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## FISH ON ROYAL, NOBLEMEN'S, TOWNSMEN'S AND MONASTIC TABLES AS WELL AS IN SOLDIER'S CAULDRONS IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN POLAND

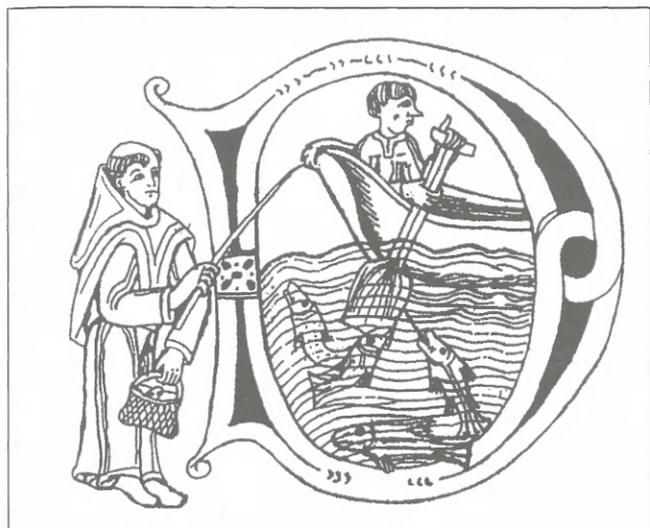


Fig. 1. Method fishing – engling from the shore or boat (Heiligenkreuz, 13<sup>th</sup>). After: A. M. Wyrwa 2004.

Presumably, fish have always been abundant in the Slavic lands. As early as twenty-six centuries ago, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Herodot was the first to praise the fisheries of the Dnieper River and mention the local sturgeon as a fish species particularly suitable for smoking<sup>1</sup>. The fact that fish were plentiful in the Slavic states was stressed by Constantine VII Porfirogenet, Gallus Anonymus, Cosmas of Prague and Helmold<sup>2</sup>. Similar information can be found in The Primary Chronicle (Tale of Bygone Years). What is more, while characterizing Pomerania, Herbold wrote that the land supplied the inhabitants with 'fish in great abundance', as a cartful of fresh herrings, whose flavour and fatty texture aroused a consumer's gluttony, cost

<sup>1</sup> See: G. Labuda, *Słowiańszczyzna starożytna i wczesnośredniowieczna. Antologia tekstów źródłowych*, Poznań 1999, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 127-128, 131, 153; U. Lewicka-Rajewska, *Arabskie opisanie Słowian. Źródła do dziejów średniowiecznej kultury*, Wrocław 2004, pp. 101-102; see: A. Zbiński, *Rybolówstwo*, [in:] *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich*, vol. 4/2, eds. G. Labuda and Z. Stieber, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1972, p. 618.

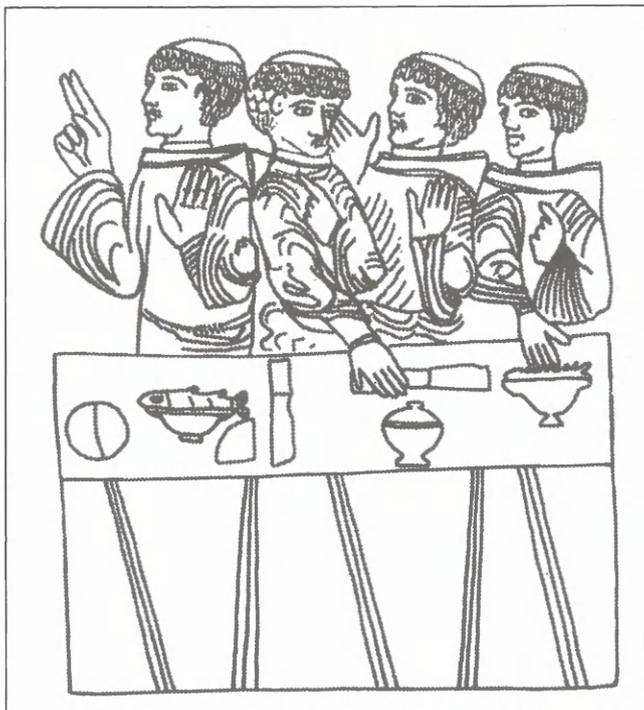


Fig. 2. Fish on the plate. After: H. Kóčka-Krenz, 2003.

a denarius („pro denario recentis acciperes allecis, de cuius sapore vel crassitudine gulositatis arguerer”)<sup>3</sup>. Thus Gall Anonymus was right, when he wrote down a well known and presumably widely sung song, saying:

„Pisces salsos et fetentes apportabant alii,  
Palpitantes et recentes nunc apportant filii”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Herbordi Dialogus de vita s. Ottonis episcopi Babenbergensis*, eds. J. Wikarjak and K. Liman, [in:] *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, Series 2, vol. VII, part 3, pp. 61, 141; see: D. Makowiecki, *Użytkowanie zwierząt i konsumpcja mięsa w średniowieczu w świetle badań archeozoologicznych. Wybrane zagadnienia*, [in:] *Źródła historyczne wydobywane z ziemi*, ed. S. Suchodolski, Wrocław 2008, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, book 11/28, ed. K. Maleczyński, [in:] *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, Series 2, vol. II, Kraków 1952, p. 97.

Salted herrings, mentioned in the song, were not regarded as a particularly sumptuous meal until and in the time of Bolesław III the Wry-mouthed, as one of the reasons why the king travelled to Pomerania and Kołobrzeg, the main fish trade centres, was the purchase of fresh fish.

Undoubtedly, the information provided by Gall Anonymus about salty and rancid fish, that is, salted herrings, being a fundamental element of the fish market is an exaggeration, as fresh fish could easily be obtained from rivers, lakes, creeks, streams as well as other water courses of contemporary Poland. Fish were eaten in various forms. Small fish were used for cooking soup with vegetables, larger species were fried in lax or hemp oil in long, clay dishes. Besides, our ancestors did not find it difficult to store fish, which were salted, dried or preserved in smoking pits. In addition, they could also prepare a sort of fish silage, which could be stored for a relatively long period of time<sup>5</sup>.

Fishing has been one of the most important spheres of human activity since ancient times. From around the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century onward, a new branch of the economy, fisheries, developed, which included breeding fish in artificial water reservoirs. The fish captured provided valuable meat, high in proteins and phosphorus, complementing a daily diet, and glue, particularly useful for shoe-making and saddle making<sup>6</sup>. Fishing gained considerable importance after the Christianization, when fish were eaten in large quantities on fasting days. It may only be noted that there were 192 fasting days in a year, including 52 strict fast days, when dairy foods were not to be eaten either and when meals were composed exclusively of cereals, vegetables and fish<sup>7</sup>. The composition of a meal eaten by Zawisza Czarny (Zawisza Niger), a knight well known

both among his contemporaries and nowadays, during his and his court's stay in Nowe Miasto Korczyn between 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March 1414, seems to confirm the above assumption. The meal served on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March, which was a fasting day, consisted of fish for 6 skojejs [Latin scotus = 1/24 mark's] fried in oil (2 skojejs) and beer for 7 skojejs. On Monday, fish for 6 skojejs fried in oil, which cost 1 skojeje, and beer for 6 skojejs were served. A similar meal was served on Tuesday, but as more beer was served, the beverages cost 7 skojejs. The fish served on Wednesday cost 6 skojejs, the oil 1.5 skojejs and the beer 6 skojejs<sup>8</sup>.

In connection with an increased demand for fish during the fast, in an ordinance of 1575, the herring merchants of Cracow, remind their fellow merchants that although according to some ancient customs, it is forbidden to trade in herrings and eels and open barrels of fish on holidays, vimbas, stockfishes, salmons and other kinds of fish brought to town may be sold provided that the holiday is a fasting day, when no meat but fish is to be served<sup>9</sup>.

The development of monasteries, which from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onward, enjoyed sea and inland water fishing privileges and frequently had their own fishermen<sup>10</sup>, as well as increasing parish network density and urbanization of the country resulted in a growing demand for fish. In the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, honey and *pisces* are mentioned among the levies imposed on the Slavs of Lusatia by the monastery in Nienburg. The amount due was expressed in three scores or even cartfuls: „V scoc piscium” or „duo carrada piscium”<sup>11</sup>.

Besides written records archaeological material provides information about contemporary fisheries, the fish species served as well as the fishing gear and tools used. The Multiflue fish spears, fishing hooks, floats and fishnet weights found on the site confirm that fishing was known on Ostrów Lednicki<sup>12</sup>. Besides, as the word 'fish' means 'ryby' in Polish, local names, such as Rybaki, Rybitwy, Rybie, Rybieniec, Rybienki, Rybin, Rybna, Rybnica, Rybnik, are evidence of fishing activity in the area. This is also the case with local names derived directly from names of individual fish species such as the tench (Polish lin, hence Linowiec), the common bream (Polish leszcz, hence Leszcze), the weather loach (Polish piskorz, hence Piskorzyn) and the pike (Polish szczupak,

<sup>5</sup> M. Dembińska, *Konsumpcja żywnościowa w Polsce średniowiecznej*, Wrocław 1963, pp. 57-58; Z. Bukowski, *Uwagi o konserwacji ryb u Słowian w świetle materiałów archeologicznych i etnograficznych*, [in:] *Pożywienie w dawnej Polsce*, „Studia z Dziejów Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego”, vol. 9, 1967, fasc. 3, pp. 51-53; M. Dembińska, *Pożywienie*, [in:] *Historia kultury materialnej Polski w zarysie*, eds. W. Hensel and J. Pazdur, vol. I: *od VII do XII w.*, eds. M. Dembińska and Z. Podwińska, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1978, pp. 197, 297; W. Hensel, *Słowiańszczyzna wczesnośredniowieczna. Zarys kultury materialnej*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, revised and expanded, Warszawa 1987, p. 158; H. Kóčka-Krenz, *Na stole we wczesnośredniowiecznym Poznaniu*, „Kronika Miasta Poznania”, 2003, No. 4: „Do stołu podano”, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> A. Zbierski, *Rybolówstwo...*, pp. 617-618; M. Dembińska, *Zdobycie surowców. Eksploatacja wód*, [in:] *Historia kultury materialnej Polski w zarysie*, vol. I, p. 112.

<sup>7</sup> A. Rutkowska-Płachcińska, *Pożywienie, napoje*, [in:] *Historia kultury materialnej Polski w zarysie*, vol. II: *od XIII do XV w.*, ed. A. Rutkowska-Płachcińska, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1978, p. 258; J. Tyszkiewicz, *Ludzie i przyroda w Polsce średniowiecznej*, Warszawa 1983, p. 105; see: I. Skierska, *Sabbatha sanctifices. Dzień święty w średniowiecznej Polsce*, Warszawa 2008, p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> *Rachunki dworu króla Władysława Jagielly i królowej Jadwigi z lat 1388 do 1420*, ed. F. Piekosiński, Kraków 1896, pp. 451-455.

<sup>9</sup> I. Skierska, *Sabbatha sanctifices...*, p. 335.

<sup>10</sup> W. Szczygielski, *Zarys dziejów rybactwa śródlądowego w Polsce*, Warszawa 1967, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Śląska. Zbiór dokumentów i listów dotyczących Śląska*, ed. K. Maleczyński, vol. I: *lata 971-1204*, Wrocław 1956, No. 27; see: G. Labuda, *Słowiańszczyzna starożytna i wczesnośredniowieczna...*, pp. 131-134.

<sup>12</sup> J. Górecki, *Gród na Ostrowie Lednickim na tle wybranych ośrodków grodowych pierwszej monarchii piastowskiej*, Biblioteka Studiów Lednickich, vol. VII, 2001, p. 109.

hence Szczuczyn)<sup>13</sup>. Sturgeons, weighing between 50 and 180 kg and in some extreme cases up to 370kg, were the main kind of fish served to the ruler on Ostrów Lednicki. The catfishes were large fish too. Pikes, common breams and tenches caught weighed up to 5-6kg. What is more, perches, asp and vimbas were equally large and heavy<sup>14</sup>. According to Władysław Łęga, herrings (42%) were the main fish species served on noblemen's tables in Gdańsk, Pomerania. Flounders (21.5%), pikes (15.9%), sturgeons (13%) and salmon (7.5%) were also very common<sup>15</sup>. Archeoichthological remains found on the site of the former Cistercian monastery in Łekno enabled researchers to classify the fish into following groups: carp-like species (37%), pikes (23.5%), tenches (10.1%), perches (9.2%), catfishes (6.7%), common breams (5.0%), sturgeons (3.4%), roaches/rudds (3.4%), white breams (0.8%), ides/orfes (0.8%). However, it was mostly herrings (13.9%) and some smaller quantities of salmon-like species (1.1%) and bleaks (0.5%) that were found among the fish remains discovered in the monastery kitchens<sup>16</sup>. Pikes, catfishes, tenches and sturgeons as well as carp-like species, perches, common breams, roaches and crucians from the Warta River, its tributaries and nearby lakes were mostly found on the tables of the inhabitants of Poznań<sup>17</sup>. The only seawater species, shipped from Kołobrzeg, were herrings, preserved in salt. The demand for fish grew in autumn and winter, when fishing for sweetwater species was difficult<sup>18</sup>. The presence of carps, a species bred and imported from southern Europe and West European countries, where they were known and popular earlier, seems to be of considerable importance. Until the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, carp consumption did not play a major role in Pomerania and Greater Poland, where natural environmental conditions were conducive to the development of native fish species<sup>19</sup>.

In his Chorography, Jan Długosz (Johannes Longinus) argues that the lands of the Polish Kingdom boast delicious fish („deliciosa piscibus”)<sup>20</sup>. Enumerating the rivers, the chronicler says that salmon and pikes („salmones et esoces”) similar to those which are born in the third mouth of the Vistula River, called the Nogat, are

hardly ever found in others, even the most noble rivers<sup>21</sup>. Lake Gopło, one of the largest and best known lakes in Poland, is so rich in fish („piscium multitudine adeo fecundus”) that they are caught and shipped to nearby villages on carts. It abounds with superb fish regarding both taste and appearance, which are much tastier than fish found in other lakes („piscium genera [...] et specie”). Lake-Pond Czartoria, an artificial reservoir formed by the waters of the Vistula and the Nida rivers, situated near Nowe Miasto Korczyn, is famous for its tasty fish („fertilitate piscium”). In Zbąskie Lake, which is very rich in fish („piscibus uberimus”), eels are born in great numbers (‘anguillas’)<sup>22</sup>. Fish were also abundant in Drawskie Lake, Greater Poland, Orle Lake, also called Głuszyńskie Lake, Kujawy (Kuyavia), Nobel and Orzechów lakes, Polesia, Berszty Lake, Lithuania, Górzno Lake, Dobrzyń Land, and Krynicze Lake, Bełsk Land<sup>23</sup>. In Białe Lake, situated in the vicinity of the village of Bielsko, near Gostynin, Mazovia, there are „bizarre and delicious fish which are hardly ever found in other Polish lakes called ‘szyłowicze’, that is ‘sutwice’ in Polish, and known as vendances”<sup>24</sup>. Tur Lake, near Bydgoszcz, is best known for its plentiful fish known as ‘kleszcz’, that is common breams<sup>25</sup>. According to Długosz, this tasty fish were also to be found in lakes situated in Chełmno Land, such as Świtaż („piscis forcipes producens kleszcze”) and Białe lakes. Local people used to pour the fat of this fish into all kinds of vessels („crassos adeo piscis ‘kleszcze’ producent, ut ex illorum adipe plura vasa impleantur arvina”)<sup>26</sup>.

In 1577, Marcin Kromer outlined the geographical characteristics of the Polish lands in the Jagiellonian Era. The author says that at that time, Prussia, particularly the Curonian Lagoon, was the part of the country especially rich in fish. Fish were also plentiful in a number of lakes in Greater Poland and Kujawy. Kromer mentions Gopło Lake first, but the names of other lakes, like Tur and Bielsko lakes, which can also be found on Długosz's list, follow. Both Długosz and Kromer stress the quality of fish caught in Białe Lake, where „bardzo tłuste ryby o nazwie *brasmi* [od łac. *Abramis brama*], które nasi nazywają kleszczami”<sup>27</sup> (very fatty fish with the name *brasmi* [Latin *Abramis brama*], called ‘kleszcze’ by the locals) are to be found.

<sup>13</sup> A. Zbierski, *Rybołówstwo...*, p. 618.

<sup>14</sup> J. Górecki, *Gród na Ostrowie Lednickim...*, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> W. Łęga, *Obraz gospodarczy Pomorza Gdańskiego w XII i XIII wieku*, Poznań 1949, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Based on research conducted by D. Makowiecki see: A. M. Wyrwa, *W kuchni i przy stole ‘szarych mnichów’, czyli o wyżywieniu cystersów w świetle źródeł normatywnych zakonu oraz wybranych źródeł pisanych, archeologicznych i przyrodniczych*, „Archaeologia Historica Polona”, vol. 14, 2004, pp. 93-95.

<sup>17</sup> H. Kóćka-Krenz, *Na stole we wczesnośredniowiecznym Poznaniu...*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> D. Makowiecki, *Użytkowanie zwierząt...*, p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> J. Długosz, *Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, books 1-2, Warszawa 1964, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 93, 94, 98, 99, 100.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 146.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96; M. H. Malewicz, *Zjawiska przyrodnicze w relacjach dziejopisarzy polskiego średniowiecza*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź, p. 71.

<sup>27</sup> Marcin Kromer, *Polska, czyli o położeniu, ludności, obyczajach, urzędach i sprawach publicznych Królestwa Polskiego księgi dwie*, translated by S. Kazikowski, prefaced and edited by R. Marchwiński, Olsztyn 1977, pp. 37-39.

Besides, Marcin Kromer writes, „bo i tu i tam mamy szczupaki, leszcze, okonie, płaszczyki (jeśli tylko należy tak nazwać ryby, które potocznie określamy jako karasie), sumy, sandacze, cyrty czyli certy, które – jeśli się nie mylę – nazwę tę otrzymały u Niemców dla swego wybornego smaku, liny, węgorze, czerwonki, karpie, które Włosi nazywają królewskimi, o łacińskiej nazwie *cyprini*, jak utrzymuje Jan Dubrawski, biskup ołomuniecki; ale te ryby rzadziej spotyka się w jeziorach aniżeli w stawach, do których wpuszcza się pieczolowicie młode sztuki na zarybek, jakby do akwarium” (the same fish species, including pikes, common breams, perches, rays ((if the fish commonly referred to as crucians can be called rays)), catfishes, zanders, vimbas, which if I am not mistaken, were given this name by the Germans due to their delicious flavour, further tenches, eels, rudds, carps, called royal carps by the Italians as well as fish referred to as *cyprini* in Latin, according to Jan Dubrawski, Bishop of Ołomuniec, are to be found in both lakes and ponds. However, the latter are less common in lakes than ponds, where the young are put and carefully bred, like in a fish tank). Some lakes abound with vendances, called *marenami* by the Germans (Latin *Coregonus maraena*), which are „ryba słodkawa i smaczna, podobna do śledzia”<sup>28</sup> (slightly sweet, tasty fish, resembling herrings). Therefore, it seems that both the chroniclers liked the taste of vendances.

Among the fish living in rivers, Marcin Kromer mentions the following „wyborne nade wszystko” (most delicious) species: trouts, striped red mullets, lampreys, as well as burbot, whose liver is a unique delicacy. The Polish term *przydenki* probably refers to the fish looking for food at the bottom of the rivers. The list also comprises graylings, stone loaches, barbel, bleak, ruffe and a fish species called the *biała* (white) fish in Polish. The Nida River was particularly rich in crayfish and eels. The Curonian Lagoon and some Prussian lakes abounded with eels and smelts<sup>29</sup>.

Marcin Kromer argues that winter offers most favourable conditions for fishing in lakes, larger ponds and rivers. Holes are made at intervals in the ice and a fishnet is dipped through a large hole. It is then dragged to another air-hole by means of long ropes tied to poles, where it is taken out full of fish using the strength of men and horses<sup>30</sup>.

In Marcin Kromer's opinion, Poland cannot boast of many sea fish species. „Znakomite są zwłaszcza śledzie, które Niemcy nazywają *heringami*; jak Polska długa i szeroka spożywa się je przede wszystkim zakonserwowane w soli, ba, rozpowszechnione są i na Litwie, w Czechach, na Śląsku, na Morawach i na Węgrzech – tak nieprzebrane są ich ilości. Ale na wybrzeżu Prus mało ich się łowi, natomiast przywozi się je tam z Chersonesu Cymbryjskiego,

ze Skandii i Oceanu Niemieckiego, w wielkich ilościach i w doskonałym gatunku”<sup>31</sup> (The herring, called *hering* in German, is a particularly delicious kind of fish. Herrings are mostly eaten salted throughout Poland, but the fish are so plentiful that they are also popular in Lithuania, Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia and Hungary. However, they are hardly ever caught along the coast of Prussia, where high quality fish are brought in large quantities from Chersonesus Cimbrica, Scandinavia and the German Ocean). It may only be noted that herrings are very healthy fish with low calorie but iron, zinc, phosphorus and iodine rich meat. They are also a source of full-value, easily-absorbed protein and so-called healthy fats (16g fat per 100g fish), which widen blood vessels, help control blood pressure and lower cholesterol levels. Omega-3 fatty acids found in their meat stimulate metabolic conversion and increase fat burning. Vitamin E plays a significant role in the prevention of atherosclerosis. In May, matias herrings, young, fatty specimens called virgin herrings, were captured and consumed raw. According to Marcin Kromer, Baltic cods and turbot were also to be found in Poland. Tasty salmon and brown trout or bulltrout (Latin *Salmo trutta*; Polish *troć*) could be caught in both rivers and the sea<sup>32</sup>.

A great number of fish types are listed in the court accounts of King Władysław II Jagiełło and Queen Jadwiga. The records include: *pisces, pisces recentes* – fresh fish; *pisces recentes ad frixandum in oleo* [fish for frying in oil] *pro domino rege; pisces salsi seu salsati* – salted fish; *pisces sicci* [dried fish] *dicti strekfussy, strakfus* – stockfishes; *pisces semiassati* – smoked fish; *pisces sterlezcze* – common breams; *pisces iazicze* – orfes/ides; *pisces lipienie; pisces fundiculi zlice* – stone loaches<sup>33</sup>; *pisces Hungarici; piscis mentusz* – burbot; and *piscis magnus dictus som* – catfishes. Besides, wet, probably fresh, herrings – *aleces* and *aleces madidati*, as well as eels, which were either fresh and alive – *recentes* and *uiue* – or dried and salted – *sicce and salse* – are mentioned<sup>34</sup>.

The accounts of the subordinate land agent of Cracow and the station in Nowy Sącz also contain a long list of fish names, such as *pisces, pisces recentes, salsi* and *sicci*<sup>35</sup> as well as herrings – *aleces*, including *madidati* and *humidi*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>32</sup> Marcin Kromer, *Polska...*, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Słownik łaciny średniowiecznej w Polsce*, vol. IV, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1975-1977, cols. 442, 450; *Słownik staropolski*, vol. IX, fasc. 1 (55), Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1982, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Rachunki dworu króla Władysława Jagiełły...*, pp. 591, 601, 602, 604, 608, 612, 613, 616; see: J. Szymczak, *Grzyby, ryby i polewki na średniowiecznym stole i w kotle obozowym*, [in:] *In memoriam honoremque Casimiri Jasińskiego*, eds. J. Wenta and P. Oliński, „Scientiae Auxiliaries Historiae”, vol. I, Toruń 2010, p. 201.

<sup>35</sup> *Rachunki królewskie z lat 1393-1395 i 1412. Rachunki podrzectwa krakowskiego. Rachunki stacji nowosądeckiej*, ed. H. Wajs, Warszawa 1993, p. 176.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.

fish, that is, wet, fresh specimens, eels, salted eels, stone loaches – *fundiculi*, mentioned above, graylings, stockfishes – *stogfesz*, *strekfusz* etc.<sup>36</sup>

In the light of these accounts, it may be assumed that fresh, dried and smoked fish were all bought to meet the court's needs. The fish came from both rivers and lakes, as well as the sea (herrings mainly). In addition, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century customs tariffs are evidence of a growing trade in salted herrings<sup>37</sup>. Frequently, specially selected, high quality fish were bought to be served to the king. However, in the majority of cases, the king and his servants consumed the same kind of fish<sup>38</sup>. On 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1389, a note was made in the register of the subordinate land agent of Nowe Miasto Korczyn regarding the purchase of 6 barrelfuls of herrings („pro VI tunis allecum”), 1 mark and 16 skojecs each<sup>39</sup>. The fish might have been intended to be served at Easter, on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Besides, jellied fish, particularly jellied eels, were bought, which should not be surprising as a brick layer from Nowy Sącz could afford a barrelful of eels („tunnam anguillarum”), which was requisitioned by customs collectors in Bardejov, Slovakia in 1501<sup>40</sup>.

What is more, fish are a permanent item on every single receipt made out for the purchase of foods. For example, in 1402, Commander Pokarmina Marquart von Sulzbach bought 11 oxen, 24 muttoms, a barrelful of oil and a barrelful of pikes, not to mention the figs, raisins, rice and almonds, for 2.5 marks<sup>41</sup>. In 1403, among other things, 3.5 barrelfuls of sturgeons were bought for 24.5 marks and 8 barrelfuls of cods for 6 marks<sup>42</sup>.

In addition, fish, such as pikes, sturgeons and dried herrings from Bergen, constituted a permanent item on receipts made out for feasts held by the Town Council of Elbląg<sup>43</sup>. In the light of a receipt for a feast organized by Stare Miasto Toruń in honour of Ulrich von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1407, it may be assumed that the following types of fish

were served: eels – *oles*, herrings – *heringen*, common breams – *bresemen*, orfes/ides – *yesicen*, perches – *perske*, pikes – *hechte*, lampreys – *newnoucken*, burbot – *qwapin*, salmon – *lachs*, stockfishes, dried and salted cods, as well as a sturgeon – *stor*<sup>44</sup>.

Sometimes, however, the food served at a feast disagreed with the guests. At the end of September 1410, for instance, John Sokół [Falco] of Lamberk, a Bohemian veteran who had fought in the Grunwald [Tannenberg] campaign, was invited to dinner by one of the Toruń townsmen and suffered from food poisoning after eating a pike („in luceo venenatus”). He was taken to Brześć Kujawski by order of Władysław II Jagiełło, where he died despite treatment<sup>45</sup>. In the case of Toruń, fish and fish preserves played a significant role in the town's commercial activity and trade with other cities. For example, dried and salted herrings, cods, pikes, salmon, eels, common breams and platfishes were sold to Wrocław. In addition, the merchants of Toruń and other Prussian suppliers provided the inhabitants of Wrocław with fish oil and oleum jecoris aselli<sup>46</sup>. However, this was not always an amicable exchange of goods. The residents of Wrocław repeatedly accused Prussian merchants of fraud. They often claimed that the fish supplied was rotten („von wegen des bosen heringe”) or that fresh and rotten fish or better and worse types of fish were mixed together and that the barrels themselves were smaller than promised<sup>47</sup>. The issue of the quality of sea fish provided to Wrocław was even raised in a letter sent by the Town Council of Toruń to the councillors of Gdańsk in 1487<sup>48</sup>.

The eel was also listed among the fish detrimental to health and endangering life. In 1355, Władysław [Ladislav], Duke of Cieszyn, accompanied emperor Charles IV during his expedition to Italy, where the latter was to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor. In Florence, Władysław was greeted as a guest of honour and an eel was served to him at the feast. After he returned to Pizza, he felt ill and died in May 1355<sup>49</sup>. According to Jan Długosz, a badly

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 169, 172, 174, 178.

<sup>37</sup> S. Weyman, *Cła i drogi handlowe w Polsce piastowskiej*, Poznań 1938, pp. 43-44, 118.

<sup>38</sup> H. Kręć, *Dwór królewski Jadwigi i Jagiełły*, Kraków 1987, p. 135.

<sup>39</sup> *Rachunki dworu króla Władysława Jagiełły...*, p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> *Dokumenty polskie z archiwów dawnego Królestwa Węgier*, wyd. S. A. Sroka, vol. IV. (documents from the years 1501-1520), Kraków 2006, No. 604.

<sup>41</sup> *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch der Jahre 1399-1409*, ed. E. Joachim, Königsberg 1896, pp. 262-263; see: M. Radoch, *Wydatki wielkiego mistrza Konrada von Jungingen na utrzymanie księcia litewskiego Świdrygielly w państwie zakonnym w Prusach w latach 1402-1404*, [in:] *Komturzy, rajcy, żupani. Studia z dziejów średniowiecza*, No. 11, ed. B. Śliwiński, Malbork 2005, p. 288.

<sup>42</sup> *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch...*, p. 220; see: M. Radoch, *Wydatki wielkiego mistrza...*, pp. 298-299.

<sup>43</sup> R. Czaja, *Uczty rady miejskiej w średniowiecznym Elblągu*, [in:] *Archaeologia et historia urbana*, eds. R. Czaja, G. Nawrońska, M. Rębkowski, J. Tandecki, Elbląg 2004, p. 264.

<sup>44</sup> B. Herdzin, P. Oliński, *Rachunki z uczty wydanej na cześć wielkiego mistrza Ulryka von Jungingen w Toruniu w 1407 roku*, [in:] *Studia nad dziejami miast i mieszczaństwa w średniowieczu. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Antoniemu Czacharowskiemu w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę urodzin i czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej*, Toruń 1996, pp. 295-302.

<sup>45</sup> J. Długosz, *Annales...*, books 10-11, Warszawa 1997, pp. 149-150.

<sup>46</sup> K. Kopiński, *Gospodarcze i społeczne kontakty Torunia z Wrocławiem w późnym średniowieczu*, Toruń 2005, p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 106-107; G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław w przestrzeni gospodarczej Europy (XIII-XV wiek). Centrum czy peryferie?*, Wrocław 2009, p. 125.

<sup>48</sup> G. Myśliwski, *Wrocław w przestrzeni gospodarczej...*, p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> K. Jasiński, *Rodowód Piastów śląskich, part III: Piastowie opolscy, cieszyńscy i oświęcimscy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, revised, Kraków 2007, p. 610.

cooked eel eaten during an expedition caused food poisoning and resulted in the death of Mikołaj Próchnicki, Bishop of Krzemieniec, during an assembly in Piotrków in 1479<sup>50</sup>.

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1419, in the register of ducal transportation services in Kazimierz [near Cracow], a note can be found regarding 2 barrels of „*piscium stakfisch et welerib*” shipped to Bochnia on a cart pulled by four horses<sup>51</sup>. The name can easily be associated with the whale (Polish wieloryb). However, the mammal reached Poland only one and a half centuries later. In his account of 1583 describing the wedding celebrations of Griselda Bathory and Jan Zamojski, Bartosz Paprocki, writes that „wielorybowi dwa, ciągnęli musłę morską, którym z oczu a z gąb woda pryskała perfumowana na ludzie, na której siedziała Wenus”<sup>52</sup> (Venus was sitting in a seashell pulled by two whales, who were sprinkling the people with perfumed water flowing from their mouths). He went on to say that „Wenus na dwóch wielorybach na muszli morskiej siedząc wyjechała” (Venus, sitting in a seashell, was riding on two whales) and „wielorybom z oczu i z gąb po wszystkich stronach pryskała woda perfumowana na ludzie”<sup>53</sup> (the whales sprinkled the people with perfumed water flowing from their eyes and mouths on all sides). Talking of the above-mentioned record of 1419, it may therefore be assumed that what the scribe had in mind was stockfishes and *many* [other types of] *fish*, not a whale, as two barrels might not have been enough to ship the animal to Kazimierz.

Faced with a scarcity of data found in written records regarding foods and dishes served to soldiers during military expeditions, readers may be interested in an account offered by Jan Długosz. In 1410, Polish troops took part in an expedition to Prussia. Travelling from Wolbórz, via Lubochnia and Wysokienice, the column arrived at the archbishop's iron ore mine and a large fish pond called Samice on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March. During a violent storm a couple of horses and a man were struck and killed by lightning and another man was badly injured. A bowlful of cooked fish was broken in the tent of Dobiesław of Oleśnica, where his numerous guests were at table having dinner, but none of them were hurt<sup>54</sup>.

Also, Jan Długosz writes that rich food supplies were found in Dzierzgoń, which was seized on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1410. The king allowed the soldiers to load their wagons with not only wine, beer, meat, cereals and other goods, but also

fish („*quadrigas suas vino, cerevisia, carne, pisce et frumento ceterisque comeatibuss implevit*”)<sup>55</sup>. Fish, particularly dried fish, constituted the so-called emergency survival food in all house pantries and castle larders. Besides smoked and dried meat, fish were also among the basic provisions carried by army wagons, which accompanied columns of troops during military expeditions. In 1490, the town of Lublin supplied the army leaving for Moldova with flour, peas, poppy seeds, hemp seeds, butter, salt, 1320 loaves of bread, further 480 rounds of cheese, 10 hams or flitches of pork meat, as well as 840 dried fishes („*piscium siccorum*”) carried on two carts<sup>56</sup>.

The Register of Polish Wagons Provided by the Cities and Towns of the Polish Commonwealth for the Military Expedition of 1521 is a useful source of information about the kinds of provisions taken on military expeditions. The 92 wagons dispatched by 85 towns in all the provinces of the Crown were loaded with food, especially meat in various forms. Another important type of food carried by the army was fish<sup>57</sup>. Various types of fish, as usual referred to as *pisces comonium*, were sent from 27 towns. Five other towns provided dried fish (*siccis, siccarum*). Radom and, most probably Sandomierz as well, were obliged to supply the king's table in Ropczyce with 2 salmons instead of 720 other fishes (thus 1 salmon = 360 other fishes). This may also have been the case with Stojanów, which was obliged to send 4 sturgeons (1 sturgeon = 180 other fishes). Sturgeons, which were once very common in Slavic rivers, were gradually becoming less numerous and more valuable as a result of intensive fishing. Consequently the demand for this species was growing. In the light of archeoichtiological research, the proportion of sturgeon remains found among all the fish remains from Gdańsk varies from 66.1% in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and 49.1% in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to 35% in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and only 16.1% in the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>58</sup>.

Returning to the issue of fish transported on town army wagons, it may be assumed that in four cases the town was obliged to provide both fish and eels („*piscium cum anguillis*”) and in two cases fish and pikes („*piscis luceus*”) in addition, 5 towns were to dispatch some herrings, 2 salmons, 1 eel, 1 orfe, 1 pike (Horodło: „*iasow et luceorum*”) and 1 vimba (Košice: „*czert*”). There are

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 130.

<sup>56</sup> *Wyjtki z najdawniejszej księgi miejskiej lubelskiej*, ed. B. Ulanowski, „Archiwum Komisji Historycznej” 1886, vol. III, No. 23; Cf.: M. Dembińska, *Konsumpcja żywnościowa...*, p. 210.

<sup>57</sup> *Rejestr wozów skarbnych od miast i miasteczek Rzeczypospolitej koronnych na wyprawę wojenną roku 1521 dostarczonych*, ed. C. Biernacki, „Archiwum Komisji Historycznej” 1886, vol. III, pp. 473-499; see: J. Szymczak, *Żywność na miejskich wozach wojennych w późnym średniowieczu i na początku epoki nowożytnej*, „Przegląd Nauk Historycznych”, Yearbook V, No. 1 (9), 2006, pp. 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> D. Makowiecki, *Użytkowanie zwierząt...*, p. 73.

<sup>50</sup> J. Długosz, *Annales...*, book 12/2, Kraków 2005, p. 433; see: F. Kiryk, *Próchnicki (Pruchnicki) Mikołaj h. Korczak*, [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. XXVIII, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1985, p. 551; M. H. Malewicz, *Zjawiska przyrodnicze...*, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> *Podwoły kazimierskie 1407-1432*, ed. S. Krzyżanowski, „Archiwum Komisji Historycznej” 1909-1913, vol. XI, p. 410.

<sup>52</sup> B. Paprocki, *Herby rycerstwa polskiego*, ed. K. J. Turowski, Kraków 1858, pp. 264-265.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 883.

<sup>54</sup> J. Długosz, *Annales...*, books 10-11, p. 63.

49 relevant mentions altogether. Three score eels cost approximately 16 grossi and a barrelful of eels was worth 72-96 grossi. A large pike cost 1.5-2 grossi and a very big one up to 5 grossi, a small salmon was about 7 grossi, a large one 18-21 grossi and a huge one 36 grossi. What is more, an impressive sturgeon could be bought for 70 grossi<sup>59</sup>, which was a lot of money. The most important and widely eaten type of sea fish was the herring (160 kcal per 100g). A barrelful of eels cost approximately 72-96 grossi and 100 fishes of this type were worth 8-12 grossi<sup>60</sup>. The herring dominated the market until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the inhabitants of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea discovered the cod, which was previously absent from the Slavic sphere of the southern Baltic Sea due to the wrong salt level in the water<sup>61</sup>.

The fact that a considerable amount of fish was consumed at soldier quarters is confirmed by numerous written records. Food rations issued to the soldiers during a military expedition of 1552 to Braclaw are listed below. In the light of surviving receipts, it may be assumed that on meat days, a gunner's dinner consisted of a piece of boiled meat with spices, a bowl of soup made of duck blood, one or two small fishes, some vegetables and beer to be drunk with the meal. Roast meat with vegetables was served for supper. A typical breakfast consisted of a slice of bread and a mug of beer. I would like to remind readers that the meal consumed by Zawisza Czarny in Nowe Miasto Korczyn was composed of fish and beer! Talking about soldiers' rations, it should be mentioned that a wagon or cart driver, like a gunner, had a piece of boiled meat with vegetables for dinner. They were also allowed a mug of beer for a shilling or two, subtracted from their pay. A supper consisted of a piece of roast meat with vegetables and grits or some other addition to the meal. Nutritionists consider such meal composition to be the most suitable diet. On fasting days,

a dinner consisted of 2 slices of fresh fish accompanied by broth, on weekdays, and soup made of duck blood, on holidays. Fresh fish could be replaced with dried or salted fish. On butter days, 2 slices of dried or 1 slice of fresh fish cooked in broth or 2 eggs, accompanied by vegetables with butter, were served for dinner. A supper consisted of some bread, cheese and beer for a shilling. This beverage was also served to wagon or cart drivers and their mates on meat days<sup>62</sup>. Thus, fish has always been present in a soldier's diet. However, in the past, it used to be eaten for dinner and no salted herrings were once served for breakfast as was the case with breakfasts in the time of my military service.

I would like to round off the paper with a list of fish names found in a scientific and medical glossary with the title 'Antibolomenum', published in 1472, by Jan Stanko MD from Wroclaw, Canon of Wroclaw and Cracow, the personal doctor of Casimir IV Jagiellon (d. 1493)<sup>63</sup>. The entries are as follows: *caricius* = grayling; *aculea* = seahorse; *cepedo* = dace; (*cronda*) = (*gorzenka*) is an unknown fish, whose name in Polish may derive from the word 'gorzeć' – to be aglow; *piscis salitus strakfifch* = dried fish; *ruburus* (Polish *fuchy zledz*) = *strakfisz*, dried herring; *lambeta* = zander; *strumulus* = *sztokfisz*; *murena* = moray eel; roach, (*fluta*); *fundiculus* = stone loach; *gracius* = gudgeon; *carabulus* = orfe, ide; *cinedia* = ruffe; *inodontitis* = (*jażdż*) ruffe; *balena* = catfish; *forica* = barbel; *aforus* = white aspes, belicas; „*carbit congrus fundibuli nyerod*” (= nierod); *polipus* = bleaks; *parca* = perch; *luceus* = pike; *tructa* = trout. The Latin names of fishes such as *turonilla*, *forosa* and *cironilla* are not included in any dictionary<sup>64</sup>. Most probably, the glossary is a catalogue of contemporary ichthiofauna.

Translated by Zuzanna Poklewska-Parra

## Streszczenie

### Ryby na stołach królewskich, szlacheckich, mieszczańskich i klasztornych oraz w kotłach żołnierskich w Polsce średniowiecznej i wczesnonowożytnej

Rybołówstwo należało do ważniejszych dziedzin działalności ludzkiej od najdawniejszych czasów. Od około połowy XI w. rozwinęła się nowa gałąź gospodarki, a mianowicie rybactwo, obejmujące hodowlę ryb w sztucznych zbiornikach wodnych. Poławiane ryby dostarczały cennego – uzupełniającego białka i składniki fosforowe – mięsa,

a także kleju, stosowanego zwłaszcza w rzemiośle szewskim oraz rymarskim. Rybactwo nabrało szczególnego znaczenia po przyjęciu chrześcijaństwa, kiedy w okresach postu spożywano znaczne ilości ryb. Post od mięsa obejmował aż 190-192 dni w roku, w tym 51 było postu ścisłego, nawet bez spożycia nabiału, kiedy pożywienie

<sup>59</sup> J. Pelc, *Ceny w Krakowie w latach 1369-1600*, Lwów 1935, p. 38; M. Dembińska, *Konsumpcja żywnościowa...*, pp. 52, 56-58; A. Rutkowska-Płachcińska, *Pożywienie...*, p. 263.

<sup>60</sup> M. Dembińska, *Konsumpcja żywnościowa...*, pp. 52, 57; A. Rutkowska-Płachcińska, *Pożywienie...*, p. 255.

<sup>61</sup> D. Makowiecki, *Użytkowanie zwierząt...*, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> K. Górski, *Historia artylerii polskiej*, ed. T. Korzon, Warszawa 1902, p. 257; see: J. Szymczak, *Początki broni palnej w Polsce (1383-1533)*, Łódź 2004, p. 203.

<sup>63</sup> P. Rybicki, *Odrodzenie*, [in:] *Historia nauki polskiej*, vol. I, ed. B. Suchodolski, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1970, p. 318;

<sup>64</sup> W. Wydra, W. R. Rzepka, *Chrestomatia staropolska. Teksty do roku 1543*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1984, pp. 208-209.

sprowadzało się wyłącznie do potraw zbożowych, jarzynowych i rybnych.

O bogactwie ryb w krajach słowiańskich donosi już Herodot w V w. p.n.e., a później Konstantyn Porfirogeneta, Powieść doroczna, Kosmas, Herbord i Helmold oraz Anonim tzw. Gall śpiewając o rybach słonych i cuchnących, czyli solonych śledziach jako podstawowym składniku rynku rybiego. Jest to oczywista przesada, gdyż świeżych ryb dostarczały mieszkańcom Polski liczne rzeki, jeziora, strumienie, potoki i inne zbiorniki wodne. Spożywano je pod różnymi postaciami, jak gotowane z warzywami, smażone w oleju lnianym lub konopnym, solone, suszone, wędzone i kiszone.

Jan Długosz w Chorografii stwierdził, że ziemie Królestwa Polskiego szczycą się rybami wybornymi w smaku. Wymieniając rzeki napisał, że w ujściu Wisły rodzą się łososie i szczupaki, do najślawniejszych rybnych jezior zaliczył Gopło, Czartorię koło Nowego Miasta Korczyna, jeziora Zbąskie i Drawskie w Wielkopolsce, Orle, czyli Głuszyńskie na Kujawach, Nobel i Orzechów na Polesiu, Berszty na Litwie, Górzno w ziemi dobrzyńskiej, Krynice w ziemi bełskiej, Białe k. Gostynina, Tur k. Bydgoszczy, Świataż i Białe w ziemi chełmskiej.

Charakterystykę geograficzną ziem Polski jagiellońskiej dał w 1577 r. Marcin Kromer. Za jego czasów w wody rybne obfitowały Prusy i Zalew Kuroński. Także w Wielkopolsce i na Kujawach znajdowało się sporo zasobnych w ryby jezior, spośród których na pierwszym miejscu wymienił Gopło, Tur i Bielsko, a w nich szczupaki, leszcze, okonie, płaszczyki zwane też karasiami, sumy, sandacze, certy, liny, węgorze, czerwunki, karpie, sielawy, stynki. Wśród ryb rzecznych wyróżnił takie ryby jak pstrąg, barba, czyli czerwobroda lub barwena, przydenka, oczkowiec zwany też minogiem, aloza, zwana też borbochą i miętusem, lipień, śliz, brzana, ukleja, jazgarz oraz ryba nazywana białą. Zdaniem Kromera, Polska ma niewiele ryb morskich, głównie śledzie, nazywane przez Niemców *heringami*, których mięso jest niskokaloryczne i zawiera spore dawki żelaza, cynku, fosforu i jodu, a odławiane w maju młode, tłuste śledzie, zwano matiasami. Nie brak w Polsce także pomuchli i skarp, smaczne są także łososie i trocie.

W świetle rachunków dworu królewskiego Jagielly i Jadwigi, na potrzeby dworu królewskiego kupowano ryby świeże, suszone i wędzone, pochodzące z rzek i jezior, a także ryby morskie, przeważnie śledzie. Ryby stanowiły nieodłączną pozycję na ucztach wydawanych, np. przez

komtura Pokarmina Marquarta von Sulzbach, rady miejskiej Elbląga, Starego Miasta Torunia. Ale zdarzały się również nieszczęśliwe przypadki zatruc rybnymi. W 1410 r. szczupakiem zatrut się czeski kombatant w kampanii grunwaldzkiej Jan Sokół z Lamberka, źle ugotowany węgorz spowodował śmierć księcia cieszyńskiego Władysława w 1355 r. oraz biskupa kamienieckiego Mikołaja Próchnickiego w 1479 r.

Ryby, zwłaszcza suszone, stanowiły żelazny składnik zapasów żywnościowych we wszystkich spiżarniach domowych i magazynach zamkowych. Należały też do podstawowego wyposażenia wozów wojennych, towarzyszących wojsku podczas wypraw wojennych. Ważny i obszerny materiał pod tym względem zawiera „Rejestr wozów skarbnych od miast i miasteczek Rzeczypospolitej koronnych na wyprawę wojenną roku 1521 dostarczonych” w odniesieniu do 85 miast we wszystkich prowincjach Korony. Wysłały one 92 wozy, na których znajdowała się żywność. Najczęściej znajdowało się na nich mięso, ale na 49 wozach były ryby. Znaczący udział ryb w posiłkach żołnierskich poświadczają liczne źródła, w tym rachunki z wyprawy wojennej do Braclawia w 1552 r. Puszkarze w dni mięsne otrzymywali na obiad sztukę mięsa z korzeniem i z czarną juchą, jedną rybę lub dwie małe i do tego jarzynę oraz piwo. W dni postne na obiad powinny być 2 dzwonka świeżych ryb, w dzień powszedni z rosołem, w święto zaś z czarną juchą. Świeże ryby można było zastąpić suszonymi lub solonymi. W dni maślane należało podać na obiad 2 dzwonka ryby suszonej lub jednej świeżej z rosołu albo zastąpić je 2 jajami.

Jan Stanko z Wrocławia (zm. 1493), doktor nauk medycznych, kanonik wrocławski i krakowski oraz przyboczny lekarz Kazimierza Jagiellończyka w słowniku przyrodniczo-medycznym pt. „Antibolomenum” z 1472 r. zawarł następujące nazwy ryb: *caricius* = lipień; *aculea* = konik morski; *cepedo* = jelec; *cronda* = gorzenka; *piscis salitus strakfifch* = stokwisz; *ruburus* = strakfisz; *lambeta* = sandacz; *strumulus* = sztokfisz; *murena* = nawoj, płota, fluta; *fundiculus* = śliz; *gracius* = kiełb; *carabulus* = jaź; *cinedia* i *inodontitis* = jażdż, jazgarz; *balena* = sum; *forica* = brzana; *aforus* = owsianka; *carbit congrus fundibuli nyjerod* = nierod; *polipus* = ukleja; *parca* = okoń; *lucus* = szczupak; *tructa* = pstrąg. Nie udało się zidentyfikować nazw: *turonilla*, *forosa*, *cironilla*. Jest to zapewne katalog znanej wówczas ichtiofauny<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Za pomoc w identyfikacji niektórych ryb dziękuję Koleżance Dorocie Filipczak.