

IV. THE MARKET SQUARE IN GLIWICE, THE 13TH TO THE 18TH CENTURY – CLOSING REMARKS

The Market Square in Gliwice is an example of a town centre with a perceptibly burgher character, one which functioned without the permanent presence of a ducal court, with no pervasive involvement of a bishop's authority or that of other members of the elite. The upper strata of medieval and early modern society had little impact on what would have been a fairly autonomous development of the daily life of the town. Its nature and rhythm of life were regulated mostly by its own needs and potential. Thus, the medieval and early modern period, Gliwice had a form distinct from that of Opole, Racibórz, Cieszyn or Nysa – the capital cities of the dukes and bishops of Upper Silesia. Except for the 13th century act of the town's incorporation, the outside world intruded on Gliwice mostly to burn it down or wreck its development rather than to bring any measurable profit. The result of the described state of affairs was the emergence of an exceptional entity – a local bourgeois community of the pre-industrial age. Attributes of this community and conditions of its existence are for us a significant research issue and the extensive scale of archaeological excavation carried out in the Market Square in Gliwice has offered us a relatively wide scope for investigation and analysis. Without doubt, the results from this research have added greatly to our understanding of Silesian towns during the age before rapid industrialization.

The form of the main market of medieval Gliwice was the effect of processes of urban development specific for East-Central Europe in the 13th century (Eysymontt 2009, pp. 36–199). The square-shaped market had a coherent overall plan with a regular grid of streets marking the boundaries between street blocks, which were subdivided into town properties. The rent-paying town property was the basic unit of the town's space and economy. The economic success of its owner was translated into the economic

success of the town. Thus, the spatial structure was largely the basis for the economic and cultural development of the town commune, complete with norms related to behaviour and patterns of lifestyle. The parish church – an important institution unifying the commune – occupied a marginal location in the townscape of Gliwice.

The medieval and early modern Market Square accumulated central functions – ones that were mutually complementary and defined the outlook of the whole (Piekalski 2000). Of key significance among them were the economic function, the function of a self-governed centre, the role of the central meeting place, a place for communication and for leisure activity. Also relevant is the position of the town plots extending from the Market Square in the socio-topographic townscape.

The set of material sources collected during our investigation testifies to the non-agrarian nature of the economy of Gliwice throughout the entire duration of the investigated period. During the oldest phase of the Market Square, dated by us to the second half of the 13th–14th century, its surface was paved over, adjusted to constant and intensive use. Not later than during the 15th century at least a part of the commerce of the town was taking place inside stalls – light weight posted structures sub-rectangular in plan with an area of a few, or at the most, a dozen-odd square metres. Stalls of this description occupied large parts of the Market Square forming a permanent element of its landscape. Their construction and manner of use did not vary until a time of change in the 18th–19th century. Another confirmation of commercial activity in the Market Square comes from the coin finds. The group of more than 30 or so specimens examined by Borys Paszkiewicz has proved that coinage was used in the retail trade. This is suggested by the domination of coins of the lowest denomination in

III. THE MARKET SQUARE IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

the recovered assemblage. This is true of both the oldest specimens, issued during the 14th century, and the later coins. Prominent among them are mainly local Upper Silesian and Bohemian coins, more rarely, coins minted in the German states and in the Kingdom of Poland.

Also found in the inventories of small finds are objects which document the activity in the Market Square of various trades. Carpenters' and blacksmiths' tools are a confirmation of what could be the most essential town professions in Gliwice. Production waste and assorted finds of raw lead and

copper suggest metallurgical activity. Stonemasons' chisels and iron wedges appear to be the relics of the medieval construction site of the Town Hall.

The construction of the Town Hall towering over the tenement houses of the town is an expression of the self-government function of the commune. The results of our research have confirmed suggestions put forward in the literature on the subject that the masonry structure of the Town Hall started being built in the Town Square of Gliwice during the 15th century.

Jerzy Piekalski
Institute of Archaeology, University of Wrocław