

SUMMARY

*The Bailiwick in Medieval Livonia.
Its Duties and Jurisdictions in the
Riga Bishopric and Archbishopric*

The present article analyses the functions of bailiffs in the Bishopric and Archbishopric of Riga. Evaluating the role of bailiffs in local land administration, the author emphasises their functions in judging peasants and citizens, their responsibilities in domestic administration and their relations to officials and land administrators under their supervision. In the hierarchical pyramid of power in Livonia, the evolution of the role of bailiffs appointed by the Archbishop can be seen through the historical prism of local vassal families. Actually, the disclosing of the position of bailiff was a serious instrument on behalf of vassal families towards material wealth and their rising importance in the Livonian political arena. In the 16th century, the post of bailiff was of equal worth to other posts of officials in the service of the Archbishop. This position made it possible for more gifted organizers to establish themselves for a longer period of time in the local elite circles.

The historical evolvement of the role of bailiffs in Livonia began in the Middle Ages when the bailiwick could be an inheritable fief. In the early Modern Times, land-bailiffs like other Archbishop's officials received a salary and performed the discussed functions. The post of a land-bailiff (*Landvogt*) in the Riga Bishopric (1201–1253) was still closely linked with the tradition of bailiffs in the German lands. Proceeding to advanced land domination, the bishops of Livonia and prelates obtained the right to appoint bailiffs as officials. As a result, a high aristocracy administering the bailiwick as inheritable fief did not arise. However, some certain sprouting seeds of such form of land domination appeared in the 13th and 14th century, when fief possessions and the bailiwicks of some vassal families, for example, the Rosens and Tiesenhausens, became closely related to each other. The spiritual landlords of Livonia tried to diminish the influence of secular knighthood in the domains and they succeeded in the Riga Archbishopric with the support of the Papal Curia in Rome. In general, land-bailiffs in the Riga Archbishopric were administrators, who collected taxes and duties and administered justice in a certain territory under authorization of a spiritual landlord. They also concluded agreements and organized the defence of the land. In social terms, they were almost exclusively highborn vassals, who were appointed for a certain period. Now and then they were kinsfolk of the landlord or other officials involved in administration of domains.

Territorial changes of administrative districts of bailiffs of Riga Archbishopric testify to the organization of land administration in the areas inhabited by Livs starting from 1207. Initially the boundaries of administrative district were based on territorial divisions, which were established before the crusades. In the period from the 13th to the 15th century, Treiden and Kokenhusen preserved their status as centres of bailiwick protractedly. But Kokenhusen castle was the object of dispute between the Tiesenhausens and the eventually victorious landlord for almost half a century. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the centres of bailiwicks were stone castles and domains of the Archbishop of Riga.

The main function of the bailiff was the representation of the highest spiritual judge in the secular court. The collection of taxes and duties and the administration of justice took place several times a year according to the annual traditional cycle. Like the implementation of the judicial power, the administration of land funds and finances, as well as the organization of military defence preserved their significance for the whole period. However, their judicial power over the peasants in the fief tenures diminished in accordance with the establishment of serfdom since the end of the 15th century. In theory, the bailiff had no judicial power over vassals, but in regard to the citizens of the Archbishopric of Riga, he obviously used this power to a certain extent.

The local knighthood, including the land bailiffs, was important for domestic policy negotiations. Consequently, their political and economic potential grew substantially in Livonia. The post of land-bailiff was one of the ways of promotion and consolidation of the social status of vassals. Managing the domains of the Archbishop of Riga, the bailiff had a right to receive a part of the domain income as salary. The prestige of the land-bailiff was in high esteem in the 14th century, when the Riga Archbishoprics were in constant conflict with the Order and resided basically outside their territory. Of course, the functions of the post were closely interlinked with kinship networks. For any appointment land administration and for obtaining hereditary rights, marriages with the relatives of the landlord or bailiffs were a welcomed precondition. The use of the fief for service enabled the bailiff to increase essentially their and their family's wealth and prestige, ensured income, and consequently, strengthened their position.