

Social structures and social groups in the processes of integration and disintegration of Silesia as a region (1526–1619)

Abstract:

The distinct Silesian social structure, especially its unique ruling group of dukes, territorial rulers as well as heterogeneous groups of higher Silesian nobility, incompatible with the ruling lords of the Bohemian and Moravian lands constituted estate asymmetry when compared to the other lands of the Bohemian Crown. It became a factor detrimental to the formation of social relations at a level higher than regional. Other reasons for the growth of Silesian regionalism in the social context were political by nature, in the 16th and beginnings of the 17th centuries and were the consequences of the centralising policies of the Habsburg monarchy. These were realised in the approval for the Bohemian political agenda, in granting the highest legal and social status in the monarchy and choosing only its members for offices in the central institutions of the monarchy. This marginalised the socio-political importance of Silesian upper classes and their confinement within the region. The Silesian dukes' countered this socio-political alienation in the Bohemian Crown by extending their prestige through marrying abroad, with the houses of the Holy Roman Empire. That became an additional factor disruptive to the social structure of the monarchy. Although groups of higher Silesian nobility had the potential for tendencies for integration, opposition from the Bohemian nobles meant that their approach until the year 1619 was a combination of pro-monarchic and pro-regional approach, while simultaneously including the tendency to individually include themselves in the group of the Bohemian-Moravian rulers. For the population of the Silesian land, including the lower gentry and the townsfolk, who were only in a small extent affected by the common legal solutions, the state division was merely a framework within which heterogeneous communities with individual social and legal rules still functioned.

Keywords:

Silesia, social history, social structure

The most notable feature of the social structure of Silesia in the period between 1526 and the Thirty Years' War – as in the previous period – was the fact that the dukes sat upon the top of the pyramid. Having the ducal right, confirmed by paying homage to the King of Bohemia, consolidated their status as territorial rulers who were only feudally dependent on the king-suzerain. In the modern period, however, this status became increasingly archaic because it rested on the assumption that the

mechanisms of state power would not only be decentralized but also fragmented and spread among a variable number of dukes in Silesia.

Throughout the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th centuries their rights were, in practice, subject to significant limitations as a result of the political and administrative system formation processes occurring in early modern Silesia which induced institutional and legal restrictions on the policy of the king, who, in principle, tried to restrict the political status of Silesian dukes.

However, until the end of the Silesian ducal families whose lineage dated before 1526, the dukes descending from these dynasties formally retained the status of rulers into the 17th century; indeed, this was their own understanding of their socio-political position. These characteristics of the socio-political position of the Silesian dukes were the cause of a strong asymmetry between the elite classes of individual Bohemian lands and determined the differences in social stratification, thus contributing to the disharmony of social divisions from the perspective of the whole Kingdom of Bohemia.

The dukes of Silesia in the 16th century were not uniform with respect to their dynasties. The most prominent were the Piasts and the Poděbrady family, who in modern times prided themselves on originating from ducal dynasties with royal traditions and much of their prestige was contained in their public image as dukes 'by birth' and the 'innate lords' of Silesia¹. The status of a Silesian duke was also enjoyed by George, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach from the House of Hohenzollern, Duke of Krnov since 1523, as well as by the Duke of Saxony, a vassal of the King of Bohemia from the Duchy of Žagaň and by the Elector of Brandenburg from the Duchy of Krosno. Although the latter two paid homage, they did not participate in the Silesian estate institutions, and so in practice they did not belong to the social structures of Silesia. From the king's perspective, this did not produce a qualitative change. The king still had to co-rule with the dukes by birth, and did not govern the people who owed their social position to him.

Therefore, for the ruler the Silesian dukes constituted a highly autonomous social group, not only due to the realm of the dukes which was determined through legal provisions, but also because of the monarch's limited possibilities to initiate changes within this group. The title of a Silesian duke was inherited by birth, which also concerned dukes of other, non-Silesian, origin, but it was not possible to enter this class by means of promotion. Despite minor deviations from this principle in practice, it was still regarded as binding. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that a significant factor which acted as a region-forming agent was the high degree of

¹ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, p. 96.

autonomy from the interference from the central power as regards the composition of the social group which had the highest social status and the most profound political significance.

In the last decade before the Thirty Years' War, two circumstances appeared which could have significantly influenced the extent to which the Silesian dukes were bound by the policy of the monarch. The first one was instigated by political aspirations of the Silesian dukes themselves, who, despite the fact that they shared similar legal grounds and dynastic traditions, were in fact a heterogeneous group in terms of prestige and social importance. When in 1609 the kings agreed not to appoint the bishops of Wrocław to the position of the governor of Silesia, but to appoint only secular dukes to this office, Duke Adam Wenceslaus of Cieszyn, despite his personal participation in the efforts to issue the Letter of Majesty², converted to Catholicism,³ expecting in return royal support in his quest for promotion within Silesia. In 1617 he became the governor of Silesia, while the dukes who enjoyed greater prestige in Silesia had been ignored. However, this appointment transpired to be of limited consequence, as the Duke of Cieszyn died in the year of his promotion to the office of the governor of Silesia.

Another possibility of introducing changes in the status of Silesian dukes, which had considerable consequences in the following period, began with the transition of the Duchy of Opava, which was given by the king to Karl I, Duke of Liechtenstein, in 1614. The difference lay in the fact that he was a magnate that was elevated to the position of a duke by an act of grace of Archduke Matthias in 1608, making him, therefore, a titular duke. Similarly to the Silesian dukes, he paid homage to the king, but he received the duchy as a kind of property and not as a form of ducal power⁴. This method paved the way for the gradual replacement of the existing dukes-rulers with titular dukes, which was characteristic of the royal policy in the following period. However, it strengthened the resolve of the existing dukes to maintain the autonomy of Silesia, since the attempts at enabling the central power of the monarchy to penetrate into it were inextricably connected with processes which reduced the socio-political status of the Silesian dukes.

These events did not shape in any negative way the individual attitudes of particular dukes towards the king. Some of the dukes of the 16th and early 17th centuries, such as George II of Brzeg, Joachim Frederick of Legnica-Brzeg, Duke

² T. Winkelbauer, *Österreichische Geschichte*, vol. 2, p. 66.

³ Joachim Köhler, *Das Ringen um die tridentische Erneuerung im Bistum Breslau*, Köln 1971, p. 275; Norbert Conrads, *Die Rekatholisierungspolitik in Teschen und die Ambitionen des letzten Herzogs von Teschen*, [in:] *idem, Schlesien in der Frühmoderne*, pp. 21-38.

⁴ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, p. 188.

Charles I of Ziębice-Oleśnica, Wenceslaus III Adam and the aforementioned Adam Wenceslaus – the Duke of Cieszyn – were perceived as loyal to the House of Habsburgs, regardless of the fact that their religious status differed to that of the monarch. The ranks of the Silesian dukes who had a positive attitude towards the royal power should also include dukes-bishops for whom the support of the king was crucial for maintaining both the Catholic Church in Silesia and their socio-political position. At the same time, however, this social group in Silesia also included active political opponents of the king. The creation of an anti-Habsburg coalition in the years 1526–1528 was pursued by Frederick II of Legnica-Brzeg-Wołów, who, together with Albert von Hohenzollern, Duke of Prussia, constructed plans to put forward the Polish King Sigismund I the Old as a counter-candidate to the Bohemian throne⁵. A similar political option was represented by his son, Frederick III, and then by one of his successors, Henry XI. In the years leading to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, this anti-Habsburg political stance, underpinned by conversion to Calvinism, was adopted by George Rudolf, Duke of Legnica, John Christian, Duke of Brzeg and John George of Hohenzollern, Duke of Krnov, who were determined to topple the Habsburgs from the throne after joining the Bohemian Uprising in 1619. By the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, the activities of this group of dukes and the authorities of the city of Wrocław revealed in the clearest possible terms the idea of political regionalism in Silesia, because of which Silesia was perceived as a separate country within the monarchy with its own political system, religion and culture. Therefore, although it cannot generally be concluded that Silesian dukes in the 16th and early 17th centuries were characterized by having an anti-royal attitude, the dukes as a group of regional rulers facing political confrontation can be classified as an anti-central, or, at minimum, a politically unpredictable force.

At the same time, two examples are illustrative of how some Silesian dukes actively functioned in the environment of royal power. It is noteworthy that during the reign of Rudolf⁶, who had been the only monarch before the Thirty Years' War to have widely opened his court to allow a greater influx of people from all territories under the Habsburg sovereignty, the Silesian dukes showed readiness for greater assimilation with the royal power, including in cultural and political terms, and

⁵ Christel Krämer, *Beziehungen zwischen Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach und Friedrich II von Liegnitz. Ein Fürstenbriefwechsel 1514-1547*, Köln 1977, pp. 102-130.

⁶ Robert John Weston Evans, *Rudolf II: Ohnmacht und Einsamkeit*, Graz 1980, pp. 83-112; Václav Bůžek, *Konfessionelle Pluralität in der kaiserlichen Leibkammer zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] *Konfessionelle Pluralität als Herausforderung. Koexistenz und Konflikt in Spätmittelalter und Frühen Neuzeit. Winfried Eberhard zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Göttingen 2006, pp. 381-395.

for gaining additional prestige from being in close proximity to it. In 1581, George II of Brzeg and Charles II of Oleśnica, both Lutherans, took part in celebrations connected with the Habsburgs' arch-Catholic Order of the Golden Fleece, and also attended the Mass at St Vitus Cathedral in Prague⁷. Nevertheless, Rudolf's policy of an open court had remained unique up to the Thirty Years' War.

The functioning of the courts of other monarchs in the 16th and early 17th centuries was not conducive to the emergence of more direct contact with the Silesian dukes and they were very rarely engaged to perform important political missions not of a Silesian flavour, which contributed to reducing the scope of their activity in political events which went beyond mere Silesian interests. An important cause of the deepening alienation of the Silesian dukes in the Bohemian monarchy in the 16th century was the fact that the royal power abandoned attempts to include them as a social group in the affairs of the kingdom and grant them a place in the system of power, or at least in exercising its commands, which increasingly excluded them from the social ruling elites at the central level. The severity of this observation stems from the fact that this situation concerned not only the dukes, but can also be applied to the majority of socio-political groups of Silesian elite in that period. This observation is, therefore, true for the whole of Silesia. The career paths of distinguished Silesians in diplomatic or military service to the Habsburgs were not uncommon at that time, but they always concerned single cases and relied on the personal merits of prominent individuals, and not on their affiliation to groups which were the source of systemic recruitment to the apparatus of power.

An important determinant strengthening the distinctiveness of the ducal group in the social frame of the monarchy, and at the same time the distinctiveness of the structure of Silesian communities, was the existence of the estate of lords in Bohemia and Moravia, which formed the highest social layer⁸. In the modern period, the resulting estate inequality, combined with religious differences between the Lutheran Silesian dukes and the mostly Catholic or Utraquist Bohemian lords, to some extent explain why marriages between representatives of these groups were so rare. However, these factors should rather be viewed as of secondary significance, and their importance only began to increase over the course of the 16th century, in conjunction with political obstacles which appear to be of major importance.

At the end of the previous period, at the initiative of John of Pernstein, several socially and politically important relationships between the families of lords

⁷ Piotr Oszczanowski, *Silesians at the Court of the Emperor Rudolf II*, 'Studia Rudolphina', 2 (2004), pp. 3-16.

⁸ Petr Maťa, *Svět české aristokracie (1500–1700)*, Praha 2004, p. 53.

and dukes developed in Silesia, such as the family unions between the Pernsteins and the dynasty of the Piast Dukes of Cieszyn and the Poděbrady dynasty of Ziębice-Oleśnica. Throughout the 16th century, connections between Bohemian and Silesian families of comparable rank occurred only in exceptional cases, such as when Duke Charles II of Ziębice-Oleśnica married Katharina of the Moravian noble family of Berek von Duba in 1583⁹. This proves the readiness of Silesian dukes to enter into marital relationships with powerful families of the Bohemian-Moravian lords despite religious and language differences. Moreover, it is also a sign of social processes of mergers between families from the Bohemian lands which, slow as they were, are possible to see in the period before 1526. These processes were, however, hampered in the period which followed.

Indirectly, the inhibition of social integration processes was influenced by the political programme of the new Bohemian monarchs, the Habsburgs, who, unlike the Jagiellonian dynasty, did not intend to continue the political tradition of the Bohemian Crown as a state of dualistic government, that is the co-regency of the estates and the king¹⁰. In this situation, any actions of inter-regional social integration, which included the integration of the families from various Bohemian lands and the strengthening of their political position against the king, were contrary to the royal objectives.

In practice, the relationship between the elites of the Bohemian countries was largely influenced by the policy of royal centralism in the 16th century, the implementation of which included, among others, efforts to expand the competence of the offices and central institutions of the kingdom. This policy stimulated an increased interest in the positions and taking offices among the Bohemian nobility, which led to a substantial increase in the sense of political importance among the Bohemian estates as a main part of the monarchy¹¹. They aspired to be exclusively appointed to all central positions and offices. These political ambitions were expressed in the desire to constitute a new estate structure of the monarchy which would document the inferiority of social structures of the feudal countries of the Crown in relation to the Bohemian ones. These political ambitions were strikingly expressed before the end of the first half of the 16th century, both as open actions and as political opinions, one of the objectives of which was to reduce the social rank of the Silesian dukes.

⁹ J. Bahlcke, *Regionalismus*, p. 219.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹¹ Alfred Kohler, *Ferdinand I 1503-1564*, München 2003, p. 158.

In the 1530s the Bohemian lords were exposed to opinions which perceived the Silesian dukes as being only equal, at best, to the Bohemian families of lords. These opinions referred to their shared equality of origin, stating that the two most prominent families of the Silesian dukes, the Piasts of Legnica-Brzeg and the Poděbrady family of Ziębice-Oleśnica, descended from the Bohemian Kuna of Kunstadt family of lords.

The event which revealed the essential objectives of the Bohemian lords' policy, which in that period was far more active and effective, was their struggle for the abolition of the privilege granted to Silesia by Ladislaus Jagiellon in 1498, which reached a climax in events in Wrocław in 1547. In that year Zdislav Berka von Duba, a Bohemian Hofmeister, one of the highest officials of the Bohemian estate, when demanding the annulment of this privilege¹² also argued that the office of the governor of Silesia can be granted only to a Bohemian lord as a representative of the highest social group of the kingdom. Although the Silesian dukes and estates managed to defend the validity of the privilege, they did not stop the Bohemian estates from taking further action aimed at becoming an elite class exclusively entitled to participate in the central offices of power and in key offices in all countries of the Monarchy.

An event of great importance for the whole Silesian community was the so-called King John's Document of (it is believed) 1341, which was forged and spread between 1549 and 1554 by William of Rosenberg, as a result of which the new social order of the highest groups of the state was, in practice, recognized by Ferdinand¹³. King John was supposed to declare in this document that the lineage of the lords of Rosenberg preceded all other families included in the Bohemian estate of the lords. This family was followed by all the other families of the lords of the Bohemian country, listed in order of hierarchy. Rosenberg and other lords were declared at the same time to constitute the main estate of the Bohemian Monarchy. The basis of their priority was the right to freely choose the king in contrast to the duty of the Silesian dukes to accept the king who had been chosen by the Bohemian estates. A further argument for the lesser importance of the Silesian dukes was the submission of their feudal oath to the monarch, which in this document was understood not in medieval terms, as a feudal bond between two types of rulers, but was interpreted as an expression of a specific submission of the dukes to the king and the kingdom. The document ends with a call for the dukes to remain 'in their own

¹² *Lehns- und Besitzurkunden Schlesiens und seiner einzelnen Fürstenthümer im Mittelalter*, vol. 1, eds Colmar Grünhagen, Hermann Markgraf, Leipzig 1881, p. 56, issue 34, and p. 57, issues 35 and 36.

¹³ *Norbert Hermann's Rosenberg'sche Chronik*, ed. Matthäus Klimesch, Prag 1898, pp. 51-55.

estate' in Silesia, which was a recommendation against connecting the social structures of the lands of the Bohemian Crown and the launch of the policy of isolation of the Silesian social elites favoured by the Bohemian lords of the mid-16th century¹⁴. In the period up to 1627, when Ferdinand II announced the Renewed Land Ordinance, it was King John's Document and the resulting ideas, and not the *Order of Estate of the Lords (Herrenstandsordnung)* from 1501, which became authoritative in the socio-political reality. It played a major role in the struggle to extend the political influence of the Bohemian estates and to have the exclusive right both to assume central offices and exercise power in the regions. This fact resulted in the need for political rights to be protected not only by the dukes within Silesia, but by all groups of Silesian socio-political elites which took part in the estate government in Silesia, strengthening in each of them their attempts to separate within the region.

At the same time, these events explain the reduced interest of the Bohemian-Moravian lords in entering into family relationships with the Silesian dukes, which had been significant in the previous period. Those connections became significantly less attractive for the lords because they did not open new opportunities for social advancement which could consequently stimulate their political career. On the other hand, for the dukes these relationships would mean accepting their social degradation to one of the nobility estates advocated by the lords. Successful actions carried out by the Bohemian lords at around the middle of the 16th century aimed at diminishing the importance of the highest Silesian social group, along with the trend common among the Bohemian estate politicians to depreciate the social rank of the Silesian dukes within the monarchy, received the royal assent of Ferdinand, and then his successors. Therefore, what may be listed among the factors unfavourable to the emergence of inter-regional social relationships are the royal policy, the Bohemian estates' pursuit of social and political hegemony and the resulting separative tendency of the political circles of Silesian estates. Their reaction to the expansive attempts to widen the scope of power held by the central institutions in Silesia throughout the 16th century was withdrawal and a focus on defending their own political positions within the Silesian country on the basis of the acquired law. One of the main reasons for the increase in regionalism and the separation of the Silesian elites was their inability to fight for their right to conduct political activities at the central level of the monarchy. In the transforming socio-political system of the monarchy after 1526, they were not formally included in the social circles which were the regular basis for recruitment to exercise power in the supra-regional system. It can therefore be assumed that the main reasons for enhancing pro-regional

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 53-55.

attitudes in social areas adopted not only by the dukes but, more broadly, the Silesian elites, stemmed from the political sphere.

This situation was the reason not only for the separation of political elites of Silesia in the region, but it also became the main motivation of the Silesian dukes in the modern era to turn to the ducal families of the Reich. This phenomenon may be seen in terms of social disintegration in relation to the community of the Kingdom of Bohemia as a whole. The positive response from the noble families of Anhalt, Mecklenburg, Palatinate, electoral Wettins and the Hohenzollerns to the initiative of forming matrimonial relationships¹⁵ – in addition to all the specific and ad hoc political and religious goals that kept them motivated – was still perceived by the Silesian dukes primarily as confirmation of their inclusion in a group of territorial rulers. Both matrimonial and religious choices were strongly stimulated by the socio-political processes taking place in the Bohemian Kingdom.

Another important process that affected the social characteristics of the structure of Silesia as a regional structure was a change which had already been occurring at the close of the previous era and which had profound consequences for the modern age: the integration of the dukes into the structure of the Silesian Diet (the dukes and estate assembly). They formed the first curia there, deciding on matters concerning Silesia as a whole. However, the decision reached was a collective one and after its adoption as a parliamentary resolution the dukes were obliged to submit to it as a political decision of all the dukes and estates of the Silesian Diet. A large part of the prestige arising from their social status as individual rulers was thus transferred to the special ducal estate, which they began to form at the Silesia-wide level within the Diet.

The next social group of Silesia whose options regarding Silesian regionalism – its reinforcement or, conversely, its weakening and thus their planned socio-political significance – may be characterized as the layer of higher nobility in the 16th and early 17th centuries. This layer only partially found its legal reflection in the Silesian political system; it was also not uniform. We should rather talk about groups of nobles in Silesia who, by virtue of their different and unique features, were conspicuous when viewed in the context of the general nobility.

The group of free-state lords in the 1526-1618 consisted of four members. Although there were in fact more representatives of the Silesian families bearing this title in the 16th century, the title was associated with the ownership of landed properties with a free-state law, hence the loss of these goods resulted in the loss of

¹⁵ Matthias Weber, *Das Verhältnis Schlesiens zum Alten Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wien 1992, pp. 118-145.

the title, and thus the number of free-state lords did not change. Accordingly, it was not an aristocratic title in the modern sense: the Free State (*status maiores*) of Syców was owned by the von Maltzan, von Braun (1571-1591) and zu Dohna (1591-1711) families, the Free State of Pszczyna was owned by the Turzo (1517-1548) and Promnitz families (1548-1765), the Free State of Milicz belonged to the families of Kurzbach (1521-1592) and Maltzan (1590-1806), and the Free State of Żmigród was acquired by the von Kurzbach (1492-1592) family and the House of Schaffgotsch (1592-1634). After their creation in the second half of the 15th century, these free states were fully separated from the duchy, and were thus independent from a given duke, and henceforth formed a separate dominion. Until the Thirty Years' War this group also included the Schönaich family, who received the title of free-state lords of the Free State of Siedlisko-Bytom as early as in 1601, but were not granted full political rights, however, before 1697. The initiative in the formation of this social stratum is attributed to the royal power, who followed the desire to group free-state lords into a separate curia, or integrate them into the ducal curia with rights such as those possessed by the dukes, and who sought to create a kind of political counterbalance to the dukes of Silesia, especially in the most important political institutions, i.e. the Silesian Diet and in the Supreme Ducal Tribunal. However, this group was affected by two important limitations: they were granted only quasi-ducal social status, and they were denied the title of the duke. Consequently, in accordance with the law they could not claim the highest offices in Silesia. In addition, in the first curia they could only cast one vote representing all of the free-state lords, and they could cast it only after those of the dukes, who unlike them voted *viritim*. What is more, they were prohibited from exercising the function of chairman of the proceedings¹⁶. In this way, their position as a potential ally of the royal policy in Silesian authorities was marginalized.

Another conspicuous group among the nobility in Silesia were lords of lesser states (*status minores*), who appeared only after the mid-16th century. Additionally, their separate position was secured according to the status of the owned property. Legally, these properties were identified as autonomous entities, and their owners were not a part of any noble corporation¹⁷. The owners of the lesser states did not enjoy any particular political rights. Almost all of the lesser states in the second half of the 16th and the early 17th centuries were formed in Upper Silesia. At around

¹⁶ Marian Ptak, *Pozycja publiczno-prawna wolnych panów stanowych na Śląsku*, Wrocław 1993 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No 1477, Prawo 222), pp. 79–102.

¹⁷ *Idem*, *Zur politischen Bedeutung des schlesisches Adels*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft – Kultur – Selbstdarstellung*, eds Jan Harasimowicz, Matthias Weber, München 2010 (=Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, vol. 36), p. 328.

1610-1611 there were probably about ten of them in Silesia, including Międzybórz, Skoczów, Sułów, Siedlisko-Bytom, Bielsko, Frydek, Frysztat, Olbrachce, Borek Strzeliński and Rothensierben. Literature also fails to precisely define the position of another group, that of the owners of modern castle fiefs. They appeared, similarly to the previous group, at around the middle of the 16th century. By the Thirty Years' War, the castle fiefs had also included Uraz and Piotrowice in 1556 and Leśnica in 1619¹⁸, probably also Kożuchów and Świebodzin¹⁹. They constituted purchased goods separated from the royal domain, whose owners were recorded separately in cadasters. Possession of this property was associated with holding the office of the governor of the castle city. The owners also held judiciary power and some legislature power for the people in their area. In addition to these indigenous groups of higher nobility, there was also a group of lords coming from Czech-Moravian families, who bought the assets in Silesia. By the Thirty Years' War its size is estimated, after Jacob Schickfus, to be 20 families strong²⁰. The basis of their estate of lords was their non-Silesian status. However, they cannot be treated as a homogeneous social group, because their legal and political status as a whole group had not been defined. Their special privileges, if there were any, were revealed exclusively and separately in the system of each separate Upper Silesian duchy, and yet not in all of them – for instance, they formed the first estate in the estate assembly of the Duchy of Opole²¹ and Opava, but not in the estate assembly of the Duchy of Krnov. At the central level of Silesia as a whole, they were not affected by any regulations. Nonetheless, it is important to note that through the acquisition of landed properties, the Bohemian lords became members of the corporations of the Silesian nobility, which enabled them to perform functions in the Silesian self-governing body of the estates. The settling of Bohemian lords in Silesia is evidence of social integration between the regions which took place as a grassroots initiative of members of individual noble families.

The legal and political position that was achieved by the groups of free-state lords and lesser state lords in Silesia and other groups of the distinguished nobility was different to that of the Czech-Moravian estate of lords. In Bohemia and Moravia,

¹⁸ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, p. 106.

¹⁹ Jarosław Kuczer, *Szlachta w życiu społeczno-gospodarczym księstwa głogowskiego w epoce habsburskiej*, Zielona Góra 2007, pp. 128-133.

²⁰ Jacob Schickfuß, *New Vermehrte Schlesische Chronica und Landesbeschreibung*, Jehna-Breßlaw 1625, vol. 4, chapter 2, pp. 39-41; N. Conrads, *Regionalismus und Zentralismus im schlesischen Ständestaat*, [in:] *idem*, *Schlesien in der Frühmoderne*, p. 169; Jarosław Kuczer, *Zarys problemu*, [in:] *Šlechtic v Horním Slezsku*, p. 39.

²¹ Małgorzata Hatałska, *Sejmik księstwa opolsko-raciborskiego w latach 1564-1742*, Wrocław 1979, p. 30.

the lords created the first large social and political estate in Bohemia, with rights guaranteed in *Constitutionis terrae* of 1500²², which included taking the highest country and royal offices. In Silesia, all of these prerogatives were reserved for the dukes. For the Bohemian-Moravian lords, the abovementioned groups of higher Silesian nobility in the early modern period were therefore not their socio-political counterparts. The existence of the Silesian free-state lords thus contributed to the issue of social groups in Silesia being arranged differently to those within the most important countries of the monarchy. This fact highlights further difficulties encountered by the representatives of this group of Silesian lords – who were not fully codified, and not as privileged as their Czech-Moravian counterparts, yet aspired to a higher position than the ordinary nobles – when planning marriages, which was the most important factor to affect the binding of the members of this layer of nobility with the regions of Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia. Thus, the difference in stratification, deepening the asymmetry in the estate structure of Silesia and other Bohemian countries, may be considered as a potentially pro-regional factor, cementing the families of specific Silesian lords as families of a mainly regional range. However, this was strongly modified by the attempt of members of these groups from the upper layer of the nobility to change their status in the system and their role in exercising power within Silesia.

In the context of regionalism, it is important that these groups of higher nobility provided committed supporters of the royal power. Their disposition to create a pro-royal environment resulted from their ambiguous status in Silesia, as described above. Included in its highest social layer, but at the same time facing the dominance of the dukes, they could not achieve important political positions by their own efforts or take the main estate offices. As a result of this, they were not a group that wished to preserve the status quo of their socio-political position in Silesia. They most vividly responded to the impulses from the central government to promote their political and social significance in return for loyalty and service in the name of the central, i.e. royal, power. Due to such royal influence they were able to gain social and political promotions both by being awarded honorary titles and offices of the court, which brought about social prestige, and by being appointed to holding the royal offices in Silesia. Serving the king provided the members of these groups not only with a position in the Silesian political sphere, but also with the additional prestige that came from acting in the name of monarchical sovereignty. The majority of royal officials acting as the governor of hereditary duchies and officials of the royal-central institutions operating in Silesia originated from this

²² P. Mařa, *Svět*, pp. 53-53.

group, especially presidents and councillors of the royal chamber in Wrocław. The representatives of this group were also the most numerous to appear at the royal court on their own initiative, trying to serve the king or to be awarded honours by him. They also hoped, at least until the 1580s, to be promoted to the most lucrative ecclesiastical office in Silesia, the staffing of which was influenced by the king: the duke-bishop office and the ducal dominion associated with it (von Promnitz, von Logau).

In the modern era these circumstances were conducive to the emergence of new groups within the higher nobility characterized by aristocratic titles awarded at the will of the monarch. However, in Silesia they are difficult to precisely define in the period before the Thirty Years' War because they have not been the subject of systematic research. It seems that the number of members of the Silesian titular nobility at that time was small. By the time of the Thirty Years' War no count was recorded, and all of the honoured men were promoted only to the title of barons²³. At the same time, due to the introduction of this title to Silesia, the differences between this new group of titular nobility and traditional free-state lords and the lesser state lords in Silesia were blurred. The title of baron in German sounded similar to the name of the members of this specific Silesian group (*Freiherr* and *Freier Standesherr*). A barony was awarded, for instance, to several members of the von Rechenberg family from the Duchy of Głogów: the first of them became a baron as early as 1534²⁴, in 1612 the title was given to Melchior of Sława after 35 years of service to the emperor²⁵ and in 1610 the title was awarded to Caspar of Kliczków, the governor of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor²⁶. Also, early in their lineage a barony was acquired by the Kitlitz family of the Duchy of Świdnica²⁷. The title raised the prestige and splendour of the person and the family awarded it, but it did not directly affect the legal status of a nobleman and did not increase his authority to execute power and offices in Silesia. Nevertheless, owing to the title, the barons were preferred by the monarch to take up the offices dependent on his decision. In addition, the king favoured them by awarding them honorary courtly titles. The title of an 'imperial adviser' was awarded in turn to almost all governors in the Duchy of Opole-Racibórz after the mid-16th century²⁸. Efforts to obtain the grace of the

²³ N. Conrads, *Adelsgeschichte*, [in:] *Historische Schlesienforschung*, p. 355.

²⁴ J. Kuczer, *Szlachta*, p. 76.

²⁵ Willy Klawitter, *Melchior von Redern*, [in:] *Schlesien des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts*, eds Friedrich Andrae, Erich Graber, Max Hippe, Breslau 1931, pp. 74-79.

²⁶ Tomasz Andrzejewski, *Rechenbergowie w życiu społeczno-gospodarczym księstwa głogowskiego w XVI-XVII wieku*, Zielona Góra 2007, pp. 202-203.

²⁷ J. Kuczer, *Szlachta*, pp. 76, 126.

²⁸ Anton Weltzel, *Die Landesbeamten der Fürstenthümer Oppeln-Ratibor von 1532 bis 1741*, 'Zeitschrift für Geschichte Schlesien', 15 (1863), pp. 19-44.

king by members of these groups are also visible in the acquisition of titular offices of the court, such as cupbearer, pantler, or chamberlain, usually before the promotion to the office of the governor of the royal duchy. The office of governor of the duchy was granted, for example, to Johann von Oppersdorf in 1557-1568, Georg von Oppersdorf in 1591-1606, and Hans Christof von Pruskovsky auf Proskau in 1608-1619. Preliminary studies on the groups of Silesian higher nobility at the court showed that during the reign of Rudolf II various functions and offices of the court were awarded to about 50 representatives of the Silesian families²⁹. Although this phenomenon on such a scale was unique, their functioning at the court clearly raised the prestige of those Silesian families among the families of Bohemian lords and also made them a desirable match when planning marriages. This helped some of them to be included in the social systems of Bohemia and Moravia. As a result, it enabled as many as 13 members of Silesian families to be accepted to the Bohemian estate of the lords, including the von Logau, von Promnitz and von Pruskovsky families³⁰. To provide a balanced picture of the importance of the Silesians' participation in Rudolf's court, it should be pointed out that when it came to the exercising of functions at court, a huge advantage was held by the nobility from the hereditary lands of the Habsburgs in the Old Reich and from the Reich itself, and that the nobility of all the lands of the Kingdom of Bohemia accounted for only 9–10% of the total, with the Bohemian nobility comprising the vast majority.

Also of significance was the desire of the members of the separate groups of the nobility to acquire wealth in Bohemia, sometimes to a substantial degree. The free-state Lord of Milicz-Żmigród, Sigmund Kurzbach, through his marriage to the heiress of lord Wilhelm von Illburg in 1550 acquired a large property complex in northern Bohemia. Also around the middle of the century, Hans von Oppersdorf came into possession of the dominion of Böhmisches Aicha and Friedstein, expanding it in the 1570s by further extensive assets in eastern Bohemia. In 1558 Friedrich von Redern bought the estate of Friedland and Reichenberg on the Bohemian-Sorbian border, and George von Proskau, through his marriage to Ursula von Lobkowitz, became the lord of a dominion in eastern Bohemia, Altenburg, in 1571. At the same time, it is apparent that in the 16th and early 17th centuries it was the Silesian lords who bought Bohemian properties and attempted to form marriages in this

²⁹ Petr Mařa, *Der Adel Böhmens und Schlesiens in der Frühen Neuzeit in vergleichender und beziehungs-geschichtlicher Perspektive*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft*, p. 255.

³⁰ Marek Starý, *Přijímání moravských a slezských šlechticů do panského stavu království českého v 16. a na počátku 17. století*, [in:] *Korunní země v dějinách českého státu*. Vol. 2: *Společné a rozdílné – Česká koruna v životě a vědomí jejích obyvatel ve 14.–16. století. Sborník příspěvků přednesených na kolokviu pořádaném ve dnech 12. a 13. května 2004 v Clam-Gallasově paláci v Praze*, ed. Lenka Bobkova, Praha 2005, pp. 251-288.

social group, thus trying to acquire a similar social status to the status of the Bohemian lords and become a part of their group, although the lack of research in this respect does not allow for a precise determination of the scale of the phenomenon. As early as in the 16th century, and especially in the second half, the practical political significance of some Silesian lords increased so much that the most prominent Bohemian families decided to merge with them through marriage. For example, at the end of the 16th century and before the Thirty Years' War, representatives of the family of Oppersdorf entered a kinship with such families as Berka von Duba, Popel von Lobkowitz, Kolowrat and Žerotín.

This proved to be much more durable than integration through court offices during a transitory period when the imperial and royal court opened itself more widely to enable an influx of nobility from the Bohemian lands. However, making connections between the Silesian and Bohemian communities, and especially between the Silesian and Moravian nobles, was not only a matter of acquiring economic and prestige-related benefits. What followed was also the cultural rapprochement of these communities. This was expressed, among others, by the fact that until the second half of the 16th century several canons and prelates and as many as two bishops of Olomouc came from the Upper Silesian noble families. The bishops of Olomouc were John Grodecky von Brod (1572-1574) and Stanislaus Pavlovský von Pavlovitz (1579-1598).³¹ The court of the latter was an arena for the actions of Bartholomew Paprocki of Paprocka Wola (1543-1614), a Polish heraldist and historian, who developed the armorial of Moravian, Bohemian and Silesian nobility, thus demonstrating their common historical and geographical origins. In this way he expressed the willingness of at least some noble circles of these areas to create a cultural community. What is more, the representatives of the Silesian families repeatedly held Moravian state offices, including the highest office of the governor of Moravia; these included Hanusz (1578-1582) and Joachim (1598-1602) from the family Haugwitz von Biskupitz, and Hynek the Elder (1594-1598) from the family Bruntálský von Würben. Their chronological placement indicates that the integration processes bore fruit in the last decades of the 16th century. Members of these Silesian families also took up royal posts in Moravia, such as councillors of the local royal Camera.³²

However, the most desirable honour among early modern Silesian social circles of the higher nobility remained – rare as they were – the merger of noble

³¹ Joachim Bahlcke, *Bischöfliche Traditionen des schlesischen Adels in der Frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft*, p. 350.

³² Tomáš Knoz, *Die Integration des Adels schlesischer Herkunft in die Gesellschaft Mährens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft*, pp. 281-282.

families with the Silesian ducal dynasties. The fact that in 1620 Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch, whose family was elevated to the status of free-state lords through buying the autonomous Free State of Żmigród in 1592³³, married Barbara Agnes, the daughter of Joachim Frederick of Legnica, was not only permanently etched into the consciousness of the Schaffgotsch family, but also – despite the temporary family crisis associated with the execution of Hans Ulrich in 1635 for treason – in the 17th and 18th centuries gave impetus to the family in their effort to raise their social status, and served as an important argument for their aspirations to achieve a prominent place in the political system of Silesia. Advancement in the social structure within Silesia through marriage was still perceived as the most effective method and one which brought the most permanent results, and was therefore the most desirable among these groups of nobility.

In terms of a clerical career, it was the most desirable in circles of the higher nobility to hold an office on behalf of the king in Silesia. The greatest prestige followed the appointment to the positions in the royal Camera in Wrocław, which had existed since 1558, especially to the office of the president of the Camera, which were all thoroughly dependent on the decision of the king. The first president was Friedrich von Redern, whose loyalty was paid by the monarch by his quick elevation to the estate of free lords. After him, the service to the king in this office was taken by Wilhelm von Kurzbach, then since 1567 this function was held in turn by Matthias von Logau, Seyfried von Promnitz and Siegmund von Zedlitz, and among the members of the Camera were, for example, Hans von Schaffgotsch, a Lutheran, who until 1573 was even, like Redern, an advocate of Schwenckfeldian spiritualism³⁴, and Heinrich von Hohberg³⁵. The formal scope of the functions of the president, as well as the Camera itself, was not extensive. Supervision and management of finances from Silesia which were due to the king consisted of performing small tasks within the system of Silesian finances. Performing this office did not formally empower the president to participate in exercising power in Silesia. Nevertheless, what affected his status was the fact that he was treated as a trusted servant of the king, which was guaranteed by an oath obliging him to hold the office and perform functions loyally and confidentially, and which made him an official of royal power

³³ Ulrich Schmilewski, *Das Geschlecht der Schaffgotsch – ein genealogisch-historischer Überblick vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Das Haus Schaffgotsch. Konfession, Politik und Gedächtnis eines schlesischen Adelsgeschlechtes vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne*, eds Joachim Bahlcke, Ulrich Schmilewski, Thomas Wunsch, Würzburg 2010, pp.11-12.

³⁴ Jörg Deventer, *Adel und Konfession. Beobachtungen am Beispiel des Schaffgotsch*, [in:] *Das Haus Schaffgotsch*, pp. 179-181.

³⁵ Elisabeth Zimmermann, *Die schlesische Kammer und die Reformation in Schlesien*, "Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte", 14 (1956), p. 145.

in the modern sense. The king also began to commission various political missions within Silesia to the presidents. Even during the attempts to choose Kaspar von Logau as the Bishop of Wrocław in 1562, the king ordered the president and the councillors of the Camera to represent the will of the king when contacting the canons, and at the choice of his successor – Martin Gerstmann – in 1574, the president of the Camera formally entered into the electoral commissariat sent for the election and appointed by the king. At the elections of the next bishops, Andreas Jerin in 1585 and Paul Albert, who stood for election twice (in 1596 and 1599), the successive presidents of the Camera – Seyfried von Promnitz in 1598 and Siegmund von Zedlitz since 1599 – and baron George von Oppersdorf, the governor of the Duchy of Opole-Racibórz, were the main people from Silesia among the king's envoys sent to the Wrocław chapter to present the royal candidate. Especially during the elections of Albert, they fully assumed the role of presenting the royal candidate to the canons gathered for the elections from the Silesian dukes who had been burdened with this task before, Charles II of Oleśnica and Joachim Frederick of Brzeg-Legnica. The dukes refused then to act on behalf of the king, assuming the elections to have been a farce prepared by the victor himself and his party at the royal court. An important element of renouncing this mission by the dukes was also the submission of the relevant chairmanship of the royal commission into the hands of Christoph Popel von Lobkowitz, an *Oberlandhofmeister* of Bohemia. The dukes did not want to work under his charge, the more so since Bohemian politicians propagated the opinion that the king and the Bohemian estates, as the main estates of the kingdom, not only had the right to appoint any candidate, but even possessed the right to nominate the bishop of Wrocław³⁶. None of these circumstances, however, prevented the Silesian heads of the Camera from conscientiously executing the assigned task.

Thus, the Silesian higher nobility represented the potential for social and political integration within the monarchy. The obstacles in its development comprised, however, the absence of formal legal regulation of their position in Silesia, and also the fact that it was not guaranteed within the monarchy, which affects the relevance of the aforementioned favourable attitude towards integration. Members of these groups must have been aware that conditions in the 16th and early 17th centuries meant that only the stable existence of the Silesian region as a separate segment of the institutional and political system under the monarchy would ensure the maintenance of a favourable system of regulation of the important estate-royal

³⁶ Hubert Jedin, *Die Krone Böhmen und die Breslauer Bischofswahlen 1468-1732*, [in:] *Kirche des Glaubens Kirche der Geschichte*, Freiburg 1966, pp. 427-428.

offices, as well as official positions in the royal institutions in Silesia. In the event of the implementation of centralizing policy towards Silesia, they would be threatened by competition from the Bohemian lords to the same extent as the dukes were. In the period of actively pursuing integration plans based on the central offices of the Bohemian monarchy, Ferdinand sought, for instance, to appoint the members of the Bohemian estates to the offices of the governors of the hereditary duchies. A record suggesting that the office of the governor of the Duchy of Głogów may be held only by the Bohemian lords can be found, for example, in a document issued by Ferdinand in 1544³⁷. If these individual events, each time evoking fierce protests from the estates of a given royal duchy, had been established, they could have marginalized the meaning of the members of the groups of Silesian higher nobility, and could have even led to their taking a more inferior position in the competition for offices and titles. In this context it is worth recalling that neither the Order of Estate of the Lords of 1501, nor the alleged *King John's Document* of 1341, which determined the social order of the highest groups and thus affected the determination of their rights to hold important offices in the monarchy, took into account the members of Silesian higher nobility (with the exception of one Silesian family von Dohna, which was included in the Order of Estate of the Lords). In events which tested their loyalty to the king and the monarchy in opposition to their affiliation with a socio-legal Silesian body, such as the first confederation of 1609 and, in particular, the second confederation of 1619, most of them were neutral or sided with the revolt, as did the Rechenberg or Schönaich families³⁸. For this reason, until the Thirty Years' War their attitude had been a combination of pro-king and at the same time pro-regional tendencies, while simultaneously having a strong desire for affiliation of their social status with that of the Bohemian and Moravian lords.

The complexity of the conditions constituting further features of the social specificity of Silesia lay in the formation of the next Silesian estate, the ordinary Silesian nobility. An important factor influencing the integrity of Silesian nobility was the diversity of their political rights, expressed in the right for representation in the estate bodies in Silesia. Participation in the Diet of Silesia and in the Supreme Ducal Tribunal, the tribunal assembly, was restricted to the representatives of the nobility from hereditary duchies. The vassal duchies, including all the estates and the nobility, were, in all areas in the forums common for the whole Silesia, represented only by the duke. Thus only a part of the nobility, derived from hereditary

³⁷ M. Ptak, *Zgromadzenia stanowe księstwa głogowskiego*, p. 49.

³⁸ Jarosław Kuczer, *Arystokracja z przywileju. Czynniki determinujące rozwój śląskiego Herrenstandu w okresie dominacji cesarskiej 1600-1740*, [in:] *Szlachta europejska w strukturach lokalnych XVI–XVII wieku*, ed. Małgorzata Konopnicka-Szatarska, Zielona Góra 2010, pp. 124-126.

duchies, was a political co-decision-maker on matters concerning Silesia as a whole and took part in the dualist rule alongside the royal power in the region. Asserting this feature, some researchers advocate the division of the Silesian nobility into two estates: firstly, given the legal capacity of the nobility of a given duchy to participate in Silesia-wide authorities, their community could be regarded as a political noble estate, in contrast to the nobility who had no such access and who can only be described in a Silesian perspective as a social estate³⁹. The specificity was therefore the lack of full identity between the social and political status of the Silesian nobility. Trying to evaluate this feature of the Silesian nobility in terms of regional stability, first and foremost it can be stated that this internal division factor, preventing part of the nobility from being able to deal with Silesia-wide matters, much weakened their interest in the smooth functioning of Silesia-wide central authorities. An additional complication in this distinction, at the same time increasing the instability factor of the rights of this group in the political system of Silesia, was caused by the fact that the nobility of a given duchy was validated to send their representatives when the duchy was transformed from vassal to hereditary, or was deprived of this right when the opposite case occurred. In respect to such duchies as Opole-Racibórz, Krnov and Żagań, the change of their qualification occurred several times in the modern period, as a result of which the nobility of those duchies gained or lost their political capacity to participate in the central organs of power in Silesia. This was a factor that destabilized regional bonds, hampering the awareness of forming an all-Silesian estate among the nobility, as well as their full identification with the fate of the entire region. Disintegrating effects of the various socio-political positions of the Silesian nobility in the social sphere were revealed in the efforts of the estates from hereditary duchies to acquire the status of a Bohemian estate and belonging to the Bohemian estate assembly, which took place in the 16th century. These operations culminated in a declarative joining of the estates of Świdnica-Jawor to the first Bohemian Revolt in 1546-1547, despite the fact that the political estates of Silesia remained neutral at that time.

The above statements have not yet fully reflected the status of the nobility in Silesia. This group was subjected to yet further division. Silesia as a whole came to be represented by Silesia-wide offices and institutions in the modern period, and its basic constitution and political system meant that it consisted of a limited number of political and territorial units, duchies and free states. Within those realms, organized in a given duchy or a free state individually in separate territorial corporations, the presence of the nobility was, in legal terms, based on the land owned on the

³⁹ K. Orzechowski, *Historia ustroju*, p. 109.

knightly law. Therefore, the Silesian nobility as a social estate also failed to create an all-Silesian entity. Each nobleman was a member of a specific noble community of a duchy or a free state country. From a legal perspective, this estate must therefore be referred to in the plural form: it was created from a total of noble estates of each of the Silesian dominions separately. The nobility were divided by the borders within Silesia into several noble communities. However, this did not result in the separation of the nobility within individual dominions. For a nobleman from another duchy, access to the group of nobility in a given duchy remained open, provided, however, that he became a member of the corporation, that is that he acquired the land on the knightly law in a given duchy. Nonetheless, acquiring *Indygenat* and its specific complementary form, *Inkolat*, in Silesia had no meaning in a region-wide sense.

Internal divisions of the Silesian nobility did not end, however, with their division into legal and social organisms determined by the boundaries of duchies and free-state countries. A prerequisite for the creation of a community by the nobility of the duchy was in fact the creation of even smaller communities, corporations at the level of districts (*weichbild*); the division of duchies into these basic units of internal division meant that what was important for the legal identity of a given Silesian nobleman and for his participation in the circles of power was not only the fact that he possessed land in the duchy, but that he owned it in its particular district. This was the source of the legal and political affiliation of a nobleman, and within its framework the nobility realized the first stage of their self-government through self-educated estate district offices, which were held by their representatives. The nobility of a district often had a separate right-privilege, which formed their partial autonomy from the superior state bodies within their own duchy. To put it clearly, the Silesian nobility can be considered a collection of about 70 district corporations⁴⁰, and a corporation within the duchy was, in turn, their highest level of social organization. Only a proportion of the noble communities, as mentioned above, was then reflected in the organizational and institutional all-Silesian bodies. The nobility in Silesia was, therefore, a community of small corporations. This hampered the processes of regional and social cohesion and disturbed the formation of the identity of the communities living there with Silesia as a homogeneous socio-political organism. At the same time, however, for this reason the Silesian group of nobility became a difficult social area to be managed from the centre of power, because it was difficult to introduce uniform top-down regulations in relation to such legally-varied noble communities.

⁴⁰ M. Ptak, *Zur politischen Bedeutung*, p. 325.

Another important factor was the fact that the nobility in Silesia, in comparison to other Bohemian countries, was quite numerous and at the same time controlled relatively small landed properties. Its number is estimated to range from 1,800 to 2,000⁴¹. Being, therefore, numerous and possessing a small income, the Silesian nobility showed rather conservative tendencies regarding its socio-political status, mainly focusing on maintaining their position in local structures. They rarely sought promotion outside their duchy or Silesia, and when they did it tended to be only the wealthier or especially gifted members who displayed such aspirations, because the noble families were usually unable to finance the conditions of such advancement.

These features characterizing the Silesian nobility determined the fact that as a group they mostly showed pro-regional, and even pro-local, tendencies. This statement, however, does not characterize this class in its entirety. Until recently, relying on the unverified statements of modern chroniclers, especially those of Frederick Lucae⁴², researchers repeated his claim that the Silesian nobility was not associated through marriage with Polish nobility or the nobility of other Bohemian countries⁴³, and even less with the nobility of the Reich⁴⁴. However, current research in this area – made so far only for Moravia – has confirmed an intensive integration process of the Silesian nobility in this country, both by frequent marriages, the acquisition of goods and permanent entry to the Moravian noble community by performing official functions, paying taxes, etc. (as mentioned above with regard to the noble lords), and yet these phenomena are related to the ordinary nobility too. Of 265 persons of noble origin compiled from Moravian tax lists until 1619, as many as 67 came from Silesia⁴⁵. It is difficult to predict how further research will change the current image of the separation of the Silesian nobility.

The burghers formed another extensive social group in Silesia. Given the number of towns in Silesia, which stood at about 140 at the threshold of the modern era, the degree of their participation in the economic value of the region as well as their population – some estimates say that urban dwellers accounted for approximately 23 per cent of the population of Silesia – the burghers had favourable conditions to form a strong social layer. Similar to the nobility, however, the borders of the Silesian dominions marked the lines of strong internal divisions within this social

⁴¹ P. Mat' a, *Der Adel Böhmens*, p. 230.

⁴² Friedrich Lucae, *Schlesiens curieuse Denkwürdigkeiten oder vollkommene Chronica von Ober- und Nieder-Schlesien: welche in Sieben Haupt-Theilen vorstellet Alle Fürstenthümer und Herrschafften, mit ihren Ober-Regenten*, Frankfurt am Mäyn 1689, p. 1778.

⁴³ N. Condrads, *Adelsgeschichte*, p. 352.

⁴⁴ Ulrich Schmilewski, *Die Beziehungen des schlesischen Adel zum Heiligen Römischen Reich im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft*, p. 217.

⁴⁵ T. Knoz, *Die Integration*, p. 273.

group. The participation of the towns in the Silesian Diet was even more complicated and limited than that experienced by the nobility. At the beginning of the era this right was held by all the towns that were located in the hereditary duchies of Wrocław, Głogów and Świdnica-Jawor and were at the same time district towns. Among the duchies which in the 16th century became hereditary, this right was granted only to the most important towns, or they did not receive it at all, as was the case with towns in the Duchies of Ziębice and Żagań. In addition, from the middle of the century there had been a regression in this area. Since 1552, the governor of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor, following the decision of the monarch, had forbidden smaller district towns to send representatives to the Diet of Silesia⁴⁶. Therefore, royal power was a factor that not only weakened the political importance of towns, but also narrowed their opportunities for social integration through cooperation on country's matters in central forums of Silesia. This had consequences in the deepening of social disintegration of this class.

At the same time, the division of the Silesian burghers into those entitled and not entitled to political representation in the Silesia-wide governing body influenced, as in the case of the nobility, the lack of identity between the burghers as a political estate and the social estate in Silesia. However, we cannot speak about the existence of one estate of the burghers in a social sense, because the status of urban residents was separately regulated by the rights assigned to every particular town individually. In the modern era, there was only one legal regulation for all towns and it concerned the subordination of the municipal court to the Prague appeals chamber in 1548. The legal status and the way a specific town functioned, both in terms of political participation in the estate assembly of a duchy or a free state, as well as the modification of the rules concerning its economic status, were defined within individual realms. These factors accounted for the diversity of the estate of the burghers and also influenced the strong pro-local orientation of the Silesian towns, which in the modern era was expressed in holding town assemblies almost exclusively within a given duchy. Most often, political rights in the form of conventions of ducal towns were, however, exercised only by the district towns, and then only they were subject to the right to participate in the estate assembly of the duchies: out of the 16 towns in the Duchy of Głogów only seven district towns cooperated in the conventions of towns⁴⁷. This lack of political unification became an obstacle in the creation of a sense of social community among the burghers even within individual Silesian dominions. What is more, Ferdinand's anti-urban policy

⁴⁶ K. Orzechowski, *Ogólnośląskie*, p. 234.

⁴⁷ M. Ptak, *Zgromadzenia stanowe księstwa głogowskiego*, p. 69.

was carried out not only at the level of the whole Silesia, but it was also directed against the towns from the hereditary duchies of the Bohemian Crown. It excluded not only the formation of a pro-royal political option of the Silesian towns, even within individual dominions, but – as the royal policy actually supported noble aspirations in economic competition with the towns – it even caused residents to abandon the exercising of their political rights within the estate assemblies of the duchies. As it was impossible for the towns of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor to effectively represent their interests against the political domination of the nobility, around the mid-16th century they relinquished appearing in the estate assembly of the duchy through the burghers and began to participate in it only because of the issues associated with their own landed properties⁴⁸.

Despite the burghers being the social group responsible for strengthening the individuality of individual Silesian dominions and shaping an important part of cultural landscape of Silesia before 1526, in the modern period they lost their status as a unifying force for the Silesian region. The only city that preserved its economic importance for the whole of Silesia and became a significant factor influencing the shape of Silesian policy remained Wrocław. Its government, whose representatives since around 1538 had ceased to participate in the curia of the towns of the Silesian Diet and joined the curia of the knights, had, until the Thirty Years' War, been an integral component of any all-Silesian estate assemblies or narrower departments of the Diet which made important decisions for the region. Their pro-regional political approach was determined by the attempts to remain a part of political life in Silesia and retain autonomy in relation to their community and control of their economic resources, and the efforts to protect these areas of socio-political life of the city from the interference of the monarch. Nevertheless, this policy was implemented by the community of Wrocław alone. The power of the city was not supported by the connections or cooperation with other Silesian towns. Wrocław did not represent the Silesian burghers but its own economic and political interests.

For the residents of the land of Silesia, who in the late 16th and early 17th centuries had not yet formed a society, and for whom the division into estates was merely a framework for the functioning of heterogeneous local communities, groups and social classes, a clear inter-estate factor which can be identified as having a social impact on the region was 'Lutheranization'⁴⁹. In the course of the 16th century it had become a factor contributing to the formation of social regional

⁴⁸ G. Croon, *Die landständische Verfassung*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁹ Thomas Winkelbauer, *Sozialdisziplinierung und Konfessionalisierung durch Grundherren in den österreichischen und böhmischen Länder im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, 'Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung', 19 (1992), No. 3, pp. 317-339.

identity. The importance of this process had also very strong social connotations. Decentralized Lutheran confessionalization – whose main tool turned out to be police orders⁵⁰ issued by the Diet and by all-Silesian estate assemblies of the duchies, orders issued by the country courts at the level of individual goods, the so-called *Dreidinge*, and highly-developed Protestant church teaching and secondary education on an intellectual level, had led to the Silesian social system and its cultural values being strongly associated with the Lutheran Protestantism and regional political programme of the estates.

⁵⁰ M. Weber, *Die schlesischen Polizei- und Landesordnungen*, *passim*.