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Military Service of Knights, Vogts and Village Mayors in the Kingdom of Poland under the Reign of Władysław II Jagiełło: Legal Regulations

Summary: The reign of Władysław Jagiełło in Poland was highly significant. He not only established a new dynasty but also succeeded diplomatically and militarily in foreign policy. His forty-year reign was also a time of granting privileges, which was necessary to win the support of the nobility and to execute the king's will. This led to changes in military obligations, allowing the nobility to gain prerogatives, including the right to war prisoners. The king also repeated and extended existing privileges, such as the right to be paid for military campaigns on foreign territory and the right to compensation for the losses of equipment and horses. These changes were significant both militarily and politically and reinforced the nobility's power within the kingdom. Changes in military services of the feudal system in Poland, which occurred during the reign of Władysław II Jagiełło, were essential in understanding the future military evolution of the Polish army.

Keywords: Kingdom of Poland, 15th century, Władysław Jagiełło, knight's law, military history

One of the most renowned episodes during the reign of Władysław Jagiełło was the Battle of Grunwald (July 15, 1410), where Polish-Lithuanian forces defeated the army of the Teutonic Order, supported by numerous foreign mercenaries and volunteers. This clash became a cornerstone for the future development of the Polish-Lithuanian Union. The battle on the Grunwald fields was also one of the largest battles in late medieval Central Europe, involving around forty thousand armed men in total. Needless to say, this confrontation was not the only example of military conflict involving the

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Kingdom of Poland. During Władysław Jagiełło's reign (1386–1434), several other wars were fought against the Teutonic Order (e.g., in 1414, 1422), in Lithuania (e.g., 1390–1391, 1431–1432), and in Ruthenia (e.g., 1431). These frequent wars significantly burdened the state and its participants, which historians often overlooked in favour of tales regarding chivalry and its armament. This article examines the legal basis of military service under the first Jagiellon king and identifies those who were subjected to it along with their duties and privileges during wartime.

In medieval Polish law, three forms of military mobilisation can be distinguished. The first was the general defence (*defensio terrae*).¹ When proclaimed, every man capable of bearing arms, regardless of social class, was obliged to fight in defence of the Kingdom. The army formed through such mobilisation was highly diverse in training and equipment quality. Under Władysław Jagiełło, this form was not widely used, therefore it will not be the focus of this article, though it must be mentioned for a complete picture.

The second method of army formation was the proclamation of the general levy (*expeditio generalis*). This mobilisation encompassed the entire country, requiring those with military service obligations due to land ownership to report for duty. It is estimated that during Jagiełło's time, such mobilisation could summon tens of thousands of armed men. The main component of this army was the knighthood.² Historians debate the origins of this obligation, though it is most commonly believed that all landowners under knightly law (*ius militare*) were required to serve in the *expeditio generalis*.³ This law exempted them from paying taxes to the king but obliged them to bear the costs of war participation.⁴ In addition to knights, village mayors (German: *Schuldheiss*; Latin: *scultetus*; Polish: *sołtys*), and town administrators – vogts (German: *Vogt*; Latin: *advocatus*; Polish: *wójt*) managing settlements under German law also participated in the general levy.⁵ The establishment of villages and towns under German law in Polish lands began in the first half of the 13th century. Granting German law to a settlement was accompanied by a document specifying, among other things, the military service duties of the village or town head. Imposing these obligations on them was likely linked to the fact that part of their property in the managed settlement consisted of land, making their social status similar to that of the nobility.

The third form was the partial levy (*expeditio particularis*), a call for military service from a specific territory. In practice, this mobilisation involved knights from one

1 Grabarczyk T. 2000, 200.

2 Szymczak J. 1989, 253; Nadolski A. 1994, 194.

3 The legal basis for the military service obligation of knights remains a subject of debate. It is believed to have been linked to land ownership, but this connection is not entirely clarified. See: Bogucki A. 2007, 59–89.

4 Ginter K. 2008, 68.

5 Sculteti usually were assigned to villages and advocati to towns, but it wasn't always the case.

or several administrative units, so-called lands (Polish: *województwo* or *ziemia*). The resulting army was smaller than that of the *expeditio generalis* but had the advantage of being quicker to assemble and less burdensome for the king's subjects. The armies formed through both these mobilisations could be used for the Kingdom's defence or campaigns beyond its borders. This article will further discuss issues related to military service in the general levy and the partial levy.

When Władysław Jagiełło ascended the Polish throne, the military obligations of his subjects were primarily governed by the *Statutes* of Casimir III the Great, written in the mid-14th century, and the privilege issued in Košice in 1374 by Louis of Anjou. These laws were modified several times during Jagiełło's reign, primarily through privileges granted to the nobility. The king issued these to gain the support of his subjects, especially the most powerful estate – the nobility.⁶ It is worth noting that the terms of noble military service were not uniform across the Kingdom of Poland. Significant differences existed, for instance, in Red Ruthenia.⁷ These differences had important implications for military obligations, similar in form to those of village mayors and vogts. For this reason, these obligations will be discussed in a separate section of the article.

Equipment

The smallest military unit among knights in the Kingdom of Poland was known as the 'lance' (Latin: *hasta*, *lancea*; Polish: *kopia*).⁸ This unit was believed to consist of one heavily armed rider and two lightly armed mounted warriors.⁹ While the lance was a standardised accounting unit in the Teutonic Order – used to calculate wages or troop numbers (e.g., a detachment of 100 lances equated to 300 horses)¹⁰ – the situation in Poland was more complex.¹¹ Despite historians simplifying the lance to three armed riders, many variations existed. The number of people comprising a lance ranged from two to as many as five combatants. There is no doubt that the lance was an essential organisational unit for fulfilling military obligations. Unfortunately, little information is available on how knights organised and equipped their retinues.

One or more lances formed a retinue, varying widely in size. These retinues were combined into the basic tactical unit of medieval Poland: the banner. Most banners consisted of knights from specific lands (*terra*) – territorial administrative units of the Kingdom of Poland. For instance, knights owning estates in a particular administrative

6 Bömelburg H.J. 1999, 46–47.

7 Kurtyka J. 2000, 83.

8 Bardach J. et al. 1985, 104.

9 Ginter K. 2008, 265.

10 Ekdahl S. 2008, 349; Ginter K. 2008, 67.

11 Ginter K. 2008, 65–66; Kukiel M. 1929, 17.

region served in the banner of Kraków land. Private (organised by magnates), familial (formed by specific families),¹² or royal banners (e.g., the Court or Chasing banners, including courtiers) were also formed.

One of the primary sources on the rules of knightly military service is the aforementioned *Statutes*, Poland's first attempt at legal unification, though not entirely successful. Article 124¹³ of the *Statutes* mentions that knights were obliged to serve in arms 'as best as they can' (*servire in armis, sicut melius potentatur*).¹⁴ This phrase indicates that knights (*barones et nobiles*) were required to equip themselves as well as their financial situation allowed. This article was very general, making it challenging to define what 'the best possible way' meant, leaving room for abuse by the gentry.¹⁵ Lawyers were aware of this issue, and Article 144¹⁶ of the *Statutes* clarified that the quality and extent of obligations depended on the knight's wealth.¹⁷ This gave the king greater control over the extent to which knights fulfilled their duties. However, this article was part of the so-called 'petitions' – a portion of the *Statutes*¹⁸ that never came into force and remained a mere proposal.

Area of Operations and Remuneration

One of the key aspects of legal regulations concerning military service in the Kingdom of Poland was whether the nobility was to be deployed in wars conducted within the Kingdom's territory or beyond its borders. Historical documents distinguish between defensive campaigns, considered an obligation of the noble estate (*comunitas nobilium*), and external wars, deemed part of the monarch's private policy. This duality translated into varied responsibilities and rights for the knights, depending on whether they were defending the country's territory or engaging in offensive actions. These issues were addressed in the *Statutes* of Casimir the Great, where the legislator emphasised: 'But beyond the Kingdom's borders, he is not obliged to serve us unless he receives appropriate remuneration or is personally requested by us'. As such, knights were obliged to serve in the country's defence without payment. However, for foreign expeditions, they had the right to expect satisfactory compensation, though the amount or timing was not specified.

12 Mosingiewicz K. 1984, 124.

13 Due to edition by Romuald Hube, it was article no. 17.

14 'De servicio exhiben(do). Declaramus eciam (et) decernimus, quod barones et nobiles nostri terre Polonie nobis et nostris successoribus in terra et regno Polonie servire in armis, sicut melius potentatur, teneantur; sed extra [metas] regni non teneatur servire nobis, nisi ipsis competens satisfaccio impendatur, vel per nos petiti'. AKP 1921, 42; Hube R. 1881, XLIII.

15 Spieralski Z. 1958, 419.

16 Due to edition: Hube R. 1881, it was article no. 37.

17 Hube R. 1881, LI.

18 Kutrzeba S. 2017, 341–343; Ginter K. 2008, 249.

The privilege of Louis I of Anjou, adopted in Košice in 1374, reaffirmed the knights' duty to serve in defensive wars, while information on offensive campaigns abroad was omitted for unknown reasons. More details regarding knightly remuneration appear in privileges issued by Władysław II Jagiełło. In a document issued in Kraków (1386),¹⁹ the king assured that he was obliged to pay knights for any foreign expedition. If the king paid the army but the campaign did not take place, the nobility was required to be ready for another foreign expedition within two years. If such a campaign occurred, they were to participate without further pay. This clause suggests that remuneration for offensive wars was already in place. Further information on the military obligations of knights was provided in the second privilege of King Władysław II, issued in Piotrków (1388).²⁰ This document reaffirmed the knights' duty to defend the Kingdom under previously established terms and clarified conditions for participating in foreign campaigns. The king guaranteed five marks (Polish: *grzywna*)²¹ for each 'lance' participating in such expeditions. This was the first detailed mention of remuneration in privileges granted to Polish knights. These details were repeated in subsequent privileges issued in Brześć (1425),²² Jedlnia (1430), and Kraków (1433). Unfortunately, few records confirm the king's fulfilment of this obligation.

Existing notes in royal court expenditure books from the reigns of Władysław II and Jadwiga only concern individual knights. For example, a knight named Drogosz

19 '4. Promittimus eciam, quod quocienscumque et quandocumque nobiles terrarum regni Polonie nobis requiritibus ad expeditionem et ad repellendam seviciam hostium nostrorum extra metas terrarum suarum processerint, ipsis satisfaccionem condignam. tam pro dampnis [...] gratanter impendemus et impendi faciemus.

5. In casum (sic) autem, in quem (sic) aliquis hostis regni aliquam terrarum aperte vel occulte intraverit et nobiles illius terre cum ipso hoste intra metas terre ipsorum conflictum fecerint, ipsis pro [...] dampnis notabilibus satisfaccionem impendemus'. The First Kraków Privilege of Władysław Jagiełło, granted as King of Poland. Kraków, February 18, 1386. CE 2. 1891, 8.

20 '2. nobis facienda retinere volumus penitus et habe re Promittimus etiam quod si tempore se offerente et necessitate urgente in spem alicujus expeditionis futurae hostium et aemulorum insultus et hostilitates sentientes terrigenis nostris pecunias videlicet quinque marcas super hastam dare vel distribuere nos contingat casu vero seu successu temporis offerente dum infra spatium duorum annorum post distributionem pecuniarum sic ut praemittitur factam ad expeditionem non processerimus extunc iidem terrigenae ab hujusmodi pecuniis et a servitiis ratione praedictarum pecuniarum faciendis erunt soluti penitus et (3.) exempti Si vero infra decursum eorundem duorum annorum ad expeditionem cum eisdem terrigenis nostris transitum fecerimus et extra metas regni processerimus extunc predicti terrigenae ab eisdem pecuniis et a servitiis praeterea earundem similiter sint soluti Absolvimus insuper et liberamus omnes et singulos omnium nostrorum terrigenarum kmethones ab omnibus solutionibus contra butionibus executionibus vecturis laboribus et equitaturis angariis gravamini bus frumentorum donationibus sep vulgariter dictis'. Privilege of Władysław Jagiełło. Piotrków, February 29, 1388. JP 1831, 192.

21 1 mark = 48 groschen.

22 '6. Item promittimus insuper et spondemus, quod dum ad requisicionem nostram nobiles nostri regni extra metas eiusdem regni ad repellendam (sic) hostium seviciam transferre contingerit, ipsis satisfaccionem condignam pro captivitate ceterisque dampnis notabilibus faciemus. [...] In casu vero, quo aliquis emulus regni nostri quocumque modo regnum ipsum intraverit et cum eodem conflictum intra metas ipsius regni terrigenas nostros facere contingerit: eisdem terrigenis pro captivitate dumtaxat; si vero extra metas id ipsum fieri contingerit, tunc et pro dampnis, si que quod absit incurrerint, et pro captivitate satisfaccionem condignam impendere (sic)'. The privilege granted by Władysław Jagiełło in recognition of the nobility's acknowledgement of his son Władysław as heir to the throne. Brześć, May 1, 1425. CE 1891, 188.

(originally: *Drogossio*) received 50 marks in 1394 for assembling ten 'lances'.²³ The reasons for such singular payments are unclear. Perhaps these knights performed specific services for the monarch, such as escort duties, though no direct evidence supports this hypothesis. The issue of general remuneration for the nobility remains obscure. While thousands of knights participated in wars, there is no evidence of systematic payment. It is unclear whether the obligation was fulfilled universally or whether the king's authority led the nobility to forgo or limit their claims.

Prisoners of War

Another issue related to military service during Jagiełło's reign, regulated by royal privileges, concerned the ransom of prisoners. For instance, Louis I of Anjou, in a privilege for Jan of Tarnów, promised to ransom him if he were captured during the war, expecting in return all prisoners taken by him.²⁴ While the broader significance of such individual declarations is uncertain, they reflect contemporary practices and noble expectations regarding military service. The first general privilege addressing the issue of prisoners was the Kraków privilege (1388),²⁵ in which Władysław Jagiełło secured his rights to prisoners captured by Polish knights. The king could exchange them or release them for ransom, both scenarios benefiting him.²⁶

These provisions proved relevant during the war with the Teutonic Order (1409–1411), during which Poles captured many prisoners. Some were captured twice,²⁷ requiring the Order to pay ransoms, especially for Western European knights, to maintain alliances and avoid international embarrassment. The potential profitability of ransoms is illustrated by the case of Nikolaus von Kottovitz, a Teutonic knight captured in 1410, who paid 150 *sexagenas* Prague groschen (Latin: *sexagena* = 60 groshen; German: *Schock*; Polish: *kopa*) and provided armour and two crossbows for his release.²⁸ The ransom of Teutonic prisoners was the subject of peace negotiations in Toruń and the following year. Ultimately, the Order agreed to pay 100,000 *sexagenas* of Prague groschen,²⁹ covering war damages and ransom for prisoners, finalised in 1412. Such profits, though rare, could offset the costs of war. The king's rights to prisoners

23 RD 1896, 196. There were more such payments noted in registers.

24 'quod captiui per iam dictum Johannem, aut suos homines in dicta gwerra vel expedicione'. AKLS 1888, 56.

25 '6. Captivos autem, per nobiles regni Poloniae predicti tam intra metas regni quam eciam extra detentos, pro nobis reservamus'. Kraków privilege granted by Władysław Jagiełło. Kraków, February 18, 1386. CE 1891, 9.

26 Śliwiński B. 1993, 320. Similar dealings were present in other European countries, like the Teutonic Order. See: Ekdahl S. 2008, 353.

27 Ekdahl S. 2008, 356.

28 Pelech M. 1987, 138; Grabarczyk T. 2000, 59.

29 Długosz J. 2009a, 202–203; Jóźwiak S. et al. 2010, 71.

extended to the 1414 war against the Teutonic Order. Jan Długosz mentions that knights delivered 60 prisoners to Jagiełło during the campaign.³⁰ However, deviations from this practice occurred such as in December 1410, when Maciej of Wąsosz negotiated a ransom for Kasper Schönefeld, a prisoner captured at Koronowo on October 10, 1410, bypassing the king.³¹ This case highlights the fact that knights sometimes claimed ransoms for prisoners despite royal rights, which raises questions regarding the king's awareness or approval of such actions.³²

Royal rights to prisoners remained unchanged until 1430. Revisions in 1433³³ stipulated that while the king retained the rights to captured enemies, he was required to pay the captors for them. This shift reduced the king's absolute authority over prisoners, allowing the nobility to ransom their captives independently. Records of such transactions include Jan Kuropatwa of Łańcuchów, who detained Teutonic knights captured on September 1, 1435, during the battle at Ukmergė (Polish: *Wilkomierz*) on his estate to secure ransoms.³⁴

Provisions

Supplying a large army during campaigns was a challenging logistical task. Władysław Jagiełło addressed this issue in an edict issued in Lublin in 1432³⁵ during a campaign against the rebellious Lithuanian prince Švitrigaila, the king's youngest brother. Most provisions in the edict concerned maintaining order during marches and punishing knights who looted Polish territories. Jagiełło referenced an earlier, currently unknown today document from Casimir the Great's reign. Looting certainly was one of the methods of acquiring food during wars. Moreover, knights did not limit their activities to enemy territories but also plundered Polish lands. The king sought to prevent such incidents. Władysław Jagiełło also forbade troops from staying in villages and towns, as this would create favourable conditions for looting and foster conflicts with the local population. It is difficult to determine the content of earlier instructions, but their existence suggests that problems with knights had a longer history.³⁶

30 Długosz J. 2009b, 41.

31 Niewiński A. 2020, 183–184; Józwiak S. 2010, 99.

32 Gryglewski K. 2023, 64–65.

33 '7. Et si quis ex nostris baronibus nebulibus proceribus seu terrigenis aliquem vel aliquos captivum vel captivos, cuiuscumque status condicionis aut eminencie fuerit, captivaverit: illi vel illis promittimus a quolibet huiusmodi captivo dare et solvere unam sexagenam monete in regno nostro currentis et recipere pro nobis captivum depactandum, exceptis civibus et plebeis, quos ille vel illi depactent, qui eos duxerit seu duxerint captivandos, pro libito sue voluntatis'. Second Kraków privilege of king Władysław Jagiełło. Kraków, January 9, 1433. CE, 309–310.

34 Sochacka A. 2009, 15–16.

35 Kutrzeba S. 1930, 1–7.

36 Kaczmarczyk Z., Weyman S. 1958, 55.

The latter part of the edict outlined fixed food prices that were to be enforced in the military camp. On the one hand, this prevented sellers from inflating prices; on the other, participants in the campaign could not coerce merchants into reducing the prices. The camp was a large military gathering where food was often scarce. These provisions, likely based on previous experiences, reflected the king's concern for the knights' well-being.

Individual Obligations

The general privileges mentioned above (up to the end of Władysław Jagiełło's reign) did not, however, apply to the nobility of the Ruthenian lands. These areas had been annexed to the Kingdom of Poland by Casimir the Great as a result of prolonged wars that ended in 1366. The population of the newly annexed territories operated under their laws, which differed significantly from those in Polish lands. Consequently, when Casimir the Great issued his legal codification known as the *Statutes*, they did not cover the territory of Red Ruthenia. After Casimir's death, these lands became the focus of Polish-Hungarian rivalry. Ultimately, Louis of Anjou (died 1382), king of Hungary and Poland, placed them under Hungarian administration. This decision was not accepted by the Polish side, which took advantage of Hungary's internal crisis after Louis's death and in 1387 ousted the Hungarian garrisons, restoring Polish control over the Ruthenian territories.

The military obligations of Polish knights granted estates in these lands were not determined by the laws in force in Polish territories (the *Statutes* of Casimir the Great) but by individual documents issued to them.³⁷ These documents specified, among other things, the form and scope of the military service required of a given knight. As a result, the knights had varied obligations. The factors determining the differences in military service among landowners in Ruthenia remain unclear. Existing research has not yet linked this variability to the size of the estates granted to the knights.³⁸

How military service was regulated in Ruthenia placed its knights in a less favourable position compared to the nobility in other parts of the Kingdom of Poland. It is, therefore, not surprising that the knights from Ruthenia sought to eliminate this inequality. A good opportunity to achieve this arose with the birth of Władysław, the first son of Władysław Jagiełło, in 1424. The king wanted to ensure his son's succession to the throne, which required the nobility's approval. The Ruthenian nobility decided to leverage this situation and began demanding privileges equal to those already enjoyed by the rest of the Polish knights. It appeared that their goal was achieved in 1425 when a privilege issued in Brześć Kujawski equalised the military burdens of the

37 Kurtyka J. 2000, 86.

38 Zajączkowski S.M. 1978b, 81.

Ruthenian nobility with those of other Polish territories. However, this document ultimately never came into force. The conflict intensified in 1427 when the king ordered the Ruthenian knights to prepare for a campaign against the Ottomans. Many refused, conditioning their participation on receiving payment of five marks per 'lance' before the campaign. They were thus demanding compensation similar to that guaranteed by earlier privileges to the knights of Polish lands. The king responded with repressions and confiscated the lands of disobedient knights, but once the situation was under control, he released the captives and returned most of the confiscated properties. Only in 1430, in the privilege issued at Jedlnia and confirmed in Kraków in 1433, did the king agree to equalise the rights of the Ruthenian nobility with those of the rest of the Polish Kingdom. This was ultimately realised in 1434, when Władysław III (1434–1444), son of Władysław Jagiełło, ascended the throne in Kraków, and the Kraków privilege was extended to the knights of the Ruthenian lands.³⁹

A similar form of defining military obligations through individual duties applied to village heads and town administrators managing settlements established under German law across the Kingdom of Poland, including Ruthenian territories. The specifics of their military service were outlined in location charters, detailing the quality of equipment, the number of troops and the price of horses. These obligations also varied significantly – some village heads were required to participate in all types of military campaigns, others only in defensive actions, and still others only within their voivodeship.⁴⁰ The determination of how administrators were to fulfil their military service in individual documents made them comparable in this regard to the nobility of Ruthenia.

Sculteti and *advocati* provided valuable support during military mobilisation. They served as heavily or lightly armed cavalry,⁴¹ with equipment not significantly different from that of the nobility. For instance, in 1423, a document concerning Częstochowa required the wójt to serve with one heavily armed companion on a good horse.⁴² Similarly, the vogt of Stara Sól (near Przemyśl) in 1421 was obligated to serve personally and also provide a lancer and four archers.⁴³ *Sculteti* were required to serve at their own expense in wars within the Kingdom of Poland; for campaigns beyond the Kingdom's borders, the king had to pay them.⁴⁴ In private settlements, landlords typically paid the village heads, who served within their lord's contingent.⁴⁵ From 1423 (the privilege of Warta), the role of village heads began to decline when Władysław

39 Ginter K. 2008, 262.

40 Zajączkowski S.M. 1973, 27–28.

41 Zajączkowski S.M. 1973, 35, 37.

42 Zajączkowski S.M. 1978a, 37.

43 MAML 1890, 33; Zajączkowski S.M. 1978a, 37.

44 Zajączkowski S.M. 1973, 30.

45 Kaczmarczyk Z., Weyman S. 1958, 56.

Jagiello granted the nobility greater control over this group. Knights were allowed to gradually annex and incorporate the lands of village heads into their estates, leading to the atrophy and eventual marginalisation of this group during wars. As a result, the nobility strengthened their position, eliminating a potentially competing group. This process occurred mainly during the 15th century.⁴⁶

The military organisation based on individual charters was undoubtedly advantageous for the monarch, allowing him to dictate the scale of obligations and control their fulfilment. Unfortunately, as the nobility's influence grew, this military service declined. Ruthenian knights were incorporated into Polish law and served 'to the best of their abilities', limiting the monarch's ability to ensure proportional military service based on wealth, while the role of village heads and vogts in the army was marginalised.

The military obligations of knights during the reign of Władysław Jagiełło underwent significant changes. The *Statutes* of Casimir the Great addressed this issue in very general terms. His successors clarified these provisions under pressure from the knights. There is no doubt that privileges were most often proclaimed at moments when the monarch needed the support of society. For instance, Louis I of Hungary had to secure the Polish throne for one of his daughters. Władysław Jagiełło sought to strengthen his position at the beginning of his reign and later to ensure the inheritance of the crown by his son. These circumstances were favourable for the knights to put forward their demands. The changes enforced in such situations shaped laws that became the cornerstone of the future power of the nobility in the Kingdom of Poland.

A particularly interesting aspect of this evolution was its benefits to military campaign participants. Aside from two obligations – the defence of the Kingdom and the right to take prisoners – these changes primarily favoured the nobility. They acquired the right to compensation for campaigns conducted beyond the borders of the country, indemnities for lost equipment and captivity, and later, even for captured prisoners. These changes had a fiscal nature, and their implementation required the monarch to have sufficient financial resources. It is unclear whether these obligations were honoured by the king, but they undoubtedly posed a challenge to the royal treasury. These concessions enhanced the financial power of the nobility while simultaneously weakening the king's influence. Trends in how military duties evolved also reflected the nobility's expectations and can be seen as a means to fulfil their aspirations. These aspirations concerned financial benefits but also included matters such as participation in significant state decisions, like the initiation of wars or their conduct.⁴⁷

46 Lysiak L. 1964, 80–81.

47 Burkhardt J. 2016, 200–202.

The described changes in the knights' military service were just one of many areas of political struggle between the king and the nobility. These conflicts shaped the political system of the Kingdom of Poland, where the knights emerged as the dominant force with significant influence on political decisions and their implementation. An interesting aspect of this process was also the awareness of the nobility as a cohesive estate. It seems that these changes were not the result of a coordinated and planned consolidation of the entire estate within the Kingdom. Such a pattern can only be observed at a territorial level (at most, at the provincial level). One notable instance occurred in 1427 when knights from Ruthenian lands demanded equal rights with the rest of the country. Perhaps the fact that this conflict involved only one estate from a single province (which had different legal foundations for military service compared to the rest of the Kingdom) allowed Władysław Jagiełło to quell these demands. This suggests that the nobility from other provinces did not identify with their issues. Local communities had a sense of certain unity, but it did not yet exist on a national level.⁴⁸ It seems that occasionally similar demands arose in various regions of the Kingdom, leading to temporary coordination of actions, but only on an ad hoc basis. Perhaps the success of enforcing such demands contributed to the formation of a broader awareness. This article merely outlines the main aspects of this complex issue. Nonetheless, further research is necessary to better understand not only the legal aspects of military obligations but also the mentality of people at that time.

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