*, [in:] *Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt*, Sigmaringen 1991, pp. 58, 62; M. Wolański, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

century owing to, among others, native sheep husbandry.⁴⁵ The most important centres of cloth making were located in Wrocław, Świdnica, Namysłów and Strzegom (whose prominence began in the 13th century).⁴⁶ These cities produced the famous *pannus polonialis*, which was successfully exported to Bohemia and Moravia, the Kingdom of Poland (Lesser Poland, Ruthenia), the Kingdom of Hungary (Sibiu/Hermannstadt), Switzerland and Upper Austria, Franconia and Venice.⁴⁷ In the 1380s a considerable amount of cloth produced in Opava was exported to Poland.⁴⁸ In the Middle Ages not much importance was attributed to Silesian linen manufacturing, whose development and export date back only to the turn of the 16th century.⁴⁹ Before that only Wrocław linen products were sold outside Wrocław – in Lublin (1453)⁵⁰ and, possibly, in England.⁵¹ Wrocław was probably also the centre of production of linen exported around the mid-14th century to Toruń.⁵² Perhaps the same claim be made about the manufacture and export (or maybe re-export?) of fustian to southern Germany in the 15th century.⁵³

However, what brought Silesia most fame in the markets of Europe were minerals.⁵⁴ Despite the fact that the period of the Middle Ages abounded in discoveries of various mineral resources, only a few spurred the dynamic development of the Silesian mining industry – gold, silver, lead, iron and stone mining.⁵⁵ At that time precious ore mining

⁴⁵ *Historia chłopów*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*. For the Silesian cloth making see H. Wendt, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Karol Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia od czasów najdawniejszych do roku 1618*, [in:] Waclaw Długoborski, Józef Gierowski, Karol Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia do roku 1807*, Warszawa 1958, p. 94; W. Kehn, *Der Handel*, p. 61; Mateusz Goliński, *Podstawy gospodarcze mieszczaństwa wrocławskiego w XIII wieku*, Wrocław 1991, pp. 49–50; for Strzegom see Danuta Poppe, *Pannus polonialis. Z dziejów sukiennictwa polskiego w średniowieczu*, 'Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej', 36 (1988), Nos 3/4, p. 625.

⁴⁷ Marie Scholz–Babisch, *Oberdeutscher Handel mit dem deutschen und polnischen Osten nach Geschäftsbriefen von 1444*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 64 (1930), pp. 62, 63; František Graus, *Česky obchod se sukнем ve 14. a počátkem 15. století*, Praha 1950, p. 61; K. Maleczyński, *Dzieje*, p. 108; Hektor Ammann, *Wirtschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Oberdeutschland und Polen im Mittelalter*, 'Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte', 38 (1961), issue 4, p. 440; Marian Małowist, *The Trade of Eastern Europe in the Later Middle Ages*, [in:] *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. 2, eds Michael M. Postan, Edward Miller, Cambridge 1987, 2nd edition, pp. 539, 567; D. Poppe, *op. cit.*, pp. 618, 621, 623, 627, 631; Feliks Kiryk, *Z dziejów późnośredniowiecznego Kamieńca Podolskiego*, [in:] *Kamieniec Podolski. Studia z dziejów miasta i regionu*, vol. 1, ed. Feliks Kiryk, Kraków 2000, p. 102; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 279, 302, 351–353, 409, 420, 473.

⁴⁸ *Opava*, eds Karel Müller, Rudolf Žáček, Praha 2006, p. 125.

⁴⁹ K. Maleczyński, *Dzieje*, p. 246.

⁵⁰ G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 302.

⁵¹ Rudolf Stein, *Breslau und Bremen, zwei Hansestädte*, 'Jahrbuch des Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität zu Breslau', 15 (1970), p. 8.

⁵² *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* (hereafter referred to as *HUb.*), vol. 3: *1343-1361*, ed. Konstantin Höhlbaum, Halle 1882–1886, no. 559, p. 314. The expression 'de 100 ulnis tele' was overlooked by p. Stefan Weymann's notice (S. Weymann, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 121). It was also omitted by K. Kopiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–113, 121.

⁵³ M. Scholz–Babisch, *op. cit.*, p. 64. For the growing significance of Wrocław fustian production see Mateusz Goliński, *Kryzys a przemiany środowiska miejskiego w późnym średniowieczu*, 'Sobótka', 65 (2010), p. 270.

⁵⁴ Marian Małowist, *Le développement des rapports économiques entre la Flandre la Pologne et les pays limitrophes du XIII^e au XIV^e siècle*, 'Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire', 10 (1931), issue 4, p. 1020.

⁵⁵ Karol Maleczyński, *Aus der Geschichte des schlesischen Bergbaus in der Epoche des Feudalismus*, [in:] *Beiträge zur Geschichte Schlesiens*, ed. Ewa Maleczyńska, Berlin 1958, pp. 236–237.

centres were concentrated in three areas of Silesia.⁵⁶ In the western part (near Legnica, Złotoryja and Lwówek) there were **gold** mining centres,⁵⁷ whereas in the Sudetes, from the aptly named city of Złoty Stok ('golden slope') up to the Opava Silesia (Bruntál, Benešov) both gold and **silver** mining was highly developed.⁵⁸ Silver was extracted from galena deposits (along with lead) also near Bytom.⁵⁹ The beginnings of the Silesian mining industry took place in the 12th century; however, the peak of its development would occur in the next century,⁶⁰ and from the fourth quarter of the 13th century it became intertwined with numerous crises (see part 8).

The exploitation of deposits of precious ores and lead helped form connections between different parts of Silesia. The Church institutions of Lower Silesia (the Cistercian monasteries in Lubiąż and Kamieniec Ząbkowicki, the Monastery of Regular Canons in Wrocław and the Wrocław Bishopric) received land grants in Upper Silesia from local rulers in the 13th century, sometimes together with permission to search for metal ores.⁶¹ In the same century the Abbey of St. Vincent in Wrocław extracted lead ores near Tarnowskie Góry.⁶² Frequent local border crossings led to the purchase of Złoty Stok by Bolko II of Świdnica, which granted him the opportunity to mint his own coins in 1356.⁶³ In addition the monasteries, whose incomes were paid in gold, were dependent on deposits of this precious ore (as was the case of the Cistercian abbey Lubiąż and gold mines around the town of Złotoryja).⁶⁴

The extraction and processing of various mineral resources also engaged Silesian merchants who began sell them abroad. Precious ores were already being exported in the third quarter of the 13th century to Bruges and, much later, to Cracow.⁶⁵ Finally, stone mining provided the material to make millstones, which around the mid-14th century were exported to Prussia.⁶⁶

All of the aforementioned branches of the Silesian economy were important elements of the economic map of central Europe, and possibly beyond, in the 13th–14th centuries. Key factors to spur potential regional integration were the formation of connections between the producers of natural products (farmers, breeders, winemakers,

⁵⁶ The location of the mining regions in Silesia can be found in: *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 462.

⁵⁷ For the characteristics of the region see D. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, p. 77–78, 80; Roman Gorzkowski, *Lokacyjne miasto średniowieczne (XIII–XV w.)*, [in:] *Dzieje Złotoryi*, ed. Ryszard Gładkiewicz, Złotoryja-Wrocław 1997, p. 50–52, 57.

⁵⁸ For information on the general characteristics of the whole territory and particular coal mines see Karl Peter, *Die Goldbergwerke bei Zuckmantel und Freiwalldau*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 19 (1885), pp. 35–62; K. Maleczyński, *Aus der Geschichte*, pp. 239–242; D. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, pp. 78–79, 156.

⁵⁹ For the characteristics of the region see *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 104; D. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, pp. 45–63; Jan Drabina, *Historia Bytomia*, Bytom 1994, pp. 43–45.

⁶⁰ D. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, pp. 48–49.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 53–54.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 57.

⁶³ S. Kotelko, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁶⁴ R. Gorzkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁶⁵ M. Małowist, *Le développement*, p. 1020; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 303.

⁶⁶ S. Weymann, *op. cit.*, p. 51; W. Kehn, *Der Handel*, p. 143; R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 115.

miners, stoneworkers) as well as, in the case of the textile and mining industries, artisans (weavers, steelworkers), and merchants who bought the products of the aforementioned industries. Let us emphasize that these connections were between producers, artisans and merchants from different localities of Silesia. Admittedly, it is known that in some cases Silesian goods were transported abroad by merchants from Austria, Lviv and perhaps also from Prussia.⁶⁷ It is less certain whether merchants from Austria transported Silesian cloth abroad in order to sell it in Germany, or whether they bought it in Prague, for example. However, it seems that the exportation of grains, cloth (including from Opava), linen, precious ores and millstones was made mainly by merchants from Wrocław. Obviously, we cannot exclude the participation of merchants from other cities of the region (Legnica, Świdnica, maybe Lwówek), who travelled, for example, to the markets of Frankfurt am Main.⁶⁸

It is mainly the Silesian rulers and Bishops of Wrocław who deserve credit for constructing the development of the Silesian economy based on natural resources. Their economic policy constituted another crucial factor in facilitating the transformation of Silesia into a developed economic region.

Common trends in the economic policy of the Silesian dukes, bishops and Charles IV of Luxembourg

In spite of the fact that the period under discussion was characterized by political fragmentation (after it had been incorporated into the Crown of Bohemia the dukes retained power over their territories) and frequent internal political conflicts in the region, the economic activities of many Silesian rulers were similar.⁶⁹ Each ruler more or less assisted the economic development of their area of dominance and supported the transformation of their economic landscape from being forest-dominated to one more reliant on farm breeding infrastructure, as well as the urbanization of the economy and the development of commerce and mining in areas that were rich in ores. Among the rulers whose contributions to the economic transformation of Silesia were of greatest value were the dukes who ruled the parts of the region which belonged to Wrocław. This reformation activity was set off by the initiator of the internal colonization process, Boleslaus

⁶⁷ G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 352, 409. For a rather sceptical approach towards the issue of Silesian cloth trading on a 'mass' scale see K. Kopiński, *op. cit.*, p. 113. However, the Toruń list of custom houses contains an entry referring to the trade in cloth (of uncertain provenance) from Wrocław (via Wrocław?) to Toruń along the 'old route' (HUb., vol. 3, No. 559, p. 314).

⁶⁸ Michael Rothmann, *Die Frankfurter Messen im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 155–157. For the suggestion that the merchants from Lwówek participated in trading during the Frankfurt fairs see Grzegorz Myśliwski, *Strefa sudecko-karpacka i Lwów. Miejsce Śląska, Małopolski i Rusi Czerwonej w gospodarce Europy Zachodniej (połowa XIII–początek XVI w.)*, [in:] *Ziemia polskie wobec Zachodu. Studia nad rozwojem Europy*, ed. Sławomir Gawlas, Warszawa 2006, pp. 264–265.

⁶⁹ For synthetic characteristics see: Sławomir Gawlas, *Komercjalizacja jako mechanizm europeizacji peryferii na przykładzie Polski*, [in:] *Ziemia polskie wobec Zachodu*, pp. 98–107.

I the Tall.⁷⁰ However, the most ambitious economic policy was conducted by his son, Henry the Bearded, his grandson Henry IV the Righteous and the Bishops Laurentius (1207–1232) and Thomas I (1232–1268) who ruled the castellannies of Nysa and Ot-muchów.⁷¹ It was as a result of their initiative that an intense process of colonizing vil-lages and cities based on German law and of stimulating the development of interna-tional trade and handicraft took place. The establishment of guilds occurred earlier in Wrocław (1273) than in Prague and the cities of the Hungarian Crown.⁷² The roster of Silesian dukes that supported the economic development of the region also included other figures, for example Henry III the White, who engaged in rebuilding his ducal realm after a crisis in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion in 1241 and re-launched the process of founding villages and towns.⁷³ Others included the rulers of the Duchy of Głogów, Conrad I, and the more politically-ambitious Henry III.⁷⁴ Dukes from Opole and Racibórz – for instance Casimir I, Mieszko II the Fat, Ladislaus I and others – followed a similar strategy, albeit on a smaller scale.⁷⁵

It should be noted here that from the end of the 12th century Silesia produced its own currency, denarii, and by the end of the 13th century Lower Silesian rulers had in-troduced three further monetary reforms.⁷⁶ Recently it has been claimed that similar ac-tivities were conducted at that time by Duke Ladislaus I of Opole and Racibórz, who after 1258 introduced the bracteate denarii.⁷⁷ Especially important was the emission of what were known as ‘quarter’ coins (*kwartnik*) (from ca. 1290), which enjoyed the status

⁷⁰ B. Zientara, *Heinrich der Bärtige*, pp. 117–124.

⁷¹ Other literary sources see: *ibidem*, p. 117–139, 163–181; Colmar Grünhagen, *Breslau und die Landes-fürsten*, ‘Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens’, 36 (1901), pp. 6–7; Leon Koczy, *Związki handlowe Wrocławia z Polską do końca XVI wieku*, Katowice 1936, p. 9; Zbigniew Zielonka, *Henryk Prawy*, Katowice 1982, p. 108, 120–124; Piotr Górecki, *Economy, Society, and Lordship in Medieval Poland (1100–1250)*, New York – London 1992, p. 236–275; J. Rajman, *op. cit.*, p. 84; J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Kazimierz Dola, *Znaczenie instytucji kościelnych dla organizowania osadnictwa średniowiecznego na Śląsku*, [in:] *Korzenie środkowoeuropejskiej i górnośląskiej kultury gospodarczej*, ed. Antoni Barciak, Katowice 2003, p. 60.

⁷² Roman Heck, *Wrocław w latach 1241–1526*, [in:] *Wrocław, jego dzieje i kultura*, ed. Zygmunt Świechowski, Warszawa 1978, p. 60; M. Goliński, *Wrocław od połowy XIII w.*, p. 110; cf. *Dějiny Prahy*, vol. 1, Praha – Litomyšl 1997, pp. 107, 121; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary (895–1526)*, translation: Tamás Pálosfalvi, London – New York 2001, p. 259–260.

⁷³ Andrzej Jureczko, *Henryk III Biały książę wrocławski (1247–1266)*, Kraków 2007, pp. 119–124, 132, 135–138.

⁷⁴ R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 78; Tomasz Jurek, *Dziedzic Królestwa Polskiego. Książę głogowski Henryk (1274–1309)*, 2nd edition, Kraków 2006, pp. 155–160.

⁷⁵ Władysław Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, [in:] *Opole. Monografia miasta*, ed. Franciszek Hawranek, Opole 1975, p. 57; J. Rajman, *op. cit.*, p. 83–88; Jerzy Horwat, *Formowanie się miast księstwa opolsko-raciborskiego do poł. XIV w.*, Gliwice – Rzeszów 1996, p. 121; Wojciech Dominiak, *Polityka gospodarcza księcia Władysława I Opolskiego (1246–1281)*, [in:] *Korzenie środkowoeuropejskiej i górnośląskiej kultury gospodarczej*, p. 77–78, 86–90; Anna Pobóg-Lenartowicz, *Rozwój akcji osadniczej w księstwie opolsko-raciborskim w I poł. XIII wieku*, [in:] *Sacra Silentii provincia*, p. 149.

⁷⁶ Marian Gumowski, *Moneta na Śląsku do końca XIV w.*, [in:] *Historja Śląska od najdawniejszych czasów do roku 1400*, vol. 3, ed. Władysław Semkowicz, Kraków 1936, pp. 579, 583, 602–603, 649–650; Borys Paszkiewicz, *Mennictwo śląskie wobec ‘Rewolucji handlowej’ XIII wieku*, [in:] *Kultura średniowiecznego Śląska i Czech. ‘Rewolucja’ XIII wieku*, ed. Krzysztof Wachowski, Wrocław 1998, pp. 36, 49.

⁷⁷ Borys Paszkiewicz, *Polityka monetarna Władysława I*, [in:] *Sacra Silentii provincia*, p. 160.

of a genuine and valuable Silesian currency for over three decades.⁷⁸ The quarter coin reform at that point constituted a desired solution to the regional need to produce a coin that would be larger in size, and thus of more permanent value than the bracteats in use at the time. It was Ferdinand Friedensburg who first raised the number of quarter coin mints to 34, five of which were located in Upper Silesia (in Bytom, Cieszyn, Racibórz, Toszek and Sławęcice).⁷⁹ In the same period the decentralization of the mint industry also took place.⁸⁰ The incorporation of most of the Silesian duchies to Bohemia (1327–1335) resulted in the domination of the Prague *groschen* over the Silesian currency. At the same time, in Wrocław in particular, during the entire medieval period larger sums of money were counted in accordance with the so-called ‘Polish counting system’ (where 48 *groschen* = 1 *grzywna*) and not by using the Bohemian currency division.⁸¹ This would confirm the observation made by Günther Meinhardt that Silesia constituted a kind of monetary borderland where the influences of different monetary systems clashed.⁸²

The activity of the aforementioned dukes in the period between the second half of the 12th century and the outset of the 14th century accelerated the process by which the Silesian lands developed a common economic profile far earlier than in the case of other Polish lands, and at approximately the same time as that of the Bohemian Crown.⁸³ An opinion has been expressed that Henry III of Głogów (who died in 1309) was the last contestant in the race of duke-reformers of the Silesian economy.⁸⁴ This opinion, however, needs to be updated and corrected. We must not forget that by the first quarter of the 14th century the basic economic transformation of the Silesian region was completed. Reforms also contributed to the spread of economic life stimulators (monasteries, burghers) whose role in this period was increasingly important. As a result of immunization efforts and frequent cases of people being exempt from making payments to dukes, the material resources of the rulers were gradually shrinking.⁸⁵ Their role in the Silesian economy was thus restricted. At the same time, after the death of Henry III of Głogów Silesia was home to many dukes that played a favourable role in the economic history of their subject cities and territories. It is worth mentioning here the rational fiscal policy of Louis I of Brzeg, who granted permission to numerous Silesian cities to strike coins let

⁷⁸ M. Gumowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 555, 648, 649–650, 688, 690; Günther Meinhardt, *Schlesiens Währungssysteme*, ‘Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich–Wilhelms–Universität zu Breslau’, 15 (1970), p. 48; B. Paszkiewicz, *Mennictwo*, p. 49; T. Jurek, *Dziedzic*, p. 163–164.

⁷⁹ M. Gumowski, *op. cit.*, p. 656–683.

⁸⁰ B. Paszkiewicz, *Mennictwo*, p. 49.

⁸¹ Ferdinand Friedensburg, *Schlesiens Münzgeschichte im Mittelalter*, part. 2: *Münzgeschichte und Münzbeschreibung*, Breslau 1888 (=Codex Diplomaticus Silesiae, vol. 13), p. 52; *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 158; M. Goliński, *Wrocław od połowy XIII w.*, p. 165; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 520.

⁸² G. Meinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁸³ For Bohemia see Jan Klápšte, *Studies of structural change in medieval settlement in Bohemia*, ‘Antiquity’, 65 (1991), p. 397; J.K. Hoensch, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁸⁴ So stated W. Kuhn, and accordingly T. Jurek, *Dziedzic*, p. 165. What corresponds with these data are the findings of J. Horwat, who confirmed the halt of urbanization processes in the Upper Silesia at the turn of the 14th century, mostly from the initiative of the dukes (J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, pp. 121, 124).

⁸⁵ See i.e. M. Haisig, *Podstawy gospodarczego rozwoju miasta*, p. 41.

alone other less spectacular privileges.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the monetary reforms introduced by rulers such as Wenceslaus I of Legnica, Louis I of Brzeg, Bolko II of Świdnica and Bolko II of Ziębice (the issuance of golden coins) turned out to be short-lived.⁸⁷ Even worse was the decision of Matthias Corvinus to introduce the Silesian *groschen* at end of 1470, which, despite being put into use, brought about monetary chaos.⁸⁸ As far as the financial policy of the late medieval period is concerned, the best results were obtained by the municipal authorities' actions to uphold the value of money, such as the joint resolution of the cities of Wrocław, Świdnica and Legnica in 1438 for example.⁸⁹

Despite the conspicuous difference in the range of economic activity of the Silesian rulers in the second half of 12th century and at the outset of the 14th century, as well as their 14th-century successors (to say nothing of the relatively insignificant (in this area) rulers of the 15th century), the claim that there was a lack of great reformers in late medieval Silesia does not seem justified. What comes to mind in this context is the great figure of Charles IV of Luxembourg. As we know, Charles, as both King of Bohemia and the Holy Roman Emperor, carried out active and well-thought-out policies to develop his successive territories. On his initiative new trades were founded (e.g. the fustian industry in Germany, Austria and Bohemia) and he strove to make the Elbe river basin the major trading artery between Flanders and northern Italy (especially Venice).⁹⁰ When planning the economic flourish of the Bohemian Crown, he did not forget to pay attention to the interests of Silesia. Charles' intention was not only to restore trade along the Odra river within the region (see above) but he also engaged himself in activities aimed at the restoration of trade with Western Pomerania via the Odra. This was to be achieved through conquering Brandenburg (1373), his marriage to Elisabeth, the Duchess of Pomerania, as well as through revoking the detrimental staple right in Frankfurt an der Oder.⁹¹ The fact of awarding the city of Wrocław two mint privileges (1360, 1362), and Świdnica two commercial privileges (1355, 1363)⁹² needs to be viewed in the context of Charles' hopes of successfully achieving his plan to focus all the main trade and communication arteries between the north and northern Italy within his area of rule, although

⁸⁶ S. Kotelko, *op. cit.*, p. 74; M. Haisig, *Podstawy gospodarczego rozwoju miasta*, p. 38; G. Meinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁸⁷ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 159; G. Meinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁸⁸ F. Friedensburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 89; Borys Paszkiewicz, *Pieniądz górnośląski w średniowieczu*, Lublin 2000, pp. 86–88.

⁸⁹ F. Friedensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁹⁰ Wolfgang von Stromer, *Der kaiserliche Kaufmann – Wirtschaftspolitik unter Karl IV.*, [in:] *Kaiser Karl IV. Staatsman und Mäzen*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt, München 1978, pp. 67, 69–70.

⁹¹ Ferdinand Seibt, *Karol IV. Cesarz w Europie 1346–1378*, translated by Czesław Tarnogórski, ed., Warszawa 1996, p. 267–270. For information on the history of the 15th century Frankfurt staple right see M. Rauprich, *Breslaus Handelslage*, p. 13; A. Grodek, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

⁹² See i.e. M. Gumowski, *Moneta*, p. 707, 715; Marian Haisig, *Wrocławskie pieczęcie, medale i monety*, [in:] *Wrocław, jego dzieje i kultura*, ed. Zygmunt Świechowski, Warszawa 1978, p. 82; S. Kotelko, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

in the case of Świdnica, which was the capital city of a still-independent duchy, the political aspect was of greater importance. Researchers assume that Charles' attempt to introduce the fustian industry to Wrocław in the 1350s was repeat of his earlier economic policy in southern Germany.⁹³ Although Charles failed to achieve the main target of his master plan (the Venetians did not accept his offer), his economic policy brought many benefits to the Silesian economy.

Both Charles' predecessors and his successors in the Luxembourg dynasty substantially contributed to the economic development of the region by supporting trade in Wrocław, to give one example.⁹⁴ Their actions were, however, politically motivated and did not result from a broader economic policy led by either King John or King Wenceslaus IV. Sigismund of Luxemburg, on the other hand, whose intellectual horizons were far broader than the political imagination of his grandfather and brother, decided to lead a risky policy of confrontation with the mighty Venice; hence, he proclaimed a blockade of the trade routes on the north–south axis.⁹⁵ His action simply could not have had a positive impact on the economic development of those Silesian cities where merchants were actively participating in long-distant trade. Despite the initial stand of Wolfgang von Stromer, who claimed the activity of Sigismund to be partly successful, the ruler's attempt to change the hierarchy of the economic system of Europe resulted in utter failure. Both his actions and the actions of John of Luxembourg and Wenceslaus IV brought privileges to a number of municipal centres. In comparison to the economic activities conducted by the three Luxembourgs, the policies of the Dukes and Bishops of Silesia between the 13th and 14th centuries appear to be far more multidimensional. One of the crucial achievements in this area was the activity of founding and reorganizing cities on the basis of German and Flemish law, whose presence was far more evident in Silesia than in any other region of central Europe.

Advanced urbanization and high percentage of urban population

According to Henryk Samsonowicz, as many as 129 out of 169 (76.33 per cent) centres with municipal rights were established by the dukes.⁹⁶ The number of cities in medieval Silesia founded on the basis of German law was actually higher. The findings of Samsonowicz must be supplemented by data concerning the cities of the Opava area, including the first founded city of Bruntál (1213 r.), as well as Opava, Hlučín, Krnov and

⁹³ W. von Stromer, *Der kaiserliche Kaufmann*, p. 70. See also I. Turnau, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁹⁴ Samuel Benjamin Klose, *Von Breslau. Dokumentierte Geschichte und Beschreibung in Briefen*, vol. 2, part 2, Breslau 1781, p. 350–351; Colmar Grünhagen, *Schlesien am Ausgange des Mittelalters*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 18 (1884), p. 39; H. Wendt, *op. cit.*, p. 43; K. Maleczyński, *Dzieje*, p. 171; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 101, 239–240, 243, 256, 408, 497.

⁹⁵ See especially Wolfgang von Stromer, *Landmacht gegen Seemacht. Kaiser Sigismunds Kontinentalsperre gegen Venedig (1412–1433)*, 'Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung', 22 (1995), issue 2, pp. 145–189.

⁹⁶ Maria Bogucka, Henryk Samsonowicz, *Dzieje miast i mieszczaństwa w Polsce przedrozbiorowej*, Wrocław 1986, p. 84. In Upper Silesia this proportion was even higher – over 89 percent (J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, p. 121).

Odry.⁹⁷ The apogee of urbanization passed soon after 1310.⁹⁸ Based on the list of municipal foundations created by Samsonowicz it is possible to extend this period to 1327 for Lower Silesia.⁹⁹ As a result, Silesia was covered with a dense network of urban centres of different sizes. This related especially to Lower Silesia, where the urban population reached 27.1 per cent, whereas Upper Silesia could boast only 14.9 per cent.¹⁰⁰ The aggregate population of the Silesian urban centres constituted 23.1 per cent of the total population of the region in the second quarter of the 14th century. In this respect, Silesia outperformed the majority of its neighbouring regions, perhaps even Bohemia.¹⁰¹ Despite a drop in the population in the 15th century, the level of urbanization of the region of Silesia in the closing period of the Middle Ages was among the highest in central Europe (15 per cent), and is comparable with royal (Polish) Prussia and the indigenous regions of the Kingdom of Bohemia.¹⁰² At the same time, the proportion of urban population in Silesia was higher than that in Lesser Poland (11–13 per cent), but lower than in the case of Greater Poland (19 per cent).¹⁰³ On the basis of the aforementioned data we may, therefore, draw the conclusion that the urban population of both parts of Silesia, although being substantially high in general, slumped in the 15th century when compared to the 14th century.

Simultaneously, late medieval Silesia had a higher number of towns than other regions, including Bohemia and Moravia.

Table 2. The largest towns of Silesia and its neighbouring regions in the Late Middle Ages¹⁰⁴

Population	Silesia ¹⁰⁵	Bohemia and Moravia ¹⁰⁶	Lesser Poland ¹⁰⁷	Greater Poland ¹⁰⁸	Lusatia ¹⁰⁹
Over 20,000	–	Prague	–	–	–
15,000–20,000	Wrocław	–	Cracow	–	–
11,000–14,000	Świdnica, Legnica	–	–	Poznań	–

⁹⁷ Zdeněk Láznička, *K počátkům města Opavy*, [in:] *Opava. Sborník k 10. výročí osvobození města*, eds Andělín Grobelný, Bohumil Sobotík, Ostrava 1956, p. 78; *Opava*, eds Karel Müller, Rudolf Žáček, Praha 2006, p. 46.

⁹⁸ M. Bogucka, H. Samsonowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁹⁹ The Upper Silesian urbanization surge came to an end in the 13th century (J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, p. 124).

¹⁰⁰ Jan Drabina, *Žycie codzienne w miastach śląskich XIV i XV wieku*, Wrocław 1998, p. 7–8.

¹⁰¹ The urban population of Bohemia around the year 1400 is estimated to be 20 per cent of the total, Jan Čechura, *České země v letech 1310–1378. Lucemburkové na českém trůně*, Praha 1999, p. 160.

¹⁰² M. Bogucka, H. Samsonowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 122. The list of population figures prepared by H. Samsonowicz, where the total population of the regions and towns is stated separately, shows that the Silesian population at the end of the Middle Ages was significantly smaller than that of Royal Prussia (27.5 %) (*ibidem*, pp. 120–121).

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁴ Most of the findings refer to the 15th century. We shall provide here several explanations. In the case of a substantial number of urban centres, the size of their population was estimated with a high degree accuracy to be over 2,000 (e.g. Głogów, Lwówek). In such cases we assume the lowest threshold. The population estimates vary in the case of different towns located mainly in Bohemia and Moravia (Kutná Hora, Olomuniec, Pilsno, see below). Detailed estimates with explanations, see below.

5,000–10,000	Lwówek, Głogów	Olomuc, Plzeň, Kutná Hora, Brno, Hradec Králové	–		Zgorzelec, Budziszyn, Żytawa,
3,000–5,000	Brzeg, Dzierżoniów, Nysa, Racibórz, Środa, Ząbkowice, Ziębice, Krosno, Opava	Jihlava, České Budějovice, Znojmo	Lublin, Sandomierz	Kalisz, Kościan	Lubań

¹⁰⁵ There are considerable divergences in the data on the size of the Wrocław population in the 15th century. For example, it has been discovered recently that the Wrocław population at the outset of the 15th century was around 13,000–22,000 and around 15,000–21,000 in the mid-15th century (M. Goliński, *Wrocław od połowy XIII w.*, p. 207). For a variety of different views on this subject see G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 61. The town of Świdnica was to comprise a population of 14,000 people between the 15th and the 16th centuries, S. Kotełko, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Legnica on the other hand had 12,000–15,000 people, including the suburbs (Kazimierz Bobowski, *Etapy rozwoju miasta w okresie piastowskim*, [in:] *Legnica. Zarys monografii miasta*, ed. Stanisław Dąbrowski, Wrocław-Legnica 1998, p. 58). It is worth remembering here the much lower estimates of Marian Haisig – 10,000 in 1329 and only 6,500 in the mid-15th century, see *idem*, *Zaludnienie i kłęski żywiołowe*, [in:] *Legnica. Monografia historyczna*, p. 47; this drop was probably caused by the crisis in the local mining industry. How should we then reconcile this fact with Haisig's views on the peak development of the city in the first half of the 15th century? (M. Haisig, *Podstawy gospodarczego rozwoju miasta*, p. 41); I based my assumptions on K. Bobowski, see above. Other data: Lwówek had 9,000–11,500 people in 1329 (*Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 249); Głogów – 9,000–11,000 (R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 115), Nysa – about 5,000 people. (J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 34), which was similar for Brzeg, Dzierżoniów, Ziębice and Ząbkowice – all of them had about 4,500–5,000 inhabitants (cf. J. Drabina, *Życie codzienne*, p. 7). In the case of the remaining cities, I present the data for the 14th century: Krosno was inhabited by over 3,000 people (J. Muszyński, *op. cit.*, p. 69), Racibórz – only a little over 3,000. (J. Burek, *op. cit.*, p. 55–56); and the researchers are in agreement that the population of Opava amounted to 4,000 people (J. Čechura, *České země w letech 1310–1378*, p. 177; *Opava*, p. 30). It would be worth referring here to the view of Karl Borchardt, who like several other, mainly German researchers, has recently supported the view that Wrocław had 15,000 inhabitants in the 15th century and whose estimates of the sizes of the populations of other Silesian cities are generally lower than those of other Polish historians. According to his view, Świdnica was to have half of the population of the central city of Silesia, whereas Legnica, Głogów, Opole and Racibórz comprised a group of small cities with populations between 1,000 and 5,000 people (*idem*, *Breslau als Zentrum Schlesiens im 15. Jahrhundert. Überlegungen zur Genese gesamt-schlesischer Einrichtungen*, 'Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich–Wilhelms–Universität zu Breslau', 42–44 (2001–2003), pp. 11–12. Nonetheless, it seems that although the size of the population of Wrocław may be still placed within the range of most actual estimates, the views on the populations of other cities are understated. What also provokes doubts is the fact that both cities with average populations of 1,000 and 5,000 people were included in one group (without mentioning their names).

¹⁰⁶ In the pre-Hussite period, the population of Prague was estimated at 30,000–40,000 people and in the post-Hussite period – at 20,000. (Jaroslav Mezník, *Der ökonomische Charakter Prags im 14. J.*, 'Historica', 17 (1969), pp. 46, 65). In the 15th century, Brno had about 8,000 inhabitants and Cheb – 6,800; Hradec Králové – 5,000 and Jihlava – 4,600; České Budějovice – 4,000 (Jaroslav Čechura, *České země w letech 1378–1437. Lucemburkové na českém trůně*, vol. 2, Praha 2000, p. 220). Josiah Cox Russell estimated the size of the population of Olomuc and Plzeň at 10,000 people, and the population of Kutná Hora at 8,000. (*idem*, *Medieval Regions and Their Cities*, Bloomington 1972, p. 100). Far lower were the estimates of 4,000 for Kutná Hora, Cheb, Plzeň, Olomuc, Znojmo and Litoměřice in the second half the 14th century mentioned by J. Čechura, *České země w letech 1310–1378*, p. 177. But the view that in the peak of their prosperity (14th century) the Bishop's capital city of Olomuc and the centre of silver mining Kutná Hora both had populations of only 4,000 people raises serious doubts. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that after the Hussite Wars the populations of most of the urban centres significantly shrunk in size.

¹⁰⁷ The population of Cracow was estimated in the first half of the 15th century at about 15,000. (Jerzy Wyrozumski, *Dzieje Krakowa*, vol. 1: *Kraków do schyłku wieków średnich*, Kraków 1992, pp. 315–317); the population of Lublin in the 15th century – at about 4,000. (M. Bogucka, H. Samsonowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 119),

This list needs to be supplemented by two remarks. Firstly, it does not illustrate the changes in the population of the largest cities of Silesia and its neighbouring regions. For example, in the case of Bohemia and Moravia, the turning point, after which the number of municipal inhabitants started to fall radically, was the outbreak of the Hussite Wars (1419). The same may also be said about the population of Zgorzelec.¹¹⁰ The wars had no impact on the size of the population of Wrocław, which grew during the 15th century. A similar tendency was evident in the case of the cities of the Kingdom of Poland.

The impact of developing a dense network of fairly populated Silesian towns on the integrity of the region is obvious. These cities served as unifying forces of the economy, to say nothing of their formidable political, legal (sources of municipal law, *weichbilds*)¹¹¹ and cultural significance. Perhaps the urbanization process could be regarded as the reason why, despite the early and intensive development of agriculture, the export of grains did not become one of Silesia's commercial strengths – it was probably the case that the large populations of the Silesian cities consumed the majority of any agricultural produce surpluses.

Based on the above table we can see that in Silesia there was little disproportion between the main city of the region and the other larger centres, which cannot be said for its neighbouring regions. In urbanized Bohemia, Prague was considerably outpacing other cities as far as the number of its inhabitants was concerned. The demographic advantage enjoyed by Silesia is even better demonstrated in the case of Lesser Poland, where Lublin, its second most densely populated city, probably had only 4,000 inhabitants. Similarly, in Greater Poland Poznań, which was medium-sized but distinguished by a royal-diocesan tradition, significantly outgrew other small cities. The urbanization of

Sandomierz – 3,000. (Zbigniew Morawski, *Sandomierz od końca XIII do początków XV wieku*, [in:] *Dzieje Sandomierza*, vol. 1, ed. Henryk Samsonowicz, Warszawa 1993, p. 122).

¹⁰⁸ For the year 1430, the population of Poznań is estimated at 6,000–6,500 people, and for the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries at 10,000–12,500 people (Jacek Wiesiołowski, *Socjotopografia późnośredniowiecznego Poznania*, Poznań 1997, 2 edition, pp. 234–235). At the close of the Middle Ages, the population of Kalisz was about 4,000 people (Stanisław Herbst, *Kalisz renesansowy*, [in:] *Osiemnaście wieków Kalisza. Studia i materiały do dziejów miasta Kalisza i regionu kaliskiego*, vol. 3, ed. Aleksander Gieysztor, Kalisz 1961, p. 95). Similar are the estimates regarding the population of Kościan (*Kościan. Zarys dziejów*, eds Zbigniew Wielgosz, Kazimierz Zimmiewicz, Warszawa – Poznań 1985, p. 17).

¹⁰⁹ Data for the 15th century from Norbert Kersken, *Górne Łużyce od założenia Związku Sześciu Miast do włączenia do Elektoratu Saksonii (1346–1635)*, [in:] *Dzieje Górnych Łużyc. Władza, społeczeństwo, kultura od średniowiecza do końca XX wieku*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, translated by Marek Słoń, Rafał Sendek, coop., Warszawa 2007, p. 131.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹¹ Slightly modified versions of legal regulations from Magdeburg and Halle, as well as Flemish laws, were adopted by Silesian cities as to create Wrocław, Środa Śląska, Krosno, Lwówek, Głubczyce and Nysa versions and, exceptionally, the Chełmno version. For the so-called *weichbilds* of Silesia see S. Gawlas, *O kształt zjednoczonego Królestwa*, Warszawa 1996, p. 54–55; Hugo Weczerka, *Schlesiens zentrale Orte: Kontinuität und Wandel vom Mittelalter bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 'Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau', 59 (2008), pp. 41–45 and the chapter by M. Pauk i E. Wólkiewicz above in the book.

Lusatia on the other hand (especially in Upper Lusatia) was dominated by a group of towns with similar but not large populations.

Even the largest of these towns (Zgorzelec) was much smaller than Wrocław. Wrocław was the undisputed regional metropolis and one of the driving forces of the Silesian economy.

Wrocław and smaller urban centres

This city on the Odra river had always enjoyed the status of the political, administrative (residence of the captain of the Duchy of Wrocław) and diocesan centre of the region. At the same time, its influence on the aforementioned areas was volatile and spatially restricted, even as far as the administrative-church sphere was concerned (i.e. the diocese did not include Opava).¹¹² It is worth mentioning the issue of the so-called ‘Peter’s Pence’ payment, which in 1329 flowed to Wrocław from almost the whole territory of Silesia, including the city and Duchy of Racibórz.¹¹³ The spread of Wrocław’s version of German law did not reach Upper Silesia, although it included Olomuc.¹¹⁴

In an economic sense, Wrocław was a center of Silesia. Its formidable manufacturing potential may be illustrated by the number of guilds (which was usually lower than the number of professions registered in the city). Even by 1303, 29 guilds were in operation in the city, whereas their number in other Silesian towns was much smaller: 16 in Świdnica (1374), 11 in Legnica (1352), and 6 in Brzeg – just as in the case of the principal urban centres of Upper Silesia at the end of the 14th century such as Opole and Racibórz (1362).¹¹⁵ In the period of the Late Middle Ages the leading branches of industry were the textile industry, metalworking, clothing (including fur clothing) and food manufacturing.

However, Wrocław’s advantage over other cities of the region was most evident in its flourishing long-distance trade and the immense size of its commercial network. Being a centre of commerce with a vast commercial network reaching as far as the Netherlands, England, southern Germany, northern Italy, Hungary, Wallachia, Novogrod and Scandinavia, Wrocław also played an important role as an international fair centre.¹¹⁶ It is known that in the Late Middle Ages it was involved in the series of international commercial

¹¹² František Papoušek, *Opavské mincování*, [in:] *Opava. Sborník*, p. 87.

¹¹³ *Henricus Pauper. Rechnungen der Stadt Breslau (1299–1358)*, [in:] *Codex diplomaticus Silesiae*, vol. 3, ed. Colmar Grünhagen, Breslau 1860, p. 89.

¹¹⁴ Theodor Goerlitz, *Verfassung, Verwaltung und Recht der Stadt Breslau*, part 1: *Mittelalter*, Würzburg 1962, p. 108–109.

¹¹⁵ Roman Heck, *Die gewerbliche Produktion der mittelalterlichen Stadt Wrocław*, [in:] *Gewerbliche Produktion und Stadt-Land-Beziehungen*, eds Konrad Fritze, Eckhard Müller-Mertens, Johannes Schildhauer, Weimar 1979 (=Hansische Studien, vol. 4), p. 44.

¹¹⁶ G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 92.

meetings that took place in various locations from Vilnius to Leipzig.¹¹⁷ However, the purpose of raising the issue of the importance of the fairs organized in Wrocław in the context of the formation of the Silesian economic region is to determine whether these markets were the main driving forces of the alleged series of commercial meetings that took place in the region. The historical process behind the development of the Wrocław fairs and the perturbations concerning the dates of their organization is a well-known issue.¹¹⁸ After the monastic fair organized on the day of St. Vincent (6th June), later revoked by Henry I the Bearded in 1232,¹¹⁹ the fair of St. John, the oldest in the city, started on 24th June. After 1337, the so-called ‘mid-fast fair’ was introduced (every year it commenced on a different date between the 1st May and the 4th of April), and from 1374 the St. Elizabeth fair also took place (from 19th October). In 1481 Matthias Corvinus founded the Holy Cross fair, which commenced on the 14th September. It is hard to evaluate the importance of the St. John fair for the economic life of Silesia before the 14th century partly due to the fact that the dates of many fairs in other cities of the region are unknown. It does not seem, however, that there was any overlap between it and the old fair in Nysa (which commenced on 21st January), or the fair in Brzeg (8th September), provided it was launched soon after the founding of the city, that is in the second half of the 1270s;¹²⁰ the time between the fairs was too great. There is substantial evidence that a chronological relationship between fairs in certain cities developed by the Late Middle Ages. What is noticeable is a close relationship between the fair in Brzeg and the series of fairs in Wrocław, which was successfully supplemented in 1412 with the fair of St. Bartholomew (24th August)¹²¹ – the Brzeg fair was at that time established enough in the economic life of Silesia to make the capital city adopt the tradition of the meetings of wholesale merchants at a slightly earlier time. One could also look for a compatibility of dates among certain fairs in Głogów and Wrocław¹²² – for example the Głogów fair of the Virgin Mary (15th August) and the fourth Wrocław fair (14th September), as well as the Głogów fair that was launched in 1472 (and started on 30th November) and that of Wrocław, which started on 19th November. Furthermore, the purpose behind the foundation of the Easter fair in Legnica (1443)¹²³ could have been the strengthening of commercial relations with Wrocław and its ‘mid-fast fair’. In light of

¹¹⁷ Henryk Samsonowicz, *Warszawa w handlu średniowiecznym*, [in:] *Warszawa średniowieczna*, issue 2, ed. Aleksander Gieysztor, Warszawa 1975 (=Studia Warszawskie, vol. 19), p. 28.

¹¹⁸ M. Goliński, *Wrocław od połowy XIII w.*, p. 153; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 129.

¹¹⁹ M. Młynarska-Kaletynowa, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹²⁰ For dates of fairs in Nysa and Brzeg see J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 18; Władysław Dziewulski, *Brzeg od lokacji na prawie zachodnim do wygaśnięcia dynastii Piastów*, [in:] *Brzeg. Dzieje – gospodarka – kultura*, Opole 1975, p. 88.

¹²¹ G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 133–134.

¹²² R. Żereplik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 114.

¹²³ Marian Haisig, *Rzemiosło, handel i pieniądz miejski*, [in:] *Legnica*, p. 63.

all the available historical data it does not seem however that the oldest fair of Świdnica (16th October) was also part of this series.¹²⁴

The issue of compatibility of the fairs of Upper Silesia together with their Wrocław counterparts is unequivocal.¹²⁵ What is less certain is the issue of a potential chronological compatibility between the Upper Silesian annual meetings with the fairs of Cracow. In the Late Middle Ages Cracow had three fairs which started on 3rd May, 11th June and 29th September.¹²⁶ With this perspective in mind, we may divide the fairs of Upper Silesia into four groups: (a) fairs that were potentially related to the Wrocław fairs; (b) fairs that were potentially related to both the Wrocław and Cracow fairs; (c) fairs that related only to fairs in Cracow; (d) fairs that related neither to the Wrocław nor Cracow fairs. The fourth of these groups is omitted in my analysis. The groups under scrutiny comprise both towns with wider and more local influences, which may have been the places in which the distribution of goods purchased either in both or at least in one of the metropolises of Silesia and Lesser Poland took place.

A town of the first group that is especially worth noting is Bytom, whose autumn (30th November) and summer (15th August) fairs could have been related to the St. Elizabeth fair and – from 1481 – to the Holy Cross fair in Wrocław. What is especially interesting is that the third fair of Bytom (22nd July) did not have anything in common with the annual meetings of merchants either in the capital city of Silesia or in the capital city of the Kingdom of Poland. The St. Elizabeth fair in Wrocław was probably connected with the Pyskowice fair (6th December) located on the Via Regia.¹²⁷ The Holy Cross fair could be connected with the Zator fair, which commenced on the 24th August. All these Upper Silesian towns were located about 150–200 km away in a straight line from Wrocław. As at that time the average daily travelling distance was ca. 20–30 km,¹²⁸ we can reasonably say that the journey from Pyskowice (closest to Wrocław) to the centre of Wrocław took the merchants about 58 days.

At the same time, I would include Zator in the group of cities whose fairs were compatible with some of the fairs of Wrocław and Cracow. We should also name here the fairs in Czeladź (27th September) and Oświęcim (after 21st May).

¹²⁴ Actually, perhaps this was the fair that Charles IV had in mind when in 1374 he asked Wrocław to choose between two possible dates for the newly-founded fair. In accordance with one of these options the fair was to commence on the day of St Simon and Juda (October 28). The emperor's intention could be justified by his knowledge of the economic regulations and with the fact that he wanted to establish a closer economic relationship between Świdnica and Wrocław. Naturally, Świdnica was the capital of an autonomous duchy, and Charles IV undertook a number of steps in order to subordinate it in the second half of the 14th century. Nevertheless the authorities of Wrocław, who were very faithful to their ruler, had chosen a different, later date, thus preventing the hypothetical plan of developing the link between the fair of Świdnica and Wrocław.

¹²⁵ The dates of Upper Silesian fairs after: J. Rajman, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

¹²⁶ J. Wyrozumski, *Dzieje*, p. 390.

¹²⁷ General information on Pyskowice see J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹²⁸ H. Samsonowicz, *Warszawa*, p. 28; Norman J. G. Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe*, 2nd edition, New York 1994, p. 358.

A typical example of the third group was the summer fair in Opole (24th June). It was impossible to attend the St. John fair in this city for those who also wanted to visit the St. John fair in Wrocław. On the other hand, Opole could have been visited in that period by the merchants who participated in the Cracow fair slightly earlier, which started on 11th June and lasted five and half days. Moreover, the date of the Opole fair in the Late Middle Ages could have collided with the date of the Brzeg fair (from 1369), which started usually nine weeks after Easter, that is between 24th May and 27th June.¹²⁹ Because of this, in 1513 Ladislaus Jagiellon changed the date of the opening of the Opole fair to St. Lambert's day (17th September).¹³⁰ The newly designated dates collided with the dates of the Holy Cross fair in Wrocław. At the same time, it should be noted that Władysław Dziewulski did not take into account the fact that Easter sometimes takes place earlier – which could have occasionally prevented the fair dates from overlapping and most importantly enabled a situation where the Opole and Brzeg fairs took place sequentially. The fair on the day of St. Lambert would then match the dates of the subsequent Cracow fair, which started 29th September. This fair could also have been connected with one of the fairs of Gliwice (15th October) and a prior fair in Sławków (14th September). The late-spring Cracow fair (11th June 11) could have been connected with fair in Siewierz.

Table 3. Selected Upper Silesian fairs and their correlation with the dates of fairs in Wrocław and Cracow between the 14th and 15th centuries

Wrocław	Upper Silesia	Cracow
from September 14	Bytom—from August 15	—
from November 19	Bytom—from November 30	—
from September 14	Czeladź—from September 27	from September 29
—	Gliwice—from October 15	from September 29
—	Opole—from June 24	from June 11
—	Opole—from September 17 (from 1513)	from September 29
from June 24	Oświęcim—after May 21	from June 11
from November 19	Pyskowice—from December 6	—
—	Siewierz—from June 24	from June 11
—	Sławków—from September 14	from September 29
—	Zator—from April 23	from May 3
—	Zator—from June 24	from June 11
from September 14	Zator—from August 24	—

As we can see, Cracow's force of attraction in the 15th and at the outset of the 16th centuries was stronger than the impact of Wrocław on other cities of Upper Silesia. So in

¹²⁹ W. Dziewulski, *Brzeg*, p. 88.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

this context the fact of conceiving a fair on 14th September needs to be viewed as an attempt to develop bonds between Wrocław and a number of Upper Silesian towns.

The region-bonding role of Wrocław could be also manifested by the fact that the city was also attractive for Silesians as a spot where they could meet merchants from outside the region. Sometimes these were foreigners who played the role of middlemen in contracts with merchants from various Silesian towns. The majority of these Silesian merchants were burghers, but the fairs also attracted knights, clergymen and the representatives of dukes. The contracts agreed upon during these meetings varied in nature. Besides transactions or demands connected with the realization of commercial or credit contracts, Silesians were also involved in various contracts as representatives or guarantors of the contracting parties.

Table 4. Meetings between Silesian citizens and international merchants in Wrocław between the 14th and the 15th centuries¹³¹

	Brno	Cheb	Erfurt	Gdańsk	Florence	Frankfurt (Oder)	Hamburg	Cracow	Leipzig	Lithuania	Lublin	Magdeburg	Nuremberg	Olomouc	Plauen	Prague	Prussia	Regensburg	Sopron	Toruń	Venice	Zgorzelec	
Brzeg						X ¹³²		X					X									X	
Głogów								X															
Jawor											X												
Near Jelenia Góra–Rybnica							X ¹³³																
Kłodzko	X ¹³⁴																						
Legnica				X ¹³⁵				X								X							X
Near Legnica–Klebanów								X															
Lipa															X								
Lubiąż																					X		
Lwówek								X															
Next to Lwówek–Gryfów													X										

¹³¹ Most of the data is based on G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 162, 259, 263–264, 320–321, 389–390, 391–392, 434, 438, 460, 494–495.

¹³² Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu (State Archives in Wrocław, hereafter referred to as APWr.), Akta miasta Wrocławia (hereafter referred to as AWr.), *Libri excessuum et signaturarum* (hereafter referred to as *Lib.exc.sign.*), vol. 26, p. 54 (1426).

¹³³ *Mittheilungen aus Breslauer Signaturbüchern*, [part 3], ed. Otto Stobbe, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 7 (1866), issue 2, p. 350 (1423).

¹³⁴ APWr., AWr., *Liber Magnus* (hereafter referred to as *L.Mag.*), p. 24 (1397).

¹³⁵ *Mittheilungen aus Breslauer Signaturbüchern*, [part 1], ed. Otto Stobbe, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', vol. 6, issue 2, 1865, p. 346–347 (1408).

Namysłów								X ¹³⁶										X ¹³⁷	
Nosseldorf (?)									X									X	
Nysa	X	X	X ¹³⁸						X			X						X ¹³⁹	X
Oleśnica/ Kąty				X															
Oława								X											
Opava			X ¹⁴⁰																
Next to Opole– –Gryzów														X ¹⁴¹					
Next to Opole– –Siedlice													X ¹⁴²						
Next to Opole– –Wolczyn									X ¹⁴³										
Strzegom																			X
Strzelce													X						
Środa							X ¹⁴⁴		X			X ¹⁴⁵	X						
Świdnica									X			X						X ¹⁴⁶	X
Toszek												X							
Next to Wrocław– –Gębczyce									X										
Next to Wrocław– –Osiek				X															X
Next to Wrocław– –Rogowo									X										
Next to Wrocław– –Sarby									X										
Next to Wrocław – –Źródła									X			X		X					
Ząbkowice	X ¹⁴⁷																		
Ziębice																			X X
Zlaté Hory				X						X ¹⁴⁸									
Žagaň							X		X	X									X X

¹³⁶ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 24, p. 17 (1423).

¹³⁷ APWr., AWr., *Laurentius Nudus*, p. 234 (1368).

¹³⁸ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 3, k. 6v (1390).

¹³⁹ *Mitteilungen aus Breslauer Signaturbüchern*, [part 1], p. 347 (1408).

¹⁴⁰ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 22, p. 17–18 (1418).

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, vol. 26, p. 55 (1426).

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, vol. 26, p. 73 (1427).

The above findings also prove that the significance of Wrocław was to a large extent recognized only by the cities of Lower Silesia. What is surprising is that there is no trace of any merchants from the largest city of Upper Silesia. Merchants from beyond Lower Silesia that rarely visited Wrocław mainly came from the Opava region (Opava, Zlaté Hory) and from the Opole region (Toszek, Strzelce Opolskie, Gryzów, Rogów, Siedlice and Wołczyn). However, in light of the sources I am familiar with, commercial meetings between Wrocław and Opole and Opole citizens were more frequent than one could assume on the basis of recorded meetings with outsiders in Wrocław. The intense activity of a wealthy financier, Abraham of Opole, in Wrocław and other cities (see part 7), is just one example of commercial meetings between Wrocław and Opole. Wrocław merchants coming to Opole were offered customs allowances as early as 1310 thanks to the initiative of Duke Bolko II of Opole.¹⁴⁹ Bolko's successors at the turn of the 15th century simply robbed the visiting merchants from Wrocław,¹⁵⁰ what also testifies a continuation of trade trips of Wrocław merchants through Opole. The inhabitants of both cities traded real estate between each other (only in Cracow).¹⁵¹ In the 1430s the citizens of Opole brought to Wrocław various goods of an undefined nature.¹⁵² The fact that commercial contact also took place on an individual level may be proven by an enigmatic document issued by the Wrocław municipal council in 1427 for Dukes Bolko IV of Opole and Bernard of Niemodlin concerning an undefined 'harmful company' ('von schedlicher und bozer gesellschaft wegen').¹⁵³ We are lacking the same various data that would prove that there was more frequent contact between the citizens of Wrocław and Opava. The surviving notes about guarantees of safety granted by the municipal authorities of Wrocław (*treuga pacis, salva conductus*) to the visitors from the heart of the Opava region allow us to assume that mutual contact intensified in the 1430s and 1440s.¹⁵⁴ The three earliest guarantees related to all the citizens of Opava present at the St. John fair who were indebted to the creditors of their city. Another was granted to an individual citizen of Opava for the period following the closing of the fair.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, vol. 55, p. 37 (1477).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, vol. 27, p. 90 (1428).

¹⁴⁵ *Regesta Historico-diplomatica Ordinis p. Mariae Theutonicorum (1198–1525)*, eds Erich Joachim, Walter Hubatsch, vol. 1: *Index Tabularii Ordinis p. Mariae heutonicorum Regesten zum Ordensbriefarchiv*, part 1: 1198–1454, Göttingen 1948, Nos 12683–1454, p. 825.

¹⁴⁶ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 32, p. 235 (1439).

¹⁴⁷ *L.Mag.*, p. 24 (1397).

¹⁴⁸ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 45, p. 101 (1465).

¹⁴⁹ W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, pp. 71–72.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 58, 72.

¹⁵¹ G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 323.

¹⁵² *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 28, p. 114 (1431).

¹⁵³ APWr., Dokumenty miasta Wrocławia, no. 1761 (formerly: no. 1817) (1427).

¹⁵⁴ *Lib.exc.sign.*, vol. 32, p. 130 (1439); vol. 34, p. 137 (1442); vol. 35, p. 145 (1444); vol. 37, p. 258 (1449). About *treuga pacis* see Peter Laband, *Die Breslauer Stadt- und Gerichts-Bücher*, 'Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertum Schlesiens', 4 (1862), p. 10–11; Th. Goerlitz, *Verfassung*, pp. 104–105.

Finally, the last *treuga pacis*, from 1449, related to the city and its people and their debts towards Opava and to the financial commitments of the dukes.

In light of the broadly-understood commercial relationships, Wrocław as a place annuities were traded was much less significant for the Silesian inhabitants. Based on the surviving records from 1334–1426, only the inhabitants of the sovereign cities of Brzeg, Legnica and Środa, and probably of Laasan (though there are some doubts as to the accuracy of this), had purchased annuities in the central municipal centre of Silesia.¹⁵⁵ It is worth mentioning here that in Świdnica also, albeit for a short period (1377–1382), purchasers of annuities from outside the city constituted only a minority.¹⁵⁶

After reviewing the contents of both of the tables above, it is clear that Silesia, especially its lower region, was polycentric rather than concentric in its structure. Despite the marked economic advantage over the remaining Silesian cities, Wrocław was not the principal magnet for all of the most important Silesian municipal centres in the period of the Late Middle Ages. Rather, it tended to attract Lower Silesian more than Upper Silesian centres. At the same time, a considerably numerous group of cities with populations of between 3,000–12,000 also played an important role in the regional economy and rivalled the central city of Wrocław in this field. From 1345 Świdnica enjoyed a privileged and more advantageous position in terms of business contact with Halych Ruthenia than Wrocław, whose prospects here were intentionally blocked by Casimir the Great.¹⁵⁷ It also excelled in the area of brewing. *Glogovia maior* had gained much prominence by the end of the 15th century, when the trade routes moved westwards and Wrocław focused on renewing its staple rights.¹⁵⁸ Nysa, the centre of the Bishop's authority, was the second most important communication junction. It was also the main distributor of Hungarian and Moravian wine in Silesia.¹⁵⁹ Another rival was the small-sized town of Racibórz, which was situated at the crossing of eight road trails and from 1290 enjoyed the exclusive right to supply Upper Silesia with salt from Wieliczka.¹⁶⁰ Legnica, thanks to its close proximity to gold mines, experienced a long period of economic development and thus a high degree of independence in the first half of the 14th century, which was soon unfortunately lost due to the popular uprising in 1454 and the political repercussions that followed.¹⁶¹ As early as in the 13th century, Strzegom saw a marked development of the textile industry, and until 1360 as many as eight guilds functioned

¹⁵⁵ APWr., AWr., *Antiquarius*, vol. 1, p. 37, 115; vol. 2, pp. 334, 369. The accuracy of the identification of *Lazany* is questionable. The very word suggests the name to be related with the name contained in the preserved sources either with Laasan/Łażany (like in Tomasz Jurek, *Obce rycerstwo na Śląsku do połowy XIV wieku*, p. 414) or with Bohemian word 'Łażan' (see G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, p. 257).

¹⁵⁶ Mateusz Goliński, *Wokół socjotopografii późnośredniowiecznej Świdnicy*, part 2, Wrocław 2003, pp. 58–60.

¹⁵⁷ Stefania Kalfas-Piotrowska, *Stosunki handlowe polsko-śląskie za Kazimierza Wielkiego*, 'Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku', 5 (1936), p. 251.

¹⁵⁸ R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁹ J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁶⁰ J. Wyrozumski, *Dzieje*, p. 56.

¹⁶¹ Marian Haisig, *Ruchy społeczne w mieście i powstanie gospódstwa w 1454*, [in:] *Legnica*, p. 70.

there – only Wrocław, Świdnica and Legnica could boast more. Silesian cities with a mining tradition (Złotoryja, Lwówek, Zlaté Hory, Złoty Stok and Bytom) at various moments in time attracted entrepreneurs and diggers, and thus became mining hubs, an industry that was developing dynamically and one of the major spurs of the Silesian economy.

Less certain and secondary factors

A question arises whether there are any other factors that could have had a significant impact upon the Silesian economy. Despite their being hypothetical or of secondary importance, it is worth discussing them briefly. One of these factors is the activity of Jewish communities that operated intermittently (due to pogroms and expulsions) in as many as 33 cities of Silesia until the mid-14th century.¹⁶² Although they were driven out of Lower Silesia in the second half of the 15th century, in Upper Silesia they survived until the 16th century (to 1510 in Racibórz and to 1563 in Opole), likewise in the Opava region.¹⁶³ Despite enjoying a special legal status, being a separate religious entity and having distinctive habits and customs, they did not constitute isolated communities, but actively participated in the economic life of their cities. Jewish communities were an integral part of the group of Silesian burgesses and helped to develop the economic potential of the region. The reason for their separate description in this part of my article is the nature of the financial activity they specialized in, specifically their loan-related ventures. In the course of recent research it was possible to trace the financial connections between the most renowned Jews from Lower and Upper Silesia with members of Roman Catholic communities. The most famous usurers (Abraham of Opole, Moshe of Legnica) gave loans mainly to the burghers and dukes from Legnica, Świdnica, Środa, Brzeg, Chojnów and Cieszyn.¹⁶⁴ Izaak of Świdnica had financial control over the entire Lwówek based on the pending debt of Duke Bolko II of Świdnica.¹⁶⁵ The two aforementioned examples of Jewish tycoons are sufficient proof of the development of financial bonds between Lower and Upper Silesia and, in consequence, of the growing economic cooperation between the two regions.

It is also worth considering the potentially-integrating impact of craft (other than the examples already mentioned) on the leading branches of Silesian manufacture. This was apparent in the unification of professional law and, more broadly, of common principles in

¹⁶² M. Bogucka, H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje*, p. 158.

¹⁶³ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 35; Adolf Turek, *Přehled vývoje národnostních poměrů v Opavě do poloviny 19. století*, [in:] *Opava. Sborník*, p. 98.

¹⁶⁴ About Abraham see Henryk Samsonowicz, *Początki banków prywatnych w Polsce*, 'Sobótka', 36 (1981), No. 1, p. 130; about Abraham and Moshe see Mateusz Goliński, *Wrocławskie spisy zastawów długów i mienia żydowskiego z 1453 roku. Studium z historii kredytu i kultury materialnej*, Wrocław 2006 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No 2852, Historia vol. 173), pp. 55–60.

¹⁶⁵ S. Kotelko, *op. cit.*, p. 64, 70.

artisanal culture. One example here is the convention of Silesian tailors which took place in 1361 in Świdnica,¹⁶⁶ where the principles governing clothing production processes and the type of clothes worn by masters and journeymen were established. What is of importance is the fact that the convention was attended by visitors from as many as 24 Silesian cities (including Opole) and from Lusatian Lubań.¹⁶⁷ This may be regarded as firm evidence of the existence of a close-knit professional community which undertook actions focused on the unification of its laws and customs. For a similar example of such an attitude one may look to the recently-discussed convention of cauldron makers in Strzelin around 1377, which gathered representatives of this profession from several cities of Lower Silesia and from Upper Silesian Głogówek.¹⁶⁸ Another example, this time of a bilateral transfer of professional law, was the act of sending the statutes of the belt makers from Wrocław to their colleagues from Legnica as a pattern to adopt and follow.¹⁶⁹ A similar strategy was adopted by Wrocław furriers towards the furriers of Legnica (1405, 1424).¹⁷⁰ In turn, these same craftsmen of Legnica were a brilliant example of organizational integration by opening their membership beyond the borders of their city, although its range was not extraordinarily broad. The furriers of Legnica unified their guild with those of Złotoryja, Lubin, Chojnów and Prochowice.¹⁷¹

Factors responsible for the weakening and destruction of the economic unity of Silesia

A rich chapter of Silesian history, the period between the 13th and 15th centuries yields many events and processes that were potentially destructive for economic relationships within the Silesian region. Among them are purely economic, biological and natural factors as well as political and military ones which have an economic impact. It should be stressed here though that the histories of various Silesian cities are very distinct.

A suitable illustration would be natural disasters (floods, fires, famines and, epidemics), whose frequent occurrence was part and parcel of the grim everyday life of medieval Europe. According to the valuable findings of historian Marek L. Wójcik, in the period between the 13th and 15th centuries the entire area of Silesia had been repeatedly struck by as many as 15 epidemics and 22 famines (some even two or three years'

¹⁶⁶ J. Drabina, *Życie*, p. 21; Mateusz Goliński, *Śląski cech kotlarzy i jego 'czarna lista'*, 'Sobótka', 54 (2009), No. 1, pp. 2, 6–7.

¹⁶⁷ From Wrocław, Świdnica, Legnica, Brzeg, Strzegom, Dzierżonów, Kamienna Góra, Jawor, Bolesławiec, Lwówek, Jelenia Góra, Środa, Chojnów, Złotoryja, Lubin, Ziębice, Strzelin, Ząbkowice, Kłodzko, Oława, Opole, Namysłów, Oleśnica, Bierutów (*Schlesische Urkunden zur Geschichte des Gewererechts insbesondere des Innungswesens aus der Zeit vor 1400*, ed. Georg Korn, Breslau 1867 (=Codex diplomaticus Silesiae, vol. 8), pp. 52–54).

¹⁶⁸ M. Goliński, *Śląski cech*, pp. 1–3, 6, 8–10, 14–17.

¹⁶⁹ *Schlesische Urkunden*, No. 80 (before 1424), pp. 120–121.

¹⁷⁰ M. Haisig, *Rzemiosło*, p. 54; *Schlesische Urkunden*, No. 79 (before 1424), pp. 118–120.

¹⁷¹ K. Bobowski, *Etapy*, p. 53.

long).¹⁷² At the same time, Wójcik claims that some epidemics took place only in Wrocław, but at a different time.¹⁷³ It is also worth mentioning here that endemic epidemics occurred in Głogów,¹⁷⁴ Legnica¹⁷⁵ and probably in Nysa.¹⁷⁶ However, Silesia did not experience a cataclysm that could be comparable to that of the Black Death, which exterminated the rural populations and decimated the populations of large cities. That is why the epidemics may constitute a set of ominous landmarks in the history of particular Silesian centres, but not on the scale of the entire region.¹⁷⁷ What was Silesian-wide was the floods caused by the melting of extensive masses of snow or heavy rainfall, for example in 1445 and 1464.¹⁷⁸ Food shortages or even famines were probably more varied, to a large extent because of the fact that it was simply easier to feed oneself in villages than in large urban centres. Fires were more local cataclysms as they occurred independently in various Silesian cities.¹⁷⁹ They differed in the extent of the damage they caused – from the burning-down of individual buildings and their immediate surroundings to the complete erasure of entire urban developments.

Among the military activities which affected the majority of the Silesian cities, historians mainly name those related to the Mongol invasion and the Hussite Wars. Curiously enough, the Mongols did not in fact wreak economic havoc on the region, an assertion which historians until recently claimed to be certain.¹⁸⁰ Their stay in Silesia was short and a one-off experience. It naturally brought some material losses to the local community, but its main result was the migration of terrified settlers and chaos in private estate relations, so vividly described in the *Henryków Book*. Even if Silesia constituted at that time an economic whole, which seems just about probable, the disruption to its functioning could have lasted a couple of years at most. In this respect, the Silesian economy was much more influenced by the events from 1425 to 1434, when Silesia was regularly subjected to the Hussite military policy of scorched earth.¹⁸¹ Historians assume

¹⁷² Marek L. Wójcik, *Kłęski elementarne w średniowiecznym Wrocławiu. I. Pożary i zarazy*, 'Rocznik Wrocławski', 6 (2000), p. 34; *idem*, *Kłęski elementarne w średniowiecznym Wrocławiu. III. Głód, trzęsienia ziemi i zjawiska astronomiczne*, 'Rocznik Wrocławski', 8 (2002), p. 10.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁴ R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, pp. 110, 116 (1295, 1315, 1362, 1395, 1464, 1484).

¹⁷⁵ M. Haisig, *Zaludnienie*, p. 47 (1412).

¹⁷⁶ J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 31 (1267, 1301, 1333).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. the comments of M. Goliński, *Kryzys*, p. 269.

¹⁷⁸ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. the list of dates of annual fires in Brzeg, Głogów and Legnica after: J. Dziewulski, *Brzeg*, p. 113 (1309, 1380, 1476, 1494); R. Żerelik, *W średniowieczu*, pp. 102, 110 (1402, 1420, 1433, 1438, 1442, 1445); M. Haisig, *Zaludnienie*, p. 48 (fires of 1338, 1411, p. 1438, 1454). Only in 1438 both Głogów and Legnica suffered from fires.

¹⁸⁰ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 355; R. Żerelik, *Dzieje*, p. 58; *Opawa*, p. 45; traditional views on the material consequences of Mongol invasion were expressed by Waclaw Korta (*Historia*, p. 82) and Wojciech Dominiak on the Upper Silesia (*Polityka*, pp. 84, 89).

¹⁸¹ Emil Schieche, *Politische Geschichte von 1327–1526*, [in:] *Geschichte Schlesiens*, ed. H. Aubin, p. 249–258; *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 59, 235–236, 238, 241, 243; Richard C. Hoffmann, *Land, Liberties and Lordship in a Late Medieval Countryside. Agrarian Structure and Change in the Duchy of Wrocław*, Philadelphia 1988, pp. 28, 275–276.

that as a result of this activity about 40 Silesian urban centres suffered extensive damage.¹⁸² The size of the destruction depended on the location. For example, Duke Bolko V, a Hussite from the Opole branch of the Piast dynasty, made an agreement with the Hussites which saved his ducal capital city from destruction.¹⁸³ According to other examples – e.g. part of Wrocław located on the western bank of the Odra river, Legnica and Racibórz – some cities managed to defend¹⁸⁴ themselves at the price of losing their suburban areas and farming facilities. This was also the case in many other urban centres. The Hussite raids were especially destructive for villages and agriculture. The result was a slump in the level of the population and many villages were completely emptied of inhabitants.¹⁸⁵ It does not seem, however, that the negative consequences of the Hussite raids led to the disintegration of ties between the inhabitants of Silesian regions. What it could have caused was the rearrangement of the routes of the communication trails, for example the Via Regia between 1430 and 1440,¹⁸⁶ which may have weakened ties as a result of the increasingly less frequent contact between inhabitants. Conversely, there were also cities which took advantage of the Bohemian heretic eruption. For example, for Wrocław the international isolation of the Bohemian Crown meant a drop in the importance of Prague, a far more important and wealthier competitor. This resulted in the relocation of the long-distance trade routes to Silesia and the influx of foreign, wealthy merchants (especially from Nuremberg) to the provincial capital.¹⁸⁷ A negative consequence of the Hussite activity was the fact that it spurred the military quests of Casimir Jagiellon, and soon afterwards of George of Poděbrady and Matthias Corvinus, which also brought extensive human and material losses.¹⁸⁸ These losses were nonetheless incomparably less acute than those inflicted upon Silesia by the Hussites.

Both during the 15th century and earlier Silesia saw a number of internal military conflicts which constituted the most destructive economic effects of the political divisions inside Silesia. These conflicts more often than not erased whole cities, as in the examples of Nysa (in the second half of the 13th century), Opole (at the outset of the 14th century) and even larger areas of Silesia (for example the lands of Krosno, Opole and

¹⁸² J. Drabina, *Życie*, p. 9. Compare the maps illustrating the extent of damages brought by the Hussites: Schieche, *Politische Geschichte*, p. 250; R.C. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

¹⁸³ W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, p. 62; J. Drabina, *Miasta*, p. 43–44.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 121–122; K. Maleczyński, *Dzieje*, p. 72; J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁸⁵ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 11–12, 47.

¹⁸⁶ At that period, the merchants began to avoid visiting the Opole region and travelled mainly via Częstochowa and Kluczbork (W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, p. 62).

¹⁸⁷ Wolfgang von Stromer, *Nürnberg–Breslauer Wirtschaftsbeziehungen im Spätmittelalter*, ‘Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung’, 34–35 (1974/1975), p. 1089.

¹⁸⁸ Zob. W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, p. 62–64; R. Heck, *Wrocław*, p. 72; J. Drabina, *Miasta*, p. 43–44; R.C. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 276, 279–280. Hermann Aubin on the other hand stressed the phenomenon of the growth in the cities’ expenditure on military defence, which was financed from the introduction of new taxes (*idem*, *Die Wirtschaft*, p. 478–479).

Racibórz in the 14th century, and the Głogów Duchy in the fourth quarter of the 15th century).¹⁸⁹

Another consequence of the frequent military upheavals in Silesia was the distortion of political and legal order and the spread of criminal activity, both spontaneous and commissioned (as in the example of Leonard Assenheimer, who was hired by Queen Elizabeth).¹⁹⁰ Władysław Dziewulski claimed that the period between 1440 and 1452 was a time of utter chaos in the region.¹⁹¹ The main force behind it were the Hussite raids;¹⁹² nevertheless, according to symptomatic data from the 14th century – the establishment of municipal confederations (1339, 1369) and the launching of local initiatives against banditry¹⁹³ – criminal activity on the communication routes was a serious problem for Silesia long before the outbreak of the Hussite Wars. In a way this can be seen as evidence which indirectly supports the development of long-distance trade – increasingly affluent merchant convoys were attractive prey for robber barons and common bandits. The lack of statistical data prevents us from evaluating the scale of the criminal activity and its evolution. Crime could have also weakened the ties between the individual cities and regions of Silesia. It does not seem, however, that it could have caused their total disintegration.

It is also useful to mention certain negative phenomena of a purely economic origin and their possible consequences for the Silesian economy and its integrity. What comes to mind is the growing crisis of the mining industry. Starting from 1274, the first cases of mine flooding occurred, which became more frequent in the 14th century and continued until the beginning of the 15th century.¹⁹⁴ From the mid-14th century overflowing waters prevented the exploitation of deposits in Bytom, Będzin, Złotoryja and Zlaté Hory.¹⁹⁵ In the case of the first two aforementioned cities it proved impossible to re-launch efforts to extract silver and lead before the end of the medieval period. In other mining centres deposits of gold were exhausted as early as in the second quarter of the 14th century.¹⁹⁶ What was particularly harmful was the cessation of the extraction of galena deposits (silver and lead) in the mines of Bytom, the main mining centre of Upper Silesia. This further deepened the economic crisis of the eastern part of the province of Silesia, which from the beginning of the 14th century was constantly plagued by a gradual halting of the urbanization process, the negative commercial consequences of divisions between

¹⁸⁹ J. Leszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 31; W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, p. 62–64; J. Drabina, *Miasta*, p. 43; J. Muszyński, *op. cit.*, p. 77, 79; J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹⁹⁰ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 266, 268; R. Heck, *Wrocław*, p. 72.

¹⁹¹ W. Dziewulski, *Brzeg*, p. 46.

¹⁹² Krystyna Pieradzka, *Związki handlowe Łużyc ze Śląskiem*, 'Sobótka', 4 (1949), p. 95.

¹⁹³ Colmar Grünhagen, *Schlesien unter Kaiser Karl IV*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 17 (1883), p. 26; Krystyna Pieradzka, *Bolko II świdnicki na Łużycach*, 'Sobótka', 2 (1947), p. 99; W. Dziewulski, *Brzeg*, p. 42.

¹⁹⁴ K. Małczyński, *Aus der Geschichte*, pp. 251–253, 265.

¹⁹⁵ D. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, p. 156; J. Drabina, *Historia*, pp. 44–45.

¹⁹⁶ For example M. Haisig, *Rzemiosło*, p. 65.

districts and internal conflicts.¹⁹⁷ Another damaging factor was Silesia's political and commercial conflicts with the Kingdom of Poland in the 14th and 15th–16th centuries (because of the importance of contact with the former Silesian motherland), and also the purposeful interference into the Silesian economy by the rulers of Poland. Granting Świdnica priority in commercial contacts with Ruthenia (which might have brought advantages for Namysłów)¹⁹⁸ in connection with the customs war of Casimir the Great against Wrocław¹⁹⁹ could have only strengthened the divisions within Silesia and further weakened the contacts between the two principal cities of the region, although, based on the surviving data, we cannot be fully certain that this was the case. If it was indeed so, it was only for a short period. The wars of the years 1490–1515,²⁰⁰ as a consequence of which Głogów gained advantages over Wrocław, involved the relocation of the trade routes and a drop in the importance of the *Hohe Strasse*, as well as the weakening of Wrocław's position. It did not result, however, in any catastrophe involving either this affluent urban centre or other cities located along the *Via Regia*.

All the aforementioned events and processes are certain to have contributed in this period to a deterioration of the region's economic potential and disruptions to connections between the Silesian cities and remaining territories, thus damaging its integrity. Were the foundations of economic relations within Silesia developed before 1425 indeed strong enough to allow historians to confirm that they survived the forthcoming critical decades?

Summary

According to the traditional approach to studying the economic history of Silesia based on the history of its rural areas, throughout the period of feudal fragmentation three stages, interwoven by warfare, can be identified.²⁰¹ The period of economic growth initiated in the times of Boleslaus the Tall was only briefly paused by the Mongol invasion of 1241. From the mid-13th century there was a rejuvenation of the region's economy followed by further development, which lasted until about 1420 when the Hussite Wars began, which marked a long period of regression in Silesia; one can even call this an economic crisis. In the context of recent scholarly deliberations, however, it would be reasonable to update this periodization. It would be also desirable to view the fifth decade of the 14th century as another important landmark brought about by the crisis of Silesian mining. This is augmented by the blockade of eastern trade introduced at that time

¹⁹⁷ J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁹⁸ After Hermann Aubin, who assumed the fact of the simultaneous journeys of merchants from this city to Ruthenia (*idem, Die Wirtschaft*, p. 473).

¹⁹⁹ S. Kalfas-Piotrowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-261; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław*, pp. 291-296, 331-336.

²⁰⁰ Max Rauprich, *Der Streit um die Breslauer Niederlage (1490–1515)*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens*, 27 (1893), pp. 54-116.

²⁰¹ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 46-49.

by the King of Poland. From then on it would be advisable to speak of a divergence in the paths of the economic histories of different parts of Silesia. On the whole, we can say that there was a trend of economic growth on a regional scale, but at the same time certain parts of Silesia suffered regression. We would also need to change the year 1420 to 1425, when the Hussite Wars started to wreak havoc in Silesia, followed by other military conflicts which were accompanied by criminal activity interwoven, as in the preceding centuries, by natural disasters. Nonetheless, it seems that in this period the dual economic history of the region continued to play out, although it is true to say that in general the regression spread over the whole region and the number of prosperous areas shrunk. When examined in the context of the entire Silesian region, the regression-crisis trend must have finally triumphed over that of economic growth, which was augmented by the crisis in Wrocław commerce from the close of the 1450s. It seems that the first symptoms of revival appeared no sooner than at the close of the Middle Ages. Owing to the gradual popularization of land drainage technology, excavation works were resumed, an example of which can be seen in Złotoryja.²⁰² The gold mining industry in Złoty Stok was only fully developed at the close of the century.²⁰³ The crisis of farming in Wrocław's outlying areas came to an end no sooner than in ca. 1480.²⁰⁴

We should then decide whether region-integrating economic factors were strong enough to transform the territories between the rivers of Kwisa and Wisła, Barycz and Odra and the Sudeten into an economic zone, and if so, for how long? Did Lower and Upper Silesia as well as the Opava region merge into one economic entirety or did they evolve into completely independent regions? Our considerations on the subject above often yielded evidence on the existence of significant differences between the economies of Lower and Upper Silesia. Besides, although the links between Lower Silesian centres were strong, diverse and durable, their connections with the Upper Silesian economy seemed to be weaker. Another criterion of evaluation would be the industrial resemblance of both economies, independent of their connections and regional or professional identity. One may say that at a more advanced stage of the Middle Ages there was much more common ground between the economies of Lower Silesia and the regions of Opava and Lesser Poland than there were between the economies of Lower and Upper Silesia. This is especially the case from the mid-14th century, when the production of silver and lead in Bytom came to a halt. Nonetheless, the theory of economic regions does not insist upon economic homogeneity; we could also view economic regions as lands of diverse constituent industries. The proximity of urban centres to rural production areas in Lower Silesia would have naturally spurred a greater growth in meetings within its own boundaries than those which took place with the centres of Upper Silesia. A less advanced urbanization process in Upper Silesia resulted in the fact that the total number of

²⁰² H. Aubin, *Die Wirtschaft*, p. 476; R. Gorzkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁰³ G. Molenda, *Górnictwo*, p. 78.

²⁰⁴ R.C. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 319–320, 326.

Upper Silesian merchants was smaller when compared to that of the merchants of Lower Silesia, and they were less affluent than their Lower Silesian counterparts as well. Moreover, they were less eager to undertake business investments beyond their native centres and outside the areas of Upper Silesia. Additionally, we need to re-emphasize the fact that in Upper Silesia the presence of Jewish communities lasted longer than anywhere else. This must have been a definite economic advantage for a region whose level of industrial development was lower than that of its neighbours. Paradoxically, the impact of Wrocław on the development of Opole was considerable, although this was in fact a destructive influence. A view has been recently expressed that it was the flourishing affluence of the Lower Silesian centre that deprived Opole of the chance for economic growth.²⁰⁵

From an economic perspective, what brought the Silesian lands closer together was mostly their territorial proximity as well as the important communication and trade routes – the Via Regia (joining Wrocław with Opole and Bytom) and the transport of timber on the Odra river (between e.g. Wrocław and Racibórz). We also need to bring up the issue of the granting of the lands of Upper Silesia to the Church institutions (such as monasteries and the Wrocław Bishopric) whose headquarters were located in Lower Silesia. Sometimes this involved the exploitation of Upper Silesian mineral deposits. One should also take note of the process by which certain towns of Upper Silesia (Racibórz, Strzelce Opolskie, Głogówek, Zator, Cieszyn and Opava) adopted regulations of German law from the cities of Lower Silesia (Wrocław, Środa, Świdnica, Lwówek)²⁰⁶ and credit agreements between two regions (e.g. loans granted by the authorities of Opole to the authorities of Brzeg).²⁰⁷ The conventions of tailors and cauldron makers in the second half of the 14th century prove the existence of a sense of common regional and professional identity among the Lower Silesian population and the citizens of Opole and the cauldron makers of Głogówek. I would further attribute less importance to the chronological concordance between some of the Wrocław and Upper Silesian fairs, because in most cases this did not occur before 1481 (see part 5).

Hence, despite a number of differences in the levels of economic development between Lower Silesia, the Opava region and eastern Silesia and the less frequent contact between the cities and their merchants, we may surely claim that these three lands were strongly linked and characterized by many similarities. These common features allow us to define them as constituents of a uniform economic system with, however, some obvious restrictions. This view is mostly true for the Opava region and, until the second half of the 14th century, Bytom and its surrounding areas, and to lesser extent for Opava and

²⁰⁵ A. Pobóg–Lenartowicz, *Rozwój*, p. 146–147. Contrary to this was the opinion of Józef Kaźmierczyk, according to whom the main factor that slowed down the growth of Opole was the weakness of its economic background, caused directly by infertile soils and small population (*idem, op. cit.*, p. 35).

²⁰⁶ Th. Goerlitz, *Verfassung*, pp. 108–109; J. Horwat, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 88, 112, 117; S. Kotelko, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁰⁷ W. Dziewulski, *Za Piastów opolskich*, pp. 62, 64.

the lands of Racibórz. I am not convinced whether the similarity between the Opava region and the economy of Lower Silesia (mining) and the Odra-related link of this land with Racibórz (which adopted German laws from Świdnica in 1293) were stronger bonding factors than the town's key position as a communication centre or Opava's position in relation to Cracow in terms of connections with the Kingdom of Bohemia. When we compare these findings with the hypothetical relationship between several Upper Silesian fairs and Cracow fairs, we may reasonably assume that the lands of Racibórz and especially those of the Opava region were no less connected with Lesser Poland and the Bohemian Crown than with the rest of Silesia. The level of integration within the economic region of Silesia differed according to its constituent parts – Lower Silesia's bonds were strongest with the region of Opole, weaker with the region of Racibórz and weaker still with the region of Opava.

At what point did this uniform economic region in fact come into being? It seems that no earlier than at the close of the 13th century when the rural and urban settlement process was at its peak. One may think that the symptoms of a crisis in the region's uniformity started to surface as early as in the 1340s together with the beginnings of the crisis in the mining industry and the long-term crises of Bytom and Opole. It does not seem, however, that the disintegration of the economic region of Silesia actually took place. Even the compatibility of a part of Upper Silesian fairs with the fairs of Cracow did not result in the strengthening of links with Lesser Poland. Also, the subsequent political and military conflicts – local, regional and international – along the natural disasters and crime did not lead to the permanent disintegration of the Silesian economic region. Another question arises as to the nature of Silesia's economic specificity in comparison with its neighbouring regions. When viewed in the context of the western part of central Europe and eastern Germany, the region of Silesia was not different to the rest of its neighbours. All the regions of this territory were subject to identical long-term economic processes. What differentiated Silesia from its neighbours was gold mining (so scarce in Bohemia that it is almost never mentioned in the scholarly literature) and the production of madder for export purposes. Silesia had least in common with Greater Poland, where there was no mining industry, wine production for export purposes or populous urban centres (except for Poznań). The economic trends of both regions were also crucial here – the steady economic growth of Greater Poland²⁰⁸ and the major decline of Silesia from the 1420s and 1430s. These three characteristics also differentiated Silesia from Lesser Poland (which thrived throughout the entire Late Middle Ages), which in contrast to Silesia boasted a more advanced fustian industry,²⁰⁹ but, at the same time, was outdistanced by Silesia in the area of textile production (Silesian textiles were exported abroad). Compared to Lusatia, on the other hand, gold mining was more advanced in Silesia and,

²⁰⁸ This was supposed to constitute the specificity of Greater Poland throughout the extensive period of the Middle Ages and the modern era (J. Topolski, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27).

²⁰⁹ I. Turnau, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

given the similarities in terms of the main cities' populations (Silesia was slightly ahead of Lusatia), it had developed a distinct economic centre – Wrocław. At the same time, in contrast to Lusatia, Silesia did not boast the tradition of zinc mining,²¹⁰ but neither did Lusatia with silver. The greatest similarities may be found between the Silesian economic region and Bohemia and Moravia. Nevertheless, even in this case certain key differences, mentioned above, were apparent.

²¹⁰ Danuta Molenda, *Powstawanie miast górniczych w Europie Środkowej w XIII – XVIII*, [in:] *Czas, przestrzeń, praca w dawnych. Studia ofiarowane Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, eds Michał Tymowski, Andrzej Wyrobisz, Warszawa 1991, p. 162.