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The Political Activity of Mazovian Dukes between the 13th and 15th Century

Abstract

According to some historians, Mazovia once had a separate political existence, with a different form of economy, a social structure and customs that differed from those of the Crown, a separate dialect, and its own laws. One of the outward expressions of its separate existence was its own dynasty. To defend its independence, Mazovia entered into feudal contracts with Bohemia and Kazimierz III the Great. Mazovian dukes also paid homage to Władysław Jagiełło, not only as an acknowledgment of dependence, but also of certain obligations the dukes took upon themselves. After the death of Władysław Jagiełło, a group of Lesser Poland lords proposed the candidature of Siemowit V as king of Poland, and Mazovia had a chance to play a more significant role in Polish politics. It should be stressed that while Siemowit IV still enjoyed popularity on the political scene, his sons, particularly after they divided their patrimony among themselves in 1434, very soon lost significance. The period of the greatest regional disintegration of Mazovia began and the province soon lost any political significance.

Keywords

Mazovia; politics; dukes; alliances; law.

Mazovia, situated in the middle Vistula region, was one of the provinces forming part of the early Piast state. In the beginning of the 11th century, Płock became the centre of a vast province and the state run by Miecław. In his testament of 1138, Bolesław III Wrymouth merged Mazovia, Kuyavia, Sieradz and Łęczyca into a single province. Mazovia was detached from it in 1234, and began its independent political existence, ruled by the local branch of the Piast dynasty.

In the eyes of its neighbours – both Lithuania, the emperor, Hungary and the Teutonic Knights, Mazovia was a separate country from Poland¹. The inhabitants of both Lesser and Greater Poland had no doubt that Mazovia was “a natural part of the Kingdom”, that is Poland². Henryk Samsonowicz, a historian of Mazovia, believes the province existed as a separate state, with a different form of economy, a social structure and customs that differed from those of the Crown, a separate dialect, and moreover – its own laws³.

One of the outward expressions of its separate existence was its own dynasty. In the 1138 testament of Bolesław III Wrymouth, the Mazovian Province (Płock, Czersk) was inherited by Bolesław IV the Curly. At the end of his life, the Duke, who died in the beginning of 1173, also ruled the seniorate province with Krakow, Sandomierz, Łęczyca, Kalisz, Gniezno and Włocławek. After his death, Mazovia was inherited by his son Leszek. When Leszek died heirless in 1186, the province was taken over by Kazimierz II – the youngest son of Bolesław III Wrymouth. After the sudden death of Kazimierz II in 1194, his older brother, Leszek I the White, was elected by the magnates to the throne of Krakow, and his younger brother, Konrad, received the province of Mazovia and Kuyavia⁴. Duke Konrad I was an important figure for Mazovia. His expansive politics which aimed at ascending the throne of Krakow, though failed, initiated the separation of Mazovia from the other provinces of the Piast state. Konrad’s hopes for the Krakow throne first stirred after the assassination of Leszek I the White during the Congress of Gąsawa in November 1227. Under the statute of succession, after Leszek’s death, the throne should have gone to Bolesław V the Chaste, who, being only one year old at his father’s death, was in the custody of his mother Grzymiślawa and a group of Little Poland lords. In defence of the minor prince’s claims upon the throne, they allied themselves with the Great Poland Duke Władysław III Spindleshanks, who was entrusted with the rule and care of the minor successor to the throne of Krakow. Due to the increasing

¹ H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, in: *Dzieje Mazowsza do 1526 roku*, ed. A. Gieysztor, H. Samsonowicz, Warszawa 1994, p. 242; Cf. W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, Płock 1999, p. 30.

² *Iura Masoviae terrestria. Pomniki dawnego prawa mazowieckiego*, publ. J. Sawicki, in: *Fontes Historiae Masoviensis*, vol. 1 (1228–1471), Warszawa 1972, p. 113.

³ H. Samsonowicz, *Przesłanki tworzenia się narodu mazowieckiego na przełomie XV i XVI wieku*, in: *Narody, jak powstawały i wybijały się na niepodległość*, Warszawa 1989, p. 146.

⁴ A. Gieysztor, *Trzy stulecia najdawniejszego Mazowsza (połowa X – połowa XIII w.)*, in: *Dzieje Mazowsza do 1526 roku*, ed. A. Gieysztor, H. Samsonowicz, Warszawa 1994, p. 119–120.

difficulties in his own province, with the consent of Great Poland lords, Władysław then entrusted Krakow to the care of the Silesian duke, Henryk I the Bearded⁵. This was objected to by Duke Konrad, and in 1228 led to a raid on Krakow by Mazovian knights who aimed to remove Henryk and seize power. The Mazovian army was repelled at Skała, but Konrad managed to abduct Duke Henryk to Płock, where he made him swear an oath that he would not fight against him in the future⁶. Attempts at taking Krakow, though only briefly successful, were made by Konrad, practically until his death on 31 August 1247⁷. Thus, Konrad's ambitions of taking the supremacy were never fulfilled. His plans were taken up and continued by his grandson Konrad II⁸ who was the son of Duke Siemowit I. His ascension to the throne in Krakow in 1282, with the help of the knights of the Sandomierz province, who rebelled against Leszek the Black under the command of Janusz, the voivode of Sandomierz, and Krystyn, the castellan of Sandomierz, was objected to by his brother, Bolesław II, who used the support of Władysław I the Short to invade Konrad's province⁹. As a result, Konrad had first to repel the attack threatening his own province. This allowed Duke Leszek the Black to strengthen his position in Lesser Poland.

Konrad II did not give up on his hopes of ascending the throne in Krakow. In 1285, with the support of Lithuanian and Russian army units, he organized an expedition, but was forced to flee after the defeat at Bogucice on 3 May 1285 at the hand of Leszek's army. That failure made him finally give up his plans to seize the duchy of Krakow¹⁰. After the death of Duke Leszek the Black (30

⁵ R. Grodecki, *Bolesław Wstydlivy*, PSB, vol. 2, Kraków 1936, p. 260.

⁶ Duke Henryk tried to obtain the Pope's absolution from the oath he had sworn to Konrad. This suggests that he did not intend to give up his claims on the throne in Krakow. B. Włodarski, *Polityczne plany Konrada I księcia mazowieckiego*, Toruń 1971, p. 34; W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 31–32.

⁷ J. Miłkowski, *Konrad*, PSB, vol. 13, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1966–1967, p. 584–585. B. Włodarski, *Polityczne plany*, p. 55–61.

⁸ Konrad II, Duke of Czersk, was born about 1252. He was the son of Siemowit I and grandson of Konrad. In Mazovia, he ruled together with his brother Bolesław II, Duke of Płock, with whom he was for many years in conflict, possibly due to the overly ambitious political plans of Konrad II. Cf. B. Włodarski, *Konrad II*, PSB, vol. 13, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1967–1968, p. 587. W. Dworzaczek, *Genealogia*. Part 2. *Książęta mazowieccy z domu Piastów*, Warszawa 1959, Fig. 4.

⁹ B. Włodarski, *Polska i Ruś (1194–1340)*, Warszawa 1966, p. 199. B. Horodyski, *Bolesław II*, PSB, vol. 2, Kraków 1936, p. 267; W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 33–34.

¹⁰ E. Suchodolska, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIII – połowa XIV w.)*, in: *Dzieje Mazowsza do 1526 roku*, ed. A. Gieysztor, H. Samsonowicz, Warszawa 1994, p. 189.

November 1289)¹¹, Bolesław II¹², Konrad's brother and Duke of Płock, was elected to the throne in Krakow at the congress in Sandomierz with the support of Lesser Poland knights. This did not allow him to assume power, however, due to the opposition of Krakow burgesses, who feared the new duke would try to find a way to punish them for their earlier rejection of Konrad. In order to thwart Bolesław's plans, they turned for help to Henryk IV, Duke of Wrocław¹³. This gave rise to many years of rivalry with the participation of Henryk IV, Wenceslaus II – King of Bohemia, Przemysław II – Duke of Greater Poland, and Władysław the Elbow-High – Duke of Kuyavia and Łęczyca. This situation made Bolesław II focus his efforts mainly on maintaining his territory and the sovereignty of his duchy, which led him to enter into a number of alliances reflecting the current balance of power. In 1292, he supported Wenceslaus in his expedition aimed at subordinating Lesser Poland, and in 1296, became an ally of Władysław I the Elbow-High¹⁴. The assistance he provided to the Elbow-High could hardly be seen as proof of his support for the idea of Poland's unification under the Piast dynasty. It appears to have merely been the kind of mutual assistance usually provided to one another by the allied dukes.

The unsuccessful southward expansion of the Mazovian province made it turn towards the Teutonic Knights.

Władysław the Elbow-High initially saw Mazovia as his ally in his endeavours, but when he entered into an alliance with Lithuania, believing dukes to be the allies of the Teutonic Knights, in the 1320s he began to raid the Mazovian Province together with Lithuanians: “[...] fuit discordia inter regem Poloniae [...], et Wancko dux Masoviae [...], propter quod rex terram ipsius spoliari fecit et vastari”¹⁵.

¹¹ W. Dworzaczek, *Genealogia. Part 2. Książęta małopolscy i kujawscy oraz królowie polscy z domu Piastów i z domu andegaweńskiego*, Fig. 3.

¹² Bolesław II, Duke of Płock and Mazovia, was born after 1251 and died on May 20, 1313. W. Dworzaczek, *Genealogia. Part 2, Fig. 4*; B. Horodyski, *Bolesław II*, PSB, vol. 2, p. 267.

¹³ H. Samsonowicz attributes Konrad II's failure in the struggle for Krakow to the intense political activity of Krakow's bourgeoisie. H. Samsonowicz, *Piastowskie Mazowsze a Królestwo Polskie w XIII–XV wieku*, in: *Piastowie w dziejach Polski*, ed. R. Heck, Wrocław 1975, p. 121; W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 35.

¹⁴ E. Suchodolska, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIII – połowa XIV w.)*, p. 192. In order to secure Bolesław's allegiance, Waclaw gave his sister Kunegunda to him in marriage.

¹⁵ *Chronica Olivensis. Auctore Stanislao Abate Olivensi*, publ. W. Kętrzyński, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. 6, Warszawa 1961, p. 327.

Władysław's alliance with Lithuania strengthened the ties between Mazovia and the Teutonic Order. The treaty made between Mazovian dukes and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in Brodnica in 1326 was aimed at defence against common enemies¹⁶. Moreover, peace on the border between Mazovia and the lands of the Teutonic Order warranted stabilization and security on the part of the stronger neighbour. The turn towards the Order should also be seen as an attempt to find allies against political subordination, particularly at the time when Władysław unified the Polish state. It is from that time that the independence of Mazovia began to be emphasized.

In order to defend its independence, Mazovia made feudal allegiances to Bohemia and Kazimierz III the Great. Historians of Mazovia, such as Ewa Maleczyńska, Aleksander Świeżawski and Henryk Samsonowicz, believe that the province entered the road of feudal subordination to the Kingdom of Bohemia between 1346 and 1351¹⁷. According to Ewa Suchodolska, a feudal relationship may have existed, at most, with reference to the province of Płock and the Wizna and Zakroczym land¹⁸.

The relationship of Mazovian Dukes Siemowit III and Kazimierz I with Bohemia should be seen as a reaction to the earlier arrangement made between Bolesław, Duke of Płock, and Kazimierz the Great. They believed Bolesław had violated the law of succession by blood relationship – that would suggest he gave his province to Kazimierz in case of heirless death. Not willing to allow the rule of Płock to pass to the king, the dukes tried to oppose him with the support of Bohemia. It proved to be a poor warrantor of Mazovia's independence, however, particularly after the meeting of Kazimierz the Great

¹⁶ *Iura Masoviae*, vol. 1, p. 6; H. Samsonowicz, *Piastowskie Mazowsze*, p. 122. The treaty was made between Grand Master Werner von Orseln and each of the Mazovian dukes: Siemowit II, Trojden I and Waclaw. Cf. E. Suchodolska, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIII – połowa XIV w.)*, p. 201.

¹⁷ E. Maleczyńska, *Książęce lenno mazowieckie 1351–1526*, Lwów 1929, p. 30f. A. Świeżawski, *Rawskie księstwo Piastów mazowieckich. Dzieje polityczne*, Łódź 1975, p. 38–39. In his opinion, homage paid to Charles IV by Siemowit II and Kazimierz I must therefore have taken place before 1348. H. Samsonowicz, *Piastowskie Mazowsze*, p. 123. E. Maleczyńska dates this event between 1346–1350, i.e. between the date Charles IV ascended the throne of Bohemia and the rapprochement between Mazovia and Kazimierz in 1350.

¹⁸ In the document of 1351, Kazimierz the Great promised Dukes Siemowit III and Kazimierz that he would release them from homage paid to Charles IV from the Duchy of Płock. Cf. *Iura Masoviae*, No. 10, p. 10. They inherited the Duchy of Płock by succession from Bolesław III, Duke of Płock, Sochaczew and Wizna. Feudal dependence may thus have followed from the statute of succession. Cf. E. Suchodolska, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIII – połowa XIV w.)*, p. 209–210. Also, the lands inherited by the sons of Trojden I after the death of Siemowit II, Duke of Wizna and Rawa, in 1345, may have formed part of the Bohemian fiefdom.

and Charles IV in Namysłów in 1348. A thaw in relations between the two monarchs resulted in the Mazovian dukes losing the support they had expected from Bohemia, in their struggle against the Polish king, and finally led them to enter into a feudal contract with Kazimierz¹⁹. The date of that contract is not known precisely. Henryk Paszkiewicz believes it was signed in 1351²⁰. It was not until the document of 1355, however, in which the property of the deceased Kazimierz I, Duke of Czersk, Rawa, Sochaczew and Warsaw, was given under feudal law to his brother Siemowit III, that this feudal relationship was clearly defined: “[...] per mortem Illustris principis domini Kazimieri pie memoriae filiastrī nostri carissimi et feudalis Incliti ducis Mazoviae racione feudi [...]”²¹.

Thus, Ewa Suchodolska is probably right to believe that the process of transforming Mazovia into a fiefdom of the Polish king took place between 1351 and 1355²². The contract was time-barred, as Kazimierz the Great exempted the Duke of Mazovia from any obligations if it turned out that he died without leaving a male heir: “Preterea Regalis Mayestas nisi crescat in beneficiis nichil se putat deisse ea de causa cum eodem principe Graciam facientes ampliozem post curriculum vite nostre eciam prole nostra masculina tunc extante castrum Ploczsk [...] cum suis districtibus [...] de iure racione donacionis per filium [...] duci Mazovie fratri nostro et sue posteritati in totum restauramus et nullum alium preter [...] sub nomine feudi ut est premissum”²³.

Such a situation continued until the death of Kazimierz the Great in 1370. His successors did not consider themselves obliged to respect the contract which the king had entered into with Mazovian dukes. Louis I of Hungary demanded that Siemowit IV pay him homage. The latter’s refusal gave rise to a conflict²⁴. The king’s unexpected death initiated rivalry over the throne, with Siemowit IV as one of the claimants. The Greater Poland party, striving to protect the rights they believed to have been violated by the Lesser Poland lords, put

¹⁹ E. Maleczyńska, *Książęce lenno mazowieckie*, p. 28–31.

²⁰ H. Paszkiewicz, *W sprawie zhołdowania Mazowsza przez Kazimierza Wielkiego*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 24 (1924), p. 6. J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz I*, PSB, vol. 12, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1966–1967, p. 280–281.

²¹ *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Księstwa mazowieckiego*, publ. J. T. Lubomirski, Warszawa 1863, No. 77, p. 69.

²² E. Suchodolska, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIII – połowa XIV w.)*, p. 210–211.

²³ *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Księstwa mazowieckiego*, publ. J. T. Lubomirski, No. 77 p. 79.

²⁴ King Kazimierz the Great died without a male heir, and was therefore succeeded by Louis, King of Hungary, whose mother Elżbieta, daughter of Władysław the Elbow-high, acted as his regent in Poland for some time. N. Davies, *Boże Igrzysko. Historia Polski*, vol. 1, Kraków 1987, p. 156–157.

forward Siemowit IV as a candidate to the throne. The Lesser Poland party, on the other hand, supported Louis I's younger daughter – Jadwiga. Siemowit was not a passive witness to these developments; his response was an armed raid by Sigismund of Luxemburg, the deceased king's son-in-law, who invaded Mazovia and inflicted much destruction²⁵. Attacked by the Hungarian army, Siemowit called a truce in 1383, under which he had to give up his claims to the throne, and his difficult financial situation forced him to pledge Zawkrze to the Teutonic Order²⁶.

In the succeeding fight over the crown, it is worth noting the role of Polish burgesses, particularly those of Krakow, Kalisz and Brześć Kujawski, who explicitly opposed the candidature of the Mazovian duke²⁷. The burgesses were more inclined towards the Lesser Poland concept and the candidature of Władysław II Jagiełło, believing such solution to the political situation would provide them with an opportunity for their own development²⁸.

Thus, Siemowit paid homage to Jagiełło as king, and in return was granted the Belz land²⁹. Despite having paid homage, the duke of Mazovia followed his own policy with respect to the neighbouring Teutonic Knights. In 1382, 1386

²⁵ H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 216–217.

²⁶ W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 37–38. Concerning the fight for the throne after the death of Louis I of Hungary, see W. Moszczeńska, *Rola polityczna rycerstwa wielkopolskiego w czasie bezkrólewia po Ludwiku Węgierskim*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 25 (1925), p. 40, 135, 144f. Duke Siemowit IV pledged Zawkrze in 1384 for 3600 threescores of Prague groschen. Cf. *Słownik historyczno-geograficzny województwa płockiego w średniowieczu*, ed. A. Borkiewicz-Celińska, vol. 3. Mazowsze, b. 1, Wrocław 1980, p. 8.

²⁷ A similar reaction of the Krakow burgesses had taken place earlier with respect to Dukes Konrad I and Konrad II. The activation of that social class prevented Siemowit from ascending the throne in Krakow. Concerning the role of the bourgeoisie in the fight over the throne with Duke Siemowit IV, see W. Moszczeńska, *Rola polityczna rycerstwa wielkopolskiego*, p. 144f.; H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 216–218.

²⁸ H. Samsonowicz, *Piastowskie Mazowsze*, p. 126; W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, pp. 37–38. Supporting the candidature of the Mazovian duke to the throne, the burgesses would have lost the possibility to pursue business relations with Lithuania, seeing the politics and disputes Siemowit IV had with this neighbour.

²⁹ Siemowit IV paid homage first through representatives, and then in person, even before the coronation of Jagiełło in March 1386. A. Prohaska, *Hołdy Mazowieckie 1386–1430*, in: *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności Wydziału historyczno-filozoficznego*, vol. 22, Kraków 1905, p. 3. The decision to grant the Belz land to the Duke of Mazovia was much opposed by the Polish lords. Cf. J. Krzyżaniakowa, J. Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiełło*, Wrocław 1990, p. 159. Jagiełło also paid Siemowit IV ten thousand grzywnas as compensation for withdrawal from Kujawy, which allowed him to recover Zawkrze and Płońsk from the Teutonic Knights in 1399. Cf. H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 220.

and 1389, he formed alliances with them in order to secure the border between Mazovia and the Teutonic territory³⁰. The complexity of these relationships can be seen in the events which took place in the 1390s, related to the political rapprochement between Duke Janusz I and King Władysław Jagiełło. Trying to break up their alliance, the Teutonic Knights attempted to intimidate the duke by abducting him and burning the castle he was building in Złotoryja on the Narew River³¹. Upon the king's intervention, the duke was set free, but he never succeeded at restoring the former relations with the Teutonic Order, despite his best endeavours. Even his willingness to meet the Grand Master of the Order, in order to resolve the disputes, was disregarded by the Teutonic party³². This was related to the policy of the Grand Master, who was willing to tolerate the weaker neighbour as long as it showed obedience, and could serve as a convenient barrier against the king, who was growing in power³³.

The great war with the Teutonic Order in the years 1409–1411 became a litmus test which clearly showed the position of Mazovian dukes with regard to the Teutonic Knights. Siemowit IV did not personally participate in the Grunwald war: he only supplied, to the king, a certain number of knights under the command of his son – unlike Duke Janusz I, who, still remembering his recent humiliation at the hand of the Order, led his army to war with the Teutonic Knights in person³⁴. The complex situation of Mazovia is reflected in the attitude of the Bishop of Płock, Jakub of Korzkiew, who officially prohibited his subjects from engaging in the Teutonic war³⁵. In fact, Mazovia did not benefit at all from the Polish-Teutonic war. On the contrary, the marches of troops caused much devastation and did not evoke any enthusiasm of either

³⁰ Alliances were formed by both dukes, Siemowit IV and Janusz I, Duke of Wyszogród, Ciechanów, Zakroczym, Czersk and Warsaw. Cf. *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni ducis Lituaniae (1376–1430)*, publ. A. Prochaska, in: *Monumenta mediæ aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, vol. 6, Kraków, 1882, No. 50, p. 17; H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 219.

³¹ W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 39.

³² W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 39.

³³ One attempt at easing the feuds between neighbours in the first decade of the 15th century was the proposal of the Grand Master who offered to meet the Mazovian dukes, including Janusz I. Cf. *Regesta historia – diplomatica Ordinis p. Mariae Teutonicorum (1198–1525)*, vol. 1, publ. E. Joachim, W. Hubatsch, Göttingen 1965, p. 819; H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 220.

³⁴ Sobol, *Janusz I*, PSB, vol. 10, p. 582.

³⁵ W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 40.

the dukes or the people³⁶. Moreover, by way of compensation the king had promised certain grants to Dukes Siemowit IV and Janusz I, but never kept his word as due to insufficient protection on his part, the promised lands came to be occupied by the Teutonic Knights³⁷. Thus the hopes of Mazovia failed to materialize, and the king did not show much interest in the losses sustained by Mazovian dukes during the war. The king's attitude further fuelled separatist tendencies in Mazovia, the most explicit example of which was the address of Stanisław Pawłowski, the Archdeacon of Płock, at the synod in Łęczyca in 1425, who declared the independence of Mazovia in the name of Duke Siemowit IV. As a result, King Władysław Jagiełło, with the consent of Pope Martin V, burdened the ecclesial province of Gniezno with *subsidium charitativum* of 20 000 florins³⁸. In response, the duke's representative declared that the order of the Holy See did not apply to the diocese of Płock, as it was part of Mazovia, which had its own sovereign dukes not subject to the Polish king or any other ruler. Such explicit declaration of the status of the duchy of Mazovia with respect to the Crown caused an immediate reaction of King Władysław Jagiełło. He accused Duke Siemowit IV of felony, or failure to perform the feudal obligation, and called a congress in Brześć Litewski to resolve the problem³⁹. More charges were then added: of forging coins and preparing an assassination attempt on the king⁴⁰. In result, the duke was forced to promise to pay homage. He did not do it in person, however; the promise was made on his behalf by his sons: Siemowit V and Kazimierz II⁴¹. The strained situation relaxed with the death of Siemowit IV at the end of 1425 or beginning of 1426. Before homage was paid, Mazovian dukes tried to ally themselves against

³⁶ *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, publ. A. Lewicki, in: *Monumenta aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, vol. 12, Kraków 1891, nr 116, p. 153. The desolation inflicted by the army marches through Mazovia during the expedition to Grunwald included e.g. Bądryń, a village near Ciechanów, which was at that time pledged to the Teutonic Knights. For that reason the area was devastated, and many people were killed.

³⁷ As compensation, Duke Janusz I was to receive Ostróda and Nidzica, and Siemowit IV – Szczytno and Działdowo. H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje polityczne. (połowa XIV – początek XVI w.)*, p. 220.

³⁸ The Pope allowed the Polish king to burden the Gniezno Province financially on the condition that he would organize an expedition against the Hussite heresy spreading in Bohemia. H. Samsonowicz, *Przesłanki tworzenia się narodu mazowieckiego na przełomie XV i XVI wieku*, p. 147.

³⁹ W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 40–41.

⁴⁰ W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 40–41; J. Krzyżaniakowa, J. Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiełło*, p. 307–308.

⁴¹ E. Maleczyńska, *Książęce lenno*, p. 95.

King Władysław Jagiełło with Emperor Sigismund. To that end, they went to Vienna and accepted the supremacy of the emperor, King of Bohemia, and his successor to the Bohemian throne, the Austrian Duke Albrecht V. This did not improve their situation at all, but additionally strained the already tense relations with the Polish king, which in fact resulted in accelerating the homage. Dukes Siemowit V, Kazimierz II, Trojden I and Władysław I, who had acceded to power before August 1426, after their father's death, as non-divisory brothers, all, except for Kazimierz, paid homage to Władysław Jagiełło. Kazimierz II may have delayed paying homage due to the fact he had found an ally in Duke Witold. In his letter of 14 June 1430 to the Grand Duke of Lithuania, the king asked him to admonish the Mazovian Duke Kazimierz, who was then staying at his court, to pay homage at the appointed time: "Insuper frater carrisime, dominus Kazimirus dux Mazouie nepos noster apud vestram fraternitatem est, qui eciam omagium fidelitatis sicut ceteri fratres sui nobis facere debuit et hucusque non fecit. Petimus igitur vestram fraternitatem [...], que erunt facienda in termino prefato Bolkoni assignato"⁴².

In his reply to the king, Duke Witold tried to excuse Kazimierz, citing the principle according to which only the eldest brother was required to fulfil that obligation⁴³.

The act of homage was not only performed as an acknowledgment of dependence, but was also related to certain duties which the dukes took upon themselves. They included prohibition on acting to the detriment of the feudal lord, the duty to provide courtly service and armed assistance when needed. The fact that the Mazovian dukes performed their feudal obligations is proved, for example, by the participation of Siemowit V and Kazimierz II in the expedition led by Władysław Jagiełło against Świdrygiełło in 1431, following which the king, in appreciation of the services provided by Siemowit V, granted him

⁴² *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni ducis Lithuaniae (1376–1430)*, publ. A. Prohaska, in: *Monumenta medii aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, vol. 6, Cracoviae 1882, n. 1415, p. 904–905.

⁴³ Duke Kazimierz II did not pay homage until 1430. *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni ducis Lithuaniae (1376–1430)*, nr 180, p. 241–244. E. Maleczyńska, *Książęce lenno*, p. 96–97. The principle according to which the eldest descendant in the male line was obliged to pay homage was practiced in the French world, but was not consistent with Polish customs.

Żydaczów together with a large estate⁴⁴. Siemowit V also participated with Duke Bolesław in the crowning ceremony of Władysław of Varna⁴⁵.

The joint politics of the sons of Siemowit IV with respect to Mazovia could have warranted its political stability and power. Seeing perhaps the need for united action, the dukes brought themselves to conclude an agreement on mutual assistance and defence of their common rights⁴⁶. In practice, however, that agreement was far from implemented, particularly after 1434.

Even though at the end of the 1430s an opportunity emerged for Mazovia to play a more significant role in Polish politics, when after the death of Władysław Jagiełło a group of Lesser Poland lords proposed the candidature of Siemowit V as the king of Poland, that concept, Henryk Samsonowicz believes, did not stand much chance of ever becoming reality, and even Siemowit V did not seem to treat it too seriously⁴⁷.

The growing strength of the Polish state and the weakened position of the Teutonic Order after the Battle at Grunwald allowed Poland to gradually achieve a strong political position on the international arena.

As for Mazovia itself, while Siemowit IV still enjoyed popularity on the political scene, his sons, particularly after they divided their patrimony among themselves in 1434, very soon lost significance. The period of the greatest regional disintegration of Mazovia began, and the province soon lost any political significance.

Mazovians still retained a sense of a separate identity, which was to be consistently suppressed by Polish kings. The province was incorporated into the Crown in 1526, and the sole trace of its independent identity remained in its legal customs. While Mazovian nobility formally accepted the laws of the Crown in 1576, they reserved the right to retain some of their own regulations. They were collected in 46 articles, called “Mazovian Exceptions”, and remained

⁴⁴ *Iura Masoviae*, vol. 1, nr 18, 24, 76; W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 42.

⁴⁵ In the letter of October 14, 1441, King Władysław of Varna requested the armed assistance of the Mazovian Duke Siemowit V. *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni ducis Lituaniae (1376–1430)*, vol. 2, No. 280, p. 424–426.

⁴⁶ Kodeks dyplomatyczny Księstwa mazowieckiego, No 181, p. 197–198.

⁴⁷ The candidature of Siemowit V to the throne was supported by: Spytek of Melsztyn, Dzierżek of Rytwiany and Strasz of Kościelniki. These lords put forward the candidature of the Duke of Mazovia in opposition to the party supporting the Bishop of Krakow, Z. Oleśnicki. Cf. W. Graczyk, *Paweł Giżycki, biskup płocki (1439–1463)*, p. 43.

in force up until the partitions of Poland⁴⁸. When the Mazovian line of the Piast dynasty became extinct, Mazovia became politically subordinated to the Crown.

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⁴⁸ *Historia ustroju i prawa polskiego*, ed. J. Bardach, B. Leśnodorski, M. Pietrzak, Warszawa 1994, p. 189.