

Babrujsk and its Neighbourhood in the Early Seventeenth Century

BY

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In eastern Europe, the period from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries was one of great importance in agrarian history. These two hundred years saw the three-field system of open field agriculture become the dominant practice in most areas; it was to remain so, in general, until the twentieth century. Certainly during the whole period, when Byelorussia formed part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the most far-reaching single event of economic history was the 'voloka' agrarian reform of 1557. This introduced by decree a highly standardized form of three-field agriculture on all crown estates, a system subsequently adopted on many private estates. Its result was the transmogrification of the national economy, rural social structure, agricultural practices, field patterns and even the very villages themselves.¹ However, the immediate impact of the reform was felt only in the western provinces, Žmudz, Vilna and Troki, which formed Lithuania proper. In the east of the Grand Duchy, in the so-called 'Russian provinces' (*Russkije volosti*), the agrarian-social reorganization was introduced only slowly and partially. Indeed, for the most part the changeover to the *voloka* system took place only at the beginning of the seventeenth century. As in the western provinces in the sixteenth century, cadastres were compiled to record the redistributed holdings of land and the taxes due from them. Of the very few eastern cadastres which have survived, one of the most important, detailed and useful is the inventory drawn up in 1639 of the town of Bobruysk² and its *starostvo*, that is its subordinate lands.³ The reorganization of the Bobruysk lands was slow, particularly in comparison with the speed of transformation in the western provinces. It commenced in 1611, under the supervision of Jan Korsak and Mikołaj Puzialeŭski,⁴ but both died before the work was completed and were replaced by other commissioners. The survey was eventually finished by the Hrodna magistrate, Astafiej Kier-

1. V. I. Pičeta, *Agrarnaja reforma Sigizmunda-Avgusto, v litovsko-russkom gosudarstve*, Izd. Ak. Nauk, Moscow, 1958.

2. The inventory was compiled in Polish; a number of place-names could not be found on modern maps and therefore for consistency the contemporary Polish spellings of all settlement-names in the Bobruysk area have been used throughout this article. River names are in their modern forms in B. G. N. transliteration.

3. Inventar' bobrujskogo starostva, *Akty izdavajemyje vilenskoj archeografičeskoj komissljej dlja razbora drevnych aktov*, XXV, Vilna, 1898, pp. 114-330 (Subsequently referred to as *AVK*, XXV.)

4. *AVK*, XXV, p. 115.

dej. The aim of this paper is to examine the historical geography of Bobruysk and its villages, as revealed in the document, with special emphasis on differences between the conditions of western and eastern Byelorussia.

The town of Bobruysk had only begun to figure as a place of any significance in the sixteenth century and its position near the eastern, exposed border of Lithuania ensured a stormy history in that and the following centuries. In 1502 the town was destroyed by the Crimean Tatars. It was besieged unsuccessfully by Prince Michajl Glinkij in 1507 and again, much more determinedly, in 1648 by Januš Radziwiłł during the revolt of Bohdan Chmel'nickyj. Less than two decades later, it was the Cossacks who sacked Bobruysk. Between these major military events there were constant alarms and excursions. The inventory stressed the military role of Bobruysk and its inhabitants were under strict obligation to maintain the fortifications, keep watch and be prepared to serve in its defence. The repeated calamities and disturbed conditions must have been inimical to development and indeed the inventory showed Bobruysk to have been only a medium sized town in 1639. It listed 394 houses, with a recorded (i. e. named) population of 402. If one assumes, as Kopysskij does, that the average size of a household was five persons,⁵ this would suggest a minimum population of about 2,000. In comparison, major cities of Byelorussia, such as Brest, Słuck, Mahiloŭ, Pinsk, Połack and Viciebsk, had by the mid-seventeenth century over 10,000 inhabitants each, Hrodna about 7-8,000, according to Kopysskij.⁶

The cadastre, despite its detail, does not permit a precise reconstruction of the town plan, but its main features are clear. A wall and ditch, 26 *šnuri*⁷ or some 1,350 yards long, surrounded the town, running from the river Berezina at the Świśtocka Gate upstream to the Berezina again at the Podolna Gate downstream. There were three other gates, the Prudowa, Kisielewska and Słucka.⁸ Five streets bearing the same names as the gates presumably radiated out to them from the central market place. The market place, which was on the river, was described as 'not square', covered $\frac{2}{8}$ *morgi* (about 4 acres) and had seventy-five stalls selling vegetables and other goods.⁹ The Catholic church of St. Peter and Paul and the Orthodox church of St. Nicholas stood in the market place by the river. Around the market were houses of principal citizens, including the deputy sheriff (*podstarosta*) and the military commander (*chorqz*), and also the hospital attached to the Catholic church. No doubt the castle lay beside the market place, as was usual in other towns such as Pinsk, but unfortunately the beginning of the inventory of the castle itself

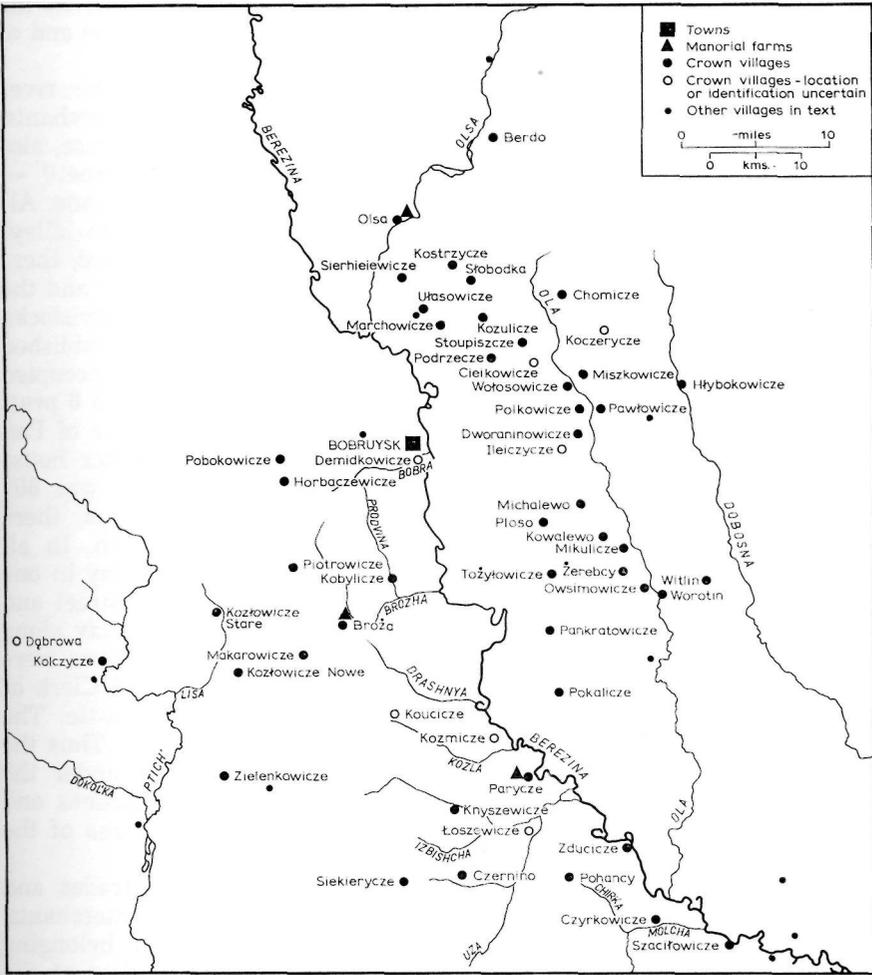
5. Ju. Z. Kopysskij, *Ekonomičeskoje razvitije gorodov Belorussii (XVI-XVII vv)*, Minsk, 1966, p. 29.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

7. A *šnur* was a linear measure of 10 linear *pruti* or approximately 160 feet.

8. *AVK*, XXV, p. 126.

9. *Ibid.*



1

The manors and villages of Bobruysk District.

is missing. The kitchen garden (*ogrod*) of the castle did abut on the market place. On the opposite side of the market place, at the end of Podolna Street, was the manor (*dwor*).

Podolna Street 'alias Porieczna'¹⁰ clearly ran along the river between the market and the Podolna Gate. On it stood a merchants' house (*dom zamkowy goscinny*). There was another such house, also described as a *stodola* or warehouse on Kopylniczowa Street¹¹ — evidence that there must have been reasonably flourishing trade. Altogether the inventory described fifteen streets and two alleys (*zaulki*). In addition to the two churches in the market place, there were two more Orthodox churches, St. Ilija on Ilińska Street and the Church of the Purification behind Prudowa Street. On Swislocka Street was the house of the Jesuit fathers,¹² who had established themselves in Bobruysk in 1527. The houses along the streets occupied plots, ranging in size from half a *prut*¹³ (145 square yards) to 6 *pruti* (1,742 square yards). The manor had 12 *pruti* and the house of Pan Mikołaj Nieprzecki no less than 16½. The total area under house plots, including the churches and other public buildings, was 807 *pruti*. Unlike most other Byelorussian towns of the period, there were very few separate kitchen gardens within the town. In all Bobruysk had 95 *pruti* of such gardens, but 60½ of these lay in one large plot belonging to the Catholic priests on Świsłocka Street and another six were attached to the castle. Seven small plots lay along the town wall between the Podolna and Słucka Gates.¹⁴ There were also two orchards on Świsłocka, one belonging to the Land Clerk of Rzeczyca and the second, larger one belonging to the castle. The latter had cherry, apple, pear and Hungarian plum trees.¹⁵ Thus the total recorded area within the walls was 993 *pruti* (68 under the market place, 807 under houseplots, 95 under kitchen gardens and 23 under orchards) or 60 acres, excluding the unknown area of the castle and the surface area of the streets themselves.

The inventory included only scattered clues to the trades and occupations of the inhabitants. In addition to the two merchants' houses, there was a brewhouse, with malthouse attached, belonging to the manor and located beside the Berezina.¹⁶ A number of the named householders were distinguished by their trade, for example Janek Bednarz (cooper)¹⁷ and Taras Fiedorowicz, *cieśla* (carpenter).¹⁸ Probably this was done only where necessary to distinguish them from others of the same name. Certainly far from all the craftsmen and tradesmen could have been so noted. Many essential occupations were not mentioned at all. Kopysskij enumerates nearly two hundred professions existing in Byelorussian towns in the seventeenth cen-

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

13. An areal *prut* was the thirtieth part of a *morg*, approximately 0.06 acre.

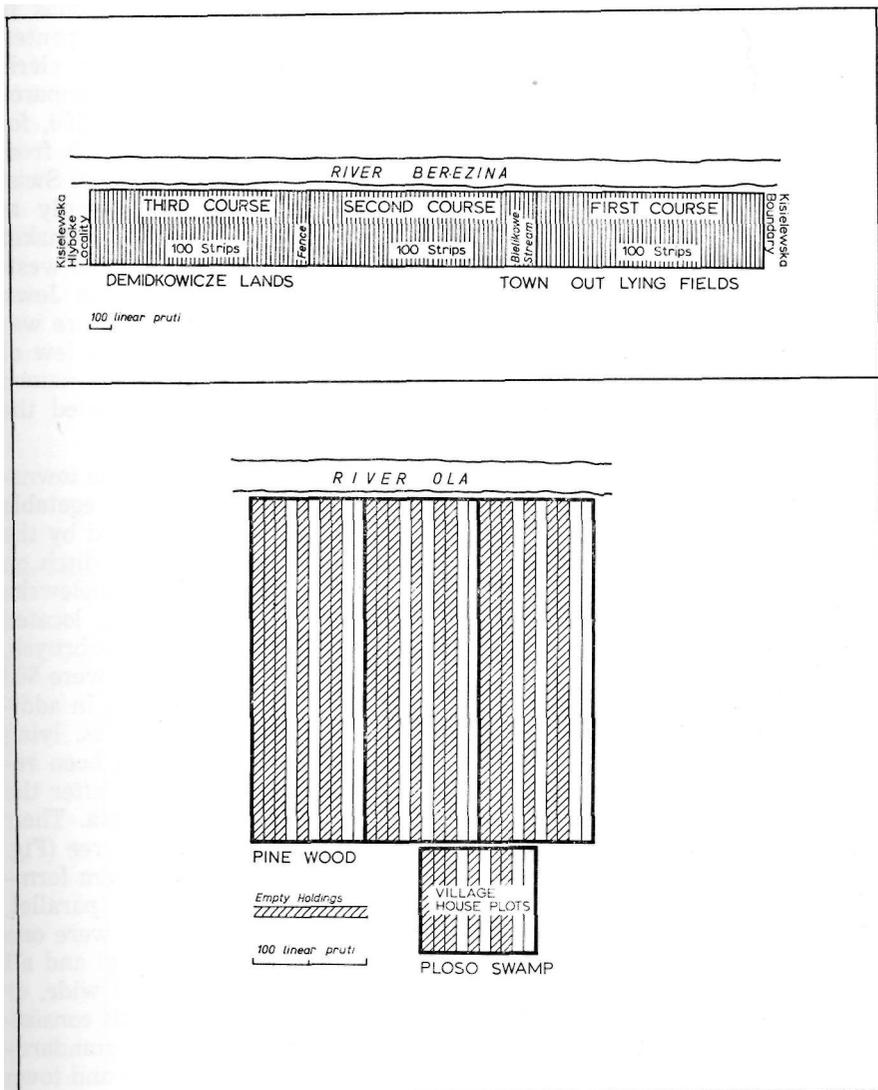
14. *AVK*, XXV, p. 133.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 127.



2
 (Above) The main fields of Bobruysk, reorganized on the standard pattern;
 (Below) The fields and settlement of Cieikowicze.

ture,¹⁹ but the Bobruysk inventory gives only twenty persons in sixteen trades — goldsmith, smith, tinsmith, locksmith, carpenter, cooper, saddler, harness-maker, fuller, baker, brewer, groom, clerk, priest, watchman and castle gunner. This list is indeed short, compared with the forty trades referred to in the Brest cadastre of 1566, for example.²⁰ Several inhabitants had clearly come to Bobruysk from elsewhere — Arciom Mohilewicz,²¹ Matfiej Wołyniec,²² Suprun Swisłoczanin²³ and others. Three persons were referred to simply as '*przychozy*', arrivals or newcomers.²⁴ One Janusz the harness-maker was described as a Hungarian.²⁵ Unlike the earlier cadastres of western Byelorussia, the Bobruysk document did not distinguish Jews. Very possibly there were none resident in the town, since there was no reference to a synagogue. Also unlike the western towns, few of the nobility had residences in Bobruysk; only three of the named householders were titled *Pan*. This might well have reflected the town's insecure, frontier position.

Outside the walls lay the lands of the burghers. Many of the town-folk had small kitchen gardens, or allotments. One group of vegetable allotments lay beyond the Podolna Gate, in the area bounded by the Berezina on the east, the Bobra stream on the south and a ditch on the west. Another group lay west of the town, beyond the Kisiełewska Gate, flanking the Kisiełewska road. Other allotments were located north of the town and yet more across the Berezina from Bobruysk, to which they were connected by a ferry.²⁶ Altogether there were 808 allotments, totalling 2,777 *pruti*, or approximately 167 acres. In addition to the small allotments, Bobruysk had its arable fields, lying north of the town on the Berezina. These town fields had been re-organized on the *voloka* system in 1560,²⁷ only three years after the *Voloka* Decree — a very early date for eastern Byelorussia. Their layout followed the standard pattern, prescribed by the Decree (Fig. 2); the three fields lay side by side, the small Bielikowe stream forming the boundary between the first two. The strips were all parallel, with the ends abutting on the river Berezina. In each field were one hundred strips; each strip was the ordained area of 11 *morgi* and all had exactly the same dimensions, 33 *šnuri* long by 10 *pruti* wide, or some 5,280 by 160 feet. Each *voloka* holding in the townlands consisted of one strip in each field. This was precisely the highly standardized layout of fields and strips found on hundreds of village and town

19. Kopysskij, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81.

20. *Dokumenty moskovskogo archiva Ministerstva Justicii*, I, Moscow, 1897, pp. 205-19.

21. *AVK*, XXV, p. 132.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

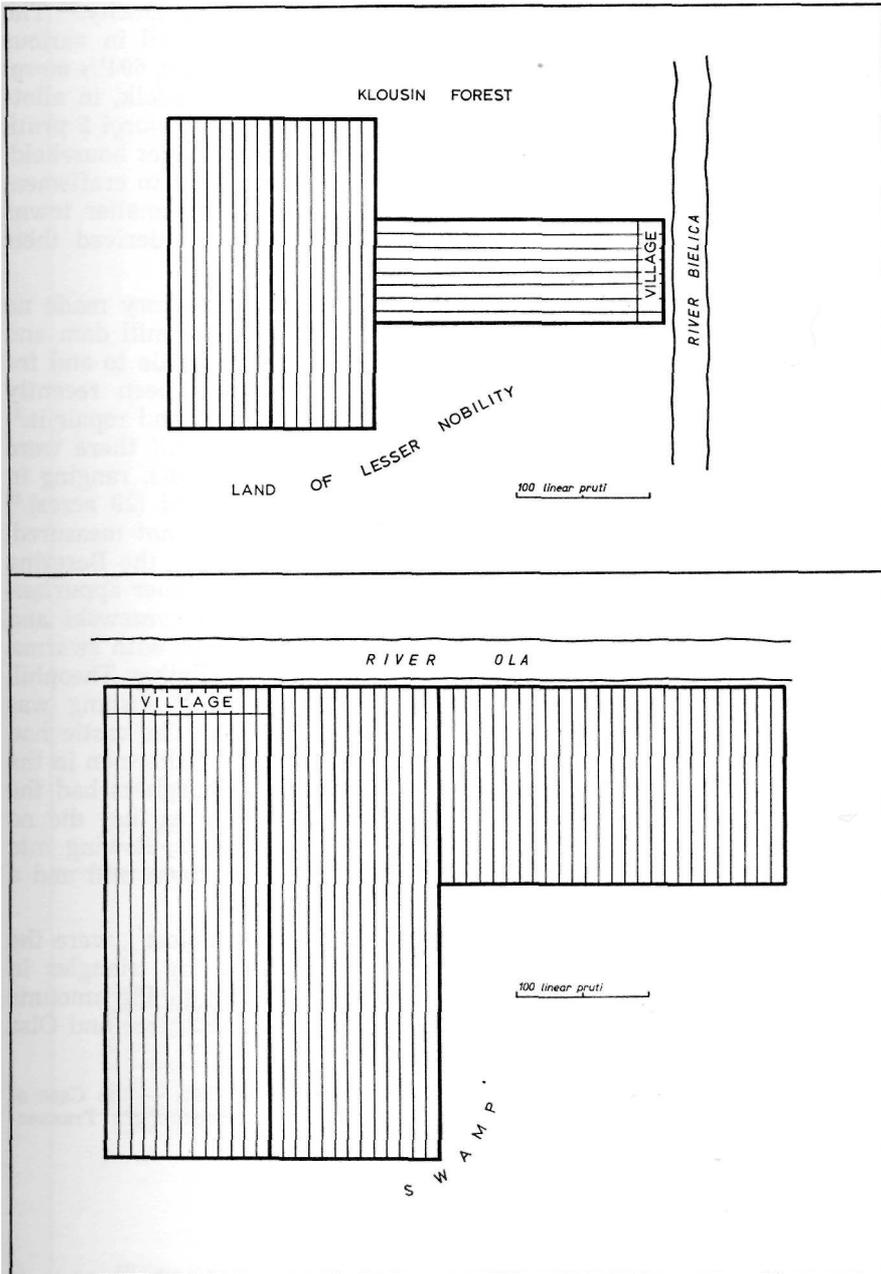
23. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 127, 128.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 140.



(Above) The field layout of Kowalewo;
(Below) The field layout of Worotin.

lands in the western part of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy.²⁸ The burghers had also thirty-two out-lying fields, scattered in various places beyond the fences of the main fields and totalling 694½ *morgi* (1,258 acres).²⁹ The sum of all the arable of the townfolk, in allotments, main fields and out-lying fields, came to 4,087 *morgi* 2 *pruti*, or over 7,350 acres. This figure, approximately 18 acres per household, when taken together with the rather scarce references to craftsmen, would seem to suggest that in Bobruysk, as in other smaller towns of Byelorussia, a large proportion of the population derived their living principally from the land.

The citizens possessed livestock, although the inventory made no record of their animals. It did note however that the mill dam and bridge had suffered damage through the driving of cattle to and fro between pasture and town;³⁰ indeed the dam had been recently breached and the burghers were required to fill it in and repair it.³¹ Hay and pasture were needed to feed the stock. In all there were 651 *morgi* 26 *pruti* (1,173 acres) of hayland in 118 plots, ranging in size from a mere 5 *pruti* (about ⅓ acre) to 16 *morgi* (29 acres).³² The town pasture, which was untaxed and therefore not measured, lay along the Berezina, no doubt on its floodplain. By the Berezina also were the two paddocks belonging to the castle. Other appurtenances of Bobruysk were two 'islands'³³ called Dobrzyczewski and Winnicki, where there were beaver runs and bee-trees with swarms. A third 'island', Bozytow, was in the possession of Father Theophil, the arch-priest (*protopop*) of St. Nicholas' church.³⁴ Fishing was important, as throughout Byelorussia of the period. The castle had nine fisheries (*toni*) in seven lakes.³⁵ There were ten fishermen in the castle service who operated these fisheries, while burghers had the right to fish on both banks of the Berezina, as long as they did no harm to the beaver runs.³⁶ On the small river Bobra, flowing into the Berezina downstream from Bobruysk, was the town mill and a second mill in the personal possession of the sheriff.³⁷

Attached to Bobruysk and forming its bailiwick (*volost'*), were the three manors of Olsa, Broża and Parycze, shown by triangles in Fig. 1. All three manors had demesne arable, although the amounts were not large. Broża, the largest, had 455 *morgi*; Parycze and Olsa

28. R. A. French, *Field Patterns and the Three-Field System — the Case of Sixteenth-Century Lithuania*, *Institute of British Geographers Transactions*, 48, 1969, pp. 121-134.

29. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 142-4.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-52.

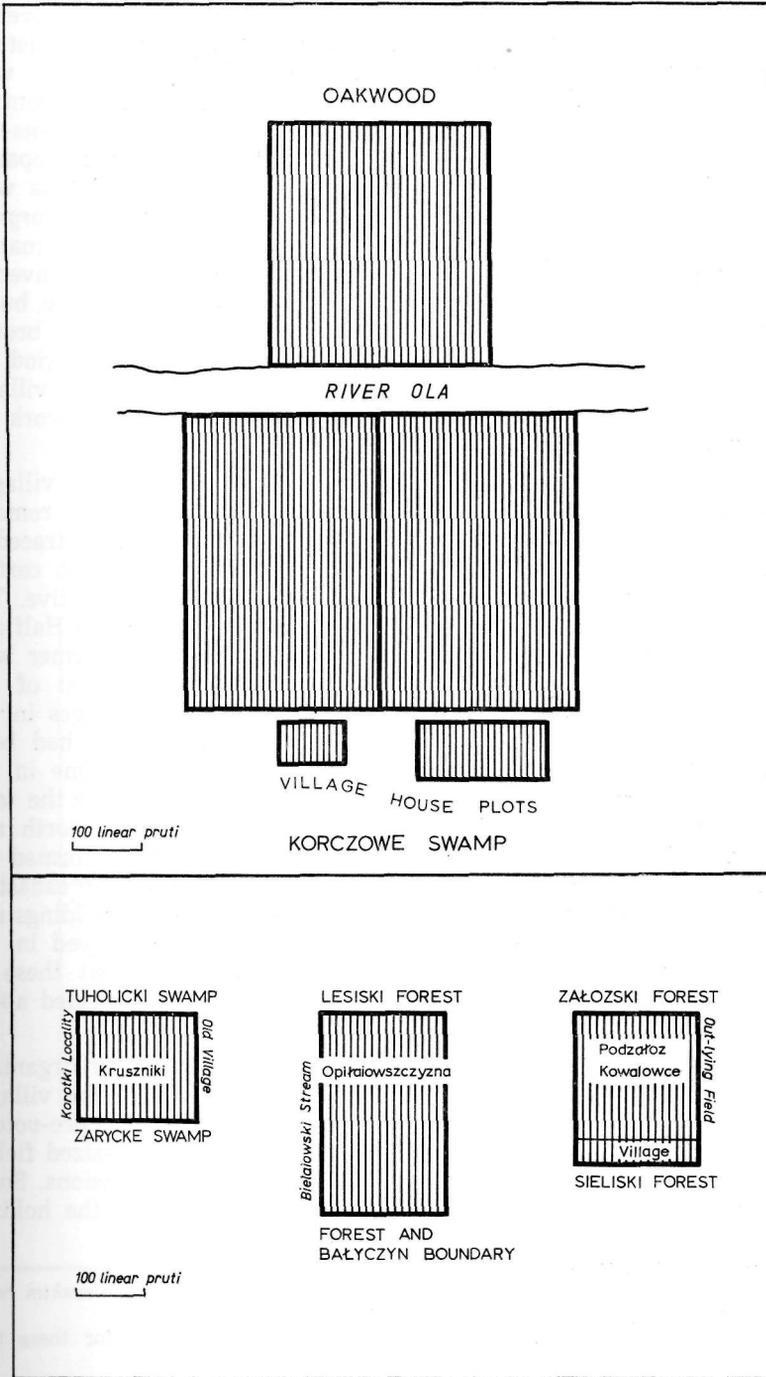
33. Probably areas of higher, dry ground amidst the flood-plain marshes, or true islands between arms of the river.

34. *AVK*, XXV, p. 153.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 154.



(Above) The field layout of Chomicze;
 (Below) The main fields of Horbaczewicze.

had 270 and 134 *morgi* respectively.³⁸ By comparison, the average size of crown manorial arable in the four west Byelorussian districts of Brest, Hrodna, Pinsk and Kobryn was $563\frac{1}{2}$ *morgi*; many were over 700 *morgi* and the largest was over 1,100.³⁹ Also in contrast to the western manors, the arable of the three Bobruysk farms was not in three equal-sized fields. At Broża there were four separate parcels of 325, 100, 20 and 10 *morgi*. The three plots of Olsa were respectively 49 *morgi* 20 *pruti*, 74 *morgi* 20 *pruti* and 9 *morgi* 20 *pruti*. However, like their western counterparts, the Bobruysk manors had their attached servants, the *ogorodniki* (*ogrodnicy*) who lived at the manor. Their numbers were not given for Olsa and Parycze, but at Broża there were thirteen, including a carpenter, a cooper, a brewer and a wine-maker (*winnik*). As usual in the post-reform period the working of the demesne depended on *tyaglo* peasants in the villages — that is, those who held their land in return for two days work per week on the manor fields.

Under Bobruysk and its three manors were fifty-seven villages. The location of fifty-five of these is shown in Fig. 1. The two remaining villages, Poniuszkowicze and Bielewicze, have not been traced at all on modern maps and have therefore been omitted.⁴⁰ In certain cases, distinguished on the map, the location is only tentative. The bailiwick was divided 'of old' into two 'halves' — the Vilna Half and the Troki Half, each headed by an elder (*starec*). The former with twenty-two villages occupied the north, centre and west of the district, the latter the east and south. Three of the villages in the Vilna Half (Poniuszkowicze, Dąbrowa and Pobokowicze) had been given to the Catholic church and although listed by name in the survey, no information was recorded at all for them, save the total number of holdings.⁴¹ A group of eight villages, lying north and north-east of Bobruysk between the Olsa and Ola rivers, formed the separate Luboniec Bailiwick.⁴² For these eight villages the cadastres recorded no information other than the total number of holdings and the dues from them. Between the crown villages surveyed in the document were other villages in private ownership, but these of course lay outside its scope and no information was provided about them.

If the town arable of Bobruysk itself had been earlier reorganized precisely on the *voloka* pattern, the arable of most of the villages represented various intermediate stages between the pre-*voloka* system and the ideal transformed layout of three equal-sized fields, lying side by side with parallel strips of identical dimensions. Some villages were not reorganized at all. In such instances the holding

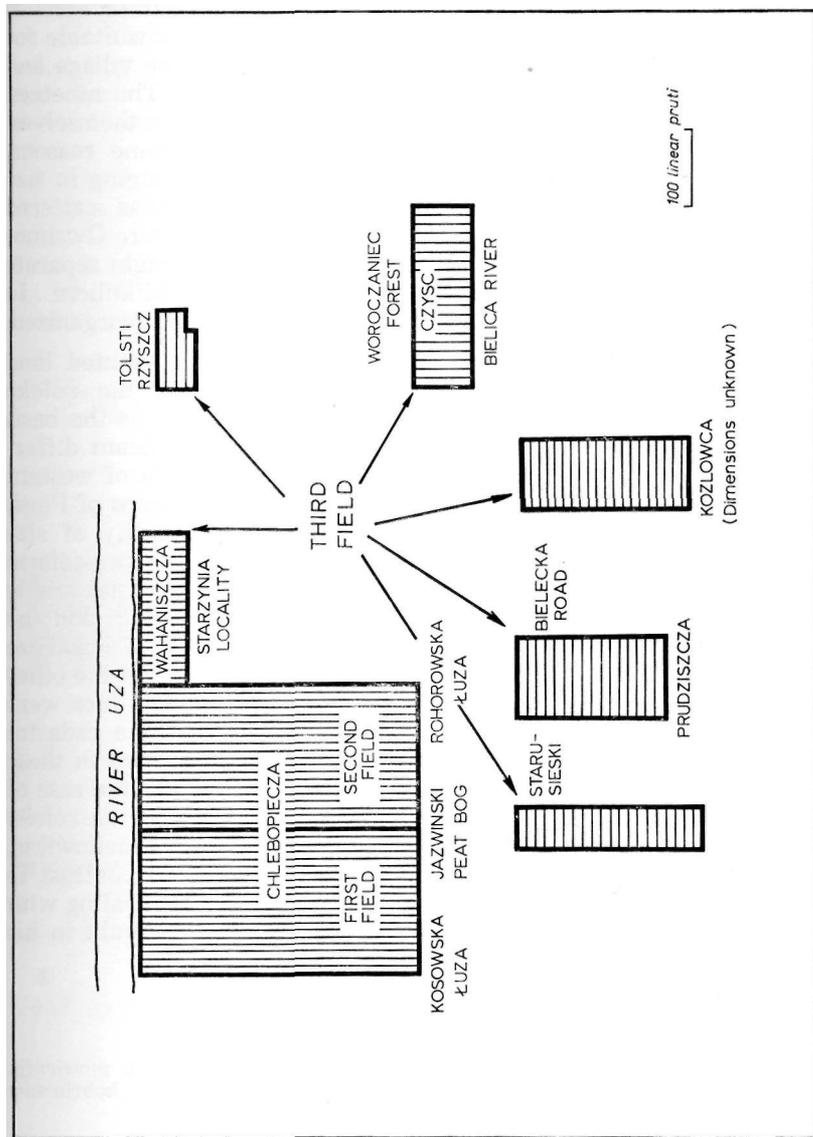
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 274, and 221.

39. *Revizija kobrinskoj ekonomii, sostavlennaja v 1563 godu korolevskim revizorom Dmitrijem Sapegoju*, Vilna, 1876, p. 105.

40. In any case the mapped information was not recorded for these two villages.

41. *AVK*, XXV, p. 166.

42. Kozulicze, Podrzecze, Morchowicze, Ułasowicze, Bielewicze, Sierchiewdcze, Kostrzycze and Slobodka; *Ibid.*, pp. 306-7.



5 The field layout of Parycze village. (The position of third field segments is diagrammatic).

unit was not the *voloka*, but the 'service' (*shužba* or *sluzba*). The arable, instead of being arranged in three, regular, common fields, was scattered in a number of plots. Thus at Demidkovicze there were six separate fields, two of 30 *morgi* in area, three of 40 *morgi* and one of 60 *morgi*, because 'voloki could not be measured out' on account of 'the bad position of the land', which was scarce and unsuitable for working.⁴³ Moreover a new site was not available for the village and the houses remained where they had been previously. The nineteen households of Demidkovicze shared out the land between themselves. Similarly Pankratovicze was unreorganized for the same reasons. The arable of its five 'services' was in fourteen plots, ranging in size from only one *morg* to 58 *morgi*, and the village itself was scattered in several 'settlements'.⁴⁴ Other unreorganized villages were Owsimowicze, Pokalicze (where there were no less than twenty-eight separate parcels of arable), Szaciłowicze and Żerebcy with Mikulicze. In addition the three villages given to the church were not reorganized.

All these villages represented a survival of the fragmented land holding which existed throughout Byelorussia before the *voloka* reform, with either the 'service' or the similar *dvorišče* as the basis of cultivation and taxation. There were, however, significant differences between the Bobruysk 'services' and those *dvorišča* of western Byelorussia, which survived the reform in the great swamps of Pinsk and Kobryn Districts. In the *dvorišča* the vast inequality of size between one holding and another persisted, as did the pre-reform scale of tax assessment.⁴⁵ In the Bobruysk 'services' the total arable in *morgi* was in most cases recalculated in terms of *voloki* and the reformed tax scale applied. Thus the 313 *morgi* 25 *pruți* of Pokalicze were reckoned as 10 *voloki* for purposes of assessment.⁴⁶ On the other hand, in the case of Żerebcy the cadastre noted that the dues were still 'according to the old revision'.⁴⁷ The compiler of the cadastre seems to have been confused as to whether the *voloka* used in these recalculations was an areal measurement or a tax unit. In the case of Pokalicze and Pankratovicze the scribe wrote, 'reckoning the *voloka* at 30 *morgi*' and in the case of Demidkovicze and Szaciłowicze, 'reckoning the *voloka* at 33 *morgi*'.⁴⁸ This was in sharp contrast to the clerk who drew up the 1561-66 cadastre of Pinsk; he, dealing with the similar instance of unreorganized *dvorišča*, had no doubt in his

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-9.

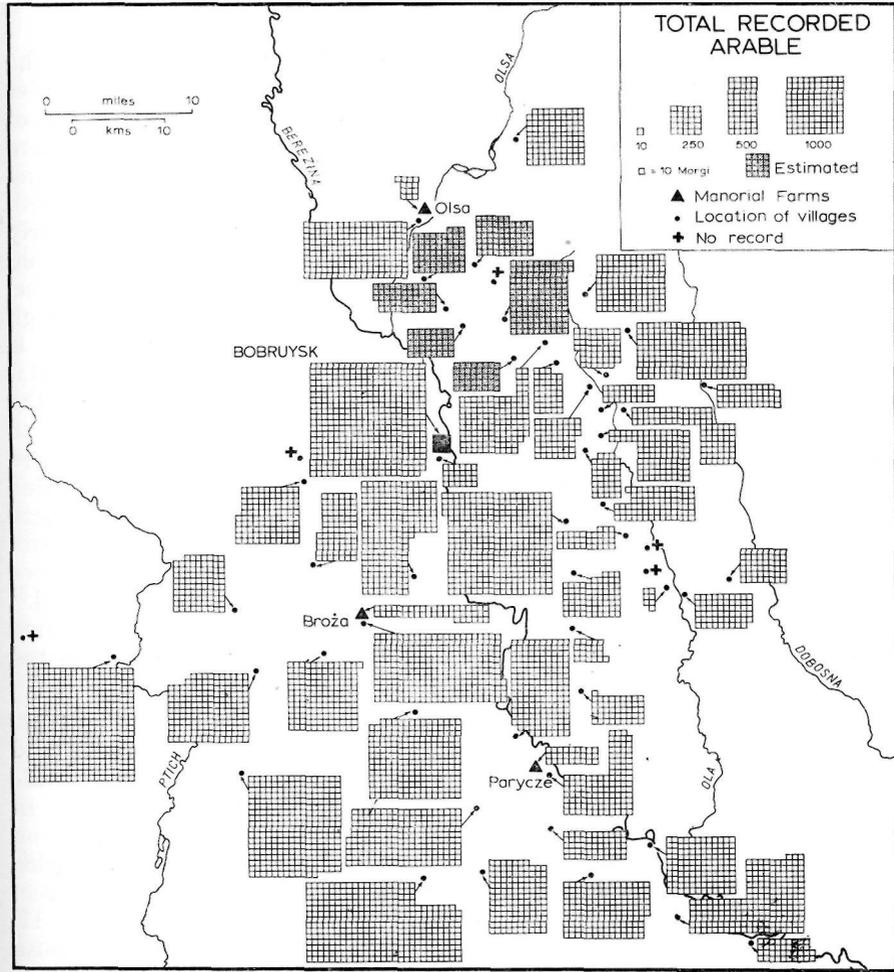
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-6.

45. *Piscovaja kniga byvšogo pinskogo starostva, sostavlennaja po povelenu korolja Sigizmunda Avgusta v 1561-1566 godach pinskim i kobrinskim starostaju Lavrinom Vojnoju*, Vilna, 1874, II, *passim*.

46. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 271-3.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

48. The existence of two different values for the *voloka* has caused considerable confusion to historians. In fact usage was always consistent with, first a *voloka* of 30 *morgi* in straightforward measurement of any area, and secondly a *voloka* of 33 *morgi* as the basic unit on which taxation was imposed, following the 1557 decree.



6
Total recorded arable (main fields, additions, out-lying fields and town allotments) for Bobruysk, its manors and villages.

mind that he was concerned with a tax unit and used the *voloka* of 33 *morgi*.⁴⁹

All the remaining villages of Bobruysk had been converted to the *voloka* system — that is to say that the arable had been put under a three-year rotation and holdings were of the standard *voloka* size of 33 *morgi*, plus any permitted additions for poor quality soil. There was no correlation at all between the number of previously existing 'services' and the number of newly established *voloki*. Thus both Kolczycze and Broża now had 60 *voloki*, but the first had formerly twenty-eight 'services' and the second only five.⁵⁰ At Witlin 12 old 'services' became 11 new *voloki*,⁵¹ while at Knyszewicze one 'service' was converted into 30 *voloki*.⁵² It is true that in every village a high proportion of the new *voloka* holdings were still empty — that is without holders to cultivate them. However there was the same total lack of correlation between the number of former 'services' and the number of occupied *voloki*. At Kolczycze the ratio of 'services' to occupied *voloki* was 1:1; at Knyszewicze it was 1:15. Nor was there any relationship between the number of households (*dymy*) recorded and the number of *voloki*, whether occupied or not. Both Zducicze and Czyrkowicze had previously one 'service'; both had twenty-six households. The former was now in 33 *voloki*, of which 12 were occupied,⁵³ the latter was in 40 *voloki*, of which 15 were occupied.⁵⁴ It would seem clear from this that the new holdings were established with regard to the land available and not at all with regard to the population already present to work it.

In western Byelorussia the overwhelming majority of villages, which were reorganized in the *voloka* reform, had their lands and settlements laid out anew on the same, universal pattern as illustrated by the town fields of Bobruysk. In Bobruysk District, in sharp contrast, not one single village was reorganized precisely on the standard pattern. Only one village, Cieikowicze, had three fields side by side and parallel strips of the same dimensions in all three; but even there the strips were of 10 *morgi*, not the prescribed 11. The remaining 3 *morgi* were in an outlying field, where the house plots were located (Fig. 2).⁵⁵ Indeed only a minority of villages succeeded in rearranging the arable in three contiguous fields. Including Cieikowicze, ten out of thirty-nine villages had three fields side by side, but all showed some variation from the west Byelorussian norm. Miszkowicze, like Cieikowicze, was in three adjoining fields of parallel strips, but the size of the strips was below the norm, markedly so in the first field, and therefore additions had to be made elsewhere in out-lying fields.⁵⁶ Worotin came near the standard pattern,

49. *Piscovaja kniga ... op. cit., II, passim.*

50. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 159 and 175.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

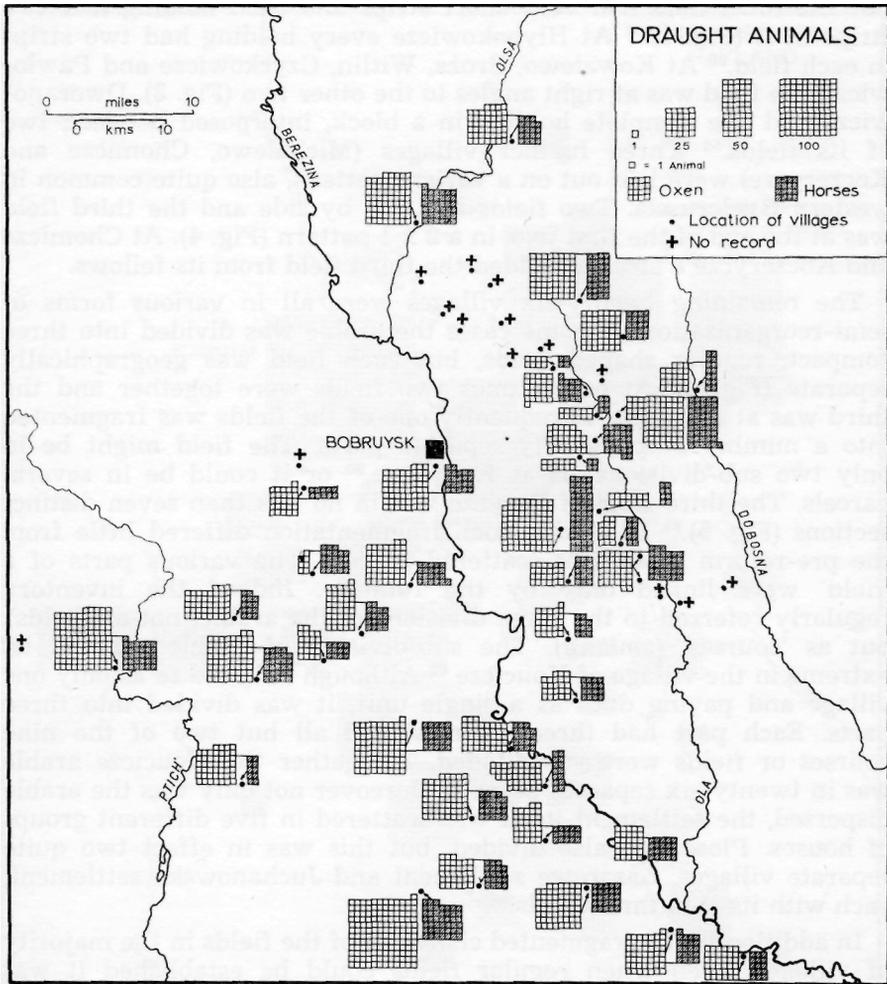
52. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-8.



7

Numbers of draught animals recorded in the villages.

but the third field had very short strips and each holding had two strips in it (Fig. 3).⁵⁷ At Hlybokowicze every holding had two strips in each field.⁵⁸ At Kowalewo, Broża, Witlin, Czyrkowicze and Pawłowicze one field was at right angles to the other two (Fig. 3). Dworano-wicze had one complete holding in a block, interposed between two of its fields.⁵⁹ Three further villages (Michalewo, Chomicze and Koczerycze) were laid out on a variant pattern, also quite common in western Byelorussia. Two fields lay side by side and the third field was at the end of the first two, in a 2 x 1 pattern (Fig. 4). At Chomicze and Koczerycze a stream divided the third field from its fellows.

The remaining twenty-six villages were all in various forms of semi-reorganization. In some cases the arable was divided into three compact, regular shaped fields, but each field was geographically separate (Fig. 4). At other times two fields were together and the third was at a distance. Frequently one of the fields was fragmented into a number of physically separate parts. The field might be in only two sub-divisions, as at Kobylicze,⁶⁰ or it could be in several parcels. The third field of Parycze was in no less than seven distinct sections (Fig. 5).⁶¹ In layout, such fragmentation differed little from the pre-reform pattern of scattered parcels. The various parts of a 'field' were linked only by the rotation. Indeed the inventory regularly referred to the three divisions of the arable, not as 'fields', but as 'courses' (*zmiany*). The sub-division of arable reached its extreme in the village of Koucicze.⁶² Although referred to as only one village and paying dues as a single unit, it was divided into three parts. Each part had three 'courses' and all but two of the nine courses or fields were sub-divided. Altogether the Koucicze arable was in twenty-six separate parcels. Moreover not only was the arable dispersed, the settlement itself was scattered in five different groups of houses. Płoso was also divided, but this was in effect two quite separate villages, Łazarowe settlement and Juchanowske settlement, each with its own three fields.⁶³

In addition to the fragmented character of the fields in the majority of villages, even when regular fields could be established it was comparatively rare for the strips to achieve the decreed size of 11 *morgi*. Thus at Horbaczewicze (Fig. 4) the strips in the three fields were respectively 6 *morgi* 20 *pruti*, 9 *morgi* and only 4 *morgi* 20 *pruti*.⁶⁴ Therefore additions had to be made elsewhere in out-lying fields to bring the holdings up to standard size, thus increasing the degree of fragmentation. Also the overseers of the agrarian reform were permitted to enlarge the size of the *voloka* holding over 33

57. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-8.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

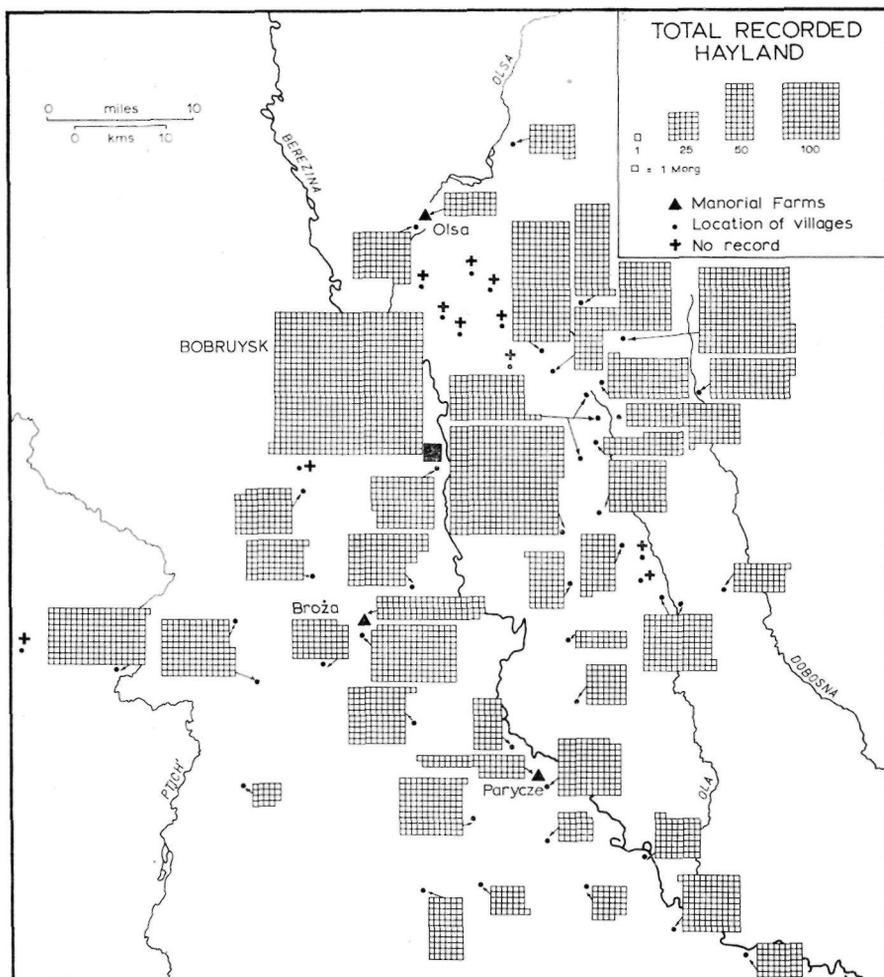
60. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-9.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-61.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-2.



8

The haylands of Bobruysk, its manors and villages.

morgi, if the soil quality was poor.⁶⁵ Such additions (*naddatki*) were free of any further taxation. Almost all the villages were so enlarged; only Cieikowicze had no additions at all. This is somewhat surprising, since the great majority of villages had land graded 'Good' or 'Medium'. For example, Parycze, although its land was 'Good', had $86\frac{1}{2}$ *morgi* of tax-free additions to the 660 *morgi* of its *voloka* holdings.⁶⁶ Of the thirty-nine villages reorganized on the *voloka* system, no less than twenty-eight were recorded as having 'Good' land, six as 'Medium' and five⁶⁷ as 'Bad'. Such remarkably high grading was in strong contrast to those districts of western Byelorussia with surviving cadastres; Pinsk and Kobryn Districts had no 'Good' land in any of their villages and little enough 'Medium'. Even in Brest and Hrodna Districts 'Good' land occurred in only a small minority of villages. It is not readily obvious why the Bobruysk gradings were so much better, because the physical geography of the Bobruysk region was broadly similar to that of the western districts.

Over and above the *voloka* holdings and additions, with their fixed rates of taxation, the villagers could have out-lying fields (*zaścianki* or *zastenki*) beyond the main field fences. These were taxed separately according to size. They represented either parcels too far from the village to be brought conveniently into the three-year rotation, or patches cleared and cultivated after the reorganization. Only two villages, Polkowicze and Stoupiszczce had no out-lying fields. Most villages had a large number — forty-eight parcels at Parycze, sixty-nine at Koucicze and no less than seventy-two at Kolczycze. The out-lying fields frequently formed a substantial proportion of the total arable belonging to a village. At Czyrkowicze out-lying fields made a 35 per cent increase over the *voloka* holdings; at Kolczycze the figure was 46 per cent.

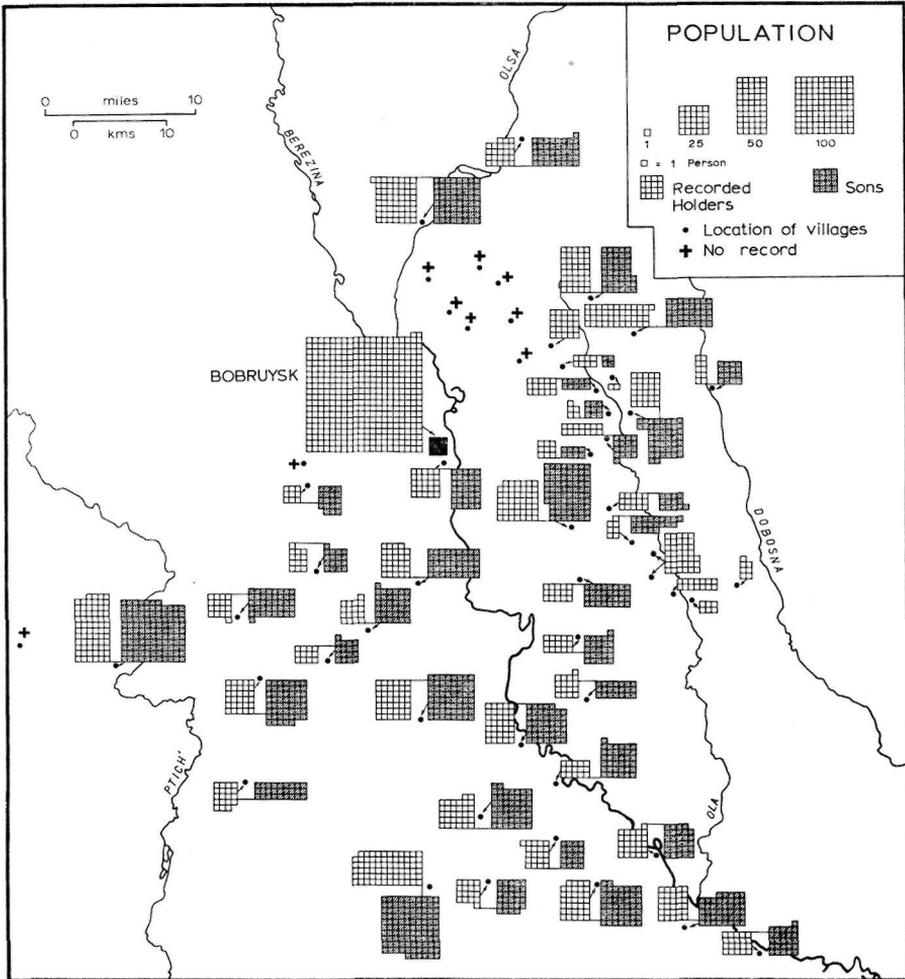
The total arable of each village, including main fields, additions and out-lying fields, is mapped in Fig. 6. It shows that villages west of the Berezina were in general distinctly larger than those to the east. However nothing like this total amount was actually being cultivated at the time of the inventory. In every village, without exception, a high proportion of the new *voloka* holdings were empty, without occupiers to work them. Indeed in only eleven villages did the occupied holdings outnumber the empty ones and six of these were the villages of Luboniec Bailiwick, without a detailed record. In four villages there were equal numbers of occupied and unoccupied holdings. The rest had more land unused than used. At Broża only a quarter of the *voloki* were cultivated, at Zielenkowicze only a fifth and at Miskowicze only one *voloka* out of fourteen was occupied.⁶⁸ Altogether the reorganized villages had 1,168 holdings, of which only 484, or 41.4 per cent, were in occupation. The extremely high share of empty holdings, well over half the total, reinforces the conclusion

65. 'Ustawa na volok', Article 29, *Russkaja Istoričeskaja Biblioteka*, XXX, cols. 570-1.

66. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 274-7.

67. Berdo, Broża, Makarowicze, Olsa and Zielenkowicze.

68. *AVK*, XXV, p. 238.



9

The recorded population of Bobruysk and its villages.

already expressed that the new holdings were laid out with regard to the availability of land, rather than of labour. It might also reflect the insecure conditions near the eastern borders of Lithuania. Here too is yet another contrast with western Byelorussia, where even on the worst quality land in swampy Pinsk District the proportion of unused arable holdings was only 16.3 per cent. Nevertheless, despite the existence of so much unused land, the cadastre contained some evidence of extension of the arable. In a few villages were areas of oakwood, described as 'fit for field' (i. e. for ploughing) — 10 *morgi* at Kozmicze,⁶⁹ 6 *morgi* at Polkowicze⁷⁰ and 48 *morgi* at Wolosowicze, where already 10 *morgi* had been cleared.⁷¹ There was no reference however to any tax relief to encourage the clearing as was usual in the west and these extensions were trivial compared with the forest clearing for agriculture, which characterized the west. This was surely inevitable, when so many holdings awaited occupiers.

The inventory was not concerned with the practices of farming or with crops, but it is clear from the tax dues, that as everywhere in Byelorussia at the period, rye and oats were the principal crops. The three-year rotation, as in the west, consisted of winter rye, spring oats and fallow. Altogether the villages contributed to the Treasury each year 496 *bocki*⁷² of rye and 504 of oats.⁷³ They must also have grown fair quantities of flax, either on the spring field with the oats or on the house plots. Every holding had to contribute annually 10 *garšci*⁷⁴ of flax, the total for the district coming to 4,210 *garšci*. At Sikierycze the village as a whole had to provide 15 'quarters' of wheat and 15 of peas.

Part of the obligations of the peasants was to work for the manors on two days of the week. This applied to all the settlements, save Sikierycze and Kolczycze and the eight villages of Luboniec Bailiwick. At Kolczycze only four weeks' work per year were required, together with work as needed on maintaining the castle.⁷⁵ This almost universal labour due was distinct from the west, in spite of the much greater development of manorial arable in the west. Even in Hrodna District only 35 per cent of all holdings were for labour, in Kobryn District 28.5 per cent and in Brest District only 18.5 per cent. In these western districts the other holdings were either on a money basis (*osada*) or given for services. In Bobruysk District a few holdings were allotted for services, as *starec* or as priest, but the money basis was completely absent. To work the manorial arable, as well as their own holdings, the peasants needed draught animals. The inventory recorded the number of oxen and horses on each occupied holding (Fig. 7).⁷⁶ There

69. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

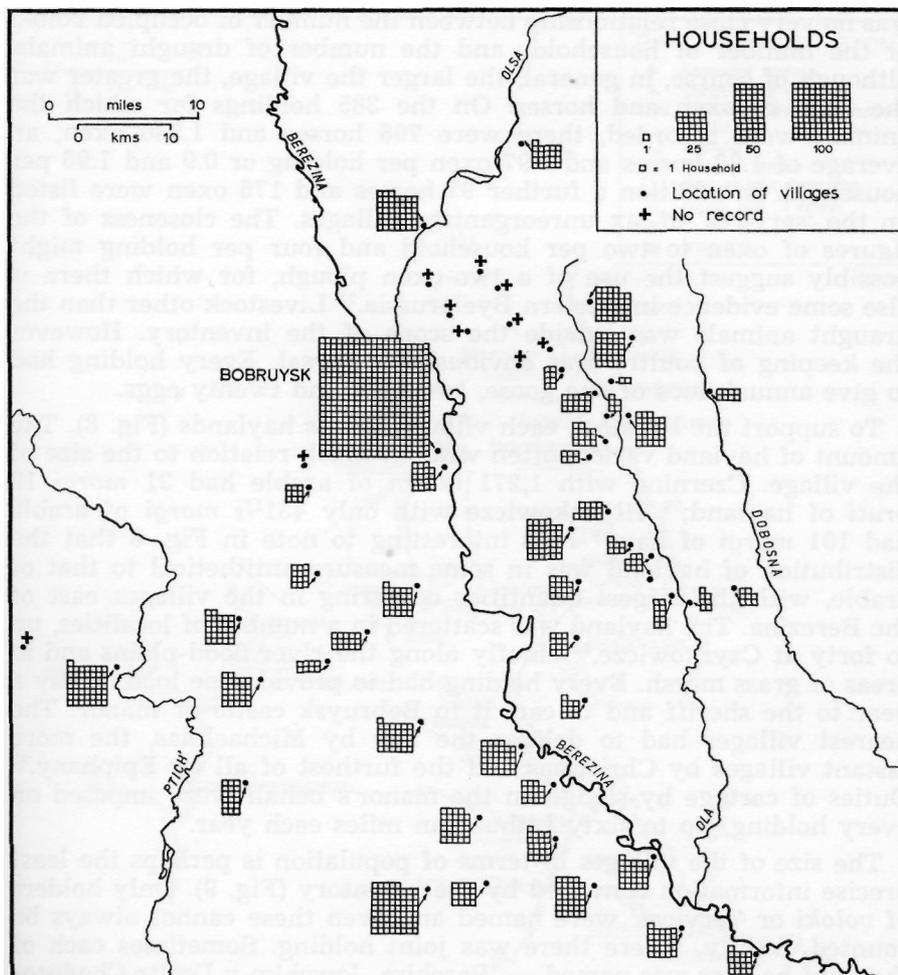
72. A capacity measure of 407 litres: K. I. Jablonskis (ed.), *Statut Velikogo Knjažestva Litovskogo 1529 goda*, Minsk, 1960, p. 224.

73. *AVK*, XXV, p. 323.

74. Literally 'handfuls'.

75. *AVK*, XXV, p. 166.

76. For no clear reason no draught animals were recorded for the four villages of Miskowicze, Stoupiszczce, Witlin and Wrotin.



10
Number of households recorded in Bobruysk and its villages.

was no very close relationship between the number of occupied *voloki* or the number of households and the number of draught animals, although of course, in general, the larger the village, the greater was the head of oxen and horses. On the 385 holdings for which the animals were recorded, there were 706 horses and 1,530 oxen, an average of 1.83 horses and 3.97 oxen per holding or 0.9 and 1.96 per household. In addition a further 97 horses and 176 oxen were listed on the 'services' of six unreorganized villages. The closeness of the figures of oxen to two per household and four per holding might possibly suggest the use of a two-oxen plough, for which there is also some evidence in western Byelorussia.⁷⁷ Livestock other than the draught animals was outside the scope of the inventory. However the keeping of poultry was obviously universal. Every holding had to give annual dues of one goose, two hens and twenty eggs.

To support the livestock each village had its haylands (Fig. 8). The amount of hayland varied, often without much relation to the size of the village. Czernino with 1,271 *morgi* of arable had 31 *morgi* 10 *pruti* of hayland;⁷⁸ Hlybokowicze with only 431½ *morgi* of arable had 101 *morgi* of hay.⁷⁹ It is interesting to note in Fig. 8 that the distribution of hayland was in some measure antithetical to that of arable, with the largest quantities occurring in the villages east of the Berezina. The hayland was scattered in a number of localities, up to forty at Czyrkowicze,⁸⁰ chiefly along the river flood-plains and in areas of grass marsh. Every holding had to provide one load of hay a year to the sheriff and to cart it to Bobruysk castle or manor. The nearest villages had to deliver the hay by Michaelmas, the more distant villages by Christmas and the furthest of all by Epiphany.⁸¹ Duties of cartage by sledge on the manor's behalf were imposed on every holding, up to sixty Lithuanian miles each year.

The size of the villages in terms of population is perhaps the least precise information conveyed by the inventory (Fig. 9). Only holders of *voloki* or 'services' were named and even these cannot always be counted exactly, where there was joint holding. Sometimes each of the joint holders was named — 'Parchim, Jowchim y Dmitr Chodorowicz' — but just as frequently the clerk recorded one named person 'with his brothers' or 'with his sons' — 'Charyton Rewiczycz z synami.' One cannot know how many brothers or sons were involved. On the other hand the inventory listed for each holding the number of sons, just as it did the oxen and horses. Presumably the sons, like the draught animals, represented labour for the fields. Almost certainly the sons so recorded were only the unmarried sons living in the family. In several villages⁸² no sons were enumerated, but holders were described as working their lands 'with their sons.' If the

77. *Dokumenty moskovskogo archiva ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

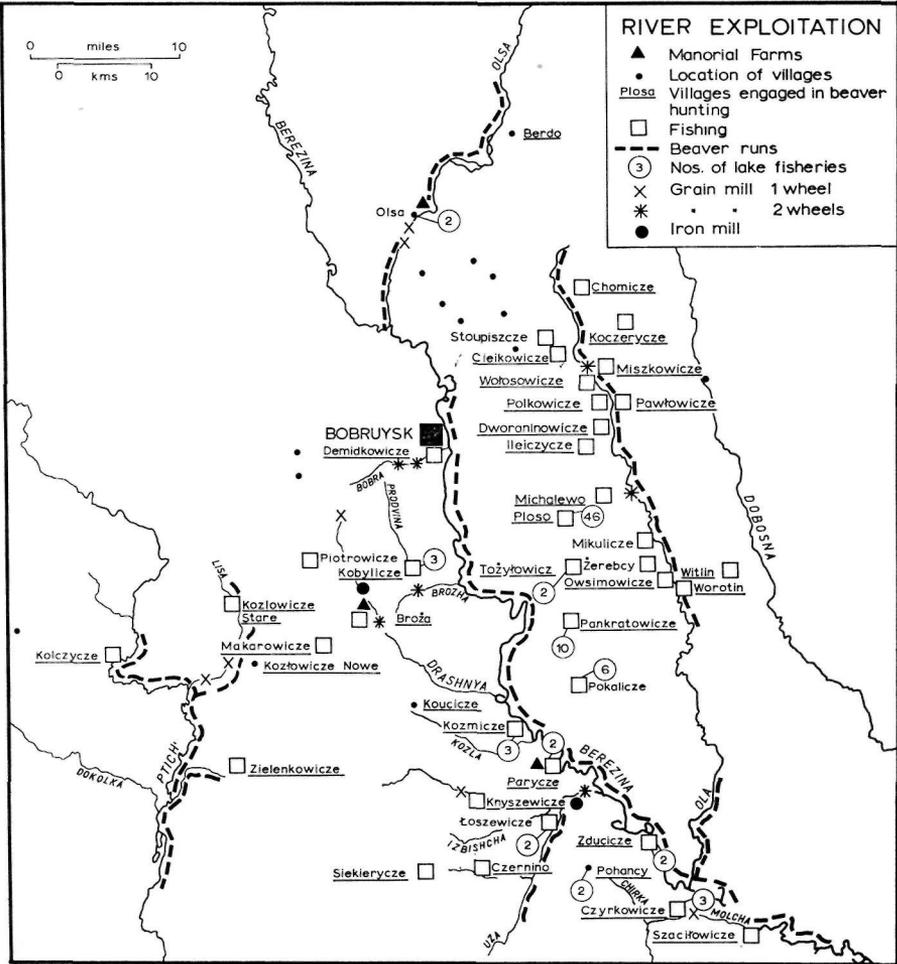
78. *AVK*, XXV, p. 290.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

82. Miskowicze, Owsimowicze, Stoupiszczce, Witlin, Worotin, Żerebcy and Mikulicze.



11

Exploitation of the rivers by Bobruysk villages.

enumerated sons were indeed regarded simply as labour units, it is possible of course that there was a lower age limit, as those under seven years old would scarcely be of use. The ratio of sons to named holders varied; at Kowalewo seven persons had twenty-two sons,⁸³ at Wolosowicze fifteen persons had only ten sons.⁸⁴ In all 903 named persons had 1,405 sons, or 1.56 sons per person. If this represented all the unmarried sons (i. e. those without their own families) and if the number of daughters per person was comparable, as one would expect, then this suggests an average family size of five and provides support for those historians, such as Kopysskij, who have maintained such a figure. The size of recorded population ranged from two at Miskowicze to seventy at Kolczycze, the average for all villages being 22.07. Thus the average total population was about 110. This figure was rather small, compared with the western villages. The average number of recorded persons in the four districts of Brest, Hrodna, Pinsk and Kobryn was 35.66, or 180 total population. In Brest District alone the corresponding figures were 51 and 255.

The cadastre enumerated not only holders of land and sons, but also houses or hearths (*dymy*) to give a second guide to village size (Fig. 10). In broad terms there was one house for each named holder, as one would expect if each named person represented a family unit. But the correspondence was not always exact; indeed it was exact in only seventeen out of forty-four villages with recorded houses and holders. In half a dozen villages there was one more house than the number of recorded holders, perhaps occupied by one of the unnamed sons, brothers, nephews or sons-in-law. Only at Kozłowicze Stare was there a significantly larger number of houses than named persons, twenty-seven to seventeen, and there no-one was described as working his land with sons or brothers. Possibly the ten surplus houses were empty. In other cases there were fewer houses than named holders, indicating that families sometimes shared the same dwelling. At Kolczycze there were seventy named holders and only fifty households; doubtless the overcrowding there resulted from the lack of a suitable new site for the village, which had to remain 'as of old'.⁸⁵

The site of the villages showed a very clear contrast with the reorganized villages of western Byelorussia. In the west, the overwhelming majority of settlements were reconstructed on a new site at the time of the reform, following precisely a standardized pattern, 'in the middle field in one line, with the barns opposite'. In other words the new village houses were sited beside each other, one at the end of each middle field strip.⁸⁶ In Bobruysk District also the villages were, when possible, reconstructed, but only four⁸⁷ achieved this standard layout. Eleven other villages were in either the first or third fields. Eight villages, where the arable was reorganized, could

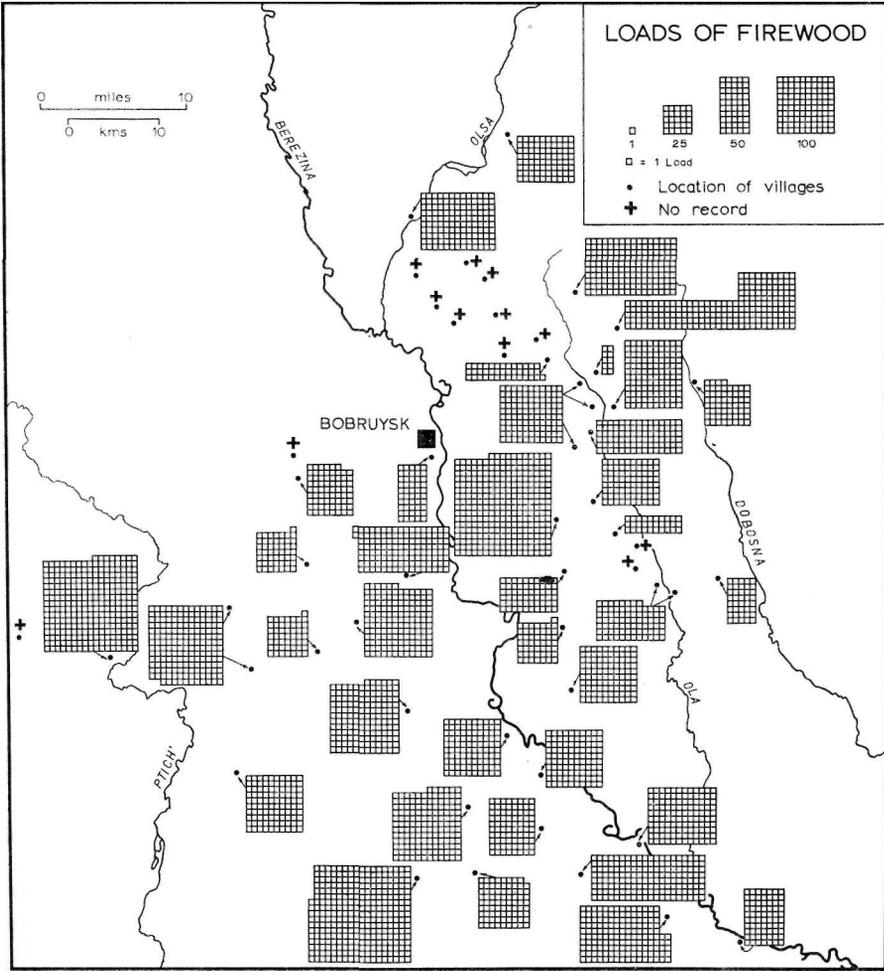
83. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 265-6.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-2.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

86. R. A. French, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

87. Berdo, Dworaninowicze, Hlybokowicze and Kozłowicze Nowe.



12

Dues of firewood from the villages to Bobruysk castle and manor.

not be resited at all and had to remain in their old locations, as in the case of Kolczycze. Yet others could not be sited by the new fields and were placed in out-lying fields (Figs. 2 and 4); this applied in eight instances. Michalewo and Zducicze were both split, part of the village being by the new fields and part being in an out-lying field.⁸⁸ Koucicze, cited earlier, was dispersed into no less than five different locations.

In the economy of the Bobruysk villages the rivers played a very important role (Fig. 11). In the first place they provided power for the mills. Most of the tributaries of the Berezina had one or more mills along them, but the main stream itself had none, presumably because it was used for navigation. Apart from the Bobruysk town mill and the sheriff's mill, there was one attached to Olsa Manor and ten near various villages. The Broża mill was empty⁸⁹ and another at Kolczycze was described as abandoned but capable of being restored.⁹⁰ Most of the mills had two wheels, the rest only one. There were three iron mills, at Parycze, Kobylicze and Broża, processing bog iron ore. That at Broża was not in use, but the Kobylicze mill brought in 50 kopy a year.

Beavers abounded in the rivers and almost every village had the right to catch beaver from stretches of river bank specifically allocated to it. Thus Kiczerycze and Chomicze shared two versts along both banks of the river Ola,⁹¹ Kozmicze had one bank of the Berezina between the mouths of the Pukowa and Uza streams.⁹² The beavers had to be offered for sale first to the steward of the manor; only if he did not wish to buy them, could they be offered elsewhere.⁹³ The same stretches of river were available to the villages for fishing. In addition many villages had fishing rights in specified lakes. The lake fishing was divided into fisheries (*toni*). Pohancy, Parycze and Łoszewicze shared two *toni* in Lake Uza.⁹⁴ The two Płoso villages had no less than forty-six *toni* in seventeen lakes. The majority of these lakes were cut-offs and former channels lying on the broad Berezina flood-plain, amidst grass marsh and swamp. Lake Wiachowo of Płoso, on the flood-plain near Bobruysk, was surrounded by swamps 'and therefore they cannot go with nets to it'.⁹⁵ The rights of fishing and beaver hunting must have given a valuable boost to the income of the villagers. Only three villages had no such rights.⁹⁶ Unlike the villages of western Byelorussia, the Bobruysk settlements did not have to pay an annual tax for their fishing privileges.

The forests also provided income. Like other crown peasants in the Grand Duchy, the inhabitants of the Bobruysk villages enjoyed the 'right of entry' to the royal forest for fishing, bee-trees and hay-

88. *AVK*, XXV, pp. 256 and 298.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

96. Hlybokowicze, Horbaczewicze and Kowalewo.

cutting.⁹⁷ Presumably, although it was not specifically stated, they could also gather dead wood for fuel as permitted by the original *Voloka* Decree.⁹⁸ In return for the right of entry every village had to supply the castle and manor with firewood, ten cartloads from each occupied holding (Fig. 12). Secondly the villages had to give fixed quantities of honey and therefore needed bee-trees. Some villages had 'islands' with bee-trees, either in their sole use or shared with neighbouring villages. The people of Pankratowicze had 'in the land of that village an island, on which there are 20 *bočki*' of arable land and scrub, as well as bee-trees, of which there are not a few'.¹⁰⁰ Villages without their own 'islands' had their bee-trees in the crown forests. The amounts of honey due were not related, like the other dues, to the number of holdings, but were 'according to the old revision'. Pawłowicze with twelve holdings gave 5 *kamni* of honey, Kobylicze with thirteen holdings gave 56.¹⁰¹ No doubt the amount varied with the number of trees in a village's possession; usual Lithuanian practice was for the crown to take half the total quantity of honey gathered. Only Dworandinowicze and Kowalewo had no bee-trees and were therefore excused the dues of honey.¹⁰² The villagers did not have the right to kill game, unless it happened to cross their land, 'tylko czasem przechodem'.¹⁰³ If elk or deer were so killed, first refusal of the animals had to be given to the steward. However the steward did pay the peasants for wolves and foxes at 40 *groshi* each and martens at 24 *groshi* each.¹⁰⁴

The economic geography of Bobruysk District about 1640 has many features in common with that established in the western parts of the Grand Duchy some eighty years earlier, but also many marked differences. The *voloka* system of land holding by the peasants was set up in the great majority of villages in both areas; in both areas there were some villages where conditions did not allow the new regime to be introduced and the old pattern persisted of fragmented arable and great disparity in size of holding. But whereas in the west extensive areas displayed village after village with the same regular, indeed geometric, layout of new fields and settlements, in Bobruysk District such regularity was the exception. Most villages had their lands only partially reorganized, with much surviving fragmentation. Nevertheless a regular three-year crop rotation of winter rye, spring oats and fallow was introduced on all but the totally unreorganized village lands.

Villages around Bobruysk were smaller on average than in the west and the town itself was considerably smaller than such western

97. *AVK*, XXV, p. 325.

98. 'Ustawa na volok', Article 33, *op. cit.*, col. 576.

99. A *bočka* of land was the area on which a *bočko* of rye could be sown, supposedly equal to one *morg*.

100. *AVK*, XXV, p. 216.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 252 and 172.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

104. *Ibid.*

district centres as Pinsk, Hrodna and Brest. By comparison with the west there was an extremely high proportion of unused land, suggesting a lack of labour. The great development of manorial arable farming, primarily for export of grain, which characterized the west and which was a fundamental reason for the 1557 agrarian reform, cannot be seen in the three small manors of Bobruysk. Pičeta has suggested that, whereas cultivation was highly developed in the west, in the eastern districts of Lithuania exploitation of the forest was of great significance¹⁰⁵ — that is, the supply to the state of furs, especially beaver skins, and honey. On the other hand the *tyaglo* system of land holding in return for labour on the demesne was even more widespread in Bobruysk than in the west and the Bobruysk peasants contributed not insignificant quantities of rye and oats to the Treasury, together with considerably more flax than did the west.

The Bobruysk inventory, in its wealth of detail, provides an historical geographical picture of a small area of Byelorussia in the seventeenth century, but a picture one may reasonably think is typical of most of the eastern part of the country. At the same time it has light to shed on the operation of common-field agriculture in eastern Europe. The three-field system as it developed in Poland, Lithuania and Russia between the middle of the fifteenth and the middle of the seventeenth centuries displayed a number of variations, few of which have ever been examined in any detail. The standardized *voloka* system of the western provinces of Lithuania was one such variation. The modified version of the eastern provinces, exemplified by Bobruysk, was yet another.¹⁰⁶

105. V. I. Pičeta, *Belorussija i Litva XV-XVI vv.*, Izd. Akademii Nauk, Moscow, 1961, p. 121.

106. The author would like to thank Miss C Hill, who drew the maps for the article.