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## The ecclesiastical proletariat? The income of the lesser clergy in the late Middle Ages exemplified with the accounting book of St. Martin's altar in Nysa\*

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**Słowa kluczowe:** historia Kościoła, historia Śląska, duchowieństwo, późne średniowiecze

In German historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lower clergy was often referred to as “the ecclesiastical proletariat” (“das klerikale Proletariat”). This resulted from the belief that the large group of poorly paid clergy created, at the end of the Middle Ages, the social base of the Reformation movement, which was quickly spreading all over Central Europe, from the third decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward. In support of this concept were just a few examples of poorly salaried benefices and some complaints from priests about their devastating financial situation in late 15<sup>th</sup> century literature. The validity of this perspective was critiqued by later historians, who set out to determine what clergymen really earned. “Were priests actually poor?” asked Enno Bünz<sup>1</sup> in his article on the clergy of Thuringia. His detailed research, based on the register of the so-called *subsidium caritativum*, paid by the clergy of the Mainz diocese, provides a much more varied picture of the material situation of this social group. The scope of their earnings spanned from several to around fifty marks<sup>2</sup>. A similar result was obtained by Eugeniusz Wiśniowski, who studied the income of clergy recorded in the *Liber retaxationum* of the Cracow diocese<sup>3</sup>.

Both studies are of indisputable importance for the presentation of the general state of clerical finances, yet they do not exhaust this complex issue. An unavoidable drawback of the fiscal registers upon which both abovementioned researchers based their studies is the recording only of an estimated sum of earnings. The actual amounts which the clergymen obtained remain to a large extent elusive. Calculations based upon the data from foundation acts are tainted with an even larger scale of imprecision. The only source which allows for a truly precise appraisal of income from prebends remain personal bills. These sources are rare and are hitherto known only to the owners of parish benefices<sup>4</sup>. In this context, the accounting book of the altar of St. Martin in the Nysa parish church is quite exceptional. This source allows us, like no other, to discover the real proceeds from altar stipends at the end of the Middle Ages. This is not the only valuable information with which this hitherto unexploited material provides us. The Nysa

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<sup>1</sup> Bünz E. 2004, pp. 57–58.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pp. 58–60. Also: Bünz E. 2000, pp. 67–86.

<sup>3</sup> Wiśniowski E. 2004, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> See: Bünz E. 2017, pp. 19–20.

accounts also provide information on the ways of executing provisions, the system of cash transfers and the costs associated with the handling of altar benefices. It is in many ways a sort of useful peephole through which we can observe the microcosm of the lower clergy.

Before we commence with the analysis of our source, a brief description of the material situation of the lower clergy of Nysa is called for. The appointment of the first altar benefices in the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century made it necessary for the founders to secure material assets for the clergymen serving them. Initially, particular estates, market stalls or tithes were foreordained for this end. This is illustrated by the example of the oldest Nysa foundation from 1282, the salary for which was to be provided by an island on the Nysa Kłodzka, a market stall and three gardens near the town<sup>5</sup>. The wages of the chantry priest of the first ministry founded in the church of St. James were to come from two *mansi* in the village of Strobice, a parcel with a house and one tenth of the mayor's revenue from the mill in Nysa. The priest also obtained the right to the free grinding of flour in the abovementioned mill<sup>6</sup>. The founder, Nysa advocate Jan, was also allotted to cede to the chantry the tithes from his own property in Głębinów as well as from the meadows around Nysa<sup>7</sup>. The funds of the prebend in the chapel of St. Michael from around 1307 were similarly organized, drawing on the proceeds from land in the village of Regulice and tithes from two villages belonging to the founder<sup>8</sup>. Only with the development of the credit market did it become possible to base a salary on cash rents. The first foundation of this type was made by Bertold Fulschussil in 1326, allocating for the chantry priest of the Corpus Christi chapel seven marks of rent from his own estate<sup>9</sup>. However, we can still find examples of the old practise of ceding the income from land as late as the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A farm in Sękowice was to provide the endowment for the altar of the Holy Trinity (1360), and the founder of the chantry in the Old Town church left its owner his farm including pigs and other animals (1378)<sup>10</sup>. The hassle of managing this sort of property spurred clergymen to attempt to exchange them for cash incomes fairly quickly. Still, some income from property is recorded as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>, and the purchase of pensions in kind also sporadically appears<sup>12</sup>. A similar system, comprising the securing of foundations from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century by property in land is confirmed also in other Central European towns<sup>13</sup>.

The Nysa examples clearly present the evolutionary character of changes in the financing system. Initially, founders secured pensions with their own estates<sup>14</sup>, and only in the last quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century did the acquisition of rents on the open market, typical for the late Middle Ages, become common. This last procedure delayed the foundation process, as it required the slow collection of particular payments. For example, Margaret, widow of Gunderam, submitting

<sup>5</sup> SUB 5, nr 479.

<sup>6</sup> SUB 6, nr 358.

<sup>7</sup> SR 3821.

<sup>8</sup> SR 2604, 2724, 2809, 2924, 3024; AAW, DL, sg. X. 29.

<sup>9</sup> APWr, Rep. 102, nr 21.

<sup>10</sup> APOp, Akta m. Nysy, nr 40; regest: CDS 36, nr 47.

<sup>11</sup> For example: in 1437 Francis Czegenbeyn gave the priests of the chantry of St. Michael in the parish church half a *mansus* in the village Konradowa, NU, nr 119.

<sup>12</sup> In some cases the clergy themselves decided to purchase a provision in kind, for example John Koemil, chantry priest of the Corpus Christi altar at the church of St. James payed for a deputy including a measure of grain and the right to keep pigs in a nearby village (1392), *ibidem*, nr 29.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Graf S. 1998, pp. 249–250.

<sup>14</sup> This was the way the endowment of the abovementioned foundation of Bertold Fulschussil from 1326 was secured, as was that of Heza, widow of Herdan (1361). In the latter case, the progressing commercialization of financial relations is even more visible. Heza bequeathed to the holder of the new prebend income from two mills and ponds in Sękowice and Regulice, adding a clause stating that her descendants had the right to exchange that provision for 8 marks of rent, NL, nr 45.

a request to found an altar in the church of St. James in 1361, possessed a rent list for 5 marks as well as 50 marks in cash, which were to serve the purchase of the rest of the salary<sup>15</sup>. Since borrowers usually needed a loan of 5–10 marks, less often 15–20 marks, the completion of the altar fund usually consisted of several payments. The management of these payments was troublesome for the owners. In the event of the repurchase of the debt by the payer, money had to be invested in a new pension. Founders sometimes made the stipulation that such a transaction should only be made by the clergyman in agreement with the patron of the altar<sup>16</sup>. The new resources should be also incorporated into the goods of the benefice, which required a new Episcopal document<sup>17</sup>. In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the most common problem was the loss of income as a result of the dilapidation of buildings with liabilities. There is a number of diplomas from this period, in which representatives of the clergy agree to a reduction of the amounts they are owed, which was undoubtedly the only way of executing any payment at all<sup>18</sup>.

The average income from altar prebends in Central Europe oscillated between several and over a dozen marks. Relations in Nysa did not differ from those standards. It is most difficult to estimate the salaries connected to the earliest foundations, which relied on income from land properties. These were naturally immeasurable and dependent on environmental factors. Some information about the generosity of donators is brought to light by later documents concerning the transformation of provisions into flat rate rents. In the act of exchange of tithes belonging to the altar donation of St. Michael from 1409, the fixed sum of 12 marks and 16 *grossi* was denoted for the rent<sup>19</sup>. Founders in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century usually secured annual incomes of 8 to 9 marks for the clergymen, though slightly higher dispositions (10 to 11 marks) also occurred. The rent was never below 6 marks, and some of the poorest prebends were additionally supported by other subsidies. The first 15 years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century brought certain changes. Among the seven benefices appointed at this time, five obtained dotations of 14 to 20 marks.<sup>20</sup> Such generosity did not occur again. Later foundations usually received 10 to 12 marks, the only exemption *in plus* being the foundation of the wealthy townswoman Anna Rudelynne, who allocated 13.5 marks for the priest who served at her altar<sup>21</sup>. It is also significant that the brothers Achatius and Nicholas Wenke, who initially assigned 20 marks yearly income for the chantry priest of the Ten Thousand Martyrs altar, after a few years decided to cut this sum by one half, and to give the rest to charity<sup>22</sup>. This is surely a sign that this amount was seen as decent and sufficient in the general view. Examples from other towns in Silesia confirm that 10 to 12 marks was the typical chantry priest income<sup>23</sup>. The only exemption here was the capital city of Wrocław, where the average stipend in the parish church was between 11 and 14.5 marks<sup>24</sup>. The lowest Nysa benefice was at this time 6 marks, and five oscillated from 7.5 to 8.5. Two of the last were shortly upgraded. As it seems, the sum of 5 marks in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and 6 marks in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a sort of minimum wage, that should be earned by a clergyman. John Czambor, founding the chantry at the altar of Saints Stanislaus, Adalbert and George ob-

<sup>15</sup> CDS 36, nr 34.

<sup>16</sup> More: Wólkiewicz E. 2011, p. 170.

<sup>17</sup> NL, nr 511.

<sup>18</sup> See below.

<sup>19</sup> AAW, DL, sign. X. 29.

<sup>20</sup> A much larger range of incomes of the lower clergy is attested to in German towns, e.g. in Hamburg they ranged from 7 to 110 marks, cf. Kurze D. 1976, pp. 292–293.

<sup>21</sup> AAW, II b 3, f. 92v.

<sup>22</sup> See: Wólkiewicz E. 2014, pp. 347–348.

<sup>23</sup> More: Wólkiewicz E. 2011, pp. 167–168. Reductions of stipends were rather rare, but particular cases are well known. See: Gerlic H., Jucezka S. 2010, p. 204.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, pp. 200–201.

served concisely that if its accompanying salary was to fall beneath 5 marks, the priest was not obliged to perform liturgical services<sup>25</sup>.

The scope of liturgical duties associated with an altar stipend played a certain role in its amount. For example, the holder of the prebend for the altar of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Virgin, Saints Simon and Jude with an endowment of 10 marks was to celebrate just two masses a week<sup>26</sup>. Founders who wished three masses a week supplied an income of 12 to 14 marks. These tariffs were not totally binding, as shown by the foundation of John Bies from 1455, who called for the celebration of three masses a week for a rent of just 10 marks. Characteristically, however, in 1487, the salary was raised to the customary 12 marks<sup>27</sup>. Examples from other Silesian towns show analogous relations between costs and expectations<sup>28</sup>.

It is worth noting that some founders reserved the right to reduce the clergymen's income with each neglected service. There are late 14<sup>th</sup> century mentions of the payment of one *grossus* of penalty for each mass omitted. 15<sup>th</sup> century documents speak of a fine of two or three *grossi*<sup>29</sup>. The abovementioned sums also reveal the estimated cost of celebrating one mass in late Medieval Silesia<sup>30</sup>. This was the sort of sum that chantry priests could earn additionally by saying mass for a private individual. This market did, however, have its limitations. Most masses ordered went undoubtedly to the parson and his vicars. The parson had a complete monopoly over the stewardship of sacraments, including first and foremost profits from holding funerals. In foundation acts from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, rigorous clauses were often included that the beneficiary of the stipend was not to receive any benefits from this type of service<sup>31</sup>. In the later Middle Ages, some income was available to lower clergymen through the foundation of ceremonial services. Their sponsors reserved certain sums for the fee of the votive mass itself, celebrated by one or many priests. This arrangement was convenient for some founders, as it allowed them to obtain a commemorative service for a lower sum than the ordaining of a separate altar stipend<sup>32</sup>.

By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, mentions of poor clergymen begin to appear in Nysa sources. The funding document from 1389 for lighting in the church of St. James includes a fragment stating that the poorest chantry priests, who cannot afford their own candles, should have precedence in the use of the funds<sup>33</sup>. Foundations for poor priests are testified not long

<sup>25</sup> CDS 36, nr 33.

<sup>26</sup> NU, nr 102.

<sup>27</sup> CDS 36, nr 204, 302.

<sup>28</sup> This dependency is best shown in cases in which the founders temporarily kept possession of part of the endowment. E.g. the Głogów townswoman Barbara Schultis, giving only 4 marks of rent (of the planned 12) required of the chantry priest the celebration of just one mass weekly. Only upon obtaining the entirety of the endowment after her death was the priest obliged to double his liturgical duties, AAW, II b 3, f. 73r–73v. Nicholas Tile of Namysłów, founding an altar in the church at the local hospital of the Holy Spirit, also kept part of the stipend as his annuity. The attached clause stated that the chantry priest's responsibilities were therefore to be reduced to one mass weekly in this initial period (1437), AAW, II b 1, f. 57v–58r. Examples of similar correlations for foundations in the church of St. Maria Magdalene in Wrocław are collected by: Gerlic H., Jujeczka S. 2010, pp. 199–200.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Wólkiewicz E. 2011, p. 175.

<sup>30</sup> A number of years ago, Kurt Engelbert attempted to calculate the cost of ordering a mass in the late Middle Ages. His estimates must however be used cautiously, as they are based on the nominal sums of stipends, divided by the number of services in a year. The scholar failed to take into account not only the significant diversification of rents and the question of their actual collectability, but also the costs of handling of the stipends, cf. Engelbert K. 1937, pp. 78–81. The diversity of the costs of liturgic services is testified to by accounting sources from this period, cf. Jedin H. 1939, p. 289.

<sup>31</sup> See: Wólkiewicz E. 2011, pp. 183–184.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Wólkiewicz E. 2014, pp. 250–254.

<sup>33</sup> APWr, Rep. 102, nr 89.

after, suggesting that there existed already in this period a group of clergy that did not possess the most basic liturgical books<sup>34</sup>. This problem grew along with the reduction of prebends in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The destruction that was the result of the Hussite wars caused some of the incomes from rents to be lost. Some estates in the possession of the clergy were also destroyed, and their owners were not always able to rebuild them of their own means. An area of land belonging to the Nysa chantry priest Jodocus Kolner was still empty in 1479, as can be concluded from a document from that year. The priest had made no profit from it for some time, as is mentioned in the document: “dy gar langezeit wuste gewest ist”. The owner decided to give it to the owner of the adjacent plot — the cartwright Michael Kessler, who was obliged to rebuild the former buildings and in exchange for the donation to pay a rent of 36 *grossi* yearly<sup>35</sup>. Many cases are confirmed of clergymen forgoing rent for a number of years, and later agreeing to a smaller sum<sup>36</sup>. In some cases, clergymen agreed to a permanent reduction of their salaries<sup>37</sup>. Despite a series of individual decrees, issued beginning in the 1440s, the question of vacant plots was not regulated in the long term. And so the town council of Nysa asked bishop Rudolph to resolve the issue of unoccupied parcels in the town. In an act from June 5, 1480, the bishop decided that all plots of land whose owners do not begin rebuilding within three months will become town property and the municipal authorities may develop them using town funds, and bestow them on anyone they choose. Because the rents which were dependent on the destroyed buildings were one of the obstacles for their owners to rebuild them, the bishop decreed that this restriction should be eliminated, therefore abolishing any claims of lay and clergy pensioners<sup>38</sup>.

In this context, the main question remains: what were the sums that chantry priests actually obtained from their prebends? Setting aside losses of rent resulting from damage to buildings, the execution of payment in itself was sometimes troublesome. The unique source that is the mentioned accounting book of one of the altar donations in the Nysa church of St. James allows us to examine the actual income of the clergy. The benefice of the altar of St. Martin, George, Adalbert, Barbara, Catherine and Dorothy was funded at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and its first noted owner was Paul Scheiban, who assumed it before May 1st, 1406<sup>39</sup>. The founder of this chantry undoubtedly came from the Nysa patriciate. It would be plausible to see Henry Czeicz, mayor of the city in the 80s of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in this role<sup>40</sup>. Around 1440 the rights of patronage to the aforementioned chantry belonged to Francis Czeicz and his female relatives (sisters?) married to members of Nysa patriciate families or local lesser nobility<sup>41</sup>. It is not inconceivable, however, that these rights were inherited from the affluent Libingi family. In the 1370s, James Libingi purchased land and rent from Bodzanów (Langendorf), where the basic endowment of the chantry was coming from<sup>42</sup>. The association of this family with the foundation may also indirectly be confirmed by the acquisition of this benefice by John Libingi

<sup>34</sup> More: Wólkiewicz E. (in preparation).

<sup>35</sup> APWr, Rep. 102, nr 815.

<sup>36</sup> APOp, Akta m. Nysy, nr 584, f. 151r.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. John Werner, the owner of a benefice at the altar of Saints Michael, John the Evangelist, Wenceslaus and Hedwig in the parish church, renounced one third of the rent he was entitled to from a house on Weaver street (1472), NU, nr 154. Also: NU, nr 153. Similar difficulties were experienced by church institutions in Wrocław, cf. Stoń M. 1999, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> APWr, Rep. 31, nr 262, pp. 21–22.

<sup>39</sup> APWr, Rep. 102, nr 272. The location of the St. Martin altar was noted in 1493 as “ex opposito Corporis sancti”. More on this chantry: Wólkiewicz E. 2014, pp. 350–351.

<sup>40</sup> Wólkiewicz E. 2013, pp. 59–61.

<sup>41</sup> APWr, Rep. 88, nr 217<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> NL, nr 902, 903.

in the 1430s<sup>43</sup>. The rights of patronage over this foundation were to remain in burgher's hands until 1493, when their holder Catherine, widow of the shoemaker Martin Hoppener, relinquished them to the Cistercians Abbey of Kamieniec Żąbkowicki<sup>44</sup>. In 1500, the abbot of Kamieniec presented the chantry onto Wenceslaus Sculteti of Kłodzko<sup>45</sup>. Sculeti however did not reside in Nysa, and his liturgical obligations were filled by a deputy. The collection of his benefits was executed through a procurator. This last function was filled by other chantry priests of the Nysa church, first Conrad Pusch, then Nicholas Jentsch and John Grottil<sup>46</sup>. It seems that it is this cession of the management of finances to a procurator that gave rise to the accounting book in question. Because the entrusted funds had to be settled, the scrupulous notation of all incoming and outgoing payments was necessary. The keeping of the accounting book by procurators is confirmed by changes in the handwriting, coinciding with changes at that position. Entries by the owner of the benefice are very rare, and limited to a receipt of the funds collected. It is probable that other chantry priests also kept accounting books for their own use in this period, although perhaps in a more temporary form, on loose pieces of paper and did not put effort into their conservation. This custom certainly became more common in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which is confirmed by other Nysa sources, for example the accounting book of the chantry at the Corpus Christi altar<sup>47</sup>. Yet the only records from the pre-Reformation period we have are from the altar of St. Martin. An additional advantage of the preserved book is the relatively long cycle of entries, spanning over twenty years from 1500 to Sculteti's death in 1523. The accounts were continued also by the subsequent holders of the prebend (or their procurators) and reach until 1597. Entries until the end of the 60s are irregular and do not add much to the general picture. The book has 96 pages and entries are kept in Latin, exceptionally only intermittent German inclusions. The book is currently in the collection of the National Archives in Wrocław, where it arrived as part of the secularized archive of the Nysa chapter, which resided at the church of St. James from 1650<sup>48</sup>.

The book was included into the chapter archive in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, most probably as the inheritance of a one member of the Chapter. Canon Matthew Scholtis, who acquired this prebend in 1567, noted that he found the account records among the movables of another canon, James Mehse, who was the procurator of the previous chantry priest. Mehse also kept the rent lists for the chantry, which Scholtis gave to the archives of the Nysa Chapter<sup>49</sup>. This provenance gives us a clue as to how such a unique source survived to our times. Because the profits of the chantry were not a part of the parish assets, there was no reason to keep private accounting books in the parish archive<sup>50</sup>. It was only in exceptional circumstances that books of this kind had a chance to be preserved, as in this case, thanks to incorporation into the archives of an institution that

<sup>43</sup> APOp, Zbiór Kastnera, vol. 45, p. 26, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Urkunden. 1881, nr CCCLXXVII.

<sup>45</sup> APWr, Rep. 88, nr 247<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> The first, Conrad Pusch, resided permanently in Nysa and was procurator of the chantry priests confraternity at the church of St. James in the years 1496–1508. He therefore had experience in the management of finances, accounting and execution of payments, and so was a good candidate for the administrator of Sculteti's assets. After his death in 1510 (and perhaps his preceding illness) a different representative had to be found. Nicholas Jentsch, also active as one of the procurators of the confraternity (1505–1514), was chosen. Jentsch died in 1519 and his successor was an unnamed "commissarius", undoubtedly John Grottil, who served from 1519 as the Episcopal commissioner in the Nysa district.

<sup>47</sup> APWr, Rep. 135, nr 405.

<sup>48</sup> APWr, Rep. 135, nr 407.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> More on the problems of the keeping of individual documents belonging to clergy: Hlaváček I. 1976, pp. 249–255.

collected accounting materials. Scholtis himself, who looked after the chapter archives, organized the documentation and recorded protocols of the Nysa canons meetings, seems to be a key figure here<sup>51</sup>. He commissioned dispersed account records of St. Martin chantry to be bound in one volume in 1575. It seems realistic that after death of the next chantry priest all the acts in his manor were deemed property of the chapter and added to the rest of the archives.

The income of an altar benefice founded at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, as shown above, usually amounted to 8 to 10 marks, being less only in exceptional cases. What part of this sum was successfully obtained one hundred years later? We do not know the original sum of the benefice of the St. Martin altar, but it is possible to reconstruct its components from the moment the accounting book was created. Only two charters concerning his property have been preserved. The first concerns the purchase of a pension of 2 mark from Wierzbice in 1406<sup>52</sup>, the latter certifies a donation of 1 mark from the village council in Wójcice made by Barbara, wife of the advocate of Nysa<sup>53</sup>. In 1500 the last one was at disposal of the procurator, though, as he noted, he was unable to claim any income due to it. Similarly, the ineffective provisions concerned other rural rents: 1 mark from the village in Biała and taverns in Lipniki, 1 mark from Smolice and Nowaki and 1 mark in Regulice and Gryżów<sup>54</sup>. One rentable benefit was the rent from the bathhouse on Merchant St. in Nysa, paid in quarterly instalments of 12 *grossi*. However, the procurator was unable to find any confirmation of the assignment of the pension from the peasants leasing parcels in the village Bodzanów. The basis of villagers' payments were 96 *virgae* of cultivated land, that cca. 1500 were divided into 19 shares. Individual peasant lot usually consisted of 3 to 8 *virgae* of land. The procurator kept a name list of all payers, and noticed all proprietary changes. Peasants paid a flat rate one *grossus* for each *virga* of land. The total income from the rent was 96 *grossi*, which gives a sum of two marks. In reality, however, not every year was the entire due amount obtained. Predictably, the procurator had the most trouble receiving rents from plots of land located far from Nysa. In 1500 he spent two *grossi* on "monitio super solventes census" and an additional 2.5 *grossi* on a messenger, who delivered that reminder<sup>55</sup>. These expenses repeat regularly throughout the entries, and are raised in 1514 by the costs of lawsuit proceedings. Not all peasants were able to provide the full amount of the payment. The underpayments, however, usually reached only a few deniers. The incomplete payments may have been the result of the peasant's death, e.g. in 1503 a widow paid 6 deniers less than the full amount<sup>56</sup>. Other problems were emerging as far as the execution of the rent from the Nysa bathhouse was concerned. In this case additional funds for transport and collectors were not needed, but the payer was notoriously trying to avoid the full obligation. He was usually giving 42 *grossi* instead of one mark, and in 1507 he negotiated a rate of 36 deniers<sup>57</sup>. This rent turned out to be also the most uncertain, because in 1525 after a catastrophic fire in Nysa, the owner of the chantry noted a remission of payment due to the complete destruction of the building<sup>58</sup>. The example of the altar salary of St. Martin is a perfect illustration of the main problems of the credit market in the Middle Ages: dispersion of payments, difficulty in executing payments from rural rents, reluctance of payers and catastrophes that could even result in complete loss of profits.

<sup>51</sup> Biography of Matthew Scholtis: Völkel R. 1938, pp. 193–194.

<sup>52</sup> APOp, Rep. 102, nr 272.

<sup>53</sup> APWr, Rep. 102, nr 722.

<sup>54</sup> APWr, Rep. 135, nr 407, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, p. 62.

Thanks to the preserved accounting book we can state precisely the income of the chantry holder. In 1501, the procurator gave Wenceslaus Sculteti a sum of 1 mark and 40 *grossi*. In later years, the profits were only slightly higher and usually oscillated around two marks<sup>59</sup>. An even lower amount was obtained by the priest, who celebrated Mass in the name of Sculteti at the altar. His pay was just half a mark yearly<sup>60</sup>. In light of our knowledge of the price of a single mass, we can say that this sum was enough for just a dozen services. We do not however know how the contract between the two clergymen was constructed, whether the price for the priestly services was lower because of a flat rate payment and whether it included the full scope of the liturgical obligations specified in the foundation act. Records from the years 1512–1523 note that the clergyman received quarterly remuneration and so perhaps it concerned mainly liturgical services linked to the celebration of Ember Days. The correlation between the sum of the stipend and the scope of the priestly duties has been mentioned above. As mentioned above — one of the founders of the chantry in the St. James church presciently included a clause stating that in the case that the salary of the prebend were to fall to beneath 5 marks, its holder should be released from all commemorative obligations. Generally, however, only the ordinary could reduce the obligations instituted by the foundation act, which requests to him in this matter only confirm. We can only guess whether this sort of consent from the bishop was obtained in the case of the St. Martin foundation. The fee of the procurator remains a separate question. The accounts barely reference this issue, only incidentally mentioning payments *pro fatiga*. It is difficult even to determine whether this was a fixed amount, since the procurator received over eleven white *grossi* in 1517, and just eight in the next year<sup>61</sup>.

The Nysa accounts also give us an insight into another important and so far underestimated issue, which is a problem of expenses incurred due to the current functioning of the benefice. Besides expenses spent on the execution of payments, the chantry priest also needed to finance the purchase of candles and lamps to light the altar. In 1501 a clergyman spent 6.5 gr on 1.5 of a pound of wax and 0.5 gr on payment for the person who made candles. In the subsequent years these expenses has grown, because of purchase of a larger amount of wax (two pounds) and due to the increase of its price<sup>62</sup>. It follows from several entries that wax was bought in the last quarter of the year, in connection with the celebration of All Saints Day<sup>63</sup> or Christmas<sup>64</sup>. The payments for the candle maker did not constitute a large part of the general pool of costs, and amounted to 3–4 deniers. A fixed expense was the salary of sextons, referred to as “tecturalia” and paid on the feast of Corpus Christi<sup>65</sup>. It was usually 3 gr, after the monetary reform of 1513 — 2 white gr<sup>66</sup>. The holder of the prebend also had to keep his liturgical vestments clean. Accounts from 1508 show that cleaning an alba cost 8 deniers<sup>67</sup>. Washerwomen were however apparently seldom hired, since over a period of twenty years, this type of expense appears only one other time (in 1517)<sup>68</sup>. Renovation work appears occasionally. In 1501, the

<sup>59</sup> See Table 2.

<sup>60</sup> APWr, Rep. 135, nr 407, pp. 8–10.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, pp. 47, 49.

<sup>62</sup> See Table 3.

<sup>63</sup> APWr, Rep. 135, nr 407, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, pp. 18, 20, 22, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, pp. 8, 12 and others.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 60.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 47.



procurator had to pay for the repair of the grating around the mensa and making of a key (1 gr)<sup>69</sup>. An exceptional expense was the cost of the new consecration of the altar (1 gr)<sup>70</sup>.

Yet the largest expense was the contribution for the Bohemian king. Attempts to tax the incomes of clergymen were numerous in the late Middle Ages. In Silesia, Matthias Corvinus introduced a severe version of such a tax. In 1480, he imposed a tax of one-sixth of the yearly income<sup>71</sup>, and in 1489 he demanded of all those whose income came from cash rents a payment of half the sum of their earnings to the crown. These payments were to be made in the town halls of regional centres, such as Nysa. Most clergymen made appeals in this matter to the Holy See. The problem was resolved with the death of Corvinus in 1490, as his successor did not insist upon the execution of this contribution, and the already collected payments were returned to their owners<sup>72</sup>. However, although introduced only temporarily, the concept had far-reaching consequences, as it became the point of reference for future ordinances. In 1499, Wrocław burghers, “led on by the whispers of the devil”, as the chronicler writes, succeeded in obtaining from the king a document giving them the right to half of the income of the clergy from rents in the town for a period of six years, in order to finance the renovation of the town fortifications<sup>73</sup>. Silesian dukes also did not hesitate to impose taxes on ecclesiastical institutions located on their lands. In the accounts of the altar of St. Martin, the first note of a contribution for the ruler appears in 1502, when 13 *grossi* was paid<sup>74</sup>. In this case we are dealing with a payment in the amount of one tenth of income assigned for the war against the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, the contributions from 1521 and 1522<sup>75</sup> can also be identified as taxes for the war with the Turks<sup>76</sup>.

The origin of three payments made *pro contributione* in the years 1510, 1512 and 1513<sup>77</sup> are more complex. In 1509, Vladislaus II demanded of the clergy a remittance of half of the sum of their earnings for the coronation of Louis as the king of Bohemia. Bishops and canons appealed in this matter to the Holy See and received a papal brief from Julius II releasing them of this obligation in the mentioned amount (1510). This did not however resolve the conflict and finally, after prolonged negotiations, in 1511 the king agreed to retract his claims in exchange for the repayment by the clergy of his debt to the Duke of Opole in the amount of two thousand florins<sup>78</sup>. Stanislaus Sauer's records also indicate that 3000 marks was also paid as a voluntary donation for the ruler. It is worth noting that the lower clergy were to bear in a large part the burden of this payment<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Aufzeichnungen. 1955, p. 89.

<sup>72</sup> Annales Glogovienses. 1877, p. 4: “A. d. 1482 ordinatus est Joannes episcopus Wratislaviensis qui prius episcops Laventinensis erat. Idem Joannes episcopus anno 89 induxit unam grandem contributionem per totam diocesim pro rege, tantum ad census reemptionis, ut omnes deberent dare medios census et deponere registra sub poena excommunicationis. Et censiti deberent deponere census ad praetoria sc. Wratislaviae, Nisse, Swednitz, Legenitz etc. Quod aliqui fecerunt. Et sic omnis clerus per totam diocesim appellavit ad sedem apostolicam, excepto capitulo Glogoviensi, quod maxime damnificatus fuerat. Interim rex mortuus est et sic nihil dederunt, et quorum census depositus fuerat ad praetoria, illi receperunt suum censum”. Also: Aufzeichnungen. 1955, p. 99.

<sup>73</sup> Aufzeichnungen. 1955, p. 111.

<sup>74</sup> APWr, Rep. 31, nr 407, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> In 1521, an altarist paid 10 *grossi* in total for a royal contribution and an Episcopal subsidy, APWr, Rep. 31, nr 407, p. 56. In 1522, the contribution was 6 *grossi*, APWr, Rep. 31, nr 407, p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> See ACW II/1, nr 1363, p. 275.

<sup>77</sup> In 1510 the contribution was 6 *grossi*, in 1512 5 *grossi* and in 1513 6 white *grossi*, APWr, Rep. 31, nr 407, pp. 26, 29, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Meyer A.O. 1903, pp. 137–145.

<sup>79</sup> See ACW I/1, nr 358, p. 274.

Occasional payments for the bishop, so-called *subsidiū caritativū*, were another major expense. This provision could be collected by the ordinary once during the length of his rule and was usually called for shortly after he assumed office in the diocese<sup>80</sup>. In the period from 1500 to 1523, records of which are included in the accounts we are analyzing, this contribution was collected twice. John Thurzo, enthroned in 1506, collected the subsidy in 1509<sup>81</sup>, and Jacob of Salza announced the collection just a year after he was chosen as bishop (1521). In the first case, the altarist of St. Martin made a payment of 9 *grossi*<sup>82</sup>, while in the second it is impossible to determine the amount as it is recorded jointly with the contribution for Louis II<sup>83</sup>.

The accounts show us how logistical problems of the transfer of money were resolved. The holder of the benefice, Wenceslaus Sculteti, who resided permanently in Kamieniec, visited Nysa only sporadically, which made it necessary to employ a broker. His stipend was usually to be paid on the day of St. Vincent (January 22). This happened to be at the time of the yearly town fair in Nysa, which was organized on the feast of one of the patrons of the church, St. Agnes (January 21). This made it easier to find someone travelling in the direction of Kamieniec. In the years 1503–1507, the procurator usually used the services of stewards from Kamieniec, who arrived in town to represent the interests of the monastery. Occasionally the monastery's tailor named Nickel, or the provost of Bardo served as couriers<sup>84</sup>. In 1508 the money was entrusted to the parson of the village Przyłęk, which lays very near to Kamieniec<sup>85</sup>, and the following year, to a townsman from Kłodzko<sup>86</sup>. The owed sum was also sometimes transferred through an unnamed chantry priest brother<sup>87</sup>. In some years, the whole amount was not successfully raised and the remainder was paid around Easter<sup>88</sup> - another date, when it was relatively easy to find someone to transport it, or during the other yearly fair, which began on the day of St. James. In the event that Sculteti collected the money personally in the house of the procurator, it was scrupulously noted that the transaction took place "in stuba" or "in parva stubella"<sup>89</sup>. From 1514 the rule was introduced that the collection should be signed for in the accounting book<sup>90</sup>.

Despite the fact that the presented material concerns an individual case, it should not be disregarded in the discussion on the financial situation of the clergy at the end of the Middle Ages. First of all, it shows the radical discrepancy between the nominal salary of the prebend and the actual income that made its way to the clergyman. The described calculations leave no doubt that the profits of at least some of the chantry priests did not suffice for a decent living. The sum of two marks, obtained by Wenceslaus Sculteti for the chantry in the St. James church, was lower than the price of board for a woman in one of the town hospices. On the other hand, in the case of Sculteti, his prebend was a sinecure in broader sense, since it did not impose any responsibilities. He could therefore combine it without difficulty with other benefices.

<sup>80</sup> For example, Rudolf of Rudesheim, enthroned in the diocese in 1468, called for the payment of the subsidy in 1470.

<sup>81</sup> Aufzeichnungen. 1955, p. 115.

<sup>82</sup> APWr, Rep. 31, nr 407.

<sup>83</sup> In 1521, the expenditures for the contribution for the king and the *subsidiū caritativū* are recorded together in the amount of 10 *grossi*.

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem, pp. 10, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, p. 22.

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.

<sup>87</sup> Ibidem, pp. 33, 47.

<sup>88</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.

<sup>89</sup> Ibidem, pp. 22, 52.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem, pp. 49, 54, 58.

Table 1  
The income of the chantry of St. Martin in Nysa in 1500

| Payer                      | Payment basis     | Amount (in <i>grossi</i> ) |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Jorge Hirte                | 6 virgae          | 6                          |
| Paul Schindler             | 8 virgae          | 8                          |
| Paul Gilge                 | 6 virgae          | 6                          |
| Andres Trautman            | 4 virgae          | 4                          |
| Hensel Künel               | 7 virgae          | 7                          |
| Nickel Asman               | 7,5 virgae        | 7,5                        |
| Steynbrecher               | 4,5 virgae        | 4,5                        |
| Merten Mumel (Fyweger)     | 6 virgae          | 6                          |
| Hans Jost                  | 6 virgae          | 6                          |
| Michel Polcz               | 3 virgae          | 3                          |
| Cristoff Schneider         | 6 virgae          | 6                          |
| Wolfgang Schneider         | 3 virgae          | 3                          |
| Andres Smedt               | 5 virgae          | 5                          |
| Nickel Starcker            | 7 virgae          | 7                          |
| Steynbrecher               | 3 virgae          | 3                          |
| Bartel Presburg            | 5 virgae          | 5                          |
| Nickel Schuch              | 3 virgae          | 3                          |
| Quintner                   | 3 virgae          | 3                          |
| Thomas Lang and Cristpolin | 3 virgae          | 1                          |
| Owner of the bathhouse     | bathhouse in Nysa | 48                         |

Table 2  
The salary of the chantry priest of St. Martin in Nysa 1500–1510  
(gr = *grossi*, d = deniers)

| Year  | Amount           | Year | Amount            |
|-------|------------------|------|-------------------|
| 1500* | 2 mark 5 gr 6 d? | 1506 | 2 mark 6 gr       |
| 1501  | 1 mark 40 gr 6 d | 1507 | 1 mark 46 gr 11 d |
| 1502  | 2 mark 5 gr 6 d  | 1508 | 2 mark 4 gr 7 d   |
| 1503  | 1 mark 44 gr 6 d | 1509 | 1 mark 40 gr 4 d  |
| 1504  | 2 mark 3 gr 3 d  | 1510 | 1 mark 26 gr      |
| 1505  | 1 mark 36 gr     |      |                   |

\* incomplete

Table 3  
The expenses for wax of the chantry of St. Martin in Nysa 1500–1510  
(gr = *grossi*, d = deniers)

| Year | Amount | Quantity (lbs) | Year | Amount            | Quantity (lbs) |
|------|--------|----------------|------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1500 | 6,5 gr | 1,5            | 1506 | 4 gr 10 d<br>5 gr | —<br>—         |
| 1501 | —      | —              | 1507 | 5 gr 4 d          | 1              |
| 1502 | 5,5 gr | 1,25           | 1508 | 5,5 gr            | 1              |
| 1503 | —      | —              | 1509 | 6 gr              | 1              |
| 1504 | 7 gr   | 1,5            |      | 6 gr 9 d          | 1              |
| 1505 | 5 gr   | —              | 1510 | 11 gr             | 2              |

Table 4  
The total amount of expenses of the chantry priest of St. Martin in Nysa 1500–1510  
(gr = *grossi*, d = deniers)

| Year  | Amount                        | Year | Amount     |
|-------|-------------------------------|------|------------|
| 1500* | 12,5 gr (+ 24 gr?) = 36,5 gr? | 1506 | 42 gr 2 d  |
| 1501  | 32 gr                         | 1507 | 36 gr 8 d  |
| 1502  | 37,5 gr                       | 1508 | 37 gr 11 d |
| 1503  | 45 gr                         | 1509 | 50 gr 8 d  |
| 1504  | 38 gr 7 d                     | 1510 | 45 gr      |
| 1505  | 36 gr                         |      |            |

\* incomplete

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#### DUCHOWNY PROLETARIAT?

#### DOCHODY NIŻSZEGO KLERU W PÓŻNYM ŚREDNIOWIECZU NA PRZYKŁADZIE KSIĘGI RACHUNKOWEJ OLTARZA ŚW. MARCINA W NYSIE

Problem dochodów niższego kleru w późnym średniowieczu był dotąd analizowany przede wszystkim na podstawie wykazów fiskalnych. Wadą tego rodzaju materiałów jest jednak rejestracja jedynie przybliżonej sumy profitów. Jedynym źródłem pozwalającym precyzyjnie ująć wpływy z prebendy pozostają osobiste rachunki. Źródła tego rodzaju są jednak niezwykle rzadkie i jak dotąd znane tylko dla posiadaczy beneficjów parafialnych. W tym kontekście unikatowy i wyjątkowy charakter ma księga rachunkowa altarii przy ołtarzu św. Marcina w nyskim kościele św. Jakuba (1500–1597). Beneficjum to zostało ufundowane na przełomie XIV i XV w., a jego pierwszym znanym posiadaczem był Paweł Scheiban, który objął je przed 1 maja 1406 r. Fundator tego stypendium należał niewątpliwie do nyskiego patrycjatu. Ostrożnie wskazać można osobę Henryka Czeicza, burmistrza w latach osiemdziesiątych XIV w. W 1500 r. prebendę objął Wacław Sculteti z Kłodzka, który nie rezydował jednak w Nysie, a jego obowiązki liturgiczne wypełniał zastępca. Także przy poborze świadczeń zastępował duchownego prokurator. Niewątpliwie właśnie z cesją zarządu majątkiem na prokuratora należy wiązać powstanie interesującej nas księgi rachunkowej. Ze względu na konieczność rozliczenia się z powierzonych środków niezbędne było szczególnie staranne notowanie wpływów i wydatków. Rachunki altarii św. Marcina umożliwiają, jak żadne inne źródło, rozpoznanie realnych dochodów, jakie przynosiło stypendium altaryjne u schyłku średniowiecza. W 1500 r. wynosiły one jedynie 3 grzywny czynszu, przy czym nie każdego roku udawało się uzyskać wszystkie należne świadczenia. Na przykładzie uposażenia altarii św. Marcina można też poznać główne problemy związane z funkcjonowaniem rynku kredytowego w początkach XVI w. — rozproszenie płatności, trudności w egzekucji rent wiejskich i katastrofy, mogące skutkować całkowitą utratą świadczenia. Nyskie rachunki dostarczają drobiazgowych informacji o sposobach egzekucji świadczeń, systemie transferu gotówki oraz kosztach związanych z obsługą beneficjum ołtarzowego (pranie szat, naprawy, zakup wosku, etc.). Rachunki dają nam także dobry wgląd w wysokość świadczeń fiskalnych, jakie musiał ponosić altarysta na rzecz króla oraz urzędującego biskupa.