

Integration and the economy. Silesia in the early modern period

Abstract:

Despite having distinct features due to economy, Silesia was no different, in context of events shaping conditions of development, from the neighbouring regions, especially the Bohemian Crown from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The particular interests of the Silesian economy since the 17th century were required, possibly enabled by the political distinctiveness of the region and the complex structure of the monarchy. Also relevant were strong external relations (transit, export and import) long maintained despite divisions, both political and at customs. Said „interests” could themselves be considered an additional factor integrating the region, (certainly, that became so in time) if not for their existence stemming from earlier political integration and specifically being an unexpected (since mercantile times intentional) result of the “external” factor, specifically state politics. Although lacking the influence it enjoyed in earlier times, Wrocław remained the primary beneficiary, as its economic interests were typically considered synonymous with interests of entire Silesia.

Keywords:

Silesia, 16th-18th centuries, economic policy, tax policy, tariff policy, communication

As has been repeatedly pointed out by Kazimierz Orzechowski, an eminent historian of law, since the close of the 15th century Silesia had been a separate political entity (as a result of being merged from ‘outside’) but it had not been a state¹. The following considerations result from the adoption of this thought, and are focused on the determinants of the Silesian economy arising from continuous confrontation between the needs of the state agent, which in this case acts as an external factor, with the interests of the forces binding the local community of dukes and Silesian estates². The text further presents a brief description of the leading sectors of the Silesian economy, and attempts to identify their regional specificities, as well as to discern some universal determinants located in the context of society and settlement.

¹ Recently: K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, pp. 103, 141. Other: N. Conrads, *Książęta*, p. 95, assuming, due the language of the original, the existence of the ‘the state of Silesia’ in the 1st half of the 18th century.

² For a broader context: J. Bahlcke, *Regionalismus*, pp. 446-457.

The state-enforced structures and operations distinguishing Silesia and bonding it as a separate economic area within the monarchy, or integrating it with the state organism; the dynamics of the situation

Under the rule of the Habsburgs, all parts of the region, regardless of their political status, had a common fiscal burden to the state. Since 1527, the monarch had imposed financial charges not on individual duchies, regardless of whether they were inherited or feudal, but on the whole of Silesia, thus emphasizing both its distinctiveness within the structure of the state and its internal integrity. The fiscal policy of the monarchy – pursued separately in each of its parts – continued to be directed at the region, whose residents were then united by a common level of benefits and institutions enforcing them. These comprised brand new (modern) solutions that could be compared only to the earlier attempts undertaken by Matthias Corvinus (1470–1490) to create a common fiscal and customs policy for the whole of Silesia. From that moment, the monarch entrusted every division, collection and transfer of basic taxes imposed on the region (a direct tax on assets and income, the so-called estimated tax) to the Diet of Silesia – the regional representative body of the estates. Thus, a local agent participated in the management of the fiscal policy (a consequence of the ‘grand privilege’ granted by Ladislaus Jagiellon in 1498, which, among others, made the introduction of taxes and customs conditional on the consent of the Silesians), which was integrated at the level of the region and forced to establish its own procedures and a permanent executive body (General Steuer-Amt in Wrocław, which held the keys to the ‘domestic treasury’ in the local town hall). However, no separate regional budget was created.

The estimation of wealth and the collection of taxes by institutions of the estates, which began in 1527 in the name of ‘aid’ to the monarch to repel the Turkish threat, was carried out smoothly, which indicates that there was a social acceptance of the procedure that the goal of the king was shared by the estates. The threat, however, continued and the estimated tax resolution had to be repeated a further ten times by the dukes and the estates, so that from 1556 the annual management and collection of ‘ordinary Turkish aid’ (also called an ‘estimation’ or ‘forecast’) began, and from 1570 it was supplemented by an ‘extraordinary resolution’, which meant an additional tax for the army compensating the tax collector for the decrease in value of the inflowing coin³. The system of state and internal duties referred to the ongoing sense of military threat. Regardless of the name and form of the duty,

³ See Kazimierz Orzechowski, *Podatek szacunkowy na tle systemu daninowego dawnego Śląska 1527-1740. Studium historycznoprawne*, Wrocław 1999.

a dramatic justification was always required to persuade the dukes and estates deliberating in the Diet of Silesia that they should implement it. Such was the case with the subsequent fixed indirect tax on barrels of beer (*Biergeld*), described as an ‘aid’ to settle debts (*Schuldenlasthilfe*), with *Scheffelgeld* – an internal duty, which was a conglomerate of the provision on sowing grain and overheads charged on selected food products, as well as any other indirect taxes (initially referred to as *Ungeld*). Since the debt of Silesian estates to the state was gradually increasing, particularly in the late 16th and the early 17th centuries when they increasingly failed to deal with outstanding payments of direct taxes, the monarch still received indirect ones. Especially important were those duties which aggravated large-scale trade throughout Silesia, i.e. ‘cattle duty’ (*Viehgeld*) and border duty, which could prove to be lucrative for the royal office of tax collector (of whom more will be said below), unless its very activity would not lead to the collapse of such hitherto prosperous trade. Fiscal pressure revealed again at the turn of the 16th century, when fees on selected local products (paper, leather) were dramatically increased and an excise duty, i.e. a tax on consumption, was introduced. The pressure strengthened once again during the Thirty Years’ War, as from 1631 the system of ‘extraordinary’ tax was gradually expanded, culminating in 1645 in 13 amazingly diversified duties, such as a tax on milling and excise duty on alcohol. After a long period of introducing a variety of taxes (which temporarily operated as expedient ones), in order to simplify the system in 1706 the monarch imposed a provision on the trade of all commodities – a universal excise tax. The introduction of this tax was performed in several stages: it was applied to the upper part of Silesia a year before it covered the whole region of Silesia⁴.

Only one indirect tax (the *Biergeld* of 1546) and the import duty which was in operation (of which there is a description below) were chosen by the office of royal tax governor – victum (*Viztum*), a position which had existed in Wrocław since 1554 and whose owner was appointed to manage royal privileges at the regional level, and was subordinate to the Bohemian Camera. Since 1558, the apparatus had been subject to a collective body – the royal Camera of Silesia in Wrocław. The latter, at the same time, did not constitute an independent institution, but was placed within the supraregional structure of the tax administration of the king through direct subordination to his court Camera of Vienna⁵. This condition was one of the few achievements of the Habsburgs’ unification policy, which in this case was based

⁴ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, pp. 145-150, 215-219.

⁵ Subjection to the Bohemian *camera* in customs issues lasted until 1572. Cf. Arthur Kern, *Der ‘neue Grenzzoll’ in Schlesien, seine Begründung und Entwicklung 1556-1624*, Berlin 1892, pp. 11, 39; K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, pp. 119, 124; N. Conrads, *Książęta*, pp. 92-93.

on integration at a regional level⁶. The intensification of efforts aimed at increasing the royal revenues arising from the enforcement of a royal privilege led to the appointment of specialized services at the regional level, such as services for the use of newly-created monopolies on sea salt (1562) and tobacco (1706), for the supervision and minting of coins (the Monetary Office) or for mining supervision (the Higher Master of Mining). The free development of their territorial competence – the case of the Higher Salt Officer, who had supervised saltworks in Silesia and Lusatia since 1572⁷ – indicates the pragmatic nature of the activities performed by the apparatus of the monarchy. Its structures, as can be seen through the example of the Camera, were not dependent on formal and political barriers that are idealistically treated here as a factor influencing the processes of the creation of public awareness.

What became a part of the fiscal policy of the monarchy implemented at a regional level after 1556 was the so-called border duty selected by the aforesaid state apparatus. External and transit trade were subject to uniform charges across the region which, since 1623 – as formulated in historiography – constituted a separate customs area within the Bohemian monarchy⁸. Uniform operating conditions enforced the sense of community among the merchants of Silesia. The unfavourable customs policy of the monarch gave rise to local agents first defining the economic interests of the region, and then fighting for their protection.

Activities related to the implementation of new tax charges repeated different countries of the monarchy unified the conditions for economic activity existing within the state, but at the same time – since they were adapted to local specificities and the existing legal situation – they maintained regional autonomy. This was especially true in cases where the new charges supplemented rather than replaced existing duties and city entrance tolls, as they constituted a further influence on local conditions for the functioning of economic life. For example, by gradually expanding the list of goods subject to export duties over the years 1546–1564, Bohemia became a separate customs territory whose specificity lied within the fact that import duties were replaced there with *Ungeld*, later called an excise duty, collected from foreign and domestic goods imported into the cities⁹. Moreover, in Silesia the export duties were established as the foundation of the system which was

⁶ See Gabriela Wąs, *Dzieje Śląska od 1526 do 1806 roku*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, ed. Marek Czapliński, Wrocław 2002 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No. 2364), pp. 120-121.

⁷ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, p. 127.

⁸ Józef Gierowski, *Struktura gospodarcza i społeczna miast. Przemysł i górnictwo. Handel*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, vol. 1, part 3: *Od końca XVI w. do r. 1763*, ed. Karol Maleczyński, Wrocław 1963, p. 229; Waław Korta, *Historia Śląska do 1763 roku*, introduction and prepared for printing by Marek Derwich, Warszawa 2003, p. 369.

⁹ A. Kern, *Der 'neue Grenzzoll'*, p. 14.

introduced in violation of the great privilege of 1498, that is only on the basis of the imperial mandate of the 1st of May 1556, issued in Wrocław on the 20th of September, 1557. Import duties were imposed only on a few commodities (gold, silver and silk), and attempts to expand their range (e.g. to wool) failed because of the resistance of Silesian residents (although here sale taxes constituted a supplement to duty; the list of items this applied to was constantly expanded)¹⁰. Border duty did not serve to protect local production, but at the same time it did not pose difficulties in importing raw materials from outside of the region. At its core, the border duty was a tax levied only to meet the needs of the royal treasury, but at the same time it undermined the competitiveness of the goods exported by Silesian cities. Since exports included not only domestic products, but also goods passing through it in transit, the border duty was harmful to the functioning of the great international trade routes running through Silesia, which were commonly considered to have been the true wealth of the land¹¹.

The unequivocally negative assessment of customs duty both by contemporaries and historians¹² should not obscure the fact that the monarch also issued orders which resulted from considerations not related to taxes, such as separate resolutions introducing export bans on saltpetre and gunpowder, firearms, gold, silver and horses (goods which were consequently smuggled out), not to mention the temporary prohibitions related to catastrophic crop failures affecting export of grain, flour and bread¹³. The consequences of the conscious economic policy of the officials of the Bohemian Camera to which the Silesian Camera was initially subjected are indicated in Danuta Molenda's research. To prevent a deficit of lead supplies, which were necessary for the Bohemian silver smelting industry, an export duty was imposed on lead mined in Upper Silesia, which thus lost its competitiveness in foreign markets, while maintaining the principle of individual exemption from the duty of the transport of lead from Poland, through Silesia, to Kutná Hora¹⁴.

Royal duty ordinance evoked criticism from the Wrocław city council, the dukes and the Silesian estates, which were thus forced to analyze the relationship between trade prosperity and public welfare. The legitimacy of the complaints was also examined by the royal tax authorities, (referring for example to the analysis of the cost-effectiveness of trade routes from Cracow to Leipzig and Nuremberg via

¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 44.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 15, 17, 19, 23, 25.

¹² J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 228; W. Korta, *Historia*, p. 369.

¹³ A. Kern, *Der 'neue Grenzzoll'*, pp. 16, 43, 47-48.

¹⁴ Danuta Molenda, *Polski ołów na rynkach Europy Środkowej w XIII–XVII wieku*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 70-71.

Poznań, bypassing Wrocław, performed in 1559 by the commissioners of the Silesian camera)¹⁵, which undoubtedly contributed to the deepening reflections on economic issues among political classes of Silesian contemporary society. Exaggerated claims were made declaring that the trade-based Wrocław economy had crashed – this was incorrect, though they shaped the assessments formulated by the historians hundreds of years later (which was already pointed out in different times by Heinrich Wendt, Józef Gierowski and Leszek Ziątkowski)¹⁶. They failed, however, to stimulate any change in the fiscal policy of the monarchy for a long time, as was witnessed in 1578 and 1600 when the border duty mandate was renewed. Especially in the latter case, the list of items subject to export duty was extended to include goods hitherto underestimated by imperial officials, including books and old and new clothes traded by the Jews, which was accompanied by the increasingly bold imposition of import duties on luxury goods, foreign cloth, furrier's goods and copper not derived from the imperial mines¹⁷. On the other hand, the tightening fiscal policy did not exclude the emergence of some elements aimed at protecting the local economy, weak though they were. More importantly, as emphasized over one hundred years ago by Arthur Kern in his dissertation, the mandate of 1600 expanded the concept of 'foreign countries' to which the export of goods from Silesia was liable to duty. Thus far the countries belonging to this category were considered to be those which did not fall under the direct authority of the German line of the Habsburgs, but from that moment they included all lands which were not part of the Bohemian Crown¹⁸.

The whole series of temporary royal ordinances at the turn of the 17th century, starting with the patent of 1599, was aimed at eliminating foreign merchants and middlemen from the export of goods to Silesia, mainly the export of madder, yarn, linen, wax and wool. This issue, similarly as in the case of the recognition of Hungary and Austria as 'foreign countries' despite their remaining under the authority of the same monarch, which was nagging for the merchants, was presented many times to the Diet of Silesia, which was thus perceived as the authority to speak on matters of regional economic interest. Finally, the new customs mandate of 1613 seemed to indicate that the fiscal policy of the monarchy was changing, partly due to the economic demands of the region having been taken into account. Duty rates

¹⁵ A. Kern, *Der 'neue Grenzzoll'*, p. 25.

¹⁶ J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 227; Leszek Ziątkowski, *Wrocław w czasach habsburskich (1520-1740)*, [in:] *Historia Wrocławia*, vol. 1: *Od pradziejów do końca czasów habsburskich*, eds Cezary Buśko, Mateusz Goliński, Michał Kaczmarek, Leszek Ziątkowski, Wrocław 2001, pp. 249-250.

¹⁷ A. Kern, *Der 'neue Grenzzoll'*, pp. 42, 46-47.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

of exports to Hungary, Austria and their ‘peripheral countries’ were reduced by half as compared to other countries, and goods which had been declared once when imported into Silesia were exempted from being declared again when exported. The political and fiscal actions of the monarchy, which were by no means motivated by an economic strategy, were fully revealed by another customs mandate of 1623. Silesians, humiliated after the defeat of the uprising of Bohemian estates which they had supported, were subject to the terms by order from the superior authority only. The duty rates were increased, the double declaration of goods passing through the province was restored and, most importantly, the concept of ‘foreign countries’ was also extended to all lands of the Bohemian Crown other than Silesia! Thus, the products exported to Bohemia, Moravia, and Lower and Upper Lusatia were liable to the same duty imposed on exports to other lands¹⁹. From that moment on, Silesia normatively became a separate economic organism within the borders of the atomized Bohemian state, which can be considered as crucial for the issue under discussion.

Of course, from a contemporary perspective, of more importance were specific errors in the tariff which made, for example, the export of raw materials – such as wool – more profitable than the export of highly processed products – such as cloth – and, above all, roads which bypassed Silesia became more attractive for the merchants from Rzeczpospolita, which must have been reflected in the income to the cameras. As a result, when the duty patent was revised in 1638, the pleas of the Silesian estates were taken into serious consideration and the double declaration on transit duties was cancelled (restrictions directed against foreign traders were avoided by them entrusting their merchandise in consignment to the residents of Wrocław)²⁰. Finally, neither these or other regulations concerning Silesia changed the problems that arose from the corresponding tariff barriers which fenced off the remaining lands of the Bohemian Crown and divided them into regions and even micro-regions of a similar economic character, especially concerning the developing textile production. This condition was further aggravated by a change of political affinity – the transition in 1635 to the reign of the Saxon Wettins, whose trade links with Silesian Lusatia had up to then been strong – which involved an open duty conflict with the Silesians and repressions for the exchange which were mutually disadvantageous. Acting in isolation had developed mechanisms of mutual competition even between the countries within one Crown, so that when the barriers slowly began to be lowered in the 18th century, it led to resistance among parties which

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 63, 66-68; *idem*, *Das Zollwesen Schlesiens von 1623–1740*, ‘Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte Schlesiens’, 44 (1910), p. 1; Cf. J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 229.

²⁰ A. Kern, *Das Zollwesen*, p. 2; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 229.

believed that their economy would be threatened with an overabundance of products from their neighbours (as was the case with the defence of the Bohemian cloth industry against stronger competition from Silesia)²¹.

The actions of the apparatus which executed royal privileges were aimed at monetary unification in the country, which would simultaneously facilitate its other tasks such as the elimination of local autonomy in the area of monetary policy. Defining the region's economic self-interests also contributed to the policy of monetary integration, and not so much to integration with the rest of the monarchy. The dukes, however, acted as decentralist agents, effectively protracting the state of monetary diversity, which was not controlled by the monarch before the 18th century.

The fact that since 1527 the Wrocław mint had been beating coins of all successive rulers of the Habsburg dynasty is primarily evidence of the consistency with which they enforced royal privileges over the area of their hereditary duchies, while the copying of Austrian patterns applied across the Bohemian monarchy confirmed practical benefits resulting from the unity of the state. The symbolism used after 1556 generally displayed imperial emblems (e.g. the double-headed eagle), whereas the legend – located only on large-denomination coins – contained the lengthy titles of the rulers, as the listing of all their crowns and the title of Archduke could serve as a means to manifest the primacy and universality of the Habsburg's power. The words *dux Silesiae* were engraved on the 'Silesian' coins even in the abbreviated version of all the titles, which, due to the obvious historical and legal context of the aforesaid title (still used by other heirs of the dukes of Silesia, the Dukes of Legnica-Brzeg), in the 16th and 17th centuries did not express the policies aimed at integration of the entire region. It appears that in this way we can interpret the symbol of a Silesian eagle accompanying the imperial emblems, inconsistent though it was, in a similar way to that of the S-initial (standing for Silesia) on small-denomination coins²².

At the same time, the old privileges held by the dukes and the city of Wrocław allowed them to continue minting their own coins whenever they decided it was viable or desirable for prestige or ideological reasons (hence religious threads in the legends and symbolism on the coins); however, a problem arose when not all of the interested parties were able to show a relevant document to the ruler (not every feudal act contained provisions on ducal minting rights). Subordination to the policy of unification with the royal currency system advised by the royal authority was, in

²¹ J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 230, 233–234.

²² The Silesian eagle even appears on the coins of Friedrich Wilhelm Hohenzollern, the Margrave of Brandenburg, as the Duke of Krosno in the second half of the 17th century.

practice, dependant on the habits and particular benefits of the issuer resulting from the adoption of a given rate of mintage. The Dukes of Cieszyn used Polish and Lithuanian stamp designs in their mintage (including the Upper Silesian eagle, which was identical to the eagle of the Polish Crown) and copied their monetary systems, while imitating the royal coins of Wrocław whenever it seemed to be convenient. The coins, which were on the verge of causing of political insubordination due to their originality, were fought over by the royal apparatus, who threatened to close the mints and withdraw the coins from circulation. The same was the case with the emissions of Frederick II, Duke of Legnica, which referred to the Polish patterns, or in the 17th century to some Duke coins of his successors, beaten in Złoty Stok (acquired in 1599) and Oława, which more or less deviated from the standard of state monetary system, which was to be followed by the order of the royal regulations. In the 17th century, the production of silver coins for circulation was joined by Wrocław bishops and the dukes of Ziębice–Oleśnica, although previously the mints in Nysa and Złoty Stok which they owned by them issued only gold ducats, based on the indigenous raw material extracted in the Sudetes. Monetary policy, or rather monetary practice, was, therefore, of a double nature: on the one hand it did not serve to help integrate the region as it maintained local autonomies, while on the other hand it contributed to the identification of the subjects of the Bohemian king with the family of the Habsburg countries, or even with the Reich, which was represented in the person of the king. The former character of the monetary system common to all of medieval Silesia disappeared in the 16th century with the spread of the thaler, followed by new German units of account (mainly guilders) unrelated to large-denomination coins, which were actually beaten. Both belonged to the system adopted in 1559 in the Reich and in both places a variety of money existed due to the minting of small-denomination coins according to its own, local rate, on an enormous scale.

The resistance of the dukes and the estates prevented the unification of the monetary systems of Silesia and the monarchy. Nonetheless, the Silesian estates, which at that point acted as a disintegrating agent within the state, became involved in efforts to achieve unification at the regional level and, moreover, in what was a logical step considering their main economic ties, they engaged in further projects to adapt the Silesian rate of mintage to the Polish one (and even to the Hungarian one). The crisis of a small-denomination coin, which, since the close of the 16th century, was increasingly a copper coin because of the depletion of silver, led to the saturation of the German market with coins so corrupt they were almost worthless (Kipper und Wipperzeit, 1619-1623). This crisis naturally affected Silesia – here

the coppers from the mint of the Dukes of Legnica appeared in Złoty Stok in 1619. In the unanimous opinion of historians, long-term monetary anarchy, chaos in the supply of coins of different rates and of various origin, the development of ducal mintage, and the debasement of money disrupted economic life. Monetary relations were thus a disintegrating factor for the region, or perhaps vice versa, they only reflected the strength of destabilizing elements in the form of the particular interests of mint owners, the inflow of foreign coins and the benefits derived by trade-related groups, and even forgery during the aforementioned monetary disaster from the beginning of the 17th century. Due to the logic behind the political events, in that unfavourable moment, at the threshold of the Thirty Years' War, the rebellious Silesian dukes and the Silesian estates were forced to collectively acquire from the monarch the role of the main issuer on the territory controlled by them, a task which can be interpreted as taking advantage of the circumstances to use money as a factor constituting the autonomy and integration of the region (which became a kind of quasi-state). In accordance with the resolutions of the diet of 1620, regional coins minted jointly from 1621 to 1623 in the mints in Wrocław, Oława, Oleśnica and Legnica wore a clearly comprehensible *moneta Silesiae* inscription and the sign of a Silesian eagle, although because of the aforementioned reasons they discredited the message which they contained – their actual value was many times lower than the nominal value. Certainly, as particular ducal coinage was maintained²³, including the mintage of the dukes participating in the aforementioned joint coin issues, and even taking into account the vigorous revival of city mintage in Lower Silesia which had long (i.e. after 1528) disappeared outside of Wrocław, any real monetary integration of the rebelled territory was in practice impossible²⁴.

Only the military pacification of Silesia created the conditions in which the victorious monarch was able to act as a repairing agent, albeit not entirely successfully, yet he undoubtedly acted as an integrating agent in the monetary area through royal privileges, which had been strictly enforced since that time. In 1623 (i.e. at the same time as the reform which began in the Reich concerning the exchange of money for new according to a false rate) the imperial mint in Wrocław was reopened, which confirmed its monopoly on beating the new circulation coin for Silesia – a coin which was no different from the existing royal coin in terms of its symbolism and inscriptions on the rims. That exclusiveness was due to the patent

²³ Not to mention the issues of the Bohemian 'winter king' Frederick in Oleśnica (1620-1621); we shall add here however the bestowing of the Duchy of Opole and Racibórz to Gabor Bethlen, the Prince of Transylvania, which automatically resulted in his own emissions (1622-1623).

²⁴ To illustrate the scale of the practice of mass production of small coins, a chronicle account of a 264-person staff of the Mint in Świdnica in 1622 is often quoted.

issued on the 14th of December 1623 which withdrew all the previously granted mintage privileges, and which was put into effect despite the protests of the dukes. Temporarily, the role of the former princely and city mints was undertaken by five additional royal mints operating in 1623-1626 (Głogów, Żagań, Nysa, Opole, Racibórz), which helped the mint in Wrocław to quickly distribute better coins in the region²⁵. This Lower Silesian episode of state coinage was repeated in 1634-1635, when the management of the imperial mint in Wrocław was overtaken by the association of Evangelical dukes and estates appointed in 1633, which included the city of Wrocław and the Dukes of Legnica-Brzeg and Oleśnica. The Silesian eagle was at that time accompanied by the explanatory inscription *moneta principum et Wratislavia statuum evangelicorum Silesiae*, which not only did not serve regional unity, but also perpetuated a sense of division according to new religious and political patterns.

Despite the return in 1637 to the status quo which existed prior to 1634, from the 1640s imperial centralization trends were disrupted by a gradual consent to the reopening of ducal mints (Cieszyn, Legnica, Brzeg, Złoty Stok, Wołów, Opole, Nysa, Oleśnica and Ziębice, the problem of which was partially resolved itself through the imminent deaths of the owners) and subsequently, at the turn of the 18th century, with the same monarch referring to the old mintage traditions in the duchies acquired or recovered by him (imperial coinage in Brzeg and Opole). For reasons of royal mintage monopoly, restrictions on the production of ducal coins were imposed to prevent the ideological and economic disintegration of the state, and in the case of the Duchy of Oleśnica after the Poděbrady family had come to an end, the surveillance of the camera was stretched to include the ducal mints in Oleśnica and Bierutów. The gradual phasing-out of minting coins, whether the non-monarchical one or the one located outside of Wrocław, came to an end in 1717. Only the bishop's duchy was excluded from this trend, but nonetheless in the 18th century bishops did not beat small-denomination coins, only large-denomination ones which were not used in everyday transactions and reached only a limited audience²⁶.

The breakthrough of mercantilism, which manifested in the application of a theory formulated in the second half of the 17th century concerning a top-down

²⁵ The inconsistency—resulting from the political situation—resulted in toleration of the production of coins by Generalissimo Albrecht Wallenstein Wenceslas, the Duke of Żagań carried out between 1629 and 1631. Similar political priorities led to overlooking the problem of the emissions of the coins of Charles Ferdinand Vasa, the Bishop of Wrocław (Polish Prince), the more that they were occasional and of commemorative character.

²⁶ On monetary policy see *Schlesiens Neuer Münzgeschichte*, [in:] *Codex Diplomaticus Silesiae*, vol. 19, ed. Ferdinand Friedensburg, Breslau 1899; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 242; Józef A. Szwa-
rzyk, *Pieniądz na ziemiach polskich X-XX w.*, 2nd edition, Wrocław 1990, pp. 114-123, 172-209.

policy to protect the economic interests of the enlightened absolutist state, resulted, from a regional perspective, in a picture as ambiguously complex as the contemporary economy. The quest for stronger ties between the province and the entire Bohemian state, and even with Austria, was at odds with a too-tentative elimination of internal trade barriers, which in turn was at odds with the concern to maintain the privileges for local producers, whose interests, in the final analysis, were not the same as those of the merchants. Nonetheless, the formulation of the customs policy, as well as additional integrating activities (the standardization of weights and measures in Silesia in accordance with the system in place in Wrocław) and the stimulation of the development of the industry (supporting manufactures) were achieved with the participation of local agents combined with the state agent embodied by the Silesian College of Commerce (*Merkantil* or *Kommerzkolleg*), a form of a joint regional authority which had existed in Wrocław since 1716²⁷. Defining Silesia's own economic interest in contrast to the aspirations of competition was to some extent facilitated by the mercantilist policy of the neighbouring absolutist monarchies, namely Saxony and Prussia, which was openly unfavourable for the merchants of Silesia. In a world where 'economic policy' became both the goal and an instrument of the state apparatus, the genuine commitment of imperial diplomatic efforts to maintain the best possible conditions for the commercial interests of Silesia and Bohemia in the neighbouring countries tied the regions and made them dependant on the operations of the central power authority, demonstrating the need for such an inward direction of integration.

The essence of mercantilist assumptions, and thus the core of creating favourable conditions for the development of domestic production, was a new customs mandate of the 24th of October 1718. It clearly differentiated the rates levied on local goods (which were lower) and foreign goods (which were higher), cancelled duty on raw materials imported for production (such as flax, hemp, wool, raw cloth and leather) and banned the export of unique raw materials (such as dyer's woodruff, potter's clay), which, depending on the circumstances, was expanded to other products (e.g. grain, horses). The policy of protective tariffs on imports, which affected the turnover of foreign goods, threatened transit trade, hence it sparked the strongest protests among the merchants of Wrocław. As a result, due to the actions of the

²⁷ Five of its members represented the state apparatus, four represented the interests of Wrocław, supported by honorary advisers taken from the landed gentry. Interestingly, this fact does not prevent historiography from applying the term 'trade policy of Silesia' to an earlier period, i.e. the 17th century, for example when discussing relations with Eastern Europe. Cf J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 236. For more see Siegfried Tschierschky, *Die Wirtschaftspolitik des Schlesischen Kommerzkollegs 1716-1740*, Gotha 1902.

College of Commerce, the years 1721-1722 witnessed partial revisions of the tariffs and the introduction of concessions for the merchants from Rzeczpospolita and from the east. Hoping to initiate the formation of larger, and therefore stronger economic regions, Viennese authorities in 1727-1728 undertook a project – which was abandoned after a short time – of integrating the lands of Austria and the Bohemian Crown into one customs area (the so-called uniformity), which, as was mentioned above, sparked successful local resistance resulting from the concern for the protection of local producers²⁸. It may have been potentially far more important for both integration and updating relations in the region to institute a policy of reducing and standardizing local customs, as was achieved in Wrocław in 1739. However, the mere elimination of hundreds of region-disintegrating tariffs and city entrance tolls, both private and ducal ones, remained beyond the reach of the state agent, considering the legal and proprietary legacy of the past centuries and the fact that the executive apparatus was slow and corrupt. For example, the appalling cases of military commanders arbitrarily imposing tariffs, which began during the Thirty Years' War, lasted until 1705. Similarly, illegal duties were introduced by local agents, from dukes to innkeepers²⁹. The recurring periods of crises which occurred once every decade (and even more frequently from the second quarter of the 18th century), including starvation periods which brought about a need to stabilize food prices – alongside an appropriate custom policy – led to the establishment of Provisions Offices located in the three Silesian fortresses (the location was not incidental, given their role in the event of war). Their activities were based on inventories of grain collected in the four state-owned stores assigned for the entire region in the abovementioned strongholds in Głogów, Brzeg and Namysłów, and in Opava³⁰.

Since the late Middle Ages, basic trans-regional transport routes led not through the peripheries but deep into the heart of Silesia, intersecting the region. Given the preponderance of large-scale transit through the region on its east–west line, the various connections along the central part of the longitudinally-shaped province must have held a dominant position. It may, therefore, be assumed that the same economic factors, combined with geographic elements, had, over the centuries, created the communication network which bonded the region, while, in addition, the central role played by Wrocław, clearly visible in the network's structure,

²⁸ A. Kern, *Das Zollwesen*, pp. 5-10; S. Tschierschky, *Die Wirtschaftspolitik*, pp. 92-107; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 230-231.

²⁹ A. Kern, *Das Zollwesen*, pp. 3, 14-17.

³⁰ Gustav Otruba, *Schlesien im System österreichischen Merkantilismus Die Auswirkungen des Verlustes Schlesiens auf die österreichische Wirtschaft*, [in:] *Kontinuität und Wandel. Schlesien zwischen Österreich und Preußen*, eds Peter Baumgart, Ulrich Schmilewski, Sigmaringen 1990, pp. 90-91, 106.

became the focal point of a large number of routes used both for the transport of export and transit goods³¹. However, for a long time this did not mean that the roads and permanent river crossings were assumed to be of strategic importance, or that this network was analyzed from the perspective of collective needs. No meaningful road investments were undertaken by the rulers, and, excluding issues of safety on the public high roads, which unified the cities and the nobles, taking care of their condition was left to the local agents who drew profits from customs and tolls. The choice of route by the merchants depended on the legal and customs conditions imposed on them and on the aforementioned security situation, and not on the length of the route or its quality, which was linked to the relative technical primitivism of the means of transport. In this context, there seems to be absolutely no relationship between the state of the roads network and the fact of establishing institutional postal services in Wrocław starting from the 16th century (for the use of trade service) and finally launching in 1625 a permanent state-owned service of post riders between Wrocław and Vienna. The network of postal connections, including imperial ones and those belonging to the neighbouring monarchies, had been rapidly expanding since the 18th century, and, running inwards (via Wrocław), as well as directly between the cities, it consolidated the territory to some extent³². But how strong was the impact of the acceleration of the flow of information (including the benefits following the actions performed by the bureaucratic apparatus subordinated to the centres of state power), and the ties established between individuals, companies and institutions through regular exchange of correspondence on the integration processes within the region? This issue requires more thorough investigation, not only through analysis of the network of postal connections, but also through a statistical survey of senders/recipients of correspondence prepared using a dynamic approach (how the share of individual groups designated by their location in an area changed over time). This research, however, need not focus on subjects whose activity specifically determined the geographical location of their contacts (such as export companies and owners of landed property complexes). The postal system, a new information exchange channel, facilitated the operation of a previously unknown medium, newspapers³³. An analysis of the content of such news reports is not the subject of our discussion here, but again, the choice of

³¹ Cf. *ibidem*, draft on p. 93.

³² Eduard Kutsche, *Postgeschichte von Schlesien bis zum Jahre 1766*, Breslau 1936, pp. 8-208, 319-320; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 249; N. Conrads, *Książęta*, p. 169.

³³ Cf. Wolfgang Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur. Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2003, pp. 412-436.

contemporary information could have resulted from their sources and not only from readers' expectations³⁴.

Another, more holistic, perspective on the network of roads, crossings and the river (as both a transport route and a road barrier) was taken by military commanders who ably manoeuvred troops across Silesia during the Thirty Years' War. They were interested, however, in an area of military operations reaching beyond the political boundaries of the region, otherwise ruthlessly exploited, but they did not develop logistics services to maintain the communication infrastructure (they were replaced instead by a system of ransoms and contributions provided by civilians)³⁵. The authorities, following the foresight of the military, expressed an interest in infrastructure but not before the beginning of the 18th century, along with attempts to further develop a programme which began after the Thirty Years' War concerning the maintenance (by Silesians themselves) of three modern fortresses with imperial garrisons (Brzeg, Namysłów, Głogów)³⁶. Provisional considerations, especially new opportunities to improve the speed and scale of military responses in times of peace and in the first days of war provided now by the existence of a permanent army, were the catalyst of road investments, in particular on the strategic routes connecting Bohemia with Silesia³⁷. In the face of threats stemming mostly from the area of unstable Rzeczpospolita, the critical marching routes of the potential enemy leading to the Odra crossings and to the capital of the region were supposed to be blocked by fortresses, guarded by the state, and by the state army arriving from other parts of the monarchy. (A sign that a military system worthy of the modern state was not obvious for all, and that the old, non-integrating structures did not disappear, was the functioning of the city fortress of Wrocław and its *ius praesidii* – the privilege of having its own force, which remained unchanged over centuries). Since 1727, the routes of the troops were to be established by the Superior Office (*Oberamt*) representing the monarch in agreement with the Silesian state body – General Tax Office (*General Steuer-Amt*). Although the office of the Higher Office of War, a specialized body

³⁴ Cf Willy Klawitter, *Die Zeitungen und Zeitschriften Schlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1870 bzw. bis zur Gegenwart*, Breslau 1930, pp. 11, 23 (on the significance of the earliest press titles); Lucyna Harc, *Z problematyki badawczej gazet pisanych ręcznie*, [in:] *Monastycyzm. Słowiańszczyzna i państwo polskie. Warsztat badawczy historyka*, ed. Kazimierz Bobowski, Wrocław 1994, pp. 196, 200.

³⁵ See Jerzy Maroń, *Wojna trzydziestoletnia na Śląsku. Aspekty militarne*, Wrocław–Racibórz 2008, pp. 85–87, 96–99, 141–171.

³⁶ In 1652, the Diet of Silesia created a 'fortification tax' for the national fortresses. Willy Klawitter, *Geschichte der schlesischen Festungen in vorpreußischer Zeit*, Breslau 1941, pp. 35–145; Werner Bein, *Schlesien und die habsburgische Politik. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung des Dualismus im Alten Reich*, Sigmaringen 1994, (=Quellen und Darstellungen zur Schlesischen Geschichte, vol. 26), pp. 138–139.

³⁷ J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 247.

within the Superior Office supervising military affairs, had existed since 1640, it did not create its own field apparatus. From a logistics standpoint, total reliance was placed on the estates and their institutions, which were slowly being subordinated in this regard. This was clearly visible at the level of districts, where the beginning of the local administration appointed by the estates of those lands from the second half of the 17th century comprised, incidentally, marching commissioners. Such a system of cooperation being replaced by subordination – clearly reflecting the transformation of the estates into a society – was confirmed by the new marching and stage ordinance of 1735³⁸.

Repeated attempts to encourage navigation on the Odra river and transform it into a trade route with the west of equal importance to the land routes, in light of success of the Habsburgs in the integration of the region with the simultaneous loss of control over its historical north-western borderlands (the Duchy of Krosno ruled by the Hohenzollerns, to which the river led), were already less significant in domestic politics than they had been in the 14th century, for instance. In other words, efforts concentrated on a more intense use of the natural axis formed by the river which the land stretched along may not have resulted from an ideological desire to bond the region, but were primarily the result of economic calculations³⁹. The river transport of bulk cargo (copper, salt, wheat) was at the time several times cheaper than wheel transport, especially considering the disastrous conditions of the roads. The growing dependence of several sectors of the economy of Silesia on the trade with the west, which specifically took place through Hamburg, meant that the development of the leading route in 1668 could not be ignored – following the opening of a channel connecting the Odra river with the Elbe through the Spree, it was possible to travel from Wrocław to Hamburg by water, without transshipping goods onto carts in Magdeburg. Although the implementation of a probable vision in which perpendicular road connections ran to and from the ports located along the entire river (almost like veins of an oak leaf, which symbolizes the land of Silesia with its river system)⁴⁰ would revolutionize communication relations and, as a result, would make the functioning of the economy of the region dependent on the situation on the river, it would have meant pursuing a pipe dream, not least because

³⁸ Kazimierz Orzechowski, *Ustrojowe zmiany na Śląsku po wprowadzeniu w monarchii Habsburgów rządów absolutnych*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, vol.1, part 3: *Od końca XVI w. do r. 1763*, ed. Karol Malecziński, pp. 466, 468; *idem*, *Historia ustroju*, pp. 202-203, 220.

³⁹ In spite of the observations expressed from different perspectives. Cf for example Jan Harasimowicz, *Odra jako oś transferu kulturowego w średniowieczu i czasach nowożytnych* [in:] *Odra – Oder. Panorama europejskiej rzeki*, eds Karl Schlögel, Beata Halicka, Skórczyn 2008, pp. 125-132 (p. 130 on the motif of the Odra river in the Silesian culture).

⁴⁰ N. Conrads, *Książęta*, p. 218.

of the seasonality of navigation through the irregular channel in the climatic conditions of the 'Little Ice Age'. It was also made impossible by the difficulties arising from external political and legal conditions (in its lower reaches the river flowed through territories which were part of other political bodies pursuing different objectives, and cities situated at the river banks which had the staple right)⁴¹, and above all, by the impact of other environmental factors enhanced by human activities. The progressive deforestation of Silesia, especially in mountainous regions, resulted in an increased erosion of the soil which flowed down the rivers and thus slimed the already-shallow Odra, resulting in recurring severe floods from the 16th century⁴².

In such conditions of limited navigability, people seldom decided to use the river to transport goods along its whole length – periodic connections using only a few sections was more a more commonly chosen strategy. Wood was practically the only one, albeit very important, material that was often transported by water all the way from the place of production to the point of sale. Thus the Odra lost the chance to become a potential bonding agent for the Silesian economy. Interventions at the regional level aimed at improving navigability since Luxembourgian times had been confined to strenuous attempts to reconcile navigation with the presence of artificial barriers on the rivers, such as mills, dams and bridges. Regulations, changes to the course of the river and the construction of embankments were activities performed at the local level – projects of a broader range were not implemented, although in the 18th century the Superior Office definitely had concerns for the whole subordinate territory, as can be seen by its admonishing the authorities of various duchies in matters of proper maintenance of the river. Political changes that took place in Silesia after 1740 impeded attempts at regulating the Odra, the development of which had been pointed as necessary in 1739 by the merchants and public administration in connection with the plans to improve navigation from

⁴¹ See Uwe Müller, *Miejsce Odry w środkowoeuropejskiej sieci transportowej a pruska polityka budowy dróg wodnych w okresie industrializacji*, [in:] *Odra*, pp. 150-151, highlighting lack of interest in the Odra river in the economic policy of Brandenburg and Pomerania. This was the case regardless of the diplomatic success of Silesians or in the interest of Silesians in 1646, 1667 and 1727, in attempts to solve difficulties in Frankfurt upon Oder, Szczecin and Krosno. See J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 232, 246-247; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, pp. 90-91; Kazimiera Chojnacka, *Handel na Warcie i Odrze w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, prepared for print by Bogdan Wachowiak, Poznań 2007, pp. 23-108, 148-195.

⁴² Julian Janczak, *Człowiek i przyroda. Przegląd zmian w środowisku geograficznym Śląska w ostatnim tysiącleciu*, Wrocław 1985, p. 72; U. Müller, *Miejsce*, p. 149, among the adverse hydrographic conditions of the Odra ranked large fluctuations of the water level, the formation of shoals and the long-term presence of ice, cf K. Chojnacka, *Handel*, pp. 111-122.

Wrocław to Hamburg⁴³. This was especially the case given that river transport of light and valuable textiles, the main export commodity of Silesia, was not an economic necessity but merely one option among others available and economically acceptable means of transportation⁴⁴.

Distinctive resources and dominant economic factors of the region⁴⁵: the production of grain, fish, beer, textile and clothing, leather, metal, metallurgy and transit trade

According to the model of spatial and functional division of the European economy introduced by Marian Małowist, Silesia was placed within the Sudeten–Carpathian zone of strong economic growth, a territorial unit whose common feature was the exploitation of underground natural resources of prime importance for the European economy (gold, silver, lead, copper, tin, and iron)⁴⁶. In the case of Silesia, however, despite all the intensity of mining searches conducted there, and despite a wide range of raw materials exploited, due to the specific conditions of their occurrence, most of the ore resources extracted at that time using very primitive means did not provide enough quantities of excavated material to ensure long-term continuity and profitability of production. Apart from gold (Głuchołazy, Złate Hory, Złoty Stok) and periodically lead (Bytom, Tarnowskie Góry), such production did not have any tangible significance on a supra-regional scale, as it was unable to significantly stimulate the development of production based on non-ferrous metals, and it even failed to satisfy local demand for them. In the first half of the 16th century almost half of local gold mining was controlled by the Fuggers of Augsburg and the Turzos of Cracow, but the access to capital and technology provided by them did not save Silesian mining from the collapse in the 1560s,

⁴³ Cf *Die schlesische Oderschiffahrt in vorpreussischer Zeit. Urkunden und Aktenstücke*, [in:] *Codex diplomaticus Silesiae*, vol. 17, ed. Konrad Wutke, Breslau 1896, pp. 305–318; S. Tschierschky, *Die Wirtschaftspolitik*, pp. 86–89; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 247; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, p. 96.

⁴⁴ U. Müller, *Miejsce*, p. 151.

⁴⁵ In connection with the study by Grzegorz Myśliwski, *Czy Śląsk stanowił region ekonomiczny w XIII–XV w.? Czynniki spajające i dezintegrujące terytorium regionalne pod względem ekonomicznym*, ‘Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka’, 67 (2012), No. 4, pp. 79–102; *idem*, *Did Silesia constitute an economic region between the 13th and the 15th century? A survey of region-integrating and region-disintegrating economic factors*, [in:] *The Long Formation*, pp. 93–128, <http://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=49790&from=publication>, concerning an earlier period.

⁴⁶ Marian Małowist, *Wschód a Zachód Europy w XIII–XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych*, Warszawa 1973; Cf Tadeusz Dziekoński, *Metalurgia miedzi, ołowiu i srebra w Europie Środkowej od XV do końca XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1963; See also Mateusz Goliński, *Ludzie, przyroda i gospodarka na Dolnym Śląsku (1526–1618)*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński, Wrocław 2006, pp. 207–225.

which sealed the withdrawal of the aforesaid central European business magnates. In Złoty Stok, mining was brought out of a long-term crisis only by the exploration of arsenic ores at the close of the 17th century. Lead extraction in Tarnowskie Góry reached its peak in the first half of the 16th century, about a quarter century following the beginning of exploitation of local deposits, after which it suffered a sharp decline, so that since the 1570s it played a secondary role on the central European market, and was gradually decreasing. The general cause of ore mining coming to a standstill after the mid-16th century was the exhaustion of the richest parts of the deposit and reaching a depth from which it was impossible or uneconomical to drain groundwater in those days. The deadlock could not have been overcome as capital was taken out from mining in the 17th century, and what remained were only small-scale operations such as the recycling of old slag, or the processing of less-processed raw materials imported from Poland. On the other hand, as the 18th century witnessed the growing concern of land owners to increase the viability of large landed properties, the introduction of small-scale mining and metallurgical operations by this group became increasingly common. A wide-ranging (at least in its theoretical assumptions) mining revitalization programme was initiated as part of the mercantilist policy by the state agent, which therefore appointed a mining director in Silesia (1711) and the Camera commissioned the prospecting of ores in the 1720s⁴⁷.

In contrast to non-ferrous metallurgy, the collapse observed since the late 16th century did not concern iron and steel manufacturing, although it is difficult to assign outstanding development trends to it (we do not consider the period of collapse during the Thirty Years' War, as this was derived from the demographic, settlement and economic crisis that gripped the whole of Silesia). There were no economic factors conducive for progress in metallurgy: primitive techniques prevailed (bloomeries), which were especially characteristic of the lowland centres based on the exploitation of the ores of bog iron. Large-furnace technology, apart from sporadic earlier cases, was adopted only from the 18th century. What was characteristic for iron metallurgy was therefore its dispersion, its presence in almost the entire region, with major concentrations in the Sudetes (the lands of Opava, the south of

⁴⁷ Erich Fink, *Die Bergwerksunternehmungen der Fugger in Schlesien*, 'Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens', 28 (1894), pp. 294-340; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 221-222; Tadeusz Dziekoński, *Wydobywanie i metalurgia kruszców na Dolnym Śląsku od XIII do połowy XX wieku*, Wrocław 1972; Danuta Molenda, *Kopalnie rud ołowiu na terenie złóż śląsko-krakowskich w XVI-XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1972, p. 280; *eadem*, *Polski ołów*, pp. 14-15; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, pp. 88-89; Eufrozyna Piątek, Zygfryd Piątek, *Górnictwo rud metali w Górach Sowich*, ed. Stanisław Januszewski, Wrocław 2000; W. Korta, *Historia*, p. 368; Herbert Schmidt, *Der Silberbergbau in der Grafschaft Glatz und im Fürstentum Münsterberg-Oels – von mittelalterlichen Anfängen bis zum Niedergang*, Marburg 2003.

the Episcopal duchy of Otmuchów-Nysa, the district of Jelenia Góra with Kamienna Góra and Kowary, where metal crafts developed) and in the vast forests on the border of Silesia and Lusatia (with selling centres and forges in Żagań and Bolesławiec). Not disregarding the importance of exports of metallurgic products, especially steel, historians used to emphasize that they were primarily regarded as a manufacturing base for Silesian craft, both in the forges located directly next to ironworks which generally provided tools for agriculture, as well as more diverse and specialized craft (e.g. locksmithing) practised in the cities. Therefore, only the products of metal craft were exported from the region on a large scale. Among the entire spectrum of Silesian economic sectors based on their own mining (including carbon and rock mining) and metallurgy, only iron metallurgy could be included in a group of the leading factors that determined the nature of lasting economic links with the outside world. Glassworking was another prominent area of Sudetian production, which also included production located on the Silesian side of the border with Kingdom of Bohemia. Although local products had for a long time been of rather low quality, this changed with the implementation of technology for the production of a sophisticated type of glass known as Bohemian crystal, which influenced the development of glassmaking artisanship from the second half of the 17th century. At that time, large landowners also invested in the glass industry⁴⁸.

The textile industry – wool weaving and linen weaving – is considered to be the most important area of Silesian non-agricultural manufacturing. The biggest centres of wool weaving in the early modern period were Lwówek, Żagań, Żary, Koźuchów, Zielona Góra, Głogów, Ścinawa and Góra. In contrast to a more balanced development of this industry in the Middle Ages, we can clearly observe its shift to the cities of the western and north-western parts of the region. It is considered that the linen weaving centres which developed in the villages and cities of Sudeten Foothills (Pogórze Sudeckie) became the districts of Jawor and Gryfów, and since the second quarter of the 17th century, also of Jelenia Góra. In the southern part of Lower Silesia, the movement of the production centres from the city to the countryside took place in the 16th century, much earlier than in the case of its neighbours and competitors, in northern Bohemia and Lusatia. A third avenue in the development of weaving was the production of mixed fabrics, especially cotton-linen

⁴⁸ Hans Grabig, *Die mittelalterliche Eisenhüttenindustrie der Niederschlesisch–Lausitzer Heide und ihre Wasserhämmer*, Breslau 1937; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 223-226; Marian Haisig, *Rzemiosła kowalsko–ślusarskie na Śląsku do połowy XVIII wieku*, Wrocław 1962; Anna Chrzanowska, Wojciech Gluziński, Zbigniew Kwaśny, Wojciech Trznadel, *Z dziejów szklarstwa na Dolnym Śląsku*, Wrocław 1974; Anna Chrzanowska, *Artystyczne szkła śląskie XVII i XVIII w.*, Warszawa 1987; Eufrozyna Piątek, *Historia dolnośląskiego górnictwa węgla kamiennego od XV do połowy XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1989; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, p. 89; W. Korta, *Historia*, p. 369.

fustian, and since the 17th century, the wool-linen *mazelan*. The centres in which those fabrics were produced were located in the districts of Kamienna Góra and Dzierżoniów and in Wrocław. The capital of local and Upper German merchants competed and mingled with each other in the organization of exports. The agents of the latter concluded collective contracts with the guilds of small towns in Silesia, Bohemia, Saxony and Lusatia, buying such an important part of production that it led to local crafts being dependent on them. A strong branch of Silesian manufacturing was the paper industry, which was closely linked to the availability of raw material in the form of rags and waste in the production of linen. As early the second quarter of the 16th century Silesian printers used only local paper, which was also exported to many destinations, including first and foremost the Polish market, to which exports lasted the longest.

The main destinations for the export of Silesian wool fabric since the Middle Ages had been the lands of Rzeczpospolita – from where the raw material was imported, especially from Greater Poland – as well as Hungary and more distant regions of Eastern Europe. Exports were made on a mass scale. The production was based on the manufacture of low-cost, common materials that customers regarded as inferior to average-quality cloth from Meissen, Lusatia, Moravia and Bohemia. It is believed that the Silesian specialty was lighter wool fabrics, not intended for felt, which supplemented the availability of local cloth on the Polish market. Hence the productive capacity in the number of weavers and their looms usually went beyond the local power of providing finishing touches (fulleries, dyeing houses, cropping houses). In the 16th century the commodity imported from Silesia was referred to in Poland as both ‘simple cloth’ and ‘Silesian cloth’; the latter name was also in use in the 17th century. When more specific names were necessary, the terms in use included dozens of regional varieties, coined from the names of the settlements. Up to the 16th century the name which dominated among them was ‘Wrocław cloth’. It is believed that the parallel naming system referred to the types of fabrics mimicking English and Dutch patterns. In contrast to the exports of woollen cloth, exports of linen weave were destined for many locations. Simultaneously, raw material, i.e. flax, was imported from Greater Poland. A niche on the Polish market, was a range of medium-quality Silesian linen fabrics which were a bit more expensive than local offerings. Appropriate development prospects for the sales of linen fabrics of cheap and average quality, lay, however, not in the neighbouring territories of Rzeczpospolita, but across the whole of Europe and beyond. The influx of Silesian products onto German markets assumed a mass character from the second half of the 16th century. Further stages of the distribution would fall primarily in the

ports of Germany, England, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. These destinations were primarily chosen for the export of veils and coutil. As far as non-European trade is concerned, Silesian fabric, or cloth of Silesian origin, was further traded in the west and was also exported to the Middle East, Africa and America. Wool-linen *mazelan* began to play an important role in exports to Poland from the third decade of the 17th century, at the expense of cloth. From the 17th century, growing cotton imports had resulted in the export production of fabrics made with it, but due to the disruption to the importation of raw material the names of the fabrics partly made of cotton (fustian) could have hidden imitations. However, one consequence of the development of specialized manufacturing craft was the dependence on the supply of various components which were indispensable in the technological process, yet not available locally, which contributed to the strengthening of complex inter-regional cooperation. Less significant was the export production of finished textiles. Tablecloths, napkins, towels, aprons, dresses, hats, caps and knitted goods such as stockings and socks were transported to Poland and Hungary. The advantage of the economic situation was especially favourable for Wrocław, where the capacity of craft guild increased⁴⁹.

The level of agriculture in Silesia was considered to be considerably varied, due to diverse natural conditions (soil, altitude) and social conditions (relations of ownership, traditions). This basic branch of the contemporary economy was therefore difficult to include among the integrating factors within the vast region. Earlier local achievements included the use of alternating farming on the seasonally-drained ponds, and the development of garden (cabbage, turnips, peas, radishes) and industrial (dyer's madder, flax, hemp, canola) crops on smaller peasant areas which bordered bigger cities. Grain production in Silesia was often too small to satisfy the needs of the region (it was necessary to supplement it with the import from Poland and Moravia) and not large enough to enable occasional export. Brewing had a major share in the consumption of barley and wheat, and their products were widely consumed in urban and suburban districts. What was specific for Silesia was the existence of brands of beer that were well-known outside of the region and were mass-exported to other cities and even abroad, which contributed to the maintenance of exceptionally high levels of production in several centres (Wrocław, Świdnica, Strzegom, Lwówek). Silesian beer in the modern period, however, usually did not

⁴⁹ Władysław Rusiński, *Tkactwo lniane na Śląsku do roku 1850*, Poznań 1949; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, pp. 203-213, 218-221; Kazimiera Maleczyńska, *Dzieje starego papiernictwa śląskiego*, Wrocław 1961; Marian Małowist, *Śląskie tekstylia w Zachodniej Afryce w XVI i XVII wieku*, 'Przegląd Historyczny', (55) 1964, No. 1, pp. 98-99; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, pp. 86-87, 95; W. Korta, *Historia*, pp. 364-365, 367-368.

travel far from the borders of the region (as opposed to the product of Świdnica in the Middle Ages), and the scale of exports remained highly variable, depending on the specific situation in the areas of production and sales (e.g. yields and grain prices). The amount of commercial brewery production was also reduced as a result of the monarch increasing the tax on it. The second half of the 16th century saw the peak of the development of the Silesian fish and pond economy, whose presence alone perpetuated special features of the contemporary landscape of the lowland parts of the region. In view of the demand for wool, the rearing of sheep was of considerable importance, and it was the most intense in the central, right-bank area of Silesia. However, native livestock production did not satisfy consumption demands, so wool, skins and live animals were imported. One of the main routes of driving cattle exported (but also smuggled) in bulk from the lands of Rzeczpospolita to the west passed through Silesia, satisfying the local needs at the same time. From the second half of the 16th century, local markets had become a stage for the international trade of oxen (Brzeg, Świdnica, Wrocław)⁵⁰.

Wrocław had remained the largest centre of metal production since the Middle Ages; the number of workshops located there was unmatched in the region, although one exception worth mentioning in this business was the small town of Kowary, where in 1618 there were 68 knife makers masters alone. Such large numbers of metalworkers was a unique feature of Silesia. In the large metropolis of Cracow, with its wide range of metallurgical services from Lesser Poland, at the close of the 16th century the metal branch was nearly three times smaller than in Wrocław. The share of metallurgy in the total craft services in Wrocław of 13 per cent went beyond the typical proportions of larger cities, which were usually characterized by a variety of manufacturing operations and services. The accumulation of certain areas of manufacturing, typical for Wrocław, which manifested in the supply of products in amounts exceeding the needs of the internal market, was encouraged by the way the city functioned as a commercial emporium – it served as a central point of distribution for goods entering and leaving the region (not just those of the metal industry). Such large-city production was also combined with the

⁵⁰ Fritz Wiggert, *Das Brauwesen der Stadt Breslau*, Berlin 1930; Walter Bunke, *Das Brauwesen der Stadt Schweidnitz*, Breslau 1935; Stefan Ingot, *Wieś i rolnictwo*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, vol.1, part. 3: *Od końca XVI w. do r. 1763*, ed. Karol Maleczyński, pp. 28-140; *idem*, *Okres folwarczno-pańszczyźniany (1527-1763)*, [in:] *idem*, *Historia chłopów śląskich*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 106-169; Friedrich-Wilhelm Henning, *Die Produktion und der Handel von Färberröte (Krapp) in Schlesien im 16. und im beginnenden 17. Jahrhundert*, 'Scripta Mercaturae', 10 (1976), No. 2, pp. 25-51; Aleksander Nyrek, *Kultura użytkowania gruntów uprawnych, lasów i wód na Śląsku od XV do XX wieku*, Wrocław 1992; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, pp. 90-91.

production of complex and labour-intensive products, mechanics and artistic crafts⁵¹. The export of finished goods, as well as prefabricated steel, headed mainly for Rzeczpospolita. It was dominated by the mass craft products from Kowary, Wrocław and Świdnica: scythes, sickles and knives, which meant items aimed at countryside dwellers. Silesia usually produced about three-quarters of the scythes which passed through Polish customs chambers on routes leading from the region in the 16th century.

Confusion over trade statistics on the basis of data from the customs chambers is caused by the combination of long distance and border trade. Directions of cross-border trade exchange sometimes did not coincide with the regularities listed in the overall scale. While scythes were generally exported from Silesia to Poland, due to border traffic it sometimes occurred that they were transported from Poland. We can even talk about the impact of local exchange centres located on the other side of the border at less economically developed areas of the borderlands. Such impact had for example Częstochowa (town located in Rzeczpospolita) market on neighbouring areas of Upper Silesia, but Częstochowa links with the Silesian market reached Namysłów and Brzeg in the case of driving cattle. A similar situation might be expected to have taken place, therefore, at other cities in the neighbouring countries⁵².

Since the Middle Ages, furs and skins had been exported in bulk from Eastern Europe to the west and south of the continent, which was to an important extent carried out by the merchants of Wrocław, and some goods were processed in Silesia before being further transported, which was advantageous primarily for the furriers from Wrocław. Leather and fur purchased in Poland by the merchants from Wrocław and Nysa, as well as further afield from places such as Brzeg, Świdnica and Głogów, were transported from Silesia to further trade points in Germany and Bohemia. At the same time, Silesian craftsmen purchased goods in Rzeczpospolita. The furrier and leather industry had for a long time been a good example of a massive drain of resource from less economically developed areas of Eastern Europe, where Silesia played the role of a re-exporter. The change in the structure of Polish exports – since the 17th century, its share of leather and saddler exports grew – hit the Silesian craftsmen, just as the increasing role of the Leipzig markets deprived Wrocław of its previous role of the main distribution centre of goods from Eastern Europe⁵³.

⁵¹ M. Haisig, *Rzemiosła*, pp. 26–45.

⁵² Henryk Samsonowicz, *Handel na pograniczu polsko-śląskim w świetle danych komory celnej w Częstochowie z 1584 r.*, 'Kwartalnik Historyczny', 99 (1992), No. 4, p. 3-16.

⁵³ Fritz Wiggert, *Entstehung und Entwicklung des Altschlesischen Kürschnerhandwerks. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kürschnerzünfte zu Breslau und Neumarkt*, Breslau 1926; Roman Rybarski, *Handel i polityka handlowa Polski w XVI stuleciu*, vol. 1: *Rozwój handlu i polityki handlowej*, Warszawa 1958 (reprint from 1928); Marian Wolański, *Związki handlowe Śląska z Rzeczpospolitą w XVII wieku ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Wrocławia*, Wrocław 1961; *idem*, *Statystyka handlu*

Intensification of rural settlements and stagnation in the urbanization process as a determinant of the economic nature of the region

Awareness of the limitations and inaccuracies inherent in early modern directories created for the purpose of defence and tax has not stopped researchers over the last two centuries from trying to use them as a basis for the estimates of the population of Silesia. Therefore, according to the still-most-frequently cited calculations made 60 years ago by Władysław Dziewulski, in 1577 Silesia was supposed to be inhabited by approximately 1.25 million people, of which 20.5 percent of people lived in the cities, however, they were very unevenly settled, because as much as about 930,000 people were supposed to have lived in Lower Silesia. In 1619, there were already 1.56 million people (including hypothetically about 1.08 million in Lower Silesia), which is evidence of a considerable population growth. The poles of settlement comprised the most densely populated region of sub-Sudetes (Podsudecie) on one side, and the lands on the right bank of the Odra and in Upper Silesia on the other side, where the average population density was two to four times smaller than in the south-western part of the region. After the demographic crash from the period of the Thirty Years' War, in 1648 the population was supposed to have dropped to 1.04 million, which would mean a shocking loss of a third of the population (520,000 people)! However, in 1663 there was supposed to be 1.25 million people in the region, so again a rapid growth was recorded. According to other, much more modest estimates, in 1618 Silesia was inhabited by just one million people, and in 1670 by 834,000, so the loss resulting from the war would be estimated at about 200,000 lives. However, all researchers agree that the aforementioned loss was compensated only in the first half of the 18th century, which is usually confirmed by the data concerning individual settlements. According to the calculation estimates from the 18th century, in 1736 the population of Silesia reached 1.209 million people, and according to Dziewulski, in 1742 it was 1.775 million people, demonstrating a continuously high pace of growth. Apart from Sudeten Foreland and Upper Silesia, the cities did not keep pace with the growth in population with the (overcrowded) villages, so the share of the urban population had fallen to a low percentage, and only one centre – a 40,000-strong Wrocław at the beginning of the 18th century – could be considered as large in the context of Central Europe at the time⁵⁴.

Śląska z Rzeczpospolitą w XVII wieku. Tablice i materiały statystyczne, Wrocław 1963; J. Gierowski, *Struktura*, p. 225-277; G. Otruba, *Schlesien*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ Cf Władysław Dziewulski, *Zaludnienie Śląska w końcu XVI i na początku XVII w.*, 'Przegląd Zachodni', 1952, additional volume, pp. 419-492 (edited also in: *Studia śląskie*, Poznań 1953, pp. 419-492); Karol Maleczyński, *Krajobraz, klasyczny elementarne, osadnictwo, stosunki etniczne i narodowościowe*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, vol.1, part 3, pp. 11-14; N. Conrads, *Książęta*, pp. 130-133,

Apart from periods of reconstruction after great demographic and economic crises (in the fifteenth century and during the Thirty Years' War), when more or less deserted villages were re-settled and the abandoned fields were plowed again, the largest development opportunities for modern settlements were looked for outside the previously populated areas, in areas which had earlier been wastelands. In the case of the Sudetes, this meant moving the settlement boundary higher. Unfavourable ownership relations (scarce farming areas of the newly settled farms, including those arising in older settlements, where common parts were divided into smaller plots) and difficult natural conditions – the topography, soil type and climate (including a shorter growing season of plants) – led to the evolution of old and the creation of new villages which became of agricultural-craft character. Mountainous regions were settled in spite of the climatic conditions – a cooling period had been ongoing since the 16th century, accompanied by an increased frequency of cold and snowy winters. People using small and stunted, inefficient plots of land were forced to (or were able to afford it due to having free time) take additional work other than agriculture. Thus, the settlement was developing in symbiosis with pre-industrial activities on the foothills lands, including smelting metals and glass, weaving linen and the exploitation of forests. The consequence of exploration, extraction and processing of ores and other mineral resources in the 16th century were mining settlements in the Sudetes which resembled (small) towns. Glassmaking, in turn, more than other branches of contemporary metallurgy spatially associated with the forest, led to the deforestation of the highland valleys, where forest resources had hitherto been regarded as unprofitable to exploit due to their excessive distance from the settlements. Forest clearing, along with firing charcoal and ash (to yield potash) offered new opportunities for unskilled employment outside agriculture. As a result, there was disproportionately high employment associated with the manufacture of glass, which in turn led to the creation of new settlements on the clearings.

Alongside the colonization campaign vigorously carried out in the mountains, the range of settlements in the remaining numerous lowland forest complexes which remained on the borderlands and in the eastern part of the region was also widened. One obstacle to these settlements was mainly the deficit of generally more efficient soil – because areas with better soil had long since been occupied – and instead there was simply too much sand or swampy areas. Hence the connection of the colonists with non-agricultural activities such as metallurgy and forest

206; Joachim Bahleke et al., *Śląsk i Ślązacy*, translated by Michał Misiorny, Zofia Rybicka, Warszawa 2001, pp. 68; W. Korta, *Historia*, p. 363.

‘industries’ was inevitable, and from the first half of the 17th century this activity included glassmaking. The small metallurgical settlements in the forests were not able to last long, moving as they did along with the cyclic exploitation of the ores of bog iron and the nearest forest resources. As a result, these settlements caused deforestation and the devastation of strips of land along the rivers to a greater extent than broader changes in the settlement landscape, although some of such settlements lasted longer in one, specific location⁵⁵.

The availability of potash (potassium carbonate) used in dyeing – obtained from ash as mentioned above – along with the availability of current and clear water and sunny meadows used as bleaching fields, was conducive to promoting technology for making linen through rural weaving. Since the mid-16th century, linen weaving was becoming more and more fundamental source of income for the peasant population, and in the 18th century it even became the only economic justification for the existence of a series of tiny abodes in the mountainous regions, which were the last to be built. When there were no problems with selling wares, peasant craft was profitable for the land owners, both ones who took part in the organization of production in their goods, and those drawing additional revenue through the feudal provisions of peasants. On the other hand, opportunities for the burghers were created by participation of local trade centres in the distribution of flax and yarn and in the purchase of fabrics.

The strongest characteristics of the Silesian economy by no means constituted a distinct developmental path when set against analogous developments taking place on adjacent lands, especially within the Bohemian Crown in the 16th-18th centuries. The particular interests of the Silesian economy emphasized since the 17th century were either forced or allowed, above all by the considerations raised at the beginning of this discussion – the political autonomy of the region and the complex structure of the monarchy. Also of significance were the extremely strong external links (transit, export and import), which were maintained for a long time in spite of political and customs divisions. The very definition of the aforementioned ‘interests’ could be considered to be an additional integrating factor for the region (and it definitely became one), if not for the fact that their existence was the result of previous integration on a political level, which more precisely comprised an unexpected (and, from the time of mercantilism, purposeful) consequence of the impact of the ‘external’ state agent. Although deprived of its old political influence, Wrocław remained the biggest beneficiary of the new relations, and its economic interests were usually identified with the interests of Silesia as a whole.

⁵⁵ See Walter Kuhn, *Schlesische Siedlungsbewegungen in der Neuzeit*, Breslau 1938.

