

WALDEMAR GRACZYK

Faculty of Historical and Social Sciences
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

**“ARBITRATORS, BUT NOT ONLY THAT...”:
THE CLERGY IN THE MAGISTRATES’ BOOK OF THE CITY
OF PŁOCK BETWEEN 1489 AND 1517**

In the wake of the liquidation of the tzarist provincial archives in the late 19th century, the book that constitutes the subject of this study was moved from the Płock City Archives to the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw. Towards the end of the 20th century (1995), this highly pertinent record of Płock’s social and professional fabric, as well as its customs and culture, penned over the years by the employees of the local vogt and magistrates’ court, was published in Warsaw, edited by Danuta Poppe¹. The printed edition contains information on payment obligations, powers of attorney, inheritance cases, wills, as well as records of thefts and assaults. In the course of a writing ductus analysis, 25 types of handwriting were specified, only three of which were identified by Poppe: Jan, son of Franciszek of Proszowice, Wojciech, son of Jakub of Gorzkowice, and Andrzej Sarbiewski. The book also contains a full list of vogts sworn into office for the duration of one year between 1490 and 1517. Some of them, e.g. Jakub Raław, Stanisław Turecki, or the aforementioned Jan, served two terms; others, e.g. Jan Gołąb – were sworn in for the duration of three terms (or as many as four, as was the case with Vogt Wietrzych)².

This study focuses on the members of the clergy who were mentioned in the Płock magistrates’ book along with the case in which they were summoned before the magistrates: Augustyn (mansionary of the Płock Cathedral)³, Stanisław Byernathowycz (deputy presbyter of the Płock Cathedral)⁴, Kalikst (provost of the Church of the Holy Spirit, situated within the Płock city walls)⁵, Mikołaj Mirowski (scholastic of the Płock Cathedral Chapter)⁶, Kostka (canon of the Płock Cathedral and doctor of medical sciences)⁷, Jakub Brolński, Jakub Zaleski, Mikołaj of Strzemeszno (canons of the Płock Cathedral)⁸, Fabian (canon of the

¹ *Księga lawnicza miasta Płocka 1489-1517*, ed. D. Poppe, Warszawa 1995, p. 1 [hereinafter KŁP].

² *Ibidem*, p. V-VI, XIII-XIV.

³ KŁP, vol. 567, p. 306-307; vol. 597, p. 320-321; vol. 600, p. 321-322.

⁴ KŁP, vol. 139, p. 73; vol. 141, p. 74; vol. 222, p. 114; vol. 264, p. 135-136.

⁵ KŁP, vol. 373, pp. 191-192.

⁶ KŁP, vol. 551, pp. 294-295.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

Pułtusk Collegiate Chapter)⁹, Jan (prior of St. Dominic's Dominican Monastery in Płock)¹⁰, Andrzej of Nakwasin (canon of the St. Michael's Collegiate Church in Płock)¹¹, Sebastian (curate of the Płock Cathedral)¹², Maciej (bachelor of arts, parish priest of Ciachcin)¹³, Jan Słupeński (mansionary of the Płock Cathedral)¹⁴, Stanisław (altarist of the St. Bartholomew's Church in Płock)¹⁵, Stanisław of Trzemeszno (doctor of laws, canon of the Płock Cathedral, curate general and judicial vicar of Płock)¹⁶, Mikołaj of Tłubycze (canon of the Płock Cathedral)¹⁷, Jan Wittin (canon of the Płock Cathedral)¹⁸ and Szymon (cleric)¹⁹.

In total, in the discussed period of time (1489-1517), the Płock magistrates' book lists nineteen clergymen, out of whom only one – Jan – was a (Dominican) monk, serving as the prior of the aforementioned Dominican monastery, while the rest belong to diocesan clergy. Most of them (12) were affiliated with the Płock Cathedral, with eight among them sitting on the chapter assembly, and the remaining four serving as priests at the primary church of the Płock Diocese. Two more priests hailed from the canonical college of the Collegiate Chapter of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pułtusk, and the collegiate chapter of St. Michael's Collegiate Chapter in Płock, respectively. The remainder (including the lone cleric among them) served as priests in the local parishes.

With respect to the cases in which the aforementioned clergymen were mentioned in the magistrates' books of Płock, they were mostly referenced as arbitrators in the conducted disputes, as well as the executors of wills or recipients of legacies, parties in deeds of sale, holders of deposits, or prudent stewards of church property.

The trust, esteem, and respect enjoyed by the said priests in the local clerical milieu are best evidenced by their appointment as arbitrators in a number of (long-standing) disputes. For instance, the mansionary of the Płock Cathedral, Augustyn, mediated between bachelor Maciej Olbracht, and Mayor Józef Frycz and his wife Małgorzata (Maciej Olbracht's mother). Augustyn was aided by Vogt Jan Gołąb, and several members of the Płock City Council: Stanisław Turecki, Jan the apothecary, Stanisław Mochacki, Maricn the saddler, Kacper Nadmych, Zygmunt the craftsman, and Baltazar Radzimiński. On July 8, 1516, the arbitrators successfully resolved the dispute, with Józef Frycz and his wife Małgorzata transferring the ownership of the "Grzegorzewski" house in the main market square of Płock (which she had likely inherited from a previous marriage) to Małgorzata's son, Maciej²⁰. Arbitration services were also provided by the canons and prelates of the Płock Cathedral chapter:

⁹ KŁP, vol. 539, pp. 287-288.

¹⁰ KŁP, vol. 594, p. 319.

¹¹ KŁP, vol. 384, pp. 196-197.

¹² KŁP, vol. 376, p. 193.

¹³ KŁP, vol. 597, pp. 320-321.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ KŁP, vol. 595, pp. 319-320.

¹⁶ KŁP, vol. 564, pp. 302-305.

¹⁷ KŁP, vol. 444, pp. 232.

¹⁸ KŁP, vol. 577, p. 311.

¹⁹ KŁP, vol. 61, pp. 31-33.

²⁰ "Dominos Augustinum mansionarium ecclesiae cathedralis [...], ex una et dominum Jozew Frycivem Plocensem ac Margeretham coniugem eius legitimam matrem vero dicti domini Mathiam Olbracht [...] donavit domum dictam Gregoriusowski." KŁP, vol. 567, pp. 306-307.

Mikołaj Mirowski, Kostka, Jakub Broliński, Jakub Zaleski, and Mikołaj of Strzemeszno, who on April 5, 1516 (together with Vogt Jan Gołąb) resolved a dispute between a Warsaw burgher Maciej Nowak, and Maciej Nowak and Stanisław Rok, the guarantors of Stanisław Nowak²¹. Another priest invited to mediate in the dispute alongside Vogt Gołąb, Mayor Maciej Olbracht, Stanisław the craftsman, and Jan Pulewka (burgher of Płock) was the doctor of laws, general curate and judicial vicar of Płock, Stanisław of Trzemeszno. The quarrel concerned a loan taken out by Bietka, widow of Jan of Krakow, with Jan Bartłomiejski. Bietka's loan amounted to 150 florins. Thanks to the arbitrators' mediation, Bietka eventually paid 60 florins out of her due debt, pledging to return the remaining 90 florins over the course of the next five years, paying 18 florins on each Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 26). In the meantime, Bietka's house was to be temporarily assigned to Jan Bartłomiejski as collateral of the loan. Bietka's husband, tailor Marcin Durman, agreed to the solution. The aforementioned settlement was reached before the assembly of arbitrators on July 30, 1516. In the following years, Bietka repaid her debt in a timely fashion, as corroborated by the annotations attached to the original ruling by the successive scribes. Between 1517 and 1521, she paid the outstanding installments of the debt around the agreed date (June 24 each year), i.e. June 25, 1517, June 26, 1518, June 29, 1519, July 9, 1520, and July 15, 1521²².

Several cases involving the participation of the Płock clergy concerned the broadly defined payment orders. While the magistrates' book does not contain direct entries concerning clergymen's wills, it does include testamentary dispositions pertaining to their property, which was sometimes subsequently depleted on account of the testator's outstanding debts. A case in point was the ruling passed by the parish priest of Ciachcin, Maciej, and the mansionary of the Płock Cathedral, Jan Słupeński, who were named executors of the last will drawn by the deceased mansionary of the Płock Cathedral, Augustyn. In order to repay the debts taken out by Augustyn, on February 4, 1517 the two sold a garden in Wąska Street, en route to the Płock brickyard, to one Krystyna Tyszak, at the price of fifteen scores grosz, in the presence of Vogt Jan Gołąb and magistrates Stanisław Gąbiński and Jan Skwarka. The payment was divided into three installments, two installments of six scores, and one installment of three scores, payable until the end of 1517. The first installment (six scores) was paid on the day of transaction, the second (six scores) – on Easter 1517, and the final one – on Pentecost²³. The payment was registered as settled in an entry dated October 2, 1517²⁴.

Apparently, selling the deceased mansionary's garden was insufficient to cover his debts, given that a month later, on March 13, 1517, the executors of the mansionary's will also sold his house with the adjacent brewery, located in św. Michała Street, opposite the Płock Collegiate Church. The buildings were purchased by a Płock burgher Marcin Durman, who bought the property at 84 scores grosz. As it was the case with the garden, the selling price was paid in (four) installments: one on the day of transaction (30 scores), followed by the

²¹ “Mathias Nowak cum Stanislawo Rok cives praefati Plocenses ex arbitrali compositione cesserunt et presentibus se obligant manu coniuncta quadraginta sexagenas grossorum ad numerum et rationem mediorum grossorum praefato domino Lorincz civi Warszoviensi ad ratas inferius descriptas soluturas [...]” KŁP, vol. 551, pp. 294-295.

²² KŁP, vol. 564, pp. 302-305.

²³ “[...] vendiderunt ortum situm in platea Stricta eundo versus laterificium civitatis olim Augustini praefati nobili domine Cristine de Thyszki pro quinque sexagenis ad rationem et numerum solidorum ad persolvenda debita certis creditoribus per praefatum Augustinum tenta.” KŁP, vol. 597, pp. 320-321.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

remaining three – paid respectively on Easter (15 scores), Nativity of St. John the Baptist (9 scores), St. Michael's day (9 scores) – with the outstanding 21 scores payable at the buyer's discretion, by the end of 1517. According to the magistrates' book, the final payment was made on November 27, 1517.²⁵

Another of the aforementioned priests, provost Kalikst of the Church of the Holy Spirit, was named the depositary of Anna Rogalina's last will. Together with two Płock burghers, Marcin the saddler and Grzegorz the singer, he drew a deed of gift in which Anna's son, Jakub, bequeathed his mother's house to his daughter Małgorzata and her husband Grzegorz²⁶.

In one of the cases recorded in the magistrates' book, a Płock burgher named Bartłomiej Kawka drew a will dated August 31, 1495, in which he bequeathed a certain amount of money to his younger brother Szymon, who was preparing to become a priest. Evidently, Szymon had not yet received his minor orders, since he was referred to as a *clericus* in the will. It should be pointed out that Bartłomiej Kawka made his will while bed-ridden due to the plague that ravaged the city between August 20 and August 31, 1495 – a fact which he mentioned in the will, stating, *licet languens in corpore sed sanus in mente existens non compulsus nec coactus sed libera sua* [...] ²⁷.

One should also be reminded that the wish to apportion one's property before death was inherently tied to eschatological vision of posthumous reward or punishment, which routinely prompted authors of last wills to commend their soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or their patron saints, along with donations made for specific churches in the city, bound to celebrate a Mass for the repose of their soul. The aforementioned Bartłomiej Kawka bequeathed money to the Dominican churches of the Holy Trinity and Saint Dominic, in the amount of three scores grosz each, donating additional three scores for the celebration of a requiem Mass for the repose of his soul, at each church, on the thirtieth day after his death²⁸. As a testator, Kawka proved to be a generous donor to other Płock parishes, too, making similar provisions with respect to his parish church (St. Bartholomew's), St. Michael's Collegiate Church (six scores grosz, including three for the celebration of a requiem Mass on the thirtieth day after his death), founded in the 12th century by Dobiechna, widow of Komes Wojśław, who also sponsored the adjacent collegiate school, run by the prelate scholastic (usually the abbot of canons regular in the nearby Czerwińsk). Among Bartłomiej Kawka's beneficiaries was his younger brother, cleric Szymon, bequeathed with three scores grosz, "item Simoni fratri iuniori clerico unam sexagenam legavit"²⁹. Aside from him, Bartłomiej's will also included his wife (four lasts of grain stored in the vestibule), his father (a small horse and six scores grosz), his second brother Wojciech (wooden building materials, a fur coat, a pair of quality breeches, a *kabat* jacket, and a hat), as well as his siste Katarzyna, domiciled in Reczyn (six scores grosz)³⁰.

²⁵ „[...] Vendidisse domum cum omni propinquitate ad dictam domum pertinente olim videlicet et brazario dicte domui adiacenti per prefatum olim Augustinum Alexio Gyrzinski in certa suma pecuniaria invadiato honesto domino Martino Durman civi Plocensi pro viginti octo sexagenis grossorum [...]” KŁP, vol. 600, pp. 321-322.

²⁶ KŁP, vol. 373, pp. 191-192.

²⁷ KŁP, vol. 61, pp. 31-33.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ KŁP, vol. 61, p. 32.

³⁰ “Item Katherine in Reczino sorori II sexagenas legavit; item patri suo equum parvum et duas sexagenas dare legavit; item Alberto fratri suo germano omnia robora ad preparandam domum legavit; item Alberto germano subam

It is in the two aforementioned capacities (arbitrators, executors of wills) that the clergy is featured most frequently in the Płock magistrates' book over the discussed period of time. These roles most likely resulted from their social status and esteem. Irrespective of those entries, members of the Płock clergy are also featured as parties in commercial transactions, for instance in the deed of sale signed by a couple of Płock burghers, Klemens and Anna (sellers), and Canon Fabian of the Collegiate Chapter of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pułtusk (buyer), on July 28, 1515. Canon Fabian purchased a garden situated in the suburbs of Płock, in Wąska Street, between the gardens of Banko and Piotr, at 30 scores grosz, paid in shillings. The canon paid half of the price on transaction, and pledged to pay the remainder by Saint Michael's Day (September 29), at the latest, including any outstanding taxes, be it royal or municipal³¹.

Apart from the purchases of church property, the magistrates' book also mentions specific donations made by the local clergymen, e.g. to the nearest family. On April 8, 1511, the canon of St. Michael's Collegiate Church in Płock, Andrzej of Nakwasin, made a donation in the presence of Vogt Jan Gołąb and the Płock magistrates, to his brothers Mikołaj, Jakub, Jan, and Maciej, who received a house in Grodzka Street, between the houses of other canons and that of Stanisław the saddler³². Consanguinity was also cited in an entry dated July 24, 1516, as a ground for a decision passed by Jan Wittin, Canon of the Płock Cathedral, who agreed to the transfer of valuable possessions (silver and tin utensils, clothes, household appliances) from Jan the stall-keeper to the surviving children of Jan Wit: Stanisław, Barbara, and Katarzyna. Pursuant to the said decision, the aforementioned possessions were then deposited with the stall. Wittin's decision was backed by goldsmith Jan Pulewka, the eldest of the orphaned siblings and their legal guardian³³.

Nothing is known of the possible consanguinity between Stanisław, the altarist of St. Bartholomew's Church in Płock, and Stanisław Kawaszka and his family. Regardless of the nature of their relations, so strong was the bond between the altarist and the family that he donated his property to the aforementioned Stanisław Kawaszka. On January 30, 1517, in the presence Vogt Jan Gołąb, and the city magistrates Gąbiński and Sasin, the altarist bequeathed Stanisław Kawaszka and his children with the right of lifelong usufruct of his house and the adjacent garden in Żabowska Street, with the provision that, should the altarist die before the beneficiary, the latter would become the owner of the house and garden, and – conversely, should the beneficiary die before the altarist, the priest would retain the ownership of the said property³⁴.

subductum bonas caligas, iopulum et mitram legavit; item consorti sue suprascripte quatuor lastos siliginis super atri legavit” [...]. KLP, vol. 61, p. 32.

³¹ “[...] Vendidisse ortum suum platea Stricta in suburbio situm inter ortum Bank ex una et ortum Petri ex altera venerabili domino Fabiano canonico Polthoviensi pro decem sexagenis obligavit se soluturum pro festo p. Michaelis proxime venturo.” KLP, vol. 539, pp. 287-288.

³² “[...] dominus Andreas de Naquasino canonicus ecclesiae collegiate p. Michaelis intra muros Plocenses sponte, mere et libere recognavit, quia dedit, donavit domum suum cum omnibus et singulis prefate [...] Nicolao dicto Pyanka de Bodzanow, Jacobo, Joanni, Mathie suis germanis de Naquassino.” KLP, vol. 384, pp. 196-197.

³³ “[...] Quequidem bona iam prefata dominus Joannes Vythyne canonicus ecclesiae cathedralis Plocensis tanquam dictorum bonorum puerorum affinis et propinquus eidem domino Joanni aromatorio dederet et commiseret in depositio ad servandum in manus fideles [...]” KLP, vol. 577, p. 311.

³⁴ “[...] Quaquidem domo cum orto prefatus dominus Stanislaus debet utifruī ad suam vitam, post mortem vero dicti domini Stanislai altariste extunc dicta domus cum orto ex tali donatione et inscripcione devolvetur ad prefatum dominum Stanislaum Cawaszka et ad eius posteritatem legitimam [...]” KLP, vol. 595, pp. 319-320.

Time and again, permeating the concluded contracts is a palpable concern for property, both private or that owned by the Church. A case in point can be found in the contract concluded between Prior Jan of the Dominican Monastery of St. Dominic in Płock, and Piotr the goldsmith. Towards the end of 1516, the prior bequeathed the goldsmith with four *skojec* of silver to produce unspecified items – most likely liturgical paraments – with Piotr’s property written into the deed as surety. The deed was drawn and signed in the presence of the vogt and the city magistrates³⁵.

The entries made in the Płock magistrates’ book between 1489 and 1517 mention a total of nineteen clergymen, who were primarily associated with the local church environment, with the exception of rev. Fabian, canon of the Collegiate Charter of Pułtusk, and rev. Maciej, bachelor of arts and parish priest at the nearby town of Ciachcin. The remaining clergymen were diocesan priests and monks of Płock, affiliated by the local parishes and church entities. In most of the discussed cases, they were approached as potential arbitrators in disputes or supervisors in the execution of the testator’s will. Entries mentioning donations, both from and to the members of the clergy, are less frequent. Over the course of the 28-year period registered in the Płock magistrates’ book, only one entry mentioned a member of the clergy as a party in a commercial transaction. The aforementioned entries seem to indicate that the representatives of the Church were greatly trusted and esteemed by the local community. Their assistance in the resolution of legal disputes and the execution of earthly testaments, drawn with the hope of heavenly rewards, is the most emphatic expression of the burghers’ sentiments.

“Arbitrators, but not only that...”: The clergy in the magistrates’ book of the City of Płock between 1489 and 1517

Summary

Entries made in the Płock magistrates’ book between 1489 and 1517 mention a total of nineteen clergymen, who were primarily associated with the local church environment. Evident in these entries is the clergy’s involvement as arbitrators in legal disputes. They are also mentioned as executors of testaments or recipients of legacies, parties in deeds of sale, holders of deposits, and prudent stewards of church property. Entries in the Płock magistrates’ book involving the local clergy seem to indicate that the representatives of the Catholic Church were greatly trusted and esteemed by the local community.

Keywords: magistrates’ book, Płock, clergy, chapter, testament

Note on the Author: rev. prof. zw. dr hab. Waldemar Graczyk is the director of the Institute of Historical Sciences at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, and the head of its Department of Medieval History. His research interests include the history of Mazovia, Polish monasticism, and the history of the book.

Translated by Józef Jaskulski

³⁵ “[...] indixit se super bona Petri aurifabri in quatuor scotis argenti, quod argentum dedit sibi in laborem.” KLP, vol. 594, p. 319.