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WITCH TRIALS AT THE ASSIZE COURT IN KOWALEWO (POMORSKIE)  
IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup>–18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

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Kowalewo Pomorskie (Schönsee) as a town was probably first founded in 1275, but as early as 1286 it was completely destroyed during the invasion of the Tatars.<sup>1</sup> The new charter privilege (or a confirmation of the previous one) was issued in the same year of 1286. The town was surrounded by a wall with four towers and a moat. After 1466, it became part of the Chełmno voivodship in Royal Prussia, incorporated into Poland. It was then the seat of the Crown demesnes/district office. From 1611, the Chełmno Voivode and the manorial court were located in Kowalewo.<sup>2</sup> This fact, however, did not propel the development of the town. Neither did the presence of the Chełmno dietine<sup>3</sup> which often assembled there since the fourth decade of the seventeenth century. Still, this latter fact greatly increased the number of gentry coming to town. Nevertheless, Kowalewo did not prosper as could have been expected. This fact was undoubtedly caused by natural disasters and war crises. In 1629, among other

<sup>1</sup> No modern monograph has been written about Kowalewo Pomorskie yet despite the fact that the number of preserved archival sources of this town seems quite sufficient. In the mid-1980s there appeared the collective work concerning the history of Kowalewo, but it must be stated that it fails to answer many questions about the history of the town in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Probably the reason for this is the fact that the author of the chapter devoted to the history of the town until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was an engineer architect. That is why the author focused mainly on the history of the castle and the spatial development of the town, see: Bogumił ROGĄLSKI, *Dzieje miasta do XVIII wieku oraz rozwój przestrzenny*, [in:] *Dzieje Kowalewa Pomorskiego. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. Jerzy DANIELEWICZ, Bydgoszcz 1986, pp. 14–111.

<sup>2</sup> Zbigniew NAWORSKI, *Szlachecki wymiar sprawiedliwości w Prusach Królewskich (1454–1772). Organizacja i funkcjonowanie*, Toruń 2004, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, *Sejmik generalny Prus Królewskich 1569–1772. Organizacja i funkcjonowanie na tle systemu zgromadzeń stanowych prowincji*, Toruń 1992, p. 62.

events, Kowalewo was plundered by Swedish troops<sup>4</sup>, who at the time affected the whole Commonwealth.

The long-lasting economic crisis that began in the mid-seventeenth century and concerned the whole of the country, as well as subsequent wars and the natural disasters of the first half of the eighteenth century, caused Kowalewo to decline. Consequently, in 1773 there were only thirty-four townhouses and thirteen houses inhabited by bailiffs amid as few as two hundred forty-two residents. Among thirty-four craftsmen, thirteen were shoemakers.<sup>5</sup> Agriculture was the main source of income for the population throughout the early modern period; the town in question had twenty acres of low quality land.

In Kowalewo, as in many other towns of Royal Prussia between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century, the inhabitants held a commonplace belief in the force of the devil, as well as in the fact that in his wicked deeds he was helped by female witches and, much less often, by male witches. The threat on their part increased especially in times of economic crises and natural calamities, when daily misery intensified not only for the people, but also for the cattle or crops in the fields. At such times, there were also more accusations against women and men who, in the opinion of others, were associates of the devil responsible for these misfortunes.

The accused were addressed by the jury court in Kowalewo, which included a village headman, not more than six jury members (assessors or alderman), and a scribe who was also a city council clerk.<sup>6</sup> A court judge and the mayor were selected during one session (on 14 February), and both their terms lasted a year. The court held jurisdiction in both criminal and common law cases. The town exercised capital punishment and had a prison in the tower.<sup>7</sup> Court sessions took place in the town hall, and after the city burned down in the mid-seventeenth century, in the home of the village headman or one of the jury members. The rulings of the jury could be appealed at the council or the village headman of Kowalewo who, at the same time, acted as the voivode of Chełmno.<sup>8</sup> The Kowalewo court judged not only local witch trials, but also, and perhaps above all, in out-of-town assize meetings, in nearby villages, when

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<sup>4</sup> Hans MAERCKER, *Geschichte der ländlichen Ortschaften und der drei kleineren Städte des Kreises Thorn in seiner früheren Ausdehnung vor der Abzweigung des Kreises Briesen i. J. 1888*, Danzig 1899–1900, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163; Zbigniew NAWORSKI, *Rola Kowalewa Pomorskiego jako ośrodka politycznego, administracyjnego i sądowego w XVII i XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Studia historycznoprawne. Tom poświęcony pamięci profesora Kazimierza Orzechowskiego*, ed. Alfred KONIECZNY, Piotr JUREK (Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, Prawo, CCCXI), Wrocław 2010, pp. 178–179.

<sup>7</sup> Z. NAWORSKI, *Rola Kowalewa Pomorskiego*, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

summoned by noble owners to judge their subjects accused of dealing with harmful spells.

We do not know whether such accusations and witchcraft trials in Kowalewo or its immediate vicinity took place already in the sixteenth century. The first known yet very scant information comes from the middle of the seventeenth century. In the spring of 1645 there was an escalation in a dispute between two married couples. Anna and Józef Głodowicz, citizens of Kowalewo, sued Anna and Bartosz Prystał for “damage of reputation and sorcery”.<sup>9</sup> We do not know under which circumstances the allegations were made or what kind of damage was done by the use of witchcraft. The case was taken on by the jury on 26 April 1645. On the same day, the court also considered the accusation of burgher and councillor Krzysztof Flakowic, who accused Wojciech Maciakowicz of witchcraft. The court adjourned the case to collect more relevant information.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know how the two accusations ended, or whether the verdicts came out, since no information about them appeared in the court rolls.

We know much more about a witchcraft trial which primarily concerned the Dutch settlers living in the county of Grudziądz. The Dutch settled in several villages belonging to this county, and the village headman of Pokrzywno gave them to use the land of grange farms in Grabowiec, Nicwałd, Węgrowo and Gać.<sup>11</sup> As it turned out, the belief in witches was widespread among the settlers, which was evidenced by the course of the trial, regarding the Olenders of the village of Gać.<sup>12</sup>

The case began with a meeting that took place before St. Martin (11 November) 1647. Several Dutchmen living in the village of Gać, namely Christian Uchntei, Hans Bifut, Jachym Wiewer, Jachym Feiner, and the village headman

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<sup>9</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu [State Archive in Toruń] (further cit. APT), Akta miasta Kowalewa 1584–1943 [Records of the town Kowalewo 1584–1943] (further cit. AmK), sygn. 5: Protocole des Kowalewoër [Schönseeër] Schöppen-Gericht 1671 bis 1680, fol. 82r.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., fol. 83r–83v.

<sup>11</sup> Karola CIESIELSKA, *Osadnictwo „olęderskie” w Prusach Królewskich i na Kujawach w świetle kontraktów osadniczych*, *Studia i Materiały do dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza*, vol. 4: 1958, no. 2, p. 223; *Opis królewszczyzn w województwach chełmińskim i malborskim w roku 1664*, ed. Józef PACZKOWSKI, Alfons MAŃKOWSKI, Toruń 1938, pp. 24–25.

<sup>12</sup> About the village see: Xaver FROELICH, *Geschichte des Graudenzer Kreises*, Bd. 1: *Die allmähliche Gestaltung der Grundverhältnisse und Besitzrechte, die Entstehung, Bevölkerung, Verwaltung und Zusammengehörigkeit der Kreis-Ortschaften, die Entwicklung des städtischen und ländlichen Kommunalwesens, der Adelsrechte, des Steuer-, Militair-, Kirchen- und Schulwesens und der Justizverfassung. Aus vorhandenen Urkunden und archivalischen Nachrichten*, Graudenz 1888, p. 76. In 1619 the village was leased for forty years to a burgher from Toruń Christian Lindenauer and his descendants. In 1664 the Olenders in this village had 9 voloks of land, but not all of them were inhabited, see: *Opis królewszczyzn w województwach chełmińskim i malborskim w roku 1664*, p. 25.

Marcin Molnohur (Molnahr) met in Grudziądz, at the place of a gingerbread maker, with a few other Dutchmen from a village called Michal, located on the other side of the Vistula.<sup>13</sup> The Dutchmen from Michal told the Dutchmen from the village of Gać that they had a witch among them and that if they did not do anything to her, they would be the same as her. They told them to come to Michal for a written testimony that the woman in question was an associate of the devil.

The witch was supposed to be the wife of Hans Marunas, Anna (during the trial also referred to as Marunka, Mrs Marun or Maruszka). She came from Michal and when she lived there was claimed to have “given the devil to a witch who was burned”.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the case would have ended with the rumours at the gingerbread maker’s if Christian Uchntei had not had his cow “spellbound” a week later with an ailment of what he called “broken legs”.<sup>15</sup> He decided that it happened because, as he later testified, during the meeting in Grudziądz he was the one who most urged everyone to go to Michal for the attestation that Marunka was a witch. After what he had heard from the Dutch of Michal, and knowing that Marunka had already been pronounced a witch years ago in a witch trial at the Bobrowniki court<sup>16</sup>, he sent his wife to Mrs Maruna, to either take away the spell, or pay for the cow. The accused woman “did not deny nor sued for libel”.<sup>17</sup> Uchntei considered this behaviour an admission of guilt and started spreading rumours in the village that Marunka put a spell on his cow and that she was a witch. Upon learning this, the Marunas sent their neighbors, Stein and Simon Cichosz (each separately), to find out if he actually considered Marunka a witch, and still accused her of having spell-bound his cow. Uchntei replied that he was convinced of this, and “if not her, then another one”.<sup>18</sup>

Hans Maruna, having heard his neighbours’ account from the visit to the accuser, was to have replied that he had to take care of his pigs first, and so he

<sup>13</sup> One of the villages in the Świecie country inhabited by Dutch settlers before 1565, see: *Lustracja województw pomorskiego 1565*, ed. Stanisław Hoszowski, Gdańsk 1961, pp. 169, 170, 172, 182; K. CIESIELSKA, op.cit., p. 223.

<sup>14</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6: Verhandlungen vor dem Schöppen Gericht Kowalewo, 1685–1689, fol. 9v.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> It is hard to say whether it refers to the city court or the castle court (starost’s court) functioning in Bobrowniki upon the Vistula River, which issued verdicts in criminal matters, see: Karl TOMM, *Bobrowniki an der Weichsel und seine Vergangenheit. Ein Beitrag zur Heimatkund*, Deutsche Blätter in Polen, Jg. 6: 1929, H. 11, p. 528. Bobrowniki was also the seat of the city court for Dobrzyń Land, see: Michał PAWLIKOWSKI, *Sądownictwo grodzkie w przedrozbiorowej Rzeczypospolitej*, Strzałków 2012, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 9v.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., fol. 8v.

would wait with any action in defense of his wife until the pigs were slaughtered. Then came the fair in Grudziądz<sup>19</sup> and again the matter got postponed. One day, at the end of the fair, the farmers gathered at the village headman's house in Gać which led to a confrontation between Christian Uchntei and Hans Marun. Uchntei, who was sitting at the table, was approached by Maruna who said: "I wish that you prove it to me if, as you keep saying, my wife is a witch!" Uchntei replied that he was in a possession of an attestation from the court in Bobrowniki, which read that a woman who had been tried for witchcraft had testified that Marunka was also a witch. When Maruna demanded to see the attestation, Uchitei did not produce it, claiming that he did not have it on him. However, he replied the following: "For what your wife did to me, and the anguish, you are to repay". Everyone present heard it. Maruna was also interviewed during that meeting at the village head's on whether he knew anything about his wife's sorcery. He swore he did not. He admitted, however, that a peasant who worked for him claimed she was a witch but did not specify what and how she could charm.<sup>20</sup>

We do not know who eventually decided to call for the court of Kowalewo to come to the village. In any case, on 24 January 1648, the court began its proceedings at the home of Marcin Molnahr, the village headman of Gać. Present there was also the head of Nicwałd Ludwik Wilsom.<sup>21</sup> Christian Uchntei appeared before the court and formally accused Anna Marunka of being a witch, "which had long been heard of her".<sup>22</sup> The accusation was reinforced by the fact that a woman from the village of Święte<sup>23</sup>, whose name we do not know, and who had been trialed as a witch by the "Bobrowniki Council", then convicted and burnt (dates unknown) as a witch, mentioned Anna Marunka during her testimony. Gać belonged to the Pokrzywno county<sup>24</sup> and so the case of the earlier accusation against Anna was probably documented there. Therefore,

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<sup>19</sup> In Grudziądz there took place three fairs a year: the first on a Monday after the second Sunday of the Lent – the so called "Dry Sunday"; the second – on a Monday after the Day of St. Bartholomew; and the third – on a Monday after the day of St. Catherine, see: Barbara GROCHULSKA, *Jarmarki w handlu polskim w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku*, *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 64: 1973, no. 4, p. 813. Here it probably refers to the fair after the Day of St. Catherine, which in 1647 fell on 2 December.

<sup>20</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 9r.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8r. Ludwik Wilsom (Wilom) was the head of the village still in 1664; he owned five voloks of inherited land, see: *Opis królewsczyzn w województwach chełmińskim i malborskim w roku 1664*, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 8r.

<sup>23</sup> The village of Święte, now the gmina of Koneck, the county of Aleksandrów Kujawski.

<sup>24</sup> The starosty in Pokrzywno (Engelsburg) was set up in 1454; X. FROELICH, *op.cit.*, Bd. 1, p. 74. See: *Lustracja województw Prus Królewskich*, vol. 2: *Województwo chełmińskie*, part 2: *Ziemia chełmińska*, ed. Jerzy DYGAŁA, Toruń 2009, pp. 49–50.

the vice village head ordered Uchntei to obtain the attestation confirming the allegation from the Bobowniki council.

After hearing the accuser, the court summoned the implicated woman and a “voluntary” hearing was commenced. Anna Marunka stated that she did not know black magic, and only knew how to pray, and swore to God as her witness. She also did not use any herbs for washing the cows, nor for other purposes, for example so that no one could do anything evil to her. She swore she did not even know anything about herbs. She had never done anything malicious to anyone, nor did anyone ever teach her evil things.<sup>25</sup>

The court adjourned the case until the next day, 25 January. The first witness, Hans Bifut, testified that he was not sure of much except the fact that people had long regarded Maruszka a witch. Another witness, Jachym Feiner, confirmed to the court that during the meeting in Grudziądz he had heard from a Dutchman of Michal that Maruszka was a witch “because she had sent the demon to a sorceress who was burned”.<sup>26</sup> After hearing the witnesses, the Kowalewo court was presented with the documentation of the court of Bobrowniki, i.e. the testimony of the alleged sorceress burnt in Święte, who testified that she had learned magic from Maruna.<sup>27</sup>

As Maruna still refused to admit to what she was being accused of, the court handed her to the executioner Hanus from Grudziądz. This happened despite her husband’s pleas not to torture her on the account of her having little children. He requested that instead she be put to the ordeal by cold water, and through that trial purged of the suspicion.<sup>28</sup> The court, however, did not agree to trial by that ordeal.

Maruna’s position deteriorated due to the fact that on 27 January, Daniel Rybak from Borowno<sup>29</sup> appeared in the village of Gać and testified that nine years before, a man in his village had gone out with Maruszka, and afterwards had fallen ill, and had blamed her for it. He did not suffer a long illness and died quickly, but on his “death bed he begged” his neighbours not to forsake his accusation and see to it that she got punished.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 9r.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., fol. 9v.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., fol. 10r.

<sup>28</sup> About tests of cold water in witch trials in the Rzeczpospolita in the early modern period see: Jacek WIJACZKA, *Próba zimnej wody (plawienie) w oskarżeniach i procesach o czary w państwie polsko-litewskim w XVI–XVIII wieku*, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, vol. 60: 2016, pp. 73–110.

<sup>29</sup> X. FROELICH, op.cit., Bd. 1, pp. 48–49, wrote that Borowno (Borowo) in the district of Pokrzywno was set up in the first half of the 18th century, but as it seems now, the village had been set up much earlier. However, the name Borowno (Borówno?) was a popular name and it might have referred to another village holding this name.

<sup>30</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 9v, 10v.

While Maruna did not admit anything during the first torture, before the second torment (27 January) she confirmed that she had used herbs and given her cow a “dubious herb” with salt. Her husband again appealed for his wife to “be trialed by a different ordeal” i.e. that she be thrust into water and not tortured. The court of Kowalewo stated that although the ordeal by water was forbidden by the “castle superiors”, i.e. the village magistrate, they did allow the husband to get such a permission from the authorities. Yet the vice-village headman Marcin Umięcki, who came to the village and took part in the trial, did not agree to the water ordeal. He urged the accused to voluntarily confess her alleged deeds and admit to being a witch. As she did not want to do that, she was tortured for the second time, during which no confession of her guilt nor admittance of witchery was obtained.

On the next day, 28 January 1648, Maruna again asked the vice village headman the permission for the ordeal by water, and this time he managed to get it. We do not know what prompted Umięcki to change his mind. In any case, the accused was led to the pond by the mill and “dropped into the water” by the executioner. “In the presence of many people the tied-up woman floated, and that provided proof she surely was a witch”.<sup>31</sup>

After the ordeal by water, she was taken for the third course of torture. She must have been in despair since the result of the water ordeal had been unfavorable to her, and “without opposing she confessed everything”.<sup>32</sup> She told the court that four years before, a gypsy woman had come to her and offered to sell a root that would bring luck in everything.<sup>33</sup> At that time Maruna suffered losses in livestock and in the field, so she readily accepted the Gypsy’s offer. She paid for it in meat, and stuck the root in the fence. She added that to that day she did not know what the root was called, and that it certainly did not bring her any luck, because her horses “perished”.

The tortured woman finally admitted, just as the judges wanted, that the root was the devil named Christopher. The demon was a good-for-nothing. When, for example, the crop was threshed after the harvest, there was not more of it than usual, “barely fifteen bushels”. The demon harmed no one else but her. And when one day she shouted at him, he drove her heifer into the water and it drowned. On the other hand, when one day she said: “may this

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., fol. 11r.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., fol. 11v.

<sup>33</sup> It was probably believed to be the root of mandrake, which was attributed magic features as its root resembled a shape of a human figure. Mandrake was highly desirable and it was to bring good luck. In Poland the plant does not exist; it is often identified with deadly nightshade, see: Margarethe RUFF, *Zauberpraktiken als Lebenshilfe. Magie im Alltag vom Mittelalter bis heute*, Frankfurt–New York 2003, pp. 271–281; Barbara and Adam PODGÓRSCY, *Wielka księga demonów polskich. Leksykon i antologia demonologii ludowej*, Katowice 2005, pp. 288–289.

whore who gave it to me be struck by lightning”, he caused her cow to drown the day after. When interrogated by the judges, she also confessed to having had sexual contact with Christopher the demon. It took place in the shed, once a year at noon on St. John’s Day. The devil always told her to wash well beforehand. Also he demanded that she renounce God, but she did not. He was not with her when she was being put to ordeal by water.<sup>34</sup>

She also described to the interrogators how the demon had appeared to her on the market in Grudziądz, taking the form of a short peasant, and that at first he danced with fellow demons while some Jew played on a plough blade to that dance. She also added that she and other witches met on the market in Grudziądz in the afternoon on St. Philip and St. James’ Day (1 May).<sup>35</sup>

Naturally, she was asked about the other witches, so she set up four women, including Kiersztonka, who had a devil named Salmon, and the village headman’s wife Krzysztofowa from Lubień.<sup>36</sup> She also admitted that there lived a witch in the village of Michal who was a seamstress. Her demon’s name was Hans, and he did nothing, but “bears money”.

The village court of Kowalewo issued a judgment on 30 January 1648. Anna Marunka was convicted for her pact with the devil, the divorce of God, as well as casting harmful spells, and sentenced to death by burning at the stake. Also, her husband was to cover half of the court costs.<sup>37</sup> We do not know when the sentence was carried out and whether the women mentioned by Marunka were ever put to trial.

Another well-known trial of witchcraft led by the Kowalewo village court, took place in May 1678 in the village Elzanowo, which belonged to Jan Elzanowski.<sup>38</sup> The accused was a villager, Truda Ząbkowa (Zębkowa, Zęmbkowa),<sup>39</sup> who had for years been suspected of sorcery, as well as of acts of harmful magic. In 1660 she was said to have committed some evil deeds to which Piotr Sche-

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<sup>34</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 11v.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. About witch trials in Grudziądz see: Jacek WIJACZKA, *Procesy o czary przed sądem miejskim w Grudziądzu w XVI–XVII wieku*, *Rocznik Grudziądzki*, vol. 18: 2009, pp. 87–101.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., fol. 11v. The rest of the surnames were undecipherable. Two villages Wielki Lubień and Mały Lubień were inhabited by Dutch settlers, see: K. CIESIELSKA, op.cit., p. 223; Peter J. KLASSEN, *Menonici w Polsce i Prusach w XVI–XIX w.*, trans. Edyta PAWLIKOWSKA, Toruń 2016, pp. 123–124.

<sup>37</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 6, fol. 11v. Arresting anyone was connected with the necessity to feed and watch this person, which required money. According to the land rights, the costs connected with the detention of somebody were covered by the plaintiff, see: Marian MIKOŁAJCZYK, *Na drodze do powstania procesu mieszanego. Zmiany w polskim procesie karnym w latach 1764–1794*, Katowice 1991, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> Jan Elzanowski was the owner of village still in 1668, See: H. MAERCKER, op.cit., p. 232.

<sup>39</sup> APT, Akta luźne z Akt miasta Torunia, sygn. 8911: procesy czarownic 1678–1686, p. 9.

nich (Shenik) fell victim. He was leasing Elzanowo at the time.<sup>40</sup> After a dozen or so years, he told the court: “During my tenure this woman cast spells over a man who I designated to serve as my scribe. He fell ill as a result of her evil spells, and it all happened in 1660. The second time, an unspeakable damage was done to my sheepfold, and for that reason I come to the conclusion she is to blame. That is in view of the evidence showed in the case of the writer. He was spellbound by her. The third time, as if it had not been enough that I lost five hundred sheep, on a clear day, out of nowhere, tremendous winds overturned the fold. God must have guarded me since she did not kill me too. While Ząbkowa was still not satisfied with the great damage she had caused, yet was already willing to move away [...] the garden and young cabbage trampled with her legs *funditus*, which all the people in the village are aware of.”<sup>41</sup>

We do not know why in 1660 Schenich did not decide to accuse and sue Ząbkowa. Perhaps he decided that Ząbkowa leaving the village would end the great misery. Ząbkowa, after the death of her husband (around 1663), moved to Golub where she lived for the next fourteen years. During that time she made a living treating people and animals, not only in Golub, but also in the vicinity. We do not know which circumstances led Schenich to finally press charges, or why it was only after several years that he decided to go to court. Perhaps it was due to the fact that, according to testimony, the owner of Elzanowo, Jan Elzanowski, himself suffered a loss in yields and livestock. This may have encouraged Schenich to bring charges in the hope of Elzanowski's support in the case. We do not know exactly when or where Ząbkowa was arrested; it may have happened in Golub. In any case, she was imprisoned in Kowalewo, but she escaped. Where and when she was captured again, we do not know either. Finally, the trial took place in Elzanowo.<sup>42</sup>

The main plaintiff was Piotr Schenich, who, apart from the above mentioned charges against Ząbkowa, also told the court of his unmarried daughter who “for quite a long time” was unable to walk. Accused of casting the evil spell of the illness was a woman called Agnieszka. She had been executed for

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<sup>40</sup> Between Schenich and Jan Elzanowski there were some family ties since Elzanowski was a son of Regina Konstancja Szenik, see: *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego S. J. powiększony dodatkami późniejszych autorów, rękopismów, dowodów urzędowych*, vol. 4, ed. Jan N. BOBROWICZ, Lipsk 1859, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> APT, Akta luźne z Akt miasta Torunia [Loose files from the Files of the City of Toruń], sygn. 8911, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> According to Krystyna Bukowska (Krystyna BUKOWSKA, *Proces w prawie miejskim*, [in:] Zdzisław KACZMARCZYK, Bogusław LEŚNODORSKI, *Historia państwa i prawa Polski*, vol. 2: *Od połowy XV wieku do r. 1795*, ed. Juliusz BARDACH, Warszawa 1966 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 414), it was the site where the crime was committed or where the criminal was caught that determined the choice of the court.

that, yet we do not know when, where, or by which court she was tried. During her tortures, Agnieszka mentioned Ząbkowa and later again confirmed it “with her clean conscience” to the court. The court, on the other hand, repeatedly instructed her “not to take [Ząbkowa] on her soul”.<sup>43</sup>

Next to testify against Ząbkowa was her stepson, Walenty Ząbek, a peasant from Elzanowo. “With his clean conscience”, he testified: “My father often complained about this woman, both in illness and when he was going from this world. He said that she was the cause of his death, and that she had knocked him out of the world by putting powder in his borscht, so thick that when it swell [...] one could neither walk nor lie”.<sup>44</sup> The father had died, probably around 1663.

Dobrogost Miłosławski, “a guest in Elzanowo at that time” also appeared in court. As noted in the protocol, he was “healthy of body and mind”. He testified that he had heard “with his own ears” how the late Ząbek said to his wife: “You’re a bad, unworthy woman, only to be burnt, you do not deserve to walk on this world, you’re a great witch, you have already bewitched me; and she laughed at this; a good master would have you burnt, you are worthy of it”.<sup>45</sup> He also testified that after the death of her husband, the woman walked to his grave, took a “mare’s skeleton head off the fence and jangled with it hitting the fence”.

After hearing the testimony of the above-mentioned witnesses, the court proceeded to question the accused woman exhorting her not to undergo torture and voluntarily confess everything. “To which she briskly responded: I not only have nothing to confess, but I sit in this prison innocently, because I cannot do anything”.<sup>46</sup> Asked for the second time and after that, the third time to voluntarily admit the charges, she claimed that she could not do anything, but say a prayer. She acknowledged, however, that she was capable of curing bone pain, as well as “other human defects”. When asked if she did it with the help of a demon, she denied. Obviously, the court wanted to know who taught her all that, and she replied that a woman from Ciechocin. But she did not remember when: “I have been here, in Golub, for fourteen years or so, and [people] ran to me in sickness, and no one reproached me for it”.<sup>47</sup> She was asked if she had been to confession. She said she had and that the priest had praised her for helping people. She did not admit to teaching sorcery to the already executed Agnieszka. They also wanted to know why she had escaped from Kowalewo, where she had been due to appear before the court. She replied that

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<sup>43</sup> APT, Akta luźne z Akt miasta Torunia, sygn. 8911, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

she had been afraid of beatings. Since she did not want to voluntarily admit to anything, the court decided to hand her over to an executioner. We do not know which city the executioner came from, but he could not have been from Kowalewo, because the town was too poor to have an executioner on duty.

The tortures began at 4 pm and when the accused woman “barely felt the pain” she began to testify.<sup>48</sup> She declared that she was taught magic by Jadwiga Kierkowa from Elzanowo, who told her: “If anyone does evil things, do as I tell you, either sprinkle [them] with frog or let [them] drink the powder I am giving you”. It was that powder that she had sprinkled on Mr Schenich’s writer because he had beaten her. But “what the disease was, I do not know, only that his body was yellow”. She added she had sprinkled him on Thursday evening, and the powder was green. The court asked whether Shenik’s daughter had also been sprinkled with that powder. She replied that Kierkowa had done it when the young lady fell in a hole while they were processing linen over the fire. Kierkowa, helping Miss Schenik out of the hole, did something to her, and since then she complained about her legs, but Ząbkowa did not know what Kierkowa had done to Schenik. She further testified that it was not she who caused the sheep to die, but Woźnicowa, who thus took revenge for the fact that her writer had beaten her.

The tortured woman confessed in pain that she had her own devil named Rokitka, who “gave her [hit her – J.W.] in the temples so that she did not hear for four and a half years, or less, she thought, and so that she does not tell about other witches, and so that she does what he says”.<sup>49</sup> She also confessed to poisoning her husband because Rokitka told her, saying that from now on, “I will sleep with you and associate with you”. She came into possession of the devil in such a way, “that Kierowa gave him to me in a sausage, in the house called Dwojaki”. He was dressed “the Polish style”, in black and had one nostril.<sup>50</sup> She married him, but she did not renounce God and the Virgin Mary, despite the fact that he insisted on that; he even hit her twice in the face to punish her for not wanting to renounce God. She had become a witch about fifteen years before. The demon “had relations with her” three times a week; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, had a cold member. In spite of having intercourse with her, he did not much care for her: “when he flew in, he spat on me”. He was poor like a serf; he had only red shoes. She used to come to Łysa Góra, mostly on Thursdays, but also on St. John’s Day (24 June) and at Easter. Łysa Góra is located in the village of Owieczkowo near Ostrowite<sup>51</sup>; there’s a pit there in the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> It refers to the village Ostrowite situated between Kowalewo Pomorskie and Golub-Dobrzyń.

middle that was formed by the witches dancing. To the dances, Jan Kisiałka, who lives in Skępsk<sup>52</sup>, and whose wife was burned as a witch, played on a rod. He himself was also wanted to be put on the stake, but the owner of the village where he lived did not allow it. This Kisiałka with the witches was once met in the field by the demon who took him to Łysa Góra. But he does not know sorcery and did not harm anyone.

The judges inquired whether the accused “had married” someone with the devil. She admitted that she had married Witkowa and Agnieszka with the devil. Witkowa’s demon was called Jan Trzcinka, and it was the same one Kierkowa had given to the accused. Ząbkowa gave a demon to her daughter, but did not know what he was called.

In the testimony appears the issue of the host and its use in magical practices,<sup>53</sup> probably asked about by the judges. Due to the torture, Ząbkowa confessed to the theft of the host during the indulgence day in Obory.<sup>54</sup> She was told to do it by Niedzielina, who lived in Golub, and promised Ząbkowa to give a pot of butter in return for the stolen host. The promise was kept, and she needed the host for her cows to give milk. She gave it to her cows for consumption in whey. The host also served, as was commonly believed, to defend against harm done by other witches, and for this purpose Niedzielina had needed it.

Siekierkowa of Golub was also supposed to have stolen the host; she twice received the Blessed Sacrament during the indulgence in Chełmża. One she received; the other she hid in a chest, because the demon, called Philip, made her do this. He told her that owing to having a host she would have an “anus” [“a higher demand”] for beer, i.e. it would be easier to sell it.

Ząbkowa, as I mentioned, confessed to going to Łysa Góra. Asked by the judges, she mentioned other women she had seen there. One of them was Mszańska from Golub, who had a devil named Grabski. This demon had only one nostril, as did the other demons. On Łysa Góra, Mszańska was surrounded by “three hundred serfs, in black robes, various shoes, i.e. red, yellow, black, with rich feathers in their caps, dressed up with sabers, blades, javelins and other weapons, while she sat in a chair”.<sup>55</sup> Ząbkowa suggested that

<sup>52</sup> Skępsk, a village benging to the starosty of Golub.

<sup>53</sup> The belief in the magic power of the hostia existed in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century in the whole of Rzeczpospolita. In Lesser Poland witches were to hide the hostia in the ground to avoid rains as the rain disturbed them flying, see: Jacek WIJACZKA, *Procesy o czary w regionie świętokrzyskim w XVII–XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Z przeszłości regionu świętokrzyskiego od XVI do XX wieku*, ed. idem, Kielce 2003, p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Obory – at present a village in the country of Golub-Dobrzyń, the gmina of Zbójno. In 1605 the monastery of the Carmelites was built and the famous miraculous figure of Our Lady of Sorrows was brought.

<sup>55</sup> APT, Akta luźne z Akt miasta Torunia, sygn. 8911, p. 14.

Mszańska played an important role during these meetings. To this Mszańska, Wrotna gave the head of a thief, which the demons had taken from the gallows. Ząbkowa was not there when the devils threw the hanged man's head on the ground, but the demon told her that parts of the hanged man's body helped to make beer and spirits sell well.

During the first torture, the judges also asked Ząbkowa whether she had confessed in church about her bad deeds. She replied that in 1677 she had confessed before a priest "at that time coming from Rome", who "thundered and scolded" her, and imposed penance, and ordered her to cast out the devil. The priest also threatened her with hell where she would remain for eternity unless she stopped her evil deeds.<sup>56</sup>

Taken to the second torture the same day, she confirmed her earlier testimony about "sprinkling" the writer, poisoning her husband and being on Łysa Góra. She also confirmed stealing the host in Obory during the indulgence day, and burying hail and dew in a field owned by the owner of the village, Elzanowski. The field lay in the direction of the village of Łąka Wielka; present were also Witkowa and Kierkowa. They did this in order to bring ruin to the crops. She was also present at the burial of spells under Elzanowski's barn's threshold; at night, and in the hidden pot was some cattle hide and "other things" she could not remember.<sup>57</sup>

She mentioned, again, the two Golub women, Wrotna and Mszańska. Then she began naming other witches known to her. In Łąka Wielka, Graczka was a witch, and her sister. There were two witches in Pruska Łąka, one was Agnieszka, Jan Ogrodnik's wife, whose husband knew nothing. The second was Jadwiga, Marcin's wife. Both were witches, but she did not know whether they were still alive. In Szewa – Woźnicowa was a witch, in Pruska Łąka someone named Elszka, who had been dealt with by the court already. In Turzno there were also the old Owczarka and Karczmarka. In Kowalewo, the witch Mielczarka lived near the castle. In Gałczewo there was Basia. In Trutowo was a witch, "people know her well", who caused a horse bought by Mikołaj, the son of Mr. Rosiński (Resiński?), to die as soon as it was paid for. She added, changing her earlier testimony that Jan Kisiałka was not only a sorcerer, but that he had ruined his own and other people's crops.<sup>58</sup> Ząbkowa accused sixteen people altogether, fifteen women and one man.

On 20 May 1678, the verdict fell in Elzanowo. The court of Kowalewo's headman concluded that after hearing allegations and witnesses' testimony, the accused, Truda Ząbkowa did not deserve any other sentence but the death

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

sentence. It could not be otherwise, for “that flying woman had already wasted more hope in the damned demon, who has taken her soul, than she had in the God who had redeemed her by the bloody stages of the cross, and who awaited her with salvation. So to God’s greater disgrace, his most holy body stole for a pot of butter, as if this had not been enough, [...] that she had cast off the God of the Proverbs for such a foolish contract, but she first renounced him, and daily led to the death of her fellow villagers”.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, “because of her own malicious demonic actions and having intercourse with the devil, the decree is to be punished by fire, as the law says, and led to the place prepared for her, and executed by master Michał. Two men designated by the court and the clerk will be present”.<sup>60</sup>

Before the execution, as was the custom, the judges, but also the clerics and laymen, reminded her that “in order not to fail her soul in this, having already defamed the women standing before her, namely the notorious Mszańska, the second Siekierkowa, the third Niedzielina, all citizens of Golub, that she does not damage their health, and revoke the accusation”. Yet Ząbkowa still obstinately claimed that they were also witches. However, having already been “placed on the soil where she received the punishment”, she decided to clear the three women from Golub she had accused.

Just before the sentence was executed, Ząbkowa was confronted by Anna Woźnicowa, who, standing face-to-face with the woman at the stake, said: “I do not know you, but Ząbkowa replied: I know you and I’ve seen you at Łysa Góra”.<sup>61</sup> Ząbkowa also did not renounce her allegations against Wrotna and Jan Kisiałka.

We do not know whether all the people accused by Ząbkowa were brought before the court. Anna Woźnicowa was certainly tried, and captured and imprisoned in the tower of Kowalewo. Her dabbling in black magic had already been mentioned before, by a woman we know little about, during trials also unknown to us. We do not know exactly when she was arrested. According to the court rolls, the trial began on 16 May 1678, so before the trial in Elzanowo. On that day, Anna Woźnicowa stood before the court of the village councillor in Kowalewo.<sup>62</sup> She was interviewed by Andrzej Siekierski and Jakub Targeiowski (Targowski), who were appointed by the Kowalewski headman, along with a court registrar. The sworn interlocutors tried to persuade her to admit to being a witch, but the woman did no such thing, she just said: “I can do nothing wrong, nor did anyone teach me, but those women, by the decree of the righteousness in the world, summoned me out of spite; yet I have also not

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., “Actum in civitate Regae Kovalenienis in residentia famati scultetu”.

been cross with them”.<sup>63</sup> Judge Balcer Szopowicz was added to the jury. Again the woman was questioned, but she still denied everything. So it was decided to hand her over to the torturer, Michał. She was tortured in the tower, with a jury present who had been appointed by the headman. The first torture began still on the 16th, at 5 pm. She did not admit to anything, repeating over and over: “I cannot do anything wrong, just a prayer, nor did I teach anyone anything; if I [...] were to speak out under torture, before these women, it will be crying during torture while saying a prayer”.<sup>64</sup>

On 17 May, during the second torture, while being blamed, she testified nothing. So it was decided: “in order for the law to be enacted by the court of the headman of Kowalewo, a third torture is employed against the accused on 18 May at 5 pm before the members of the court”, i.e. Andrzej Siekierski, Balcer Szopowicz and Jakub Targowski, and the town scribe. The chosen location for the “Way of the Cross” was between the village of Bielsk and a mill called Gapa. Also present was the headman of Kowalewo, Jan Wiczowski. Why she was being taken to that place, unfortunately we do not find out from the records. The accused once again did not confess to being a witch, and said that she could not cast spells and had never been at Łysa Góra. She asked for mercy.<sup>65</sup> In the town records there is nothing more about this process. Perhaps, because she had suffered torture and did not admit to being a witch, she was released, according to the law at the time.

While in the second half of the seventeenth century, witch trials had begun to wane in Western European countries, they were still a very common occurrence in Poland.<sup>66</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in 1701, the Kowalewo court was summoned by its owner to the village of Ryńsk, 10 km away, to try an accused witch who lived there, Barbara Stachowa. Jan Robak, a peasant from the village, accused her of “setting” the devil on his daughter Marianna. According to his testimony before the court on 24 May, 1701, his daughter „had pulled Stachowa’s hair in church, possessed by this demon; the second time she attacked both Stachowa and her younger daughter; the third time she attacked Stachowa’s daughter Magdalena having left the church”.<sup>67</sup> Ro-

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> Jacek WIJACZKA, *Procesy o czary w Polsce w dobie Oświecenia. Zarys problematyki*, Klio, no. 7: 2005, pp. 17–62; idem, *Postępowanie sądowe w sprawie o czary w Toruniu w 1712 roku*, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, vol. 51: 2007, pp. 199–212; idem, *Polowanie na czarownice i czarowników w Nowem nad Wisłą i najbliższej okolicy miasta w XVII i pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku*, *Czaszy Nowożytnie*, vol. 22: 2009, pp. 119–144.

<sup>67</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 8: Prothocollon Actorum Civilium Scabinalium Kovaleviensium 1694–1715, p. 3.

bak accused then not only Stachowa, but also her daughters; as he claimed, he did it without any hatred or bad will.

Along with the court, a torturer must have travelled to Ryńsk, because still on the first day of the trial, Stachowa was handed to him. During the first torture she admitted to nothing, but during the second one said she had given the devil to Marianna Robak in a cake.<sup>68</sup> The devil came to her by himself; no one had sent him. And he had appeared at the time when she wanted to learn sorcery to succeed in breeding poultry. This had happened two years earlier. Later she was at Łysa Góra, and along with her came Jadwiga Czernicka and Karczmarka. Stachowa was tortured for a third time, and she re-established Czernicka, which she believed only harmed herself, probably because she was angry with her husband, but she now dismissed Karczmarka.

The summoned Jadwiga Czernicka was immediately handed over to the executioner. Like Stachowa, she only began to testify during the second torture. She confessed to hosting the devil whom she had summoned because Kasper, her "husband, beat her and slept around".<sup>69</sup> She was tortured a third time, during which she claimed that she was at Łysa Góra, in front of a gate (but she did not say which one), and that there was an unknown man playing to a dog's tail to the dancing. The queen of Łysa Góra was Skowronkowa, wearing golden horns there. Czernicka also confessed to doing evil deeds, namely, by the orders of Stachowa and Skowronkowa, she caused the cows of Cholewa to die. Both these women gave her some powder and ordered them to bring that to the barn where these cows were. She also made a cow that belonged to Jankowa's family die. She had been a witch for five years and her devil was named Rokitka.<sup>70</sup>

It seems that the other women were summoned to appear before the court. I cannot be certain because the extant source is not a protocol of the whole process, but only a single card with single snippets of information written by several people. According to one of them, Skowronkowa, who was the supposed queen of Łysa Góra, had implicated the old Miller,<sup>71</sup> and so she must have been subjected to torture. We know nothing more about the further course of this trial in Ryńsk in May 1701. We may very well assume, though, that the majority of the questioned and tortured women were sentenced to burn to death at the stake.

Accusations of witchcraft continued in Kowalewo throughout the eighteenth century, but the trials did no longer end with death sentences. On

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

10 October 1733, the court of law studied the conflict between Józef Drużyński and the spouses of Andrzej and Łucja Wels,<sup>72</sup> who accused Drużyński's mother, Zofia, of being a witch. On the square, Drużyński used expletives calling her a whore. Łucja Wels, on the other hand, probably also on the square, called out to Zofia Drużyńska: "You, old woman, you soiled me and my whole house".<sup>73</sup> The court found, however, that there was no evidence that Zofia Drużyńska was a witch. That is why Wels was sentenced to a penalty of a seven-fold fine and a week's stay in the tower because of baseless witchcraft accusations made in anger. For calling Wels a whore, Drużyński had to pay two fines and two weeks locked in the tower.<sup>74</sup>

In October 1740, Marianna Żywiołkowa appeared in court, the widow of Kowalewo's councillor Kazimierz Żywiołek. Accompanied by her son-in-law Józef Gostyński, also a burgher of Kowalewo. The widow made a formal complaint to the burgher Franciszek Gaworecki, who, in the presence of many people, accused her of "being a formal witch, to the point of being detrimental to his fortune and health".<sup>75</sup> She added that the defendant had repeatedly threatened her with severe beatings. The woman's son-in-law also complained about Gaworecki, who, he alleged, had attacked him and beat him in his own backyard. He also showed the effects of this beating which included a broken forehead.<sup>76</sup> Summoned before the court, Franciszek Gaworecki claimed that he had never accused Żywiołkowa of witchcraft. It was Żywiołkowa, he claimed, who came many times to his house, "cursing, threatening great misfortunes, and lifting her dress, presenting her body, ordering him to kiss it".<sup>77</sup> The court adjourned the case by deciding to call witnesses and set a further hearing date for 18 November. The witnesses were heard, and their sworn testimony was accepted, but no verdict was issued, as the opposing parties in this conflict stated that they would bury the issue and intended to live in harmony.<sup>78</sup>

In the 1740s there must still have been many accusations of witchcraft in Kowalewo and its vicinity, since in 1749, the great Crown Chancellor Jan Ma-

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<sup>72</sup> Zbigniew NAWORSKI, *Sąd ławniczy miasta Kowalewa w XVIII w.*, [in:] *Regnare, gubernare, administrare. Z dziejów administracji, sądownictwa i nauki prawa*, ed. Stanisław GRODZISKI, Andrzej DZIADZIO, Kraków 2012, p. 37, stated that in the 1730s the marriage of the Wels was quarrelsome and aggressive in comparison to other inhabitants.

<sup>73</sup> APT, AmK, sygn. 10: Verhandlungen vor dem Schöppen-Gericht Kowalewo 1730–1733, fol. 44v.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., sygn. 11: Verhandlungen vor dem Schöppen-Gericht Kowalewo 1738–1741, fol. 237r.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., fol. 237v.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., fol. 243.

łachowski (1698–1762) rescinded Kowalewo's right to judge a woman accused of sorcery, instead directing her to Bydgoszcz, showing more confidence in the education of the court judges there. At the same time, however, he decided that the court in Bydgoszcz should only conduct an investigation and then send the files to the clerical court, which would determine whether the matter concerned witchcraft at all.<sup>79</sup> It must be added that in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, some of the Polish bishops tried to empower their dioceses to include witchcraft trials, in ecclesiastical, not secular courts.<sup>80</sup> Most of these attempts failed.

It would be interesting to determine the number of sorcery cases carried out by the Kowalewo court, and the number of people convicted and sentenced during these trials, but it is impossible because of the present state of the remaining sources. The victims of the witch trials led by the Kowalewo headman were exclusively women, women who have been accused of harming people and animals' health and destroying crops on the fields. The information preserved clearly shows that in the seventeenth century in Kowalewo and its vicinity, the alleged witches were accused not only of doing evil deeds with the help of spells, but they were also accused of abandoning the Roman Catholic Church, entering into a pact with the devil, having physical relations with him, and going to a hill known as Łysa Góra. Thus, we have all the classic elements of the concept of witchcraft. These trials are part of the Europe-wide hunt for sorcerers and witches. In all the Kowalewo cases known to us in detail, torture was used to extract confessions from the accused. Those who, under torture, not only admitted to committing the offenses but also to a pact with the devil, were burnt at the stake.

It is also clear from the course of the witch trials conducted by the local Kowalewo court that the defendants did not use legal counsel, although theoretically they had the right to do so.<sup>81</sup> They gave up this right to defense in court because this involved significant costs, and as we have seen in the Kowalewo trials, the accused were primarily poor women who could not afford such expenses. Besides, as Marian Mikołajczyk stated: "In general, the position of the accused in court [at a witch trial – J.W.] was relatively weak, as the court

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<sup>79</sup> Józef RAFACZ, *Sprawy karne w sądach miejskich w epoce nowożytnej*, Kwartalnik Historyczny, vol. 47: 1933, no. 3, p. 568.

<sup>80</sup> Jacek WIJACZKA, *Kościół wobec czarów w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku (na tle europejskim)*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 125–167.

<sup>81</sup> Marian MIKOŁAJCZYK, *Prawo oskarżonego do obrony w praktyce sądów miejskich w Polsce XVI–XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Ustrój i prawo w przeszłości dalszej i bliższej. Studia historyczne o prawie dedykowane Prof. Stanisławowi Grodzickiemu w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę pracy naukowej*, ed. Jerzy MAŁEC, Waław URUSZCZAK, Kraków 2001, pp. 397–411.

and prosecutor dominated the proceedings”.<sup>82</sup> The examples of the Kowalewo court proceedings confirm this.

(*trans. by Agnieszka Chabros*)

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

WITCH TRIALS AT THE ASSIZE COURT IN KOWALEWO (POMORSKIE)  
 IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup>–18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

Summary

**Key words:** Early Modern period, Chełmno land [Culm land], criminal law, witches, devil, witchcraft

The article discusses witch trials in the court of the village head [*soltys*] in Kowalewo (Pomorskie) in the Early Modern period. It is the first scientific study referring to the subject matter. The description of witch trials in the court in Kowalewo was possible thanks to the preserved books of the town council, which included the information concerning trials, accusations or sometimes only sentences. The course of the trials indicates that in Kowalewo and the vicinities it was strongly believed that witches serving the devil existed. The belief increased in the times of economic and social crises, which were quite abundant in Poland in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

HEXENPROZESSE VOR DEM SCHULZENGERICHT  
 IN SCHÖNSEE IN POMMERELLEN IM 17. UND 18. JAHRHUNDERT

Zusammenfassung

**Schlüsselwörter:** frühe Neuzeit, Kulmer Land, Strafrecht, Hexen, Teufel, Hexerei

Der Artikel schildert den Verlauf von Hexenprozessen, die in der frühen Neuzeit vor dem Schulzengericht in Schönsee (Kowalewo) in Pommerellen stattfanden.

Es handelt sich um die erste Arbeit zu diesem Thema. Die Beschreibung der Hexenprozesse vor dem Gericht in Schönsee wurde durch die Auswertung der erhaltenen Schöffenbücher möglich, in denen sich Informationen zum Verlauf der Prozesse erhalten haben, manchmal auch nur die Anklagen oder die Urteile. Der Verlauf der Prozesse zeigt, dass in Schönsee und auch in seiner nächsten Umgebung der Glaube an die Existenz von Hexen, die im Dienst des Teufels standen, unter den Einwohnern sehr stark war. Er wuchs jedoch in Zeiten von wirtschaftlichen oder sozialen Krisen stark an, an denen es in der Adelsrepublik des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts nicht fehlte.



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