Lands constituting the Crown of Bohemia

From the point of view of state law, the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia came into existence in the 14th century during the reign of Emperor Charles IV. The Lands of the Crown consisted of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Markgraviate of Moravia, the Silesian principalities and the Markgraviates of Upper and Lower Lusatia. The head of state was the King of Bohemia. The Lands of the Crown of Bohemia were at the same time part of the Holy Roman Empire. Upper and Lower Lusatia ceased to be a part of the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia in 1635 and most of the Silesian principalities were separated from it in 1742. The population of the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia was mixed: Slavonic (mainly Czech) and German.

Bohemia (Kingdom of Bohemia)

The former territory of Bohemia is today a constituent part of the Czech republic. From the 9th century onwards, the country was a principality, after 1198/1212 a kingdom. Early modern Bohemia was populated by Czechs with a sizeable German minority (especially in the Western frontier region).

Until the second half of the 15th century, there is no evidence for any legal proceedings against witches or sorcerers. Trials against alleged witches and sorcerers took place between the 1490s and the 1750s. Bohemia witnessed the most intensive persecution in the last third of the 16th and throughout the 17th centuries. Bohemia witnessed no long term or mass persecutions. In most trials for sorcery or witchcraft, there was only a single defendant. The great majority of the Bohemian witch trials took place before the town courts of the royal and patrimonial towns, which constituted the basis of criminal justice in Bohemia since the second half of the 15th century.

The Court of Appeal in Prague established itself in 1548. It heard appeals from all parts of the country, but in the criminal case on a large scale only since the 1680s. It had the power to confirm all the death sentences passed by all the lower courts of justice, including the town courts. The Prague Court of Appeal extended its jurisdiction into Moravia in 1700.

Koldin’s Town Code from 1579 was the first Czech law to define magic (sorcery/witchcraft) as a crime. The 1707 Criminal Order of Emperor Joseph I. for Bohemia,
Moravia and Silesia (the so-called Josephina) was the first law that regulated the punishment for magic in any detail. The first known execution of a perpetrator of witchcraft (i.e. harmful magic) took place in Bohemia in 1498 in Kutná Hora (in German Kuttenberg). In May of the same year, five women were executed for witchcraft in Prague. The number of the witchcraft trials conducted in Bohemia increased gradually from the beginning of the 16th century onwards. The execution rate began to rise in the 1540s. The only major witch hunt in Bohemia took place in 1598: The nobleman Nicolaus of Bubna had 21 women burned at the stake or buried alive in a series of trials in his patrimonial town of Žamberk (Senftenberg) in East Bohemia. In the series of sorcery trials conducted in the region of the Central Bohemian royal town of Nymburk in the years 1602–1617, 20 persons were investigated, with ten suffering capital sentences – among them three women.

In Bohemia, magical crime was as a rule mere sorcery, i.e. malevolent magic without demonism. It was not before at the end of the 16th century that this crime acquired in some cases the character of the supercrime of cumulative witchcraft, including, besides harmful magic, contact with the devil, apostasy, the witch sabbath and membership in a sect-like secret organization. A relatively high share of such cases appears only from the middle of the 17th century onwards.

The last known person to suffer capital punishment for magic in the Kingdom of Bohemia was one Jakub Trávníček, who died in 1749 in the South Bohemian patrimonial town of Milevsko (Mühlhausen). In 1755, the shepherd Jakub Polák of the South Bohemian patrimonial small town of Jistebnice was sentenced to death for witchcraft. However, after the personal intervention of Empress Maria Theresa, he received a milder punishment in 1756. The witchcraft trials in Bohemia came to an end in the middle of the 1750s.

The fragmentary sources suggest that about 400 persons were accused of magic in Bohemia in the late Middle Age and the early modern period; most of them suffered capital punishment. However, this estimate is problematic. As we know that numerous source materials have been lost, the real number could have been more than twice as high.

Moravia (Markgraviate of Moravia)

The old principality of Moravia is today part of the Czech Republic. From the 10th century onwards, the country was a part of the Czech state, and from 1182 a Margraviate subject to the supremacy of the ruler of Bohemia. In the early modern period the country was ethnically predominantly Czech with a strong German minority (above all in the northern and southern border regions).

The first reliable evidence concerning a trial against malevolent magicians dates back to the middle of the fourteenth century. The trial took place in the Moravian capital Brno (Brünn). The town court ordered two women accused of sorcery to clear themselves of suspicion by swearing that they were innocent. There were sporadic trials against sorcerers from the 1480s onwards. The first person to suffer capital punishment was a woman who died in 1494 in the Southern Moravian town of
The witch hunt in Moravia went on until the 1750s. From the middle of the 15th century to the end of 1720s, the basis of the court structure in Moravia were the town courts of royal towns, patrimonial towns and market towns. These courts heard the vast majority of all cases of magic which occurred in Moravia before 1648. After 1648, patrimonial courts made themselves more conspicuous in persecuting sorcery and witchcraft. As already mentioned, the Prague Court of Appeal had the power to sanction all capital trials conducted by all Moravian courts after 1700.

The Northern Moravian towns treated magical offences according to the regulations of the Magdeburg law which was in force from the second half of the 13th until the 17th century. The town code of Koldín, which contains the first, more exact definition of the offense of magic (sorcery/witchcraft), was officially in force in all of Moravia only at the end of the 17th century. As in Bohemia, the criminal order Emperor Joseph I (Josephina) issued in 1707 provided the first detailed regulations concerning magical crimes.

In the years 1500–1505, Heinrich Kramer (Institoris), the author of the “Hammer of Witches” (Malleus maleficarum), operated in Moravia as a papal inquisitor. After his arrival in Moravia, he took up residence in the royal town of Olomouc (Olmütz), the seat of the Moravian episcopate. He lived in the Dominican St. Michael monastery. Institoris apparently remained in this monastery until his death in in Kroměříž (Kremser) around 1505. Institoris published in two issues (1501 and 1502) two tractates directed against a group of heretics, the so-called Unitas fratrum (jednota bratrská).

Until the middle of the 16th century, only a few witch trials took place in Moravia. The numbers began to grow in Moravia only in the 1570s. Until the middle of the 17th century, we find in Moravia almost exclusively trials that focused on malevolent magic, usually with just one defendant. The only known outstanding exception was a series of sorcery trials taking place in the patrimonial town of Velká Bíteš in the southwest of Moravia. Here, at least 30 women were executed for harmful magic between 1571 and 1576. Fifteen died in 1576 alone. After the middle of the 17th century, there were almost no mass persecutions or long series of trials in Moravia, even though the neighbouring principality of Nysa in Silesia witnessed mass witch trials from the 1620s onwards. The only, but massive, exception was the witchcraft panic in Northern Moravia between 1678 and 1696. The centre of these persecutions were the patrimonial towns of Velké Losiny (Groß Ullersdorf) and Šumperk (Mährisch Schönberg). The main witch hunter in these Northern Moravian witchcraft trials was the judge Heinrich Franz Boblig von Edelstadt (1611/1612, Zuckmantel/Zlaté Hory – 1698 Olomouc). He had studied law without obtaining a degree. It seems that Boblig had worked as a judge in the witch trials in the principality of Nysa in Silesia since the end of the 1630s. The best known victim of the witch trials in Northern Moravia was the dean of Šumperk, Christoph Alois Lautner (approximately 1622–1685), who was burned alive in September 1685 in the town of Mohelnice (Müglitz). Lautner was the only Catholic priest executed for witchcraft in the Czech/Bohemian lands. His trial lasted for five years. During the witch trials in Northern Moravia in the years 1678–1696, more than 100 people were executed, most of them women. This was the absolute high point of witch hunting in Moravia.

Before 1678, the demonological concept of witchcraft had played hardly any role in Moravia. The last phase of the Moravian witch hunts took place...
between the 1730s and the 1750s. It was accompanied by cases of alleged vampirism and vampire panics, the centre of which were the neighbouring Silesian principalities.35

It is still not known when Moravia passed the last death sentence for magic. Most likely, this happened sometime in the second quarter of the 18th century. The last known sorcery/witchcraft trial in Moravia took place in 1755 in Horní Město (Bergstadt) near Rýmařov (Römerstadt) in Northern Moravia: The tenant of the local mill, Thomas Manisar, was accused of having killed the director of a neighbouring manufacturing enterprise at Janovice by magic.36

The number of victims of the sorcery and witchcraft persecutions in Moravia may be estimated at about 300 to 400 persons, including the victims of the Northern Moravian hunts. Most trials ended with a death sentence. Given the considerable gaps in the source material – especially in the records of criminal courts – the real number of victims of the persecution in Moravia in 15th to 18th century could have been almost twice as high.37

**Silesia (Slesian principalities)**38

Today, Silesia belongs to Poland. Only parts of the former Upper Silesian principalities Opava (Troppau), Krnov (Jägerndorf), Těšín (Cieszyn, Teschen) and Nysa (Neisse) are in the Czech Republic. From the 14th century onwards, Silesia was a conglomerate of principalities subject directly or indirectly to the King of Bohemia (immediate and mediate principalities) and a constituent part of the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia. In 1742, the greater part of Silesia was annexed (by the so-called Breslau peace agreement) to the Kingdom of Prussia (with the exception of the principalities Těšín and parts of the principalities Opava, Krnov and Nysa). In the early modern period, Silesia was German with a Slavic minority (Czech at the frontier with Bohemia and Moravia and Polish in Upper Silesia and in the border region with the Kingdom of Poland).

Silesia was the part of the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia that suffered most from sorcery/witchcraft trials. The first known persecution in connection with the crime of magic took place in Silesia as early as 1456 in Wrocław (Breslau). Two women were condemned to drowning for using harmful spells.39 The main part of the known persecutions before the 1550s took place in the capital of Silesia, Wrocław, as well.40

The witch trials in Silesia ended in the 1750s.41 The decades between the 1580s and the 1680s witnessed the most aggressive phase of witch hunting, including several mass witch hunts.42

The worst witch hunt in Silesia took place in three great waves in the years 1622, 1639–1641 and 1651–1652 in the Upper Silesian principality of Nysa.43 During the last wave of these hunts, which rolled over the country from February 1651 to March 1652, more than 250 people, mostly women, were executed. Mainly responsible for the persecution was the Landeshauptmann (governor) of the principality of Nysa, Georg von Hoditz (died in 1661). The principality belonged to the bishop of Wrocław.44 Fortunately, recent research has proven claims in the older literature to be false: It had been maintained that 23 children, including 17 very small children aged between 9 months and 6 years, were executed for witchcraft in 1651/52. We know now that all of the accused were adults.45
Other mass witch hunts occurred in the years 1663–1665 in the town Zielona Góra (Grünberg) and in the neighbouring villages in the principality of Głogów (Glogau) in Lower Silesia. This hunt led to more than 70 executions. Most of the witchcraft was conducted by the town court in Zielona Góra and by the Landeshauptmann of the principality of Glogau, Franz von Barwitz (died in 1668). Three waves of mass witch hunts in 1638, 1653–1654 and 1662 reached the Upper Silesian principality of Krnov (Jägerndorf), which belonged since the year 1623 to the princes of Liechtenstein. The last wave of this persecution claimed 25 victims. More witch hunts, mainly ones that were only directed against individual suspects, took place in the 1650s and 1660s in two other Upper Silesian principalities: In the principality of Opava, belonging to the Liechtensteins and in the principality of Opole-Racibórz (Oppeln-Ratibor), at that time under the administration of the Crown of Poland.

From the Middle Ages until the 17th century, Silesian towns mostly used Magdeburg Law. As subsidiary law sources, the Carolina (1532), later the Constitution of the Electorate of Saxony (1572) were in use. A detailed and uniform legal regulation of the persecution of witchcraft was brought to Silesia only by the Criminal Order of Emperor Joseph I in 1707 (Josephina). In the regions annexed to the Kingdom of Prussia, the Josephina remained in force until 1794, and in the rest of the Austrian Silesia until 1770, when the Criminal Order of Empress Maria Theresa (Theresiana) was introduced.

Responsible for the persecution of the sorcery/witchcraft in Silesia were the central courts of the principalities (under Landeshauptleute) and town courts of greater towns as well. Since 1548, the courts of the principalities and the towns and as some other courts were de iure subject to the Court of Appeal in Prague. In practice the Prague Court of Appeal was only able to exercise decisive influence in some of the Silesian principalities.

The late phase of the witch hunts after the end of the 17th century was in some of the Upper Silesian principalities accompanied by more numerous cases of alleged vampirism and vampire panics, which led to a post mortem burning of supposed witches and sorcerers as a rule after their exhumation. The last execution for sorcery in Silesia took place in 1730 in Wrocław. The last Silesian witch trial took place in 1757 in Wroclaw as well, where a certain Paul Krottenbeck was condemned to two years in penitentiary. Silesia witnessed a grand total of 444 trials for sorcery and witchcraft between 1456 and 1757. Some of the trials had more than one defendant: 593 persons suffered the death penalty, while 111 persons were sentenced to other, milder punishments or sent home. Besides that, there were 264 other persons accused or investigated whose further fate is not known. Most of them were probably executed, too. In these numbers are included trials against dozens of defendants which took place in the County of Kłodzko (Glatz), which never formed a part of the old Silesia. Kłodzko was regarded as a so-called outer region of the Kingdom of Bohemia. The Kingdom of Prussia annexed the county after the Peace of Breslau in 1742.

Lusatia (Margraviates of Upper and Lower Lusatia)

The greater part of this region is in the southeast of today’s Germany (Bundeslands Saxony and Brandenburg), the smaller part in the southwest of today’s Poland. From the 14th century onwards, Lusatia was a constituent part of the Lands of the
Crown of Bohemia. Upper Lusatia (Oberlausitz) was acquired by the King of Bohemia in 1329, Lower Lusatia (Niederlausitz) in 1367. In 1635, Lusatia (in German Lausitz, in Upper Lusatian Łužica) was annexed to the Electorate of Saxony. Since the acquisition of Lusatia to its annexation to Saxony, the two Margraviates were as a rule directly subject to the Ruler of Bohemia, the chief administrator being the Landvogt (bailiff). In the early modern period Lusatia was an ethnically mixed, German-Slavonic region with the greater towns predominantly German, the countryside Slavic (Lusatian Serbs).

Lusatia was the region which did not witness extensive sorcery and witchcraft trials. In both Margraviates, only 24 such trials took place between 1490 and 1698. Most trials happened after the cession of Lusatia to Saxony (1623/35): 24 persons were accused, among them 17 women. In eight cases the culprit suffered the death penalty, three died in prisons, five were exiled and three set free; as to the other cases, the outcome of the court proceedings is not known.

Since the Middle Ages, town courts of the towns forming the so-called Hexapolis (Oberlausitzer Sechstädtet bund), i.e. the towns Bautzen (in Upper Lusatian Budišín), Löbau (in Upper Lusatian Lubij), Kamenz (in Upper Lusatian Kamjenc), Görlitz (in Polish Zgorzelec, in Upper Lusatian Zhorjelc), Zittau (in Upper Lusatian Žitawa) and Lauban (in Polish and Upper Lusatian Lubai), played an important role in the judicature of Upper Lusatia. Upper Lusatia was divided after the annexation by Saxony into Bautzener and Görlitzer Hauptkreis (main districts of Bautzen and Görlitz). In Upper Lusatia, 14 sorcery trials took place between 1490 and 1698. The first trial took place in Görlitz. The culprit, a Niklas Weller, suffered capital punishment; he was thus the first person to be sentenced to death for malevolent magic in Upper Lusatia and all of the Lusatia. The last trial in Upper Lusatia (and in the whole of Lusatia) took place in Zittau: The two female culprits died in prison in 1698 before the town court could pass a verdict.

In Lower Lusatia, ten trials for sorcery and witchcraft took place between 1534 and 1667. Most trials accumulated in the years 1619 and 1622 when the Landvogt of Lower Lusatia, one Heinrich Anshelm von Promnitz, brought successive charges against five persons. Four of them were executed and one died in prison because of torture. The first trial in Lower Lusatia took place in 1534 on the manorial estate Pfört en (in Lower Lusatian Brody), whose proprietor, Ludomilla von Schönburg, widowed von Biberstein, lost her eyesight and accused a certain Kethe Sthone of causing her illness by magic. The last Lower Lusatian trials took place in the years 1655–1657 at the manorial estate Dobrilugk (also Doberlug, in Lower Lusatian Dobrjolug). The 70-year-old Dorothea Hille and her husband were accused. Dorothea died in prison due to the consequences of torture, whereas her husband was finally set free because of a lack of sufficient evidence.

The Lusatian towns used mainly Magdeburg Law from the Middle Ages. After the annexation to Saxony, the Constitutions of the Electorate of Saxony (1572) were in force, making the pact with the devil a capital offence.

From the year 1548 until the cession to Saxony, the town courts of both Lusatian margraviates were de iure subject to the Court of Appeal in Prague. It appears that only in one case was a Lusatian sorcery trial actually brought to the attention of the Prague court in 1564.

In accordance with Saxon practice, Lusatian courts requested expert opinions in witchcraft cases from the Schöppenstuhl (Court of Appeal) in
Leipzig, the Faculty of Law of the University of Wittenberg and the Faculty of Law of the University of Frankfurt/Oder.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{Slovakia (Upper Hungary)}\textsuperscript{74}

From a geographical point of view, Slovakia is identical to the territory of today’s Slovak Republic, which came into existence after the division of Czechoslovakia in January 1993. It is not a traditional historical territory, but it covers notwithstanding to a great degree the territory designated as Upper Hungary in the Middle Ages and early modern age and which was in the years 1018–1918 part of the Kingdom of Hungary. In the early modern period, the territory was predominantly Slavic save for ethnically Hungarian Southern Slovakia. In some greater towns, ethnic Germans played an important role in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period.

The sorcery and witchcraft trials which took place in the territory of today’s Slovakia belong to a period extending from the beginning of the 16th century to the 1750s. The persecution in Slovakia culminated in the decades roughly between 1670 and 1730.\textsuperscript{75}

The first reliably documented sorcery/witch trial took place in 1517 in the royal town of Košice (Kaschau/Kassa) in Southeastern Slovakia. It did not end with a death sentence.\textsuperscript{76} Until the middle of the 17th century, there were no series of trials in Slovakia. Only a few culprits suffered the death penalty.\textsuperscript{77} These trials took place in Baňská Štiavnica (Schemnitz/Selmecbánya) in 1520 and 1581, in Komárnó (Komorn/Komárom) in 1589, in Bratislava (Preßburg/Pozsony) in 1602,\textsuperscript{78} in Bardejov (Bartfeld/Bártfa) 1629 and in Spiš (Zips/Szepes) in 1636.\textsuperscript{79}

The courts responsible for most trials were the town and shire (\textit{župa}) courts (the so-called \textit{sedriae}). Ecclesiastical courts heard a relatively higher number of sorcery and witchcraft trials.\textsuperscript{80}

The greatest number of trials in Slovakia took place in the ethnically Slavic town Krupina in Middle Slovakia (Karpfen/Korpona).\textsuperscript{81} In the years 1662–1744, there were brought to trial at least 68 persons (mainly women), of whom at least 36 (among them one man) burned at the stake, be it alive or after being decapitated. There were series of trials in Krupina: In 1662 six persons were executed. In 1675, at least 13 persons were brought to trial, 11 of them executed. In 1716, seven were accused, six executed. In 1718, there were investigations against 16 people and one execution.\textsuperscript{82} The last person to be executed in Krupina was a certain Dorota Koziarová, burned alive at the stake as late as 1741.\textsuperscript{83}

A mass witch trial took place in the ethnically predominantly Hungarian royal town of Šamorín (Sommerein/Somorja) in Southern Slovakia. Twenty-one women were charged with witchcraft. Some of the verdicts are now lost, but it seems that only one of the women standing trial was executed. In November 1691, a certain Anna Maria Haczel alias Wolffin was decapitated, her body burned. Some other charged women were heavily fined: The fine was 100 florins.\textsuperscript{84}

In the years 1716–1747, the shire court (\textit{sedria}) in Trenčín (in Hungarian Trenčén) found at least 23 persons (among them four men) guilty of witchcraft. Most of these persons were sentenced to death and executed (as a rule burned at the stake after previous beheading).\textsuperscript{85} At least 19 persons (two of them male) were brought to trial before the \textit{sedria} of the shire of Turiec (in German Turz,
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in Hungarian Turóc) between 1674 and 1749.86 We know of only two sorcery trials conducted in 1727 before the sedria of the Orava (Arwa/Árva) shire. The two female defendants did not suffer capital punishment but were sentenced to milder punishments.87

The shires Trenčín, Turiec and Orava lay in the northeast of Slovakia and were ethnically Slavic. The last known execution for witchcraft in the ethnically Slavic territory of Slovakia took place in 1745, when the shire court in Trenčín had a certain Dorota Kalmová from Střeženice burned at the stake.88 The last execution for magic in Slovakia that is reliably documented was carried out in 1750 in the then ethnically predominantly Hungarian royal town of Košice.89 The last known sorcery/witchcraft trial in the ethnically Slavic territory of Slovakia took place in the years 1748–1749 before the court of the Turiec shire against Sophia Ivanka, widow of Juraj (Georgius) Záturecký.90 Older research literature maintained that there had been a trial in Northern Slovakia in the (ethnically mixed) royal town of Kežmarok (Kăsmark/Késmárk) as late as 1777. This would have been the last witch trial in Slovakia (and consequently in the whole Kingdom of Hungary). However, the date of the trial is wrong; the case in question took place in 1717.91

Sorcery, witchcraft and their persecution in medieval and early modern Slovakia are still awaiting a full systematic analysis by historians. For the time being the numbers of victims of the witch hunts in Slovakia can be estimated at 200 to 300 persons. Most of them were executed. As many sources have been lost, especially those from the 16th century, the real numbers of victims might have been up to 100% higher.92

Poland

Poland was a principality from the second half of the 10th century on and a kingdom since 1025. In 1386, the personal union of the Kingdom of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (including today’s Lithuania and Belarus, the greater part of the existing Ukraine and a part of modern Latvia) was created. The year 1569 witnessed the birth of the Polish-Lithuanian double state (real union) which existed until the so-called division of Poland (1772–1795). The region has a predominantly Slavic population (mainly ethnic Poles).

Record of ecclesiastical courts mention cases of sorcery in the 14th and 15th centuries.93 The earliest regulations concerning the prosecution of magic appear in Polish synodal statutes in 1279.94 Since the 16th century, most cases of sorcery and witchcraft were dealt with by secular, mainly town, courts.95 Until recently, the prevailing opinion was that a constitution of the Polish Sejm (Parliament) from the year 1543 conferred the cases in which a person charged with witchcraft should have caused material harm, malady or death to the secular, first of all town, courts.96 This is at least misleading: The town courts in Poland had the power to prosecute witchcraft on the basis of the regulations of the medieval Magdeburg Law and the Sachsenspiegel (Speculum Saxoniae).97

The number of persons put to death in the sorcery/witchcraft trials in Poland was once estimated at about several thousand, indeed up to 30,000 persons.98 The expert literature accepted for a long time the estimate of Polish historian Bohdan Baranowski (1915–1993), who wrote in 1952 that the number of victims in Poland was 15,000.99 Later on, Baranowski reduced his estimate to several thousand persons,100
Since the seventies, estimates as to numbers of executed in the sorcery/witchcraft trials in the Kingdom of Polonia oscillated between several hundred and a few thousand persons. Baranowski counted two types of trials as witch trials: Firstly witchcraft trials proper (i.e. cases of *maleficium*), and secondly the much more numerous law suits brought against persons who defamed others as witches. More recently, two estimates were published which were based on different data. The lowest estimate (M. Ostling) is 254 trials. (This number includes the relatively few trials in the region of the so-called Red Russia/Red Ruthenia; in Latin *Russia Rubra* or *Ruthenia Rubra*, later Eastern Galicia, today the west of the Ukraine.) In these trials, charges against 509 persons were brought, more than 90% of them women. At least 248 of them were put to death. With regard to the fact that the verdict is in many cases not known, the execution rate might have approached 65%. Those who survived their trials were exiled, flogged, fined or simply sent home. Two hundred and twenty-five of these trials, with 455 defendants and 245 executions, probably took place before the town courts. The higher estimate (M. Pilaszek) states there were 867 trials with 1,316 defendants and 558 executions. Both estimates furnish numbers lower by one or two numeric orders than those stated by Baranowski. Considering the enormous losses of archive material and the complete destruction of the archives of many towns, it isn’t groundless an estimate of at about 2,000 victims of the witchcraft trials in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland during the 16th–18th century.

The first known execution for magic took place in Poland before the ecclesiastical court of Waliszewo in 1511. The first execution following the verdict of a secular court was carried out only in 1544 in Poznań (Posen). Only since the second half of the 16th century was the pact with the devil sporadically mentioned in Polish trials; allusions to sabbath were even rarer. Witchcraft trials that mention sexual intercourse with demons appear for the first time in 1582 (Poznań) and for the second time in 1613 (Kalisz), but the trials did not occur more frequently until the 1640s. More detailed descriptions of the witches’ sabbath appear as far as the Polish trials are concerned only in the second half of the 17th century.

The sorcery/witchcraft trials took place between 1511 and 1775. The overwhelming majority of trials occurred in the years 1650–1725. The witch persecutions in Poland culminated in the last quarter of the 17th century: There were 75 trials, with 151 defendants and 83 executions (estimate of M. Ostling). The persecutions continued with almost the same intensity during the first quarter of the 18th century. The persecution reached an especially high intensity in the towns of Greater Poland (*Wielkopolska*, in Latin *Polonia Maior* – west of the Kingdom of Poland) and in Lesser Poland (*Małopolska*, in Latin *Polonia Minor* – southeast of the existing Poland). The local town courts had the highest execution rate. A considerably smaller number of trials took place in Royal Prussia (north of actual Poland), in Mazovia (*Mazowsze* – northeast of the existing Poland) and in Red Russia, too. The greatest Polish witch hunt ever took place in Greater Poland in the town of Kleczew (Lehmstädt). In this town, 47 trials took place between 1624 and 1738. One hundred and thirty-one persons were accused, of whom at least 92 were executed. The years 1682–1700 alone witnessed 41 of these executions. Sixty trials occurred between the years 1675 and 1711 in the town Fordon (today a part of the town of Bydgoszcz) in Greater Poland. At least a dozen witch trials were conducted in the years 1698–1722 by the court in
the town Nieszawa (Nessau).\textsuperscript{118} The court in the Greater Poland town of Łobżenica (Lobsens) sent 36 witches to the stake in the 17th century, the majority of them in the years 1675–1700.\textsuperscript{119} In the Greater Poland town of Grodzisk (Grätz), five trials with more than one defendant took place between 1700 and 1720; at least 20 died.\textsuperscript{120} Before the town court of Nowe nad Wisłą (in German Neuenburg in Westpreussen), 27 trials occurred during the years 1701–1719.\textsuperscript{121} The town court of Płońsk (Plöhn) brought charges against 44 persons, at least 26 of whom were executed between 1699 and 1713.\textsuperscript{122} Other centres of the witch hunts were the towns Kalisz (Kalisch) (1650–1680),\textsuperscript{123} Gniezno (Gnesen) (1670–1690)\textsuperscript{124} and Poznań.\textsuperscript{125} There was no significant decline in the witch hunts in Poland before 1725.\textsuperscript{126}

Witchcraft defamations with a political motive emerged in the middle of the 16th century at the court of the Polish King Sigismund II Augustus (1520–1572, reigned 1548–1572). The accusations were also directed against the king’s mother, Bona Sforza (1494–1557), who descended from Lombardy, and the king’s second wife, Barbara Radziwiłłówna (1520–1551), who was suspected of using love magic.\textsuperscript{127}

The Polish Sejm decided in 1776 on the abolition of torture and stopped the witch trials in Poland and in the whole of the Polish-Lithuanian union.\textsuperscript{128} For a long time, the opinion prevailed that this step had been taken because of the scandal caused by the spectacular execution of 14 alleged witches, which was said to have happened in 1775 in the small town of Doruchów (about 30 kilometres south of Kalisz) in Greater Poland.\textsuperscript{129} However, it could be demonstrated that the trial in Doruchów had taken place before 1769 and that there had been only six female defendants, all of whom might have survived their trials.\textsuperscript{130} There was a long and difficult controversy over the alleged burning of two witches in Poznań in 1793. This case appeared in some of the older literature as the last (legal) execution for witchcraft in Europe. Polish historians rejected the case as a product of contemporary German (Prussian) propaganda.\textsuperscript{131} The last witch trial in Poland took place apparently in 1775 in Grabów. Isolated lynching cases for witchcraft did occur in the first half of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{132}

The first vernacular language the Malleus maleficarum was translated into was Polish. Stanislaw Zambonis, the secretary to the castellan of Cracow, published translation of the second part of the “Hammer” (in Polish Młot na czarownice) in Cracow (Kraków) in 1614.\textsuperscript{133} In the 17th century, several works of Polish authors who sharply criticized the court proceedings in witchcraft trials appeared in Poland. In 1639, an anonymous tractate, Czarownica powoliana, was published that was strongly influenced by Friedrich Spee’s Cautio Criminalis.\textsuperscript{134}

In Eastern Prussia (the so-called Prince’s Brandenburg Prussia), which lay in the territory of today’s Northeast Poland and existing Kaliningrad (Königsberg) territory of Russia, we find 358 witch trials which took place in the years 1534–1739 plus one more trial that dates from 1788. Charges were brought against 511 persons, most of them female. At least 164 persons (i.e. 32\%) were executed, 148 women and 16 men.\textsuperscript{135}

The witch persecutions culminated in Eastern Central Europe and Eastern Europe later than in West and South Europe and in western parts of the Holy Roman Empire: It happened as a rule in the second half of the 17th century or even in the first third of the 18th century. Only from the second half of the 17th century were the trials in Eastern Central Europe (Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, today’s Lithuania) influenced by Western demonology to a significant degree. Mass witch hunts remained the exception.
Notes


8 Ibid., 237–239.


30 Ibid., 205–206.
32 Lambrecht, Hexenverfolgung, 92–204.
40 Ibid., 318–322 and 467–474.
41 Ibid., 467–476.
42 Ibid., esp. 345–349 and 402–415.
43 Ibid., 92–204.


52 Ibid., 32–41.

53 Ibid., 41–43.

54 Ibid., 47–55.

55 Ibid., 383–401.

56 Ibid., 513.

57 Ibid., 513.

58 Ibid., 404.

59 Ibid., 404 and 466–517.

60 Ibid., 300–316.

61 Ibid., 337–338; Manfred Wilde, Die Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), 375–381.

62 Wilde, Kursachsen, 375–381.

63 Ibid., 375–379.

64 Ibid., 376 and 507.

65 Ibid., 377 and 650.

66 Ibid., 379–381.


68 Ibid., 380 and 556.

69 Ibid., 381 and 484.

70 Ibid., 375–376.

71 Ibid., 375–377.

72 Ibid., 376–377 and 507.

73 Ibid., 381.


83 Ibid., 196.


91 Year 1777 is erroneous f. e. Lengyelová, Bosorky, strigy, čarodějnice, 141; Behringer, “Letzte Hexenverfolgungen,” 418.


WITCH HUNTS IN EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPE


Wyporska, “Poland,” 908.


Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 185–186; Wyporska, “Poland,” 908; Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 46.


Baranowski, Procesy czarownic, passim.

Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, esp. 18–20 and 86–90.

Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 291–304.

Wyporska, “Poland,” 908, estimates on the whole 251 trials with 511 charged (96% women).

Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 45–46 and 244; Wyporska, “Poland,” 908.

Jerzy Woronczak, “Procesy o czary przed poznaniaskim sądem miejskim w XVI wieku,” Literatura Ludowa 16 (1972); passim; Woronczak, Jerzy, 1972, passim; Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 277; Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 244; Wyporska, “Poland,” 908.

Wyporska, “Poland,” 907.

Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 244.

Bogdan Baranowski, Najdawniejsze procesy o czary w Kaliszcu (Łublin: Studia Etnograficzne 2, 1951), 39–55; Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 244.

Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 312–322.


Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 20–21.


Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 18–20; Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 272–274 and 509.


Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 350; Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 20.

Piłaszek, Procesy o czary, 351–352; Ostling, Between the Devil and the Host, 20.

120 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 20.
122 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 21.
123 Wyporska, “Poland,” 908.
124 Ibid.
129 Wyporska, “Poland,” 908.
131 Wyporska, “Poland,” 909.
131 Wyporska, “Poland,” 909.

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