

Power of the Subjugated

Summary

This work analyses the resistance of the subjugated on selected examples of Polish peasants' activity in the serfdom period. My assumption, which lies at the heart of the work, is that the resistance of the subjugated manifests itself on many levels and is dependent on material and ideological forms of dominance. The nature of subjugation tends to render overt political activity dangerous or even downright impossible. In such a situation the subjugated construct their resistance on the basis of available and conceivable forms. These forms depend on the given situation, most often they are conducted secretly and anonymously, while the programs of such resistance appear in a veiled, metaphorical guise.

In the first part of this study, I review the resistance of the subjugated as a concept. My starting point is the assumption that the resistance of the subjugated occurs within the material relations of power and is dependent on the way power engineers its dominion. In this part, I seek to examine models of resistance of the subjugated based on selected examples. This analysis allows me to demonstrate the sociocultural background of resistance and to emphasize that resistance does not occur in a vacuum. I also show how the subjugated should be understood as a group and how this concept relates to "class" or "peasantry". I also introduce the concept of resistance of the weak by James C. Scott. Simultaneously, I place particular emphasis on his concept of the "hidden and public transcript" and Edward P. Thompson's concept of moral economy. They are the starting point for the analyses in the sections on peasant resistance. In the subsequent chapters, I show the social, economic, and cultural background of introducing the so-called "exacerbated bondage" in Poland. This section of my monograph does not provide so much a comprehensive overview of the literature and research available on the subject as a set of landmarks that allow the reader to understand the account of how peasants became subjugated during the period of serfdom.

In the second part of the monograph I analyse particular examples of peasant resistance through the lens of the theories outlined in the preceding part. The concepts and analytical tools introduced earlier allow me to trace the specificity of peasant model and its political character. In the first chapter, I show how the subjugated build social networks that, under favourable circumstances, become the basis for rebellion. Within such networks, the subjugated create a specific culture, certain elements of which constitute the nature of resistance (implicit protocol). In this chapter I also attempt to show the cultural means used by the subjugated in the practice of resistance. In the next chapter, using James C. Scott's concept of resistance, I present the forms and practices of everyday form of peasant resistance. In doing so, I focus on practices of covert resistance, such as absconding, sabotaging work,

and metric resistance. The following chapter expands on the previous one to certain extent by analysing overt forms of resistance and rebellion. Using selected works by historians on the rebellion in the Libuski Starosty (*starostwo*), I show the dynamics of the transition from forms of everyday resistance to a peasant strike and overt rebellion.

What serves as an important research reference for the phenomenon of resistance of the subjugated is the category of so-called “social bandits.” Introduced by Eric Hobsbawm, this term describes both real bandits and their mythologized representations in folklore. The chapter on “social bandits” allows me to show the importance of brigandage and the mythology that has developed around it. In the subsequent chapter I present two models of peasant rebellion. One is based on the local culture of resistance and has a closed character, limited to the environment in which this culture is created. The second model is based on an analysis of the significance of universalist ideologies for peasant revolts (religious, proto-national). Such ideologies in the case of peasant revolts make it possible to transcend the local character of such a revolt. One of few cases when we saw an attempt to spread such a universalist ideology in Poland was the activity of Fr Piotr Ściegienny. An analysis of the ideas he built and his attempts to create a peasant movement makes it possible to discern the dynamics of the relationship between such universalist ideology and local folk culture. In the final chapter I analyse the cultural forms of resistance and the structure of an overt peasant revolt, namely the Galician Slaughter (also known as the Peasant Uprising of 1846 or the Szela Uprising). The uprising allows me to scrutinize the formation of a radical grassroots culture of resistance which – in favourable circumstances – develops into a peasant revolution.

The principal objective of the monograph titled *Power of the Subjugated* is to propose an anthropological analysis of peasant resistance in the perspective of the so-called grassroots history. The major area of interest in the study is the understanding of rebellion and resistance. On the basis of selected concrete examples, the work shows what form peasant resistance assumed in the period of serfdom.