

Zygfryd Rymaszewski, *Obrót prawny nieruchomościami w Krakowie i podkrakowskim Kazimierzu w średniowieczu*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2020, ss. 351

The issue of real estate transactions in medieval cities located in Poland has long been waiting for exploration. The scientific community impatiently waited for the realisation of the promise of Professor Zygfryd Rymaszewski, who had already declared to take up this important research topic a few years ago.

The book is divided into four chapters. The author has provided it with an extensive “Introduction”, which perfectly introduces the reader to the complex matter of urban relations. It presents, inter alia, the authorities before which individual legal actions in the field of real estate trade were performed. It also shows the attitude of the authorities towards the transaction, especially the city’s desire to control the turnover.

The first chapter describes the parties of the contract (for example the monarch, city, church and clergy, nobility, brotherhoods, guilds and others) and their representatives. The second chapter shows the subject of trading and its great diversity. In the third chapter, entitled “Types of property transactions”, the author emphasizes that municipal real estate was often the subject of perpetual purchase and sale, and much less often donation, exchange or lease. They were also often the subject of security for claims. Additionally, chapter four describes the activities accompanying the activities performed.

The choice of topic should be considered as appropriate. This is because the monograph partially fills the research gap, covering the application of German law systems in Polish lands in the Middle Ages. Previous studies on this extensive subject have dealt only with certain narrow issues, such as the purchase of an annuity. However, there were no comprehensive works. The analysis of two cities: Kraków and Kazimierz near Kraków is also justified. Firstly, they had the

same legal system (Saxon-Magdeburg law), and otherwise they constituted an economic whole. Also, the chronological framework indicated by the sources, i.e. essentially the years 1300-1442, should be considered proper.

The author used numerous printed sources, in particular magistrate's books (*acta scabinalia*), the records of the Cracow city council (*acta consularia*), and additionally the books of the head of the Supreme Court of German Law at the Kraków Castle, diplomatic codes (*Codex diplomaticus*), Kraków urban statutes based on Magdeburg Law, collections of Saxon and Magdeburg law, records of judgements (ortyle, Urteile) of the Higher Court of German Law and works of old Polish lawyers.

At the same time, the writer notices gaps in the sources he invokes, and therefore approaches them with great caution. The problems in the research on court books are mainly due to the fact that they lack the texts of the contracts. It should be emphasized that the analysis of the researched sources was very difficult, laborious and required a huge amount of time. What is more, the author presents a new research field, which is the query of handwritten documents. However, their further analysis would require the appointment of a whole research team.

A huge merit of the work is a detailed description of the adopted research method, which can be considered an exemplary one. It can be treated as a type of textbook for learners taking their first steps in scientific work.

Undoubtedly, another benefit of the work is also the list of sources with abbreviations included. It makes it easier for the reader to follow complex issues. The author's annex, containing as many as 31 tables, is also very useful. Presenting them collectively in a separate annex was a good move, because it allows for quick data comparison. Providing the tables with a separate list also makes navigating the book easier.

The subject matter that Professor Zygfryd Rymaszewski took up has long been waiting for elaboration. The author shows that in Kraków and Kazimierz real estate was traded on a very large scale. The conclusions drawn are not general in nature, but are confirmed and supported by detailed, reliable data indicated in the tables.

Also interesting conclusions are drawn. First of all, contrary to what one might expect, there was no increased interference by the ruler in Krakow (the seat of the ruler's court). The ruler rarely participated in the trade, and in addition, he acted according to the norms of municipal law. Also, the large share

of women in property transactions may be thought provoking. In some of the years depicted, they accounted for more than half of the contractors. Interestingly, among them there were not only widows, but also married women as well.

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