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"The influence of the Prussian Settlement Commission on the transformation of the Wielkopolska countryside. Witkowo district 1886-1918"

Summary

The scientific aim of this dissertation is to investigate the activities of the Settlement Commission in the Witkowo district (powiat Witkowo), focusing on the organization of the colonization campaign at the local level and its realities from an internal (grassroots) perspective — including the acquisition and parceling of land, the settlement of colonists, the construction of colonization village infrastructure, and the demographic and social characteristics of the settler community. In my dissertation, I draw attention to the Settlement Commission's attempts to transfer German village models (including architectural solutions, essential public buildings such as schools, inns, and smithies, as well as spatial layouts) to the colonized areas of the Poznań Province. The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and an annex. In the first chapter, I present the most important issues related to the establishment of the Prussian Settlement Commission, with particular emphasis on the political and socio-economic changes taking place at both national and provincial levels. The second chapter discusses the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Witkowo district, its territorial scope, and its general characteristics. It also includes a detailed analysis of the transitional period of so-called "own administration" of the acquired estates, as well as aspects related to the spatial planning of future settlements. The third chapter focuses on colonization construction in a broad sense. Cooperative activities promoted by the Settlement Commission and the agricultural education it supported are discussed in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter presents the influence of the Prussian Settlement Commission on social transformations within the Witkowo district. The conclusion summarizes the research, addressing how the activities of the Prussian Settlement Commission contributed to changes in the rural landscape, the emergence of a new type of community — the settlement community — and its defining characteristics. The annex includes fragments of German topographic maps covering the estates in the Witkowo district purchased by the Settlement Commission. The research is based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis of sources. The source material used in this study comes from the State Archives in Poznań and Bydgoszcz, as well as from the Secret State Archives of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin