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## THE EASTERN AND THE WESTERN CUIAVIA – ONE REGION, TWO DEVELOPMENT LINES

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/v10089-008-0014-6>

**ABSTRACT.** Cuiavia is one of the oldest historical regions in Poland characterized by diverse physical and geographical conditions, as well as different administrative and historical past. The aim of this paper is to present the impact of historical and administrative divisions, as well as diverse socio-economic and political transformations that in a significant way influenced the diversity of social and economical features of Eastern and Western Cuiavia. Against such a background different development directions will be discussed.

**KEY WORDS:** Cuiavia, historical region, partitions of Poland, level of socio-economic development.

The article aims at demonstrating how the distant past of a given territory together with the historical, administrative-political and various physico-geographical factors determine the present.

Located in Central Poland, Cuiavia (Polish: Kujawy) was a region having one historical, ethnic and cultural identity from its beginning (Roszkowski, 1999), but over time the situation changed radically. The unity of the region was undermined for the first time at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> c., when Cuiavia was divided into the Brześć Kujawski voivodeship (Eastern Cuiavia) and the Inowrocław voivodeship (Western Cuiavia). The two voivodeships, along with six other voivodeships, were then incorporated into the Greater Poland region (Roszkowski, 1999). Cuiavia's division into two parts consolidated in the 18<sup>th</sup> c., as a result of three successive partitions of Poland. Eastern Cuiavia found itself under the Russian occupation, whereas Western Cuiavia was taken over by Prussia. The annexation of Cuiavia by the two occupants caused that the region started to develop along separate

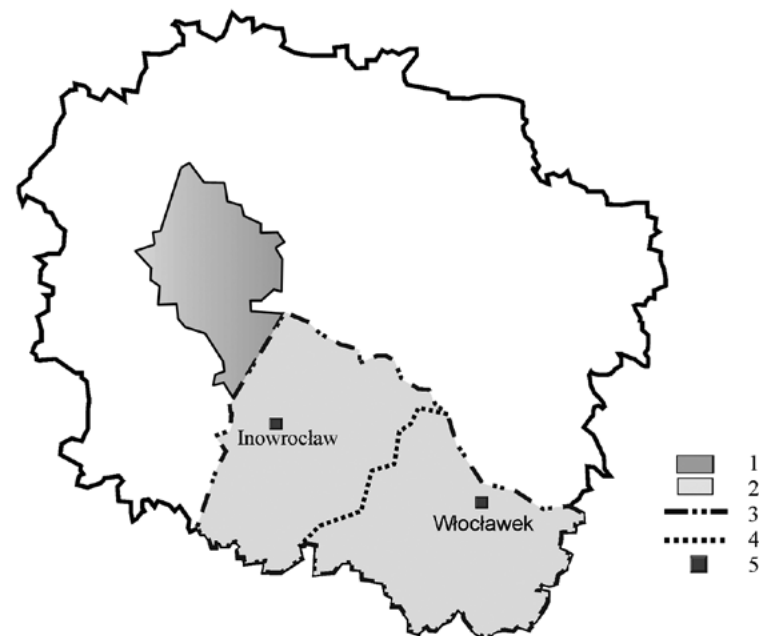
lines, dividing it into the eastern part with Włocławek as the capital city, and the western part with Inowrocław.

The 123-year period under the Russian and Prussian occupation did not put an end to the administrative bisection of Cuiavia. In the period of the Second Polish Republic (1919–1939), Eastern Cuiavia belonged to the Warsaw voivodeship and Western Cuiavia to the Poznań voivodeship. The two parts were united for the first time in 1938, when they were incorporated into the Pomeranian voivodeship with Toruń as the capital city. This situation continued after the Second World War. After 1945, the territory of historical Cuiavia administratively belonged to the Pomeranian voivodeship whose capital city was Bydgoszcz, and following 1950, after the voivodeship was renamed, to the Bydgoszcz voivodeship. As a result of another territorial reform that took place in 1975, Cuiavia underwent another administrative division. Its western part was incorporated into the Bydgoszcz voivodeship and the eastern part to the Włocławek voivodeship. On 1 January 1999, the Cuiavian-Pomeranian voivodeship was created, including both Eastern and Western Cuiavia (Fig. 1). Because of all the political and administrative

“manipulations” and the related historical past two distinct lines of Cuiavia development can be identified.

Beside the historical, political and administrative circumstances, the different lines of the region’s development were also formed by elements of the natural environment, and especially by the type of soil in the region. In Western Cuiavia, fertile black earth is common, hence the land is known as black Cuiavia, whereas poor podsolic soil is typical of Eastern Cuiavia, that gave her the name of white or sylvan Cuiavia. The type of soil determines its quality. Whereas in Western Cuiavia (for instance, in the district of Inowrocław) very good and good soil (classes I, II and III) account for almost 60% of arable land, and poor soil (classes V and VI) for 14%, in Eastern Cuiavia (e.g. in the district of Włocławek) the percentage of very good and good soil stands at 29%, and the low-quality soil is as much as 31%. The different natural conditions have influenced the present structure of land use. Arable land in Western Cuiavia makes up 76% of all land, while in Eastern Cuiavia only 67%. On the other hand, the share of woodland in total land in Western Cuiavia does not exceed 10%, but in its eastern part it is around 18–19% (Rudnicki, Kozłowski, Kluba, 2002).

Different physico-geographical conditions and dissimilar historical, political and administrative past strengthened differences between the eastern and western part of Cuiavia. The largest differences can be found within the economic dimension. Considering the fact that Cuiavia has been and still is mainly an agricultural region, the main component of the economic dimension is agriculture. In historical and economic terms, the key factor diversifying Polish agriculture was the way in which economy evolved from the feudal system to the capitalist system. This transformation modified the methods of production and changed the character of farming from natural to market-oriented (Halamska, 1998; after Rudnicki, Kozłowski, Kluba, 2002). The process emerged in Poland in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. and continued through the period of occupation by the three partitioners (Austria, Prussia and Russia) that represented three different political and economic systems, each having its specific level and pace of economic growth. In the Prussian annexation, and naturally in Western Cuiavia, farming switched to the capitalist system much earlier than in the Russian part. Peasants in the Prussian-occupied territory were enfranchised between 1811 and 1850 and the method applied in this process (so-called Prussian regulatory reform) preserved strong grange economy. As far as the peasant economy is concerned, the large and small-sized farms were favoured, while the number of medium-sized farms was largely reduced. These changes triggered two important phenomena: firstly, because of the fast-growing industry the demand for agricultural produce went up, which contributed to the growth of agricultural production and higher produce prices; secondly, the surplus labour force started leaving the rural areas (farming) to seek



1 – Areas belonging to Cuiavia as well at the 16<sup>th</sup> century, 2 – Ethnographic Cuiavia, 3 – Cuiavia region’s border, 4 – Border between the Eastern and the Western Cuiavia, 5 – Each part of Cuiavia capital

Fig. 1. Cuiavia region within limits of kujawsko-pomorskie voivodeship

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

employment in towns. Especially the latter phenomenon diminished interest in land, and together with the inheritance law in force and traditions largely helped increase the acreage of farms (Rudnicki, 2001).

Enfranchisement in the Russian annexation Eastern Cuiavia was undertaken only in the years 1861–1866, the direct reasons of the delay being the overall socio-economic backwardness and strong competition on the underdeveloped internal market for agricultural produce in Russia. The economic factors (unavailability of markets, low produce prices) and demographic factors (limited outflow of population to towns and strong demographic pressure on the possession of land) decided that agriculture developed slowly there. Consequently, typical farms in the Russian annexation were small; farms in excess of 21 acres (8.4 ha) accounted for less than 30% of all farms, whereas in the Prussian annexation their share exceeded 80% (Rudnicki, 2001; Rudnicki, Kozłowski, Kluba, 2002). Some traces of the situation can be found today in the size structure of farms in both parts of Cuiavia. Small-sized farms to 1 ha are common in Western Cuiavia (37% of all farms), whereas large-sized farms (over 20 ha) account for 12%. Medium-sized farms with acreage ranging from 2 to 10 ha (45%) are typical of Eastern Cuiavia, while the rates for the small and large-sized farms are 29 and 8%, respectively.

Progressing industrialization and urbanization processes came sooner to Western Cuiavia (annexed by Prussia), communication and services also developed there. This course of events was favourable for agriculture, because, on one hand, the demand for agricultural produce was certain on the receptive then Prussian market, additionally covered by a network of communication routes, and, on the other, the German industry could manufacture agricultural machines that increased the quality and quantity of food produced. Various development schemes were devised as a vehicle enabling investments in agricultural areas, bringing brick-made houses and outbuildings, electrification of farmsteads, amelioration of fields and pastures, as well as a dense network of roads (the Prussian regulatory reform). Areas annexed by Russia presented a completely different picture.

Consequently, the positions of Western and Eastern Cuiavia were poles apart, when Poland regained independence in 1918. Even institutional measures launched at the national level could not align the two parts of the country. It is a widespread belief that Western Cuiavia is characterised by relatively higher culture of farming, higher level of farmers' education, larger openness to innovation, implementation of new techniques and technologies, and radical modifications implemented to ensure maximum effectiveness of farming (Maślanka, 2005).

Not only agriculture, but also industry found a more favourable environment for development in Western Cuiavia, above all due to enfranchisement. As we already mentioned, the reforms were initiated quite early in Western Cuiavia,

and they triggered an outflow of labour force that joined the ranks of industrial workers. The results of migration between rural areas and towns were higher standard of living and increased demand for products made in towns.

The situation looked differently in Eastern Cuiavia, where few persons were potentially interested in industrial jobs, and additionally the demand for manufactured articles was limited. This difference directly translated into the number of industrial centres established in both parts of Cuiavia. In the western part, more than a dozen or so industrial centres had been created before 1910, the largest of them in Bydgoszcz and Inowrocław. At the same time, local deposits of raw materials, i.e. rock salt and limestone, initiated the development of what was later called the Western Cuiavian Industrial District. Moreover, new factories were built in smaller towns as well, and in several villages large sugar factories, distilleries and mills operated. By contrast, the only industrial centre in the eastern part of Cuiavia was Włocławek, and the rest of the territory was almost devoid of industrial establishments. Industrialization in Cuiavia after World War II concentrated on starting new plants in Western Cuiavia (Soda Works in Janików, Fats and Oils Works in Kruszwica), and on modernizing old plants in Eastern and Western Cuiavia (Szymańska, 1978).

In today's Western Cuiavia many factories operate not only in the capital city, i.e. Inowrocław, but also in smaller towns and villages, such as Gniewkowo, Janikowo, Kruszwica, or Wierzchosławice. Eastern Cuiavia has a limited number of factories that mainly deal with food processing, excluding Włocławek being the capital city.

Analysis of the economic dimension would be incomplete without the present sectoral structure of employment in Cuiavia. In this case, the western part of Cuiavia is represented by the district of Inowrocław and the eastern part by the district of Włocławek. Generally, the two districts considered together with their capitals do not show larger differences, and the structure of employment is almost identical. However, examination of the districts' structure of employment without their capital cities reveals some meaningful variations between the two units. The percentage of workers employed in agriculture in Western Cuiavia exceeds 7%, in industry they account for 54%, and in services below 39%. Respective rates for Eastern Cuiavia are less than 4%, around 37%, and 59% (2006 data). Then, when the capital cities of the two parts of Cuiavia are analysed in respect of the employment structure, we find that most inhabitants of Inowrocław work in the services sector and in Włocławek in industry. This distribution of workers has been formed by the historical, political and administrative past, as well as the aforementioned natural factors.

The possible effects of this situation on the living standard of population in the region can be established by referring to unemployment rates and potential

directions of migration. Lower rates of unemployment in Western Cuiavia estimated at 26% (2005 data) make the population flow within this part of Cuiavia, whereas higher rates of unemployment in Eastern Cuiavia standing at 29% (2005 data) encourage local population to migrate to larger agglomerations in the country (Maślanka, 2008). Consequently, the array of settlements in Eastern Cuiavia contains small towns where time came to a standstill, and where economic stagnation contributes to demographic and social inactivity. By contrast, even small towns in Western Cuiavia show much more dynamical rate of growth, and their inhabitants undertake business activities driving the development of these areas definitely more often (Kozłowski, 2001; Maślanka, 2005).

The different pathways of economic development have contributed to the consolidation of distinctive types of mentality. After World War I and soon after World War II (both parts of Cuiavia belonged then to the Pomeranian voivodeship), the aftermath of the long years of annexation that had marked and had formed contacts between populations in both parts of Cuiavia was clearly visible. Especially the Western Cuiavians were patronizing in their behaviour and attitude towards the Eastern Cuiavians and stressed their superiority on every occasion, also because the seeds of local patriotism were sown among them. This behaviour can be illustrated by the words spoken by the director of the voivodeship branch of the State Repatriation Office who said: "...one hundred years is much too long for several Polish generations who grew up believing that their roads were better, the country more industrial, trade better developed, the level of tidiness higher, houses more beautiful, dwellings larger and comfort more readily available" (Kozłowski, 2001:146). Local patriotism stemmed from socialization based on the socio-cultural plane of life, but one should also bear in mind that particular annexations were so much different in terms of economic development that in the 1950s of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Włocławek infrastructure was several tens of years behind Inowrocław (Kozłowski, 2001).

Another awareness-shaping factor was an administrative reform conducted in 1975. The reform established new voivodeships and placed the territory of historical Eastern Cuiavia in the voivodeship of Włocławek, while Western Cuiavia became part of the Bydgoszcz voivodeship. A new situation appeared as a result, where the capital cities of the voivodeships, i.e. Włocławek in Eastern Cuiavia and Bydgoszcz in its western part, would create the images of their respective area. The images were then reflected, *inter alia*, in historiography and popular writing authored by activists in both parts of the region. A case in point can be separate periodicals presenting the two parts of Cuiavia. "Ziemia Kujawska" has been published since 1947, and since 1993 only by the Inowrocław branch of the Polish Historical Society (Western Cuiavia) and "Zapiski Kujawsko-Dobrzyńskie" has

been issued since 1978 by the Society's branch in Włocławek (Eastern Cuiavia), despite the fact that both the publications deal with one historical region.

The most outward manifestation of the differences between the two parts of Cuiavia can be found in the psychological dimension. The socio-cultural differences are also meaningful. When analysing this dimension, one has to realize that Cuiavia is a borderland territory, open to the influence exerted by larger regions: Mazovia and the Greater Poland. The Western Cuiavians are consequently believed to have traits characteristic of the Greater Poland population, such as diligence, industriousness, discipline, respect for authority. On the other hand, the Eastern Cuiavians, who are mentally closer to the Mazovians, pay greater attention to tradition, preservation of regional customs, religious rituals and adherence to the rules of Old-Polish hospitality. The different attitudes of the two communities are reflected still today in various spheres of social life, for instance in the dynamism of acting, resourcefulness, creativity, wish for changes, or attitude to technological progress (Maślanka, 2005).

Regarding the cultural dimension, Eastern and Western Cuiavia have some common elements. The typical Cuiavian dialect can be found in both parts, as well as the Cuiavian dress, folk dances and customs distinguishing this ethnographic region among other areas.

An average inhabitant of Poland may perceive the region as relatively uniform, without distinctive features. Contrary to this opinion, investigations conducted on the territory of Cuiavia (e.g. Sługocki, 1990; after Dunin-Karwicka, 1997; Maślanka, 2005) demonstrate that the population in the region does discern specific regional features and can identify customs characteristic of Cuiavia, for instance traditional Cuiavian wedding parties with special songs; customs such as "podkoziółek" (Eastern Cuiavia), or "śledzik" (Western Cuiavia) that are celebrated in the last week of the carnival time, Shrovetide groups visiting village cottages with a mummer disguised as a goat, carts pulled up the cottage roofs, or windows painted over on Good Friday night (in Eastern Cuiavia white lime was used for the purpose (and earlier soup made from fermented rye flour called "zur", hence the custom's other name "zur splashing"), while in Western Cuiavia they used soot). Moreover, most inhabitants of Cuiavia identify themselves with their region.

Regional population recognizes the rich regional folklore as typical of Cuiavia, including folkloric elements such as the Cuiavian dialect, the dance "kujawiak" and the regional dress. The Eastern Cuiavians though are more precise at describing the elements they mention, and give more details. For the Western Cuiavians this task is more difficult. The Cuiavians believe that regional traditions are currently maintained mainly by the folk bands, whose number seems to be rising, especially in Eastern Cuiavia (Maślanka, 2005).



In the context of the facts presented, it is worth asking ourselves several questions, such as why the Western Cuiavians are less familiar with customs specific to Cuiavia, why they have problems with describing in detail the Cuiavian dress, or with quoting at least several words in the Cuiavian dialect, why more folk bands are formed in Eastern Cuiavia, why the Cuiavian dress is worn and typical Cuiavian dishes served more often on the occasion of various ceremonies. All these questions cannot be given explicit answers. It can be very cautiously assumed that the situation has been influenced by the level of socio-economic development. The level is somewhat higher in Western Cuiavia, which possibly contributes to the erosion of traditions and rich folklore. Another explanation builds on the historical past and annexations imposed by the partitioning countries, among which the Russians were more tolerant towards the land they occupied, while the Prussians were more restrictive in their attitude to all symptoms of Polish identity. As a result, the Eastern Cuiavians had more freedom in cultivating the richness of the regional folklore, while the Western Cuiavians were more limited in that respect.

Different natural factors, but mainly the administrative and historical determinants have caused that even today a border cuts across the territory of one historical and ethnographic region, separating different levels of economic, social and cultural development. The period when two powers, Russia and Prussia, ruled in Cuiavia has left such a strong mark on the region's history that the gaps left by divergent socio-economic policies are not fully bridged even today, despite efforts made by the regional and national authorities. This is the reason, as Roszak wrote (2001), why our contemporaries in Włocławek (Eastern Cuiavians) and Inowrocław (Western Cuiavians) are essentially different from each other in terms of mentality, cultural characteristics, attitude to the surrounding world and many other traits, although they all have their roots in the land of Cuiavia.

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