

Abstract

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The system of private towns in the land estates of the Radziwiłłs of Birże before 1695

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The Radziwiłłs of Birże were one of the most powerful magnate families in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Their land estates, often called latifundia, consisted of many villages and towns. Because of that, these towns have historically been referred as private ones. One of the most important centers in the estates of the Radziwiłłs were Birże – sometimes referred to as the "kamień węgielny (cornerstone)" of this line of the Radziwiłł family – Kiejdany and Śluck.

The lack of discussion in the scientific literature about the political system and the rights that characterized the mentioned private centers, as well as own interests, inspired the author to conduct research on this issue. The aim of the work was to examine and show the legal system of private towns in the land estates of the Radziwiłłs of Birże. Because of that, author analyzed orders of the above-mentioned towns and cities, i.e. Birże, Kiejdany and Śluck. In addition, author examined the laws which regulated the situation of the Jewish population in these cities, guilds and their articles, as well as regulations of municipal security.

The most important scientific research method used in the dissertation included the historical-legal method. Besides that, author used also formal-dogmatic method, and, in addition, sociological, descriptive and comparative methods. During quoting source materials, taken into account were instructions made by Kazimierz Lepszy.

The first chapter of the dissertation focused on describing the history of the studied private cities. At first, however, the characteristics of private cities, the purposes and methods of their establishment, and the benefits that such a center brought to the owner were discussed. Subsequently, the activities of the Radziwiłł princes and other factors influencing the history of their centers were shown. Next, the history of the town of Birże

was presented. The beginning of the history of this settlement was connected with granting it Magdeburg rights by Sigismund III Vasa in 1589. In the same year, Prince Krzysztof Piorun Radziwiłł granted the town his act, which gave the shape of municipal authorities, endowed Birże with lands and assigned other privileges and rights. Birże remained in the hands of the Radziwiłłs until the death of the last representative of this family – Ludwika Karolina. During its history, the town witnessed military operations twice, the first time in 1625, when it succumbed to the Swedish army, and also in the middle of the 17th century, when the town was also occupied by the Sweden. This was due to the presence of the Radziwiłłs fortress, one of the most important on the map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at that time. In the case of Kiejdany, the town was taken over by the Radziwiłł family in the form of a dowry brought by Anna Kiszczanka to the marriage with Krzysztof II Radziwiłł. The town received Magdeburg rights from Sigismund III Vasa during the reign of Krzysztof II's predecessors – the Kiszka family. During the reign of Radziwiłłs line, this center developed noticeably. As in the case of Birże, it remained in the possession of this family until the end of the life of its last representative. Just like Kiejdany, Słuck also came into the possession of the Radziwiłłs through marriage. The only heiress of the Słucko-Kopylskie duchy and the city of Słuck was Zofia Olelkowicz. In 1600, she married Janusz VI Radziwiłł, which marked the beginning of Radziwiłłs period in history of this city. Like Birże, Słuck was one of the most important fortresses on the map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, it was definitely a larger, economic center of the duchy, as well as the cultural and military one. Like other centers, it remained under the rule of the Radziwiłłs until the death of Ludwika Karolina Radziwiłł.

The legal system which existed in the examined centers was presented in the second, third and fourth chapters of the work, which also took into account such issues as obtained privileges and municipal rights, staff composition, offices, but also tax, commercial and investment regulations and freedoms. In case of occurrence, focus was also put on regulations of religious life and procedural orders. As first, the legal and political orders of Birże were presented. They were influenced by already mentioned Magdeburg law privileges, granted by Sigismund III Vasa in 1589, along with the prince's actions which defined the shape of the local authorities. In the case of Kiejdany, the granting of the Magdeburg privilege in 1590 was an equally important factor constituting its legal system, but equally important, especially in terms of defining the shape of the local authorities, was the activity of Janusz Radziwiłł and Bogusław Radziwiłł. In the course

of the research however, found records allowed to conclude that forgery of municipal ordinances and the confirmation of the forged municipal ordinances by the Sejm were to take place during the reign of the Bogusław Radziwiłł. In terms of the system and laws, Słuck was a separate case compared to the other centers discussed, as the Magdeburg law was not fully adopted in this private center. During the times of Radziwiłłs, they were given to the city in 1652 by Jan Kazimierz. However, the analysis of documentation, as well as research on the municipal session established by Bogusław Radziwiłł in 1654, allowed for the assessment that the royal privilege made almost no influence on the city, and the Magdeburg law was only one of several legal systems used, for example, in the work of courts. Mentioned chapters also presented the legal regulations relating to the Jewish population living in Birże, Kiejdany and Słuck. Generally, dominant were acts which regulated the settlement issues of the Jewish minority, especially by marking streets along which Jews could settle in towns, municipal duties of Jewish community and settling the issues of Jewish tenants. In the case of the town of Birże, author questioned the issue of Ludwika Karolina's act ordering the entire Jewish population to leave the town.

The fifth chapter concerned guild orders which occurred in the studied towns of the Radziwiłłs of Birże. These, apart from the solutions contained in the princely, official and municipal legislation, were mainly based on guild articles – orders of craftsmen's associations. Due to the turbulent history of the Birża stronghold, the recognizable guild orders were issued in the second half of the 17th century, as a result of the efforts of both the craftsmen themselves, as was the case with the shoemakers and the tailor and furrier guild, but also from the granting of the municipal authorities, as was, for example, in the case of Birże's weavers or blacksmiths. In the case of Kiejdany, the first guild orders were issued during the reign of the Kiszka family, in form of the association of tailors. During the reign of Radziwiłłs, guild orders were given to shoemakers, merchants, butchers, tanners, potters, carpenters, blacksmiths and linen makers. The apprentice association, a fraternity not present in the other surveyed centres, was an exceptional element of the Kiejdany's guild orders. In the case of Słuck, the information obtained from the research allowed for the statement that the first guild orders were issued during the rule of the Olelkowicz family. In the times of Radziwiłłs, orders were given to local safians, furriers, tailors, blacksmiths, locksmiths, weavers, hosiery makers, salt makers, saddlers, as well as a guild of musicians. The process of unification of guild statutes was noticeable in Słuck, which could have been caused by the practice of granting them mainly by the Duke

of Birże and Dubinki, Bogusław Radziwiłł, during whose reign most orders were issued. Also recognized was possibility of copying the functioning guild orders to towns where these brotherhoods were created under the decisions of officials, as it could have been the case of the Birże's blacksmith guild.

The sixth chapter of the work dealt with the laws regulating the issues of urban security in the examined cities. They usually manifested themselves both in the form of regulations which regarded the above matter in the internal dimension, drills, urban development and fire-fighting equipment, but also by establishing fire-fighting orders or specifying actions in the event of a threat of attack. In addition, the chapter also dealt with the relationship and regulations related to the contacts of the townspeople with the duke's military garrison or, if there was one, with the fortress. These areas were regulated particularly often in the case of Birże and Słuck, with a noticeably smaller scale of solutions in these matters in the case of Kiejdany.

The final part of the work was a summary in which the content presented in the pages of the doctoral dissertation was synthesized. It contains the most important findings made during the research, outlines the most important issues resulting from all the municipal laws of Birże, Kiejdany and Słuck, and assesses the activities and influence of the dukes on the urban centers ruled by them. In the author's opinion, the actions of owners were a manifestation of an active attitude towards the researched centers, both in legal terms and in the form of their support, which resulted in a positive impact on the presented private towns.