

Region-integrating or region-disintegrating? The social groups of medieval Silesia examined in the context of their political activity (from the last decades of the 12th century to the 15th century)

Abstract:

Activities of social groups, which develop relations between the members of a society, constitute a crucial aspect of every region's character. Did the political and social elite of the Odra region in the period from the latter part of the 12th century to the latter part of the 15th century engage in intentional and coordinated activity? Or did they, after being forced by external factors to take such action, continue to coordinate their activities after these external factors ceased to be operative? Yet another question is whether the members of this political elite considered the notion of a unified, territorial unit called "Silesia" in their activities?

Various political undertakings of the Odra region's elite in the Middle Ages makes establishing a unified model of the formation of regional unity unfeasible. Joint political actions undertaken by the dukes maintained an awareness of Silesia's unity despite their and their courts' tendency to focus on the importance of their particular duchies. The dukes, via conventions and confederations, focused their activities on building a sense of regional community. Despite extensive cooperation on various issues which crossed the borders of individual duchies, separatist tendencies were still visible in the latter part of the 14th and early 15th centuries. Silesian society, forged through the political activities of its elite, was by nature a network which reacted dynamically to influences from its external environment. At times the structure may have hardened, although its members valued their local identity at least as greatly as their regional one.

Keywords:

Silesia, social history, regional history, regiogenesis

Every large community consists of social groups which change dynamically in terms of size and character, and which by mutual contacts develop into a network of relations that constitutes a society. However, it should be kept in mind that this general statement is far from the commonly accepted definition of 'a social group'. Curiously enough, the vast majority of researchers emphasize a fixed set of features that determine the phenomenon of interest to us here. These features are: detachment of certain groups from a wider social context based on their mutual social relations (determined either by personal factors or by common tasks), shared objectives, a sense of isolation from external entities and a sense of belonging to a defined group. The relation of such a group to its social environment is especially visible if we establish that the group 'as such' exists only when it is recognized as a group by an individual or individuals who comprise it. Finally, groups contain a defined

structure which is correctly identified by its members.¹ Although scholars generally agree as to the basic set of characteristics exhibited by social groups, there are significant differences in views on the hierarchy of particular group formation features and of the characteristics of additional group defining factors (i.e. sense of identity, uniqueness and uniformity), not to mention the issue of groups' scope and persistence.²

On the one hand, what is vital for our discussion on the subject of this article is a phenomenon that has a potentially destructive impact on regional cohesion, namely social groups that isolate themselves from the rest of the society of a given region and whose members are linked to one another through strong social relationships. As opposed to so-called 'networks', social groups are characterized by fixed boundaries within which their members develop a sense of identity. Another impediment to social cohesion is the presence within a society of dynamically-functioning groups characterized by potentially high fluctuations in membership numbers and character. On the other hand, social groups that come to life as a result of interactive relations between their members (groups viewed as 'interactive units') despite the aforementioned clear manifestation of their independence participate in the creation of a network of relations that fosters the maintenance of social cohesion. This takes place both in consequence of inter-group relations and of the activities of individual group members who, due to their varied social roles, can indirectly and to varying degrees create bonds with other groups and their members. The activity of social groups responsible for the development of networks of social relations is a crucial condition of a region's existence. A region is understood here as a group of people, perceived by outsiders in the context of their affiliation with this group, populating a territory viewed by its members as distinct from the surrounding environment based on their particular, historically justified sense of common ownership of this territory. In turn, this unique historical and cultural affiliation with the populated territory justifies the efforts of its inhabitants to achieve common goals.³ Particular social groups may either shape a region so defined, or lead to its disintegration.⁴ Due to the limited scope of our study, analysis will be carried out with special emphasis on examining how

¹ For a list of definitions of a social group and detailed presentation of their common features, see Charles Stangor, *Social Groups in Action and Interaction*, New York 2004, pp. 15-27 or Richard M. Hodgetts, Kathryn W. Hegar, *Modern Human Relations at Work*, 10th edition, Mason 2008, pp. 128-141; among academic textbooks see by Rajendra K. Sharma, *Fundamentals of Sociology*, New Delhi 2007, pp. 123-127. Stanley Wasserman, Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis. Methods and Applications*, Cambridge 1994 (=Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences, vol. 8), pp. 13-15, 19-20 described 'social groups' from the point of view of network analysis. For the purposes of this paper, crucial were remarks by Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd edition, Abingdon-New York 2008, pp. 8-12, who focused on relations between an identity of an individual or individuals and the reality of the existence of social groups of different scale and character.

² The term 'social group' may also describe a relatively small and rather impermanent group of individuals focused on a common goal, see Donelson R. Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 5th edition, Belmont 2010, p. 12.

³ See Aansi Paasi, *Deconstructing regions. Notes on the scales of spatial life*, 'Environment and Planning', 23 (1991), pp. 239-256.

⁴ 'Social organization is the organization of social groups, and social groups are the units of social organization. Hence, the organization and disintegration of the social organization is dependent upon the integration or disintegration of the social groups', R.K. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

the phenomenon of regional cohesion is influenced by political elites – social groups viewed as the most powerful driving forces in establishing the network of relations between both individuals and groups that constitute regional communities. It was they who determined the conditions and the spatial scope of a community's lifestyle, and it was they who had a crucial impact on the character of the bonds between a region's inhabitants.⁵

Hence, the basic questions we pose in this work relate to the activity of political sovereigns of the Odra region from the close of the 12th century until the close of the 15th century. Did the contemporary political and opinion-forming elites jointly engage in consciously-coordinated activities? When forced to do so by external factors, did they continue their activities together after the pressures had subsided? Finally, did the activities of political elites, both those engaged in joint initiatives and those avoiding them, have a common denominator: the concept of a uniform community encompassing the entire territory called 'Silesia'? Was the organization of social life in the area identified as historical Silesia dominated by bonds between groups of people who populated or were active within a number of smaller territorial spaces?

Current research on the history of Silesia has not yet yielded a full picture of the functioning of the social groups in this region between the close of the 12th and 15th centuries.⁶ For this reason also, independently of the aforementioned theoretical conditions, I would like to focus in this article only on aspects connected with the functioning of elites in the context of their political activity. As this activity not only exerted a major influence on social reality but actually shaped this reality, research undertaken in the area of social history can not be divorced from political realities.⁷ In accordance with my perception of the notion of the region presented above, it is my view that the so-called 'grass-roots' political activity of the inhabitants of Silesia, that is to say activity which was not initiated at the level of state authorities, was the most important factor in fostering the development of the forces driving the process of integration and disintegration of social cohesion in the region. At the same time, that very same activity may be viewed as an indicator of the existence of relations that fostered or curbed the formation of the region itself. Establishing the importance of Silesia in the policy of local political

⁵ Andreas Rüther, *Region und Identität. Schlesien und das Reich im späten Mittelalter*, Köln 2010 (=Neue Forschungen zur schlesischen Geschichte, vol. 20), admitted that his study was an attempt at identifying the hierarchical relations within the circle of dukes of medieval Silesia 'in einer sich selbst organisierenden Landschaft', *ibidem*, p. 86. Unfortunately, this yielded only a sum of observations on various examples of political and familial relations, on the basis of which the author failed to produce – nor even propose – any general conclusions.

⁶ See for instance Thomas Wunsch, *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, [in:] *Historische Schlesien forschung. Methoden, Themen und Perspektiven zwischen traditioneller Landesgeschichtsschreibung und moderner Kulturwissenschaft*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Köln 2005 (=Neue Forschungen zur schlesischen Geschichte, vol. 1), pp. 159–184 and Mateusz Goliński, *Średniowiecze*, [in:] *Śląskoznawcze deficyty badawcze nauk historycznych*, eds Marek Czapliński, Jacek Dębicki, Tomasz Przerwa, Wrocław 2007, pp. 18–23.

⁷ Patrick Joyce, *What is the social in the social history?*, 'Past and Present', 206 (2010), pp. 213–248, here pp. 232–244.

elites is a fundamental prerequisite for identifying determinants of other social groups' functioning in the context of the development and destruction of the region of Silesia.

Although the political decisions of Silesian dukes until at least the mid-14th century were determined by their sense of belonging to the political community encompassing the entire territory of the Piast realm, at the turn of the 13th century the Dukes of Wrocław extended the political discourse of the time with a new notion of Silesia as a territory subject to their rule. What is especially noticeable is the consistent usage of the title of 'Duke of Silesia' by Henry the Bearded and all his ruling descendants. A uniform Silesian titular nomenclature was maintained in ducal documents until the 1270s. Only in 1272 was Henry IV the Righteous referred to in a document he issued as 'Henricus dei gratia dux Slesie et dominus Wratislaue'.⁸ The introduction of this title might have been resulted from preparation of the final version of the document by its recipient, the Commandery of the Order of Saint John in Strzegom. Owing to their close relations with Bohemia, the knights might have transferred to Silesian land (probably with the consent of Henry IV) the habit of extending the titular structure of Prague sovereigns. The then King of Bohemia and the mentor of the Righteous, Přemysl Otakar II, used the title 'dei gratia Bohemiae rex, dux Austriae, Stiriae, Karinthiae marchio que Moraviae, dominus Carnioliae, Marchiae, Egrae ac Portus Naonis' (1271).⁹ Yet despite the opportunity to make use of the option of *imitatio imperii*, neither Henry IV nor his relatives were keen to adopt the titles which, as well as highlighting the regional (Silesian) aspect of their authority, also accentuated its local dimension as the most important, or even the only nomenclature describing the scope of their duties. Henry's documents contain both the exclusively Silesian title and the newly introduced title format throughout the entire eighth decade of the 13th century. Curiously enough, its presence was not correlated with the content of documents (such as those issued for a special occasion), but with the habits of certain officials of the ducal chancellery.¹⁰ The decision to use the title of 'Duke of Silesia' united the local rulers for over a century in a community characterized by a shared ruling tradition of common origin and character. What legitimized the activity of dukes within a common, shared sphere of concepts of authority was the fact that the change introduced by Henry IV the Righteous spread independently of mere political conditions. Around 1288, he introduced a round seal with an inscription in the rim which read 'SIGILLUM HENRICI QUARTI DEI GRATIA DVCIS SLESIE ET DOMINI WRATIZLAVIE'.¹¹ At more or less the same time Duke Henry V the Fat of

⁸ *Schlesisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 4, ed. Winfried Irgang, Wien 1988, No. 163, p. 118, lines 2–3, see Winfried Irgang, *Die Urkunden- und Kanzleiwesen Herzog Heinrichs IV. von Schlesien (1270-1290)*, [in:] *idem, Schlesien im Mittelalter. Siedlung–Kirche–Urkunden. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, eds Norbert Kersken, Jürgen Warmbrunn, Marburg 2007 (=Materialien und Studien zur Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung, vol. 17), pp. 428–429, who emphasize that this form of title was used quite early in a document prepared by the Knights of the Order of Saint John.

⁹ *Sub.*, vol. 4, No. 147, p. 106, lines 23–24.

¹⁰ W. Irgang, *Die Urkunden- und Kanzleiwesen Herzog Heinrichs IV.*, pp. 409, 414.

¹¹ Zenon Piech, *Ikongrafia pieczęci Piastów*, Cracow 1993, pp. 224–225.

Legnica, the local political rival of the Righteous, changed the legend of his seal, which until then had only emphasized the Silesian aspect of his power to '*SIGILLUM HENRICI DVCIS SLEZIE ET DOMINI DE LIGNIT*'.¹² The new form of the ducal title reflected the increased importance of power over individual duchies at the expense of the concept of a unified Silesia as a means of raising the prestige of rulers.

From the middle of the 13th century Conrad I, Duke of Głogów (*Glogau*), used a seal with the legend '*CONRADVS DEI GRATIA DVX ZLESIE ET POLONIE*', which accentuated his and his brothers pretences to some of the lands of Greater Poland, a legacy of Henry II the Pious.¹³ The title presented both provinces as equal and indivisible holdings. It was, however, seldom used by the descendants of Henry the Pious, and hence may be found only on Conrad's official documents.¹⁴ When power went into the hands of his son Henry of Głogów, the new ruler began using a seal with the inscription '*SIGILLVM HENRICI DEI GRATIA DVCIS SLESIE ET GLOGOVIE*'¹⁵ (from ca. 1281). Considering his father's dual titles, this way of defining the scope of Henry's authority suggested that Głogów, which was in fact his property, was viewed as separate from Silesia – the common inheritance of his dynasty. Głogów gradually came to enjoy a status comparable to that of Silesia as a whole – an indivisible political entity governed by the Piast dynasty. It is hard to say whether this was perhaps a distant echo of an older political creation, the so-called 'March of Głogów'.¹⁶ What is certain is that these titles served as means of underlining Henry's independence from his relatives of the Piast dynasty's remaining lines. By the same token, equating the status of local and regional authority could potentially lead to the erasure of the concept of Silesia as a political space cemented by the sense of familial ownership of this territory felt by the members of the Piast dynasty – descendants of Henry the Bearded. It could have been replaced by a concept known from the later history of Upper Silesia, involving the formation of an independent community consisting of both living and deceased rulers of particular local duchies. This is accurately illustrated in an excerpt from the document describing the terms of the homage paid by Duke Leszek of Racibórz to King John of Luxembourg in 1327. Lestek declared that '*suo heredum et successorum suorum ducum Rathiborensium*

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 227.

¹³ In 1256 Conrad, together with brothers Ladislaus and Henry III, demanded that Pope Alexander IV return these territories, see Sub. III, nr 201, s. 117 (a petition was delivered '*ex parte dilectorum filiorum... ducum Zlesie*', without giving the title relating to Greater Poland); About the duke, see Tomasz Jurek, *Konrad I głogowski, studium z dziejów dzielnicowego Śląska*, 'Roczniki Historyczne', 54 (1988), pp. 111–141.

¹⁴ Actually, we will only find the title '*Conradus dei gracia dux Zlesie et Polonie*' in a document that came into being as a result of strong Lubiąż influences in 1251, SUB., vol. 3, Nr. 20, p. 27. Even the bull of Alexander IV of 1256, by which the Pope extended protection over Henry and Ladislaus, contains only the laconic title '*duces Zlesie*', SUB., vol. 3, No. 202, p. 137.

¹⁵ Z. Piech, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹⁶ SUB., vol. 1, No. 8, p. 8 (1134); *Magistri Vincenti dicti Kadlubek Chronica Polonorum*, IV, 8, 2, p. 147 (ca. 1178).

nomine'.¹⁷ The basis for the identification of a community contained in this expression is neither a genealogical association with the Piast dynasty nor one with a wider territory subject to their rule, but with a group of rulers of a particular local dominion.

However, the title of Dukes of Głogów (Conrad and Henry), which proved to be more suitable than ones accentuating the position of a narrow familial ruling clan for the purposes of building a sense of community, was a form put forward by Henry IV the Righteous. This title concisely presented both the legal and hierarchical status of the particular local dominion (duchy) along with the dominant position of Silesia as evidence of the link between the descendants of Henry the Bearded and their common familial tradition.¹⁸ Viewing Silesia as a fixed element in the common identification of rulers, despite the existence of other options for determining the scope of their authority (for instance, the titles of Duke of Poland or Duke of Wrocław, Legnica, Głogów), disproves the hypothesis that this name's character remained purely geographical until the 15th century. It also refutes suggestions that between the 13th and 14th centuries the term Silesia did not designate a regional community, which was said to have come into being as late as in the 15th century from the merging of the lands of the middle and southern course of the Odra (Lower and Upper Silesia).¹⁹ In this context, the close of the 13th century may be viewed as a breakthrough moment when the conviction of having been granted both special and common rights to Silesia began to grow among the Silesian Piasts. These rights were particularly unique in that they did not apply to any other territory of the former Poland. While Silesian rulers in the 13th century controlling even the smallest fragments of Greater Poland would refer to themselves as the Dukes of Poland (having in mind Greater Poland), in the 14th century, changes in this respect had already reached their peak. The ceremonial title of Duke of Głogów as taken by Henry, which imitated the titles of the rulers of Bohemia²⁰ and was consistently present in charters issued between 1301 and 1309, accentuated his right to exercise power over the whole of Poland²¹ and contained a detailed description of its actual extent with special attention

¹⁷ LBUS, vol. 2, No. 1, p. 380.

¹⁸ See Tomasz Jurek, *Die Entwicklung eines schlesischen Regionalbewußtseins im Mittelalter*, 'Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung', 47 (1998), issue 1, p. 25-26.

¹⁹ Gottlieb Biermann, *Seit wann sahen sich die oberschlesischen Piasten als schlesische Fürsten an?*, 'Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesien', 8 (1867), pp. 31–54; Halina Manikowska, *Świadomość regionalna na Śląsku w późnym średniowieczu*, [in:] *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich. Pamięci Benedykta Zientary*, eds Aleksander Gieysztor, Sławomir Gawlas, Warsaw 1990, pp. 255–256.

²⁰ This is manifested in the additional element of the title '*dominus X et X*'. A similar title, without the aforementioned additional element and containing the names of entire provinces, was normally used by Ladislaus the Elbow-high, and in one particular case by Henry I (III), see Rościsław Żerelik, *Dokumenty i kancelaria Henryka III księcia glogowskiego*, Wrocław 1984 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No. 683, Historia 42), pp. 51–53; Winfried Irgang, *Das Urkunden und Kanzleiwesen Herzogs Heinrichs III. (I.) von Glogau (+1309) bis 1300*, [in:] *idem, Schlesien im Mittelalter*, pp. 455–456. As opposed to the inscription on the seal of Henry we are familiar with, the one taken over from the chancellery of Ladislaus the Elbow-high was not accepted in Silesia.

²¹ Tomasz Jurek, *Dziedzic Królestwa Polskiego. Książę glogowski Henryk (1274–1309)*, Poznań 1993, pp. 49–50.

paid to presenting Silesia as his principal inheritance (an entry found in a charter: ‘heres Regni Polonie dux Slezie dominus Glogovie et Poznanie’; an entry found on a seal: ‘SIGILLUM HEINRICI DEI GRACIA HEREDIS REGNI POLONIE DVCIS SLEZIE DOMINI GLOGOVIE ET POZNANIE’).²² This title was copied by his descendants, who aspired to power over Poznań and Gniezno as early as in the 1330s.²³ The clear manifestation of political hierarchy in Henry of Głogów’s title was firm proof that Silesia had been considered by the Piasts and their circles as a transitory form somewhere between a state – the Kingdom of Poland, later the Kingdom of Bohemia – and a local dominion – the Duchy of Głogów.²⁴ Rather than seeing themselves as part of a more extensive political organization – a kingdom – local Piasts openly supported the idea of Silesia; this approach was continued until the 17th century, when their line died out. The emergence and the successful functioning of the notion of ‘Silesia’ understood as a territorial, political and cultural space shared by the members of the ruling elite may serve as a prerequisite for our viewing this elite as a group of conscious creators acting in the context of a regional community.

Of crucial importance was that Silesia began to be perceived as an independent political community of elites surrounding the ducal court in the period of the reign of Henry the Bearded. On the one hand, this duke can be seen as consistently striving to establish his position as sovereign of all the Piasts.²⁵ On the other hand, he manifested his consent for the independence of individual territories – his own dominions – by introducing varied official ducal titles. And though Silesia was most frequently granted priority over all other territories subject to his power, curiously enough, the land named first in documents concerning Greater and Lesser Poland was the land of Cracow. After 1236, under the reign of Henry the Bearded, the two of them – Silesia and the land of Cracow – were listed alongside Greater Poland as provinces of equal status.²⁶ Henry’s efforts to introduce a uniform system of personal sovereignty of the duke and his designees over the entire dominion was a clear attempt at building a state with a highly centralized

²² R. Żerelik, *Dokumenty i kancelaria Henryka III*, pp. 82–83. The seal issue date was different according to Tomasz Jurek, *Studia nad dokumentami księcia glogowskiego Henryka I (III)*, ‘Studia Źródłoznawcze’, 32–33 (1991), pp. 51–52. In this case we advocate the view of the specialist in the area of ducal sphragistics, Z. Piech, *op. cit.*, pp. 233–234, who supported the views on the seal issue date presented by R. Żerelik.

²³ Z. Piech, *op. cit.*, pp. 236–237. About its usage in documents see Rościśław Żerelik, *Dokumenty i kancelarie książąt glogowskich w latach 1250-1331*, Wrocław 1988 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No 902, Seria Historia 59).

²⁴ In the context of Henry’s rivalry with Weneclaus II, and afterwards with Ladislaus the Elbow-high, it seems unlikely that the title of ‘regnum Polonie’ referred only to Greater Poland. This view was cautiously advocated by T. Jurek, *Dziedzic Królestwa*, pp. 49–50. Notwithstanding this issue, the very clarification of the types of dominions is clear proof of their hierarchy (*regnum–ducatus–dominium*).

²⁵ See the canon work of Benedykt Zientara, *Henryk Brodaty i jego czasy*, 2nd edition, Warsaw 1997, pp. 303–320.

²⁶ For instance S^Ub. II, No. 73, p. 46; No 80–81, pp. 52–53 and others; Z. Piech, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–222. As Henry, Duke of Cracow and Silesia: S^Ub. II, No. 83–85, pp. 54–55, and as Duke of Cracow, Silesia and Greater Poland *ibidem*, No. 112, p. 75. In the eyes of the papal curia, Henry the Bearded was simultaneously the Duke of Silesia and Cracow, *ibidem*, Nos 97–99, pp. 62–63.

administrative apparatus and territory far larger than that of Silesia. This ran counter to the affirmation of cases of regional political independence manifested not only by the ducal title, but also by clerical hierarchies associated with certain lands rather than with Henry's state as a whole. In so far as the Bearded's supreme status bonded his state together, what became conspicuous after 1238 (the date of his death) was the activity of regional communities destructive for this 'monarchy'. During the reign of Henry the Pious, this activity initially resulted in the loss of power over the Duchy of Opole, and soon after in the establishment of a practical autonomy of the land of Cracow as well as growing independence of the elite of the original territory of Silesia. Consequently, what became especially evident was the independence of political activity undertaken by Silesian elites from that of the knights of Opole and the elites of other territories ruled by Henry II.²⁷

Henry's death during the battle of Legnica in 1241 speeded up the process of regionalization of political elites. His descendants focused on forming a system of equal dominions in the territory inherited from Boleslaus the Tall and Henry the Bearded. Political activity reaching far beyond the borders of Silesia was of secondary importance compared to the primary aim – competing for hegemony within one's circle.²⁸ This process was capped at the close of the 13th century with the introduction of a hierarchy (known to us thanks to the analysis of titles; see above) of political entities in which the status of Silesia was viewed as halfway between that of a kingdom and of a local dominion. The fact that the activity of Silesian dukes between the 13th and 14th centuries focused on establishing their position in the system of alliances with their cousins who ruled Silesia²⁹ may be evidence that they shared the sense of being part of this particular social group. Additionally, narrative sources inform us that their sense of independence from non-Silesian representatives of the Piast dynasty was acute until at least the close of the 13th century. Around AD 1300, alongside the *Life of St Hedwig* there appeared a work on the genealogy of the Silesian line of Piasts.³⁰ Slightly earlier, before 1290, the so-called Silesian '*Polish Chronicle*' was written, where strong emphasis was put on

²⁷ See Przemysław Wiszewski, *Henryk II Pobożny. Biografia polityczna*, Legnica 2011, pp. 155–168, 180–184.

²⁸ Rościśław Żerelik, *Dzieje Śląska do 1526 roku*, pp. 59–62, 65–70, 82–91; Marek Wójcik, *Dolny Śląsk w latach 1138–1326*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, pp. 55–72; Wojciech Mrozowicz, *Dolny Śląsk w latach 1327–1526*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, pp. 105–126.

²⁹ T. Jurek, *Dziedzic Królestwa*, pp. 26–28, 35–36, 43–44, 51 and further; *idem*, *Plany koronacyjne Henryka IV Probusa*, [in:] *Śląsk w czasach Henryka IV Prawego*, ed. Krzysztof Wachowski, Wrocław 2005 (=Wratistavia Antiqua, vol. 8), pp. 13–30.

³⁰ See Kazimierz Jasiński, *Genealogia św. Jadwigi. Studium źródłoznawcze*, [in:] *Mente et litteris. O kulturze i społeczeństwie wieków średnich*, Poznań 1984, pp. 195–204, and generally on the cult of the Saint in Silesia, see Winfried Irgang, *Die heilige Hedwig. Ihre Rolle in der schlesischen Geschichte*, [in:] *Das Bild der heiligen Hedwig in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, eds Eckhardt Grunewald, Nikolaus Gussone, München 1995 (=Schriften des Bundesinstitut für ostdeutsche Kultur und Geschichte, vol. 7), pp. 23–38; on the genesis of the manuscript of the 'Lives of St. Hedwig', accompanied by the 'Genealogia', see Wojciech Mrozowicz, *Św. Jadwiga – jej żywot i kult (wraz z uwagami na temat rękopisu IV F 192 biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu)*, [in:] *Legenda o św. Jadwidze/Legende der hl. Hedwig*, translated and edited by Trude Ehlert, academic consultation and afterword by Wojciech Mrozowicz; translated into Polish by Jerzy Łukosz, Wrocław, 2000, pp. 597–620.

presenting the history of Silesian rulers as separate from the general history of the Polish Piasts.³¹ Nonetheless, the manifestation of Silesian rulers' independence in both these works was not proof of them breaking off their relations with the remaining Piasts and abandoning the concept of their being part of the community of Polish rulers. The concept of the Silesian rulers having an identity separate from the remaining Piasts was very slow to reach the lowest rungs of the social ladder. Curiously enough, in the 13th century Silesian documents issued outside the circles of ducal officials, just as in the case of charters from the surrounding territories,³² designated the Silesian Piasts as '*duces Polonie*' with no reference whatsoever to them being Silesian.³³ When in the first half of the 14th century the Bohemian kings gained in importance as guarantors of political order within provincial borders, this further strengthened their independence.³⁴ Even so, the titles analyzed above lead to the conclusion that Bohemian influences on the formation of the region were of a very complex nature. The spread of the idea of Silesia as a unique patrimony of a political community of rulers – descendants of Henry the Bearded – predated the period of Bohemian kings' dominance. Henry IV, having introduced dual titles, thereby led to emphasizing the local or sub-regional dimension of ducal power, while pointing to a traditional regional identity which had developed before the Odra region was subdued by Bohemian kings.³⁵

Did this signal the foundation between the 13th and 14th centuries of a Silesian political elite whose members engaged in coordinated political activity that transcended the boundaries of local duchies? Such assumptions require the highest degree of cautiousness. After 1241, in Silesia there were no particularly strong signs of tradition in the regional activity of the mighty. The ever-increasing fragmentation of Henry the Bearded's realm did not evoke any protests on their part. For the vast majority of the population, the duchies became a principal arena for political courting. Fragmentary findings on the subject give certain grounds for the assumption that the second half of the 13th century saw

³¹ About the '*Kronika polska*', with a list of older literature, see Wojciech Mrozowicz, *Śląska 'Kronika polska'. Wstęp do studium źródłoznawczego (part 1)*, [in:] *Studia z historii średniowiecza*, ed. Mateusz Goliński, Wrocław 2003 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Historia, vol. 163), pp. 105–128; *idem*, *Cronica principum Polonie und Cronica ducum Silesie - die Hauptwerke der Fürstenchronistik Schlesiens (Einige Überlieferungs- und Deutungsprobleme)*, [in:] *Die Hofgeschichtsschreibung im mittelalterlichen Europa: Projekte und Forschungsprobleme*, eds Rudolf Schieffer, Jarosław Wenta, Toruń 2006 (=Subsidia Historiographica, vol. 3), pp. 147–159, and an important supplementation *idem*, *Śląska Kronika polska w średniowiecznej tradycji historiograficznej: (przekaz w rękopisie I F 218 Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu)*, [in:] *Z Gorzanowa w świat szeroki: studia i materiały ofiarowane Profesorowi Arno Herzigowi w 70-lecie Urodzin*, eds Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Marek Zybura, Wrocław 2007, pp. 139–150.

³² SUB. II, No. 104, p. 69; Nos 145–146, pp. 94–95.

³³ See the documents of Magdalenes Sisters of Nowogrodzic at the Kwisa river, in SUB. III, No. 282, p. 187 from 1259 (here Boleslaus Rogatka is called '*Boleslaus dux Polonie*') and *ibidem*, No. 442, p. 291 from 22nd May 1263 (Conrad I of Głogów as '*dei gratia dux Polonie*').

³⁴ See Robert Antonín, Dalibor Prix, *Slezský a opolský region ve 13. století a prvních desetiletích 14. věku*, [in:] *Slezsko w dějinách českého státu*, vol. 1: *Od pravěku do roku 1490*, ed. Zdeněk Jirásek, Praha 2012, pp. 257–260; Martin Čapský, Dalibor Prix, *Slezsko v pozdním středověku (until 1490)*, [in:] *Slezsko w dějinách*, vol. 1, p. 263–272.

³⁵ Such a picture is presented by M. Čapský, D. Prix, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

the strengthening of a region-wide migration. It was fostered by the formation of networks comprising ducal courts and related elites, coupled with Silesia being flooded by an influx of foreign knights in search of new masters to provide them with material security and knightly fame.³⁶ At the same time, frequent changes of boundaries posed a major obstacle for the formation by individual duchies of a tradition of political independence. Compared with Silesia, a regular participant in political discourse – which is reflected, for instance, in Silesian ducal titles – the duchies were short-lived, transitory and of somewhat lower priority in the political hierarchy. It was only the introduction (see above) in the 1270s of local names into the titles of rulers, as well as the fixing of borders and designation of capitals (14th century) that could have encouraged the formation of local political elites in spite of remaining widespread respect of the more expansive political entity that was Silesia. The elites were not, however – at least as of the close of the 13th century and the outset of the 14th century – isolating themselves from their surroundings. At that time the circle of Henry of Głogów abounded in ordinary representatives of local knighthood, as well as of newcomers from other parts of Silesia and Germany. One of his primary specialists in diplomatic affairs was Lutko Pakosławic, who had betrayed Henry V the Fat, Duke of Wrocław, and sold him out to the Duke of Głogów. At the same time, many mighty families of the Głogów Duchy had only a few or no representatives whatsoever at their disposal to appear before the Duke. And these representatives, it should be said, were not fortunate enough to develop their careers outside the borders of the duchy. Migrants of various ethnic backgrounds were attracted to the Głogów court mostly by the favourable conditions resulting from the death of Henry IV the Righteous of Wrocław. Most of them, having settled in the realm of Henry of Głogów, became loyal servants to him and his family, and a smaller group migrated further, to Wrocław, Legnica and Świdnica.³⁷ In so far as it is possible to distinguish here a so-called ‘common Silesian factor’ which determined to a certain extent the migration decisions of local knights, the same can not be said in respect of their political activities. Their dependence on the decisions of particular dukes remained too extensive.

This relative political mobility of knights would be observed in Silesia throughout the entire 14th century. Of considerable importance in this process was the free will of the individuals aspiring to serve the Duke, which they viewed as a gateway to a potential career, or at least knightly adventure. Equally important was a factor beyond their influence, namely the rearrangement of borders and related changes of political affiliation. Increased mobility was accompanied by the growing convergence between the representatives of Polish- and German-speaking knighthoods, connected with the definitive declassing of their poorer local representatives. We may suspect that this led to the formation

³⁶ See Tomasz Jurek, *Die Migration deutscher Ritter nach Polen*, [in:] *Das Reich und Polen*, Ostfildern 2003 (=Vorträge und Forschungen, vol. 59), pp. 243–276, a collection of results of research devoted to the knights of medieval Silesia.

³⁷ See T. Jurek, *Dziedzic Królestwa Polskiego*, pp. 98–114.

of unique cultural characteristics of the entire population of Silesian (or, as we would say today, Lower Silesian) knights.³⁸ However, this hypothesis as well requires caution.³⁹ For one thing, alongside the dominant group of German-speaking knights there also functioned (especially on the right bank of the Odra) groups having close ties with Polish culture. It was only in the 15th century that these communities of petty knights based on Polish knightly laws finally disappeared.⁴⁰ Also, the 14th century was a period of consolidation of local elites involved in the expansion of their landed property.⁴¹ This would lead in the 15th century to the formation of a narrow group of magnates. Their political activity as viewed from a Silesia-wide perspective was, however, almost inconspicuous. And so it was, because this activity failed to produce any tangible benefits for society at large while political divisions and the formation of small duchies with their newly-established courts created favourable conditions for advancing the careers of knights supporting the new dukes.⁴² At this point it should be added that the extent of this so-called 'localness' did not necessarily overlap with the existing borders of duchies. The network of knightly families – identified by Tomasz Jurek – who owned landed properties around Lwówek Śląski, Złotoryja and Legnica survived the fragmentation of the Duchy of Boleslaus Rogatka, who was himself a major perpetrator of the crisis. A crucial change in this situation, that is in the dominance of the local context over the regional context of political activity conducted by knights, could only have been initiated by the Bohemian kings (see above). They were the only ones with enough power to establish primary provincial offices and have knights from across the entire province perform certain tasks.

³⁸ Marek Cetwiński, *Polak Albert i Niemiec Mroczko. Zarys przemian etnicznych i kulturalnych rycerstwa śląskiego do połowy XIV wieku*, [in:] *idem, Śląski tygiel. Studia z dziejów śląskiego średniowiecza*, Częstochowa 2001 (2nd edition, updated, first printing: *Niemcy – Polska w średniowieczu*, Poznań 1986, pp. 157–169), pp. 62–74; Tomasz Jurek, *Vom Rittertum zum Adel. Zur Herausbildung des Adelsstandes im mittelalterlichen Schlesien*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*, vol. 1: *Herrschaft – Kultur – Selbstdarstellung*, eds Jan Harasimowicz, Matthias Weber, München 2010, pp. 61–67.

³⁹ This was highlighted by Na M. Cetwiński, *Polak Albert*, pp. 74, who contested the views of Klaus Zernack.

⁴⁰ T. Jurek, *Vom Rittertum zum Adel*, pp. 69–70.

⁴¹ While there is no particulae information on the nature of this relationship, lords from Brzezimierz, connected in the 13th century with the court of Legnica, were distantly related to Bishops Thomas I and Thomas II of Wrocław. And despite meeting all the prerequisites for them to have played a definite political role in the context of the whole Silesia (or at least their local territory), in the second half of the 13th century and in the 14th century they concentrated on conducting commercial activity, resigning from holding ranks in royal courts, see Marek Cetwiński, *Ród Jeszka Poduszki i kościół w Brzezimierzu*, [in:] *idem, Śląski tygiel*, p. 234–235.

⁴² An interesting example of the mobility of knightly families and their careers at local courts is the history of the House of Busswoy, connected initially with Henry of Głogów, and after his death with the Piasts of Legnica. The Busswoys were said to have founded an estate in their territory not far from Chojnów, which first supported the most outstanding representative of their family – Wolff von Busswoy (a councillor of Frederick II of Legnica), to finally be dramatically expanded by his lord. Alongside the Busswoy line of Legnica, in the 15th century there were also the lines of Świdnica, Głogów and Opava. Nonetheless, we know nothing about their mutual cooperation or common family traditions of the time. See Przemysław Wiszewski, *Legnicka tablica kommemoracyjna rodu Budziwojowiców (von Bußwoy). Przyczynek do poznania mechanizmów kształtowania się tradycji genealogicznej na Śląsku (I połowa XVI w.)*, 'Genealogia. Studia i Materiały Historyczne', 12 (2000), pp. 70–74.

Nonetheless, in Silesia this process only reached a primary stage. A measure of the lack of perspectives and engagement on the general provincial level was the fact that in the 15th century the majority of Silesian knights gave priority over political activity in smaller duchies (not even to mention the province as a whole) to mercenary service for Teutonic Knights, the Crown of Poland, the Luxembourg dynasty and western states. In the second half of the 15th century, a politically fragmented Silesia, devoid of larger courts and of a clear provincial administrative structure that would offer the knights prospects for an attractive career, became one of Europe's prime mercenary recruitment zones.⁴³

At the same time, the ducal title '*duces Slesie*' clearly indicated that the Piasts were cultivating their sense of community in the context of their common right to a particular space. For their lieges, this was not of major importance in their everyday political affairs, as these were determined by the bonds between the subjects and rulers of particular local duchies. This relationship had been evolving from the second half of the 13th century. The ruler ceased to be the natural, sole centre of power. On the contrary, it was increasingly often the lieges who decided on the succession to the throne, and this was openly applauded by the rulers. When Henry V the Fat, Duke of Legnica, claimed the right to rule Wrocław with support from the burghers and local knights in 1290, in the official document decreeing the city's privileges he declared '*post solum deum per fideles et karissimos cives nostros Wratizlavienses pariter et per terrigenas Wratizlavienses sumus ducatum Wratizlaviensem et dominium consecuti*'. A clear message had been addressed to all who would acquaint themselves with the document—Henry had been made ruler of the duchy thanks in almost equal measure to the courtesy of the local elites and that of mighty God. This is not all accomplished by Henry the Fat. For the Piasts, wielding control over people and territories was for centuries a natural state, while Henry declared that he regarded the privileges of the city as '*ut beneficia beneficiis reconpensemus*'.⁴⁴ Gaining power over a duchy treated as a 'benefice' and granted to the duke by the local elites required that he repay this act of generosity with his own 'benefice'—this was a completely new concept in the Piast language of power relations. As a phenomenon punctuating the subjectivity of local elites in relations with their rulers, this concept is especially important to our study. In this system the rulers were, on the one hand, entitled to choose their political partners; on the other, the elites could define the obligations of their sovereigns. Naturally, the character of the Silesian dukes' authority remained unchanged; they were still predestined to exercise power over smaller

⁴³ Tomasz Jurek, *Obce rycerstwo na Śląsku do połowy XIV wieku*, pp. 83–90, see also passages on the economic activity of Silesian knights between the 12th and 13th centuries—this was partially a consequence of the political situation of the time, but mostly a result of economic expansion: Marek Cetwiński, *Rycerstwo śląskie do końca XIII w. Pochodzenie, gospodarka, polityka*, Wrocław 1980, pp. 96–113.

⁴⁴ SUB. V, No. 461, p. 354.

duchies. However, the power-related hereditary tradition became visibly less important than the clearly accentuated cooperation with local elites.

Mutual relationships and related choices led to the formation of a rapidly shifting network of Silesian political relations. As a result, from the second half of the 13th century the connections of elites with defined geographic locations were mostly the product of personal relations. The residing of dukes in towns or castles resulted in the strengthening of their symbolic importance as centres of individual realms. Of major importance was the establishment of a tradition according to which particular dukes were to reside in permanent locations, independently of changes in the ruling Piast lines or even dynasties. Powerful noble protectors were also drawn to centres of ducal memory, deliberately created by members of various Piast lines in institutions of high importance for them and their authority.⁴⁵ Finally, for knights of special importance were churches founded or financed by mighty families. From the 14th century the generosity of elites from all around Silesia was exploited by Wrocław's Church institutions – the donators' place of residence was of no importance to them. At the same time, the role played by Wrocław, as the region's hub and seat of the bishop and the oldest Silesian abbeys, in building an identity determined by the geography of the so-called 'sacred familiarity' was always crucial. This does not mean, however, that this role did not evolve. Beginning at the close of the 13th century some of Wrocław's functions were taken over by Legnica, Głogów, Świdnica, Oleśnica, Brzeg and finally Żagań. From the 14th century the permanent presence of courts, the attitude of municipal elites who battled with Wrocław for prestige (including in the sphere of the municipal symbolic), and finally, the rise in the number and concentration of prestigious sacred foundations resulted in an acceleration in these ducal capitals of the formation of the ducal elites' political identity with a regional accent.⁴⁶ On a lower, local level, an important factor for the development of the sense of

⁴⁵ See Marcin Pauk, *Program fundacyjny Piastów śląskich w XIII w. i jego środkowoeuropejskie konteksty*, [in:] *Piastowie śląscy w kulturze i europejskich dziejach*, ed. Antoni Barciak, Katowice 2007, pp. 73–100 (focused on the European perspective). On convents see Przemysław Wiszewski, *Związki fundatorów z klasztorami żeńskimi na Śląsku (XIII-połowa XIV w.) Wybrane aspekty*, [in:] *Genealogia – władza i społeczeństwo w Polsce średniowiecznej*, eds Andrzej Radziwiński, Jan Wroniszewski, Toruń 1999, pp. 303–332.

⁴⁶ See about the adoption of Wrocław's iconographic and symbolic patterns by the capitals of other Silesian duchies in the 14th century, Przemysław Wiszewski *Między konwencją, polityką i modą: średniowieczne śląskie pieczęcie miejskie z wizerunkami świętych*, [in:] *Formuła, archetyp, konwencja w źródle historycznym: materiały IX Sympozjum Nauk Dających Poznawać Źródła Historyczne, Kazimierz Dolny 14-15 grudnia 2000 r.*, eds Artur Górak, Krzysztof Skupieński, Lublin 2006 (=Biblioteka Wschodniego Rocznika; no. 4), pp. 275–285, 292–293, 302–303. Perhaps in the context of the process of building ducal capitals with a focus on making them sacred centres of duchies, we should also examine the moving of cloisters of canons regular – both from Ślęza Mountain to Wyspa Piaskowa, and from Nowogród Bobrzański to Żagań; on the role of monasteries (incl. the Abbey of Our Lady in the Sands) in the sacred topography of Wrocław see Halina Manikowska, *La topographie sacrée de la ville: le cas de Wrocław du XIIe au XVe siècle*, [in:] *Anthropologie de la ville médiévale*, ed. Michał Tymowski, Warszawa 1999, p. 65–82. The circumstances surrounding transfer of the Żagań monastery have recently been presented by Wojciech Mrozowicz, *Wokół przeniesienia klasztoru kanoników regularnych św. Augustyna z Nowogrodu Bobrzańskiego do Żagania. W świetlenie znanego dokumentu z 20 IX 1284 roku*, [in:] *Memoriae amici et magistri. Studia historyczne poświęcone pamięci Prof. Waclawa Korty (1919 - 1999)*, ed. Marek Derwich, Wrocław 2001, pp. 101–108 (see also earlier literature). The question of the crucial importance

community of small clans was the existence of monasteries and parish churches in the close vicinity of their landed properties.⁴⁷ At the same time, the heightened importance of urban centres (*districtus*, *Weichbild*) as territorial administrative units fostered the formation of strong bonds between urban communities and the knightly elites who controlled the outlying villages.

In the Late Middle Ages the role of districts in delimiting the borders of local economic (but also political) communities had grown in importance to such an extent that the inhabitants were more supportive of preserving their original frontiers than of incorporating them into ducal dominions. When, in the second half of the 1330s, Głogów became a subject of negotiations between the Piasts and John of Luxembourg, the latter awarded the city a special privilege in 1337, in which he stated that '[civitatem nostram Glogoviensem] ipsam cum territorio, districtu et possessionibus suis in sua integritate volumus inviolabiter permanere'.⁴⁸ Although the German publisher claims that the words 'territorium, districtus' are a clear reference to the duchy, this seems rather unlikely. At the same time, the royal chancellery used these words numerous times in reference to the lands surrounding Głogów, but with no intention of presenting them as a separate duchy.⁴⁹ This expression rather meant 'the lands of Głogów', that is a territory whose inhabitants were an integral part of both the city and its community. The charter from King John clearly accented the meaning of this relationship for the whole community: 'quoniam a capite membra diminuere non convenit, plerumque manencia cum eo vigorem sumunt, separata vero in se deficiunt et languescunt'.⁵⁰ What the document presents even more clearly by means of the organismic concept of community as suggested by the author is not only the role of Głogów as the head of this community, but also the fact that its distinctiveness from its surroundings had gained widespread acceptance.

A decisive role in the crystallization of political identity of such communities as subjects engaging in relations with their rulers was played by the period of uncertainty and reoccurring political divisions following the reign of Henry I (III) of Głogów. In the whirlwind of the redrawing of borders and reshuffling of higher authorities, the only thing that seemed durable was the local community, and guaranteeing its security was given the highest priority. In 1337, Duke John of Ścinawa granted King John power over 'terram Goram cum civitate castroque Gora et territorio suo necnon vassallis et utilitatibus suis una cum civitate Frowenstat'. In order to make this act legally valid, both

of ducal capitals for ducal families is punctuated in a passage from a document of Bishop Weneclaus, Duke of Legnica, who on endowing Louis II of Brzeg with his duchy at the outset of the 15th century named its constituent parts (most likely on purpose): 'unser haws stad land und lewthe zu Legenicz', LBUS, vol. 1, No. 55, p. 358.

⁴⁷ With reference to the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor see analyses by Dagmara Adamska, *Fundacje dewocyjne rycerstwa księstwa świdnicko-jaworskiego w średniowieczu*, Poznań-Wrocław 2005 (=Badania z Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych, vol. 64), especially the summary, pp. 225–230.

⁴⁸ LBUS, vol. 1, No. 22, p. 145.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, Nos 20–21, pp. 143–144.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, No. 22, p. 145.

the Duke and the King had to take an oath to retain the privileges of this community ('vasallos, terras, civitates et earum homines'), and the king additionally had to swear he would treat his liegemen 'prout alii principes Polonie vasalli sui habent'.⁵¹ This latter issue is of particular significance to us, as it points to the ruler's eagerness to secure the stability of the position of the local elites as knights subject to the Polish law, unique for Silesia at the time. However, it seems unlikely that the king himself would have favoured such a solution. This specific privilege was of primary importance to the knights, who saw it as an integral part of their identity and independence from the elites of other lands, and one they were not keen on losing with the advent a new ruler.

Appreciating the strength of ties binding these local communities, what should be kept in mind is that, firstly, they could be rapidly shattered by political decisions independent of the will of their members. This very thing happened in 1360, when Duke Henry V of Głogów concluded an agreement with Charles IV under which they divided Głogów and Bytom Odrzański along with their outlying lands into equal parts among the rulers. According to the charter which precisely described the newly-delineated borders between the towns, each of them was divided in half. What is more, the charter also mentioned several churches and production facilities (slaughterhouse, mill, etc.) that were to be kept in common for both cities, while at the same time it clearly declared the formation of two separate communities with two distinct legal systems for the cities and their districts.⁵² Other divided towns and their districts, such as Ścinawa, Góra and Chobienia, encountered similar situations.⁵³ The will of the ruler, who was supported by more powerful elites, was definitely of far greater weight than the forces binding local communities. It could bring about a transformation of the newly-formed 'semi-communities' into real subjects of political activity.⁵⁴

Secondly, people of the time had no doubt that local communities, like those of the lands of Głogów and Góra, were part of a larger whole – ducal communities. Duke John of Ścinawa – frequently mentioned here – when transferring his duchy with the consent of barons in 1337 to the brothers Henry of Żagań and Conrad of Oleśnica wrote that he had done this 'commoditatem nihilominus et utilitatem nostram et omnium subditorum nostrorum ac incolarum dicti ducatus sperantes ex hoc imposterum non modicum provenire'.⁵⁵ He punctuated this statement with another to the effect that 'terram nostram seu ducatum Stinaviensem' comprised towns (including Góra), castles and villages together

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, No. 23, p. 146.

⁵² *Ibidem*, No. 47, pp. 172–178.

⁵³ See also the document on the division of Góra (1375) with very similar content to the document of Głogów-Bytom, *ibidem*, No. 57, pp. 187–192; however, it must be clear that the division was made 'den herren den mannen und den steten yren rechten unschedelich' (p. 191).

⁵⁴ Even in connection with the necessity of paying homage to the new ruler following the death of the previous head, see *ibidem*, No. 55, p. 185 (Karol IV commands 'landluyten, rittern und knechten, burgern und insessen des halbenlandis und der halben stad czu der Steinaw' and paying homage to King Wenclaus after the death of Duke Bolko of Świdnica, 1368).

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, No. 24, p. 148.

with all the listed categories of inhabitants. He also noted the fact that in the event of his involvement in any arrangement ‘cum nostris feodalibus, civibus et rusticis’, his brothers should not engage themselves in any way in such a matter. A similar demand was addressed in a different charter to Boleslaus of Legnica by King John of Luxembourg (1329). In exchange for Bolesław’s allegiance, John promised him that neither he himself nor his successors would engage in any disputes with the Duke or his successors ‘cum rusticis, colonis, scultetis, civibus aut aliis quibuscunque subditis eorum cuiuscunque conditionis extiterit’, this excluding the liegemen.⁵⁶ Two different entries point to the growing detachment of communities of duchies. King John reserved for himself the right to exercise power over the liegemen, but only a few years later, as the perpetual ruler of the duchy, along with his subjects he was part of a uniform community reluctant to be disturbed by external influences.

The force of the unique regional characteristics of duchies’ inhabitants surfaced in the specificity of Silesian political life until at least the close of the 14th century. What is striking in this context is the record of the author of the *Chronicle of Dukes of Poles* about the alleged cause of Wrocław burghers’ reluctance in 1290 to accept the sovereignty of Henry of Głogów, who was designated by the dying Henry the Righteous as his successor. The burghers were said to claim that Henry of Głogów would not only advocate aggressive policies, but would also be prone to breaking promises.⁵⁷ They were more open to the potential reign of the Duke of Legnica, Henry the Fat, whose peaceful introduction would guarantee the burghers a calm existence in a land where justice prevailed.⁵⁸ The cited passages of the chronicle, written in the second half of the 14th century, demonstrate how vital political stability was for elites within their duchy, including for conducting political affairs with reference to their inhabitants, or rather – their elites. After Henry the Fat refused on his deathbed to hand Sobótka to his brother Bolko in exchange for him taking care of his infant sons, Henry was actually chided by his subjects – knights and vassals – who instructed him that in the long run it would be much less painful to face a small loss at once rather than a great loss of everything at a later time.⁵⁹ As Marek Cetwiński noted, in the eyes of the chronicler, those surrounding the duke demanded that he maintain peace and security, and in exchange the duke could count on them guarding his honour and the duchies’ borders. Although the chronicler is far from praising the relationship between the main architects of local policy, nor does he criticize it.⁶⁰ The ambitions of rulers to dominate in Silesia, not to mention the broader

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 3, p. 305.

⁵⁷ ‘Scientes non esse ipsum pacis zelatorem et, ut dicebatur, non fuit firmus in verbis’, *Kronika książąt polskich*, p. 502.

⁵⁸ ‘Henricus (...) pacifice et quiete adeptus est totam terram et districtum Wratislaviensem, regens huius modi dominium multum honeste fonesque iusticiam in omnibus et honorem’, *ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 506–507.

⁶⁰ Marek Cetwiński, *Porwanie Henryka Grubego. Próba interpretacji*, [in:] *Genealogia. Władza i społeczeństwo w Polsce średniowiecznej*, eds. Andrzej Radziwiński, Jan Wroniszewski, Toruń 1999, s. 32–34.

political horizon, could have been regarded as a harmful expression of hubris, and not as a sign of a justified desire to offer their authority to the community of Silesians existing beyond the ducal borders. The political horizon of the lesser dukes was confined to the limits of their own, narrow communities. According to the chronicler, the rulers were not blameless in this situation. Describing the dukes' feuds following the death of Henry the Pious, the author showed that a combination of their ambitions and misdeeds that prompted the downfall of the entire dynasty, which lost power over Greater Poland and Cracow while maintaining control over '*sola Slezia*'.⁶¹

This though concerned 13th-century Silesia disquisition serves as a rationalization of the functioning of a 14th-century phenomenon: a group of dukes controlling single realms, while claiming the exclusive right to rule all of Silesia. Dukes without the slightest chance to rule Poland in its entirety, but at a minimum laying their claims to the legacy of Henry the Bearded. In the eyes of the contemporary ruling elites, Silesia was not the same type of legal and political entity as duchies, which were their nearest points of reference in terms of the struggle for influence and power. The charters of John of Luxembourg from April 6th 1327 served as good illustrations of the acceptance by outside observers of both the clearly-defined distinctness of the duchy's political elite from the political community of the remaining Silesian lands and this elite's intellectual distance to the idea of a united Silesia. In the first charter, John received from Henry VI the Duchy of Wrocław, thereby becoming his suzerain and assigning him the title '*dux Slezie dominus Wratislaviensis*' or '*dominus Wratislaviae*'. The area under Henry's authority was '*tota terra sua Wratislaviensis*' – this was the inheritance he took possession of after his father's lands had been divided between him and his brothers. It was the Duchy of Wrocław that was the real target of political campaigns undertaken by elites. In the charter's narrative, Silesia went unmentioned apart from the duke's title. The purpose of this charter was to protect Henry from possible expulsion from his real dominion, which for contemporary political players was the Duchy of Wrocław, not Silesia.⁶² The fact of Silesia being placed on the back burner of local political elites' interests was well illustrated by the privilege issued for the knights and townsmen of the Duchy of Wrocław that very same day by King John, in which he promised to maintain all their existing ducal privileges '*dive memorie ducum Silesie ac dominorum Wratislaviensium*', and granted new economic privileges to the inhabitants of the duchy within the borders of the Bohemian Crown. Finally, he made a solemn promise that the duchy would be permanently incorporated into Bohemia and that the allegiance would be unbreakable.⁶³ Charles IV struck a similar tone when in 1352 he approved the privileges of the Duchy of Wrocław and officially incorporated Namysłów, bought from Wenceslaus Duke of

⁶¹ *Kronika książąt polskich*, p. 491.

⁶² LUBS, vol. 1, No. 8, pp. 66–67.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, No. 9, pp. 67–68.

Silesia and Legnica in 1359.⁶⁴ ‘Silesia’ is present only in the titles of Piast rulers, but absent from the political language of elites belonging to individual political entities.

This was not, however, caused by replacement of this vision with the idea of association with the Bohemian Crown and hence the functioning of the duchies within its limits. The concepts of Silesia and the Bohemian Crown were perceived as structural elements of contemporary reality, but they had much less impact on inhabitants’ sense of identity than did the concept of a duchy. In 1349, the entire community of the city of Głogów – mayor, councillors, artisans, burghers – requested that Charles IV renounce a pledge he and his father had made to maintain a permanent link between Głogów, the Crown and the Duchy of Wrocław. Their intention was to make Henry IV the Faithful their ruler, whom they referred to not as the Duke of Silesia and ruler of Głogów, but simply as ‘*herzogin zu Glogow*’.⁶⁵ Even the Bishop of Wrocław, Przeclaw, followed the trend of emphasizing the identity of political communities with the exclusion of the idea of Silesia as a cementing factor. In 1345, having issued a charter on the debts of the Dukes of Legnica, he called them ‘*duces Wenceslaus et Ludwicus, domines Lignicensis*’, and his companion Henry of Żagań and Głogów – ‘*dei gracia dux Saganensis et dominus Glogoviensis*’.⁶⁶ In a sign of support for Bohemian rule over the Duchy of Wrocław (‘*civitas et terra Wratislaviensis*’), in 1367 he issued a charter which, while confirming the Bohemian claims towards Wrocław, failed to mention the Silesian context, even with regard to the titles of the Piast dukes. In his eyes, the last Duke of Wrocław was simply ‘*illustris princeps dominus Henricus olim dux Wratislaviensis sextus et ultimus*’.⁶⁷

Among the Piast ruling the mid-Odra region, they were few who wanted to constitute a counterbalance to the idea of Silesia. In the foregoing passages I have already mentioned the specific title of Conrad I, Duke of Głogów, who granted equal status to Silesia and the lands of Głogów. His attitude was mirrored in the 1320s by his grandchildren, most notably evident in the charters decreeing their feudal dependence on King John of Luxembourg. In 1329, Duke Conrad of Oleśnica issued a charter in which he referred to himself as ‘*nos Conradus dei gratia dux Slesie et Glogovie et dominus in Olsna*’. He stressed that his brothers’ lands were to belong ‘*ad fratres nostros principes illustres dominum Henricum videlicet ducem Slesie et Glogovie Saganensemque dominum ac dominum Johannem ducem Slesie et Glogovie ac dominum Stynavie heredesque suos*’.⁶⁸ Having recognized the rights of John – as King of Bohemia and Poland – to rule these territories, he authorized the charter with a seal referring to him as ‘the heir to the Polish Crown’. Perhaps it was the pride felt by the sons of Henry I (III) of Głogów

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, No. 15, 17, pp. 70–72.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, No. 44, p. 169.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 26, p. 324.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, No. 22, p. 75.

⁶⁸ LUBS, vol. 2, No. 16, pp. 19–20.

of being successors to the Polish throne that lied at the roots of their desire to highlight their and their lands' unique status in relation to the remaining Silesian Piasts. This was no less than well-regarded by King John and his chancellery. In both John's feudal charter and a later charter by which he granted Conrad a special privilege, the duke and his brother Henry were referred to as 'duces Slesie et Glogovie', lords of Oleśnica and Ścinawa. In that, they were clearly distinguished from Henry VI the Good ('dux Slesie et dominus Wratislaviensis') and Boleslaus (Bolko) of Niemodlin, who, originating from outside the line of Henry the Bearded's descendants, were not even awarded the title of Duke of Silesia ('de Valkenberg [dux]').⁶⁹

The Duchy of Głogów, inherited by Henry I (III) and subsequently divided between his sons, was thereby assuming a similar character to that of Silesia, which was inherited from Henry I the Bearded and, just like the Duchy of Głogów, divided after his son's death. Such a comparison would doubtlessly be a great distinction for the entire Głogów line. This attempt to create a uniform familial community with a vast amount of political power over the Głogów legacy, therefore making it, in a sense, a region equal in status with Silesia and its potential competitor, ended in failure.⁷⁰ Perhaps this was so because the idea was advanced during a time when the family was embroiled in a major crisis. The Dukes of Głogów lost the lands of Greater Poland and recognized the overlordship of the Bohemian King, who began soon afterwards to deprive them of their rights to Głogów.⁷¹ Earlier, while sharing Henry I (III) of Głogów's lands, his sons displayed no keenness to mention either Głogów – at that time controlled by their mother – or Silesia.⁷² They rather focused on their local realms, thereby contenting themselves with the prestige thus brought to them. Nonetheless, the very appearance of the tendency to establish a region that was to compete with Silesia, the Głogów 'region of inheritance', is an important sign that in the 14th century Silesia, as a region and a point of reference for the realization of the common political interests of various rulers, was not the only option available for the Piasts of the time. A decision to allow Silesia to be eclipsed by the Głogów lands might also have met with acceptance beyond the limits of narrow familial circles. For instance, Bolko of Świdnica, in an official speech given in 1331 on behalf of his sister Constance, widow of Duke Przemko II of Głogów, referred to the duke

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, No. 17, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Only nine years later that very same king granted Conrad a supreme privilege according to which, in the event of the lack of a male successor, Conrad would be entitled to use the title of 'dux Slesye [sic!] et dominus Olsnicensis', *ibidem*, No. 21, p. 24, which was also used in identical form by the Duke himself.

⁷¹ LUBS, vol. 1, No. 13, pp. 134–135. What is especially striking in this document are the various titles of the sons of Henry of Głogów. John of Ścinawa calls himself 'dux Slesie et dominus in Stynavia', while his father Henry I (III) and late brother Przemko – both ruling Głogów – were 'duces Glogoviae'. The difference was that it was John who by this very charter transferred his power over Głogów to King John of Luxembourg. He did so in the presence of 'Bolezlai videlicet ducis Slesie domini Lignicensis, domini Conradi fratris nostril carrissimi ducis Glogovie et domini Stynavie'. Most probably the Głogów title was meant for those members of the family having at least partial rights to the patrimony. In such a context these rights were of much greater value than his still-valid rights to Silesia.

⁷² *Ibidem*, No. 4, pp. 120–125.

as ‘quondam ducis Glogovie’, but he called himself ‘dux Slesie dominus de Forstenberg et Swidniczensis’.⁷³

It would be difficult to determine the chronology and the durability of the process of the transformation of ducal and urban political elites into groups detached from the more common Silesian identity and supporting the independence of elites within the borders of smaller polities. The activities of elites operating outside the duchy’s borders as representatives of the ducal community surfaced in moments of crisis. When in 1443 the citizens of the Duchy of Ziębice were to accept William of Opava as their ruler, they were represented by the abbots of Henryków and Kamieniec Ząbkowicki, knights Hans von Burschwitz, Heintze Friedrich von Stosch and Christoff Stosch, the parish priest of Ziębice and burghers called ‘manne in der Münsterbergischen fürstenthumb’. They unanimously agreed to accept William of the Přemyslid dynasty, associated with the Piasts on the distaff side (mother Catherine, Duchesse of Ziębice), as their overlord in the event of an immediate threat to the security of their community. That is why they designated him as ‘als seinen herrn, der do gerechtigkeit hat zu dem lande und eingeboren fürst ist des lands, zu einem vorweser dem lande und der stadt’.⁷⁴ The universal message – with the Silesian context absent – is only a prerequisite for the primary aim of ensuring the survival of the Duchy’s community in times of hardship.

A similar diminishing of importance of the idea of Silesia can be observed in later disputes over succession rights in the Piast duchies. During the feud over the inheritance following the death of Conrad VII the White (the Elder) duke of Oleśnica, his sons Conrad the White (the Younger) and Conrad Kantner focused on arguments in favour of their personal interests, alternatively of the interests of the Dukes of Oleśnica. Silesia was virtually absent not only in their considerations, but also in the political plans of opponents.⁷⁵ This strategy’s foundations were presented in 1490 by Conrad X the White, who bequeathed his duchy to the young Dukes of Legnica. He wrote as follows: ‘wir unser landt und furstenthum in voller macht als eyn freyer furste und in rechten erblehen innehaben (...) vormols unser landt unde furstenthum von frunden an frunde fursten des geslechtis komen und geerbitseyn’.⁷⁶ A true, hereditary duchy of territory controlled by the duke’s family was the factor that brought the Piasts closer together and gave direction to their and their partners’ political activities. In the end, it was the king’s – not the Piast dukes’ – place to accept Conrad’s decision through the majority of ‘*fursten des landes*’.⁷⁷ The strive to constitute a common and uniform set of rules adhered to by the entire political elite of Silesia was in the king’s interest, not in that of the heirs to the former architects of the region’s political identity. The establishment of the superior

⁷³ *Ibidem*, No. 12, p. 133.

⁷⁴ LUBS, vol. 2, no. 31, p. 148.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, Nos 67–69, pp. 70–71, Nos 71–73, pp. 73–85.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 84, p. 100.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, No. 85, p. 103.

status of monarchic laws in relation to the privileges of the Piasts, forced through by central authorities, resulted in undesirable outcomes for the Piast dynasty. Oleśnica, as a fiefdom of the king, was handed down to the House of Poděbrady. Only Wołów went into the hands of the Piasts of Legnica. Ladislaus Jagiellon, King of Bohemia and ‘herzog in Sleszien’, having granted Oleśnica to Henry of Poděbrady, did not fail to stress that Henry had been one of the ‘fuersten aus der Sleszie’, and could hence be judged only by a member of this circle.⁷⁸ The breaking of the agreement between Conrad the White (the Younger) and Duchess Ludmila of Legnica was a clear sign that the era of acceptance of political domination in Silesia by elites representing their particular interests – i.e. those of particular duchies and their ruling families – was coming to a close. By the end of the 15th century, every attempt to impose one’s will required efforts be made to influence both the entire community of local rulers and the king’s court. Silesia gradually assumed the role of a platform for this sort of cooperation, which was revived by the mutual desire (of both central authorities and local elites) to create a certain middle ground between the Kingdom of Bohemia and the duchies.

This was a result of a long term process under which Silesia had always remained a concept uniting all the parties that felt a responsibility to share the hereditary rights to the legacy of the Henry I the Bearded. The durability of this idea is validated by the act of incorporation to the Bohemian Crown of duchies belonging to Charles IV’s liegemen in 1348. It confirms that some dukes and their subordinate political elites were perceived as part of a common Silesian political space; it also verifies the superior status of Wrocław and the existence of a division of liegemen into ‘Silesian ones’ and ‘Polish ones’, that is – surely – the heirs of Henry I the Bearded and those of Mieszko the Tanglefoot.⁷⁹ The overlordship of the King of Bohemia could have united his dependent dukes, but not to the extent which led to the erasure of the older and deeper divisions within the political community of Piast dukes, who viewed Silesia as a much less meaningful entity, but at the same time as one more tangible than the new space formed as a result of their dependency on the King of Prague. Charles IV, having incorporated the Odra region to the Bohemian Crown, wrote explicitly about ‘duces Polonie et Slesie’, who had long before paid tribute to the Bohemian rulers, and soon after paid feudal homage to King John of Luxembourg. This binary interpretation of the Odra community under Bohemian

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, No. 92, pp. 109–113, citation from p. 112.

⁷⁹ The document, however, contains a very imprecise classification of the ruler’s affiliations. It mentions, in general, ‘duces Polonie et Slesie’, and the homage paid to the Bohemian King by ‘illustrum Slesie et Polonie ducum videlicet Lignicensis, Bregensis, Munsterbergensis, Olnensis, Glogoviensis, Saganensis, Opoliensis, Falckenbergensis, Strelicensis, Teschinensis, Coslensis, Bithumiensis, Stinaviensis et Osve-tiensis’. Alongside the inclusion of the Duke of Ścinawa in the circle of the dukes of what is now called Upper Silesia, the division of the remaining territories seems to illustrate the duality of both communities – dukes of ‘Silesia’ and ‘Poland’. We hasten to add here that Charles IV consistently referred to the Duchy of Wrocław and its duke as ‘ducatu Wratislaviensis et Slesie’ and ‘Henrico Wratislaviae et Slesie duci’, LUBS, vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 9–10. So, the so-called Duchy of ‘Wrocław and Silesia’ was not the Duchy of ‘Wrocław, Silesia and Poland’. The identity and separateness of both communities was maintained.

rulers would gradually proliferate in the language of communication with the court of Prague. Louis I of Hungary, having renounced in 1373 on his and his wife's behalf the rights to Silesian duchies, listed them and informed of his abandonment of all claims towards any dukes and duchies in 'Bohemia, Moravia, Slesia, Polonia, Saxonia, Bavaria, Franconia' being part of 'regni et corone Bohemie'.⁸⁰ We must also remember that in the second half of the 14th century, authors of historiographical works whose main function was to present an idealized vision of the past, claimed that the only rulers of Silesia were the descendants of Henry the Bearded and those of St Hedwig. The Dukes of Opole comprised a different community.⁸¹ The distinctness of the dukes residing in the upper-Odra region from their Silesian cousins ceased to be highlighted only in the 14th century when, according to scholars, the name of Silesia was incorporated into the titles of Upper Silesian rulers (those of Opole, Racibórz, Opava and others).⁸²

At the time, it was also clear that the permanent domination of Bohemian kings over the Silesian duchies and their taking direct control over Wrocław, Świdnica and Jawor would slowly but irrevocably and fundamentally transform the situation of the Odra region's population. The supreme status of the Bohemian king and his officials was gradually gaining strength beyond the sphere of the ducal administration. This change, however, was neither immediate nor uniform for the entire affected territory. The power of the royal authority was definitely more conspicuous in duchies directly dependent on the Bohemian monarch, represented in these duchies from the second half of the 14th century by his governors of duchies (*starostas*).⁸³ The rulers of feudal duchies retained their previous position, and at times they even opposed the king.

In the 14th century, two separate trends could be observed in the activity of the rulers of Silesian territories. On one side there were sovereigns of the southern duchies, and on the other, the rulers of the territory considered to be the real Silesia. When, following the death of Duke Leszek of Racibórz, King John handed all his territory to Nicholas II of Opava from the Přemyslid dynasty (husband of Anna, the sister of Leszek), his act was contested by relatives of the deceased. A complaint was filed in 1337 to the king's court by Dukes Ladislaus of Bytom, Casimir of Cieszyn, Boleslaus of Niemodlin, Bolko of Opole, Albert of Strzelin and John of Oświęcim. None of them could call himself a Duke of Silesia, for they descended from the Piast line of Mieszko the Tanglefoot.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, No. 8, p. 18.

⁸¹ Wojciech Mrozowicz, *Dlaczego Piotr z Byczyny nic nie wiedział o księżętach opolskich? Książęta opolscy w średniowiecznej historiografii śląskiej*, [in:] *Jak powstawało Opole? Miasto i jego książęta*, ed. Anna Pobóg-Lenartowicz, Opole 2006, pp. 89–107.

⁸² An extensive number of earlier sources on the subject has been collected and summarized by Sławomir Gawlas, *Ślązacy w oczach własnych i cudzych. Uwagi o powstaniu i rozwoju tożsamości regionalnej w średniowieczu*, [in:] *Ślązacy w oczach własnych i obcych*, ed. Antoni Barciak, Katowice 2010, pp. 51–52.

⁸³ See description of the office of governor of duchy or of the province and survey of related publications, Ewa Wólkiewicz, *Capitaneus Slesie. Królewscy namiestnicy księstwa wrocławskiego i Śląska w XIV i XV wieku*, [in:] *Monarchia w średniowieczu. Władza nad ludźmi. Władza nad terytorium*, eds Jerzy Pysiak, Aneta Pieniądz-Skrzypczak, Marcin Pauk, Warsaw 2002, pp. 169–225.

Their complaint was rejected by the king, who cited the superiority of feudal law over the rules of male primogeniture to succession.⁸⁴ His decision was announced in a place of symbolic importance – Wrocław – which he had inherited a short time before (in 1335) from Henry VI the Good. This was done in the presence of Boleslaus III the Generous, the Duke of Silesia and Legnica, who was a trusted partner of John at the time.⁸⁵ Although Boleslaus supported the king's decisions, in 1308 he had single-handedly claimed the Duchy of Opava, thereby depriving Nicholas I (Nicholas II's father) of the chance to become its ruler. What is more, between 1328 and 1329 he had questioned King John's claim to take over the lands of Wrocław. Nonetheless, he favoured the royal verdict in the case of Opava and rejected the arguments of the Upper Silesian Piasts. He did so as the fate of Silesia—understood as his family's legacy—was close to his heart. Ultimately, the laws and the lands of his distant relatives, which were not part of 'his' Silesia, were not worth cooperation with the discontented nor entering into a conflict with the king.

In the 14th century, the policies of Bohemian rulers had a mixed impact on the formation and the activity of groups focused on effecting the unification of the province. For one thing, the Bohemian kings underlined the link between the Silesian elites based on their joint dependency on the king and the Bohemian Crown. For another, their interference in local disputes deepened the divisions between the actors of the political arena. In November of 1347, Charles IV issued a charter for Silesia in Nuremberg, invoking the concept of the so-called 'landfryd'. The document did not impose an obligation to maintain the peace on all the inhabitants. It rather called on all the 'ducibus in partibus Polonie consitutis nostre dicioni subiectis' to cease their battles, in order to guarantee peace in 'terre nostre dicioni subiecte et specialiter Wratislaviensis'. It also forbade giving shelter to all individuals bringing harm to 'terrarum nostrarum presertim terre Wratislaviensis'.⁸⁶ While the king was of the view that everyone was meant to be equal ('in all the Polish lands of my sovereignty'), the lands of Wrocław were given special treatment in this respect. This was especially beneficial for maintaining the king's supremacy over his vassals and facilitating his rule over the kingdom, yet it did not contribute to a strengthening of bonds between representatives of Silesian elites at the regional level. Worthy of note was the novelty that the dukes of Silesia and Opole were viewed by the royal authorities as one and the same collective political subject. This approach was, however, often applied inconsistently, and hence the concept of Silesia continued to encompass the lands of the central and northern Odra regions.

What proved the validity of the elite's conviction of the ideological unity of Silesia, coupled with the simultaneous evolution of their self-identification, was the political

⁸⁴ See Wojciech Nowacki, *Piastowski Śląsk wobec opawskich Przemyślidów*, [in:] *Ślązacy w oczach własnych i obcych*, pp. 118–120.

⁸⁵ LUBS, vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 380–383.

⁸⁶ BUb., No. 188, p. 167.

activity of the clergy. On the one hand, the superiority of the bishop over the entire ecclesiastical community, excluding the majority of religious orders, favoured the emergence of a sense of belonging to a community extending beyond the ducal borders. This does not mean, however, that its members and their administrative framework instantly identified themselves with the concept of Silesia. This is well illustrated by, for instance, the charter of Bishop Przeclaw of Pogorzela (1342), in which he confirmed the homage, which was paid to John of Luxembourg by Boleslaus of Brzeg, Bolko of Niemodlin, Bolko of Opole, Ladislaus of Koźle, Casimir of Cieszyn, Nicholas of Opava and Raci-bórz and Siemowit of Gliwice, and called them ‘duces nostre wratislaviensis diocesis’.⁸⁷ None of them save Boleslaus of Brzeg was ever referred to by the title of Duke of Silesia, and it was evident that the Bishop did not view them as part of a uniform community linked by a so-called ‘Silesian factor’. They were bound by the diocese, which in terms of nomenclature was completely unassociated with Silesia; rather, as tradition dictated it was bound with the capital of the Bishopric-Wrocław. The distinctiveness of Silesia from the diocesan territory was accentuated in a document from 1358, in which the Bishop, accepting Charles IV as the patron of ‘episcopatus wratislaviensis’ pointed to the dependence of the dukes from ‘the lands of Silesia and Opole’ on the king. Curiously enough, he failed to mention that these dukes were in control of the lands within the borders of his diocese. On the contrary, he claimed that some of the diocesan properties were located ‘in terris et principatibus ducum et principum Slezie et Opuliensis’.⁸⁸ Finally, we must not forget that the connection with the province was not necessarily a natural one for clergymen serving here. This is well-illustrated by the example of Bishop Nanker, for whom the fact of being transferred from Cracow to Wrocław was a source of much discomfort; indeed, this was to such a degree that, in 1327, after putting much effort into the process, he managed to obtain a papal privilege of primacy – based on him being the head of the Diocese of Cracow – in the congregation of Polish bishops. This was accepted by the pope as ‘ad tuam consolacionem’.⁸⁹ Also, Nanker regarded only Cracow liturgical customs as ‘his’. Nanker himself wrote that as a child he had been taught the canonical agenda of the Cracow Diocese, and he – the Bishop of Wrocław! – was reluctant to learn new ‘Wrocław’ customs.⁹⁰

Frequent conflicts at the end of the 13th century between Episcopal authorities and the dukes and their urban centres broadened the gap between the two administrative systems. At the same time, they hindered cooperation in strengthening the regional community, particularly in cases when the Bishops – for instance, Przeclaw of Pogorzela – cooperated with the Bohemian kings in order to strengthen diocesan bonds with the Bohemian

⁸⁷ LUBS, vol. 2, No. 3, p. 6.

⁸⁸ LUBS, vol. 1, No. 6, p. 15.

⁸⁹ *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae gentiumque finitimarum historiam illustrantia*, ed. Augustyn Theiner, vol. 1, Rome 1860, No. 391, p. 305.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, No. 405, p. 313.

to Silesia, viewed at that time as part of the Bohemian Crown.⁹⁵ The Diocese of Wrocław was yet another point of reference for the common identity of the region's population. The formation of a community based on this affiliation could have served as a strong bonding factor for the region. The coexistence of two platforms of identification for the population of the Odra region, one being the Wrocław Diocese, the other being the territory referred to by the historical name of Silesia, created as a result of the political needs and top-down initiatives of monarchs to develop an effective tool for administration of the Odra region, facilitated the strengthening of bonds within the large community of these two entities.

The terms of office of the Bishops of Wrocław – the Piast dukes – between the close of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century collided with fundamental changes in the political identity of various groups of inhabitants of the upper- and mid-Odra region. This was a consequence of the efforts of the Kings of Bohemia – the suzerains of Silesian duchies – to treat the province as a unified territory, despite its administrative fragmentation and the threat of Hussite invasion. The first steps in this direction were taken by John of Luxembourg, through his approach to the matter of reclaiming power over the duchies. King John, having described in his charter (see above) the dispute with the dukes of the southern Odra region concerning authority over the Duchy of Racibórz, contended that their greatest error was their demand that the issue be pursued according to the Polish law effective in their duchies. John, however, decided to grant to Nicholas II the Duchy of Racibórz, based on the principles of the feudal law. He justified his decision saying that Nicholas was not subordinate to the Piasts' rule of inheritance, but to the king, who did not apply the Polish law in this area. Disregarding the preferences of Nicholas II's opponents, he decided to resolve this dispute according to the rules of the feudal law.⁹⁶ So as to avoid any potential doubts in this respect, he issued a separate charter in which he clearly stated that the issue of Nicholas' power over Racibórz may only be resolved 'more et iure principum Alemanie vassalorum aliorum et non Polonie'.⁹⁷ John's firm attitude should come as no surprise – feudal law helped him keep the dukes of the Odra region in check. It also helped him subdue the Duchy of Wrocław,⁹⁸ and it was thanks to feudal law that he strengthened his power as a suzerain of the Piasts. The rules imposed by John – as can be seen in the example of the dispute over Racibórz – failed to bring provincial political elites closer together. On the contrary, they may have even deepened the divisions between them, for they enjoyed varying degrees of acceptance by dukes and Piast lines. It would be a tremendous simplification to believe that

⁹⁵ See *Statuta capituli ecclesiae cathedralis Wratislaviensis ex anno 1482/1483. Statuty wrocławskiej kapituły katedralnej z roku 1482/1483*, ed. Kazimierz Dola, trans. Norbert Widok, Wrocław-Opole 2004, pp. 2, 4, 6 (pledges to the new bishop, by the new bishop and the members of the Wrocław chapter).

⁹⁶ LUBS, vol. 2, No. 2, p. 381.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, No. 3, p. 384.

⁹⁸ See his emphasis on defining the order of the mutual feudal duties of the Wrocław knights when Henry VI was still alive, LUBS, vol. 1, No. 8, pp. 66–67.

they met with a favourable response in the north while an unfavourable reception greeted them in the south. This is mostly evident in the history of the Duchy of Głogów, where the male descendants of Henry of Głogów fought a continual battle over the ducal capital, and later over a portion of it controlled by the King of Bohemia. The hereditary right to the capital of their familial realm was of much higher importance than the obligations towards their formal senior. Meanwhile, to remedy this situation in 1384 Wenceslaus IV handed his portion of Głogów over to the Duke of Cieszyn, Przemysław Noszak. This was a major sensation – the capital of one of the major lines of Silesian rulers was to be controlled by a Piast from outside the Silesian line, a vassal of the King of Bohemia, a politician of great ambitions but one active principally in the southern Odra region and in Bohemia. At the time, he was probably the most outstanding member of the Piast dynasty to have sit on the Silesian throne.⁹⁹ His political activity, supported by the king, also unexpectedly brought an end to elites from the north and the south pursuing their political activities in isolation. At the close of 14th century, Noszak was actively involved in the formation of the ‘Silesian Union’, uniting dukes and cities from different parts of the Odra region to keep the peace in the event of internal conflicts erupting within the Bohemian Crown.

In the second half of the 14th century and at the outset of the 15th century the dukes of the Odra region formed their first unions (a hypothetical union in 1382, and a real one in 1387) and political associations (in 1402).¹⁰⁰ While exhibiting many differences, they all served to advance the common initiatives of dukes, including ones from outside the Piast dynasty with the exception of representatives of the lands of the monarchy – the governors of the Duchies of Świdnica-Jawor and Wrocław.¹⁰¹ The so-called *landfryd* of 1387, which may have been an extension of the former Union to the lands of Moravia, concerned not only the rulers of Silesia, but also the Margrave of Moravia and the Bishop of Olomouc.¹⁰² The imitation of past links between Silesian and Lusatian cities may indicate that the formation of both *landfryds* was an attempt at finding a broader platform for cooperation between the rulers dependent on the Bohemian king within the borders of the Bohemian Crown, whose territory was constantly shaken by political conflict. Although these activities were not necessarily an expression of the aspiration to strengthen

⁹⁹ See Idzi Panic, *Książę cieszyński Przemysław Noszak (ca. 1332/1336–1410). Biografia polityczna*, Cieszyn 1996.

¹⁰⁰ In the face of the lack of original documents confirming the formation of the coalition, scholars base their studies on the findings of Felix Rachfal, *Die Organization der Gesamtstaatsverwaltung Schlesiens vor dem dreissigjährigen Kriege*, Leipzig 1894 (= *Staats- und Socialwissenschaftliche [sic!] Forschungen*, ed. Gustav Schmoller, vol. 30, issue 1), p. 84, footnotes 1–2, partially adopted from the lost manuscript of H. Grotefend.

¹⁰¹ The coalition of 1389 comprised the Bishop of Wrocław, Dukes Louis of Brzeg, Henry of Lubin, Przemysław and Siemowit of Cieszyn, Conrad II of Oleśnica with his son Conrad III, Ruprecht of Legnica, Henry of Głogów and Henry of Koźuchów, Dukes Nicholas and Przemko of Opava (from a side line of the Přemyslid dynasty) and Ladislaus and Bolko of Opole, *ibidem*, p. 84, footnote 1.

¹⁰² See Veronika Slezáková, *Počátky a vývoj nejstarších moravských landfrydů z let 1387, 1396, 1405 a 1412*, ‘Časopis Matice Moravske’, 120 (2001), No. 2, pp. 315–336.

the region's uniformity, they doubtlessly gave rise to the conviction of the dukes that they shared a common cause. Of a much different character was a relationship initiated in 1402, perhaps by Wenceslaus, the Bishop of Wrocław and Duke of Legnica. His aim was to support King Wenceslaus of Luxembourg, whose position was being threatened by his brother, Sigismund. To this end Bishop Wenceslaus joined forces with the Dukes Rupert of Legnica, Przemko of Opava, Bolko, Bernard and Ofka of Opole, Henry of Lubin, John of Oświęcim, Louis of Brzeg and John of Głogów; in an act which went far beyond anything seen in the former *landfryds*, he also entered into partnerships with the governors (*starostas*) of Wrocław, Środa and Namysłów. Most importantly, the Bishop and the Dukes were collectively referred to as '*von denselben gnaden herren und in Slesien herczoge*'.¹⁰³ The engagement of all major political actors of the region in a common cause, in spite of them being potential competitors in a battle for dominance of Silesia, was an unprecedented phenomenon. The cooperation of royal governors of duchies, starostas and estates of dependent duchies was a sign of their appreciation of the Bohemian rule and proof of the development of a particular bond between them and that was their relationship with Bohemian Crown. It may be said that in political terms, dukes united by this relationship could be seen as – metaphorically speaking – standing in the middle ground between the level of state and of particular duchies. One important player remained on the outside – the royal governor of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor. His views on the political situation in Bohemia were considerably different from those represented by the remaining members of the Silesian elites. Even when faced with the ongoing process of a regional community taking shape within state structures, it was possible to choose not to be a part of it.¹⁰⁴ The response to the internal political shufflings in Bohemia was not a sufficient impulse for the permanent unification of the Odra region's political elites.

As it soon turned out, this impulse would come from the Hussites. The Czechs were increasingly turning against the German-speaking elites connected with the Roman Catholic Church, the royal court and the magnates. This in turn strengthened the sense of insecurity felt by affluent and influential Silesians. For these individuals, the ethnic aspect of the confederation could have been of considerable significance in their evaluation of potential threats from the south. It was not a coincidence that in 1421 the Bishop of Wrocław and dukes from the entire province of Silesia – not only its historical territory – joined forces with the dukes and states of the Reich in a coalition of dukes and knights '*dewtschir czunge*' against the Hussites.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, the inhabitants of the Odra region

¹⁰³ LUBS, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, King Wenceslaus was not as considerate as one could expect in this situation. When the battles ended, he instantly deprived the governor of his office on the grounds of him having neglected his duties by refusing to participate in the common initiative of the King's liegemen and officials. For more information on the confederations of cities and dukes between the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century see Kazimierz Orzechowski, *Ogólnośląskie zgromadzenia stanowe*, pp. 113–119.

¹⁰⁵ *Geschichtsquellen der Hussitenkriege*, ed. Colmar Grünhagen, Breslau 1871 (=Scriptores rerum Silesiacarum, vol. 6), No. 11, p. 8.

were less hasty in forming an alliance to fight the threat. Quite the contrary, during the first two years following the Defenestration of Prague, King Sigismund of Luxembourg was rather trying to apply traditional political mechanisms that had divided the inhabitants of the province. As soon as in November 1420 he sought support in fighting the rebels, but his plea was addressed only to the royal cities of Wrocław and Środa Śląska. In his letter he emphasized the necessity of fulfilling the obligation of faithfulness to the king, and principally to the Bohemian Crown, in the face of the Hussite atrocities inflicted upon Prague.¹⁰⁶ Shortly thereafter, in May of 1421, adhering to the division of his realm into duchies directly subordinate to the king and those based on feudal law, Sigismund gathered a military contingent commanded by the governor Albrecht von Colditz composed of divisions supplied by the Duchy of Wrocław, Świdnica-Jawor and Namysłów; he also called on all those concerned for the fate of Christendom to unify under the command of his paternal uncle, Duke Henry Rumpold of Głogów.¹⁰⁷ This traditional approach – one which encouraged divisions between the inhabitants of the province – to the issue of feudal obligations was completely alien to the Hussites. On 7th June 1421, the Parliament of Bohemia issued an official reprimand to all, without exception, ‘*illustres principes et barones, milites, clientes ceterique districtus Slesie civitatum communitates*’. All of them – in the eyes of the authors of the document – owed loyalty and faithfulness to the Bohemian Crown. The act of showing support for King Sigismund and the military atrocities inflicted by the Silesian contingent constituted breaches of feudal contract. The charter made clear reference to a single political elite of the entire ‘district of Silesia’, obliged in its entirety to show subservience to the abstractly-described Bohemian Crown.¹⁰⁸ In line with this approach, the elites of Silesia (in general), whose formation was encouraged by the political decisions taken by Bohemia, were presented as the subject of a political game. These elites were namely those from the entire territory of the Odra region, which is now regarded as Silesia. This interpretation of the political situation was met with strong protest by the other side of the conflict. The Congress of Zgorzelec, which took place on 24th June that very same year and saw the formation of an alliance between the dukes of the Holy Roman Empire against the Hussites, was attended by representatives of the Silesian dukes, cities (royal) and state – meaning the nobility of the royal duchies. Firstly, Louis of Brzeg and Bernard of Opole, who appeared at the congress, were presented as representatives of the entire community of Silesian dukes. Nonetheless, a clear mark of the dual nature of the province was that this did not contradict the fact that they were appearing on behalf of all the princes. Secondly, the distinction between the representatives of the royal portion of Silesia and the dukes was observed during the entire event.¹⁰⁹ Royal cities were bound to

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 2, pp. 1–2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, Nos 4–5, pp. 3–4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, No. 6, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, No. 8–9, pp. 4–5.

address a plea for the king to include them in the alliance.¹¹⁰ The distinct situation of duchies directly subordinate to the king was highlighted by the fact that, having been granted special privileges by the king they were simultaneously obliged to defend the kingdom against the Hussites.¹¹¹

In the end, the forces driving cooperation between members of the Silesian elite were stronger than the forces dividing them. Sigismund's failures in combat with the Hussites forced them to seek solutions other than those put forward by the king. The Zgorzelec alliance may have been of vital importance for the formation of the military alliance in Grodków (18th September 1421) by the Bishop of Wrocław, representatives of the Duchies of Wrocław and Świdnica and dukes from the northern and southern parts of the Odra region.¹¹² Almost all local rulers joined the initiative, save for those of the northern-most duchies of Głogów and Żagań, who were actually major players in Silesian politics. Independently of their formal and legal status (hereditary Piast dukes, Duke-Bishop, representatives of royal cities simultaneously serving as capitals of duchies directly dependent on the Bohemian king) all of them became partners. The growing closeness of their cooperation was induced by the rules of the union formed in 1427 in Strzelin, itself a continuation of the activity of the union from 1421. Among numerous detailed rules introduced on that occasion we find, most notably, that the union would continue its activity and protect its members in the event of interregnum. Another entry holds that all potential disputes between members of the union were to be resolved solely by the union court.¹¹³

This growing integration of the actors on the Silesian political scene is reflected in the content of an agreement from 1427 between all the dukes and representatives of royal duchies on one side, and representatives of Bohemian nobility supporting the king on the other. It marked the formation of an equal partnership between representatives of the whole of Silesia and of Bohemia. They did not, however, forget to emphasize the complex internal political structure of Silesia and the issue of the independence of the two groups of Silesian rulers. The former was accomplished by separating the bishop and dukes from the residents of hereditary duchies ('lantman und stete'). The latter was indicated by the representatives of the dukes – Bishop Conrad of Oleśnica and Duke Przemysław of Cieszyn, both representing the body of 'ffürsten [sic!] uss der Slessien'. In addition, the document contains a complementary remark on the organization of an annual presentation of military forces, which is supposed to be two separate presentations of two contingents. The first one was composed of troops led by 'die ffürsten nedewenig gesessin', that is Bishop Conrad and Duke Louis II of Brzeg. The other is made up of forces under the command of 'die fursten oberwenig gesessin', that is Duke Przemysław of

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, No. 13, p. 9.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, No. 12, p. 8, No. 14, p. 9.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, No. 17, pp. 10–11.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, No. 72, p. 52.

Cieszyn and Duke Bernard of Niemodlin, who used his family title of ‘Duke of Opole’.¹¹⁴ Although the confederation was rather short-lived, the perpetual threat to the entire Odra region fostered a growing sense of a shared fate among the politically active elites in the confederated realms. Taking collective action to protect the interests of the residents of the Odra region led to changes in the official titles of particular rulers. Princes from the south, who had formerly been designated as Silesian dukes only unofficially in the company of other rulers, were more frequently referred to using this title as the dukes of Silesia, such as ‘Bernhard dux Slesie heres Opolinensis’ in 1432, to give but one example.¹¹⁵

Based on the preferences of political elites, one may come to the conclusion that a conviction developed which said that cooperation within the community of the entire region of Silesia (not only within the borders of duchies) brought extensive benefits. However, on the other hand, one should not disregard the fact that the detachment of the political elites of the so-called old Silesia and Opole region remained a salient issue. In 1428, a separatist alliance with Hussites was formed by the Dukes of Opole, Racibórz, Cieszyn, Ziębice and Oława against the will of the remaining rulers of the province. In reaction to this subversive act, a deeply resentful Bishop Conrad wrote that there existed ‘the first group of Silesian dukes’ and ‘the second group of Silesian dukes’. His division mirrors the composition of the two previously-mentioned contingents presented during the military celebrations of the union of Strzelin. Although at that point the rulers differed in terms of their decisions, Bishop Conrad still saw them as part of a uniform, Silesian community.¹¹⁶ Political cooperation between Silesian elites in the period of the Hussite Wars would not have been possible if not for prior experiences in forming a confederation, which guaranteed the internal security of the duchies. However, at the same time the historical political divisions of Silesia were strengthened by the royal apparatus’ use of these experiences to manage the lands that were subservient to Bohemia. It was only the Hussite factor, which threatened the foundations of the entire political structure and the physical existence of the elites of the Odra region, and which could not be removed by the king through the use of traditional methods, that forced almost all the actors on the political scene to form a coalition. The eventual success of the initiative, although not free from major military defeats, had the potential to encourage the formation of other similar communities focused on achieving particular political objectives.

In this context, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the 15th century saw considerable growth in the number of confederations comprising both dukes and ducal states. This was coupled by significant growth in the frequency with which congresses of representatives of Silesian political elites were held (dukes, nobility and representatives of the cities). Between 1378 and 1469 the number of such assemblies that took place in the Odra region was 129, and as many as 117 of them occurred in 1419–69. In the 14th

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, No. 73, pp. 53–54.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, No. 161, pp. 111–112.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 93, p. 70.

century there were, however, no assemblies whose participants included both representatives of cities and dukes. It was not until the beginning of the 15th century that this situation changed. From 1419, these assemblies were supplemented by representatives of knights from the Crown-dependent duchies. Kazimierz Orzechowski demonstrated that at least 50 such assemblies took place in 1402–69, the majority of which gathered selected Silesian dukes.¹¹⁷ These assemblies, closely connected with confederations of the time, not only fostered but also proved the intentionality of the cooperation between representatives of provincial political elites, which was most frequently independent of – but not contrary to – the monarch’s will.

Nonetheless, these assemblies did not constitute an institutionalized form of cooperation between dukes and representatives of the remaining participants in provincial political life. They were organized intermittently, and their compositions reflected particular aims. At the same time, this type of activity was supplemented by political alliances between dukes, the nobility and cities. It is not always possible to clearly understand the range of notions used to designate the concept of ‘Silesia’. One good example is the petition submitted to the pope in 1459 by dukes and ‘Silesian’ states full of details on the genealogy of dukes and the dependence of their duchies on the Bohemian Crown. In this document, the term ‘Silesia’ refers to territories that were incorporated to the Bohemian Crown. However, the geographic scope of this term is designated by the city of Wrocław, Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor and the realms of Duke Henry of Głogów, Balthasar and John of Żagań, Conrad the White of Oleśnica and Frederick of Legnica. It is impossible to say definitively whether the authors used the name ‘Silesia’ in reference to the entire territory of the Bohemia-dependent Odra region or rather in reference to what we now call Lower Silesia. Based on the fact that these political players had strong connections with the entire Wrocław clergy, it is highly probable that in referring to Silesia the authors meant something more than a relatively small territory in the mid-Odra region. In another charter issued for the same purpose, Silesia is viewed as a province, a land of the Bohemian Crown – but even in this case it would be hard to determine its exact borders.¹¹⁸ What is certain is that the charter of 1459 (cited above) presents a highly controversial idea floated by Silesian dukes which was the outcome of the alleged relationship between Lestek and Julia, the daughter of Julius Caesar.¹¹⁹ Bringing up their alleged close genealogical bond with Rome was an idea which strongly appealed to the rulers who sought the pope’s support in their conflict with George of Poděbrady. For our study, this thread is significant in that it confirms the decisive and intentional step

¹¹⁷ K. Orzechowski, *Ogólnosląskie zgromadzenia stanowe*, pp. 127–130, 132–133.

¹¹⁸ *Politische Correspondenz Breslaus 1454-1483*, Breslau 1873 (=Scriptores Rerum Silesiacarum, vol. 8), No. 19, pp. 16–18, also *ibidem*, no. 20, p. 21, where Silesia is viewed as part of a heretic Bohemia devoted to the Church: ‘Slesiam saniozem regni [Bohemiae – P.W.] partem tam in principibus nobilibus civitatibus et plebe gloriosiozem’.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, No 19, p. 17, with the caveat that Silesia never renounced its Church.

towards the Silesian rulers being united by not only temporary political interests but also by broader ideological considerations.

The grass-roots initiative of dukes and hereditary duchies to unite all the participants in regional politics into one community gained the support of the king. In 1466, during the conflict between Wrocław and King George of Poděbrady, the chancellor of the latter prepared a document in which the king's supporters – Henry of Głogów, Conrad IX the Black and Conrad the White of Oleśnica, Nicholas I of Opole, Przemysł of Oświęcim and Frederick I of Legnica and Brzeg – pledged allegiance to the king as the dukes of Silesia, which they viewed as part of the Bohemian Crown: 'nobilissimus Slesie principatus incorporatus est'.¹²⁰ It must be mentioned that the idea of incorporating Silesia into the Bohemian Crown was actually imposed on the dukes by the king, but they did not oppose it. Eventually, on the initiative of King Matthias Corvinus in 1469, Wrocław saw the organization of the first joint assembly of Silesian states, traditionally viewed as the first Silesian *sejm*. Matthias Corvinus' objective was to centralize power over the province, and thereby enhance the sense of political community felt by its residents.¹²¹ He also promoted modifications to official language by consistently applying a description of the political realities indicated by the term 'Silesia' that defined the scope of his power as encompassing the entire territory of the Odra region. All political subjects, both the dukes and the ducal states subordinate to the king, were becoming part of the Silesian community.¹²² At the same time, with respect to tradition, Corvinus introduced the notion of the so-called 'both Silesias': the old one, called Lower Silesia and a new one named Upper Silesia.¹²³ He gave his consent to Upper Silesia for individual acceptance of him to become the sovereign of the province in 1479.¹²⁴

One attempt to create a common political space to bring all the participants in political life closer than ever before produced mixed results. On the one hand, confederations encouraged by the king advocated the formation of a group of rulers who would collectively call themselves 'the Dukes of Silesia'.¹²⁵ In 1479, the Bishop of Wrocław together with the Dukes of Legnica, Racibórz, Opole and Ujazd on paying homage to Mathias introduced themselves as the representatives of all 'Silesians', in contrast to the states of Hungary and Bohemia. Silesian elites were supposed to be partners of the king on equal terms with the states of his two 'crowns'.¹²⁶ Their stand referred to

¹²⁰ *Politische Correspondenz Breslaus im Zeitalter Georgs von Podiebrad*, ed. Hermann Markgraf, Breslau 1874 (=Scriptores Rerum Silesiacarum, vol. 9), no. 333, pp. 192 (the passage on the incorporation of Silesia), 195 (the list of dukes).

¹²¹ See H. Manikowska, *Świadomość regionalna*, p. 258.

¹²² LUBS, vol. 1, No. 16, p. 31, containing the list of dukes from the entire Odra region and 'Silesian' states accepting the agreement between Matthias and Ladislaus of 1479.

¹²³ In a document containing the conditions of the Peace of Olomouc (1479) concluded between Mathias Corvinus and Ladislaus Jagiellon, the Hungarian king is referred to as '*dux Slesie*', but his properties are referred to as 'in utraque Slesia', *ibidem*, No. 13, pp. 21–22.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, No. 18, pp. 32–33.

¹²⁵ LUBS, vol. 2, No. 80, p. 96.

¹²⁶ LUBS, vol. 1, No. 15, p. 30.

the historical claims of the Czech states of the Bohemian Crown against Silesians at the initial stage of the Hussite Wars. It proved the existence of the Silesian community – including the territories located above the upper Odra region – as a hierarchical group aware of its political independence from other major political actors in one kingdom (Hungary) or another (Bohemia). King Mathias also confirmed this in 1479 by presenting the Bishop of Wrocław, the dukes and the representatives of the Duchies of Wrocław and Świdnica-Jawor as both parts of and ‘supplements’ to ‘land und stete der ganczen Slesien’. The united body of Silesia was a political creation comparable to Lusatia. Its politically active members were responsible for making vital decisions on behalf of the entire community.¹²⁷

The reign of Mathias may be regarded as a breakthrough in the long-term formation of the community of Silesians and their means of expression. The common Parliament of Silesia organized on Mathias’ initiative was convened until the mid-16th century at least once a year, but usually much more often – on average 3.5 times a year.¹²⁸ At the same time, the states of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor persistently opposed the policy to unify the province, and even Mathias Corvinus himself seemed to accept their separatist attitude towards Silesia.¹²⁹ The confederation formed immediately following his death for maintaining peace in the province did not include all the political players and representatives of authorities. In April 1490, the Bishop of Wrocław, the Dukes of Oleśnica, Ziębice, Legnica, Racibórz, Cieszyn, Ujazd, ‘landen und steten der furstenthumer’ of Wrocław, Środa Śląska, Namysłów, Świdnica-Jawor, as well as Hans Haugwitz, the Lord of Syców and his brother Hynko, the Lord of Wąsosz presented a united political front. Out of this group only Bishop John, Dukes Conrad X the White of Oleśnica, Henry I the Older of Ziębice and Hans Haugwitz appeared in the charter in person, and only Conrad used the title of ‘herzog in der Slezien’.¹³⁰ As we see, the initiative was not participated in by every member of the region’s highest political class. What is more, its active members decided to reintroduce the division between the dukes of ‘proper Silesia’ and ‘the rest’ from the south of the region. This happened independently of all the political mechanisms and new forms introduced by the late King Mathias. When another confederation was formed a few months later between the states of Moravia and representatives of Silesia in order to secure a consensus election of the new king, it comprised the entire political community of Moravia but only selected Silesian duchies, who declared through emissaries their willingness to participate in the arrangement.

¹²⁷ In this case, the voluntary payment of a special tax to the king, who in exchange promised not to introduce any other taxes, and charge his subjects with respect to the privileges of bishops, dukes, duchies, country and states of Silesia, *ibidem*, No. 17, p. 32.

¹²⁸ K. Orzechowski, *Ogólnosląskie zgromadzenia stanowe*, pp. 154–163.

¹²⁹ In 1474, Stefan Zapolya was named ‘supremus capitaneus Slesienecnon in Sweydnicz Jawer et advocates Lusatie superioris etc.’, LUBS, vol. 2, no. 70, p. 72, which actually made the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor equal to Silesia in terms of status – a similar act was performed in the 1320s by the sons of Henry I (III) in reference to the lands of Głogów.

¹³⁰ LUBS, vol. 1, No. 20, pp. 33–34.

And, curiously enough, these duchies were not presented as representatives of the entire province of Silesia. On the contrary, it had been clearly stated that one side was composed of all the inhabitants ('alle inwoner') of the Margrave of Moravia, and the other of all the inhabitants of 'der genanter furstenthumer in der Slesie'.¹³¹ The existence of Silesia as a certain self-contained whole also including the south-eastern territories is an irrefutable fact, but the concept of political unity above all ducal divisions was still beyond reach.

This did not prevent the royal authorities from treating the inhabitants of the entire Odra region as a uniform political community, though at times divided into Lower and Upper Silesia.¹³² In 1498, on the occasion of paying homage to King Ladislaus dukes were titled 'von gotes gnaden herzeoge in Slezien', independently of the location of their realms within the borders of the province – and what was equally important – independently of their dynastic background.¹³³ This corresponded with the efforts of the royal authorities to centralize Silesia's political system,¹³⁴ although resistance to this could have influenced the adoption of changes at the local level. Later in the charter confirming the homage of 1498, alongside the aforementioned dukes, the pledge was also made by the Wrocław city councillors as the holders of the title of royal governors of the Duchy – but the group of delegates of provincial authorities did not include representatives of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor. The unique status of this duchy in respect of the remaining provincial lands was again accented. At the same time, although the office of the governor of Silesia introduced by Corvinus in 1474 was reintroduced by Ladislaus Jagiellon in 1498, from that time on it was only associated with the person of the current duke of Silesia.¹³⁵ This decision was ideologically consistent with the principles of the 14th-century privileges granted by the Luxembourg dynasty to the Duchies of Wrocław and Świdnica-Jawor, and allowed for the assumption of the office of governor of the duchy by nobles who originated from these duchies (*terrigena*). However, the 14th century privileges reflected the strength of the influence wielded by local elites, who pushed the aspect of 'regionality' within the borders of a particular duchy.¹³⁶ At the end of the 15th century the notion of region was to refer to the entire Silesia.

This was, however, rather a long-term target, for one of many problems on the way was reluctance towards common political activity on a provincial scale. One expression of this was the reluctance of the Duchies of Świdnica-Jawor and Opava to acknowledge the competences of the ducal court appointed by royal privilege in 1498 for the entire Silesia. This resistance was durable and effective, and it waned no sooner than in the modern era. Nonetheless, the very activity of the court, just like the activity of the Parliament of Silesia, laid the groundwork for cooperation between the Silesian rulers

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, No. 22, p. 36.

¹³² *Ibidem*, No. 24, p. 39.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, No. 27, p. 48.

¹³⁴ See the article by Marcin Pauk and Ewa Wólkiewicz earlier in this volume.

¹³⁵ LUBS, vol. 1, No. 28, p. 49.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, No. 9, p. 68.

and their collective influence – within a defined political framework – on the royal administration.¹³⁷ The existence of a Silesian-wide political community ceased to be part of the royal agenda, but became a permanent element of the Silesian public sphere.¹³⁸ This was so in spite of the fact that the interests of particular duchies remained dearer to those involved in politics than did the ‘Silesian interest’. At the close of the Middle Ages the regional dimension of the Silesian community’s political activity was still being pulled in opposite directions by the idea of Silesia as the legacy of Henry I the Bearded and St. Jadwiga (which was gradually losing strength), by the concept of Silesia as a community of the Bohemian king’s subjects populating the entire Odra region and, finally, by the sense of identity of the people of particular duchies – both feudal and hereditary.

The multidimensionality of the political activity of the dukes of the Odra region and other representatives of the medieval political elite prevents us from positing an evolutionary model of the formation of the region’s community in the context of top-down administrative forces (the King of Bohemia or the states of the Bohemian Crown) or of grass-roots initiatives by dukes and Silesian states. It seems, however, that it was the activity of the dukes from the Piast dynasty that was vital for the formation of the unique network of social relations responsible for the creation of – a fragile and contested – community of Silesia at the close of the 15th century. Firstly, it was their activity in the areas of ideology and practical authority that maintained social awareness of the functioning of the community of Silesia in spite of tendencies to emphasize the significance of particular duchies. It was also their activity that helped overcome the tendency to create confederations at the level of groups of duchies (mostly hereditary ones), and within the borders of urban communities. Finally, it was the collective activity of dukes during the Silesian assemblies and confederations that spurred the formation of a community linking two formerly separate groups of elites from the southern and mid-Odra regions. The results of studies done on the selection of appropriate partners for dynastic marriages of Piasts controlling both parts of the Odra region particularly draw our attention to the second half of the 14th century. It was in that time when Silesian Piasts were most keen to marry their closest, Silesian relatives. Both before as well as after that period the domination of external connections in the matrimonial policy of Odra-region Piasts is conspicuous (see Table 1). The strengthening of their cooperation in many areas beyond the borders of particular duchies observed between the second half of the 14th century and the mid-15th century did not mean that the strength of separatist social tendencies, including that of political elites or particular duchies, was disregarded. At the close

¹³⁷ It was not a coincidence that King Ladislaus had to justify in 1504 in front of the ducal court his breach of the rules of the great privilege of 1498, LUBS, vol. 1, No. 31, pp. 53–54.

¹³⁸ It is well illustrated by the privilege issued by King Ladislaus in November of 1498 for the entire Silesia at the request of Duke Casimir of Cieszyn and Sigismund Kurzbach, the owner of the town Żmigród, who represented ‘geistliche und wertliche fürsten, pralaten, herren, ritterschaft, mannschaft’, who in turn expressed the will ‘stetten und gemeine die inwonner unnser ober und nider Slesischen lanndt’, LUBS, vol. 1, No. 28, p. 49.

of the Middle Ages, the Silesian community which developed as a result of political activity may be described as a dynamic network that was extremely sensitive to external impacts. This network's coherence gained strength in favourable conditions, but its constituent groups rarely acted in line with the idea of a regional community comprising the entire upper and mid-Odra region. The so-called local factor was no less attractive than the sense of regional community.

Table 5. Marriages of the members of the Piast dynasty ruling the Odra region in 1201–1500

	1201–1250		1251–1300		1301–1350		1351–1400		1401–1450		1451–1500	
	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Boleslaus I the Tall	With Piast descendants of Mieszko I the Tall
Wrocław line			1	4		3						
Legnica line				4	1	2	2	3	1	2		1
Głogów line				3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0	2
Świdnica line				3	1	1	1	3				
Olesnica line						2		1	1			2
Opole line		2	1	7	4	6	2	3	12	2	1	3
Cieszyn line					1	5	3	1	3	2	1	5
												4
												9

From Kazimierz Jasiński, *Rodowód Piastów śląskich*, vol. 1–3, Wrocław 1973–1977.