

Masovian-Lithuanian border until 1569. Formation, social role

Summary

The dissertation consists of four parts that covers two main thesis statements. The first two chapters refer to the analysis of the historical sources about formation of the Mazovian-Lithuanian border until 1444. The concept of the border was divided geographically into two sections: northern and southern. The northern part of the border was created as a result of the fall of Yatvingia, whereas, the southern was developed during the times of Rus. What is more, the southern fragment was later taken over by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Mazovian-Lithuanian border was formed as a consequence of the political activity of the rulers of Mazovia and Lithuania, but also Polish, Ruthenian and Teutonic Knights. Equally, this thesis will widely explore the concept of social issues. It is presented in the third chapter, which focuses mainly on the analysis of the law according to which the Mazovian-Lithuanian border should have been shaped at the local level. Not to mention the fourth chapter that presents the fact how this formation process actually looked like. Conclusions are based on the preserved sources taken from Mazovian court books.

The subject of the Mazovian-Lithuanian border appeared in historiography, but it has not been studied from a broad, chronological and geographical perspective yet. Heretofore studies had been conducted primarily on an individual issues associated with this subject (e.g. analysis of the alleged Masovian-Lithuanian Peace Treaty of 1358, Teutonic-Lithuanian Treaty of 1398, a letter of Masovian princes to the Pope about the Lithuanian threat of 1325). Researchers, who were analyzing the historical sources, interpreted them in a variety of ways. Such works have been created in attempt to systematize knowledge. However, the diversity of interpretations may have caused historians to draw contradictory conclusions according to discussed border concerns.

The starting point for research on the Mazovian-Lithuanian border is the Teutonic-Masovian-Ruthenian agreement concluded in Troszyn in 1260. So far, in historiography it was assumed that a part of Yatvingia, which was supposed to belong to Mazovia under the abovementioned arrangement, was in fact Rajgrodzki district. What is more, Rajgrodzki district was to be located between the rivers Lek, Biebrza and Netta. From the north, however, the line was supposed to be drawn at the level of Rajgrodzkie Lake. To confirm this hypothesis sources were widely examined. Nevertheless, the analysis of these sources

indicates that the land never actually belonged to Mazovians. Interpretation of sources concerning the northern section of the Mazovian-Lithuanian border made it possible to indicate that the fragment of Yatvingia, to which the Mazovians claimed their rights, was in fact the Goniądz district.

Battles that took place in the 13th and 14th century between Ruthenia, Mazovia, Prussia and Yatvingians, and later by the Teutonic Knights and Lithuanians, led to total depopulation of Yatvingia and eastern Mazovia territories. In fact, large areas of settlement voids became the broad Mazovian-Prussian-Ruthenian border, and later on, the Mazovian-Teutonic-Lithuanian border. Undoubtedly, Mazovia and Teutonic Knights claimed greater part of this area in accordance with the statement of the Troszyn Treaty – the border of the division of expansion zones was Biebrza in its middle and upper reaches. The fact that discussed areas constituted of a settlement void did not led the researches to think that until the time of the re-colonization of these lands the Mazovian-Lithuanian line border could not be determined. It was the settlement that formed the linear boundary.

Consequently, actions taken in the reign of Grand Duke Witold caused the fact that borderland has not been developed by the Masovians. For this reason, it had to be incorporated into Lithuania. The southern section of the eastern border of Mazovia developed differently. From the middle of the 11 th century the Mazovian-Ruthenian border zone ran along the central Narew, followed by the rivers Nur, Bug and the watershed of Liwiec and Bug, up to the border with Lesser Poland. Despite the temporary possession of Drohiczyn land conquered by Polish princes border remained stable untill the fall of Halych-Volyn Ruthenia and absorption of its territory by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Activities taken by prince Witold have caused acquirement depopulated Mazovian areas situated on the on the left bank of the Narew and the area between Liwiec and Bug (so-called Węgrów district). Consequently, Witold gained empty territories before the Mazovian dukes.

Historiography presents the idea that taking Lithuanian-Mazovian border was an intentional expansion of Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the expense of the native lands of the Duchy of Mazovia. At the same time, the analysis of historical sources shows that Lithuanians managed to overtake Mazovians during the colonization of unassigned areas, to which the Mazovian princes only pretended. In fact, the only Mazovian area occupied by Lithuania was the Tykocin district, which prince Witold ordered to take as a part of political extortion (Witold's aim was to force Janusz I to return the privilege to the Drohiczyn land dispensed to

the East Mazovian prince by the Polish king Władysław Jagiełło). Nevertheless, the act was not returned. Therefore, Tykocin permanently remained with Lithuania.

The second research problem presented in this dissertation will explore the social role of the Mazovian-Lithuanian border. This subject is presented in terms of legal theory and real actions taken on the Mazovian-Lithuanian interstate border. The analysis of border law, both Mazovian and Lithuanian, had its origins in Polish and Ruthenian customary law. It has been detailed over the centuries. What is more, it showed differences and similarities of the Mazovian and Lithuanian legal systems in terms of land law. This branch of law arose and evolved essentially for cases, where disputes related to land estates located in a specific administrative unit. Nonetheless, in cases of some border-related problems land law was only a suggestion.

One of the most fundamental issues was to report an argument over the land and borders to the central authority. Moreover, there was an attempt to create mutual Mazovian-Lithuanian commissioner court, which would have the power to pass a judgement. Many so-called boundary committees were appointed to resolve disagreements only on the specific side of the border. What is more, such committees were established, but only a few of them actually took place. The only attempt to establish the Mazovian-Lithuanian border duct was made in the 1540s due to the efforts of the Grand Duke of Lithuania –Zygmunt August. Nevertheless, it did not complete its mission.

The fact that the central government was unable to bring law and order led the borderland residents to act on their own. Thanks to preserved copies of the court books from the northern-eastern part of Mazovia it was possible to present how the local landowners and administration tried to solve their border-related issues. The cause of the conflict– the land and its limits – became the main reason of serious arguments that took place between the neighbours. Moreover, such misunderstandings very often evolved into murders, beatings, arson, looting.

Ultimately, in the era of Lublin Union, the border and neighbour disputes had existed for decades had gradually expired. It was not a result of adapting new laws or the final execution of the border duct. The reason behind this was the fact that the Podlaskie region (voivodeship) was incorporated into Poland in 1569. It has changed the status of the current Mazovian-Lithuanian interstate border to the internal border between the Mazowieckie and

Podlaskie regions, consequently, making them the one state – the Crown (Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth).