I. INTRODUCTION

We live in an industrialized world so our fascination with towns must come from our conviction that towns have played a major role in the building of civilizations. So much so that according to some researchers, there can be no sustained progress without an organized group of people living within a limited space and pursuing a non-agrarian economy (Weber 1920/21; Benevolo 1971; Ennen 1988). As it continued developing, a town would evolve in its outlook adjusting to new needs and circumstances. For us, towns of the Middle Ages are 'towns of that time' and we would be greatly deceived if we assessed them with the criteria of our age. There is general consensus that a town can be built and exist only within a suitably developed economic and cultural space. A town never stands alone without the right hinterland it will cease developing, descend into stagnation or decline (e.g. Sombart 1907, 3; Ennen 1987, 638–639; Samsonowicz 1986, 5; Klápště 2012, 325–457). Thus, a town can only be created when the social and economic substratum is suitably prepared. In the cultural formation that was characteristic of Europe's Latin West, a legally sanctioned affiliation to an urban community tended to be a mark of distinction and a guarantee of relative social safety. Town communes and an urban mode of life moulded the mentality of the European middle classes from the Medieval period until the Industrial Age.

Towns have an identity of their own. This is something worth stressing and cultivating, especially in our age of globalization, which is for numerous reasons, useful and inevitable, but also has quite a few unwelcome consequences. One of them is the loss of cultural self- identification. The medieval past of Prague, Wrocław and Krakow has a significant impact on the appearance of these cities and the way they function, and not less so, on the region for which they continue to be the central settlement (Fig. 1). Their most attractive districts developed in the period from the 12th to 14th century and produced the spatial layout that is preserved to this day. They continue to serve the broad spectrum of functions of a city centre – from administrative to recreational. Each of these towns has some individual features while sharing some similarities – the result of their development in the same civilization zone.

The aim of this book is to add a voice to the discussion on the medieval urbanisation of East Central Europe and the changes in lifestyle expressed in the new organization of urban space, private property and living conditions. As a starting point, we adopted the assumption that life in towns had special circumstances, different from standards typical of rural settlements and elite establishments. Urban life may be said to have had two rhythms that were separate but interlocked in the public and the private space. Both these spheres were necessary to sustain the urban lifestyle, reconciling the interests of the commune, economic goals and private life. Prague, Wrocław and Krakow, major urban centres in Bohemia, Silesia and Lesser Poland, were chosen because they best illustrate the cultural turnaround noted in East Central Europe during the High Middle Ages. This was not the first critical period in the history of this part of the continent. Three centuries earlier the region was swept by political and social transformation when tribal structures were replaced by state structures, and the Christian religion was adopted in the western rite. In contrast to these developments, the transformation of the 13th century was not political. Its foundation was the adoption of a new economic model, its main driving force – an influx of colonists from the West. It is no accident that this process has been referred to as commercialization (Gawlas 2006; McCormick 2007). Using

Fig. 1. Prague, Wrocław and Krakow within the network of urban centres of the Central European inner zone. Main trade routes according to Myśliwski 2009, with author's additions. Drawing N. Lenkow

this approach, the transformation of central European proto-towns into communal towns was mainly a process of their adaptation to new economic challenges. The laws and the structure of towns were adjusted to them too. The chronology of this book is defined by the time of this transformation. We cannot specify its exact dates but the first evidence of change may be observed during the 12th century, its intensification in the 13th century and the consolidation of new structures in the 14th century (Klápště 1994).

Also addressed in this study are several specific themes and questions such as the relationship of early medieval proto-towns to the legally regulated towns of the High Middle Ages, the progress of incorporation, the organization of the burgage plot etc. Another essential question relates to the origins of the town house in East Central Europe. To what extent was it a phenomenon transplanted from the West, and to what extent did it take form in the region, as a merchant's house in a proto-urban centre, conditioned by local needs? Also presented are a number of insights into the emerging infrastructure – the techniques and facilities associated with communication and waste disposal. Finally, some local and cross-regional features are examined to identify elements that Prague, Wrocław and Krakow have in common and those that are discrete.

The material used in completing this work is medieval archaeology and methods appropriate to this discipline. Consequently, our inferences derive from the analysis of the material record obtained through excavation. Certainly, the author is aware that the study of medieval towns extends beyond the scope of the interest and methodological potential of a single branch of research. We have to make use of left bank findings contributed by researchers whose work is within other disciplines: history *sensu stricto*, history of architecture and art history, legal history and ethnology. Let us also add that the borderline between archaeology, architectural history and urban planning is fluid, understood variously in different countries and research communities. We assume that the object of our study is held in common, despite differences in the way we understand numerous issues. The history of towns, their structure and urban lifestyle is compatible with the subject of the daily life of medieval man that all these disciplines address. It may be understood as an attempt to describe man by making an analysis of his immediate material surroundings. These questions may be accessed by all of the disciplines named earlier through an array of sources, which range from the written record through iconographical representations to surviving material remains contained in functioning buildings and in cultural deposits. Because of the fragmentation of the record, none of these disciplines can hope to achieve the expected results by relying only on the method that is appropriate to it. Nevertheless, we can get a perspective that is closer to the bygone reality through discussion and by corroborating the results

contributed by individual areas of research (Le Goff 1990; Schreg 2001, 333–334). In effect, this means that the author does not propose to make an independent analysis of the written record; however, he shall make use of the published interpretations contributed by historians.

Studies focused on Prague, Wrocław and Krakow are but a small fraction of the vast field of research that covers the history of medieval and modern towns. To remove the analysis of these centres from the totality of urban studies is to substantially limit our perspective but this must be done if we are to investigate their individual character. At the same time, in undertaking to describe these three towns, we have to be aware that they were a part of a larger whole – the network of towns of Europe's Latin West evolved as a result of a complex, socially and economically conditioned urbanization process. It would be equally helpful, and no less interesting, to examine features shared by Prague, Nuremberg and Regensburg, or alternatively by Krakow, Toruń and Gdańsk. We have chosen Krakow, Prague and Wrocław because they were part of the same economic set of connections within the Sudetes-Carpathians zone and share a number of historical themes, such as being under the governance, at one time or other, of Přemyslid, Piast, Luxembourg, Habsburg and Jagiellonian rulers and, possibly most notably, because of their demography, the result mostly of a process of migration described in literature as eastward colonisation (Higounet 1990; Kejř 1998; Gawlas 2003). In addition, and not without importance in this choice is the fact that the author has substantial experience from archaeological investigations undertaken in Wrocław and from his exchanges with archaeologists working in Krakow and Prague.

The principal part of the existing contribution to the study of Central European medieval towns, including the centres of most interest to us here is from historians (Hoffmann 1992; Wyrozumski 1992; Goliński 1997; Manikowska 2001; Rajman 2004; Duchhardt and Reininghaus 2005; Czaja 2005). At present, there is no longer a need to justify the claim that without input from other medieval researchers our knowledge of this subject would be incomplete, distorted even. A full account of the past progress of historical and archaeological research on Krakow, Prague and Wrocław would not be useful in this book, especially as I have presented the contribution of general historians, architectural historians and archaeologists in my earlier works, and in a wider context too (Piekalski 1999; 2001; 2004). I hope it is enough if I focus on the more relevant issues of the research on Prague, Wrocław and Krakow that have become available over the last several years. The reader will find references to these earlier works in the relevant publications.

Recent years have brought many new archaeological discoveries that have enriched, but also altered our earlier understanding of medieval towns and their inhabitants. Many of these findings have not been published to-date. Nevertheless, we can say that the lively debate on their subject has been quite productive. Some important phenomena can now be placed in a new historical context. We need to revisit issues such as information flow, commercial contacts and migrations between the western and eastern region of Central Europe in the 12th–14th century. In light of the new evidence, the legal and social transformation and the commercialization of the economic systems of Prague, Wrocław and Krakow appear to be earlier and more intense than previously thought. We need to reassess the phenomenon traditionally described as establishing a town and known to researchers in our region as incorporation. The question arises whether the purpose of town privileges granted during the 13th century was always to stimulate the economy, or rather, was this fiscal regulation and a change to the system of control over an independently unfolding intensive process of urbanization. The new findings on chronology lead us to claim that the influx of merchants and craftsmen from the West to the East is evident in at least some centres, prior to the constitution of the town communes in a legal sense.

The status of the archaeological studies of Prague corresponds with the size of that city and its significance in the history of Central Europe. Systematic and well-organized heritage preservation is being rewarded by the regular recording of discoveries and their scientific evaluation. Due to them we know the extent, structure and character of the built environment below Prague Castle (Ježek and Klápště 2001; Čiháková and Havrda 2008; Čiháková and Müller 2008). Moreover, we can partially reconstruct its street system and the techniques used to protect their surfaces (Cymbalak and Podliska 2011). We have a relatively wide range of information about the town on the right bank of the Vltava River during both of its development phases – the proto-urban and the communal. Due to the research of Ladislav Hrdlička, we have a grasp of the original topography of the town and of the stratigraphy of deposits between the Vltava crossing and Tyn Court which closes off Prague's main market place from the east (Hrdlička 2000, 2001, 2005). The economic base of the early town has been discussed at length (Podliska and

Zavřel 2006; Podliska 2008; Ježek 2011). The famous Romanesque houses of Prague have now been provided with a proper source publication (Dragoun et al. 2003). Less well understood are the structure of the burgage plots and the town's level of sanitation. An archaeological excavation carried out between 2003–2006 in Náměsti Republiky Square (Juřina et al. 2009; Vyšohlid 2011) covered two hectares of the New Town in a zone occupied by a proto-urban settlement since the 12th century, but left outside the boundary of the incorporated town. A vast collection of diverse small finds was recovered which were of major significance for the study of medieval structures. Some data was made available for discussion and the rest awaits analysis. A good starting point for the future discussion of the rhythm of change in Prague and other Czech towns are the comprehensive works by Jan Klápště (2012, 325–457). An unquestioned contribution to the progress of Central European urban medieval archaeology made by Moravian and Czech archaeologists is the Forum Urbes Medii Aevi cycle of conferences, documented through a publication series, which publishes sources, interpretations and discussions (FUMA 2004–2012).

What are the current trends in the analysis and discussion on the medieval past of Wrocław and what does archaeology have to contribute to them? Having formulated our question in this way we wish to note that the research of the last decade has been built upon earlier studies. In Wrocław, an evident watershed in the development of urban archaeology is marked by the early 1990s. Construction projects undertaken at the time ran concurrently with a major intensification of archaeological rescue excavation, which has continued to this day. The exponential increase in the volume of new evidence stimulated analysis, discussion and cross-regional comparative studies. It also fuelled debate on many key subjects and helped to identify new research themes. It bore fruit in the form of the first monographic analysis of the burgage plot (Buśko and Piekalski eds. 1999), and a wide-ranging body of evidence on the Rynek – the main market square of the incorporated town (Bresch, Buśko and Lasota 2001; Bresch, Lasota and Piekalski 2002). However, some technical and organizational problems appeared too, resulting from the surfeit of new materials in need of urgent conservation and analysis. Much of this newly secured evidence is still unpublished, and consequently, still omitted from the discussion. When archaeological work was brought onto a construction site and became a commercial enterprise the quality of a large part of the conducted research suffered.

Nevertheless, we can say that substantial progress in archaeological excavation work has made it possible to put into effect a wide-ranging and reasonably organized programme of research. Generally speaking, its aim is to use archaeological methods and the archaeological record in the study of the town's past to understand it as a whole, which makes this research a segment of an interdisciplinary one. Emphasis is placed on reconstructing the structure of the medieval town and the dynamics of the changes in the built environment, on tracing the growth of infrastructure and town fortifications, on improving our understanding of craft production and living conditions. The main source for analysing the latter topic is small finds. What makes Wrocław one of the best archaeologically investigated towns of Central Europe is not so much the archaeological excavations but to the stages that followed upon them – the post-excavation analysis of the excavated archaeological record, analysis and organized discussions during meetings, lectures and a relatively wide circulation of the research results through scholarly and popular-science publications and museum exhibitions. We owe our present level of understanding to the efforts of archaeologists and researchers from related disciplines made over the last few decades. As is the nature of these endeavours, they were usually a team effort.

The groundbreaking studies of the proto-urban settlement on the left bank of the Odra undertaken by Józef Kaźmierczyk (1966–1970) were continued by Cezary Buśko (2005). His team, guided by insight obtained from linear trenches dug to install underground infrastructure in the eastern area of the Old Town, confirmed the earlier interpretation of this area as an artisan's settlement and proposed some corrections to its dating. The next stage of investigation took place in 2010–2012 and covered an extensive area of 40,000 m^2 in Nowy Targ Square. It was carried out by a team of archaeologists from the University of Wrocław. Provisional conclusions drawn from this excavation allow us to make a further revision of earlier deductions and were used, to some extent, in the present work.

The debate on the structure of the incorporated town and its early development has changed direction in recent years. The place of the statistical method of study of the cadastral town plan of the regularly laid out part of the town has been replaced by analysis of the actual material remains of the oldest built environment found in the burgage plots (Lasota 2002; Chorowska and Lasota 2010). In consequence, our perspective on the built environment of the incor-

porated town has changed. At present, it is thought, more realistically than in the older literature, that it developed over several stages, over time, rather than as part of a single act. The burgage plot differed in its appearance depending on its location within the town and the prosperity of its owner – this was argued convincingly by Paweł Konczewski in his study (2007), the result of painstaking analysis of confusing input from rescue excavations carried out in the south-eastern area of the incorporated town. The plots described by him present a reality different from the one known to us from the Market Square (Rynek) and its environs (Chorowska et al. 2012).

The streets of the Old Town in Wrocław had been studied for a long time (Kaźmierczyk 1966–1970; Buśko 1997; 1999a) but there was a rapid acceleration after 2000. The underground grid was replaced under the streets and this exposed a several kilometre long section through the medieval deposits and the sequence of street paving structures. Most essential in this respect were the investigations in Kiełbaśnicza, Szewska and Wita Stwosza streets, which were elements of the regular town plan. Next to the information about the methods used to consolidate and repair the streets, this research resulted in a large body of small finds which were later used to analyse the typical behaviour in a public urban space (Piekalski and Wachowski 2010).

These studies of medieval Wrocław are described in a separate publication series called 'Wratislavia Antiqua'. Since 1999 seventeen volumes have been published which present the excavated material record, its analytical results, papers from conferences held, and monographic studies (Wachowski 1999–2013), e.g. of medieval glass (Biszkont 2005), weapons (Marek 2008), cemeteries (Wachowski 2010), and the water supply and waste disposal systems (Cembrzyński 2011). Issues central to the study of medieval Wrocław are being presented in succession at colloquia on the archaeology of Hanseatic towns organized by the conservation authority in Lübeck (Piekalski 2004, 2006, 2008; Konczewski, Mruczek and Piekalski 2010; Piekalski and Wachowski 2012).

Krakow, similar to Prague but in contrast to Wrocław, is a city fortunate to have escaped destruction during World War II. As a result, it has its own rhythm of archaeological and architectural investigation, which was not driven by the need to excavate in the ruins or in vacant lots left by demolished buildings. Greater insight into the structure of medieval houses only occurred in the 1980s in connection with projects concerned with the restoration of historic architecture. The last decade in particular has seen a substantial revival of research activity in Krakow in the wake of repairs and adaptations made to the cellars of townhouses of the Old Town (referred to in Krakow as Śródmieście, or 'town centre') adjusting them to businesses, mostly associated with the food and drink industry. Moreover, an extensive renovation of the Main Market Square was carried out accompanied by a widescale archaeological investigation (Firlet 2010). This was not the first excavation undertaken in the city's principal square. Kazimierz Radwański (1975, 1995) and Emil Zaitz (2010, 203–210) have reviewed the long history of past research and conservation projects. Nevertheless, their scope was small and they never went beyond the basic, source-critical stage of research. Current views and the progress of discussion of the medieval urban historians of Krakow were presented in an individual monograph by Jerzy Rajman (2004). A wider selection of views is given in an interdisciplinary tome edited by Jerzy Wyrozumski (2007). A new contribution to the discussion about the development of the 'new towns' of Krakow was presented by Marek Słoń in his monograph on double and multiple towns (2010, 288–306).

A general view of the structure of Krakow's prototown was reconstructed using evidence from numerous small area and sondage excavations undertaken in different parts of the city. The interpretation provided at the time was that the early agglomeration had four zones of settlement (Radwański 1975) and these were the stronghold in Wawel (zone I), the suburbium of Okół to the north of it (zone II), the area to the north of the suburbium settled during the 11th and 12th century (zone III) and the agricultural settlements and the convent of the Premonstratensian nuns in Zwierzyniec. Studies carried out in the Main Market Square, pursued with some interruption during the first decade of the 21st century, resulted in some crucial adjustments to this image. Most notably, they improved our understanding of zone III by adding the extensive graveyard found there to the archaeological record (Myszka 2003, 121–144; Głowa 2010), which was later occupied by an ironworking settlement (Buśko and Głowa 2010).

The current findings from the study of the structure of the incorporated town rely, in the main, on the theoretical study made by Bogusław Krasnowolski (2004, 88–136). His scrupulous analysis of measurements led him to reconstruct the plan of the town designed by surveyors, *vogts* and Duke Bolesław the Chaste at the time of the 1257 incorporation. We may conclude that this project was put into effect almost

fully. Studies of the layout of the plots within blocks of buildings and their early transformation were also undertaken, also based mainly on the measurement method without sufficient understanding of the oldest boundary walls (Łukacz 1999). Nevertheless, the findings made using this method are apparently being confirmed by architectural studies carried out in townhouse cellars.

A key development for understanding the origins of the townhouses of Krakow was inventory work undertaken on the former Hungarian Dormitory (Bursa Węgierska) on 3/5 Bracka Street and the discovery within its remains of a residential tower dating to the 13th century. Guided by the results from the analysis of this structure, Waldemar Komorowski and Marek Łukacz rejected as inaccurate results from a search for the oldest town buildings made earlier (Komorowski and Łukacz 1985; Komorowski 1997). At the same time, a new stage was started to identify town houses from the 13th/14th century compatible in their workmanship to the features of the tower on Bracka Street. The results of studies carried out since then have been presented in a number of publications illustrating the already significant level of understanding of the origins of the houses of Krakow's merchants (Komorowski 2000; Cechosz and Holcer 2006, 2007; Łukacz 2010, 2011; Sławiński 2010; Komorowski and Opaliński 2011).

Quite concentrated research undertaken during the last decade focused on the area of the town occupied from the 15th century adjacent to the University of Krakow (Niemiec 2007; Sławiński 2010, 86–90). This is a section of the western district of the town, near the wall. The area is significant for the understanding of medieval Krakow because its inhabitants were very mixed socially and ranged from members of the less affluent trades (mainly potters and tanners), through Krakow Jews, the noble family of Szczepan Pęcherz to the professors of the university founded by King Władysław Jagiełło (1386–1434).

This book is the result of research, reflection and discussion with fellow researchers specialising in the study of the towns of Central Europe. To some extent, it continues themes I have addressed in my earlier publications but my views have been much altered by new archaeological evidence recovered from recent excavations carried out in Prague, Krakow and Wrocław. This text was written at the Albert-Ludwig University of Freiburg thanks to the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Professor Sebastian Brather, my kind host at the Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften. I am grateful for their assistance and for that of the first readers of this book – Professor Jan Klápště in Prague, Dr. Dariusz Niemiec in Krakow and Karol Bykowski in Wrocław.