

Material Traces of a Religious Trial

The Case of Ludwig Teschler

Abstract

In 1991, when a private house in Graz was to be sold, the owner asked her son and his wife to lend a hand in clearing the attic of the small house, a typical construction of the 1930s which had been built by her grandfather. Amongst the broken furniture, obsolete tableware, old books and rubble, all covered in layers of dust, the couple found a plastic bag containing about 70 sheets of paper, most of them damaged, most of them in an unreadable handwriting. The dates written on some of sheets aroused their interest: the years mentioned belonged largely to the 17th century.

The material aspect of this collection is of particular interest. On the one hand, the analogue medium of pen and paper has been subject to various destructive factors, and information originally contained in the documents is irrecoverable; the find is also incomplete. On the other hand, the medium provides access to dimensions of the individuals who produced these records in ways that a digital entity could never provide, contributing to stories that unwind across the 136 pages, narratives that are not only interesting but also deeply touching. One of these stories is a fine example for this engagement: the case of Ludwig Teschler, an artisan accused of using witchcraft. Teschler was tried and sentenced. This article explores how the material quality of the documents helps us interpret the case.

Keywords

Teschler, Paris Lodron, Widman, Amulet, Talisman, Haus im Ennstal, Witchcraft, Superstition

Biography

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Introduction

Speaking of the “materiality of scripture” raises the question whether scripture can ever be “immaterial”. In fact, it is a misconception to classify even digital entities, be they texts, pictures, videos, or sound, as immaterial. Even though intangible in the strict sense, these backbones of our media society

are unthinkable without a material framework, and on the level of bits and bytes, they are material entities too.

Yet scripture has a different quality connected to bodily experience when it is engraved, written, or embossed on something palpable and with sensory elements. The haptic of old paper, the smell of the dust, the sound of the rustling, and the picture of the seals and the watermarks on the material become part of the perception process. Even for the best possible digital representation such dimensions are largely missing, in part as a result of a lack of technical possibilities and in part as a result of the usual focus on the text itself. In this article I seek to show that the opportunity to handle original material influences how we interpret and classify texts and thus provides us with new insights.

The original documents that are the subject of this article were found in 1991 in an attic in Graz, Austria. The lot includes letters of individuals involved in a witchcraft process, different versions of the corresponding interrogation record, and files and orders of the court involved. They bear signs of an enervating and painful process. As effigies of their writers, they have a place in this issue in showing relations between official proceedings and the unofficial course of action, associations that are often overlooked in cases like this.

It remains unclear why and how these documents were moved to the house where they were found. The plastic bag containing the rolled-up material bore the imprint of the Graz record shop Mecki Schallplatten; this company was founded in 1976 so evidently the documents were handled after this year, although we cannot know the nature of that handling – were they simply tidied up or perhaps they were acquired around this time, for example at a flea market. The last owner of the house, Gerlinde Leski, asserted that neither she nor to the best of her knowledge her parents (resident 1960–1990) knew about the treasure hidden above their heads.

In 1642 an accusation of witchcraft and/or performing magic was life-threatening. The last witch trial in the duchy of Styria was conducted in the city of Radkersburg in 1746,¹ and many of the accused were sentenced to death based on confessions they had been forced to make by being racked. The *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* ordered, “If someone [...] carries around suspicious things or acts and speaks like performing magic [...] it is sufficient reason to question him [her] under torture.”²

1 Cf. Valentinitzsch 1987.

2 “Item so jemandt sich erbeut andere menschen zauberei zuo lernen / oder jemandt zuo bezaubern bedrahet vnd dem bedraheten dergleichen beschicht / auch sonderlich

Church authorities did not usually try the defendants – they had neither the authority to do so nor an official interest in this aspect of dealing with witchcraft. In the overwhelming majority of known cases, the sentence in witchcraft trials was passed by a municipal judge and executed by the hangman. In the particular case of Ludwig Teschler, the subject of the case these papers address, the two authorities coincided, for the Archbishop of Salzburg was also secular ruler of the considerably smaller duchy of Salzburg. We should note that although the result of the case described in this article resonated with the humanist ideals of Archbishop Paris Lodron, just 35 years later his successor had 150 persons tried and executed for similar accusations.³

Materiality: A Description

The complete corpus of scans and transcriptions is published in Wessely/Knappitsch 2015. The publication is available as an open access PDF and contains all the documents mentioned here and more, in high resolution. The document numbers in this article (#xx) reflect the order in which the documents were found; in the online version of this journal, they are linked to the scans in the open access repository.⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

The [corpus of finds](#) contains 52 documents, each consisting of one or more pages for a total of 136 pages including the seals or the placement of lost seals. The material is paper; the paper watermarks have not yet been documented and classified. Of the documents, 51 are handwritten in ink; one is printed with handwritten amendments to the greeting (#115). The language is German except for #8 and #100, which are in Latin. The handwriting includes the *cancelleresca* script used in Austria and Salzburg in the 17th century, but some documents are written in an individual style. It has been possible to identify 9 hands that composed more than one document and 16 hands for

gemeynschafft mit zaubern oder zauberin hat / oder mit solchen verdecktlichen dingen / geberden / Worten vnd weisen / vmbgeht / die zauberey auf sich tragen / vnd die selbig person des selben sonst auch berüchtigt / das gibt eyn redlich anzeygung der zauberey / vnd gnuogsam vrsach zuo peinlicher frage.” Kohler/Scheel 1968, XLIV. The *Peinliche Gerichtsordnung* was issued in 1532 and contained strict regulations limiting the previously uncontrolled practice of torture (“peinlich” refers to “pain”).

3 Fürweger 2015.

4 <http://irenaeus.uni-graz.at/index.php?/category/202> [accessed 16 September 2020].

single documents. Considerably later, probably around 1900, someone tried to organize the documents by writing the date (if applicable) and keywords on the “outside” of the documents, i. e. on the external sheet visible after the document had been folded. This person was probably not a professional and made several grave mistakes, with the documents for this case incorrectly dated. The majority of the documents would have borne seals, many of them embossed, some with sealing wax; but they have often been lost as the result of unskilled handling over the course of the last 350 years.

Forty-three of the documents are letters, 3 are contracts (#57, #91, #102,) 6 are announcements and rulings concerning affairs of public interest (#8, #41, #79 (probably in connection with #8), #83, #95, #109). The documents #1/2, 7/8, 25/26, 55/56, and 119/120 are not dated. The earliest dated document was written on 24 April 1618, the latest on 1 June 1715. Only eight of the documents are dated after 1700.

The state of the documents varies. Few are fully intact; most bear water spots. Damage done by mice and by fungi is severe in places, and the readability of several documents is thus limited.

The sequence of the documents as found was chaotic, with no recognizable system. The documents were scanned and numbered in that original sequence, to keep track of the changes to be applied by re-sorting on issue and date. The digitalization process was as careful as possible given the status of the documents; the Vestigia Centre of the University of Graz provided know-how and equipment for this tricky part of the process.⁵ After digitalization, the originals were professionally stored in the air-conditioned climate of the departments archive room.

The issues addressed by the documents vary. Some refer to contemporary events, like the threat of invasion of the Holy Roman Empire (#53, 1661, #83, 1704) or political influence on the region (#47, 1689). Some broach pastoral issues like penalties for penitents (#1, 1627, #5, 1687, or #89, 1703). Others refer to legal transactions (#13, 1708, #41, 1698, or #57, 1640). All are interesting sources for historians, but the 22 pages concerning the case of Ludwig Teschler are the focus of this article.

The transcription of several documents which were particularly hard to read was undertaken by Veronika Drescher, a palaeographer.⁶

5 The author is grateful to Univ.-Prof. Dr. Erich Renhart, Vestigia Manuscript Center, University of Graz, for his assistance with the digitalization.

6 In several challenging cases, Prof. Dr. Johannes Giessauf, Institute of History, University of Graz, did not hesitate to lend a hand. We are very grateful for his assistance.

The Case

In the 17th century the parish of [Haus im Ennstal](#) was in a tricky position. Politically it was an eastern outpost of the duchy of Styria, but ecclesiastically it was bound to the archdiocese of Salzburg, which was a political heavyweight too. In 1646, the parish was incorporated into the Benedictine monastery at Admont.⁷ In the course of the Reformation in the previous century, almost all of the duchy of Styria, and especially the region Ennstal, had become Protestant, and it had taken repeated efforts by the reigning Habsburgs between 1570 and 1600 to re-establish Catholicism. Many Protestants had been forced to leave Styria, and Salzburg, but many remained, formally reverting to Catholicism yet remaining crypto-Protestants. This secret Protestantism made the mountain region of northern Styria difficult ground for every Catholic cleric, and parishes were often staffed by priests who having fallen out of favour with the authorities, being disciplined with this usually temporary assignment.⁸ Many of them were naturally eager to regain the Archbishop's favour and actively sought to restore Catholic orthodoxy.

In the first half of the 17th century, the region was also affected by the rerouting of international trade roads as a result of the events of the Thirty Years' War. The lion's share of international commerce between the cities in the kingdoms and duchies of southern Germany on the one hand and Styria, Hungary and Croatia on the other hand was relocated to other routes, leaving the hitherto booming villages and markets with only a small part of their former income.⁹ The impact of famines and marauding mercenaries did not hit the region as hard as elsewhere, but there was a constant threat, exaggerated by rumours, of being raided and plundered, which created a climate of anxiety.

7 Knappitsch 2015, 37–38.

8 Even until the 1990s, the ruins of a sacral building several hundred metres west of Trautenfels Castle were called the “Heidentempel” (heathen temple) in the vernacular. They were the remains of the [Protestant Church Neuhaus](#), which was destroyed in 1599 by the Archduke of Styria during the Catholic restoration. Cf. Leeb/Scheutz/Weigl 2009.

9 See Schmidt 2018.

The Course of Events¹⁰

On 10 August 1642 after a service, the sacristan of the parish church in Haus comes across a red-leather pouch under the altar cloth. This pouch is subsequently opened and found to contain various substances that were commonly used as ingredients for a magic charm, such as human amnion, linen stained with the menstrual blood of a virgin, a rope used on gallows, and specific herbs.¹¹ A young acolyte admits to having put the pouch on the altar on behalf of the lorimer Ludwig Teschler, born in 1616. The parish priest, Albert Widman, sends the pouch to the Consistory of the Archbishop of Salzburg on 17 August along with a report about a similar pouch found earlier. We know these details only from the rescript, as the letter sent by Widman is lost.

In its session of 30 August, the Consistory discusses the case. The pouch is opened and found to contain several items used for magical purposes, as described. Widman is advised to send in the second pouch and keep the matter concealed from the public until the Archbishop has been informed. On 2 September, Widman is informed that the pouch has been presented to Archbishop Paris Lodron, who has authorized the initiation of judicial proceedings. Widman is instructed to discuss the case with the municipal judge at Radstadt, to clarify Teschler's malfeasance and from whom Teschler's knowledge about these procedures was received. On 9 September, the case is delegated to the Court Council. The judge in Radstadt is officially assigned to the interrogation of the accused and ordered to cooperate with Widman.

The contemporary Radstadt court records are lost, but the documents include two versions of the interrogation protocol – one version consists of the almost complete draft notes (#9–12), the other is a clean but incomplete copy of the version submitted to the court (#34–35). Both versions are dated 25 September 1642. The record shows that Teschler, scared by events during what would prove to be the final phase of the devastating war begun in 1618, has listened to the advice of a certain “doctor from Linz”(#12), who

10 See Knappitsch 2015. The Consistory was the relevant body for all religious concerns, but the Court Council was the responsible authority for all “worldly” cases, and prosecution always fell to the Court Council. Some individuals served on both. In both instances the Archbishop had the final word.

11 Cf. Knappitsch 2015, 47–48. Byloff 1902 describes a similar pouch that was found in Aussee in 1611. Knappitsch notes that pouches like these were relatively popular in this region in the 17th century.

has claimed to be skilled in magical practices. This man has told him that a charm worn around his neck which consists of certain ingredients and over which five Catholic masses have been celebrated will protect him from shots, stabbing and sword cuts.

The accounting Widman submits to the Consistory suggests that further versions of the protocol existed (#21). The final version is discussed in the Consistory on 10 October. Teschler and Barbara Schlemmerin, a midwife who provided Teschler with a dried piece of an amnion, are sent to the Court Council for punishment, with Teschler to be used to set an example. On 22 October the Consistory and on 30 October the Court Council vote for the examination and punishment of the midwife; the Court Council orders her to be interrogated under threat of torture.

On 20 November, a report by Widman is discussed in the Consistory. Widman writes that the accused midwife remains obstinate but has confessed to having said blessings and prayers over sick humans and animals. According to the theology of the 17th century, no layperson and, *a fortiori*, no woman was allowed to bless or say prayers over anybody beyond their own household, and the misconception around healing prayer taken as proof of magical practice was aggravating. Widman asks the Consistory to prohibit Schlemmerin from performing such rituals and to ban her from practising as a midwife. The Consistory decides to punish Teschler with a prison sentence of eight days and to require him to undertake a pilgrimage to the Capuchine monks of Radstadt (a journey of some 25 kilometres).

On 24 November the Court Council discusses the case of Barbara Schlemmerin. The council decides that she is to be released, but on 2 January 1643 the council again discusses the case and agrees to forbid her from secretly performing such blessings. Somewhere around January or February 1643, the Consistory demands to know from Widman whether Teschler has already served his sentence. He answers in the negative and adds that he has heard rumours that the local administrator at first refused to arrest Barbara Schlemmerin and only took her into custody after receiving strict orders from the judge. Widman also reports that Schlemmerin – again? – has practised magic (#110 und 111). Meanwhile, on 7 January 1643 the Consistory discusses the report of the Court Council and joins it in the interdiction against Schlemmerin; it increases Teschler's sentence from eight to ten days.

By the beginning of March 1643, a petition for mercy from Teschler arrives at the Consistory, in which Teschler notes that the parish priest (Widman) is harassing him and demanding he pay the expenses of the trial, which were

considerable (#21).¹² Teschler notes that he has already spent 17 days in prison and beseeches the Consistory to order Widman to leave him in peace. It is unclear whether Teschler is telling the truth; a comment on the petition (#23 and 24, possibly a copy written by Widman) describes his supplication as “fraudulent”.¹³ In its session of 4 March the Consistory grants Teschler’s petition and orders Widman to answer the allegations. In #36, dated 20 March, the Consistory asks Widman for a more detailed list of his expenses. The last evidence of these proceedings is an entry in the Consistory protocol dated 18 May – Widman has again asked that an example be made in punishing Teschler and again asks that Teschler be ordered to cover the expenses. The Consistory decided to refer the cost issue to the higher authority and to order Widman to refrain from further punishment other than the required pilgrimage to Radstadt.

No further documents concerning this legal process could be found. Their loss may be attributed to a devastating fire which almost completely destroyed Haus im Ennstal in 1750; only the parish register survived.

Dramatis Personae

The parish register, now accessible digitally,¹⁴ is an important source for reconstructing at least some important parts of the lives of the individuals involved.

Ludwig Teschler

Ludwig Teschler, his name spelled Taschler or Däschl in other sources,¹⁵ was baptized in Haus on 26 October 1616. He was the third child of his married

12 Widman tried to charge Teschler for a total of 11 gulden and 2 shillings (1 gulden = 8 shillings = 60 kreuzer = 240 pfennige). In 1640, a skilled worker in this region might have earned a maximum of 16 kreuzer a day, so Widman was demanding more than a month’s income. Cf. Mensi 1929; Mensi 1935, Rumpl 1962.

13 “Verlogne supplication des überwisen werb[e]n Ludbig[en] Teschlers zu Haus” It remains unclear whether Widman himself wrote this copy. As the parish priest in Haus, he would have had no need to note the location specifically (“zu Haus”).

14 Cf. <https://data.matricula-online.eu/de/oesterreich/graz-seckau/haus-im-ennstale/>. I am most grateful to Gudrun Rausch, who assisted us so greatly in combing through entries in the parish records, which were sometimes almost unreadable.

15 As was customary in the 17th century, the surnames were written phonetically and thus spelled inconsistently.

parents, Jakob and Anna Teschler. Jakob was the local shoemaker and had contact with other leather workshops in the region: Ludwig's godfather was Adam Zeisser [Geisser], shoemaker in Schladming. Two of the three witnesses to Jakob and Anna's marriage are also identified in the records as shoemakers. Ludwig's elder brother Rupertus, born 1614, is identified as shoemaker too; Ludwig himself is called a "Riemer", a person who manufactures leather items for everyday use in rural communities, such as belts, straps, laces, harnesses, and horse-gear. The family is not poor; in a sidenote and in the later version of the main text of the interrogation protocol (#10), Widman mentions that Teschler's mother possesses 1,500 gulden. On 19 August 1643 Teschler married Elisabeth Pernung [?], the daughter of a servant of the archduke. Michael Schwaiger, the municipal judge at Haus, is recorded as a witness to the marriage. Teschler's surely sensational trial had taken place only a few months earlier, but it does not seem to have compromised his standing in the community. According to baptismal records for Haus, the couple had at least six children, with three sons and three daughters born between 1644 and 1660. After 3 June 1660, the date of the baptism of his youngest daughter, Barbara, there is no further trace of Ludwig Teschler, neither in parish records nor in other sources. He has no entry in the local listing of deaths, although his brother, his wife (1684), and at least two of his children were buried in Haus.

The entries in the parish records differ in form and style. Whereas entries made before Albert Widman was parish priest are clear and well structured, his entries between 1633 and 1648 are hard to read and in part lack clear structure, a problem also found in all his notes in the finding volume other than those directed to his superior authority.

Barbara Schlemmerin

Information about Barbara Schlemmerin (who is once called Barbara Kramerin, #110, a name possibly related to a farm where she used to live¹⁶) is sketchy. The only entry that concerns her dates from 8 March 1602¹⁷ and lists her as a legitimate daughter of Anna and Andreas Schlemmer. For her godmother, Anna, the record notes, "She does not know neither her nor her husband's

16 A property known colloquially as Kramer is still found in Oberhaus. It was purchased by the current owners in the 1970s and they know nothing of the property's earlier history or of the case discussed here (information by phone, 22 September 2020).

17 Archive of the Archdiocese Salzburg: Matriken der Pfarre Haus im Ennstal, Taufbuch I (1586-1629), 40.

surname, lives in Haus.”¹⁸ The Schlemmer family was obviously not as financially well-off as the Teschler family, and also lacked their social standing. After the end of the legal proceedings in 1643, her trail runs cold. We do not know whether Widman’s second accusation had any consequences for her. We also do not know when or where she died – she does not appear in the record of parish deaths.

Albert Widman

Widman was parish priest in Haus from 1635 until 1648; he succeeded Johann Riept and was succeeded by Christoph Assinger. We do not yet have details of his origins and career, since his personnel file has not been found. We do know, however, that he had studied law and was appointed as episcopal visitor in the parishes of Winklern, Matrei and Heiligenblut. Widman had been accused of repeated physical abuse. The records of the diocese of Graz-Seckau show that he threatened the municipal judge of Haus physically and on another occasion used a picket during an argument.¹⁹ During the visitation, he was accused of having attacked two priests physically. Widman denied the accusation and pointed out that the priests had committed serious crimes, e.g. peculation, failure to remain chaste and even attempted murder (#17 and #19). His attitude was uncompromising: he insisted on using Latin in addressing the community even though virtually no one was able to understand it, and he did not cease until he received a strict order from the Consistory to desist.²⁰

In spite of these reports, Widman was evidently trusted by his superiors, for in 1647 he was appointed as a visitor for the monastery of Rottenmann (#97, #100).

The Authorities

Today the Archbishop of Salzburg is still termed *primas germaniae*, an honorary title indicative of Salzburg’s leading role in European church history.²¹ At the time of these events, Paris Count Lodron (1586–1653) was Archbishop of Salzburg. He was descended from old and influential Italian nobility, highly

18 “Diese weiss weder ihren noch ihres Manns Zunamen nicht, ist wohnhaft zu Haus”. Ibid.

19 Archive of the Diocese of Graz-Seckau, records of the parish priests of Haus im Ennstal.

20 Fürsterzbischöfliches Konsistorium Salzburg 1642, 10 November.

21 See Zaisberger/Rainer 1998.

educated and upheld humanist ideals. After studying theology, he was appointed as cathedral provost and director of the Court Chamber. In 1619, he was elected Archbishop of Salzburg and in 1622 founded the university at Salzburg, with faculties of theology, medicine, jurisprudence and philosophy. A skilled politician, he managed to keep the region out of the turmoil of the Thirty Years War, but the border lands within his territory suffered in particular as a result of events in surrounding regions.²² Although the duchy of Styria was part of the diocese of Seckau, religious life was dominated by Salzburg because the Archbishop was authorized to install (and recall) the bishop of Seckau, and large regions in Styria also belonged to the archdiocese. The situation for the adjacent dioceses was similar, for example for Chiemsee, where Christoph von Liechtenstein was bishop from 1624 to 1643. In presiding at the Consistory and the Court Council of Salzburg, von Liechtenstein was involved in the case of Ludwig Teschler (#31). Christoph Schrepf (also spelled Schropfh and Schroff), a doctor of theology, was a member of the collegiate monastery Beatae Virginis Ad Nives (Salzburg) and councillor of the Consistory. As such he signed documents #27, #36, #112 and #130.

Materiality: Examples

The case of Ludwig Teschler is fascinating and layered. This analysis and even the literal transcriptions cannot alone reveal all that the documents contain. The digital versions, with high-resolution scans, enable the researcher to derive from the material emotional states and even sometimes psychological aspects. The handwriting often shows personal involvement, but writer and “speaker” are usually not the same person. We can safely assume that Ludwig Teschler and Barbara Schlemmerin were unable to write, especially longer texts. When they are available, changes between draft and fair copy are also revealing.

The material state of the papers is also intriguing: parts of the text are lost forever; parts are unreadable for the time being – the information loss is random, but it also provides new impulses for research.

This case also has an emotional quality that cannot always be accessed via digital artefacts. The scans have quantitative limitations and even as the quality of each new digitalization improves, it will still come up against the

22 See Heinisch 1991.

limitations of the storage space/picture resolution balance. More importantly, especially in this case which is deeply rooted in religious conceptions, in touching, smelling and viewing the papers one becomes deeply involved in a story that links these individuals and institutions in a struggle for safety, hope, truth and benevolence. The digital pictures in the repository and the examples that accompany this article can be only an inferior impression of the large originals. Links are given to the transcripts of the documents, with an English paraphrase of the content also provided.

Left:

To the reverend Consistory in Salzburg etc.

The mother of Teschler has assets of around 1500 fl. *[unreadable]*

Right:

Gracious and highborn Lords,

in execution of your order we have interrogated the undersigned Ludwig Taschler, citizen and lorimer here in Haus. Enclosed you find the protocol containing his statement and confession.

May your reverend highness register it graciously.

Left:

7 lines and one amendment left stroke through

Right:

2. Christian, the legitimate son of Martin Wolf, citizen and blacksmith, 15 years old, has confessed that Teschler asked him three times to put a pouch of red leather under the altar cloth whilst serving as acolyte, so that the mass is celebrated over it. He claims to have refused twice but agreed the third time.

He committed this on 10 August, the feast of St. Laurentius. After the service the sacristan noticed the pouch while extinguishing the candles and handed it to the priest Martin.

When Teschler wanted his pouch back, he [Christian Wolf] told him to ask the priest Martin for it, and [Teschler] did so.

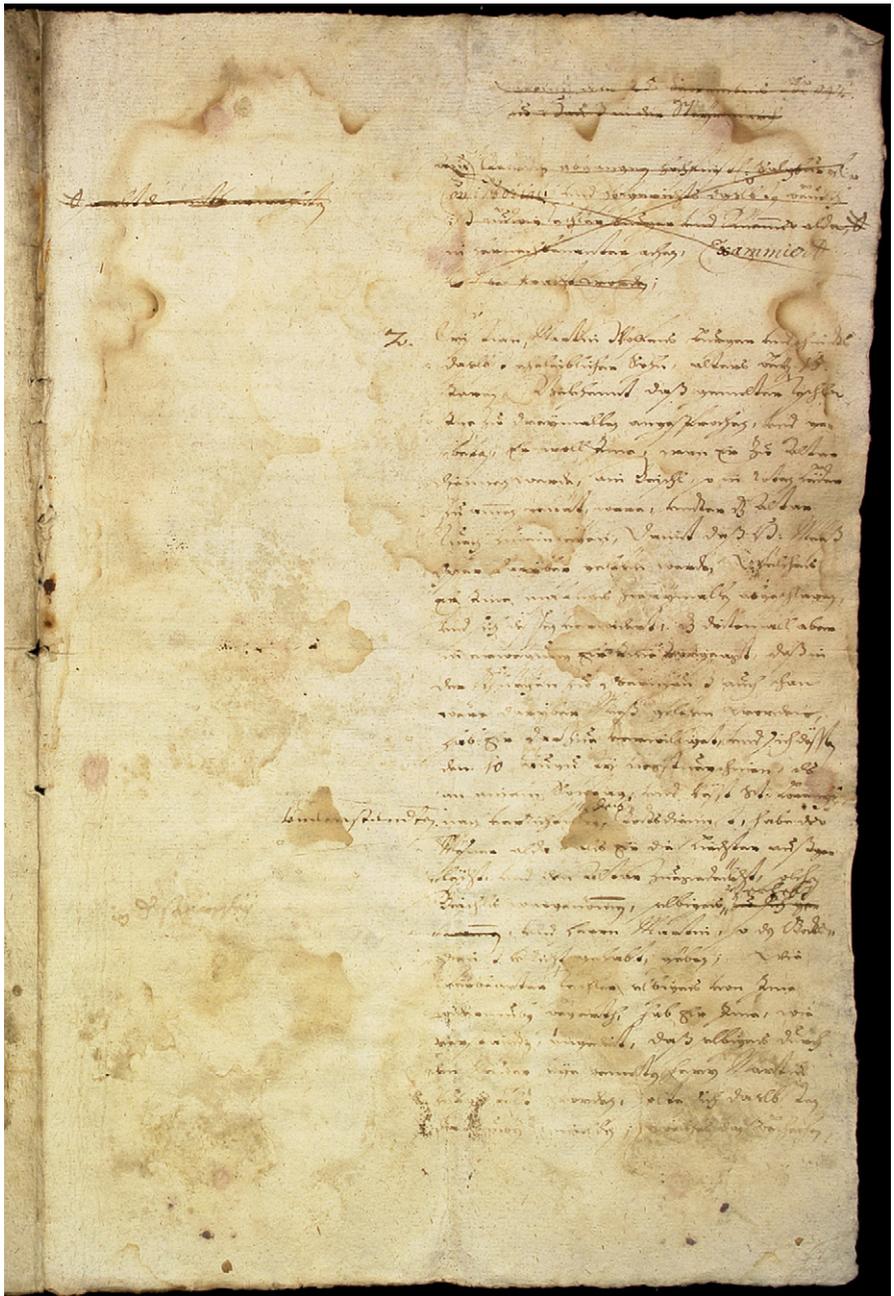


Fig. 2: The report of Albert Widman, part of the interrogation protocol, Hand 3, #11.

Reverend Duke, merciful Lord!

Your noble Highness I approach once more, me, a poor citizen of Haus, unmarried, due to grave distress.

A short time ago the reverend priest here at Haus, Albert Widman, wrongly put me on trial and in custody, but I, a simple mind, was merely misled by others [...] I have never before in my life been involved in magic, yet [...] I served the sentence of the consistory and court.

Now master Widman stalks me, wanting reimbursement for the costs of the trial, expropriating me.

I, just a poor wretch, have already been imprisoned for 17 days [*the original verdict of 8 days was revised to 10 days after Widman's appeal*] in iron chains.

I hope that your Grace will treat me poor subject mildly and grant me protection so that I may live in peace and not be harassed by the aforementioned priest.

He even approached my mother, an old woman who is completely uninvolved in the matter and yet has suffered enough due to the misdoing of her son. And he punished her for an insinuated violation of the tithe.

The committee that visited Haus had advised him to [...] yet he without any reason has defamed me in the house of the municipal judge as a scoundrel and accused me of

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a petition or legal document. The text is dense and difficult to decipher due to the cursive style and some fading. It appears to be a formal request or appeal, possibly related to a religious trial as indicated by the caption. The document is numbered '23' in the top left corner.

Fig. 3: The petition of Ludwig Teschler, Hand 6, #23.

burglary in a cabin. If such were true, I would by my honour (although it is small) and my fortune (which is small too and I do not have a single penny left) be [...] and rightfully punished.

I am a poor tributary of your Grace who is a mild ruler and will advise the reverend priest that I have suffered enough and that I have nothing but my craft and that the priest [...] his intention.

I am your Grace's most humble and unworthy Ludwig Tesler, citizen of Haus.

Bottom right:

Untruthful supplication of the guilty Ludbig Teschler at Haus.

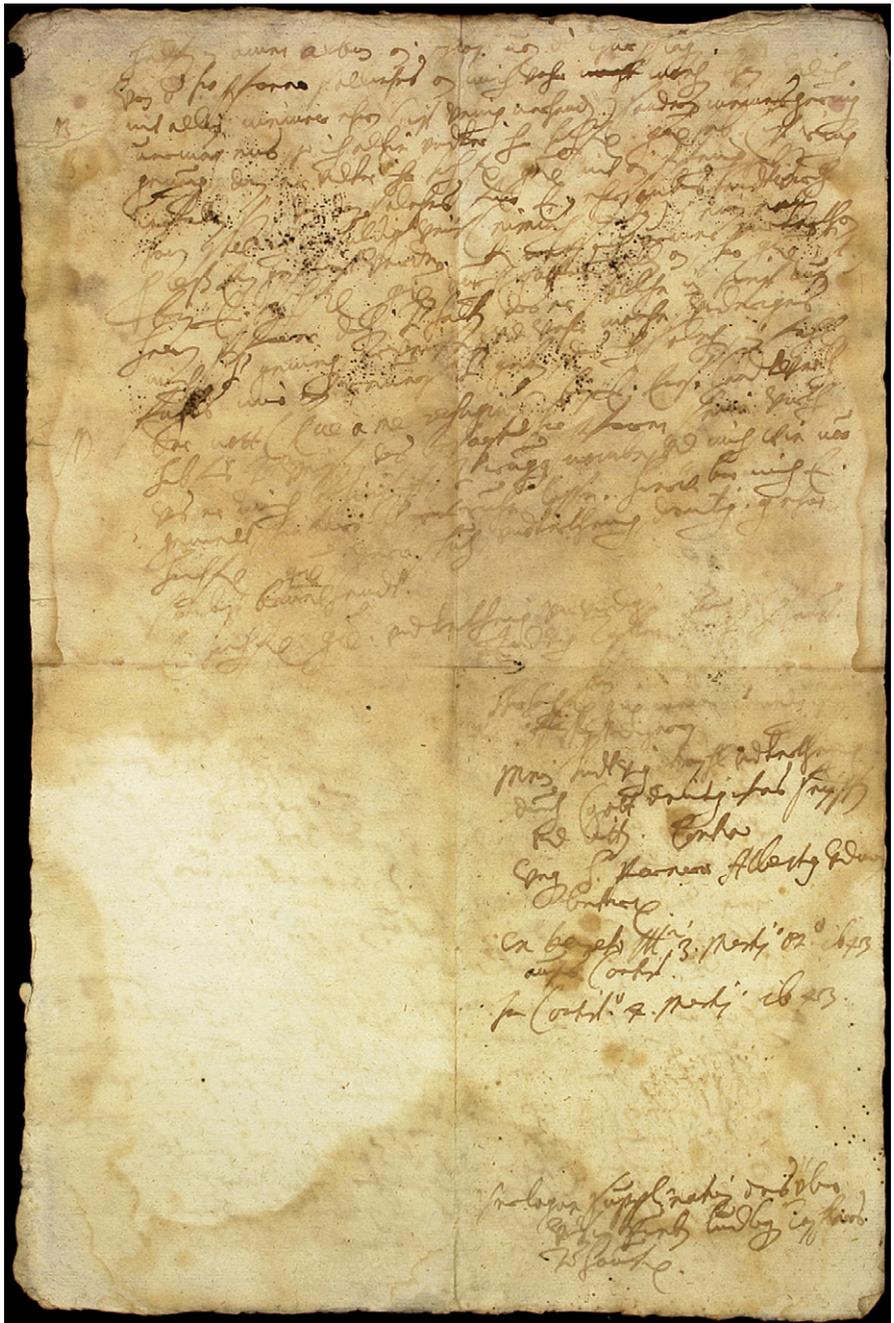


Fig. 4: The petition of Ludwig Teschler, Hand 6, #24.

Concerning the vicar Johann Guster, I do not know more than the protocol says, and I hope that I and the late master Tez will be found more trustworthy than such a person.

And it is not true that I beat two priests while visiting their parishes, for all my life I have never beaten a cleric with a single stroke, God is my witness.

It is true that I found two spoiled priests, namely in Heiligenblut and in St. Leonhard zu Windisch Matrei.

The one in Heiligenblut has had his concubine for 36 years, and he was even incarcerated for copulation. And when he was removed from Heiligenblut, he took with him the best and most valuable things and garments and locked them away in his chest.

The provost pointed me to that chest, which I hardly was able to open, and Tez retrieved from it the aforementioned things.

But the priest raised his stick, which was heavy as a hammer and he attempted to hit him on the head. I shouted out “Tez, watch out!” and caught his arm, else he would have killed him [Tez] and myself. Then I asked him whether he was a murderer.

The vicar, I think, may have been a cleric but is in fact now a living devil, having a concubine and 4 or 5 children. The mayor of Windisch Matrei has asked me to disestablish her but warned me to be careful so that I do not suffer any harm.

I tried that in a peaceful way and gave good words. But listen up: [...] tried to beat me several times. And when thereafter we came to Winklern, he stole several pages from the writing [*a reference to Widman's report of the visitation*]. Such a person is he, and the reverend Consistory will know what punishment all this deserves.

[...]

To the hands of the high and noble born count Guidobald von Thun, and to the noble and deeply learned Consistory at Salzburg, the president and director and councilmen, my gracious and powerful lords.

The president and the counsellors of the Court Consistory in Salzburg etc.

First our greetings, very reverend and deeply learned friend.

We have read what you reported about Barbara Schlemerin alias Kra-haimerin in Haus and ask you to proceed in adequate manner together with the respective authority.

Concerning Ludwig Teschler we order that in addition to the eight days he served according to the worldly authority, he is to go on a pilgrimage to the Capuchine monks in Radstadt and to prove this with a confession and a communion slip.

Report to us when this is done.

Yours sincerely and good willing.

Salzburg, 20 November 1642

Christopher Schrepf

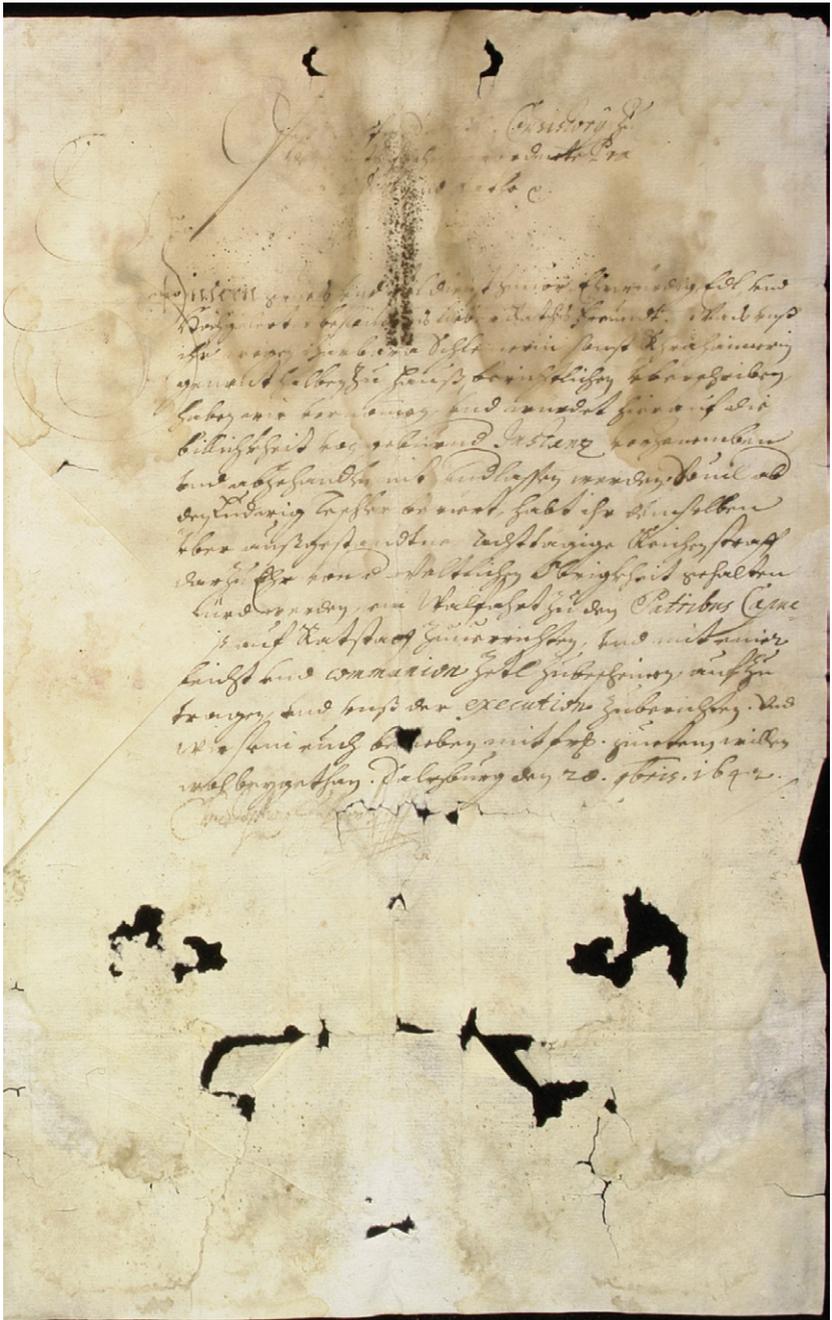


Fig. 7: The verdict against Ludwig Teschler, Hand 4, #112.

Questions remaining

Exploration awaits for the documents amongst the material uncovered that do not concern Ludwig Teschler, Barbara Schlemmerin and Albert Widman. Transcripts are still incomplete, and much archive work will need to be carried out to explore, for example, why the chaplain Sebastian Walther defected from the parish in 1629 (#134), what punishment awaited Maria Schupferin, who in her sleep had smothered her toddler (#89, 1703), or whether the fugitive clerics who appear on wanted posters (#7 and #8) were caught.

For a theologian with great interest in religious theory and practice in the time of the Catholic reform of the early 17th century, the lot of the persons encountered in this article is a particular concern. What happened to Barbara Schlemmerin, who never appeared again in any records? She evidently was never tried, but she is also absent from the register of deaths – did she move away? Did she marry (improbable for woman who was elderly by contemporary standards and had a bad reputation, but still an option)? Why is there no record of the death of Ludwig Teschler even though he lived on for almost two more decades in Haus, apparently as a respected craftsman and father? What happened to Albert Widman after he was recalled from Haus in 1648? Our picture of each of them is nebulous, and they deserve more than the limited impression we can glean from the reports in hand. Speaking of hands, why is Teschler's petition by the same hand as the notes and Widman's apology? And lastly, how did this peculiar selection of papers find its way from the Ennstal to Graz, a distance of about 160 kilometres?

There is a lot of work to be done – archives to be rummaged through, activities to be studied, curiosity to be satisfied and knowledge about past Roman Catholic customs to be acquired.

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