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TRADITIONAL CUSTOM OF KETTLEDRUMMING
DURING EUCHARISTIC PROCESSIONS
IN CENTRAL POLAND
(ŁOWICZ MAZOVIA REGION EXAMPLES)

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Subject: Still living folk custom of kettledrumming during religious ceremonies in Łowicz Mazovia region, origins of which go back to the 17th century. The role of the kettledrum as a professional, military instrument used in traditional, religious customs. The instrument as a symbol of Catholicism, and its sound as a symbol of Resurrection, splendor of ceremonies.

Purpose of study: Looking for the roots of the custom in Łowicz region, identifying similar customs in other regions and places of historical area of Poland and comparing these customs with situations in Łowicz region, describing the custom in various places in Łowicz region.

Methods: Historical, descriptive.

Key words: Kettledrum, religious musical custom, religious procession.

Introduction

In 2002 during my field research in Łowicz-Mazovia region (central Poland), I came in touch for the first time with an interesting, undoubtedly old, historical traditional musical custom. I accidentally found an old instrument – the kettledrum in a monumental church dating to the 18th century. This instrument was kept at the church choir. The local priest informed me, that this kettledrum is used during the Eucharistic procession. After a careful examination of Polish ethnographical, musicological and ethnomusicological literature, except for a few short extracts, I didn't find any information, works or articles about this custom. In this situation I began my research and field exploration mainly in the central part of Poland. Since 2002 I have been doing research in 26 villages (parishes) in the Łowicz region. I found and documented eighteen old kettledrums (three of which are broken). As a result of my pioneer searching

I established that this custom was formerly known in various regions of Poland, and is still alive in the Łowicz region. In Native Centre of Monument's Documentation I looked through 92 catalogue sticks connected with kettledrums from the 17th and 18th centuries. Apart from some instruments from Łowicz region, there were photo documents and descriptions of instruments from Płock, Siedlce, Warszawa, Lublin, Radom and Przemyśl regions. Most of them (according to the description) were used during church processions. Based on literature, documentary films and interviews, I managed to conclude that kettledrum accompanied religious customs in Hża near Radom (Kalita 2005: 4; documentary film directed by M. Gątkiewicz, TVP 3, 1988), in Wielopole Skrzyńskie near Rzeszów (Grad 2000: 43–45, 63; Strzałka 1993: 15–17), in Jastarnia near Gdańsk (Czalej 2005) and in Kurpie region (Chętnik 1983: 109; SAYSSE-TOBICZYK 1964: 130–131). In Łowicz region kettledrums accompanied liturgical ceremonies and other agro-religious customs (Ignasiak 2004; Klimaszewska 1981: 143; Lechowa 1967: 284; Zoła 2003: 154), but the origins of this custom are connected with old-Polish courtly ceremonies.

Kettledrums in Poland – Historical Scheme

Kettledrums (*tympanum*), kind of membranophon musical instrument came into Europe from Asia. It appeared in East Europe during the Crusades in the 13th century. Kettledrums in Asia (Syria, China, Japan, Tibet, Burma, India, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and others) and then in Europe, were used as a courtesy and military instrument (Blades, Bowles 2001; Czekanowska 1981). Musical ensembles with trumpets and kettledrums were a kind of aristocratic symbol. Musicians who played kettledrums had special and high social positions compared with other musicians (Blades 1975: 228; Sachs 1989: 307; Żórawska-Witkowska 1997: 124, 128). Asian kettledrums appeared in Poland in sets of Turkish janizarian and Tatar ensembles which had accompanied the “oriental” army during long military provocation (since 1241). The instruments were laced and tied in an Eastern style and were popular in Poland until 1636 (Blades 1975: 230; Sachs 1989: 412–413). We can find a description of the janizarian ensemble at the Polish court of King August II in the historical work of Jędrzej Kitowicz (Kitowicz 1951: 379). He wrote about the alien sound of kettledrums in a very onomatopoeic way and called the musicians “Paukier” (after the German name “Pauken”). This kind of ensemble was supported by the king of Poland, Jan III Sobieski, and many Polish and Lithuanian magnates in the 17th century.

The first, basic role of kettledrums was their military function*. The oldest iconography in Poland shows military trumpeters and kettledrummers (Kamiński 1971: ill. 45). The musicians played military signals and bugle-calls as a signal to attack or retreat. In Ukraine large kettledrums called “litaury” were used by the

* We can find many extracts about military kettledrums in Polish historical literature and in popular military traditional songs, e.g.: *Kotły ogromne na pospolite ruszenie pod Gołąb* (Potocki 1907: 257–258), songs: *W kotły, bębny uderzyli, na wojenkę zatrąbili* (Gloger 1985: 53; Kolberg 1865: 156, 1888: 64), *W kotły, bębny uderzają, już na wojnę wyjeżdżają* (Kolberg 1967: 246), *W kotły biją, w trąby grają, na wojenkę wyganają* (Kolberg 1873: 175).

Cossack army (described by Sienkiewicz 1956: 199–200), and in Russia one finds richly decorated “tołombas” (Blades 1975: 232). Researching old Polish literature is difficult because various authors used the names “drum” and “kettledrum” interchangeably (Szydłowska-Ceglowa 1977: 215–216). Sometimes more precise description allows us to distinguish between “drum” and “kettledrum”. In many situations these instruments were used together.

In 17th century, there were national ceremonies based on ancient Roman triumphant processions, which also had deep religious meaning (Rożek 1976: 15, 177, 1983: 7). Apart from the king and his court, many clergymen took part in the procession. The processions were organized on various occasions: e.g. canonization, moving sacred objects, welcoming members of the upper class (bishops, Primate). The singing of solemn hymns (e.g. “Te Deum”), canon shooting, bell ringing, incense and kettledrumming accompanied baroque religious processions. The ceremony had particularly meaning after the Trident Council named the feast of Corpus Christi “triumph over heresy” (Smosarski 1996: 94). The full splendor of such religious ceremonies were one of the most important ideas of the counterreformation. In Polish historical sources, we can find a lot of information about using kettledrums during processions in Krakow – the former capital of Poland (Przyboś, Żelewski 1959: 142; Grabowski 1852: 208–209; Klonowski 1867: 516; Kolberg 1871: 298; Kronika mieszczanina... 1930: 96; Rożek 1976: 45, 86–87, 168). We have to stress that kettledrums were used in two different ways during religious ceremonies: solo and in ensembles. The famous ethnographical Polish work of Oskar Kolberg informs us about kettledrums accompanying pilgrimages (Kolberg 1887: 293; Woźniak 1993: 23). Another Polish ethnographer, Zygmunt Gloger, described two big military kettledrums in St. Peter and Paul’s church (Antakalnio street) in Vilnius, Lithuania*, and another one, stored in the tower of Mary’s church in Krakow used for signalization (Gloger 1985: 53). In 1596, Warsaw became the capital city of Poland. From that time on, state-religious ceremonies have been taking place at the king’s court (Kitowicz 1951: 19; Szwedowska 1975; Żórawska-Witkowska 1997: 123–124). Taking after the king’s court, magnate’s and Primate’s courts all over Poland created ensembles with kettledrummers amongst other musicians (Rozanow, Smulikowska 1974: 176–180; Golonka, Żmudziński 1994: 102–104, 111; Pośpiech 2005: 85, 88–89).

The Custom in Łowicz Region

Łowicz and the territories on the western edge of the Mazovia region date back to the 11th century and have been the historical domain / property of Gniezno archbishops since 1136, when pope Innocent II issued it according to bulla (edict) (Świątkowski 1961: 4). Łowicz, after Gniezno and Krakow, was a very important centre for church administration in Poland. The Primate’s castle in Łowicz was

* These big military kettledrums are kept there – in the church of Šv. Petro ir Povilo until these days. They were dented in XVIIth century by Michał Kazimierz Pac – the founder of this church.

built after 1355 by the Archbishop Jarosław Bogoria Skotnicki and organized like a king's court. He was the first to use the title, Duke of Łowicz. The name of the Łowicz Duchy first appeared in an inventory of the Łowicz archbishop estate in 1739. Over the centuries, tradition and social consciousness established the name for local people as "Łowicz Księżaks", and the name is still in use by many local farmers. In the 17th and 18th centuries, people from Łowicz and its neighborhood were familiar with regular observance of rich, full of splendor ceremonies.

According to information from "Kurier Polski" (No 698) on the 31st of January 1750, trumpets and kettledrums accompanied *ingres* of Primate Adam Ignacy Komorowski (Szwedowska 1975: 76). Apart from other instruments, the historical ensemble of Łowicz's Primates consisted of four kettledrums as well (according to the inventory from 1792, Kwiatkowski 1939: 90). The desire to save historical instruments and the relative ease of playing the drums helped to keep alive the baroque custom of signaling, so popular in Łowicz villages. The custom is still preserved until today in religious ceremonies. Long lasting, historical superiority of archbishops had very strong, basic influence on local folk devoutness. Łowicz-diocese was established in 1992. Clergy and local people take great care of cultivating this local religious tradition; new kettledrums are made for newly established parishes.

At the beginning of 20th century, two kettledrums were used during the Corpus Christi procession in Łowicz (Łowiczanin, 1913, No 21, p. 4). It was probably due to joint processions from various churches. This practice is still remembered by elderly people – my respondents. One monumental instrument has survived until today in a Collegiate church in Łowicz. It is still used during famous Corpus Christi processions in Łowicz.

The image displays two musical staves for kettledrum performance. The first staff is in 4/8 time and begins with a tempo marking of ~13" and a note value of ≈150. It contains several measures of rhythmic notation with note values of ≈200, ≈236, and ≈184. The second staff is in 2/8 time and begins with a tempo marking of ~21" and a note value of ≈73. It contains several measures of rhythmic notation with note values of ≈101, ≈167, ≈259, ≈465, and ≈206. Both staves include dynamic markings such as 'rall.' and '5'.

Fig. 1. Examples of performances of two kettledrummers from different neighboring villages. The first performer: Banaszczak Stanisław (b. 1935) from Słupia distr. Skierniewice; the Second one: Lesiak Jan (b. 1947) from Reczul distr. Skierniewice.
Transcription: Jacek Jackowski



Fig. 2. Procession on the occasion of Corpus Christi.
Marian Workowski (b. 1928) from Złaków Borowy is drumming.
Photo: Jacek Jackowski, 2003. Złaków Kościelny

Situations of Kettledrumming and Figures of the Drummers

We can divide situations in which the kettledrums are used into two categories:

- Liturgical events (Eucharistic processions on the occasion of Corpus Christi, Resurrection, Indulgence, first Sunday of the Month – during the main holy Mass; during holy Mass at the Transformation; during holy Mass at night on the occasion of Christmas, etc.).
- Paraliturgical events: e.g. walking around the boundaries of fields with a banner and a kettledrum (a kind of agricultural-religious custom).

Most of the kettledrummers known to me from the Łowicz region are (or were) drummers and musicians from traditional folk ensembles (the typical traditional ensemble in Łowicz region is: violin, drum with a triangle (so called “stalka”), harmonica and sometimes clarinet). Formerly, they joined two functions and played at traditional weddings as well as during religious ceremonies. In passing on the tradition, the selection of the kettledrummer occurred in several ways:

- The next kettledrummer was chosen by a former one (a kind of traditional school of drumming).

- A kettledrummer was chosen by a local priest or local people who knew about musical abilities of the candidate.
- A musician declared himself the kettledrummer.
- A kettledrummer inherited his function after his father or grandfather.

Kettledrummers learned how to drum from their predecessors. It is very probable that contemporary performances are very similar to the former, early, historical ones. After comparing rhythms performed by various musicians, we can designate the pattern of rhythms used during processions in the Łowicz region. But each musician executes his own variation based on the pattern that marks it as a traditional way of playing. Rhythms differ a little from village to village. We can designate certain rhythms for specific situations e.g. during the Transformation, as a signal to kneel down, get up, etc. The performers claim, that these rhythms are very old and traditional. How fast the musician can play the tremolo, which is the middle part of the pattern, shows how talented he is.

Table: Information about kettledrummers and situations of kettledrumming.

Place:	Kettledrummers in succession:	Situations of kettledrumming:
Bąków, Łowicz distr.	Rolewski (unknown dates and first name) from Bąków and Stanisław Dziedziela (died ca. 1939) – both born ca. 1900; Warzywoda (unknown dates and first name); Stefan Tarkowski (b. 1936, living in Lasota near Bąków) – traditional drummer who has been playing at traditional weddings	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection; Corpus Christi and Octave; on the first Sunday of the Month during the main holy Mass during Transformation
Bielawy, Łowicz distr.	Stanisław Przeganiąła (1899–1980) drummed until 1975; Władysław Talarowski (1915–1990); Tadeusz Miedzianowski (1936–2004)	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection; Corpus Christi and Octave; Indulgence; during holy Mass at night on the occasion of Christmas (during performing of carol <i>Bóg się rodzi</i>); during the holy Mass during Transformation; formerly after the liturgy of Holy Saturday during walking around village
Bobrowniki, Łowicz distr.	Jan Grzejszczak (b. 1959) when he was a young boy he played guitar and percussion	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection; Corpus Christi; Indulgence; during holy Mass during Transformation; walking around fields' boundaries with a banner and kettledrum

Boczki, Chełmońskie, Łowicz distr.	Józef Rześny (b. 1923) – harmonist, Wiesław Krawczyk (b. 1943) – the son of traditional violinist, when he was 15 he drummed as member of traditional ensemble on traditional dances	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection; Corpus Christi and Octave; Indulgence; during holy Mass during Transformation and as a signal for kneeling down and getting up; during the Way of the Cross (XII station); during walking around fields' boundaries with a banner and kettledrum on Easter Tuesday
Domaniewice, Łowicz distr.	Unknown man from Stara Wieś near Domaniewice; Henryk Kostrzewa (1919–1994); Jan Szymański (b. 1948) – traditional violinist	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection; Corpus Christi and Octave; on every Sunday during the main holy Mass during Transformation
Godzianów, Skierniewice distr.	Mozga (unknown dates and first name) nickname: Franowski; Sylwester Kowara (unknown dates, probably born in at the end of XIX century) – traditional violinist and cornet player	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave; on the first day of Christmas at every holy Mass; during the Transformation on the main holy Mass on Sunday
Janisławice, Skierniewice distr.	Piotr Koter (unknown dates) drummed untill 1939; Marian Machura from Lnisno (unknown dates); Józef Maj from Borysław (unknown dates); Jan Lesiak (b. 1947) – traditional drummer, he played percussion as well	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave; Indulgence; Pentacostal Day; formerly on Sunday during holy Mass during Transformation
Kocierzew, Łowicz distr.	Dębski (unknown dates) drummed untill 1939; Zygmunt Rześny (b. 1951) – traditional drummer and singer in a church choir	Processions on the occasion of: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave, the first Sunday of month (apart from period from November until March); on Sunday during holy Mass during Transformation; during peregrination of saint icons; during pilgrimages
Kompina, Łowicz distr.	Aleksander Feliga from Gągolin (unknown dates) before the second World War II; Wojciech Kucharski (b. 1957)	7 days before Maundy Thursday – walking around village every evening (about 8–10 p.m.); procession of Resurrection; walking around fields' boundaries with a banner and kettledrum on Easter Monday at night and early in the morning; during pilgrimage to Częstochowa (before the second World War)

Łowicz, Łowicz distr.	Franciszek Wysocki (unknown dates) from Placancja; Jan Więcek (unknown dates); Wiesław Szkop (b. 1941); Paweł Waracki (b. 1964)	Consecration of cathedral church in Łowicz; welcoming of Primate of Poland; Processions on the occasion: Resurrection; Corpus Christi (during singing supplication <i>Święty Boże</i> and <i>Te Deum</i> hymn) and Octave; Indulgence; during holy Mass during Transformation and as a signal for kneeling down and getting up; during pilgrimages to Częstochowa and to local sanctuaries (Miedniewice, Domaniewice); monumental kettledrum was probably borrowed from collegiate church for agro-religious customs in Arkadia, Placancja, Mysłaków, Zielkowice, Bobrowniki
Słupia, Skierniewice distr.	Karwalscy brothers (unknown dates); Feliks Banaszczak (b. 1905) started drumming ca. 1959; Stanisław Banaszczak (b. 1935) – traditional drummer	Processions on the occasion: Resurrection; Corpus Christi and Octave; Indulgence; formerly on every Sunday of the month during holy Mass during Transformation
Stara Rawa, Skierniewice distr.	Jan Kaczorowski (died 1980) – trombone player in tsar brass orchestra, cornet player, organist; Franciszek Ostrowski (unknown dates); Kazimierz Jakubik (unknown dates), Ignacy Jacak (unknown dates), Stefan Walenzik (unknown dates), Marek Zwoliński (b. 1959)	Processions on the occasion: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave, Indulgence, the first Sunday of month; Maundy Thursday
Zduny, Łowicz distr.	Konstanty Górąjek (ca. 1909–1989); Sebastian Nowak (b. 1982) – student in school of music in percussion class	Processions on the occasion: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave, Indulgence, the first Sunday of month; on Sunday during holy Mass during Transformation
Złaków Kościelny, Łowicz distr.	Szewczyk (unknown first name and dates); Workowski (unknown first name and dates); Marian Workowski (b. 1928) – traditional drummer	Processions on the occasion: Resurrection Corpus Christi and Octave, Indulgence, on Sunday during holy Mass during Transformation; during blessing; at the end of waking hours at Christ's Grave during singing <i>Witaj, Matko uwielbiona</i> (Zoła 2003: 154)

Commentaries, Opinions and Interpretations of the Custom

It is not easy to establish the meaning, roots and origins of the custom based on interviews with performers, clergy and local people. We can distinguish four categories of function, opinion and interpretation:

- The onomatopoeic meaning connected with words from Mathew's Gospel (28: 2–4). The sound of the kettledrum expresses and imitates the earthquake which took place during the Resurrection:

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it (Mat. 28: 2, New International Version).
- Expressing and stressing the people's joy at Christ's triumph over death and giving honor to Christ, who is King.
- Signal and organizational function. The sound of kettledrum informs people who participate in long processions when to kneel down, to get up, etc.
- Aesthetic function. The sound of the instrument together with the sound of bells, people's voices and shots adds splendor and dignity to the religious fest and ceremony.

Monumental Instruments

It's very difficult to find information about the origins of the monumental kettledrums, the instruments which we find in Łowicz region's villages. Most of them are very old, c.a. 18th and 19th centuries. None of my informers could remember where the kettledrums came from or when they were first used in churches. I collected few presumptions:

- The instruments were taken from military ensembles (Łowicz and its region was an important strategic area in the historical period).
- Some instruments could have been made by wandering groups of Gypsies who, among other things, also made cooking kettles, or by local blacksmiths.

Two of the kettledrums I found are engraved. One sentence is illegible, the second one states: "These kettledrums are purchased for church needs by grateful parishioners and a parish priest on 20 April 1777". The instrument from Bielawy bears a label of a well-known factory in Poland that came into being in 1888 in Częstochowa (Vogel 1980: 188).

The kettledrums are made of copper or brass. Membranes are made of either dog, calf, ram or goat skin. Sticks are wooden (oak-tree, ash-tree, hornbeam). All kettledrums are supported with screws for tuning. The instruments are stored in the choir part of a church. The kettledrummers are responsible for regular protection and preservation of the instruments (e.g. the membrane is regularly oiled).

Conclusions

Descriptions presented in this article are the attempt to explain the historical roots of the still living custom of kettledrumming during religious processions, and are a contribution to further ethnomusicological research, which could focus on comparing rhythmic patterns from various villages and the ways of beating numerous kettledrums. Results of pioneer research presented here touch on a very important sphere of traditional piety, still not well analyzed in Polish ethnomusicology – the use of traditional (e.g. clapper, rattle) and professional (e.g. organ, kettledrum) musical instruments in church and during religious rituals. The kettledrum is a professional instrument which was used formerly used (in 17th and 18th century) during courtesy and church ceremonies and was played by professional musicians. This old tradition was conserved in many villages of Łowicz Mazovia as a kind of religious folk tradition, because most of my informers and kettledrummers did not know about the origins or meaning of this custom. They very often said, “This custom is very, very old” or, “My grandfather told me about this old custom” and, “I don’t know where and when the custom comes from”. But I met a few people who associated the kettledrumming with historical splendor of the Primate Łowicz. In a few places in the south-east part of Poland, we can find a very similar custom; local people consider the use of the kettledrum during religious ceremonies as a symbol of the ultimate triumph of Christianity over Islam. A popular old legend about the king Jan III Sobieski and his victory in Vienna, tells how he left kettledrums, which were spoils of the battle, in every village. This problem is still waiting for research and explanation. The comparison of the south-east Poland tradition with kettledrumming in central Poland (Łowickie) should be the next step of my research.

The custom of kettledrumming during processions disappeared in many parishes in the Łowicz region due to the kettledrummer’s death and the lack of followers. However, there are still some villages where this tradition has been cultivated and respected for many, many years.

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LITAUŲ MUŠIMO TRADICIJA PER EUCHARISTINES PROCESIJAS VIDURIO LENKIJOJE (MOZŪRIJOS LOVIČO KRAŠTO PAVYZDŽIAI)

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Santrauka

Liaudiškas litaurų mušimo paprotys, atsiradęs dar XVII amžiuje, iki šiol tebegyvuoja Mozūrijos Lovičo krašte. Ši tradicija kadaise buvo žinoma visoje Europoje: be trimitais pučiamų fanfarų ir litaurų garsų neapsieidavo jokios svarbesnės iškilmės didikų dvaruose. Toks muzikinis akompanimentas buvo ypač populiarus pasaulietinėse ir ankstyvosiose bažnytinėse lenkų ceremonijose. Straipsnyje pažymima, jog litaurai Rytų Europoje pasirodė po kryžiaus žygių kaip karinės ir dvaro muzikos instrumentas.

Istorinis Lenkijos arkivyskupų sostas buvo įsikūręs Lovičo mieste, tad vietos valstiečiai nuo seno turėjo progą stebėti prašmatnias, išpūdingas bažnytines ceremonijas, kurių tam tikrą dalį (litaurus) jie perėmė ir pritaikė savo religiniuose papročiuose (eucharistinėse bei Velykų procesijose ir pavasarinėse žemdirbystės apeigose).

Per pastaruosius trejetą metų aš tapau pirmuoju tyrinėtoju, aprašiusiu ir užfiksavusiu iki šiol gyvuojantį šį paprotį. Atlikėjai ir dabar naudoja išpūdingus istorinius muzikos instrumentus, pavyzdžiui, vienas jų buvo datuotas 1777 metais. Kaip rodo ritmų pavyzdžių transkripcijos, skirtingose Lovičo krašto vietose jie gerokai įvairuoja. Daugelis bažnytinių litaurų mušėjų liaudiškais muzikos instrumentais groja tradiciniuose ansambliuose.

Retkarčiais kai kurių šios tradicijos apraiškų galima rasti ir kitose Lenkijos vietose, tačiau tik Lovičo krašte ji tebegyvuoja ir yra plėtojama visame regione.

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