

The society of a small Polish town in the early modern period and the witch trials. The case of Kleczew

The main goal of this project is to study the world view typical for the early modern peasants, residents and petty nobility within the context of a phenomenon common to the early modern period, namely the witch trials. The project will provide an in-depth analysis of the inhabitants of Kleczew and its surroundings; between 1624 and 1738 this small town in *koniński* district was a site of at least 46 documented trials against witches. The local people were typical representatives of rural religiosity which shaped their vision of the world.

The main source to be analysed in this project is the crime register of Kleczew – an extremely valuable manuscript stored in the library of the Poznań Society for the Advancement of Arts and Sciences. It is a nationally unique example of a penal book used to record almost exclusively witch trials as well as a few cases of other crimes which violated social norms (infanticide, particularly cruel murders, sacrilege and zoophilia). Since penal books consist of very specific information about people from a given region, the source material will be extended to include municipal books of Kleczew, Kazimierz Biskupi and Słupca, juridical books of Konin, books of consistories in Gniezno and Poznań and books of church visitations.

The project has been divided into two stages. The first stage is to make a query in court register of Kleczew, municipal books of Kleczew, Kazimierz and Słupca, juridical books of Konin, the books of consistory in Gniezno and Poznań, as well as the books of church visitation. The second stage is to analyse the subject indicated in the project's title – examination of power relations and relations between nature and culture which shaped the world view of the contemporary people.