

**Zofia Wilk-Woś**

WSB Merito University Łódź

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5315-1169>

## A Thing about Diseases of the Body and the Minds of the Archbishops of Gniezno in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century

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The archbishops of Gniezno were superiors of the diocese of Gniezno (they held the office which was added according to the Canon Law *ad officia maiora*, they had teaching, priestly and disciplinary authority),<sup>1</sup> and they played an important political role in the state. The position even of bishop in the kingdom in the Middle Ages was significant, as in the king's environment bishops were inferior only to the ruler and his family. On the list of witnesses of royal diplomats and during a courtly feast they had supremacy over the highest secular state dignitaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Teaching authority gave a bishop the right to lecture and to a determined extent to interpret the Church teaching. Priestly authority consisted of administering sacraments, including the ones reserved only for bishops – sacraments of confirmation and Holy Orders. Disciplinary authority included rights to administer a diocese, legislative, judicial and administrative rights. A bishop could legislate alone, together with the chapter or during diocese synods summoned by him. Judicial competence of the archbishop as an ordinary applied to all the faithful. The scope and competence of bishop's judiciary are discussed in the further part of the article. The bishops could execute regulations of superior authorities, proclaimed and implemented decisions of the Holy See and synods. They examined and presented to the pope requests for dispensation, they supervised church institutions, charity facilities, hospitals, schools and their property, they allowed formation of new church foundations: Andrzej Tomczak, *Kancelaria biskupów włocławskich w okresie księgi wpisów (XV–XVIII w.)* (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1964), 20–21; Stanisław Librowski, “«Wizytacje diecezji włocławskiej,» 1: «Wizytacje diecezji kujawskiej i pomorskiej,» Vol. 1: «Opracowanie archiwalno-źródłoznawcze,» *Archiwa, Biblioteki, Muzea Kościelne* 8 (1964): 45–46.

Bishops also had a privileged position in the king's council, and Gniezno archbishops had the first place here.<sup>2</sup>

The role of the archbishops of Gniezno for the state thus encourages research on various aspects of their lives and activities. Numerous works address the problem of their intellectual preparation, education and experience, which enabled them to perform their functions properly.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore worth trying to look at their physical condition and health as well. The primary source of observation for this will be the works of Jan Długosz. Unfortunately, reading his texts – *the Annals* and *Catalogues of the Archbishops of Gniezno* – does not give us a full picture of the health of the hierarchs, because the narrative of *the Annals* includes only the facts important to the historian, while the *Lives* are written according to the rhetorical rules of the time. The example of Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki indicates that the best source material to learn about the health and mental condition of the writer are his letters. The bishop of Cracow, not only in his correspondence with his doctor, did not hide his state of health (open and festering leg wounds, probably caused by varicose veins and obesity), and it can even be assumed that “illness and old age were for him a readily used excuse for absences from parliament sessions, to which he did not feel like going.” We know that illness caused him pain, made it difficult for him to move, and even sometimes kept him in bed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki and his supporters tried to question the first position of archbishops in the royal council. The king's decision maintained the privileged position of archbishops in Polish Church and introduced the principle of the cardinal and the archbishop taking the first place in the council alternately. The decision also ordered respect for Oleśnicki as a cardinal: Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Gnieźnie (AAG), Dypl. Gn, syng. 452; *Volumina legum*, wyd. Jozafat Ohryzko, t. 1 (Petersburg 1859), 77–78; Zofia Wilk-Woś, “W służbie Kościoła i Jagiellonów. Prymasostwo polskie w latach 1422–1493” in *Dzieje prymasostwa polskiego*, red. Łukasz Kruczek (Gniezno: Wydawnictwo Gaudentinum, 2017), 81–87; see also: Tomasz Graff, “Wokół kardynałatu biskupa krakowskiego Zbigniewa Oleśnickiego,” *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* 129 (2002): 19–50.

<sup>3</sup> Henryk Likowski, “Powstanie godności prymasowskiej. Ustęp z dziejów hierarchii Kościoła polskiego,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 19, 1 (1915): 21–44, nr 2, 154–190; Józef Nowacki, “De archiepiscopi gnesnensis dignitate ac praerogativa primatiali,” *Collectanea Theologica* XVIII, 3–4 (1937): 616–700; *O godnościach i uprawnieniach prymasowskich arcybiskupa gnieźnieńskiego*, transl. A. Strzelecka (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza 2008); Jacek Wiesiołowski, “Episkopat polski w XV w. jako grupa społeczna” in *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej*, t. 4 (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 236–295; Tomasz Graff, *Episkopat monarchii jagiellońskiej w dobie soborów powszechnych w XV wieku* (Kraków 2008); Antoni Gąsiorowski, “Arcybiskupi gnieźnieńscy w Polsce pierwszych Jagiellonów,” *Roczniki Historyczne* 59 (1993): 93–112; Wojciech Fałkowski, *Elita władzy w Polsce za panowania Kazimierza Jagiellończyka (1447–1491)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Fundacji “Historia pro Futuro,” 1992); Krzysztof Ozóg, *Uczeni w monarchii Jadwigi Andegaweńskiej i Władysława Jagiełły (1384–1434)* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Maria Koczerska, *Zbigniew Oleśnicki i kościół krakowski w czasach jego pontyfikatu (1423–1455)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2004), 273.

A characteristic quality of the church and public activity of the archbishops was their mobility; it was probably dependent not only on the degree of these hierarchs' involvement in the matters of the archdiocese and state but also on their age and health. The typical model for their functioning was *episcopus ambulans*. The journeys of archbishops were caused by their ecclesiastical and state duties, but they also shaped by the differences in the wealth of various estates, as ailing hierarchs were probably more likely to choose castles and manors with more comfortable living facilities for their places of residence.<sup>5</sup> Long journeys may have been tiring and not conducive to maintaining a proper diet. In addition, some of the archbishops did not shy away from attending sumptuous feasts, sometimes organising them themselves. And the basis for a long life and a peaceful old age without undue suffering as advised by medieval medical textbooks was proper nourishment and moderation in eating and drinking.<sup>6</sup>

For our considerations the age the nominees became archbishops is important. The youngest archbishop at the moment of taking over the diocese was Wincenty Kot (38 years old), Jan Sprowski (42 years) was four years older, then we have Mikołaj Kurowski (47 years), Zbigniew Oleśnicki (51 years), Mikołaj Trąba and Władysław Oporowski (both 54 years) and Jan Gruszczyński (59 years). Wojciech Jastrzębiec and Jakub Siennicki (both 61 years) were thought to be the oldest.<sup>7</sup> So,

<sup>5</sup> See more: Zofia Wilk-Woś, *Późnośredniowieczna kancelaria arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich* (Łódź: Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 2013), 30–34.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Nodl, *Średniowiecze w nas* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2019), 81–83.

<sup>7</sup> About the archbishops discussed in the work see more: Gąsiorowski, "Arcybiskupi gnieźnieńscy w Polsce pierwszych Jagiellonów"; Wilk-Woś, *Późnośredniowieczna kancelaria*; Jan Korzytkowski, *Arcybiskupi gnieźnieńscy: prymasowie i metropolici polscy od roku 1000 aż do roku 1821 czyli do połączenia arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego z biskupstwem poznańskim*, t. 2 (Poznań: Drukarnia Kuriera Poznańskiego, 1888); Tadeusz Silnicki, *Arcybiskup Mikołaj Trąba* (Warszawa: PAX, 1954); Grażyna Lichończak-Nurek, *Wojciech herbu Jastrzębiec arcybiskup i mąż stanu (ok. 1362–1436)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Papierskiej Akademii Teologicznej, 1996); Stefan Hryn, *Zbębna spacja Wincenty Kot prymas Polski (1436–1448)* (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1948); Zofia Wilk-Woś, "Władysław z Oporowa (ok. 1395–1453) podkanclerzy królewski, biskup wrocławski i arcybiskup gnieźnieński," *Studia Claromontana* 21 (2003); *Mikołaj Trąba mąż stanu i prymas Polski. Materiały z Konferencji Sandomierz 13–14 czerwca 2008 roku*, red. Feliks Kiryk (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawniczo-Drukarska Secesja, 2009); Jarosław Nikodem, "Mikołaj Trąba, amator patrie, pierwszy prymas Polski" in *Dzieje prymasostwa polskiego*, red. Łukasz Kruczek (Gniezno: Wydawnictwo Gaudentinum: 2017); Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowi, "Kurowski Mikołaj (zm. 1411)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 16 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1971), 261–262; Stefan M. Kuczyński, "Mikołaj Trąba (ok. 1358–1422)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 21 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1976), 97–99; Aleksander Świeżawski, "Kot Wincenty (ok. 1395–1448)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 14 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1968–1969), 450–452; Antoni Gąsiorowski, "Oporowski Władysław (zm. 1453)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 24 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1979), 142–144; Karol Górski, "Jan ze Sprowy (zm. 1464)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 10 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1962–1964), 479; Feliks

the age of most of the nominees was already higher than the average life expectancy for that period. In addition, their age shows us the amount of experience of the primate and it may indirectly confirm the weakening of the political activity of a given archbishop, which was noted in the sources. The length of performing the archbishop function is also important. Władysław Oporowski administered the archdiocese of Gniezno for the shortest time, namely for four years. Jakub from Sienna's pontificate was two years longer. Mikołaj Kurowski and Jan Gruszczyński held office for nine years, Mikołaj Trąba for ten. Wincenty Kot, Jan Sprowski and Zbigniew Oleśnicki stayed in Gniezno for 11 years. The pontificate of Wojciech Jastrzębiec was the longest – 13 years, which means that he was about 74 years old when he died.<sup>8</sup> The age of subsequent archbishops points out that they may have suffered from many age-related illnesses. Unfortunately, sources give us only very little information about the appearance and health of the hierarchs; they hardly ever record more precise and detailed information about the circumstances and causes of their death. For example, a very important source for the church activities of archbishops – the Chapter Book – only records information about the death of the archbishop, the bringing of the body of the deceased to Gniezno, the date and costs of his funeral, exequies, the place of burial in the cathedral and the destruction of the archbishop's seals. The files do not note the actual cause of the archbishop's death.<sup>9</sup>

The main sources here are the works of Długosz – the *Catalogue of the Archbishops of Gniezno* and the *Annals*. The form and function of these works already at the outset, regrettably, limit the possibilities of learning about the topic of our interest. Another thing that should be noted at the beginning is that the researchers of Długosz's *Catalogues* emphasise the frequent lack of the *Catalogues'* objectivity. Długosz's sympathies and antipathies are clearly visible in his biographies of the bishops.<sup>10</sup> Medieval catalogues served the purpose of documenting the origins of the bishopric and compiling a complete list of bishops from its inception. The bishops who were Długosz's contemporaries were supposed to imitate the good deeds of their predecessors and avoid the mistakes and sins committed by them thanks to reading about their lives. The catalogue of the archbishops of Gniezno is written according to a scheme in which Długosz took into account

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Kiryk, "Jakub z Sienna (1413–1480)" in *ibidem*, 364–367; Irena Sułkowska-Kurasiowa, "Oleśnicki Zbigniew (ok. 1430–1493)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 23 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, Polska Akademia Nauk, 1978), 784–786.

<sup>8</sup> Gąsiorowski, "Arcybiskupi gnieźnieńscy": 107–109; Wilk-Woś, *Późnośredniowieczna kancelaria*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> AAG, Acta capituli Gnesnensis, ACap. B14, B15, B16; Marta Czyżak, *Kapituła katedralna w Gnieźnie w świetle metryki z lat 1408–1448* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), 276–282.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Szymański, „Wstęp do Katalog Jana Długosza” in *Katalogi biskupów krakowskich*, wyd. Jan Szymański, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, s.n., t. 10, cz. 2 (Warszawa: PWN, 1974), 130.

in turn: 1) the date and manner of election of the hierarch, 2) his nationality, 3) his family or lineage and coat of arms, 4) the date of ordination, 5) his characteristics, 6) the most important political events of the pontificate and the activities of the bishop, 7) the illness and date of death, the period of office, and the place where the deceased was buried, 8) his merits and foundations.<sup>11</sup>

For the purposes of this work, the most interesting parts of the biographies are those dealing with the characteristics of the bishop, his illness and date of death. Unfortunately, in the *Catalogue of Gniezno archbishops* we can find only the descriptions of Władysław Oporowski and Jan Gruszczyński and a remark about the height of Jakub from Sienno.<sup>12</sup>

Długosz described Oporowski as a man with a shining bald spot and thin hair. The archbishop was thought to be moderate and economical in his lifestyle, and he was surrounded by only a small number of household members.<sup>13</sup> In the *Catalogue of Włocławek bishops* Długosz added also that Oporowski was accurate and careful in speech, he suffered all the time from hoarseness and his medium-height posture was bent due to colic.<sup>14</sup>

In his three catalogues Długosz also described the appearance of Jan Gruszczyński.<sup>15</sup> The primate was of tall height with a swarthy complexion, black hair, dark eyes and delicate features “sed in vita petulantiae et cupiditatis proclivus, peccatorum molem nihili pendebat mundanis et temporalibus deditus et in sanguinem lascivus”. It can be noticed that in the *vitae* of Gruszczyński the annalist applied an interesting literary device – through the conjunction *sed* he stressed that bad deeds and blameworthy behavior of the primate did not comply with his appearance.

We learn about the appearance of Jakub from Sienno only that he was “parum iustae staturae” and that “irascibilitas” was his main vice. But though Jakub easily threw a tantrum, he equally easily regained composure.<sup>16</sup>

In the last part of the catalogue bios Długosz does give the date and circumstances of the archbishops’ deaths and the places of their burial. From the records we can also indirectly come to some conclusion about the health of the clergymen before their death.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Dąbrowski, *Dawne dziejopisarstwo polskie (do roku 1480)* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 1964), 212; Maria Koczerska, “Mentalność Jana Długosza w świetle jego twórczości,” *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 15 (1971): 123.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Długosz, *Catalogus Archiepiscoporum Gnesnensium* (KAG) in *Joannis Dlugossii senioris, canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*, t. 1, wyd. Ignacy Polkowski, Żegota Pauli (Cracoviae: Etyptographia Ephemeridum “Czas” Fr. Kluczycki & Soc, 1887), 374, 376, 377.

<sup>13</sup> KAG, 374.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Długosz, „Catalogus Episcoporum Wladislaviensium” (KBWł) in *Joannis Dlugossii senioris*, 538.

<sup>15</sup> KBWł, 540; Jan Długosz, *Catalogus Episcoporum Cracoviensium* (KBK) in *Joannis Dlugossii senioris*, 433; KAG, 376.

<sup>16</sup> KAG, 378.

The cause of Mikołaj Kurowski's death was injuries sustained when falling off a horse during his trip to a meeting with the king in Gliniany in Rus. According to Długosz this unfortunate accident took place in Krzczów, with the archbishop dying on Sunday 7 September 1411 in Ropczyce, having received the last rites.<sup>17</sup> The fall off the horse must have been very serious, particularly since Mikołaj Kurowski at the moment of his death was not yet sixty as opposed to Wojciech Jastrzębiec who was 74 years old and who also had a similar accident. We can additionally assume that Kurowski's mental state could have influenced his health; the accusations of improper relationships with the queen, Anna, could have disrupted his health. When the accident occurred, the archbishop was on his way to meet the king, who intended to pass judgement on Kurowski.<sup>18</sup> False rumours could have had a negative impact on Kurowski's health because the archbishop might well have been afraid that they could damage his authority. As I have mentioned, the circumstances of Wojciech Jastrzębiec's death were similar to the causes of Kurowski's death. Jastrzębiec too fell off his horse, this time while riding over a bridge. The fall caused the disease which led to the death of the archbishop on Sunday 1 September 1436 in the archbishop's village of Mnichowice in the thirteenth year of his pontificate.<sup>19</sup> The results of falling off a horse turned out to be tragic for both the aforementioned elderly archbishops. As an aside, according to St. Brigid, riding horses, probably very good, stout and expensive steeds, emphasised the prestige of the traveller and meant taking the devil on one's back, but as we can see, the archbishops ignored these admonitions.<sup>20</sup> However, we do not know whether the fall from the horse was the direct cause as such of the deaths of Mikołaj Kurowski and Wojciech Jastrzębiec. Długosz's laconic account does not allow us to say whether the deaths of the hierarchs occurred shortly after the accident or some time later.

Missing from the *Catalogues* and *Annals* were such details as the ones given to us by John of Czarkow presenting on the pages of his Chronicle a complete description of the last days of the life and illness of Casimir the Great.<sup>21</sup> In the beginning of September 1370 during a hunt near Przedborze in pursuit of a deer, the king's horse fell down, and the king, falling, injured his left shin. A fever later appeared

<sup>17</sup> KAG, 368.

<sup>18</sup> Wioletta Zawitkowska, "Niewierność małżeńska królowej Zofii Holszańskiej w 1427 r. – prawda, pomówienie czy plotka polityczna? Próba rekonstrukcji wydarzeń na tle oskarżeń innych żon Jagiełły," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 123 (2016): 36–38.

<sup>19</sup> KAG, 371.

<sup>20</sup> Ewa Wólkiewicz, "Episcopus ambulans. Formy i organizacja podróży biskupów wrocławskich w późnym średniowieczu" in *Samotrzeć, w kompanii czy z orszakiem? Społeczne aspekty podróży w średniowieczu i w czasach nowożytnych*, red. Monika Saczyńska, Ewa Wólkiewicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, 2003), 105, przyp. 109.

<sup>21</sup> "Joannis de Czarnkow Chronicon Polonorum," opr. Jan Szlachtowski in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, t. II, wyd. August Bielowski (Lwów 1872), 631–632; *Kronika Jana z Czarkowa*, tłum. Józef Żerbiłło, oprac. Marek D. Kowalski (Kraków: TAIWPN Universitas, 2006), 23–26.

due to the wound, but it quickly subsided and Casimir set off on his journey to Sandomierz. It is believed that the cause of the king's death subsequently was gluttony and a bath that the king took against the prohibitions of his doctor upon arriving in Sandomierz. The bath caused a fever, despite which the ruler continued on his way to Krakow. As a result, Casimir the Great developed croup pneumonia, which resulted in complications and became the direct cause of the king's death. Casimir the Great died in Krakow on November 5, 1370. However, the fall from the horse may have weakened the body of the already elderly and obese ruler.<sup>22</sup>

It was mentioned above that the king contracted a fever after the fall and after bathing. The term *febris* in the sources is recorded precisely as a symptom of the disease, less often it means "malaria," in Polish "zimnica." Probably this disease is mentioned in the case of one of the archbishops. This can be evidenced by the way Długosz gave information about it in the *Annals*. Wojciech Jastrzębiec, then bishop of Poznań, having come to the king near Malbork, fell ill with a fever. Władysław Jagiełło sent the sick man back to his diocese. The historian added that the fever was to hold the bishop for as long as a year and a half.<sup>23</sup> However, despite this illness, Wojciech Jastrzębiec had already participated in peace talks with the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in January 1411.<sup>24</sup> Malaria as an endemic disease occurred in Poland until World War II, and it was already recorded in written sources in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup>

The causes of deaths of the remaining archbishops were diseases. In the bio of Mikołaj Trąba, Długosz wrote that the archbishop, despite a long and serious disease, was forced by Vladislav Jagiełło to travel to Hungary in order to make peace on the day of St Andrew. The Primate warned the king that if he went on this diplomatic mission, he would die.<sup>26</sup> Mikołaj Trąba's prediction came true. On Thursday, 4 December 1422 he died during his trip in the village of Lubicz, having received all the sacraments.<sup>27</sup> We don't know what kind of illness the archbishop suffered

<sup>22</sup> Roman Grodecki, "Zgon Kazimierza Wielkiego (1370)" in *Mediaevalia. W 50 rocznicę pracy naukowej Jana Dąbrowskiego* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960), 154–157; Jerzy Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 1986), 216–218.

<sup>23</sup> *Joannis Dlugossii Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae (Annales)*, lib. 10/11: 1406–1412 (Varsaviae: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997), 132.

<sup>24</sup> Sobiesław Szybkowski, "Otoczenie króla Władysława Jagiełły w końcowym etapie Wielkiej Wojny (listopad 1410 – styczeń 1411)," *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica* 19 (2012): 61.

<sup>25</sup> Zob. szerzej: Eugeniusz Dorsz-Szteke, "Zimnice w świetle niektórych polskich pism medycznych XVI–XVIII wieku," *Wiadomości Parazytologiczne* 22, 2 (1976); W.R. Gutt, "O niektórych chorobach występujących w Polsce w XIII i XIV wieku," *Przegląd Lekarski* 22, 10 (1966).

<sup>26</sup> *Annales*, lib. 11: 1413–1430 (Varsaviae: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), 184–185; Urszula Borkowska, "Wizerunek Mikołaja Trąby w dziełach Jana Długosza" in *Mikołaj Trąba mąż stanu i prymas Polski. Materiały z Konferencji Sandomierz 13–14 czerwca 2008 roku*, red. Feliks Kiryk (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawniczo-Drukarska Secesja, 2009), 131; Silnicki, *Arcybiskup Mikołaj Trąba*, 201.

<sup>27</sup> KAG, 370; *Annales*, lib. 11, 185

from and what its causes were, but it must have been serious, and he was aware of his ill health and the consequences for him of submitting to the king's will.

In the twelfth year of Wincenty Kot's pontificate he fell seriously ill and on 14 September 1448 he died in the archbishops' palace in Uniejów, having received all the sacraments.<sup>28</sup> And here Długosz also failed to mention what disease he died of and what caused it. For sure he was 50 years old at his death and was the youngest hierarch in the fifteenth century. Perhaps an unspecified stomach illness had some connection with his death. Długosz reported that the primate had such serious stomach problems that after a meal he could not travel by cart or on horseback without difficulty.<sup>29</sup> It is likely that Wincenty Kot is also the author of a letter from a book of forms, in which he informs that he will not be coming to the convention planned for September 8. The archbishop wrote that while travelling to the planned reunion with the King of Hungary, he caught an illness that wiped out the hierarch to the last. He did, however, manage to reach Sandomierz, but then a stronger impotence set in, which forced him to interrupt the trip and retreat.<sup>30</sup> However, the author of the letter did not use, apart from the phrases "egrito apprehendit, que nos fatigavit ad extremum," "intensior in corpore nostro infirmatas invaluit," words that would allow us to identify better the illness and its causes.

On 11 March 1453 Władysław Oporowski died paralysed in the castle in Oporów. Before his death he received the sacraments. In the *Annales* Długosz exchanged the word "paralysum" with the word "apoplexia."<sup>31</sup> It is likely that the archbishop suffered a stroke. The stroke must have been very serious and caused the death of Oporowski, who until a few months earlier had taken an active part in public life. Teutonic sources inform us that Oporowski had been seriously ill before his death.<sup>32</sup> The archbishop mentioned this in a letter, dated in Uniejów on November 11, 1452. In it, Oporowski explained that due to ill health he could not then answer the questions posed by the Prussian deputy Nicholas Weterheym, doctor of decrees, due to their *grandem materiam*, but promised that he would do so when his health permitted him.<sup>33</sup>

An ailing Jan Sprowski died in the castle in Uniejów on Saturday 14 April 1464<sup>34</sup>. The illness had lasted for several years and in April 1461 at the request of

<sup>28</sup> KAG, 373.

<sup>29</sup> KAG, 372.

<sup>30</sup> *Liber formularum ad ius polonicum necnon canonicum*, red. Bolesław Ulanowski (Kraków: Spółka Wydawnicza Polska, 1893), nr 37.

<sup>31</sup> KAG, 374; *Annales*, lib. 12: 1445–1461 (Cracoviae: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2003), 153.

<sup>32</sup> Marian Biskup, *Zjednoczenie Pomorza Wschodniego z Polską w połowie XV wieku* (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), 184–185.

<sup>33</sup> Łukasz Włodarczyk, "Posłowie arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich do Prus w XV wieku. Przyczynki do badań nad otoczeniem prymasów Polski w późnym średniowieczu," *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Prace Historyczne* 146, 4 (2019): 698.

<sup>34</sup> KAG, 375; *Annales*, lib. 12: 1462–1480 (Cracoviae: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2005), 81.

Sprowski the chapter gave a license *ab ecclesiam Gneznensis absendi* to a medical doctor, Wojciech from Opatów, who the sick archbishop wanted to have at his side.<sup>35</sup> Describing the circumstances of his death, Długosz writes that the archbishop had been suffering from scabies since his youth.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise the health of Jan Gruszczyński had been serious a couple of years before his death. The Chronicler in *Annals* in 1469 records his serious illness. When he accompanied the king on a journey, he suffered a paralysis of the left side of his body (“*valitudinarius enim erat et paralytica egritudine in latere sinistro*”). These health problems made the primate give up the office of chancellor.<sup>37</sup>

Jan Długosz very accurately described the circumstances of Jan Gruszczyński's death. He mentions that the primate came to Krakow due to state matters. There on Friday 8 October 1473 without any previous signs of disease, a sudden illness came, although a day earlier till two in the morning he had been merrily wasting his time with the bishop of Włocławek – Jakub – and others. At three o'clock a sudden illness (weakening) came, he fell into madness and in a room in the Tyniec Abbey, where he stayed, he breathed his last without confession and viaticum. The chronicler stressed that Gruszczyński earned such an unworthy death with his life: “*sortitus mortem vitae congruentem*” (likewise in *Annals*: “*talem mortem sortitus, qualem vitam duxeret*”).<sup>38</sup> In Długosz's opinion, the deceased through his scandalous activities decreased the significance of the bishops' office which he had held in three dioceses. It is worth noting that the chronicler in *Annals* presented an even more distinct picture of the “bad death” of the primate. Even reading the gospel by the ministry and exorcism did not help:

[...] post horam terciam noctis subito languore invasus, ad extremum vero valido furore correptus et in amenciam versus, familiaribus salubria monita et evangelicas lecciones ceterasque exorcisiones, quasi energuminum curaturi, nequicquam adhibentibus, adeo per noctem illam agitabatur, quousque spiritum in domo abbatis Thinyecensis, in qua hospitabatur, inconfessus et inviaticatus et omnis rationis expres, exhalaret.<sup>39</sup>

Długosz's report seems to be partial and contradicts the message of another contemporary *Catalogue I of the archbishops of Gniezno*. This source confirms that on 8 October the archbishop organised supper for the bishops and prelates who had come to the meeting with the king. He mentions Jakub from Sienna and another bishop of Krakow – Jan Rzeszowski. They both agree concerning the place where the archbishops stayed – he confirms that Gruszczyński enjoyed the hospitality

<sup>35</sup> AAG, ACap., B15, k. 150; Jan Korytkowski, *Arcybiskupi gnieźnieńscy: prymasowie i metropolici polscy od roku 1000 aż do roku 1821 czyli do połączenia arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego z biskupstwem poznańskim*, t. 2 (Poznań: Drukarnia Kuriera Poznańskiego, 1888), 307.

<sup>36</sup> KAG, 375.

<sup>37</sup> *Annales*, lib. 12: 1462–1480, 220.

<sup>38</sup> KAG, 376–377; *Annales*, lib. 12: 1462–1480, 317.

<sup>39</sup> *Annales*, lib. 12: 1462–1480, 317.

of the abbot from Tyniec. An anonymous author of *Catalogue I* confirms that the archbishop's sickness was sudden. The sick archbishop called his chancellor Benedykt from Łopienna and asked for a confession. Then he asked everyone to leave and he remained alone. When Benedict returned to the primate's room, he found him dead.<sup>40</sup>

Długosz wrote that Gruszczyński fell into madness before his death, but we can suspect that his negative attitude towards archbishop Gruszczyński could be the basis for false accusations.

It must be noted that in the case of the analysed *Catalogues* Długosz would make a stereotypical remark that a deceased received the last sacraments before his death. There is no such remark only in Jan Sprowski's bio. However, in the life of Jan Gruszczyński the chronicler stresses that he died "inconfessus et inviaticatus" in order to complete the image of an evil bishop.<sup>41</sup> Therefore Długosz's *exemplum* is very interpretable – Jan Gruszczyński, a bad bishop, suffers a terrible punishment for unworthily taking over the bishopric of Krakow. He dies without confession, possessed by the devil.<sup>42</sup>

Archbishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki had some health problems before his death as well. Miechowita writes that finally after the election of Jan Olbracht as the Polish king, the archbishop of Gniezno became reconciled to a new ruler and crowned him in Krakow on 23 September 1492. Some time after the celebration Zbigniew Oleśnicki was to leave Krakow.<sup>43</sup> This was probably caused by his sickness as during the coronation the archbishop had been "debilis et hydropicus."<sup>44</sup> The primate went to the archbishops' palace in Łowicz where he stayed till his death. He died on 2 February 1493, five month after the coronation.<sup>45</sup>

Archbishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki suffered from dropsy which is indicated simply as an abnormal accumulation of fluid (water) in the tissues of the body. Untreated dropsy was always fatal. The major underlying causes of dropsy are heart failure, liver failure, kidney failure, and malnutrition. However, heart failure was probably the most frequent of the four. We don't know which problems – heart, liver or kidney – could have killed Oleśnicki. We can only rule out malnutrition as the cause of the disease. We may also wonder if Oleśnicki's infirmity was not caused only by physical illness, but was also associated with mental problems.

<sup>40</sup> "Katalogi arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich," oprac. Xawery Liske in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, t. 3: *Katalog I* (tzw. katalog świętokrzyski) (Lwów: Akademia Umiejętności, 1878), 399–400.

<sup>41</sup> KAG, 377.

<sup>42</sup> Urszula Borkowska, "Regnum i sacerdotium w pismach Jana Długosza," *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 26 (1981): 18.

<sup>43</sup> Fryderyk Papee, *Jan Olbracht* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1936), 31–32.

<sup>44</sup> Maciej z Miechowa, *Chronica Polonorum* (Cracoviae 1521), 348 (347).

<sup>45</sup> Irena Sułkowska-Kurasiowa, "Oleśnicki Zbigniew (ok. 1430–1493)" in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 23 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1978), 786.

Colic, edemas, paralysis, apoplexy, dropsy and scabies – that is the only information about the diseases which the archbishops suffered from. They could have been related to the old age of the clergymen and unhealthy lifestyle. Some symptoms, e.g. Oporowski's hoarseness, Wincenty Kot's stomach aches or sicknesses like Sprowski's scabies troubled them for a longer time. The above mentioned scabies could have been particularly acute and difficult in contact with others as it causes serious skin lesions and itchiness which increases particularly with the rise of body temperature, e.g. at night when his body is covered. Itchiness could disturb the archbishop's sleep and made it impossible for him to rest properly and consequently led to constant tiredness and irritability of the sick. Colic, edemas and effects of a stroke e.g. partial paralysis could prevent the bishops from exercising their responsibilities and limit their public activities due to problems with travelling.

But they travelled, and even nowadays long journey for a man over 60 years old could be tiring and may have an adverse impact on his health, not only when he fell off a horse. A travel comfort in the past was rather low due to roads quality, poor protection from weather conditions and low travel speed. It could be additionally impacted by natural hazards and dangers on the road.

It is likely that the archbishops were aware of their age and health, as evidenced by the funeral preparations made while they were still alive. Wojciech Jastrzębiec had already ordered a tombstone in Bruges a few years before his death – in 1422, which was to be modeled on the tombstone of Archbishop Janusz Suchywilk.<sup>46</sup> He informed the chapter of this order and the details of his funeral in April 1426.<sup>47</sup> The archbishop wanted to be buried under this tombstone in front of the main altar. Then, Jan Sprowski ordered two years before his death the tombstone modeled on Jastrzębiec's tombstone. The contract for this order was signed with Jodok Tauchen, a Wrocław lapidary and envoy of the Archbishop of Gniezno in Wrocław on October 18, 1462.<sup>48</sup> A tombstone may also indicate that its founder wanted to ensure a worthy remembrance of himself and his achievements while still alive, especially that a tombstone was one of the most popular forms of commemoration among medieval elites in Poland. The archbishops of Gniezno took special care to add splendor to their burials. The archbishops' concern to immortalize the achieved spiritual dignity and social position with a tombstone resulted from both intellectual culture and tradition, as well as financial possibilities.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Grażyna Lichończak-Nurek, *Wojciech herbu Jastrzębiec arcybiskup i mąż stanu (ok. 1362–1436)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Papieskiej Akademii Teologicznej, 1996), 226–229; Przemysław Mrozowski, *Polskie nagrobki gotyckie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 1994), 255–256.

<sup>47</sup> AAG, ACap, B14, k. 123; *Acta capitulorum nec non iudiciorum ecclesiasticorum selecta*, wyd. Bolesław Ulanowski, t. 1: *Acta capitulorum Gneznensis, Poznansiensis et Vladislaviensis (1408–1530)* (Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1894), nr 1602.

<sup>48</sup> Lichończak-Nurek, *Wojciech herbu Jastrzębiec*, 229; Mrozowski, *Polskie nagrobki gotyckie*, 257.

<sup>49</sup> Mrozowski, *Polskie nagrobki gotyckie*, 24–26; Piotr Nowakowski, "O dwóch nagrobkach Mikołaj Tomickiego," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Archaeologica* 24 (2004): 249, 262.

Medieval people respected old age, because it was associated wisdom and a sense of justice.<sup>50</sup> Aged archbishops continue to participate in royal councils and political decision-making. Despite illness, they go on diplomatic missions (Mikołaj Trąba), travel to conventions (Wincenty Kot) or receive deputies (Władysław Oporowski). Despite their age and illness, they are able to devote themselves to their homeland, even when it costs them their lives.

#### SUMMARY

The role of the archbishops of Gniezno for the state encourages research on various aspects of their lives and activities. It is therefore worth trying to look at their physical condition and state of health. The primary source of observation for this is the works of Jan Długosz.

Information about the health of the archbishops is very sparse, but falling off a horse, stroke and dropsy are known causes of their death. The hierarchs' health was probably affected by their age and public activity, and could have limited their mobility.

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<sup>50</sup> See more: Nodl, *Średniowiecze w nas*, 73–75.