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WITCH- AND SORCERER-HUNTS IN THE TOWN OF NOWE,
THE 17th AND THE 1st HALF OF THE 18th CENTURY

Introductory remarks

In Nowe on the Vistula (Neuenburg), as well as in many other towns of the Royal Prussia, legal proceedings were carried out against witchcraft in the early modern period. In the second half of the 17th century it was undoubtedly quite a common practice among the townswomen of Nowe to hurl the “witch” insults at one another. On 8th August 1682 Marianna Baranowska, a townswoman, appeared in the local court together with some witnesses who testified that Anna Linska had insulted the plaintiff verbally. Among others, Petrus Ottowic, a painter, presented his testimony, according to which he, “being in the vestibule, was painting crosses for Mr Stadny and Mr Stolarz”, when he heard Mrs Linska who, having noticed Mrs Baranowska, said loudly these words: “Here goes the whore, the witch, and the fat cow”¹. This accusation, however, did not result in the witchcraft trial of Baranowska. This time it was Linska who paid for her slander. The insults cost her 24 Prussian marks as a penalty².

Trials were conducted by the court of benchers both in the town itself and at out-of-court sessions, when the owners of villages located in the Nowe district called for judges to try their own subjects. Such a court consisted of a judge (*tudex*, *Schulz*), as the chairman, his deputy (*subiudex* or *vicesculltetus*), and six benchers, who chose their own chairman. The court also included

¹ The National Archives in Bydgoszcz (quoted below as: AP Bydgoszcz), *Acta miasta Nowe (Records of the Town of Nowe* — quoted below as: *AmN*), cat. N° 79, p. 197.

² *Ibidem*, p. 201.

the notary or the clerk³. It was the court of first instance, whose verdicts could be appealed against to the *Starost* or the *Landtag*⁴.

What were the causes of witch-hunts? A few years ago (1998), Franz Irsigler proposed a thesis, according to which those waves of witch-hunts had been sparked by five factors: 1) general crisis, when the overwhelming majority of society felt that their lives, health and possessions were endangered, 2) the spread of demonology, not only among literate ecclesiastical and secular elites but also within simple folk, and the theory of witchcraft, associated with that, 3) the grass roots pressure, or the readiness of society for witch-hunts and sorcerer-hunts, 4) supporting, or at least tolerating witch-hunts by local authorities and town councils, 5) the influence of jurists on court proceedings, first of all on initiating witch-hunts⁵. The author concludes his considerations with another, sixth factor: the opportunity witch-hunts created to achieve the goals which had little in common with the protection from black magic and the devil sect, but they served, first of all, as a means to solve the conflicts and problems the solution of which was impossible through legal proceedings. Irsigler listed the following problems: a divorce due to the witch-trial, an earlier division of the expected bequest and property, the acquisition of neighbour's possessions and personal revenge⁶. Similar were the causes of witch-trials conducted before the Court of Nowe.

Indictment

In the proceedings carried out by the Court of Nowe, those charged with witchcraft were blamed for using it to harm the health of both humans and cattle. There are no accusations linked to milk witchcraft (taking away cows' milk), finding lost items, love, magic accessories (ropes of the hanged and parts of their bodies), bringing about rain and hail, using mirrors and crystal in magic, and profaning the Host by witches. There is only one case where we encounter a magic accessory in the trial: a pot.

³ H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei und preussischer Landrathkreis. Geschichte des Schwetzer Kreises 1466–1873*, vol. 1, Danzig 1886, p. 102.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁵ F. Irsigler, *Hexenverfolgungen vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert. Eine Einführung*, in: *Methoden und Konzepte der historischen Hexenforschung*, publ. by G. Franz, F. Irsigler, ed. H. Eiden, R. Voltmer, Trier 1998, pp. 9–10.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 19–20.

In 1624 Anna Jagódkka confessed, among others, that she had received from Rokitka, her devil, a pot containing hair, bones and other objects. This pot had to be buried in front of the barn's doorstep, if one wanted to harm the cattle kept there. Instead of burying this pot, she threw it away, for which she was beaten by the devil⁷.

Another example comes from the 18th of July 1671 when Paweł Werdzik of the village of Dąbrówka sued a woman named Ewa, who was an inhabitant of that village, for being "an infallible witch"⁸. During the court confrontation Werdzik accused her speckled cat of "biting off his ox's tail half way through, in consequence of which [the ox] tumbled over". The woman was also made responsible for the incident in which wolves had eaten his calf in front of his house and his cow on the grazing land. She also allegedly threatened him with death, and harmed his ox's back, the same one whose tail had been bitten off by her cat. She was responsible for the deaths of seven pigs belonging to him⁹.

On the one hand, as it is shown in interrogation protocols, quite a common conviction and belief prevailed in Nowe and its environs that witchcraft was one of possible means to take revenge or retaliate for the injustice caused by someone. On the other hand, if somebody suffered any misfortune, the reasons of it were looked for among those who had previously quarreled or had a tiff of any sort with the wronged, as there was a belief that such a person could have sought revenge through magic or witchcraft. That is why the interrogated women told the court that they had committed bad deeds in the course of seeking revenge for injustice done to them. In July 1689 Elza Kucharczykowska confessed that she had ordered a devil in her service to break the neck of an ox which belonged to Kolberk, the plaintiff in this case, as he had beaten her son several times¹⁰. The defendant also added that a Pietruszkowa caused the death of Wietrzykowski¹¹, a citizen of Nowe, as he had forced her out of

⁷ H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei*, p. 111.

⁸ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 1, Protocollbuch des peinliches Gerichts der Stadt Neuenburg bezeichnet Todtenbuch (1552—1685), p. 336.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 336—337.

¹⁰ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, p. 8.

¹¹ This may have been Andrzej Wietrzykowski, the mayor of the town; K. Kościński, *Kościoty i kaplice w Nowem, w powiecie świeckim, w Prusach Zachodnich (Churches and Chapels in Nowe, in the Świecie District, Western Prussia)*, Gdańsk 1896, p. 36.

home and shouted at her. "She had been rubbing into his legs some ointment apparently to treat them, but in fact she had done him harm". Wietrzykowski, having beaten Pietruszkowa, took fright at what he had done and, upset "by himself", compensated her with a quintal of rye so that he would not suffer any harm from her side. Seemingly, Pietruszkowa had already been ill-reputed in town. The attempt to make up for the wrong done to her did not produce any results as "he had to die after his legs had been harmed through her action"¹².

The devil in attendance of Kucharczykowa did harm to people, but not always — only when she got angry with someone. Then she wanted him to do damage. There was quite a lot of it. In Bielawki she ordered to suffocate a cow which belonged to the inn-keeper, as he did not want to lend her a florin. She ordered to "sprain" Tomek's mare's leg as he had been scolding her and was angry with her husband. Since the local lady did not want to give her any bread when she asked for it, she ordered the devil to suffocate a cow of the manor's barn, which had just calved, and the calf itself. She also made the cattle of the manor catch mange because the owner of the village had not wanted to give her half a bushel of rye¹³. Soon after Pentecost, she ordered to harm the back of an ox which belonged to Czapska, the village owner, because Czapska "failed to do justice to her while she was complaining about another [woman]". She was the cause of the deaths of a dozen or so of sheep, only because the shepherd's son had quarreled with her husband. She also made a cow, which belonged to Szymon, her brother, suffocate, and did the same to a horse of her brother-in-law, a peasant in Lalkowy, for he kept calling his wife, who was her sister, a witch¹⁴. During the second round of torture she added to her previous testimony that she had made the shepherd's cow suffocate for he had refused to give her some buttermilk.

The devil, which belonged to Karczmarzowa, used to go with her to Parlin, where he aided her in killing the cattle and a child of the local village administrator. She did it because the admin-

¹² AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, The protocols of the court proceedings carried out by the Town of Nowe Court of Benchers, 1689—1747, p. 12.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 130, the 17th and 18th century protocols of the proceedings of the councilors and benchers, p. 52.

istrator had refused to sift some beans for her and pay for the fatback he had taken from her. That is why she poured the “powder” to both the child and the cattle¹⁵.

Trial by water (bathing in water)

The person accused of witchcraft was arrested, and then an ordeal was carried out to find out whether he or she was guilty of the crime. Among the most popular ones, also in the 18th century Royal Prussia, was the trial by water, or the bathing in water, even though Stanisław Dąbski (1692–1700), the Bishop of Włocławek, issued a verdict on 11th April 1699, where he called this ordeal, among others, unacceptable¹⁶. The judges of the Court of Nowe did not care about the bishop’s stance. It was not until the trial of 1747 in Morzeszczyn when they did not apply bathing in water, and even refused to do so, having been asked for it by the women on trial.

Bathing in water was commonly believed in as evidence for the prosecution all over early—modern Europe. If the defendant went under water instantly, she was deemed to be innocent, but if she floated, she was regarded as guilty. In rural societies of the 17th century German speaking countries, the belief in the reliability of the trial by water was common. Women accused of witchcraft asked themselves to be allowed to undergo the trial by water, finding it the right means to prove their innocence¹⁷. Maciej Piskula, put on trial in 1690 in Łobzenica (the Great Poland district), asked for “water”, for he claimed in front of the court “people said water would clear an innocent man of accusations”¹⁸. Similar practices took place during the trials at the Court of Nowe.

In July 1689, Jan Kolberk¹⁹, a Nowe townsman, accused Elza Kucharczykowa alias Zarębina of witchcraft. The accused woman

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

¹⁶ J. Kaufmann, *Die Stellung der Kirche zu den Hexenprozessen im 17. Jahrhundert*, “Mittelungen des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins” vol. 2, 1903, p. 60.

¹⁷ R. Walz, *Hexenglaube und magische Kommunikation im Dorf der frühen Neuzeit. Die Verfolgung in der Grafschaft Lippe*, Paderborn 1993, p. 356; G. Gersmann, *Skizze einer Geschichte der Wasserprobe*, in: *Wasser*, ed. by B. Busch, L. Förster, Bonn 2000, pp. 157–167.

¹⁸ J. Wijaczka, *Men Standing Trial for Witchcraft Trials at the Łobzenica Court in the Second Half of the 17th Century*, “Acta Poloniae Historica” 2006, vol. 93, p. 74.

was arrested and, following her repeated requests, put on trial by water, which was to, according to her, prove her innocence. Also Kucharczykowa's husband, who was also summonsed to appear in the court of benchers, asked for bathing his wife in water²⁰. The trial by water, carried out by an executioner, took place in the presence of a large audience, including the two benchers, designated by the court, namely Krzysztof Lalkowski and Zachariasz Szramka. It was them who later notified the court that "when [Elza Kucharczykowa] was bound and cast into water for the first time, she went down to the bottom, but soon she emerged on the surface and began to float²¹. "When the second attempt was made, she also kept floating on the surface. She was put into a barrel and taken to the tower, where she was imprisoned.

In May 1699 it was Regina Jakubowa who in the village of Smętówko, being accused of witchcraft, "volunteered to be bathed in water, to be tried this way". She was granted permission for that and bathed three times in water, but each time "water refused to take her". Consequently, she was handed over to the executioner²². The accused woman testified, among others, that during the water trial a fiend had not been able to approach her "because of the sacred items in her possession that had been given to her by the lady of the manor"²³.

In the case of the accused Marianna Krystofka (1701) the Town Council of Nowe decided that she should be bathed in water in order to clear herself of the accusations of witchcraft. The councilors asked the community head for that and designated two benchers, who ordered the executioner to "bathe her in water for the first, second, and third time". That was carried out in the presence of numerous people, and she "being bound, having emerged her head above the surface, kept floating". The Council therefore concluded that she was guilty and turned out to be a witch, and handed her over to the court²⁴.

¹⁹ Between 1695—1711 Anna Kolberkowa was the owner of a bakery. She may have been Jan Kolberk's widow; A. Pryłowski, *Gospodarka Nowego n. Wistą w latach 1662-1772. Problem produkcji i wymiany (The Economy of Nowe on the Vistula. The Problem of Production and Exchange)*, Bydgoszcz 1978, p. 40, tab. 14.

²⁰ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 43—44.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 130, pp. 265—266.

On 7th July 1701, following the motion of Wawrzyniec Jordański and his wife, the Town Council decided to imprison Ewa Łybosowa, because the couple had accused her of witchcraft. The husband of the defendant himself asked the Council for "bathing her in water"²⁵. The trial by water was carried out the following day. Łybosowa was cast into water for three times and each time she kept floating. The Council therefore decided to hand her over to the community leader so that he would "decide and judge her in accordance with the holy justice"²⁶.

Marianna Grześkówna of Lalki asked for the trial of water for herself, which happened: "according to tradition, the executioner cast her into water, where she kept floating for the first, second, and the third time in the presence of the lord and lady of the manor, as well as numerous others. Thus, being tied up by the trial of water, and later put into a barrel by the executioner, she was taken to prison in Smętów of lady Czapski"²⁷.

The belief that water "clears" of accusations was so strong that some defendants even wanted to pay for being put to such a test. This was done in 1747 by Barbara Drązkowa, who asked for bathing in water and added: "my husband will give you, my lords, 100 zlotys, and may I be cast into water"²⁸. The court rejected this proposal.

Some fiends promised women that if they were arrested and put to trial by water, they would make them go down. This is what happened, among others, in the case of Katarzyna Oleyniczanka, who confessed that when she had already been arrested, her fiend, Hans, "promised to keep her under water so that she would not float", but he did not keep up his promise "as on the same day, when [she] was taken, he abandoned her. Also another fiend, Janek, abandoned her on that day"²⁹. Marianna Kowalka claimed that while she was being bathed, the fiend was sitting on an alder tree, and when she was taken into water he comforted her assuring her that she would go down³⁰. Another devil promised to provide Elza Kucharczykowa with a bar of iron, but he let her down as he had escaped³¹.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 130, p. 51.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 131, p. 133.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 20–21.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 130, p. 82.

³¹ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 131, p. 8.

In the trials a witch barrel is mentioned twice. In 1689 Elza Kucharczykowa was put into a barrel (after the second bathing in water) and taken to the tower, where she was kept prisoner³². After bathing in water, Marianna Grzeskówna of Lalki was bound and, "having been put into a barrel by the executioner", was then taken to the prison in Smętów of lady Czapski³³. Why such a practice? Years ago, Karol Koranyi wrote that putting the defendants into a barrel was primarily intended to isolate them from the influence of the devil, for the holy sign marked on the barrel prevented him from approaching his victim³⁴. Another reason was to "keep the defendants from touching the ground. To be precise, it was feared that if the prisoner touched the ground, the magic power that comes from the ground might pass on her, which would add her some extra strength needed to endure torture, and thanks to which the person could be freed and avoid punishing justice"³⁵.

In the trials before the Court of Nowe, unlike in other courts, the trial by water was carried out three times. Probably, such a practice aimed at avoiding any mistake, and presumably also to hush the voices of the judges' consciences.

Pact with the devil (evil spirit) and carnal relations with it

It was the invention of printing technique which had an unquestionable impact on the dissemination of the belief in witchcraft. Here in 1487, Heinrich Kramer (*Institutoris*, d. 1506), a German inquisitor, published his *Malleus maleficarum* [*The Hammer of Witches*]. In his work, Kramer listed three features of witchcraft: 1) the rejection of the Catholic belief, or heresy, 2) pact and carnal knowledge with the devil, 3) the participation in Sabbaths, 4) the ability to harm people and animals, or black magic, 5) the ability to fly. This work undoubtedly popularized the concept of witchcraft and the stereotype of a female witch among the ecclesiastical and secular elites.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³³ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 130, p. 51.

³⁴ K. Koranyi, *Ze studiów nad wierzeniami w historii prawa karnego* (*The Studies on Beliefs in the History of Criminal Law*). I. *Beczka czarownic* (*The Barrel of Witches*), Lwów 1928, p. 34.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

In addition to the invention of printing technique, it was sermons which served as another element of utmost importance, and, as it appears, an even more important factor, the one which disseminated a new belief in witchcraft, especially among commoners³⁶. According to the widely spread views, which were also confirmed by the writing on demonology, one became a witch or a sorcerer through the pact with the devil, and that happened in different ways. All this was the subject of interrogations of the people accused of witchcraft, run by judges in all parts of Europe, also those adjudicating in Nowe.

A devil called Hans was "presented" to Katarzyna Oleyniczanka in buttermilk given to her by a shepherd girl from Mirotki, and when "she brought this buttermilk home", she noticed that devil standing by the chimney. He spoke to her with these words: "you have already bought me with this buttermilk", and then he embraced her and had a sexual intercourse with her on the grinder³⁷. Elza Kucharczykowa got a devil called Kasper from Barwa Czarna, who lived in Garbary. The latter one "presented" the devil in the thin beer which she was taking with her into the field, and Elza had a drink from her³⁸.

During torture Jakub Gałgan confessed to possessing a female devil named Marianna. He "got" her on his way from Nowe to the village of Fraça, and that was right after his sister had been burnt as a witch. On appearing, the female devil pawed him and "next they had sex". She was always with him, she vowed to be wife to him³⁹.

Anna Krucha confessed that she "had received" her devil on the meadow which belonged to Mr Czechnicki "when it was kept as a deposit from him". The devil approached her on a horse, while she was going to make hay. He asked her: "what are you?", and she answered him that she was a woman⁴⁰. He led her to a heap of dry twigs on Mr Czechnicki's meadow, persuaded her to lay down the ground and then had sex with her. This misfortune happened to Anna when her second husband was still alive. The evil spirit gave her "the sign", which is hidden now (that is at

³⁶ G. Schormann, *Hexenprozesse in Deutschland*, Göttingen 1981, pp. 32–33.

³⁷ AP Bydgoszcz, *AmN*, cat. N^o 131, pp. 20–21.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

the time of testimony being given to the court) upstairs in the house, behind the trestle. She also confessed that once had hurt knee to blood and then “the devil vowed to stay with her forever and smeared this blood on her breasts”. The devil also incited her to renounce God, and her reply was: “God is dearer to me than you are, yet she still gave herself away to him”⁴¹. She kept having sexual intercourses with him three times a week through all those years, since she had him.

Krajniczka “got” her devil in Bielawki (near Pelplin), where he approached her from a lilac bush. When he made his appearance in front of her, he adopted the “body of a peasant”, dressed in a black gown. He admitted to be a devil and ordered her to renounce God and the Holy Virgin, so she did⁴².

Peter’s wife, Dorota named Kaszubka, confessed voluntarily that a devil had been presented to her by Owocowa, a female peasant from Smętówek, who she “had had an argument with some 12 or more years ago”⁴³. Owocowa sent her a bowl of flour, which she began to use for cooking hasty pudding. At the same time a devil, dressed the Polish way, in a red gown, went out of the chimney corner. On the same day, when he appeared in her house for the first time, he had sex with her twice in the garden by the cottage, and after that he “had an intercourse with her anytime”. Following his order, she renounced God.

Magdalena Ruskowa was given a devil by Anna Krucha. Although he had sex with her, he kept calling her: “a lame woman”. He wore grey Polish garments⁴⁴. She confessed that she had renounced God and that she “had signed a pact with the devil, having cut her left leg on the shin with a copper pin, and the devil dipped his finger in this blood and smeared it on his breasts saying: you are already mine, and nudged her”. She was not afraid of this devil at all⁴⁵.

In 1704 Marianna Rogalska confessed, before being handed over to the executioner, that on her way back from the marshy meadow on Rozgarty, she met a young man dressed in the Polish style red outfit “who claimed to be a student looking for a school”.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 44.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

He gave her a kiss and asked to give him some blood from the ring finger of the right hand, which she at once accepted and, cutting this finger with a pin, drew some blood, which the devil in a human body used to make a pact and said to her, you are already mine"⁴⁶. The devil's name was Marcin. She fornicated with him twice upstairs at home, and later in the garden.

A devil ordered Gertruda Śmiechowa to "sign" a pact, which she did: "he drew her some blood cutting her ring finger of the right hand with his claw and, having written the pact with the blood, said: you are already mine"⁴⁷.

Marta Stepkowa had her devil, Michał, who "came" to her in the following way: "she had had a blazing row with her husband, two years went by since the last Shrovetide, and when in the evening she was sitting at home by the stove, having put out the candle, her husband being out in town, she cursed herself very much, a devil came to her and, having stroked her face, kissed her. She asked him, who are you?, he said: Michał. Suddenly, a baby started to cry in the cradle, she speeded to it, tucked it in and put it in her bed. There the devil again approached her and had an intercourse with her, where she, persuaded by the devil, renounced Christ and his Holy Mother"⁴⁸.

Marianna Kowalka of the village of Plochocin admitted that a devil had appeared in front of her for the first time on a field near Warlub. He approached her, dressed the Polish style, in a red gown like a courtier, and embraced her saying: "you are already mine, Marysia". That happened, because she had forgotten to cross herself⁴⁹. This devil was "sent" to her by old Trajnoszka, who had said earlier to her: "if you want to do the job I do, just say a word", so she did⁵⁰. Anna Frangosowa "received" a devil called Jakub, who wore black clothes the German style, from her mother-in-law⁵¹.

In 1714 Regina Dorszewiczowa of the village of Gruczno admitted that she had signed a pact with the devil with her own blood taken from the ring finger. She was also baptized by the

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 130, p. 81.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

devil and given the name of Barbara⁵². On a certain day (1718) a devil appeared at Anna Wincentka's and asked her if he could serve her as a farmhand. She made sex with him on a bed. She gave him on his hand her saliva mixed with blood from her mouth, having hurt her gums first⁵³.

A devil said "you are mine" to Barbara Jakubka, an overseer from the village of Zawady, when she renounced Christ, the Holy Virgin and the Blessed Sacrament. She also "signed in" with her blood, having cut her ring finger with a pin, whose blood she smeared on her face. The devil had an intercourse with her on a bench at night, but her husband knew nothing about it⁵⁴.

Elżbieta Pasturka admitted that "three years have already gone by since I received a devil in Berwałd. He appeared in my imagination, as I wanted a friend. He was wearing a grey gown, the Polish style, and his name was Kuba, at that time I was a widow, I had sex with him promptly, during the day." Before she remarried, she married the devil "at noon, and my husband in the evening, on the same day I slept with the devil straight-away⁵⁵. Interrogated by the judges why she "had received" a devil, she said that "only for physical pleasure, as she could not get a lover"⁵⁶.

There was a common belief that signing a pact with the devil paid off financially, for evil spirits bring their witches money and provide their prosperity. A different picture most often emerges from the confessions of tortured women in Nowe and its environs, as most devils did not only give money very rarely, but also were poor and sponged on their witches. Anna Jagódka received only one grosz from her devil whereas she had to feed himself with groats, beans, sauerkraut, and whatever was available, she also treated him to beer⁵⁷. Hans, the devil which belonged to Katarzyna Oleyniczanka, instead of helping her at work, would sit on a grinder and bring her nothing, as he was poor himself⁵⁸. Even though Anna Krucha got a six groszy coin from her devil, this

⁵² AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, p. 105.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 122-123.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁵⁷ H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei*, p. 111.

⁵⁸ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, p. 21.

coin "got shattered"⁵⁹. After signing her pact with the evil, Regina Dorszewiczowa of the village of Gruczno (1714) was asked by the devil: "What do you prefer? Do you want me to feed you or vice versa?" Later, he would bring her some wheat cake and a pat of butter⁶⁰.

Ewa Świątkowska from Nowe confessed that she had received from her devil a thaler, which she exchanged at young Krefft's and paid her tax with the money⁶¹. While an evil spirit, which belonged to Krajniczka, promised her at the beginning that she would be prosperous with him, but it did not happen as he was poor and also: "a gourmand who devoured everything"⁶². Peter's wife, Dorota named Kaszubka, confessed that: that "damned fiend" had promised her a prosperous life by his side, but she "only managed to make two ends meet as she had no gains, and she had been doing better before she got him"⁶³.

Bald mountain (Sabbath)

According to the 15th century writing on demonology, participating in the meetings of believers in the devil, or the participating in Sabbaths⁶⁴, was among the most serious allegations against those who were accused of heresy and witchcraft⁶⁵. The first officially appointed inquisitor for the German territory, Conrad of Marburg (year of appointment 1231), stated that heretics met at devilish sessions, where Lucifer was adored. The novices kissed the butt of a toad and a black cat, orgies were practiced, and at Easter communion (the body of Christ) was taken to be next spat into faeces. In the 14th century such devilish sessions were already named Sabbath.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁶⁰ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o 131, p. 105.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 130, p. 86.

⁶² *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 131, p. 44.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

⁶⁴ On Sabbaths see, among others, : C. Ginzburg, *Hexensabbat. Entzifferung einer nächtlichen Geschichte*, Berlin 1990. On the image of Sabbaths in the rural society see, among others: E. Biesel, *Die Pfeifer seint alle uff den baumen gesessen. Der Hexensabbat in der Vorstellungswelt einer ländlichen Bevölkerung*, in: *Methoden und Konzepte der historischen Hexenforschung*, pp. 289–302.

⁶⁵ E. Potkowski, *Haeresis et secta maleficorum. Powstanie stereotypu (Haeresis et secta maleficorum. The Birth of the Stereotype)*, in: *Cultus et cognitio. Studia z dziejów średniowiecznej kultury (Cultus et cognitio. Studies into the Medieval Culture)*, Warszawa 1976, p. 474.

Around the mid-15th century, an anonymous Sabaudian inquisitor wrote the treatise *Errores Gazariorum seu illorum, qui scobam vel bacalum equitate probantu*, where he included a well-developed concept of Sabbath as the cult assembly of witches and sorcerers, which was chaired by the devil himself. During such sessions feasts were held and orgies were practiced, and homage was paid to the devil. During their first visit to the Sabbath, the novices took an oath of allegiance and paid homage to the devil. According to the author of the treatise, the oath of allegiance consisted of seven points: 1) loyalty to the devil, 2) gaining new members for the sect, 3) keeping the sect's secrets, 4) supplying the bodies of children killed by the novices, 5) a promise to participate in assemblies, 6) interfering in people's marriage through witchcraft, 7) the duty to avenge the sect and its members in case of persecution. It follows that the oath, which was then taken, referred primarily to heresy, or the departure from the Roman-Catholic religion⁶⁶.

In certain seasons, first of all on Valpurgia Night (at the turn of 30 April), on St. John's Night (at the turn of 23rd June)⁶⁷, at Christmas, on New Year's Day and at Epiphany, as well as on other days of a year (first of all on Thursdays) witches held meetings in different places in order to dance, among others, and participate in orgies. Those meetings were allegedly held primarily on tops of different mountains. In Germany the most popular was Brocken Mountain (1 142 m. above the sea level), the highest peak in the Harz Mountains. In Switzerland such a mountain was Pilatusberg, and in Hungary there were the peaks, among others, near Sopron and Tokaj⁶⁸. In Poland it was Bald Mountain (Łysiec), located in the Holy Cross Mountains, which served as such a mountain⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 471.

⁶⁷ This day was of significant importance among the yearly cycle of rituals. The summer equinox was recognized by the folk as an extraordinary event and exceptional magical properties were ascribed to it. This holiday was connected with the occurrence of the transformations in astronomy, meteorology, and, what follows, economy. B. Wojciechowska, *Od Godów do świętej Łucji. Obrzędy doroczne w Polsce późnego średniowiecza (From Gody to St. Lucia's Day. Annual Rituals in Poland of the Late Middle Ages)*, Kielce 2000, pp. 91, 99.

⁶⁸ G. Klaniczay, *Der Hexensabbat im Spiegel von Zeugenaussagen in Hexen-Prozessen*, "Kea. Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften" 1993, p. 39.

⁶⁹ J. Adamowski, *Łysa Góra (Bald Mountain)*, in: *Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych (The Dictionary of Stereotypes and Folk Symbols)*, vol. 1, *Kosmos (Cosmos)*, part. 2, *Ziemia, woda, podziemie (Earth, Water, Underworld)*, ed. by J. Bartmiński, S. Niebrzegowska, Lublin 1999, pp. 121–122.

Apart from most popular bald mountains there were also local peaks, located in the nearest proximity, where alleged witches flocked. Among such meeting places of witches were also — and even more often than mountains and hills — meadows, crossroads, deserted areas and the roofs of houses⁷⁰. It happened, which women often confessed during interrogation, that they met in a few places instead of one. Similar was the testimony given by the women put on trial as witches before the Court of Nowe on the Vistula.

The bald mountain, which Elza Kucharczykowa used to visit, was located “by the Kobyly ground on the Vistula, on white sand”⁷¹. There she danced with Kasper, and these dances, as well as other witches’ dances, were to the music played on a colter by one peasant, dressed the Polish fashion, in black garments. She could not, however, recognize who it was, for his face was covered with a piece of taffeta⁷². She was on that bald mountain on St. John’s Day. There were also other witches, whose faces, just like the musician’s, were hidden behind taffeta. During a twelve year period, she visited a bald mountain regularly twice a year.

Maryna, Jakub Gałgan’s wife, used to visit the bald mountain located at the foot of the castle of Nowe⁷³. Also, her husband used to be there, who testified that another bald mountain was located near Świecie⁷⁴. Anna Krucha would go to the bald mountain located on the estate behind the castle, three times a year, once after Lent, another time at *Corpus Christi*, and for the third time — on St. John’s Day⁷⁵.

Regina Krajniczka used to go to the bald mountain near the monastery in Pelplin. She also saw there other women, but she does not know who they were “for they covered themselves with some tissues”, besides, she is poor, and therefore she “was by the kitchen, grinding and washing up”. The meetings on this bald mountain were held on St. John’s Day and on the Holy Cross Day (14th September). They drank from beautiful tankards. She also

⁷⁰ K. Koranyi, *Łysa Góra (Studium z dziejów wierzeń ludowych w Polsce w XVII i XVIII wieku) (Bald Mountain. The Study on the History of Popular Beliefs in the 17th and 18th Century Poland)*, “Lud” 1928, vol. 7, p. 60.

⁷¹ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N° 131, p. 8.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

used to be on another bald mountain, located near Lalkowy. A peasant of Bochlin played on a little drill to their dances, who has already been burnt for that⁷⁶.

Dorota Kaszubka used to visit the bald mountain between Smętówko and Lalkowy on St. John's Day, every year. A peasant of Kamionka, whom she did not know, played music to their dances, but he played "lously"⁷⁷.

Marianna Rogalska visited this bald mountain four times, on St. John's Day and at *Corpus Christi*. She later confessed that Sabbaths had taken place once on a rampart where the estate was, and also where a rollway called *winduga* was, or in the place on the Vistula where timber ready for floating was stored. She added that there was a beautiful palace on the bald mountain, painted in circles. This place used to be visited by so many witches that "she could not take them in". She did not recognize most of them for their faces were covered up. "When they had already had their fun on the bald mountain, a billy goat stepped onto the table and, having shaken off his head, said: it is time to stop already, and at the same time the devil in the form of a lady sat at the table, whom every witch paid as big a tribute as she could, she only gave him three grosses; that devil was dressed in red, and after the contribution was given, each of them set off"⁷⁸. They danced to the music performed by Jan, the peasant who lived at Wróbel's in Kończyce. He played with some wooden nails, hammered in a board. Banging and beating those nails, he played "such a lively tune, as if he were playing the dulcimer". This peasant wore a "white waistcoat"⁷⁹.

Marianna Kowalka, questioned by the court whether she used to visit a bald mountain answered that she once had been on such a mountain, located on an old little castle near Świecie. They drank from golden mugs. They were there on Christmas Eve, Ascension's Eve, and St. John's Eve⁸⁰.

Ewa Świątkowska of Nowe paid her visits to the bald mountain "in a little manor, on Windół, on Bakałarz mountain"⁸¹, and

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, cat. N^o 130, p. 83.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

she served there as a cook. Apart from her, it was Ignacówna Kwaśna and Hesja Wolescanka who met there. There were a number of other women, but she could not recognize their faces for they were covered with "little coats and had covers on their heads". On the bald mountain a grey haired peasant played music on a colter to their dances and they danced like at a wedding party. They ate eggs, pork and carrots there⁸². She visited the bald mountain only twice, once on St. Martin's Day and the other time on St. John's Day. On the bald mountain, the witches who were better off than her were given some round white cake and meat⁸³.

On St. John's Day last year, Jadwiga Michałkowa visited the bald mountain located behind the hospital, "where there is a crossroads to Borowy Młyn and to Milewek, and she danced, drank and ate there". She took some drink and silver mugs from there, but it turned out at home that they were "horse droppings and pieces of coal, and the drink was cow's urine, and the silver pieces were goose eggs shells"⁸⁴. Next she said to the judges that devils wore different garments on the bald mountain, in ragged and in beautiful robes, for when a witch gives a devil a job to do, e.g. to dig or cut, and his robe gets ripped at the same time, the witch is obliged to buy him another one. She testified that if anyone eating eggs, does not pierce the shell or crumble it, this serves them on the bald mountain as a goblet and a silver mug. Witches visit the bald mountain every first Thursday of a new month before "a monthly Sunday"⁸⁵.

In 1714 Regina Dorszewiczowa testified that there was a bald mountain in Panie (?), where stones lie, these stones served the witches as a table by which they drank beer and wine, and ate nag's legs. This place was visited by her, her mother, and sister, Szymka, and Karczmarka (Kaczmarka). There were a number of other witches as well, she did not know them though. She used to visit the place on Thursdays, at *Corpus Christi*, and also on "the greatest holidays"⁸⁶.

Anna Wincentka used to visit a bald mountain together with other women. The music to accompany their dances was played

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 86.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

on a colter by the late Stach. Once she grabbed a mug from the bald mountain; "she understood it was golden, but when she brought it home, it turned out to be an egg shell, and instead of being gilted with gold, it was gilted with some yolk of an egg"⁸⁷.

In 1747 a shepherd confessed that there was a bald mountain in the chamber of Barbara Drąszkowa, who was their queen, so all the witches used to meet at her place, as she was lying in bed, ill⁸⁸.

In the early Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church officially stated that the phenomenon of witches' flying in the air was an illusion created by the devil. It was documented in writing in the so called *Canon episcopi*, which for the first time appeared around 906 in the work *Libri duo de synodalibus causis et ecclesiasticis disciplinis*, written in Trier. The authors argued that air flights of women in the retinue of the pagan goddess Diane were nothing but an illusion and should not be believed in⁸⁹. That collection of laws was prepared merely for the Trier Diocese, but it gained its super-regional significance thanks to the fact that it was placed by Burchard of Worms (965–1025) in his *Decretum*, and after some time included the collection of ecclesiastical laws written by Gratian, *Corpus Juris Canonici*, which was binding till 1918⁹⁰.

Between the 10th and 13th centuries, the Church did not approve of the belief that flights of witches really happened. In the 14th century, however, this stance changed, and after 1480 one was expected to believe in such views. The lack of belief that witches really fly was regarded as heresy. The common belief in night flights of witches was augmented by the art. The earliest iconographic images show witches as women flying on wild animals. Some murals in a few Danish churches, dating back to 1540–1542, show women flying on the backs of demons.

In order to be airborne, witches most frequently used some magic ointment, which they rubbed into their skin and in consequence were able to fly in the air. In most cases, they did not

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁸⁹ W. Tschacher, *Der Flug durch die Luft zwischen Illusionstheorie und Realität-beweis. Studien zum sog. Canon Episcopi und zum Hexenflug*, "Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte", vol. 116, Kanonistische Abteilung 1999, vol. 85, pp. 225–276.

⁹⁰ W. Schild, *Die Maleficia der Hexenleut*, Rothenburg o. d. T. 1997, p. 66.

prepare the ointment themselves but were give it by the devil, which he had prepared it using, e.g. fat from cooked newborn babies. This fat formed the main ingredient of such ointment⁹¹. According to another formula, a toad was needed to prepare a magic potion, which first had been fed with a stolen Host and then burnt. The ashes were mixed with the blood of the baby who had not been baptized yet, alongside different herbs and milled bones of a hangman⁹².

Elza Kucharczykowa reached the bald mountain by air, carried there by her devil⁹³. In turn, Gałgan went to the bald mountain located near Świecie in a carriage drawn by four horses⁹⁴. Anna Krucha allegedly got to the bald mountain, having rubbed in the ointment and flying out through the chimney. However, she confessed before the court that, as a matter of fact, "they are carried by the devil, who waits until they all gather there"⁹⁵. Regina Krajniczka went up the bald mountain on a hack⁹⁶. Marianna Rogalska flew to the bald mountain through the chimney, having rubbed into her body the ointment that she had purchased from Magdalena Ruskowa⁹⁷. While Marianna Kowalka, who, as she testified, was only an "ordinary witch" on the bald mountain, was taken there by the devil, other witches were driven to the Sabbath in a carriage⁹⁸. When Ewa Świątkowska of Nowe was to set off to the bald mountain, she rubbed into her body the ointment, which she kept in a little pot⁹⁹ Regina Dorszewiczowa, wishing to fly to the bald mountain, applied to her body the ointment delivered to her by the devil, which she kept hidden in the chimney in the hall¹⁰⁰.

On the bald mountain, as it stems from the testimony given by the women during their interrogations before the Court of

⁹¹ D. and G. Bandini, *Kleines Lexikon des Hexenwesens*, München 1999, p. 164.

⁹² W. Jilg, "Hexe" und "Hexerei" als kultur- und religionsgeschichtliches Phänomen, in: *Teufelsglaube und Hexenprozesse*, ed. by G. Schweiger, München 1987, pp. 47–48.

⁹³ AP Bydgoszcz, *AmN*, cat. N^o 131, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

Nowe, there was a hierarchy among witches. Marta Stępkowa testified that it was Byxmacherowa to be the most important witch on the bald mountain, which was confirmed by the fact that “five devils, dressed in a lordly fashion, stood by her”¹⁰¹. Also Karczmarka was supposed to be the queen of witches, who was dressed in red damask and sat on a golden chair. She went to the bald mountain, like a queen, in a carriage drawn by six black horses¹⁰². Barbara Drązkowa was also a queen and as she was ill, lying in bed, the bald mountain was in her chamber and there met all the witches¹⁰³. Pasturka, who used to be there, testified that at Drązkowa’s place, when they visited her “for fun”, it was equally light both at night and during the day. Drązkowa herself, being a queen, had as many as seven devils at her service and she was driven in a carriage drawn by six horses.

Marianna Rogalska, however, was a cook on the bald mountain. She cooked in huge bronze pots and served at the table¹⁰⁴. Also Ewa Świątkowska claimed to have been a cook¹⁰⁵. According to Barbara Jakubka, other witches did not want to let her “join them on the bald mountain, for she was poor”¹⁰⁶.

Appearance and names of the devil (evil spirit)

The devil appeared in folk culture of the early modern Europe as something tangible, real, the cause of all specific misfortunes which tormented the lowest strata of society, such as poverty, thunderstorms, hailstorms, illnesses of people, animals etc. Unlike in the “learned” images of the devil, his popular version appeared to be relatively simple: he was black, had horns and a tail, split or goat’s feet, fiery eyes, hairs all over his body, and smelled of sulphur¹⁰⁷.

As Polish historian Jan Stanisław Bystroń put it: “The devil, if at all wears human clothes, it is usually foreign. This is quite understandable: the locals are good, the traditional, national style is beautiful, proper, good, so it is difficult to imagine an evil spirit in such an outfit; whereas, the devilish influences

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 105.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁷ A. M. di Nola, *Diabeł (The Devil)*, 2nd. ed., Kraków 2000, p. 318.

begin already abroad, foreigners remain related to him, come from him, they are his servants etc., thus no wonder that the devil turns up in foreign clothing. We encounter such a phenomenon quite commonly: in Holland the devil wore Spanish clothes, so the clothes of the invader, the old Prussians imagined the devil in a Polish outfit, while in Poland the devil in short German clothing was very common. «Fell in love like the devil in German garments» — says the proverb¹⁰⁸.

One must be surprised by the plethora of images of the devil (an evil spirit) and the names he was given. Apart from the traditional ones, such as Lucifer and Belzebub, ordinary names appeared very frequently, which were commonly used among the inhabitants of a given region. From the sociological point of view, it is also interesting that when the devil appears with the name of “Juncker”, he is put on the same level as the nobility, especially when the description of the clothes worn by the devil reminds of the clothes of a nobleman. However, Marfred Wilde doubted that it must have reflected social tensions of the day¹⁰⁹.

The devil appeared in different forms and in different clothes. In the Commonwealth he was once dressed like a Polish nobleman, another time he turned up in the German outfit. To the Poles, he appeared in most cases as a German “...” most often as a little German, with a pigtail, in a suitable hat, with a hook nose, goat's or chicken's legs and almost always in red pants and a black, short tail coat. One has to be very careful when he appears in the form of a human, and he can be easily recognized because he has no nostrils¹¹⁰.

The belief in the presence of the devil was common among the people of the period. Some devils were rich, some others were poor, just like the devil in the possession of Hanka of the village of Lalkowy¹¹¹. Elza Kucharczykowa of Nowe confessed that the devil, Kasper, had always disturbed her whenever she made butter, and he did it so efficiently that she never finished making

¹⁰⁸ J. S. Bystroń, *Megalomania narodowa (The National Megalomania)*, Warszawa 1995, p. 178–179.

¹⁰⁹ M. Wilde, *Die Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen*, Köln—Weimar—Wien 2003, p. 269.

¹¹⁰ The quote from: Z. Benedyktowicz, *Portrety “obcego”. Od stereotypu do symbolu (The Portraits of the “Alien”. From the Stereotype to the Symbol)*, Kraków 2000, p. 140.

¹¹¹ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N^o1, p. 338.

it. That devil was very poor, so he gave her nothing; what is more, it was she who had to feed him for he had nothing to eat¹¹².

Małgorzata Tiburkowa's devil turned up at her place in Polish clothes, and when she was lying in her marital bed, on the one side was her husband and on the other — her devilish lover¹¹³. The devil which used to appear at another defendant's of the same trial, wore brown German robes¹¹⁴. The devil named Marks, which belonged to Ewa of Dąbrówka, wore Polish clothes in 1671¹¹⁵. The devil with golden horns was allegedly in the possession of Komisarka *alias* Czechnicka¹¹⁶. In turn, Marcinek was the name of the devil which was at the service of Truda Kalicka. He not only wore German clothes, but also spoke German¹¹⁷. Naturally, the evil spirit which belonged to Wellderings, who was herself German. He was dressed in the German style and "under a black feather", and his name was Jochim¹¹⁸. The devil which belonged to the Pole, Ala Kieska, wore Polish clothes¹¹⁹.

The female defendants of witchcraft trials before the Court of Nowe gave first or second names of forty eight devils. The following names were mentioned: Janek (Jan, Jaś — eight times), Marcin (Marcinek, five), Józwa (four), Kuba (four), Rokitka (two), Joachim (two), Michał (two), Paweł (two), Marks, Kasper, Hans, Jerzy, Mikołaj, Bartosz, Garbal, Boruta, Grześ, Piotr, Franciszek, Filippek, Frącek and Wojtek. The two devils were mentioned by their second, not first names: Bzowski and Rokicki.

In one case a devil appeared, whose name sounded distinctly German — Hans. It was owned by Oleyniczanka, the woman who was also served by another devil, named Janek.

The sixteen of them are known to have been dressed the Polish style, and the other ten — the German style. The three devils which belonged to Karczmarka were dressed the French style. The descriptions of the devil's outfit are usually very short: "German brown garb", "he wears black garb, the Polish style", "he

¹¹² *Ibidem*, cat. N° 131, p. 13.

¹¹³ H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei*, p. 111.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁵ AP Bydgoszcz, AmN, cat. N°1, p. 338.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 343.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 344, 346.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 343.

wears German style clothes". Only at times is the description of the outfit a bit more colourful: "a smart-looking lord the Polish style, in a blue gown, and in a red bonnet", "dressed the nobility style in red clothes". The female devil, Marianna, is known to have worn a black dress, a green overcoat and a sky-blue corset.

Sentence. The death penalty

Sorcerers and witches were sentenced to death by the Chełmno Law, which was binding in the Royal Prussia. The Old-Chełmno Law took over the sentence on this issue from The Saxon Mirror (Germ. *Sachsenspiegel*) and linked magic with heresy, and the article which clarified this was the following: "This is about sorcerers and witches, whether they are women or men, who practise magic, and who are capable of calling the devil with their words and do so. All those should be burnt or killed, the kind of death being chosen by the judge, which is harsher and more sophisticated than others. This should be the way to take their lives by the judge for they have renounced our Lord, and submitted themselves to the devil. And those who know it and pass it over, as well as those who incite somebody to it, or offer their assistance, when their guilt is proven by the law, those should be beheaded"¹²⁰. During subsequent codifications of the Chełmno Law, an attitude towards witchcraft changed to a certain degree. More attention was paid to the material damage caused as a result¹²¹.

In the 16th and 17th century Royal Prussia, the witchcraft trials were carried out primarily before the town courts. The King August II issued a rescript in Malbork on 5th May 1703, following the request of Krzysztof Antoni Szembek, the Bishop of Włocławek, in which he ordered the secular magistrates to judge this sort of cases only after they were examined by the Church authorities¹²². Those town magistrates who would not comply with the regulation could face the penalty fine of 1000 ducats, while the benchers of the village court could face the death penalty¹²³. However, this rescript was not abided by.

¹²⁰ *Prawo starochełmińskie 1584 (1394) (The Old-Chełmno Law 1584 [1394])*, ed. by W. Maisel, Z. Zdrójkowski, transl. by A. Bzdęga, A. Gaca, Toruń 1985, p. 164.

¹²¹ D. Janicka, *Prawo karne w trzech rewizjach prawa chełmińskiego (The Criminal Law in Three Reviews of the Chełmno Law)*, Toruń 1992, p. 77.

¹²² H. Karbownik, *Sprawa prowadzenia procesów o czary (The Problem of Conducting Witchcraft Trials)*, p. 165-174.

On 11th April 1699, as it has been mentioned, Stanisław Dąbski, the Bishop of Włocławek, issued an edict in which he prohibited torture in those witchcraft trials where the allegations were only based on denunciation and gossip. Also, the bishop regarded the so called trial of water as unacceptable. Moreover, he demanded that each judge, before adjudicating torture, should contact the bishop's official in this case, who himself would prepare a report for the bishop. Secular judges should seek advice of theologians, and besides, they should deal with crimes such as murders, robberies, thefts, but not with the cases that are so difficult to prove such as allegations of witchcraft. The bishop threatened the judges who would not abide by this edict to be excluded from the Church. The bishop recommended that the text of his decree be nailed to the doors of churches so that the community in the diocese could be informed accordingly¹²⁴. Dąbski's action did not, however, bring the expected results, which was confirmed by numerous witchcraft trials before the secular courts in the years that followed.

Another decree regarding the court proceeding during witchcraft trials was published in Polish on 26th September 1727 in Włocławek by Krzysztof Antoni Szembek (1720–1739), the local bishop. He had it distributed to all the parishes, where it was often read out from the pulpit so as to introduce its contents to every parishioner¹²⁵. This decree was not printed until 20 years later. It says, among others, "It is a terrible thing to hear! that every year women face groundless accusations of magic and witchcraft here and there. It is even worse! that imperfect judges, not only lacking their legal expertise, but also often illiterate, showing a disregard for the Church authority and the statutes of the Commonwealth, a contempt for decrees, Royal rescripts, let alone our ecclesiastical office (whose right is to see into such cases and judge them), on the basis of mere suspicion or slander, or of women's mutual tiffs and squabbles, or any other gossip,

¹²³ J. Tazbir, *Szlachta i teologowie. Studia z dziejów polskiej kontrreformacji (The Nobility and Theologians. Studies on the History of the Polish Counter-Reformation)*, Warszawa 1987, p. 161.

¹²⁴ J. Kaufmann, *Die Stellung der Kirche zu den Hexenprozessen im 17. Jahrhundert*, "Mitteilungen des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins" vol. 2, 1903, pp. 59–69.

¹²⁵ *Andere Catholische Verordnungen und Anmerkungen vom Hexen-Prozesse*, in: *Preußische Sammlung alleret bisher ungedruckten Urkunden, Nachrichten und Abhandlungen*, vol. 1, Danzig 1747, p. 584.

and calling the possessed (as we experience, God take pity), who are made up"¹²⁶.

Bishop Szembek, fearing that God might punish the whole Kingdom of Poland for such an illegal conduct towards the accused of witchcraft, decided to forbid everybody, but first of all judges, prosecutors, informants, "under threat of excommunication and other penalties: to steer clear of such trials, decrees, without the participation of our ecclesiastical authority"¹²⁷. He also warned the clergy of his diocese that if any of them, seeking the truth "should show any indolence *per dissimulationem*, or endorse the words of such people, showing that he believes in such tales, not having informed his ecclesiastical superior, or if he should show off to be able to recognize witches at first glance, he should be aware that not only his conscience would be guilty, but also would be rightly prosecuted by our court"¹²⁸. The truly possessed, however, will be aided, according to bishop Szembek, by the exorcisms usually practised in the Roman Catholic Church, which can be said by a priest if needed¹²⁹.

Acquittal

On 30th July 1671, the judges issued the verdict in the case of Marianna Wellerdings: as she was pregnant and pleaded not guilty, the court ordered her to take the following oath: "I, Marianna, swear to God and the Holy Trinity that I have never had anything in common with the devil, mixed with him, and I do not want anything to do with him or mix with him, but I want to keep up my first oath to God, that is, the holy baptism, until my last days, and I do not want to do any harm to anybody, either by myself or by anybody else, so help me God and all the Saints"¹³⁰. After making this vow, such was released home.

On its arrival in Smętówka, the Court of Nowe, began on 1st August 1701 the trial of Anna Jurkowa Malinowa, a local dweller accused of witchcraft, and there were four plaintiffs in the trial: the owner and the three peasants of this village: Jan Rochald (29 years old), Jurek Łoltyn (30 years old), and Maciej Kanis (around

¹²⁶ *Monumenta historica dioeceseos Wladislaviensis*, issue 5, Wladislaviae 1885, p. 16.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 349.

24 years old). Having been tortured, she did not plead guilty of doing any harm to the plaintiffs. She was tortured for the second time the next day. She did not plead guilty, just like on 3rd August, when she was tortured again¹³¹. The sentence was issued on 5th August 1701. The court adjudicated that, because the defendant had withstood the torture for three times and did not plead guilty of being a witch and doing any harm to the plaintiffs, the judges had no choice but to state publicly that Anna Jurkowa Malinowa “keeps pleading not guilty, so the Nowe Court of Justice, by the law and holy justice, not finding her guilty of death”, decided to release her¹³².

Although the court (1706) wanted to punish Marta Stępkowa for “such wicked actions”, but was unable to do so, for the defendant claimed to be pregnant. The court ordered her, however, to swear by the executioner’s sword that she would never take revenge on any members “of the castle’s or the town’s authority”, and the decision was taken to expel her from the town. She was also forbidden to turn up “closer to the town than a six mile radius”, and if she broke her present oath, she would be promptly burnt to death, which she promised to deliver¹³³.

Escapes from prison

Some women, fearing torture, decided to escape from the place of their imprisonment, although there were only few chances for their success, and even if a woman managed to escape, she was doomed to times of adversity and poverty. For this reason a larger number of women returned home sooner or later. In 1646, a decision to escape from prison was taken by Anna Koniarka, who was accused of witchcraft. She stood trial and was tortured. However, on one night “having broken her chain and the prison door, she escaped, which already confirmed her guilt”¹³⁴. The fugitive, however, returned to the town after a year, and was again brought to court by the town council. Then she was charged not only with her former “bad deeds”, but also with the escape. Tortured again, she pleaded guilty, which was confirmed by the witnesses. She was sentenced to the death penalty and “the sentence was about to be executed” when the judges changed

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

¹³² *Ibidem*, p. 50.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 1, p. 334.

their verdict and, "hoping for her improvement", spared her, but she was ordered to leave the town and the Nowe Starosty, or she would face the penalty. Koniarka was also made to take an oath that she would not appear either in the town or in the starosty, and she would not take revenge. She did not keep up her promise, however, and returned to the town a couple of years later. Moreover, she ventured to do harm to "people of different standing, both in the town and in its environs, damaging their health and property"¹³⁵, which was confirmed before the court by a few witnesses. The court had no choice but to, "following the common law, which demands that such perjurers be punished by fire"¹³⁶. On 1st July 1653 the sentence was executed and Anna Koniarka was burnt at the stake on the same day¹³⁷.

Marianna Kowalka of Plochocin was taken to prison after giving evidence, where she escaped from. The breakout, however, was unsuccessful, she was caught and already on 11th September 1709 brought to trial before the Court of Nowe in Płochocin¹³⁸.

Men as the victims of witchcraft trials

For many years, it was women who remained the focus of attention in research on witchcraft trials in the early modern Europe, as they formed the majority among those accused of witchcraft and dealings with the devil. And it was them, first of all, who perished at the stakes. Of course, men played a huge role in every witchcraft trial, being first of all judges, benchers, executioners, barristers, demonologists, confessors, prosecutors, witnesses, and also those in favour or against witch-hunts¹³⁹. As years went by, however, they also became victims of slander for witchcraft¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 335.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 130, pp. 81–82.

¹³⁹ E. Labouvie, *Männer im Hexenprozeß. Zur Sozialantropologie eines "männlichen" Verständnisses von Magie und Hexerei*, in: *Hexenverfolgung in der dörflichen Gesellschaft*, ed. by W. Schieder, Göttingen 1990, pp. 56–78.

¹⁴⁰ Among recent works on men as victims of witch-hunts and sorcerer-hunts: R. Schulte, *Hexenmeister: Männliche Opfer in der Hexenverfolgung. Realitäten und Rezeption*, in: *Realität und Mythos: Hexenverfolgung und Rezeptionsgeschichte*, ed. by K. Moeller, B. Schmidt, Hamburg 2003, pp. 203–224; J. Wijaczka, *Men Standing Trial for Witchcraft at the Łobzenica Court in the Second Half of the 17th Century*, "Acta Poloniae Historica" 2006, vol. 93, pp. 69–85.

It was much easier for men to defend themselves from witchcraft allegations, and their chances to survive such a trial were bigger. A much bigger number of women accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death for witchcraft in the Commonwealth already in the 17th century was explained by the fact that they were more defenseless¹⁴¹. Besides, if one examines popular magic more carefully, it becomes clear that it was divided. There was a preponderance of women in the area connected with births, deaths, love and breeding, as well as dealings with ghosts and daemons, and also the practices aiming at fortune telling. Men's magic, however, was much more often oriented to everyday practices, the protection of fields and crops to name but a few¹⁴². This led to the conclusion that the men's skills were considered to be more explicit and less mysterious than the women's. This seems to be the reason why there were fewer allegations against men.

Besides, in demonology and practice of witch-hunts men were not blamed to the same extent as women for sexual deviation. They allegedly entered the devil's camp not through sexual intercourse with him, but because of the loss of their faith¹⁴³. Unlike women, they were not reduced to their body and sexuality.

We can also encounter men accused of being sorcerers in trials carried out by the Court of Nowe. In 1690, Katarzyna Oleyniczanka, standing trial for witchcraft, denounced Maryna and Jakub, the Gałgans married couple. Jakub Gałgan was brought to trial on 25th October 1690. His voluntary hearing brought no results expected by the judges, so the defendant was tortured. During the torture, Gałgan confessed that he was in possession of a female devil named Marianna. He "received" her on his way from Nowe to the village of Fraça. It was soon after his sister was burnt at the stake as a witch. On her arrival the female devil immediately pawed him and later he "had sex with her". She wore a black dress, green overcoat and a sky blue corset. She was

¹⁴¹ J. Tazbir, *Procesy o czary (Witchcraft Trials)*, "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce" 1978, vol. 23, p. 169.

¹⁴² E. Labouvie, *Perspektivenwechsel. Magische Domänen von Frauen und Männern in Volksmagie und Hexeret aus der Sicht der Geschlechtergeschichte*, in: *Geschlecht, Magie und Hexenverfolgung*, ed. by I. Ahrendt-Schulte, D. R. Bauer, S. Lorenz, J. M. Schmidt, Bielefeld 2002, p. 46.

¹⁴³ R. Schulte, *Hexenmeister. Die Verfolgung von Männern im Rahmen der Hexenverfolgung von 1530–1730 im Alten Reich*, second edition, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 265.

always by his side, vowed to be his wife, and he had intercourse with her three times. He used to visit the bald mountain located behind the Nowe castle, and was accompanied there by other witches, namely the old Czajkowa and Wawrzyńcowa of Rybaki, whose husband “works for the carriage”. He played music for the witches on a little drill, and Grzywacz of Komorsko on a “little nail”. Grzywacz also used to be on the bald mountain near Świecie, which he once visited in a carriage drawn by four horses, and he gave Gałgan a drive. Grzywacz possessed his own female devil as well. Gałgan confessed that he, together with some witches, strangled one cow which belonged to the manor brewer, which they later ate on the bald mountain. He also drank mead from silver mugs. At the end of the interrogation he stated that on the bald mountain near Świecie there was a female peasant of Komorsko, who had her husband and lived behind the church¹⁴⁴. The judges, wishing to check the credibility of his testimony, ordered the executioner to “drag” him.

The second torture of Gałgan started the next day (26th October) at nine in the morning. During the torture he added that a peasant played music on a colter for the witches on the bald mountain, but he “did not know him for his eyes were blind-folded”. He confirmed that his female devil “accompanied him everywhere, and he could not get rid of her”. It was only when he put a “monstrance garland” on his head that the devil had no access to him. When he went to confession wearing this garland, the female devil did not access him, but he never confessed it to the priest that he kept in contact with her. He also listed the names of already mentioned women¹⁴⁵. On the same day in the afternoon, at four o'clock, he was tortured for the third time. He confirmed his previous testimony and called two other women, Jankowa and Maryna Czartkowa, witches¹⁴⁶.

No sentence is known from the trial of Jakub Gałgan, one can assume, however, that because all the defendants pleaded guilty of visiting the bald mountain and doing harm to other people, there could be the only sentence: the death penalty by burning at the stake.

Another man charged with witchcraft appeared before the Court of Nowe in 1714. This time it was a Szymon (Szymek) of

¹⁴⁴ AP Bydgoszcz, *AmN*, cat. N° 131, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 26—27.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

Gruczno who was reported as a sorcerer by the testimony of Regina Dorszewiczowa. He was arrested and taken to court. He asked not to be cast into water and confessed to being a sorcerer¹⁴⁷. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the developments.

In 1747 Elżbieta Pasturka gave evidence that the farmhand who served to Barbara Drąszkowa and used to visit a bald mountain, where he once wanted to play the dulcimer, but Drąszkowa did not let him do it saying that if he played, Pasturka would give it away to us "for she is not equal to us"¹⁴⁸. The preserved records of proceedings do not indicate if he stood trial for witchcraft. Elżbieta Pasturka, tortured by the executioner, confessed that she had been to the bald mountain near Dzierżążno only once, and Drąszkowa's brother, Łukasz, who serves in Pelplin, played the dulcimer there. Having been tortured again, she added that Łukasz had also wanted to play in Drąszkowa's home, but she refused that offer¹⁴⁹. He is not known to have stood trial for witchcraft.

A few more men, who played music for the dancing witches, were mentioned in the testimony given by the women on trial by the Court of Nowe. None of them, as it seems, was taken to court as a sorcerer. In 1747 Katarzyna Owczarka confessed that she had seen the son of Herowy of Bukowiec on the bald mountain near Bukowiec behind Skórcz, who played dance music and had "two ladies" of Gogolewo¹⁵⁰.

During the same trial, Barbara Drąszkowa, listing the persons engaged in witchcraft, mentioned a few men: Łabędź of Nowa Cerkiew, the peasant who used to play on the bald mountain on a wicker basket, Adrian and Swarc, peasants, and a Nacel. In turn, Wach played on a colter in her house. Also Michał Abrant was a sorcerer, because Kowalka had taught his mother, as well as Drąszkowa, witchcraft. She added that Abrant had beaten her because "I did not run away". She fled as she wanted to go to Częstochowa to "dismiss devilry from her"¹⁵¹. Nothing is known whether any of those slandered men faced trial.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, cat. N° 130, p. 107.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

Of the total number of dozen or so men whose names appeared in women's testimony (most frequently mentioned as musicians playing dance music), only two are known to have stood trial as sorcerers, namely Jakub Gałgan in 1690 and Szymon of Gruczno in 1714. No sentences are known in their cases, but they both pleaded guilty of being sorcerers, thus one can assume that they both perished at the stake. The others, as it seems, were done no harm.

Conclusions

During 27 known trials carried out by the Court of Benchers in Nowe on the Vistula, the total number of 38 people were on trial, including 36 women and only two men. In the cases of women the court passed 17 sentences to death by burning at the stake, two women were sentenced to exile, and the other two were acquitted. The court sentence is not known in 15 cases, but it is very likely that most of those women perished at the stake. It is not known what sentences were passed in the case of the two men charged with witchcraft.

Of the number of 27 known trials, eight of them took place in the 17th century, while the other 19 were carried out in the first half of the 18th century. Of these 19 trials as many as 18 were held between 1701 and 1719, i.e. when The Northern War (1700–1721) was taking place in the territory of the Royal Prussia. In 1703, during The Great Northern War, the Swedes garrisoned the whole Royal Prussia, and the Swedish king himself, Charles XII, quartered for a long time in the village of Topolno near Świecie. War contributions were levied systematically until the enemy left the territory, but there is no evidence of robberies or murders. However, the contributions ruined the budget of the Royal Prussia¹⁵², including Nowe and its environs.

During The Northern War, it was also the plague, which started in Nowe on 6th September 1708, that raged. At the beginning it took a death toll of 60 victims, while in 1710 no fewer than 500 people were killed¹⁵³. As Andrzej Pryłowski examined, between 1570 and 1772 there was no such a thing as a long-lasting economic slump in Nowe on the Vistula, and one

¹⁵² H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

can only speak of the economic breakdown during the Great Northern War¹⁵⁴.

Education in Nowe was poorly developed, and in consequence of it the level of social awareness among the local community was low. The school is known to have existed in town from at least 1552¹⁵⁵. The teacher, who was simultaneously the organist, cantor and bell-ringer, received his wages from the town's budget. In 1687 this school did not work, therefore the parish priest was obliged to employ a cantor who would also teach children¹⁵⁶. In 1702 it was an organist paid by the Church, who also became the teacher. In 1710 the school building was not suitable for teaching, and the children were not taught as almost all of them had fallen prey to the plague, raging in town those days. Probably, the school was not open until 1746, when the inspector, who visited the parish, ordered the old building to be pulled down and a new one to be built. At that time Jerzy Zimser, who was also a sacristan, was teaching children¹⁵⁷. In 1766 the school had only twelve pupils from the town and its suburbs¹⁵⁸.

It is not a coincidence that the increase in the number of witchcraft trials in Nowe and its environs took place during the time of a political and economic crisis. The growth of the sense of insecurity, uncertain future, losses of health and property caused a defense reaction which manifested itself through, among others, the increase of the belief in the devil and his witches, which were made responsible for everyday misfortunes.

(Translated by Robert Bubczyk)

¹⁵⁴ A. Pryłowski, *Gospodarka Nowego n. Wisłą (The Economy of Nowe on the Vistula)*, p. 173.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁶ J. Milewski, A. Mykaj, *Nowe nad Wisłą 1266—1966 (Nowe on the Vistula 1266—1966)*, Gdańsk 1966, p. 35.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁸ H. Maercker, *Eine polnische Starostei*, p. 133.