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CASUALTIES AMONG CHILDREN IN THE LIGHT OF POLISH MEDIEVAL CATALOGUES OF MIRACLES

The catalogues of miracles performed by the saints provide us with a lot of information about the state of health of people and dangers that threatened them in the Middle Ages¹. Among persons mentioned in the Polish *miracula* a large group consisted of children. Parents or relatives generally turned to the saints with their pleas for curing their offspring, bringing a child back to life if it died of some illness and saving it from death, if a juvenile fell victim to an accident. The latter issue will be the subject of our interest. On the basis of the catalogues of miracles performed by St. Hedwig, St. Kinga, St. Stanislaus, bishops Prę-

¹ There is a rich literature about the lives and miracles of the saints. The most important titles are included in: *Nasi święci. Polski słownik hagiograficzny* (Our Saints. Polish Hagiographic Dictionary), a collective work edited by A. Witkowska. Poznań 1999. pp. 224–225, 265–266, 393–394, 536, 573–575, 645–647; questions connected with the functioning of pilgrimage cults in 15th century Cracow as well as the religiousness of society have been most fully discussed on the basis of the miracles performed by the saints by Aleksandra Witkowska, *Kulty pątnicze piętnastowiecznego Krakowa. Z badań nad miejską kulturą religijną* (Pilgrimage Cults of 15th Century Cracow. Research on Urban Religious Culture). Lublin 1984; eadem, *Miracula małopolskie z XIII/XIV wieku. Studium źródłoznawcze* (13th–14th Century Miracula in Little Poland. A Source Study). "Roczniki Humanistyczne". 19 (1971), fasc. 2. pp. 28–161; this issue has also been considered by Maria Helena Witkowska, *Zagadnienie mentalności religijnej w świetle "Miracula" z XIII/XIV wieku* (The Question of Religious Mentality in the Light of 13th–14th Century "Miracula"). [In:] *Kościół w Polsce*, vol. 1, Średniowiecze. Kraków 1966, pp. 585–630. An analysis of the state of health of Polish medieval society on the basis of the catalogues of miracles performed by the saints was made by Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Człowiek w środowisku geograficznym średniowiecznej Polski* (People in the Geographical Environment of Medieval Poland). Rozprawy Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1981; idem, *Ludzie i przyroda w Polsce średniowiecznej* (People and Nature in Medieval Poland). Warszawa 1983; on the book of miracles of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań see: *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała* (The Book of Miracles of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań), ed. W. Karkucińska, A. Pawlaczek, J. Wiesiołowski. "Kronika Miasta Poznania". 1992, № 3–4, pp. 125–127.

dota and Werner and the book of miracles of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań². I will discuss among other things the categories of accidents experienced by children and the types of pleas addressed to the saints. I will also answer the question about the age of the juveniles who found themselves in danger of their lives and about the ratio between the accidents and illnesses. Finally I will present the problem of parental feelings and the question connected with offerings and vows taken by the relatives with the intention of saving the child³.

The catalogues of miracles have recorded most cases of the drowning of juveniles (22)⁴, and in the second place accidents connected with fire (5)⁵. The *miracula* inform us also of children bitten to death or mauled by animals (3)⁶, falls from a height (2)⁷, kidnapping (1)⁸, death under the rubble of a ruined house (1)⁹, and an unfortunate accident during manual work (1)¹⁰. The most numerous group of miracles concerned with saving a child from the danger of water was connected with Corpus Christi Church

² *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, ed A. Semkowicz, pp. 510–642; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae ducisse Cracoviensis*, ed W. Kętrzyński, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* (henceforward MPH), vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, pp. 682–744; *Vita sancti Stanislai Cracoviensis episcopi (vita maior)*, Auctore fratre Vincentio de ordine fratrum praedicatorum, ed W. Kętrzyński, MPH, vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, pp. 362–438; *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae episcopi Cracoviensis*, ed W. Kętrzyński, MPH, vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, pp. 442–500; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri episcopi Plocensis*, Auctore Iohanne, decano plocensi, ed W. Kętrzyński, MPH, vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, pp. 750–754; *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, ed W. Karkucińska, A. Pawlaczek, J. Wiesiołowski, "Kronika Miasta Poznania", 1992, N° 3–4, pp. 59–127; the only Latin edition of the miracles performed in Corpus Christi Church in Poznań comes from 1609 (*Votiva Corporis Christi miracula*). The *miracula* collected by Tomasz Treter have been translated in full by Wanda Karkucińska and supplemented with 17th and 18th century translations by Adrian Zaremba (Zareba, 1616), Franciszek Powsiński (1663), and Kazimierz Miedzwiedzki (1772).

³ The catalogues of miracles performed by St. Adalbert, St. Hyacinthus and Blessed Salomea provide no answer to the above-mentioned questions. Their *miracula* do not record any casualties among children.

⁴ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 1, pp. 621–622; N° 2, pp. 622–623; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 18; *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 47, 48; *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 59–64; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*, p. 754.

⁵ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 15; *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 72–73.

⁶ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 1, p. 619; N° 4, pp. 623–624; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 17.

⁷ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 2, pp. 585–586; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 1.

⁸ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 7, pp. 588–589.

⁹ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 4.

¹⁰ *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 55.

in Poznań. The *book of miracles* until 1510 records fifteen such cases. St. Hedwig was asked to resurrect a drowned child twice, just as were St. Stanislaus and the Blessed Werner, bishop of Plock, while St. Kinga — once¹¹. Most miracles concerning saving a juvenile from death in flames also occurred due to the offerings made for Corpus Christi Church in Poznań (four cases until 1512). From among the saints only St. Kinga was asked for intervening in a similar matter (1)¹². Children mauled or bitten by animals were saved by St. Hedwig (2) and St. Kinga (1)¹³. Both the latter saints also intervened in the cases of the loss of health or death of a juvenile who fell from a height (St. Hedwig once, so did St. Kinga)¹⁴. In the cases of the death of a child under rubble, kidnapping of a juvenile and injury during manual work, the miracles were performed due to St. Kinga (1), St. Hedwig (1) and the bishop of Cracow, Prędota (1)¹⁵.

Table 1. Casualties among children (until 1512)¹⁶

	Corpus Christi Church	St Hedwig	St Kinga	St Stanislaus	Blessed Werner	Bishop Prędota	Together
Drowning	15	2	1	2	2	–	22
Burning	4	–	1	–	–	–	5
Bitten to death or mauled by animals	–	2	1	–	–	–	3
Fall from a height	–	1	1	–	–	–	2
Disaster	–	–	1	–	–	–	1
Kidnapping	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
Accident during manual work	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
Together	19	6	5	2	2	1	

The most numerous group of miracles concerned with the resuscitation of a child or saving it from the consequences of an

¹¹ See note 4.

¹² See note 5.

¹³ See note 6.

¹⁴ See note 7.

¹⁵ See notes 8–10.

¹⁶ A similar analysis, but with reference to all the age-groups, has been carried out by A. Witkowska, *Kuły pątnicze*, pp. 245–246 and J. Tyszkiewicz, *Człowiek*, pp. 205–230.

accident was connected with Corpus Christi Church in Poznań. The book records 19 cases¹⁷. They also concerned saving a child from the danger of water or fire. St. Hedwig intervened 6 times — two cases of a juvenile's drowning, and two of death or wounds suffered as a result of mauling by an animal, one — a fall from a height and one of kidnapping¹⁸. St. Kinga was asked for help five times when juveniles lost their health or lives as a result of accidents. Due to her intervention children were restored to health or were resurrected in the case of drowning (1), a fall from a height (1), death under rubble (1), after being pulled out of the flames (1) and after being bitten to death by a wolf (1)¹⁹. St. Stanislaus and Bishop Werner intervened twice in the cases of the children's drowning²⁰. The Bishop of Cracow, Prędota, saved a juvenile from the consequences of an accident once²¹.

Most pleas addressed to the saints concerned bringing back to life a deceased child. Among 36 accidents recorded by the *catalogues of miracles* twenty six ended in the juveniles' death. Only in nine cases the child suffered injuries more or less dangerous to life, and in one case the state of the child was not defined precisely. The presented data let us suppose that the death-rate among children caused by accidents was high and amounted nearly to 72%. Most resuscitations — 15 — were connected with Corpus Christi Church in Poznań²². Apart from that, the book records four cases of restoration of a child to health (one is not described precisely)²³. St. Kinga was asked to bring a juvenile back to life four times²⁴, and to restore it to health once²⁵, St. Hedwig three times²⁶ in each of the respective cases²⁷, while St. Stanislaus respectively twice²⁸ and once²⁹. Due to

¹⁷ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 59–73.

¹⁸ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 2, pp. 585–586; N° 7, pp. 588–589; N° 1, p. 619; N° 1, pp. 621–622; N° 2, pp. 622–623; N° 4, pp. 623–624.

¹⁹ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 1, 4, 15, 17, 18.

²⁰ *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 47, 48; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*, p. 754.

²¹ *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 55.

²² *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 59–64, 73.

²³ *Ibidem*, N° 15.

²⁴ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 1, 4, 17, 18.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

²⁶ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 1, pp. 621–622; N° 2, pp. 622–623; N° 4, pp. 623–624.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, N° 2, pp. 585–586; N° 7, pp. 588–589; N° 1, p. 619.

²⁸ *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 47, 48.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, N° 47.

Bishop Werner two children were resurrected, and due to Bishop Prędota one was brought back to health³⁰.

Table 2 Kinds of pleas directed to the saints (until 1512)

	Corpus Christi Church	St. Kinga	St. Hedwig	St. Stanislaus	Blessed Werner	Bishop Prędota	Together
Resuscitation	15	4	3	2	2	–	26
Restoration to health or rescue of life	3	1	3	1	–	1	9
Nondescript cases	1	–	–	–	–	–	1

Most descriptions do not mention the children's age. It was noted only in twelve cases out of thirty six. In this group most were three-years-old (4)³¹, while other categories (several weeks, half a year³², a year³³, two years³⁴, four years³⁵, eight³⁶, nine³⁷, and ten years³⁸) were represented each by one child. In the case of other miracles the descriptions of accidents allow us to suppose that the children involved in them could for the most part move on their own, hence they must have been several years old³⁹. The catalogues of miracles show that also babies, even those newborn, encountered situations dangerous to their lives. In St. Hedwig's *miracula* we find the case of a seven-week-old Pietrucha. Her mother went to town, entrusting the girl to the care of a woman named Bogusława, who left the child alone. During her absence a hog rushed into the room and knocked the cradle down. Pietrucha fell on her face and was stifled under the

³⁰ *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*, p. 754; *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 55.

³¹ *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 47, 48; *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 62; *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 7, pp. 588–589.

³² *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 73; *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 4, pp. 623–624.

³³ *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 47.

³⁴ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 2, pp. 622–623.

³⁵ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 63.

³⁶ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 1, p. 619.

³⁷ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 1.

³⁸ *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 55.

³⁹ According to A. Witkowska children faced the greatest danger until their fifth year, *Kulty pątnicze*, p. 153.

swaddling-bands⁴⁰. In Komorniki near Poznań (1509) some countrywoman left a crawling baby in a low cradle and went out. On her return she could not find it. Finally, she looked with her husband into the stove where it was lying dead⁴¹. Apart from those two accidents, the catalogues of miracles record two other cases involving very small children⁴². Hence we may suppose that situations dangerous to the life of new-born babies and infants-in-arms were not very frequent.

Table 3 Children's age

	Up to 0.5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Corpus Christi Church	1			1	1										
St. Kinga										1					
St. Hedwig	1		1	1					1						
St. Stanislaus		1		2											
Blessed Werner															
Bishop Prędota											1				
Together	2	1	1	4	1				1	1	1				

Not in all of the cases are we able to state the sex of the child, either. In thirteen out of thirty six individual cases the sex of the juvenile has not been mentioned. The catalogues of miracles show that the dominant group consisted of boys (15). Aleksandra Witkowska is of the opinion that male children were privileged in the family. Hence parents were more anxious to save their lives⁴³. Casualties among girls were, however, almost by half less frequent (8), their number amounted to 22% of the total.

The *catalogues of miracles* show that there were more illnesses than casualties. The only exception are the cases in the *miracula* of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań and the miracles performed by Bishop Werner. Out of twenty two records of this

⁴⁰ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*. N° 4, pp. 623–624

⁴¹ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 73.

⁴² *Ibidem*: *Vita sancti Stanisłai*, N° 47

⁴³ A. Witkowska, *Kulty pątnicze*, p. 153

Table 4 Children's sex

Corpus Christi Church in Poznań	Boys	Girls	Nondescript cases
	6	1	12
St. Kinga	–	4	1
St. Hedwig	5	1	–
St. Stanislaus	2	1	–
Blessed Werner	2	–	–
Bishop Prędota	–	1	–
Together	15	8	13 ⁴⁴

church only three relate to the illnesses of the juveniles, while among the miracles of the bishop the number of illnesses and casualties is balanced (2 and 2). All in all, seventy one miracles concerned health (including warding off the danger the baby faced in childbirth), while thirty five concerned accidents. In this connection it should be stressed that accidents constituted about 33% of all the cases of danger to the children's lives. The greatest disproportions in the ratio between casualties and illnesses appear in Corpus Christi Church in Poznań (19 to 3) and in the catalogue of miracles performed by Bishop Prędota (1 to 13).

Table 5. Ratio between casualties and illnesses

	Casualties	Health problems including danger to babies' life in childbirth	Together
Corpus Christi Church in Poznań (till 1512)	19	3	22
St. Kinga	5	6	11
St. Hedwig	6	15	21
St. Stanislaus	2	17 (two records concern two juveniles)	19
Blessed Werner	2	2	4
Bishop Prędota	1	13 (one record concerns two juveniles)	14
St. Hyacinthus	–	9 (one record concerns two juveniles)	9
Blessed Salomea	–	6	6
Together	35 ⁴⁵	71 ⁴⁶	106

⁴⁴ See notes 4–10.

Let us now consider the question of the responsibility for the casualties. The catalogue of miracles shows that those responsible were mainly the parents or persons to whose care the children were entrusted. Parents were generally busy with their housework or fieldwork, and the child, left at home, was exposed to many dangers⁴⁷. Pressed by necessity, mothers sometimes relied on the help of their neighbours or acquaintances. Such help, accidental of its nature, frequently ended in tragedy. Pietrucha, left by her mother in the care of a friend, got stifled under an overturned cradle⁴⁸. A two-year-old boy, Wilhelm, got drowned also because of a lack of care. His guardian left him on the bank of the Oder river, and went swimming. The child fell into the water and got drowned⁴⁹. Sometimes parents left a baby under the charge of its brothers, sisters or older children. Such assistance sometimes also had tragic consequences. A six-month-old son of a landlord from Strońsk left under the charge of a five-year-old child, was for an unknown reason thrown by his guardian into the fire⁵⁰. Many of children's games ended in tragedy because of their own unwariness. In 1510 in a village three miles away from Poznań three boys were playing by the lake. One of them was thrown into the water by the other two. The culprits did not admit their guilt in front of their guardians. Only three days later did the parents of the lost child find him on the bank of the lake⁵¹. At harvest-time in Śliwno a three-year-old child was knocked over by another child. As a result it fell into

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 75, 76, 79; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 2, 3, 8, 11, 13, 16; *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 1, pp. 584-585; N° 4, pp. 586-587; N° 6, p. 594; N° 2, pp. 597-598; N° 1, pp. 600-601; N° 3, pp. 602-603; N° 5, p. 603; N° 6, pp. 603-604; N° 7, pp. 604-605; N° 2, p. 609; N° 1, pp. 613-614; N° 2, p. 614; N° 1, pp. 614-615; N° 1, pp. 616-617; N° 3, p. 623; *Vita sancti Stanislai*, N° 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 40, 42, 43; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*, p. 754; *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 6, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 23, 24, 36, 45, 49, 50; *De vita et miraculis sancti Iacchonis (Hyacinthi) ordinis fratrum praedicatorum*, Auctore Stanislao lectore Cracoviensi eiusdem ordinis, ed. L. Ćwikliński, MPH, vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, N° 12, 21, 27, 35, 42, 45, 46, 51; *Vita sanctae Salomeae reginae Haliciensis*, ed. W. Kętrzyński, MPH, vol. 4, Warszawa 1961, N° 5, 6, 23, 29, 30, 32.

⁴⁷ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, pp. 60, 62; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*, p. 754.

⁴⁸ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, N° 4, pp. 623-624.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, N° 2, pp. 622-623.

⁵⁰ *Księga cudów poznańskiego Kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 72.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

the water and was drowned⁵². Sometimes the victim of an accident caused it himself. The catalogue of Bishop Prędoty's miracles records the case of a ten-year-old Hedwig who swallowed a needle. The girl together with other maidens were busy sewing. She held the needle in her hand and placed it between her teeth. It's hard to explain why she suddenly swallowed it. It stuck in her throat and caused pain. Hedwig tried to get it out, coughing and sneezing — but in vain. On the third day the needle reached her stomach and pierced the wall of this organ, which was dangerous to the girl's life. Doctors were called, but they could not help her. Only on the fifth day did the girl throw up the needle with her vomit⁵³.

The catalogues of miracles seldom blame the parents or guardians for the harm suffered by the child. The events that had led to the juvenile's death or illness are generally presented in a laconic way. Only in a few cases the mother or guardian are accused of a lack of responsibility or care. For example in 1509 in Komorniki near Poznań some careless woman ("an unwary countrywoman") left a crawling baby in a low cradle and went out. On her return, she could not find it. Finally, together with her husband, she looked into the stove where it was lying dead⁵⁴. The author of the record clearly blames the mother for the unfortunate accident that befell her child.

The *miracula* allow us to suppose that parents were not deprived of tender feelings for their offspring⁵⁵. In many cases the tragedy of their child caused their despair. When the nine-year-old Dobrosława, daughter of Marcin from Szczyrzyc, fell from a tower, her mother despaired all day⁵⁶. Also Wojciech and his wife suffered because of the accident that happened to their daughter, Jarosława. The girl was crushed by fragments of a house ruined by a gale. The parents, knowing nothing of their daughter's fate, looked for her in the ruins. Finally they found her dead. The sight of the crushed body of the child caused their deep grief (— *inveniunt puerum suum mortuum, totum contritum*,

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 62.

⁵³ *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*, N° 55.

⁵⁴ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*, p. 73.

⁵⁵ A Witkowska noted that in the 15th century parental feelings started to be characteristic also in the peasant and plebeian strata, a phenomenon that could not be observed in the earlier centuries. *eadem*, *Kulty pątnicze*, p. 154.

⁵⁶ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*, N° 1.

conculcatum et lividum ac ore nivo repleto, ad quod spectaculum graviter commoti ceperunt inconsolabiliter lamentari)⁵⁷. Also the mother of a girl bitten to death by a wolf was seized with despair. The body was found by the girl's father. The woman, when she learnt of this event, threw herself on the ground wailing and calling St. Kinga⁵⁸.

The parents who addressed the saints with their pleas for the resuscitation or rescue of their child took vows or made offerings⁵⁹. The vows happened to involve a promise to bring the rescued or resuscitated child to the saint's grave⁶⁰. When the nine-year-old Dobrosława fell from a tower, the desperate mother together with other women — — *reminiscentes clemencie domine Kincze, quomodo vita comite pia super afflictos fuerit, audientesque etiam de eius sanctitate aliquantulum famam volitare, se ad ipsam omni devocione convertunt promittentes, quod cum puero et offeritorio sepulcrum eius vellent visitare, si in puero mortuo per eius merita possent consolari*⁶¹. The daughter of the knight Andrew was brought back to life in similar circumstances. He was crossing the Oder together with his family and told the nurse to go first with his children. She got into the boat with a one-year-old boy and a three- or four-year-old girl. In the middle of the river the boat hit the stump of a tree and capsized. The woman lost hold of the children and grasped the bow, while the ferryman swam to the bank. The boy was saved due to the swaddling-bands which kept him floating on the water, but the girl started to drown. The people assembled on the bank called St. Stanislaus for help. Due to his intervention the dead girl was thrown up on the bank by the water. The nurse and the boy were also saved. The parents and the crowd assembled over the dead body of the girl started lamenting and asking the Saint to save the child. When they took a vow to bring her to the martyr's grave, she was resurrected⁶². Sometimes parents brought a dead child to church

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*. N° 4

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*. N° 17

⁵⁹ A. Witkowska analysed the presence in the catalogues of miracles and the role of prayers and offerings made with the intention of saving or restoring people to life. *eadem. Kultury pątnicze*. p. 196-226.

⁶⁰ *Vita sancti Stanislai*. N° 47; *Miracula venerabilis patris Prandothae*. N° 55; *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*. N° 4.

⁶¹ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*. N° 1

⁶² *Vita sancti Stanislai*. N° 47

with the hope it could be rescued⁶³. Also votive offerings made by parents saved the life of juveniles⁶⁴. In the catalogue of miracles of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań we can read that when children met with some mishap, and the relatives made an offering, the juveniles were restored to life⁶⁵. The promise of an offering also saved some three-year-old boy kidnapped by vagrant women. The desperate father looked for his son for three days in vain. Only when he took a vow that he would offer a measure of wheat the same weight as that of the boy, he recovered his son⁶⁶. Most frequently, however, a child was brought back to life when his parents or guardians assembled by the dead body addressed their pleas to some saint. The prayer was accompanied by despair and grief connected with the loss⁶⁷. When some three-year-old boy was drowned while playing with others in the Vistula river, his parents and the crowd of people assembled — — *cum lacrimis et devotis precibus sancti martiris subsidium flagitarent, ut suffocato puero vitam redderet et parentum desolacionem adimeret*. The bishop heard the plea of the assembled and resuscitated the boy⁶⁸. In another case St. Kinga heard the prayer of the mother who learnt of her daughter's accident on her way home⁶⁹.

In the case of some *miracula* we can speak of specialization. Thus most cases of drowning (15 until 1510) are recorded in the book of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań. Other catalogues record much fewer cases of that type. Other kinds of miracles do not let us draw any conclusions about the saints' special intervention in concrete categories of casualties among children.

The catalogues of miracles show that the largest group of casualties involved drowning, while in the second place burning and death in the fire. In their pleas to the saints, parents most often asked for bringing a juvenile back to life, much less frequently to restore him to health or save from death. This shows that the death-rate of juveniles caused by accidents was very

⁶³ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*. p. 61

⁶⁴ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*. N° 4

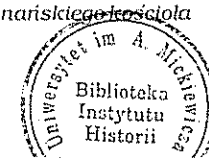
⁶⁵ *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*. pp. 60, 62, 63, 64

⁶⁶ *Vita sanctae Hedwigis*. N° 7. pp. 588-589

⁶⁷ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*. N° 17, 18; *Księga cudów poznańskiego kościoła Bożego Ciała*. p. 59; *Mors et Miracula beati Veneri*. p. 754

⁶⁸ *Vita sancti Stanislai*. N° 48

⁶⁹ *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae*. N° 18



high. The *catalogues of miracles* show, however, that there were more illnesses than accidents among children. The only exceptions are the miracles performed by Bishop Werner, and the book of Corpus Christi Church in Poznań. Casualties constituted 33% of all the cases of miracles. Since the *miracula* seldom provide the juveniles' age, it is not possible to analyse this question exactly. We may only suppose that accidents happened mostly to children who were several years old⁷⁰. The above remark also relates to boys. Out of thirty six individual cases fifteen concerned males, eight females, and in thirteen cases the sex of the child was not defined. The *miracula* have shown that children met with a lot of danger at play. In the case of new-born babies and infants accidents were usually caused by irresponsible and careless parents and guardians.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)

⁷⁰ Records which provide the age of the children show that situations dangerous to life were most frequently faced by those three years old; see pp. 4-5.

Michał Tymowski

WHY DID VALARTE DIE? DEATH OF A DANISH KNIGHT DURING EXPEDITION TO WEST AFRICA IN MID 15th CENTURY

The journeys of knights to various European courts were a common phenomenon in the Middle Ages. With regard to the problem of fight with the Muslims or pagans, three journey directions were of special importance in late Middle Ages: At the Hungarian court, fight with the Turks was possible; in the Teutonic Knights' Order State — fight with pagans; at the Portuguese court — fight with the Muslims from North Africa, as well as with pagans from West Africa. Among the works published recently on that subject, an especially important one is Werner Paravicini's study on the knights' journeys to the Teutonic Knights' Order State. Doubtlessly, Portugal gave Christian knights a chance to win such a merit¹.

Among the knights from Central and North Europe who journeyed to Portugal there happened to be one called Valarte. We can learn about him from Gomes Eanes Zurara's chronicle, written down starting from 1453, that is, not so many years after the knight's journey, though later completed and rewritten again and again until the chronicler's death in 1473 or 1474². Another

¹ W. Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des Europäischen Adels*, vol. 1, Sigmaringen 1989. About Polish knights journeys to Portugal and fights with Muslims from North Africa see A. Dziubiński, *Polski rycerz w Maroku w XV wieku (A Polish Knight in Morocco in the 15th Century)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1966, vol. LVII, № 3, pp. 444-446; A. F. Grabski, *O polskich rycerzach w Maroku w XV wieku (On Polish Knights in Morocco in the 15th Century)*, "Przegląd Historyczny", 1967, vol. LVIII, № 3, pp. 515-517.

² G. E. De Zurara, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis que se passaram na conquista de Guiné por mandado do Infante D. Henrique, versão actualizada do texto pelo Torquato de Sousa Soares*, vol. II, Lisboa 1981, the whole history of Valarte — Chapter XCIV, pp. 533-543. On the author and the chronicle P. Hair, *The Early Sources on Guinea*, "History in Africa", 21, 1994, pp. 87-126, about Zurara pp. 89-92.