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THE ECHOES OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD EVENTS ON THE PAGES OF THE CHRONICLE OF ZOFIA GROTHÓWNA IN YEARS 1703-1741

Kronika Zofii Grothówny [The Chronicle of Sophia Grothówna]¹ is an invaluable work not only in the terms of learning about the history of the convent in Imbramowice but also about the history of the local community and certain elements of the political history. The Chronicle was written in years 1703-1741 and published in print in 2011. For 38 years the abbess and later other sisters acting on her orders recorded the important events occurring not only in the walls of the cloister but also the events which influenced the convent. Although the convent of the Norbertine sisters was (and still is) a cloistered convent it was unable to avoid facing constant incursions of armed forces or unusual, adverse weather conditions. Thus, apart from the records of the life of the convent, the Chronicle, by necessity, includes the information pertaining to the events occurring outside the cloister².

During the wartime turmoil, religious orders had several options available: certain orders opted to remain in place fearing for the assets of the monasteries or due to having nowhere else to go, other orders escaped to safer locations and others still sent individual nuns to family homes. Precious items were hidden in nooks and crannies of convent buildings or handed over for safekeeping to better fortified convents. One thing was certain – not a single monastery or convent was exempted from war contributions which were executed not only under the pain of deprivation of the monastery assets but also the death of monks and nuns gathered therein. Marching armies demanded war contributions from all congregations but when the Swedish soldiers stationed in Warsaw heard that in one of the cloisters a group of nuns lived who had taken the vow of silence and who never left buildings of their convent they made an exception and did not collect contribution from them as they deemed their vow worthy of admiration³.

The convent of Norbertine sisters in Imbramowice also had to cope with the incursions of enemy forces demanding war contributions – initially with the Swedes, next with Saxons,

¹ The abbess in years 1703-1741. Recording of the chronicle began during the period of her governance.

² Two other articles have been written on the basis of the information contained within the Chronicle, both by the same author: M. Mierzejewska, *Życie zakonne i edukacja w klasztorze panien norbertanek w Imbramowicach w świetle Kroniki Zofii Grothówny w latach 1703-1741. Zarys problematyki*, „Saeculum Christianum”, 21/2014, pp. 169-178; M. Mierzejewska, *Choroba i śmierć za murami klasztoru panien norbertanek w Imbramowicach w świetle Kroniki Zofii Grothówny z lat 1703-1741*, „Saeculum Christianum”, 22/2015, pp. 155-165.

³ For the information on the conditions in convents during the Northern War see: K. Targosz, *Piorem zakonnicy: Kronikarki w Polsce XVII w. o swoich zakonach i swoich czasach*, Kraków 2002, pp. 247-258.

Cossacks and, ultimately, with Russians. The Norbertine nuns had to struggle against numerous difficulties, protected the peasants inhabiting the Imbramowice estates and due to their impoverished stores they had to deal with the demands of the military themselves. Therefore first they had to struggle against the Swedish forces, later against the Saxon forces and, to top it all, in September 1707 Cossacks attempted to raid the convent⁴. All those events were meticulously recorded by the previously mentioned abbess Grothówna in her chronicle.

Since the first year of her governance abbess Grothówna had to struggle against incursions of numerous armed forces and hiberna, the obligation to provide accommodation and sustenance to the military imposed by the state⁵. As the pages of the Chronicle indicate, between 1703 and 1716 the convent in Imbramowice was burdened with various contributions to the military forces which were to receive food for men and horses. Each time when the military stationed in the estates of the convent we can read the records concerning losses and damage peasants suffered in regard to land, housing and livestock. Peasants had to provide soldiers with sustenance, accommodation, a place for grazing for horses and money. They were frequently beaten and abused. To prevent the loss of assets, the cattle was spirited away to forests⁶ and grain was hidden in nooks and crannies of barns or in the convent itself. On the one hand the country was pillaged by the Swedes and, on the other, it was decided during the Sejm to double the war contributions for the army of the Republic of Poland. Owing to the efforts of Fr. Dominik Lochman⁷, who in 1703 held a conversation with Hieronim Lubomirski⁸, the Grand Hetman of the Crown (the commander-in-chief), the army was not stationed for winter in the Imbramowice estates⁹. In the following years the estates of the Norbertine sisters served as an outpost for the armies of, alternately, the Swedes, Saxons

⁴ Z. Grothówna, *Kronika klasztorna siostr norbertanek w Imbramowicach 1703-1741*, Kielce 2011, p. 29.

⁵ Hiberna (Latin) – to hibernate, to winterise; initially the obligation to provide accommodation and sustenance to military units stationed for winter in royal lands and church estates; in the years 1649-1652 it was transformed into a fixed tax paid by these estates, it remained for the disposition of a hetman. It was abolished by the Sejm in 1775. At that time an additional charge was imposed in the amount of the ½ of the roof tax, S. Russocki, *Hiberna*, in: *Encyklopedia Historii Gospodarczej Polski do 1945 roku*, edited by A. Mączak, Warszawa 1981, pp. 251-252.

⁶ However, it was still frequently discovered and confiscated, for instance in June 1705, see: Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁷ Fr. Dominik Lochman – born in approx. 1664, departed on the 25th of October 1738 (or probably in 1472); it is possible he received education at the Jagiellonian University where he was conferred upon doctorate in both the canon and secular law. In 1695 he was the curator of the collegiate of Opatów and the dean of Sandomierz. Since 1732 he had served as the abbot of Hebdów and was the parish priest of the St. Peter Church in Sandomierz. Together with Bishop K.F. Szaniawski he funded the convent of the Norbertine sisters in Busk, he was also a benefactor of the Norbertine sisters in Imbramowice. He formulated the legislation concerning the organisation of the spirit and was co-founder of the Brotherhood of St. Anna (1717) and the Brotherhood of St. Barbara (1729) in Sandomierz. In 1727, on behalf of Bishop Szaniawski, he conducted an inspection of the archdeaconry of Kraków, M. Górniak, *Lochman Dominik (1664-1738)*, EK, editor E. Ziemiann, R. Sawa, A. Szostek, vol. 10, Lublin 2004, col. 1293.

⁸ Hieronim Augustyn Lubomirski, of the Drużyna coat of arms, born in 1647, departed in 1706, Royal Bannerman of the Crown, Grand Marshal of the Crown, Grand Treasurer of the Crown and, from 1702, Field Hetman – soon after promoted to the rank of the Grand Hetman of the Crown (the commander-in-chief). The participant of numerous campaigns. He initially was the supporter of the French, who was later, in 1702, bribed with the office of hetman and switched over to the side of the House of Wettin. In 1704 he changed sides and joined Leszczyński but soon after he reconciled with the king and was decorated with the Order of the White Eagle, Brodowski, *Żywoty Hetmanów Królestwa Polskiego i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego z materiałów po Samuelu Brodowskim w Podhorcach znalezionych*, published by Żegota Pauli, Lwów 1850, pp. 83-85.

⁹ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 4-5.

and the Republic of Poland, which were given money, horses, wood, legumin¹⁰, oats, hay, food, beer and vodka. Frequently soldiers encroached upon the territory of the convent itself. The abbess was so desperate due to the lack of money that she offered to hand over the last pieces of silverware instead but the soldiers declined¹¹.

Grothówna did not hesitate to indirectly protest and parley with the military. This usually was Fr. Dominik Lochman who spoke on her behalf first but at times she asked other influential individuals for the intervention as was the case in January 1706 when the commandant of the forces stationed in Imbramowice received letters on behalf of Zofia Grothówna from: Bishop Kazimierz Łubieński and, twice, from Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, the wife of the Grand Hetman of the Crown. The convent did not avoid pillage but instead of taking away 1000 Polish zlotys the army (the Polish army this time) *was contented with 300 zlotys*¹². In March that year Fr. Lochman was able to obtain the exemption from all contributions for the Imbramowice estates from King Augustus II the Strong (1697-1733) but it was all for naught¹³. However, two years later, in 1708, the commissar of the convent in Imbramowice once again used his influence to obtain the exemption from military service for the residents of Imbramowice¹⁴.

The difficult situation the nuns found themselves in after the fire deteriorated even further when several days later Russians encroached upon the Imbramowice estates (!). No army hesitated to continue to collect contribution and therefore in January 1711 the Archbishop of Gniezno, Stanisław Szembek (1706-1721)¹⁵ and the Bishop of Kraków, Łubieński (1711-1719)¹⁶, sent letters to the Grand Hetman of the Crown, Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski¹⁷. Their

¹⁰ Legumin – a sweet farinaceous dish, A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Warszawa 1989, p. 293.

¹¹ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 10.

¹² Ibidem, pp. 17.

¹³ At that time a civil war raged on in the territory of the Republic of Poland – being granted such privilege by the king could not prevent enemies of the king, the supporters of Stanisław Leszczyński, from requisitioning money or other provisions.

¹⁴ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 33.

¹⁵ Stanisław Szembek, of the Szembek coat-of-arms – born in 1650, departed in 1721, the Bishop of Kujawy in years 1700-1706, the Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of Poland; in return for endorsing the Elector of Saxony he received a substantial amount of incumbencies and after the abdication of the Elector of Saxony in 1706 he became the de-facto ruler of the country. After the reign was taken over by the House of Wettin he became the opponent of the court. He was also deeply involved in pastoral ministry, which was a rare characteristic for a priest at that time. He worked for the development of churches and monasteries and during the time of plague he brought help to the people, see: P. Nitecki, *Biskupi kościoła w Polsce 965-1999*, Warszawa 2000, pp. col. 431-432.

¹⁶ Kazimierz Łubieński – born in 1652, departed in 1719, he graduated from the Jagiellonian University where he was conferred upon doctorate in theology. An auxiliary bishop of Kraków from 1700, served as the general administrator during vacancy. In 1705 he became the Bishop of Chełm and in 1710 the Bishop of Kraków. He renovated churches and during the Northern War he gained recognition as a good administrator and an almsman, he supported the convent in Imbramowice greatly, K. Panuś, *Łubieński Kazimierz*, in: *EK*, vol. 11, editor E. Gigilewicz, Lublin 2016, col. 575-576.

¹⁷ Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski, of the Leliwa coat of arms – born in 1666, departed in 1726, the Starost of Lwów and other cities, the Field Hetman of the Crown from 1702 and the Grand Hetman of the Crown from 1706. The participant of numerous campaigns. He initially was the enemy of the House of Wettin in the Republic of Poland who later turned into a supporter of Wettins after the events of 1698, although he also sympathised with France; since 1710 the Chatelaine of Kraków, one of the most important individuals in the country. He was decorated with the Order of the White Eagle, see: A. Link-Lenczowski, *Sieniawski Adam Mikołaj*, vol. 37, PSB, Warszawa -Kraków 1996, pp. 105-1996.

interference yielded the desired results. The convent was exempted from the obligation to provide the accommodation and sustenance for winter and from hiberna¹⁸. The history repeated itself several years later, in 1715; at that time Fr. Lochman obtained for the convent the exemption from *providing shelter, transportation and provisions* but this order only applied to the forces of the Republic of Poland and other armies continued to “help themselves to” the goods and the property of Imbramowice¹⁹.

Since 1711 the annotations concerning the military had become less frequent on the pages of the chronicle. Following the suggestion of Fr. Lochman, towards the end of that year the abbess decided to take *into service five dragoons who were to protect the subjects from the marching army units; these dragoons received food, a measure of beer and a quarter of vodka per man daily*²⁰. The soldiers, few as they were, were supposed to protect the convent and the local residents from the repeating acts of pillage and rape. Obviously by themselves they were unable to prevent the actions of a whole company but being armed they disposed greater strength than the nuns from Imbramowice. However, completely avoiding raids and paying the contribution was impossible, as was the case in December 1712 when the Polish army stopped in Imbramowice and requested accommodation for the coming winter. Fr. Andrzej Węgrzynowicz²¹ was able to parley with the soldiers and in return for 3000 zlotys Stanisław Rzewuski, the Field Hetman of the Crown leading the army, agreed to leave the convent estates but he left six soldiers behind for winter with the order to collect the money. Those circumstances were beneficial for the convent because in January next year, when a different 60-men strong unit stopped in Imbramowice, *they had to leave after barely an hour of rest because the soldiers stationed in the convent, protecting their own sustenance, did not allow them to spread to the surrounding villages*²². The situation repeated itself in February 1713. As Grothówna noted a unit, this time 80-men strong, attacked at night but the soldiers staying at the convent, surprised as they were, protected residents from the attack, pillaging so fiercely that the attackers were forced to retreat on the following day, in the morning²³. Ultimately the soldiers left the estates of Imbramowice in May 1713.²⁴

During the wartime turmoil, imposters pretending to be soldiers came at times to the Imbramowice estates. The abbess notes in her *Chronicle* that an individual named Jakięt came to Zagórowa claiming to be the commandant of his men. Peasants were illiterate so even if Jakięt had shown them orders they would have been unable to see through the deception. He started collecting military tolls from the village residents and demanded food for himself

¹⁸ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 47.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 81.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 53.

²¹ Fr. Andrzej Węgrzynowicz – a holder of the doctoral degree in canon and secular law, the Canon of the Kunice prebendary, the Curator of Sandomierz, the Canon of Kraków and Kielce, departed in 1727, L. Łętowski, *Katalog biskupów, prałatów i kanoników krakowskich*, vol. 4, Kraków 1853, p. 213.

²² Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 63.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Stanisław Mateusz Rzewuski, of the Krzywda coat of arms – born in 1662 and departed in 1728, a supporter of the house of Wettin, the Starost of Chełm, the Field Hetman of the Crown and, from 1726 the Grand Hetman of the Crown; the participant of numerous campaigns incl. the campaign against Tatars, in 1703 he had been suppressing Cossack uprising, after 1717 he moved to the opposition camp due to restrictions imposed on the hetman prerogatives, A. Link-Lenczowski, *Rzewuski Stanisław Mateusz*, vol. 34, PSB, Wrocław-Warszawa -Kraków 1992, pp. 152-158

and his companions. Having learnt about the incident the abbess sent an administrator and a priest to Zagórowa to *examine the "ordynans" [the orders]*²⁵. The demands of the deputy of starost enraged Jakięt who was close to opening fire on the newly arrived. It was surmised that Jakięt and his men were common crooks and peasants convened and chased the fraudulent unit from the village²⁶.

Due to constant pillaging, the population became impoverished and was unable to pay military taxes and satisfy the demands of the units stationed in the vicinity of Imbramowice, therefore abbess Grothówna frequently paid off part or, at times, the entirety of the taxes imposed on the peasants. Fr. Dominik Lohman also contributed financial resources to support the residents of Imbramowice. In 1715 the circumstances became so dire that *people from several households fled because they had nothing to give to them [the military]*²⁷.

The contributions and the armed forces marching through the estates of Imbramowice were recorded in the Chronicle once again in 1734 when a fight broke out between the supporters of two parties, Stanisław Leszczyński and Augustus III of Poland, after the death of King Augustus II²⁸. Once again the convent had to struggle against difficulties because *Polish units constantly marched through [the estates], stopped for grazing and camping, robbed people of whatever they could, confiscated wagons, ordered people to ferry them around and some wagons were lost*²⁹. When the Elector of Saxony was to be crowned in February 1735 nine hundred soldiers stopped "to rest" in Tarnawa only³⁰. After conclusion of the celebrations the problems reached their zenith when two thousand soldiers (!) stopped in Imbramowice. One of the last annotations in the Chronicle is the information concerning a battle between the army of the Republic of Poland (supporters of Leszczyński) and the Saxons recorded under the 3rd of March 1736 date. The armies fought the battle in the area near Gołcza and Rzeżuśń. The Poles, possessing numerical advantage, won and *collected spoils and stripped corpses to the bare flesh*³¹.

Apart from the difficulties pertaining to the wartime turmoil, in 1707 the epidemic of the plague broke out in the Republic of Poland. Kraków was the focal point of the first outbreak. The plague attacked on the 25th of August by claiming the lives of a family of three. The plague sparked enormous panic and even the Russians allied with Augustus II quickly retreated after capturing Kraków. Numerous restrictions were put in place but the plague spread across the entire Republic of Poland. In Warsaw dealings with Kraków were prohibited but, nevertheless, it was impossible to avoid infection and the plague gradually spread to other regions of the Republic of Poland. Gallows were erected in the streets of the

²⁵ Ordynans – a written order

²⁶ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 67.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 77.

²⁸ After the death of King Augustus II the Convocational Sejm declared that foreign candidates to the throne would be excluded from the election. Initially Russia and Austria attempted to force through the candidacy of the Portuguese infant prince but after the victory of the Stanisławów faction, they began to campaign for Augustus III as he was the only candidate who could receive domestic support. The war for Polish succession, lasting from 1733 to 1735, began. Despite the fact that the war was fought mainly in Western Europe numerous armies marched through the territory of the Republic of Poland and numerous battles were fought there, for more information see: E. Rostworowski, *Historia powszechna XVIII wiek*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 487-491.

²⁹ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 237.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem, pp. 240-241.

capital to discourage the prospective looters attempting to steal the property of the people who had died from the plague. Numerous towns and villages were deserted; the mortality rate was very high. In Kraków the epidemic subsided in April 1709 and schools were opened once again³².

The nuns in cloistered convents were frequently divided into two groups: some sisters dutifully remained at their stations to continue to celebrate liturgy whereas other migrated in small groups to other congregations. The nuns remaining in the convent broke off contacts with the outside world and delivered food and medications, most frequently garlic and vodka spiced with sulphur, to the needful by lowering items on a length of rope from a window. At times even the isolation was not sufficient as sisters could contract the illness from a confessor. The remaining sisters hid in forests or other isolated places. Inhaling the smoke from herbs burned in a bowl or an incense burner was considered an effective countermeasure; the priests who feared of becoming infected were also hearing confessions in clouds of smoke³³.

In the years when the Chronicle was recorded there were no cases of the plague which affected the general public in the convent estates, there were only individual instances of people becoming afflicted with the illness. Grothówna recorded the first annotation concerning the plague on the 13th of October 1707 when the parents of Miss Jadwiga Majerówna were not able to come to her vestition due to *plague and pestilence*³⁴ in Kraków. In January next year the abbess did not want to let the military into Małaszycze due to the suspicion that the soldiers could be infected with the plague because they had left Kraków not long ago. She sent a delegacy promising provisions in return for abstaining from entering the village in order to solve the problem. However, it was all for naught and the soldiers entered the village. Concurrently there were no annotations concerning transmission of the disease thus most probably none of the soldiers was infected³⁵.

Three years later the nuns from Imbramowice came into contact with an infected individual, the servant of Fr. Lochman, the man named Kraszowski. When sisters realised he was ill they ordered him to move out to the countryside. There he died after the lapse of three days but after examination of the bodies no external signs or traces of infection were discovered. He stayed at the house of a family from Imbramowice. The people he was staying with were forbidden from leaving their house for two weeks. They were subjected to quarantine and provisions for them were delivered from the convent. Apparently they were not infected but when they *took the belongings of the deceased tempted by greed the plague struck them, they fell sick and died three days later*³⁶. The abbess made the decision to burn the house in which the ill stayed in order to protect other residents of the village. Gravediggers came from Kraków, moved all possessions from the house, burned it and took items away to Kraków³⁷.

³² The atmosphere of terror during the epidemic in Kraków is reflected in the book written by J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć. Staropolskie postawy wobec zarazy*, Kraków 1991, p. 92-101.

³³ M. Borkowska, *Życie codzienne polskich klasztorów żeńskich XVII-XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1996, p. 276.

³⁴ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 30.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 31.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 45.

³⁷ Ibidem.

As presented previously, the convents in the towns, where the plague outbreaks were detected, dispersed to other convents and therefore the nuns from the St. John Convent in Kraków, where the sisters from the Premonstratensian convent went *for medication*, stayed in the convent in Imbramowice. It was recorded in the Chronicle *that three Benedictine nuns arrived on the 10th of July 1710 and stayed in the convent for half a year, until the 25th of February 1711.*³⁸

The large portions of the population also suffered from dysentery³⁹. The abbess recorded the instance of this affliction in July 1714. Due to the poor hygiene at the time of the disease and, primarily, because of the lack of medicaments numerous adults and children died at that time *and the villages became deserted*⁴⁰.

Plague and pestilence also did not spare livestock – in August 1713 the peasants from Tarnawa trading cattle purchased a single infected cow which, in turn, spread the disease to other animals leading to more than 170 animals dying in the entire village. It is not known how many animals remained but Grothówna recorded that *people were bereft of working animals and of food*⁴¹, therefore the losses must have been significant. More than 180 animals died in the village of Trzycież⁴². Cows and oxen were given bread and were aspersed with holy water to cure them from the disease⁴³. The latter method was supposed to have the power of “protecting” from all the evil the disease had brought.

Apart from the epidemics of the plague, cholera or dysentery, people had to struggle against natural disasters they were unable to deal with. Those were floods, fires, strong gales or blizzards.

Fire was the greatest threat to the contemporary wooden buildings. The largest fire recorded in *the Chronicle* broke out on the 28th of July 1710. During the ongoing war in the Republic of Poland, in the face of continually encroaching troops and numerous war contributions, the convent became a hiding place for the possessions from the entire village or even all the estates belonging to the convent. Hay had been stored in the room opposite the convent refectory. Those rooms were usually padlocked for the night but, as the abbess noted, on the night when the fire broke out someone had to forget to do it. When maidservants went to sleep on the hay they took oil lamps with them and did not think that sparks from the lamps may have started the fire. When nuns were sleeping in the lower part of the convent the fire broke out at approximately 11PM, buildings and roofs rapidly caught fire; some buildings were more than 450 years old. When the abbess got out from the burning convent into the courtyard she recognised that there was nothing left to save. The people of Imbramowice reacted very sluggishly. The wicket had been opened but the nuns staying in the rooms on the other side of the buildings were cut off because the door leading to the orchard was walled up. In the desperate attempt to save their lives the nuns jumped from windows. Before a ladder

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 48.

³⁹ sDysentery – an infectious disease of intestines, results in death if untreated, see: Choroby wewnętrzne, editor A Szczeklik, Kraków 2005, pp. 811-812.

⁴⁰ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 73.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 57.

⁴² The disease later spread to other villages: Zagórowa and Ciepki, see: Ibidem, p. 178.

⁴³ Ibidem.

had been brought eight nuns jumped out and only two used the ladder to descend safely. The fire spread over the period of one hour⁴⁴. The convent was facing utter ruin.

The balance of loses was enormous. Almost the entirety of the convent and church buildings burned down, numerous sisters who decided to jump out of the windows had broken or twisted legs and two maidservants suffocated with smoke and died. All the precious items stored in the refectory and cells were also consumed by the fire. The nuns did not even have habits and were dressed in night gowns only because they were not thinking of clothes when saving themselves. Numerous objects saved from the fire were stolen by the local residents who instead of helping the nuns were preoccupied with looting. Out of the convent buildings only the granary, the barn and an old wooden building, which later served as the lodging for the nuns, remained⁴⁵.

It was not difficult for fire to break out of control. In July 1709 the abbess recorded the case of fire breaking out from the stove which resulted in *shingle*⁴⁶ *beginning to smoulder*⁴⁷. It had not been discovered immediately. The fire was noticed by Fr. Lochman who was walking through that part of the convent in the evening. The smouldering part of the roof was quickly cut off and inundated with water⁴⁸. Probably the fire could continue to smoulder for a long time and lead to another conflagration. The kitchen chimney was one of the main fire hazards because exactly ten years later, in July 1719, this time at noon, a smouldering piece of coal flew out of the chimney. Despite the fact that the peace of coal burned slowly the fire spread rapidly. The carpenters erecting new buildings who were staying in the courtyard quickly brought down the roof and poured water over it.⁴⁹

The Chronicle contains numerous examples of fire consuming peasants' buildings located in the Imbramowice convent domain. Due to carelessness of the residents a house burned down in the village of Tarnawa⁵⁰. Several years later, in the same village, two houses burned down when the fire spread from one to another and the escaping inhabitants were burned and *nothing could be saved or otherwise the entire village would burn to the ground because of the closeness of buildings and wind fanning the flames towards the village; thus everyone was trying to save his own house*⁵¹. Both fires broke out in winter and, to top it all, at night. Under such circumstances the chances of saving property were slim, people reacted more slowly and water was brought from the well in buckets. The fire was probably caused by a spark from an unattended fire which had not been put out⁵² properly. In Imbramowice the farmer named Fudalej died when he set up a fire to heat oxen in his sty during the severe winter frost in 1723. He did not anticipate that a spark could reach to the hay stored some distance away; the fire spread so rapidly that people were unable to put it down⁵³.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁴⁶ Shingle – a roof tile, A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 117.

⁴⁹ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 37.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 77.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 84.

⁵² It was impossible to not attempt to warm oneself up during the winter.

⁵³ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 155.

Not only fires but also strong gales caused major damage in the Imbramowice estates. Just like nowadays they were impossible to avoid or prevent. The chroniclers frequently recorded the aftermaths of gales. The results of strong gales recorded on the pages of *the Chronicle* included overturned barns, torn roofs and knocked down trees. The chroniclers recorded windstorms, always dangerous for humans and buildings, in 1703, 1714, 1737 and 1740.

Apart from winds causing damage, another source of severe distress was the so called “great water”. The convent had to frequently cope with floods which were often described as *a genuine deluge*. The abbess “reported a grand deluge” after a brief spell of rain in May 1712. The water level rose so high and the current was so strong that water carried away several houses in Imbramowice and Małaszycze and the mill located behind the convent was completely flooded up to its roof (!). *The water rose and became like a sea; it receded after three hours but during that time it caused unspeakable damage*⁵⁴. Half a year later the flood surprised people at night; it did not cause damage as major as the previous one but, nevertheless, the crops on the meadows were lost⁵⁵. Grothówna noted another great flood a year later, in the beginning of April. Once again the losses and damage were significant – some people, particularly the impoverished leaving in old housing, were barely able to escape, poorly-built houses were torn down by the current and water dragged away furnaces and provisions from nearly all the households in Imbramowice. Nothing survived on meadows; water rose at noon and subsided by the evening. The circumstances were extremely difficult as *there was nothing left to eat or to sow*⁵⁶. When the flood struck the convent estates in June 1736 the chronicler primarily recorded the losses and the damage inflicted to the freshly planted “tatarki”⁵⁷ and also noted that meadows were covered with silt and that firewood was lost. Water also broke into the very convent through the bathhouse and the adjacent rooms.⁵⁸

The shortage of food was often the result of natural disasters (gales, floods, poor harvest) or the incursions of armed forces, which occurred rather frequently in the period under consideration. In May 1710 soldiers were so unrelenting that *they took everything they could: the remaining stock of grain and omasta*⁵⁹ and other things, even men and women clothing, everything they could find in houses and chambers⁶⁰. Therefore it is not surprising that people deprived of not only food but the bare essentials simply starved to death. During the period of the war between Stanisław Leszczyński and Augustus III of Poland, military units marched through the Imbramowice estates in March 1736, after the abdication of Leszczyński; the Russian military marched through fields and trampled winter cereals which had already sprouted. The soldiers remorselessly confiscated all the stocks and thus there was nothing left to sow fields with in the autumn. This obviously resulted in both the peasants and the nuns starving⁶¹. The abbess provided aid to the residents of the estates but the convent often had to cope with hardships itself just like its subjects. In March 1737 it was recorded that

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 56.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 57

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 64.

⁵⁷ Tatarki -various herbs and plants, A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, p. 567.

⁵⁸ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., p. 243.

⁵⁹ Omasta – grease with pork scratchings and onion.

⁶⁰ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 43.

⁶¹ The convent sowed more in time for winter than spring and thus the scarcity, Ibidem, p. 242.

500 people died⁶². The entire country was struggling against scarcity and hardship and diseases were developing, which remained untreated. That year Zofia Grothówna ordered to distribute food to the impoverished; it consisted mainly of barley which was ground and baked into bread⁶³.

The convent in Imbramowice fell victim to hailstorms on several occasions. The Chronicle lists three such instances, in 1712, 1719 and 1720; hailstorms usually occurred in summer. Each time they destroyed a part of or the majority of crops. The scorching hot summer in 1714 in the Republic of Poland resulted in poor harvest. It stopped raining for several weeks and as a result the winter cereals and vegetables did not sprout in the amount sufficient for providing sustenance for the nuns and the local populace. Then, in winter in the following year (1715), severe frost and the shortage of fodder for livestock resulting from poor harvest in the previous year caused cattle plague and *even thatches were stripped and turned into sieczka [feed]*⁶⁴ *but it was not enough*⁶⁵. The Chronicle includes the record of the crops failing due to draught in 1726.^{66,67}

The convent in Imbramowice maintained frequent relations with the outside world. The abbess was concurrently the mother superior of the nuns and the administrator of the convent estates; she also had in her care the residents of the estates towards whom she had certain obligations she fulfilled due to her willingness to help. Above all else the constant incursions of the military and war contributions required the most of abbess' attention which she was devoting to the well-being of the entire congregation and the surrounding villages. Various events like plagues or extremely adverse weather drew not only her but also other sisters away from the everyday issues of the Norbertine convent. Although the nuns vowed to God that they would remain in Imbramowice for the rest of their lives they were forced to leave the convent. Although such cases were infrequent they did occur. At such times the nuns humbly accepted their fate and attempted to solve the problem.

The echoes of the outside world events on the pages of the Chronicle of Zofia Grothówna in years 1703-1741 Summary

The article describes the echoes of the events from the outside world in an enclosed Norbertine convent in Imbramowice and is mainly based on the records taken from The Chronicle of Sophia Grothówna from the years 1703-1741. Although the Norbertine monastery was (and still is) enclosed, it maintained communications with the outside world on a regular basis but unwillingly. This article discusses just such situations. Sisters had to contend with numerous military invasions, requesting ever larger contributions and looting the surroundings belonging to the nuns' granges. During the wars of the seventeenth century a number of epidemics broke out, which reached the surrounding areas in Imbramowice. The

⁶² Ibidem, p. 245.

⁶³ During her governance the abbess ordered to distribute grain for sowing several times, Ibidem.

⁶⁴ Sieczka – feed for the livestock consisting of straw, hay or clover.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 78.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 203.

⁶⁷ Z. Grothówna, op. cit., pp. 73.

peasants contracted the plague from the army. Other events included the outbreak of fires, the largest of which broke out in 1704 and as a result many sisters had to leave the monastery and move to other monasteries or return to their homes. The reconstruction of the monastery took almost 20 years. The article describes information about the floods, strong gales, hunger, cold and drought that ravaged the monastery and caused major damage in the convent farms.

Keywords: The monastery, Norbertine, Imbramowice, nuns, enclosure, weather-related disasters

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