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Cracow Astrological Prognostics from the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries on „People of entertainment” (Entertainers, Bon Vivants)

Krakowskie prognozy astrologiczne z końca XV i początków XVI wieku dotyczące „ludzi rozrywki” (artyści, bon vivants)

ABSTRACT

Cracow astrological forecasts (calendars, almanacs, iudicia) of the so-called pre-Copernicus era are a repository of knowledge on the daily life (in a wide context) of people in the Middle Ages. The University of Cracow was famous for, among others, works of this type. The popularity of such texts brought not only fame and money to their authors but also, and probably most of all, comfort and support to the representatives of the wider society of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, who were convinced that every aspect of human existence was affected by the influence of heavenly bodies.

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Astrologers not only included almost all domains of human life in their forecasts for the year to come but, what is important, addressed them to all social groups, including kings and princes, aristocrats and clergy, warriors and merchants, women and children, inhabitants of neighboring countries, people of various nationalities and denominations (particularly Jews, Turks and Tatars). Astrological forecasts were also prepared for the so-called people of entertainment (entertainers, performers, artists). Quite often, separate sections were devoted to them, analyzing the forthcoming alignment of heavenly bodies from the viewpoint of success (or lack thereof) of the life plans and professional aspirations of the representatives of this particular social group.

Key words: astrology, University of Krakow, astrological prognostics, fun people

STRESZCZENIE

Prognozy astrologiczne (kalendarze, almanachy, iudicia) z tzw. epoki przedkopernikowskiej stanowią repozytorium wiedzy na temat życia codziennego (w szerokim kontekście) ludzi w średniowieczu. Z dzieł tego typu (między innymi) słynął Uniwersytet w Krakowie. Popularność tego typu tekstów przynosiła nie tylko sławę i pieniądze ich twórcom, ale także, a chyba przede wszystkim, pociechę i wsparcie przedstawicielom szeroko rozumianego społeczeństwa XV i początku XVI w., którzy byli przekonani, że każdy aspekt ludzkiej egzystencji podlega wpływom ciał niebieskich. Astrologowie w swoich prognozach na nadchodzący rok nie tylko uwzględniali niemal wszystkie dziedziny ludzkiego życia, ale co ważne, kierowali je do wszystkich grup społecznych, w tym królów i książąt, arystokratów i duchownych, wojowników i kupców, kobiet i dzieci, mieszkańców sąsiednich krajów, ludzi różnych narodowości i wyznań (zwłaszcza Żydów, Turków i Tatarów). Prognozy astrologiczne przygotowywano również dla tzw. ludzi rozrywki (animatorów, wykonawców, artystów). Często poświęcano im osobne ustępy, analizując nadchodzący układ ciał niebieskich pod kątem powodzenia (lub jego braku) planów życiowych i aspiracji zawodowych przedstawicieli tej właśnie grupy społecznej. Ten właśnie wątek jest mottem przewodnim artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe: astrologia, uniwersytet krakowski, prognozy astrologiczne, ludzie zabawy

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In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Cracow was famous throughout Europe for, among other things, astrological prognostics published by its local university masters. Initially, these prognostics were prepared in the form of manuscripts, but, since print was invented, they were frequently published in print and became very popular among readers who were hungry for all sorts of „heavenly promises”¹.

¹ Z. Celichowski, *Dwa Kalendarze Polskie na rok 1528 i 1529 według egzemplarzy biblioteki Kórnickiej [!]*, Poznań 1874, s. 11; Cf. J. Seruga, *Krakowskie kalendarze XVI wieku*, Kraków 1913, *passim*; M. Janik, *Staropolski kalendarz prognostykarski jako urządzenie komunikacyjne*, w: *Kalendarze staropolskie*, red. I. Dacka-Górzyńska, J. Partyka, Warszawa 2013, s. 117–153;

The creation of those so-called leaflets, also aptly named „new communication media” by Edward Potkowski², can be linked to the activity of the local university chair of astrology which was launched in mid-15th century. The professor who headed the chair was obliged to prepare an up-to-date astrological prognostic for each year³. Since the beginning of the 15th century, there was also a chair of astronomy and mathematics⁴. The statutes of 1476 obliged the professor who was the head of this chair to prepare such a prognostic annually⁵. These texts enjoyed such popularity that official numbers of published copies reached 10,000 (until 1525, there was no obligation to obtain the right to print astrological prognostics, so numerous publishers also issued their own prognostics, which were not authorized by the university)⁶. These prognostics were published under various names – *prognosticon, iudicium, practica, tacuinum, ephemerides, minutio, almanach, przepowiedzenia [predictions], przejrzenia [insights]* and *wybory dni [elections of days],* or *wybory czasów [elections*

S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Wenus panią roku, Mars towarzyszem...*”. *Astrologia w Krakowie XV i początku XVI wieku*, Kielce 2018, s. 81–136.

² E. Potkowski, *Piśmiennictwo masowe w początkach epoki nowożytnej. „Iudicia astrologica” z Krakowa*, „Z Badań nad Polskimi Księgozbiorami Historycznymi. Studia i Materiały” 2002, 20, s. 18.

³ S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Wenus*, s. 36–37, 19–80, 81–136; M. Markowski, *Stopniowa przewaga astrologii nad astronomią w pierwszej połowie XVI wieku w Uniwersytecie Krakowskim*, w: J. Dobrzycki, M. Markowski, T. Przyppkowski, *Historia astronomii w Polsce*, t. 1, red. E. Rybka, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, s. 157–183.

⁴ M. Markowski, *Astronomie an der Krakauer Universität im XV. Jahrhundert*, w: *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, red. J. Ijsewicz, J. Paquet, Leuven 1978 (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series I, Studia 6), s. 256–275; idem, *Kształtowanie się krakowskiej szkoły astronomicznej*, w: J. Dobrzycki, M. Markowski, T. Przyppkowski, *op. cit.*, s. 57–86; idem, *Powstanie pełnej szkoły astronomicznej w Krakowie*, w: *ibidem*, s. 87–106; idem, *Szczyt rozkwitu i międzynarodowego promieniowania krakowskiej szkoły astronomicznej*, w: *ibidem*, s. 107–126.

⁵ *Codex diplomaticus Universitatis Studii Generalis Cracoviensis continet privilegia et documenta quae res gestas academiae eiusque beneficia illustrant, Pars tertia: Ab Anno 1471 ad Annum 1506*, Cracovia 1880, nr 251, s. 45–48.

⁶ *Codex diplomaticus Universitatis Studii Generalis Cracoviensis continet privilegia et documenta quae res gestas academiae eiusque beneficia illustrant, Pars quarta: Ab Anno 1507 ad Annum 1548*, Cracovia 1884, nr 350, s. 92; cf. A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Rola drukarstwa polskiego w dobie Odrodzenia*, Warszawa 1954, s. 68–69; E. Potkowski, *Książka i pismo w średniowieczu. Studia z dziejów kultury piśmiennej i komunikacji społecznej*, Pułtusk 2000, s. 199–207. Cf. M. Juda, *Przywileje drukarskie w Polsce*, Lublin 1992, s. 100; *Privilegia Typographica Polonorum. Polskie przywileje drukarskie 1493–1793*, red. M. Juda, Lublin 2010, *passim*; M. Juda, *Przywileje drukarskie jako źródło do dziejów książki*, „*Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F, Historia*” 1990, 45, s. 339–354; K. Gliściński, *Wszystkie prawa zastrzeżone. Historia sporów o autorskie prawa majątkowe, 1469–1928*, Warszawa 2016, s. 82–83.

of times], *dziennik wyborów* [journal of elections], but also *kalendarz* [a calendar] and *lasztafeln*⁷. The differences between these types consisted in both the content and (which was more important) the form. The *ephemerides* were dominated by astronomical content, whereas *calendars*, and often also *almanacs* were filled with graphically presented astrological information and advice concerning medicine, economy, hygiene etc. Such texts as *prognosticon*, *iudicium*, *practica*, or the Polish language *wybory dni* [elections of days], *wybory czasow* [elections of time], etc. were usually descriptive, and their chapters presented issues which were important for the society of those times and concerned the broadly defined daily life. What is important, the astrological advice that could be found in these texts was addressed to the representatives of various social strata, denominations, nationalities, and occupations, to women, men, the elderly and the young. Therefore, everyone could find guidelines suitable for their needs.

The astrological prognostics of the late 15th and early 16th centuries were also abundant in those „heavenly promises” specifically directed towards a particular social group – one that consisted of representatives of the contemporary bohemia. They were also called „people of entertainment” (entertainers), as they provided entertainment to all social groups⁸. The representatives of this group included street comedians, called *igrcy* in Polish, as well as providers of refined courtly entertainment, jokers (*ioculatores*), actors, jesters, dancers, various instrument players, that is, zitherists (zither players), organists, drummers, trumpeters and cantors⁹. What is worth noting, also women, who entertained men with their charm and pleasant voice, were included.

⁷ J. Zathej, *Z historii środowiska magiczno-astrologicznego w Krakowie w XV wieku*, „Krzysztofory. Zeszyty Naukowe Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa” 1981, 8, s. 17; idem, *Per la storia dell’ambiente magico-astrologico a Cracovia nel Quattrocento*, w: *Magia, Astrologia e Religione nel Rinascimento. Convegno polacco-italiano (Varsavia: 25–27 settembre 1972)*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1974, s. 99–109; K. Kossakowska-Jarosz, *Kalendarz. Spory terminologiczne*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej im. Powstańców Śląskich w Opolu. Filologia Polska” 1993, 33, s. 129–135; cf. M. Głowiński et al., *Słownik terminów literackich*, red. J. Sławiński, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1988, s. 213; S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Wenus*”, s. 82–89.

⁸ L. Lepszy, *Lud wesółków w dawnej Polsce*, Kraków 1899, *passim*; M. Wilska, *Błazen na dworze Jagiellonów*, Warszawa 2001, *passim*; B. Geremek, *Człowiek marginesu w średniowieczu*, „Przegląd Historyczny” 1989, 80, 4, s. 705–727; *Homo ludens. Zabawy i rozrywki na co dzień i od święta w dziejach krajów Europy Środkowej i ich sąsiadów*, red. A. Teterycz-Puzio, W. Bejda, L. Kościelak, Słupsk 2017, *passim*; see also H. Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, London 1932, *passim*.

⁹ S. Konarska-Zimnicka, *Taniec w Polsce średniowiecznej. Świadectwo źródeł pisanych*, Kraków–Kielce 2009, s. 47–92.

What is important, in the astrological tradition Venus was the planet responsible for beauty, fashion, entertainment, as well as all sorts of pleasures of the flesh and those who indulged in them. According to *Introductorium astronomie* by Michał Falkener of Wrocław¹⁰, a textbook published for the first time in 1506¹¹, which was an interpretation of the basics of astrological knowledge and a set of instructions for those who prepared and read almanacs: „Venus [...] rules things which give one the tricky and often errant kind of happiness and pleasure of earthly life, as it is the case with all the beauty and charm of women. Therefore, she rules women, wives, matrons, beautiful maidens, as well as their glorious apparel, love, betrothal, all the delightful liquors, such as wine, and any delicious drink. [...] Among arts, [she watches over] every kind of art of painting and sound, as well as [the mastery of] musical instruments and poetry writing; anything that is practiced with admirable and subtle skill in art, is assigned to her rulership. Also, the places where people will go for entertainment and all places where they feast together, as well as pearls and fragrances are ruled by her”¹².

For this reason, in astrological prognostics, the information referring to the representatives of the world of entertainment was most often included in chapters with such titles as: *De Venere subiectis* (Jan Virdung

¹⁰ K. Bochenek, *Michał Falkener z Wrocławia – osoba i dzieło*, „Sofia. Pismo Filozofów Krajów Słowiańskich” 2005, 5, s. 373–383; R. Palacz, *Michał Falkener z Wrocławia. Stan badań*, „Materiały i Studia Zakładu Historii Filozofii Starożytnej i Średniowiecznej” 1966, 6, 4, s. 35–91; S. Konarska-Zimnicka, *Michał Falkener z Wrocławia – życie i twórczość*, w: Michał Falkener z Wrocławia, *Introductorium astronomie Cracoviense elucidans almanach, czyli kompendium wiedzy astrologicznej*, tłum. i red. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, red. P. Piotrowski, Warszawa 2014, s. 7–30.

¹¹ More printings were published in the years 1507, 1513, 1517. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, *Michał*, s. 17.

¹² Michał Falkener z Wrocławia, *Introductorium*, s. 78–79. Falkener took this knowledge from ancient scholars, particularly from Claudius Ptolemy (approx. 100–168) (Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trans. F. E. Robbins, Harvard 1990 (Loeb Classical Library No. 435), III, 14.29) and from the scholars of Islamic origin – most of all, from Albumasar (787–886) who wrote as follows in this treatise entitled *Ysagoga minor*: „Venus is benefic; cold and moist; phlegmatic; temperate; over waters, river banks and younger brothers; clean; providing ornaments, gold, silver, musical instruments, delights and joys. She is lazy; drunk; fornicating with women; generous; sharing; paying court to beautiful forms; not destroying the law”. See A. Ma’shar, *The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology. Together with the Medieval Latin Translation of Adelard of Bath*, red. Ch. Burnett, K. Yamamoto, M. Yano, Leiden–New York 1994 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, red. H. Daiber, D. Pingree, 15), s. 127. Cf. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, P. Piotrowski, *Albumasar i jego „Ysagoga minor”*, Kielce 2020, s. 86, 137, 170.

of Hassfurt (died after 1514)¹³, *Practica Cracoviensis pro anno Christi millesimo quadringentesimo nonogesimo primo currente*, 1491¹⁴), *Quos Venus gubernat* (Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek (1489–1564)¹⁵, *Judicium astrologicum coniunctionis minoris Saturni et Jovis* for 1524¹⁶), *De Veneris* (Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, *Judicium astrologicum anni M.D.XXV [...] elaboratum*, 1525¹⁷), *De mulieribus et Veneris* (Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, *Juditium astronomicum [...] pro anno Christi MDXXI, fideliter calculatum*, 1521¹⁸). Other titles include *De mulieribus et iis que naturam huius sexus infectantur* (Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, *Pronosticon judiciale [...] futurorum eventuum anno Domini 1519*¹⁹), *De mulieribus et his, qui leticie autores sunt* (Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, *Pronosticon accidentium ex syderali dispositione anni Domini 1520, 1520*²⁰), *De cetu puellarum* (Mikołaj of Toliszaków (died approx. 1534)²¹, *Judicium celebratissime Universitatis Cracoviensis [...] ad annum Domini millesimum [...] quingentesimum vigesimum tertium*, 1523²²), but also *De statu matronarum* (Mikołaj of Toliszaków, *Judicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini millesimum quingentesimum*

¹³ M. Steinmetz, *Johann Virdung von Hassfurt, seine Leben und seine astrologischen Flugschriften*, w: „Astrologi hallucinati”. *Stars and the End of the World in Luthe’s Time*, red. P. Zambelli, Berlin–New York 1986, s. 195–214.

¹⁴ Jan Virdung z Hasfurtu, *Practica Cracoviensis pro anno Christi millesimo quadringentesimo nonogesimo primo currente*, Lipsia: Konrad Kachelofen, 1491, Biblioteka PAN w Kórniku, inc. Qu. 60, k. 4r.

¹⁵ T. Marszał, *Mikołaj Prokopowicz z Szadka astrolog, astronom, historyk nauki, miłośnik i znawca książki (1489–1564)*, „Biuletyn Szadkowski” 2009, 9, s. 5–36.

¹⁶ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Judicium astrologicum coniunctionis minoris Saturni et Jovis*, Cracovia: Ioannes Haller, 1524, Biblioteka PAN w Kórniku, st. dr. cim. Qu. 2087, k. 2r.

¹⁷ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Judicium astrologicum anni M.D.XXV [...] elaboratum* (Cracovia: Hieronymus Vietor, 1524), the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kórnik, st. dr. cim. Qu. 2152, k. 6v.

¹⁸ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Juditium astronomicum [...] pro anno Christi MDXXI, fideliter calculatum*, Cracovia: Hieronymus Vietor, 1521, Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, st. dr. 400626, k. 6v.

¹⁹ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Pronosticon judiciale [...] futurorum eventuum anno Domini 1519*, Cracovia: Ioannes Haller, Hieronymus Vietor, 1518–1519, Biblioteka PAN w Kórniku, st. dr. cim. Qu. 2135, k. 8r.

²⁰ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Pronosticon accidentium ex syderali dispositione anni Domini 1520 [...] in Studio Cracoviensi editum*, Cracovia: Hieronymus Vietor, 1519, Biblioteka Narodowa, XVI. Qu. 6068., k. 3v–4r.

²¹ L. Hajdukiewicz, *Mikołaj z Tuliszakowa*, w: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 21, red. E. Rostworowski, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1976, s. 144–145.

²² Mikołaj z Toliszakowa, *Judicium celebratissime Universitatis Cracoviensis [...] ad annum Domini millesimum [...] quingentesimum vigesimum tertium*, Cracovia: Hieronymus Vietor, 1523, Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, st. dr. 400629, k. 7r.

sedecimum editum, 1516²³), *De iuencularum* (Mikołaj of Toliszków, *Judicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] ad annum Domini 1518 recolectum*²⁴), or just *De ioculatoribus* (Mikołaj of Toliszków, *Iudicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini M.D.XIII editum*, 1514²⁵). In Polish language prognostics, such chapters were entitled, for instance, *O pannach [On maidens]* (Michał z Wiślicy (1499–1575)²⁶, *Praktyka gwiazd [Practice of stars]*, 1536)²⁷.

However, despite the differences in titles, the addressees of these chapters *vel* sections, as said above, were those who contributed to the popularization of entertainment in the broad sense, even to the slightest degree. They constituted a target group for astrologers, who prepared their specific annual predictions based on diligent observations of the sky. The examples presented hereinafter are an excellent illustration of the varied content of the „leaflets”. However, despite the passing of time (the analysis includes prognostics created within the time span of about 50 years, namely from 1491 to 1536), they are characterized by similarities of the discussed issues, as well as by a specific way of presenting them, typical for works of this kind.

A long and elaborate disquisition was presented by Jan Virdung of Hassfurt, the author of a prognostic for 1491. It was addressed to a wide range of people who were considered to be under the influence of the planet Venus. The scholar included „mulieres, puellas, cantores, citaristas”²⁸,

²³ Mikołaj of Toliszków, *Iudicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini millesimum quingentesimum sedecimum editum*, Cracovia: Ioannes Haller, Florianus Ungler, Kraków 1516 (?), Biblioteka PAN w Kórniku, st. dr. cim. Qu. 2112., k. 6v.

²⁴ Mikołaj z Toliszkowa, *Judicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] ad annum Domini 1518 recolectum*, Cracovia: Ioannes Haller, 1518, Wrocław University Library, st. dr. 400623, k. 6v.

²⁵ Mikołaj z Toliszkowa, *Iudicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini M.D.XIII editum*, Cracovia: Ioannes Haller, 1513, Biblioteka UMCS, st. dr. 229, k. 7r–v.

²⁶ L. Hajdukiewicz, *Michał z Wiślicy*, w: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, t. 20, red. E. Rostrowski, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, s. 628–629; cf. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, *Astrologia Michała z Wiślicy. Przegląd twórczości*, „Z dziejów Regionu i Miasta. Rocznik Oddziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego w Skarżysku-Kamiennej” 2012, 3, s. 79–92.

²⁷ Michał z Wiślicy, *Praktyka gwiazd biegu po polsku w Krakowie uczyniona na rok 1536*. Kraków, Florian Ungler, [1535/1536]. 16°, red. K. Meller, W. Wydra, Poznań 2008 (Bibliotheca Paleotyporum in Lingua Polonica Impressorum. Libri Librorum, red. Wiesław Wydra), k. 6r.

²⁸ i.e. those who play the zither.

pictores, tubicinatores²⁹, ioculatores, sericorum, pannorum textores³⁰, pulsatores instrumentorum musicalium³¹³². For the people listed above, the beginning of the year was supposed to be busy as a consequence of their signifier (Venus) being retrograde, whereas the summer, due to unfavorable positions of heavenly bodies, was „suspect” (likely to bring adversities). The scholar explained that the people in question could expect severe ailments. There was also a threat of imprisonment, which could constitute an important piece of information, considering the frequently hostile stance of Church authorities towards representatives of the bohemia, who often were members of the underclass³³. The author continued his prognosis by assuring the addressees that autumn would bring them a lot of joy and comfort, „quod et gelidus hyemis eis negabit minime”³⁴.

Mikołaj of Toliszaków, a well-known and distinguished master of the Krakow Almae Matris, discussed this issue in a much more general way. What is worth noting, in his prognostic for 1514, he presented astrological predictions addressed directly to jesters (*De ioculatoribus*), but he also included girls, singers, prostitutes, zitherists, as well as all people indulging in various pleasures. The astrologer assured them they would find more happiness by earning the gratitude of other people – as it can be assumed, of those who would enjoy the entertainment they provided. Mikołaj of Toliszaków affirmed that, according to the information derived from the alignment of celestial bodies, in spring they would be rewarded and have good luck. This would also happen in other parts of the year, but, as the scholar emphasized, not to such an extent as in spring.

„Virgines, matrone et que leticie vel decorationi operam dant”³⁵ were addressed by Mikołaj of Toliszaków in his rather enigmatic astrological predictions for 1517. The Krakow master noted that the general situation of the „protegees” of Venus listed in his text would be fairly good. He pointed out that in spring it would get slightly worse, in summer it would improve, in autumn it would worsen a bit again, and in winter – get better³⁶. The prediction was very general and vague, therefore not very likely to be incorrect.

²⁹ i.e. those who play the trumpet.

³⁰ i.e. clothiers selling silk and linen.

³¹ i.e. those who play musical instruments.

³² Jan Virdung z Hasfurtu, *op. cit.*, k. 4r.

³³ *Ibidem*, k. 4r.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, k. 4r.

³⁵ Mikołaj z Toliszakowa, *Iudicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini millesimum*, k. 6v.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, k. 6v.

This same author, in his *iudicium* for 1518, included: „puelle, iuencule, matrone, citaredi, cantores, organiste et qui pulchrificationi aut instrumentorum pulsationi operam dant”³⁷. He assured them that in said year, their situation would be overall good. In spring, they were going to travel and see distant places, which would bring them joy. What is more, despite the fact that „inconstantia eorum noscetur”, they would succeed in their endeavors. According to the astrologer, their situation was not likely to get better in other parts of the year³⁸. In another prognostic, for 1523, this same astrologer listed lascivious women (*muliercula, -ae*), musicians and authors of melodies. The spring was supposed to bring them troubles typical for this season (unfortunately, the author did not specify what kind of troubles to expect, as if he had assumed this issue was generally understood), as well as numerous ailments of the head. The scholar noted that representatives of the professions he named would be aware of their low status. The summer would bring them good luck, as well as the autumn, when „amasionum libertatem et veneri presidis sue favore experientur”³⁹.

Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, professor of the Krakow Almae Matris, headed its chair of astrology and was among those who held this position for the longest time⁴⁰. He was also the author of numerous astrological prognostics. This scholar, in his prognostic for 1519, referred not only to women, girls and singers, but also to those who „tripudiis cetersique vanitatibus mundi indulgent”⁴¹. The master asserted that not everyone among the social groups named by him would be in an unfavorable position, as „they would have friendship and good luck”. However, he warned the young that they should keep their promises and watch out for diseases, particularly serious ones. He presented other seasons in a much better light. However, according to him, the summer would only be better unless Saturn’s rays prevented it. In such a case, one should consider the risk of diseases, but also of detention by force. In the autumn, the addressees of the prediction were said to satisfy their cravings, indulge in pleasures, undergo beauty treatments, as well as engage in promiscuity.

³⁷ Mikołaj of Toliszaków, *Judicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] ad annum Domini 1518 recollectum*, k. 6r.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, k. 6v.

³⁹ Mikołaj z Toliszkowa, *Judicium celebratissime Universitatis Cracoviensis [...] ad annum Domini miliesimum [!] quingentesimum vigesimum tertium*, k. 7r.

⁴⁰ Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadka headed the chair of astrology for 15 years (1515–1531). Then he moved to the Department of Theology of the University of Cracow. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Wenus*”, s. 44.

⁴¹ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Pronosticon judiciale [!] futurorum eventuum anno Domini 1519*, k. 6v.

However, as Prokopiades emphasized, they would have to repent and endure punishment for their deeds. Winter was said to be the time when they strove for honors – but Prokopiades added that their actions would bring no results.

In his prognostic for the following year, 1520, the said astrologer focused on what would happen to women, as he clearly indicated in the title of the chapter: *De mulieribus et his, qui leticieauctores sunt*. The scholar predicted that women would get married with all the joys and honors and they would welcome babies, as Venus, the ruler of the year, was in her own house. However, considering the fact that Venus was going to apply to a conjunction with Saturn, the prediction for the elderly was certainly less favorable, as they were going to be involved in a lot of arguments. The young, as well as all those who liked disputes, were threatened with unexpected death or severe illness due to the influence of Mars. In the summer, Saturn turned retrograde and it was expected to alleviate this influence. May and October were regarded by the astrologer as „suspect” and sinister. For March, he predicted a lot of movement from one place to another. It can be presumed that the aforesaid young probably represented jesters and entertainers, as they frequently belonged to wandering groups of vagrants⁴², who moved from place to place to seek occupation and to provide entertainment to people from lower social strata (kings’ and aristocrats’ courts had their own musicians, jokers, jesters, etc., who permanently resided there)⁴³.

In another prognostic, this same scholar emphasized the influence of the planet Venus in an interesting manner. In his vision of what was to come in 1521, he included women to whom he referred as „beautiful”, and „omnes veneri”. He specifically mentioned those who were „veri musici, homines dulces moribus et consuetudine, amenitate cantus vestium et eius generis blandimenti oblectati”, therefore all those who loved music, singing, beautiful clothing, lovely objects, and had „sweet” disposition and manners⁴⁴. Sadly, the astrological prognosis was not favorable for them. In the summer and autumn, they were to expect scorn, sorrow and discomfort from those representatives of the society who were

⁴² H. Zaremska, *Banicy w średniowiecznej Europie*, Warszawa 1993, s. 72, used an expression „people of the road” (Polish: „ludzie gościńca”).

⁴³ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Pronosticon accidentium ex syderali dispositione anni Domini 1520 [...] in Studio Cracoviensi editum*, k. 6r.

⁴⁴ Mikołaj Prokopiades of Szadek, *Juditium astronomicum [...] pro anno Christi MDXXI, fideliter calculatum*, k. 6v.

ruled by the planet Saturn (the author referred to them as *Saturnini*⁴⁵). Unfortunately, apart from this cryptic warning, there was no additional information about this expected „discomfort”.

Just as the prognostic discussed above, also those for 1524 and 1525 referred to „beauteous maidens” (*puellae venustae*). Therefore, we can suppose that beauty and pleasant appearance played a key role in this context. Both prognostics further mention people of appealing disposition and „sweet behavior”, graceful, cheerful and enjoying themselves. The forthcoming year 1524 was marked by Venus descending from the apogee of the epicycle⁴⁶, which would result in their fates being quite unremarkable. As, additionally, Mars would be more elevated, women would feel burning desire and sensual pleasures, „que et corpus et substantiam predunt”⁴⁷. For the people mentioned above, the astrologer predicted numerous ailments and bad health. He also stated that their lives would be in danger and they would suffer hardships. This prognosis, not a very optimistic one, referred particularly to those who were famous and

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, k. 6r, the earlier section entitled *De Saturninis* was devoted to groups ruled by Saturn, that is, people who were mature, thoughtful, melancholic, of fair or dark complexion, those who do tedious jobs or tasks *male olentes per naturam*; also, hermits, Jews, those who scowl, and have relentless, „wild” faces, but also those who increase and multiply their material possessions. Cf. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Secta Saturno dedicata*” – czyli los Żydów zapisany w gwiazdach (w świetle wybranych źródeł astrologicznych przełomu XV i XVI wieku), „*Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*” 2016, 260, 4, s. 813–826; I.M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinctions. Christian Perception of Jews in the High Middle Ages*, Washington 2012, *passim*.

⁴⁶ In the geocentric theory: the circle on which a planet is moving on the deferent, which was meant to explain the mechanism of planets going retrograde. Initially, the hypothesis of eccentric orbits was used, which was introduced by the Alexandrian geometer Apollonius of Perga (262–200 BC). This concept was further developed on by Hipparchus (190–120 BC). He used an eccentric orbit, a circle whose center is placed beyond the Earth, but not far from it, to explain the irregular motion of the Sun in the sky. He attempted to explain the motion of the Moon in a similar way, but he had to assume that the center of the eccentric orbit of the Moon moves around the Sun in about 9 years. He did not manage to do the same with regard to the motion of the planets. A more complex model, consisting of deferents, eccentric orbits and epicycles, was developed by Claudius Ptolemy. According to it, the Moon was orbiting in the closest proximity to the Earth and its system of epicycles was very complex. Then, the deferents of Mercury and Venus followed. They were moving in epicycles – Venus in a larger one, Mercury in a smaller one. Then, the eccentric orbit of the Sun without an epicycle was located. It was followed by the deferents of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. A revolving sphere of fixed stars was thought to be „the end of the universe”. Michał Falkener z Wrocławia, *Introductorium*, s. 90, *przyp.* 109.

⁴⁷ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Judicium astrologicum coniunctionis minoris Saturni et Jovis*, k. 2r.

of noble birth. This undoubtedly indicates that people who constituted the so-called social elite did not shun earthly pleasures.

By contrast, the year 1525 appeared to be quite lucky. The people who are the main focus of this discussion were said to exchange marriage vows, accumulate wealth, find joy and pleasure. However, as Prokopiades warned, pregnant women would hardly avoid pain and death in labor. Days which required special attention due to their, as the astrologer put it, suspect quality („quibus dies magis suspecti sunt”)⁴⁸, would be the following: 15 January, 12 February, 9 and 15 April, 7 July, 6 September, 4 October, 14 November, „et enumeratis proximi in utramque partem”⁴⁹. Therefore, the days which, from the perspective of astrological calculations, required attention and special preparation for childbirth by future mothers, were precisely indicated. In the Middle Ages, both maternal and infant mortality rates were exceptionally high. Therefore, such information was probably of great importance⁵⁰. Similar warnings can be found in numerous prognostics⁵¹, so it can be assumed that pregnant women followed this kind of advice.

Michał of Wiślica also noticed the dangers for pregnant women in the position of celestial bodies for the year 1536. The scholar, noticeably concerned, stated that their condition would be „very perilous, as they would have great difficulty in childbirth”⁵². What is more, also singers, painters, attractive people and „miłośnice”⁵³ („lovers”, „mistresses”, „adulteresses” in Old Polish) were to experience difficulties. The beginning of the year was said to be particularly hard. However, the astrologer intertwined bad prognoses with positive ones, writing that „summer will be lucky to them, but in autumn, they will experience great hardships. In winter, their wishes will come true”. Unfortunately, apart from this very concise

⁴⁸ Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Judicium astrologicum anni M.D.XXV [...] elaboratum*, k. 6v.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. Baldick, New York 1962, passim; P. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca 1994, passim; D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, *Dziecko w dawnej Polsce*, Poznań 2002, passim.

⁵¹ Mikołaj z Toliszkowa, *Iudicium celebratissime Vniuersitatis Cracouiensis [...] in annum Domini millesimum quingentesimum sedecimum editum*, k. 7r, included information addressed to pregnant women, for whom the beginning of the spring was to be particularly difficult. Mikołaj Prokopiades z Szadka, *Judicium astronomicum [...] pro anno Christi MDXXI, fideliter calculatum*, k. 6v, wrote that women would have difficult childbirth that year. Cf. S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „Wenus”, passim.

⁵² Michał z Wiślicy, *Praktyka gwiazd biegu po polsku w Krakowie uczyniona na rok 1536. Kraków, Florian Ungler, [1535/1536]. 16°*, k. 6r.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, k. 6r.

piece of information, the Cracow scholar did not deem it appropriate to give details concerning these expected „hardships“.

Therefore, certain specific characteristics of the presented texts can be distinguished. The addressees of the predictions were always indicated as those who enjoyed entertainment of any kind, the so-called worldly pleasures, and who led an unrestrained lifestyle. The predictions were usually placed in a particular period of time. Most often, a season of the forthcoming year was indicated, but sometimes, as proved by the presented examples, the astrologer named a month, or even a day. Depending on how long the section or chapter was, the predictions were either very concise and general, or more extensive, and, therefore, more specific. In the latter case, they were more likely to be wrong, considering the long time span (one year), a wide range of readers, as well as a vast array of discussed issues. Sometimes the authors of the prognostics also described reasons for the events to come, informing the readers of the positions of planets and zodiac signs. However, these were most often presented in the introductory part of the prognostic, where, among other details, the ruler of the given year was indicated⁵⁴. The manner in which the information was delivered to the readers, as well as the information itself, depended on a number of factors. The expected position of heavenly bodies was the key. However, public sentiments prevalent in the given time also played an important role. What also mattered was the author's penmanship as well as his knowledge of astronomy and astrology.

The Cracow masters were regarded as excellently educated astrologers, eager to share their knowledge by creating astrological prognostics. „Works of this kind provided a possibility of practical application of astrological rules, and, most of all, made it possible to access a really wide range of recipients who wanted instructions and clues with regard to the future“⁵⁵. The future which was revealed by the said astrological prognostics.

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⁵⁴ The ruler of the year was the planet regarded as a patron of the given year.

⁵⁵ S. Konarska-Zimnicka, „*Venus*“, s. 101.

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