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**BETWEEN MERCANTILISM, ORIENTAL LUXURY,  
AND THE OTTOMAN THREAT:  
DISCOURSES ON THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA  
IN THE EARLY MODERN KINGDOM OF POLAND\***

**Abstract**

This paper analyses the attitudes toward the Armenian Diaspora in early modern Polish society through a close examination of the issues viewed as burning by the contemporaries. The paper is focused on three such burning topics – a) the ‘price revolution’ and, in connection therewith, mercantilism; b) the growing level of consumption (“redundant luxury” – *zbytek nierozmyslny*) and the fears of social disorder aroused by it; and c) the Ottoman threat (real and imagined). The paper argues that there were a variety of discourses on the Armenians because the discourses were influenced by the different answers to the challenging issues presented by the representatives of various social estates – noblemen (*szlachta*), clergymen (*duchowieństwo*) and burghers (*mieszczaństwo*). Therefore, the attitudes to the Monophysite Armenians in Polish society were mostly shaped not as part of the Counter-Reformation agenda (as was the case with respect to Protestants and the Greek-Orthodox), but rather within the framework of economic (mercantilism), social (consumption), and psychological/political (fears of the Ottoman threat) issues.

**Key words:** mercantilism, luxury, the Ottoman threat, trading Diaspora, Armenians

I  
THE OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the attitudes toward the Armenian Diaspora in early modern Polish society. The paper deliberately avoids the present-day concepts of tolerance and intolerance, which are considered as irrelevant in this case. The paper’s purpose is to argue that the trading Diasporas were perceived in

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a different way than conventional religious minorities – Protestants and the Greek-Orthodox – who were represented by their own nobility in the Diet (*Sejm*). A different approach should thus be employed. The study of the perceptions of the trading Diasporas in early modern Polish society should be done through a close examination of the issues considered burning to their contemporaries. This paper examines three such burning topics – a) the ‘price revolution’ and, connected therewith, mercantilism; b) the growing level of consumption (“redundant luxury” – *zbytek nierozmyslny*) and fears of the social disorder it aroused; and c) the Ottoman threat (both real and imagined).

As Philip Curtin pointed out:

If people tend to be suspicious of merchants, they are even more suspicious of foreigners; yet some societies actually encouraged foreign merchants. Where commerce was regarded as such an unpleasant occupation, it was seen as better left to foreigners.<sup>1</sup>

Pragmatic reasons<sup>2</sup> were intertwined with social prejudices. This was the case in early modern Poland, when the nobility employed numerous Armenian, German, Greek, Italian, Jewish and Scottish merchants.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, in the host society the foreign tradesmen were attacked by mercantilists and moralists alike.<sup>4</sup> However, Polish society was not unanimous in its attitudes to the trading Diasporas.

There were a variety of discourses on the Armenians, owing to the different responses to the challenging issues given by the representatives of the various social estates – the noblemen, clergymen, and burghers. Thus, this paper argues that the attitudes to the Monophysite Armenians in Polish society were mostly shaped not as part of the Counter-Reformation agenda (as it was the case with the Protestants and the Greek-Orthodox) but rather within the framework of economic (mercantilism), social (consumption) and political (the Ottoman threat) issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, 1984), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Irvine Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Maria Bogucka, ‘Miasto i mieszczańin w społeczeństwie Polski nowożytnej (XVI–XVIII wiek)’, *Czasy Nowożytne*, xxii (2009), 23–36.

<sup>4</sup> Janusz Tazbir, ‘Żydzi w opinii staropolskiej’, in *idem* (ed.), *Świat Panów Pasków. Eseje i studia* (Łódź, 1986), 217–18.

Krzysztof Stopka has, in his brilliant works,<sup>5</sup> studied the successful integration of Armenians into Polish society. Therefore, this paper is mostly about the obstacles that Armenians met on their way to integration as a result of challenging issues dominating the public discussion in the host society.

The chronological focus is on the period from the mid-sixteenth century – the time of the Council of Trident – to the 1660s, ending with the Polish-Ottoman war of 1672–6, which changed the perceptions in Polish society of both the Ottoman threat and the Armenian Diaspora. This paper examines the writings of Polish authors – both Catholics and Protestants, leaving aside the discourses on Armenians produced by authors of other ethnic backgrounds – foreigners as well as Polish subjects (Ruthenians, Germans of Gdańsk, etc.).

For 170 years, from 1503 to 1672, there was almost constant peace between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire, interrupted only twice by the military conflicts in 1620–1 and 1633–4. Nevertheless, discourses concerning the ‘Ottoman threat’ circulated even during the times of peace. They were attached to the mercantilist and moralist discourses concerning both the outflow of money from Poland to the Ottoman Empire, and the inflow of the Oriental luxury.

The *Sejm* many times imposed, and then cancelled, tolls on cash exports from Poland to Moldavia, which were actually to the markets of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> In the list of ordinary state revenues mentioned

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<sup>5</sup> Krzysztof Stopka, ‘The Religious Culture of Polish Armenians (Church-Public Structures and Relations)’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 101 (2010), 163–205; *idem*, ‘“Nasza polska nacja”. Kształtowanie się patriotyzmu polskiego wśród Ormian w okresie staropolskim’, in Andrzej Nowak and Andrzej A. Zięba (eds.), *Formuły patriotyzmu w Europie Wschodniej i Środkowej od nowożytności do współczesności* (Kraków, 2009), 37–54; *idem*, ‘Migracje a przemiany tożsamości ormiańskiej w średniowiecznej Europie Wschodniej’, in Maciej Salamon and Jerzy Strzelczyk (eds.), *Wędrowniacy i etnogeneza w starożytności i średniowieczu* (Kraków, 2004), 355–65.

<sup>6</sup> Andrzej Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu. Handel między Polską a Imperium Osmańskim w XVI–XVII wieku* (Wrocław, 1997), 54; Zbigniew Świtalski, ‘Cło od pieniędzy wywożonych za granicę Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1598–1659’, *Przegląd Historyczny*, li, 1 (1960), 25–6; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, ‘The Export of Silver Coin through the Polish-Ottoman Border and the Problem of the Balance of Trade’, *Turcica*, xxviii (1996), 105–16. The sultans guaranteed not to impose customs duties on the cash which Polish merchants would export from Poland to the Ottoman domains. Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*

in the memoirs of Jakub Michałowski (1612–63), the toll is labelled as “Armenian toll from [exported] money” (*Myto Ormiańskie od pieniędzy*).<sup>7</sup> Michałowski’s evidence probably reflects the toll collection in 1647, when 2,482 Polish *złotys* were collected, making it possible to calculate that in 1647 Armenians of Lwów (L’viv) exported through the Polish-Moldavian border 128,238 *złotys* in cash.<sup>8</sup> The amount of illegally exported bullion is unknown. And most of the exported cash was used to buy Oriental luxuries on the Ottoman markets.

Despite a good many works on the trade of Armenian merchants between the Orient and Poland, the role of Armenians in shaping Polish Sarmatian culture is still understudied.<sup>9</sup>

American social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai proposed to:

regard luxury goods not so much in contrast to necessities (a contrast filled with problems), but as goods whose principal use is *rhetorical* and *social*, goods that are simply *incarnated signs*. The necessity to which *they* respond is fundamentally political. Better still, since most luxury goods are used (though in special ways and at special costs), it might make more sense to regard luxury as a special ‘register’ of consumption (by analogy to the linguistic model) than to regard them as a special class of things.<sup>10</sup>

In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Oriental goods – mostly imported by Armenian merchants – were used by the nobility to reinforce their Sarmatian Polish identity, i.e. as non-Western, in order to reject any attempts to establish a Western absolutist monarchy and to reduce the king’s power, which in turn led to the establishment of the so-called ‘Republic of nobles’ – who allegedly originated from the Sarmatians. Since the Turks were considered by the humanists

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(15th–18th Century): *An Annotated Edition of ‘Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden, 2000), 323.

<sup>7</sup> Jakuba Michałowskiego *Księga Pamiętnicza* (Kraków, 1864), 484.

<sup>8</sup> Świtalski, ‘Cło od pieniędzy’, 28.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this topic, see: Zdzisław Żygulski, ‘Armenians in Poland. A Foreign Culture Incorporated’, in Beata Biedrońska-Słota, Magdalena Ginter-Frołow and Jerzy Malinowski (eds.), *The Art of the Islamic World and the Artistic Relationships Between Poland and Islamic Countries* (Kraków, 2011), 317–36; Beata Biedrońska-Słota, *Ormianie polscy: odrębność i asymilacja [katalog wystawy]* (Kraków, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: commodities and the politics of value’, in *idem* (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 38.

as people of Scythian stock,<sup>11</sup> the Ottoman attire, arms, carpets, and horses were retrospectively attributed to the imaginary Sarmatian ancestors of Polish nobility. Following the unsuccessful efforts of the Habsburgs to be elected as Polish kings, and Zebrzydowski's mutiny of 1606–8, Sarmatism was transformed into a conservative aristocratic republican ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Following the end of the Jagiellonian dynasty in 1572 and the decline of the king's power, the trading Diasporas – Jews, Armenians and Scots – gradually established closer ties with magnates as their new protectors and business partners.<sup>13</sup> By the 1670s, a dozen new Armenian communities existed in the nobility's private towns.

## II

### HELPFUL FELLOW-TRAVELLERS IN THE OTTOMAN DOMAINS: ARMENIAN MERCHANTS AND POLISH DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

Armenian caravans regularly shuttled between Constantinople and Lwów/Kamieniec (Kamjanec'), frequently joining Polish embassies in order to travel under diplomatic protection. These joint trips were mutually beneficial, since the Armenian merchants were bearers of indispensable practical experience which the Polish ambassadors lacked.

Polish nobleman Erazm Otwinowski (1529–1614) composed an unofficial detailed diary of the embassy train led by Andrzej Bzicki in 1557. When crossing the Balkans, the Poles were twice dragged

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<sup>11</sup> Nancy Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy', in David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London, 1999), 194; Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, 2008), 68.

<sup>12</sup> Stanisław Cynarski, 'The Shape of Sarmatian Ideology in Poland', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 19 (1968), 5–17; Karin Friedrich, 'History, Myth, and Historical Identity', in James B. Collins and Karen L. Taylor (eds.), *Early Modern Europe: Issues and Interpretations* (Oxford, 2006), 41–54; Magdalena Długosz and Piotr O. Scholz (eds.), *Sarmatismus versus Orientalismus in Mitteleuropa / Sarmatyzm versus orientalizm w Europie Środkowej* (Berlin, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Andrzej Wyrobisz, 'Attitude of the Polish Nobility towards Towns in the First Half of the 17th Century', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 48 (1983), 90–1; Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, 'Polityka handlowa Jana Zamoyskiego i jego następców', *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F: Historia*, xxxviii/xxxix (1983/1984), 93–114.

into combat with Turks – once with shepherds<sup>14</sup> and again with two mounted villains who robbed the ambassador's épée.<sup>15</sup> According to Otwinowski, in both cases Armenian merchants were in the avant-garde of the pursuit and fight. When crossing the Danube, Otwinowski's cart was damaged by the boatmen, and it "was repaired almost the whole night through by the [fellow-traveller] Armenians, who are very much proficient in this work."<sup>16</sup>

Because of the ambassador's hurriedness, his train and the Armenian caravan were pursued and stopped by the chief customs officer of Moldavia, who extorted 400 thalers from the Armenian merchants. In describing this excess, Otwinowski actually expressed his sympathy with the unlucky Armenians, "since before they never paid tolls when traveling along with an ambassador."<sup>17</sup> In his narrative, Otwinowski reconstructed the dialogue between the ambassador and the Armenians, suggesting that the ambassador lost public face.

In contrast to the other Polish writers, Otwinowski gives the names of some Armenian fellow-travellers – a sure sign of his close acquaintance with them. While noting that the Armenian merchants proved to be very useful to Otwinowski and the embassy in general, in his diary he neither paid attention to the Armenian religion nor expressed any general judgment of the entire nation.

In sharp contrast to ambassador Bzicki, who failed to intercede for the merchants in Moldavia, the prince Krzysztof Zbaraski (1579–1627) made all efforts to protect the merchants at the Ottoman court in 1622. The story was described by Samuel Twardowski (1600–61), who served as Zbaraski's secretary, in a diary describing the diplomatic mission in verse. When the embassy arrived at Istanbul, the Ottoman official (*çavuş*) sent by the great vizier demanded the 10 per cent toll from both ready cash and from merchandise the merchants brought with them. Zbaraski replied: "It is not proven by any custom or memory that a Polish caravan affiliated with the Great Ambassador has ever paid any toll."<sup>18</sup> Then he advised the vizier to consult the treaty

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<sup>14</sup> Erazm Otwinowski, 'Wypisanie drogi tureckiej', in Józef I. Kraszewski (ed.), *Podróże i poselstwa polskie do Turcji* (Kraków, 1860), 32–4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 35–6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Twardowski, *Przeważna legacja, Jaśnie Oświeconego Książęcia Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego ... do ... Cesarza tureckiego Mustafy w roku 1621* (Kraków, 1639), 58.

between sultan Suleiman I and King Sigismund I (apparently the one of 1533 although its preserved copy does not contain such a clause), which reportedly contained a clear statement that merchants who accompanied embassies were exempted from any tolls. In accordance with Twardowski's narrative, Zbaraski made a statement which shed light on the nobility's attitude to the Oriental trade: "I do not invent anything new. The merchants will not pay the toll, even if they were to lose everything, including their life. The Republic will suffer less from their destruction than the ambassador's reputation [would have suffered from such a humiliation]." <sup>19</sup> In a very patriotic way Zbaraski attached the issue of tolls to the Commonwealth's public interest and his reputation as a person of authority.

His reply did not convince the vizier. Then Zbaraski made a proposal to send the Ottoman custom-farmers and search the merchants' goods. And if the sultan's officials disclosed merchandise worth more than two thousand thalers in customs duties, "I shall pay for the excess from my own purse, in order to keep the ambassador's reputation." <sup>20</sup> Actually, Zbaraski – as well as other Polish ambassadors – got his commission charge from the merchants. When back in Poland he reminded the Armenian merchants of his favour and expenses, and the Armenians of Lwów rewarded him with 5,000 *złotys* in 1624. <sup>21</sup>

While they were very helpful and profitable fellow-travellers, the Armenian merchants also caused some problems for the standing and public image of Polish ambassadors. On one hand, the Armenian caravan increased the imposing magnificence of the Polish ambassadorial train. But on the other hand, in the eyes of the Ottoman officials it transformed an embassy into a hybrid semi-diplomatic and semi-mercantile enterprise. The official diary of Polish ambassador Wojciech Miaskowski and an unofficial diary written by nobleman Zbigniew Lubieniecki, a member of the same embassy train, are good sources illustrating this point.

During its travel through the Ottoman domains in 1640, the embassy was accompanied by an Ottoman official (*çavuş*) responsible for attending to all their needs. Both Miaskowski and Lubieniecki noted in their

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, 61.

<sup>21</sup> Władysław Łoziński, *Patrycyat i mieszczaństwo lwowskie w XVI i XVII wieku* (Lwów, 1892), 274.

diaries that the avaricious and dishonest official paid neither for their foodstuffs, nor for their lodgings. When they arrived at Istanbul “the official rascally defamed his grace, Sir Ambassador, before the grand vizier, saying that ‘he has only 40 horsemen with him, not noblemen but Armenians, while I had to provide him with victuals, giving to him 5,000 aspers for every night’s lodging’. All of this is lie.”<sup>22</sup> By attaching an ambassador to a caravan, and replacing noblemen with merchants, the Ottoman official tried to diminish the status of the embassy. Moreover, the Ottoman demands for the tolls made the ambassador more vulnerable in the sense of demeaning his noble honour and his suzerain’s reputation.

Nevertheless, none of Polish ambassadors and their companions had ever complained about the Armenian merchants in their reports and diaries. Pragmatic gains – the commission charge paid by the Armenian merchants for exemption from the tolls as well as their evident efficiency during the trips – outweighed the occasional reputational risk.

The triumph of practical considerations over religiosity was represented in another story in Lubieniecki’s diary. He describes how the Polish embassy’s residence was visited on 30 April by a captive – Piotr of Komarno, a former Polish trumpeter. He was captured in Ukraine by the Tatars and sold to Istanbul. There, after 27 years of enslavement, he converted to Islam and was then freed. Piotr “said that now he has no urgent work and ‘if you need something I will gladly help you.’ We thanked him for that and were happy that the Lord God sent to us this good man in order to release us from the Armenians – the great swindlers.”<sup>23</sup> Why did Lubieniecki suddenly call the Armenians “the great swindlers” – giving no examples of their swindles? On 2 and 3 May Piotr took the Poles to a market (*bezestan*). Lubieniecki describes his successful shopping and the purchases he made with a great relish. One could suggest that Armenian merchants fell into Lubieniecki’s disgrace because of a disappointment during the shopping. Probably, they guided the Polish noblemen to the shops of their partners – most likely the local Armenians – who asked for disappointingly high prices. The fact of Piotr’s apostasy did not influence Lubieniecki’s superb characterization of him – “the Lord God sent to us this good man”.

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<sup>22</sup> Zbigniew Lubieniecki, ‘Diariusz drogi tureckiej’, in Adam Przyboś (ed.), *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.* (Warszawa and Kraków, 1985), 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 141.



Thus, the heaven-sent renegade was closer to the Polish nobleman than the Christian Armenians, since the apostate guided them to shops with affordable prices.

It can be seen that Polish ambassadors did not consider the outflow of money from Poland to the Ottoman Empire as harmful to the Polish economy. Quite the contrary, they made deliberate efforts to exempt the merchants – mostly Armenians – from the toll, in order to establish favourable conditions for the outflow. And the ambassadors did not make a secret of this.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the Polish noblemen gladly joined the embassy's train in order to shop in the bazaars of Istanbul.

Marcin Paszkowski, in his compendium work (1615), mentioned that Greeks and Armenians fearlessly helped captives to escape from Ottoman slavery.<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, it is a verbatim borrowing from a popular work on the Christian captives published by a Croatian Bartolomej Georgijević (1510–66) in 1544 and based on his personal experience (1526–38).<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in the nobility's discourse on the Ottoman threat the Armenians were on the right side.

### III

#### NOBLEMEN ON THE ARMENIAN FAITH

In general, the noblemen were ignorant of the peculiarities of the Armenian faith. When the King Ladislaus IV Vasa (1632–48) made efforts at the beginning of his rule to settle the discontent of the religious dissidents, the Armenians were among them.<sup>27</sup> Prince Albrycht

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<sup>24</sup> In his diary Miaskowski reflected his care about the Polish merchants' toll exemption. 'Relacja tejże legacji tureckiej Wojciecha Miastkowskiego podkomorzego lwowskiego, posła wielkiego do Amurata i Ibraima cesarzów otomańskich', in Przyboś (ed.), *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego*, 87, 92, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Marcin Paszkowski, *Dzieie Tvreckie y vtarczki Kozackie z Tatary* (Kraków, 1615), 320 ('O przychylności Grækow, y Ormianow, przeciwko Chrześcianom uciekaiącym'). See also: Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'Slave hunting and slave redemption as a business enterprise: the northern Black Sea region in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries', *Oriente Moderno*, s.n, xxv, 1 (2006): *The Ottomans and Trade*, 149–59.

<sup>26</sup> Bartolomej Georgijevic, *De Afflictione Tam Captivorum Quam Etiam Sub Turcae tributo viventium Christianorum* (Worms, 1545), 16.

<sup>27</sup> Nigol Torosowicz, an Armenian bishop of Lwów, being in conflict with Armenian community there, in 1630 declared himself a supporter of unity with the Roman Church. Backed by Pope Urban VIII, the local Jesuits, and the city authorities,

Stanisław Radziwiłł (1593–1656), a chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, noted in his memoirs the way he considered their issue:

After the Greeks [the Orthodox] the Armenians spoke, who complained that the Armenian bishop adopted union and seized their churches; therefore they asked that at least one church be returned to them. When prince Radziwiłł directed them to the Greek committee, the schismatics became furious that he equated them [the Armenians] to the Greeks. The prince readily dismissed them since he believed that they [the Greeks] are of the same faith as them [the Armenians].<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to Orthodox Ruthenians and various Protestant denominations, Armenians had no nobility to protect them in the *Sejm*, therefore they could not obtain special consideration for their issues. The Armenians were considered by contemporaries to be among the ‘Oriental Christians’, therefore Radziwiłł put them in the same rank with the Greek-Orthodox Ruthenians.

Protestants demonstrated more interest in other non-Catholic churches, although the only Polish noble author who showed interest in the Armenian faith was Jan Łasicki (1534–99). In his brief work *On the Armenian faith* (1582), Łasicki noted the superior credentials of the Armenians of Lwów: “They are noble, human, frank, generous, open-minded, but at the same time cautious, elegant, sophisticated, wealthy men with nice faces and black beards, who have devoted themselves to the commerce with Oriental goods. They are nominated to redeem the captive Christians, and are generous donors.”<sup>29</sup> As a Protestant intellectual, Łasicki paid particular attention to two crucial issues – the attitude of the Armenian Church to the papacy and the language of Armenian liturgy. Thus, he wrote: “I discussed their religion with two priests (there are six others). They have not adopted anything from a Roman Pope since the time of Callixtus,<sup>30</sup> nor

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the Uniate bishop seized the Armenian cathedral, then terrified and persecuted his opponents.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Memoriał rzeczy znaczniejszych, które się w Polsce działy od śmierci Zygmunta III’, in Edward Raczyński (ed.), *Pamiętniki Albrychta Stanisława X. Radziwiłła kanclerza w. Litewskiego*, i (Poznań, 1839), 58.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Łasicki, ‘De religione Armeniorum’, in *De Russorum religione, ritibus nuptiarum, funerum, victu, vestitu, &c. et de Tartarorum religione ac moribus: vera & luculenta narratio* ([Rostock]: Stephanus Myliander, 1582), 58–9.

<sup>30</sup> Probably Łasicki meant Pope Callixtus III (1455–8).

do they recognize him as the head of Church. They use their vernacular language in their sacral liturgies.”<sup>31</sup> Although austerity was deeply enmeshed in the specific doctrines of the Protestant churches, Łasicki did not criticise the Armenians’ trade in expensive Oriental goods. On the contrary, he found this Oriental trade to be virtuous since it enabled the Armenian merchants to redeem Christian captives from the Ottoman and Tatar slavery and save them from a possible apostasy.

#### IV THE NOBILITY’S DISCOURSES ON ORIENTAL LUXURY AND THE ARMENIANS

The noblemen ordinarily described Armenian trade as a positive phenomenon, since Armenian merchants supplied them with the Oriental commodities they needed to affirm their Sarmatian identity and in doing so reinforce their republican values.

Leonard Gorecki (ca. 1530 – post-1582), a Polish nobleman, in his description of Moldavia, noted, among other things, that: “[t]he Malmasia wine is taken from Turkey to Poland by Armenians through Moldavia, as well as other commodities – pepper, crocus, precious flavourings, and carpets, which are accessories of luxury.”<sup>32</sup> He did not blame Armenian intermediaries for tempting Polish consumers with luxury.

Łukasz Opaliński (1612–66), the Court Marshall of the Crown since 1650, in his pamphlet *Defense of Poland* (1648) written as a reply to foreign criticism, considered the import of Oriental merchandise by Armenian merchants as a positive phenomenon: “There is no need to say about Asian, that is Turkish or Persian merchandise, which the Armenians bring in quantities to us [in Poland].”<sup>33</sup> The nobility saw this conspicuous consumption as a sign of Poland’s prosperity and superiority as compared to other nations when it came to supplying Poland with the best goods.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 59.

<sup>32</sup> *Leonhardi Gorecii, Descriptio belli Ivoniae, Voivodae Valachiae quod anno 1574 cum Selymo II Turcarum imperatore* (Frankfurt [am Main], 1578), 19.

<sup>33</sup> Łukasz Opaliński, *Obrona Polski*, ed. by Kazimierz Tyszkowski (Lwów and Warszawa, 1921), 26. Originally published as: Łukasz Opaliński, *Polonia defensa contra Joannem Barclaium* (Gdańsk, 1648).

<sup>34</sup> Opaliński, *Obrona Polski*, 25, 83, 84.

A Polish hussar and historian Wespazjan Kochowski (1633–1700) described in a vivid manner how Armenian merchants purveyed the Polish army approaching Lwów in June 1653: “Armenians give splendid luxury on credit, thus provoking temptations; they sell their goods on trust, supply various beverages and delicious food.”<sup>35</sup> Though Armenians provided the warriors not only with food but also with luxury, Kochowski addressed his criticism rather to the prodigal Polish soldiers, who “in one day of such conviviality wasted their quarterly allowance.”<sup>36</sup>

Armenian merchants’ readiness to sell on credit was well-known in contemporary Poland. In the popular print *Lamentation over dead Credit* – published ca. 1655 and circulated widely in contemporary Poland – ‘an Armenian’ was represented in the centre of a group of merchants, tavern-keepers and artisans mourning over unpaid personal credit. The verses at the bottom of the woodcut represent their sentiments, including this: “An Armenian sold on credit various goods, though if he sold for cash he would have gained plenty of money.”<sup>37</sup> There is a strong probability that Kochowski made reference to this particular woodcut because he wrote the word *Crediti* in italics and with capital letters, as if it was a book title.

Because of their diplomatic and economic services to the king and the Polish military leadership, the wealthy Armenian merchants were also purveyors to the royal household and army.<sup>38</sup> Following the royal court and army could be both a lucrative business as well as a dangerous and ruinous adventure. When on 1 July 1656 the Swedish army abandoned Warsaw to the army of John Casimir Vasa, the Polish military leadership took measures to protect the city from devastation. When stopped by the hetmans and loyal troops, angry volunteers and servants attacked and ransacked an Armenian bazaar situated next

<sup>35</sup> Wespazjan Kochowski, *Annalium Poloniae ab obitu Vladislai IV Climacter primus* (Kraków, 1683), 371.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> Karolina Grodziska and Waław Walecki (eds.), *Lament różnego stanu ludzi nad umarłym Kredytem* (Kraków, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> For instance, the Armenian merchant Sefer Muratowicz, following the successful fulfilment of his mission to the court of the Persian Shah Abbas I, was awarded the titles of *servitor ac negotiator* and *servitor regius*. Michael Połczyński, ‘The Relation of Sefer Muratowicz: 1600–1601 Unofficial Embassy of Zygmunt III Vasa to Shah’Abbas I’, *The Turkish Historical Review*, v, 1 (2014), 59–93.

to the king's headquarters. As an eyewitness described it "a certain rascal in order to calm them gave the villainous advice to pay themselves with Armenian goods."<sup>39</sup> Jakub Łoś (1632–88), a Polish hussar who took part in the battle, noted in his diary:

when the servants realized that they were withheld from the plunder of Warsaw, they ransacked the Armenians and their bazaar. The losses by the Armenians reached 200,000 [złotys], and from that time we were left almost without Turkish goods, and the treasury held before [by the Armenians] was lost, to the great harm to the army because it was from there that warriors were given necessary goods which they needed in accordance with their achievements.<sup>40</sup>

The 'Turkish goods' ordinarily taken by Polish warriors on a march<sup>41</sup> were considered by Łoś as necessary for military service. Moreover, Łoś expressed the pragmatic opinion that the ransacking of the Armenian merchants had caused a shortage in supply and great harm to the army.

On the other hand, the early seventeenth century witnessed a growing number of Polish noble authors who expressed criticism of the redundant luxury and Poland's unbalanced foreign trade. Usually, the authors of pamphlets and satires attacked their noble compatriots – sybaritic youth, modish women, and their amenable husbands. At the same time, Polish mercantilists fiercely criticized the merchants for flooding the market with expensive foreign goods of questionable quality (*Robba per Polonia*), unreasonably high prices, and the cash outflow.<sup>42</sup> They accused the merchants of demoralizing society by importing luxury goods and by their "tricks and intolerable profits" (*fortele i zyski nieznośne*). Noblemen employed their favourite hunting

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<sup>39</sup> Warsaw, Central Archives of Historical Records (*Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych*, AGAD), Radziwiłł Archive (*Archiwum Radziwiłłów*, AR), sec. II, Book XXI, 170–2, 'Awizy spod Warszawy', 5 July 1656. Quoted after Mirosław Nagielski, *Warszawa 1656* (Warszawa, 2009), 82.

<sup>40</sup> *Pamiętniki Łosia, towarzyszka Chorągwi Pancерnej Władysława margrabi Myszkowskiego wojewody krakowskiego, obejmujące wydarzenia od r. 1646 do 1667* (Kraków, 1858), 16.

<sup>41</sup> Andrzej Rachuba, 'Poszedł żołnierz na wojnę ... Rejestry ruchomości żołnierzy litewskich z XVII wieku', in Mirosław Nagielski, Andrzej Rachuba and Sławomir Górczyński (eds.), *Świat pogranicza* (Warszawa, 2003), 192–8; Marek Wagner, 'Inwentarze ruchomości oficerów wojsk koronnych z drugiej połowy XVII wieku', *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, li, 2 (2003), 249–59.

<sup>42</sup> Jan Grodwagner, *Discurs o cenie pieniędzy terażniejszej y o niektórych skutkach iey* (s.l., 1632), 15, 17, 34.

parlance to write that “the merchants are hunting for our purses like snooping hounds and pointing dogs.”<sup>43</sup> Burghers were equated with enemies “destroying and impoverishing the Kingdom and robbing its wealth while enriching foreign countries and themselves.”<sup>44</sup> In the background, the noble pamphleteers also depicted the foreign nations – Germans, Italians, Englishmen, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Turks, and even Magyars – as making a profit off of a Polish prodigal lifestyle. Some of the authors released pointed arrows of criticism against the trading Diasporas – Jewish and Scottish, although only two of them – Piotr Zbylitowski (1569–1649) and Wojciech Gostkowski (1st half 17th c., see below) – mentioned Armenians in their writings.

Piotr Zbylitowski in his *Conversation between a Polish nobleman and a foreigner* (1600) represented the unreasonable consumption using lines such as:

Laughs the unpretentious Spaniard, mocks the learned Italian,  
 Almost all nations know about our extravagances,  
 An Armenian [merchant] will routinely weigh a pound of pepper,  
 A resident of Gdańsk will repeatedly take a half-spoon of saffron.<sup>45</sup>

Pepper and saffron were the most expensive spices used in cuisine and medicine. And their routine purchase in such vast doses, such as a pound and a half-spoon, respectively, was seen by contemporaries as a manifest sign of extravagancy. “An Armenian [merchant]” in this verse is depicted as an average seller doing his routine work – without any moral judgement, like a “snooping hound” or a “pointing dog”. Thus, the principal targets of the noblemen’s moralist/mercantilist criticism were native merchants and burghers in general.

Even those noble moralists who stressed their devotion to Catholic principles did not blame Armenians for the moral decline of Polish society. In *The Pitiful Lamentation on the Terrific Fire in the Famous City of*

<sup>43</sup> Stanisław Zaremba, ‘Okulary na rozchody w Koronie i z Korony’, in Janusz Górski and Edward Lipiński (eds.), *Merkantylistyczna myśl ekonomiczna w Polsce XVI i XVII wieku. Wybór pism* (Warszawa, 1958), 257.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 263. For more details, see Maria Bogucka, ‘Miejsce mieszczanina w społeczeństwie szlacheckim’, in Andrzej Wyczański (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo staropolskie*, i (Warszawa, 1976), 185–200.

<sup>45</sup> Piotr Zbylitowski, *Rozmowa szlachcica polskiego z cudzoziemcem* (Kraków, 1600), 44.

*Jarosław in the Course of General Fair*<sup>46</sup> (1625), Wawrzyniec Chlebowski gave a detailed account of foreign merchants and their commodities. At the very epicentre of the fair trade was a church formerly ornamented by the glorious princes, and encircled by the expensive merchandise of Armenians.<sup>47</sup> It was destroyed by fire, along with “numerous Armenian vendor kiosks with expensive merchandise, full of silk and Persian carpets.”<sup>48</sup>

Chlebowski turned his main criticism against the Poles – actually the noble owners of the private towns – for turning the churches and graveyards into market places.<sup>49</sup> According to Chlebowski, the noblemen’s willfulness, mutinies, and feuds had brought upon them a divine scourge. Chlebowski presented the great fire as one of many other recent signs of God’s wrath.<sup>50</sup> In his early works, Chlebowski criticized Zebrzydowski’s confederation of 1606–8 and promoted the idea of an anti-Ottoman league. Nevertheless, he did not use the opportunity to blame Armenian merchants for bringing Oriental extravagancies to Poland or offer unsubstantiated allegations of espionage on behalf of the Ottomans. Quite on the contrary, he expressed his compassion for the merchants:

Not alone became poor, one who beforetime was master,  
Who lived by another’s labour, now lost his status.  
And impoverished Armenians are in trouble,  
Many of them died in the fire, others – wander out.<sup>51</sup>

## V

### CATHOLIC CLERGY AND THE COMBINED THREAT OF ‘CALVINO-TURKISM’ AND ORIENTAL LUXURY

The Polish Catholic clergy had a different perspective of the Ottoman threat, Oriental luxury, and mercantilism. In the 1520s Europe witnessed simultaneously the explosive spread of the Reformation and Ottoman military expansion – the conquest of Hungary in 1526

<sup>46</sup> Wawrzyniec Chlebowski, *Lament Żaloszny Na straszliwy pożar sławnego Miasta Jarosławia: Pod czas Iarmarku Walnego* (Kraków, 1625).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 12–14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 14–15.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, 17.

and the siege of Vienna in 1529. Daniel Goffman claims that the major factor for the expansion of Lutheranism in Europe was the Ottoman Empire, which directly encouraged Protestantism, as in northern Hungary and Transylvania, where Calvinism became the dominant religion. Supporting and protecting the Lutherans and the Calvinists against Catholicism was meant to be the cornerstone of Ottoman policy in Europe.<sup>52</sup> János Zsigmond Zápolya (1540–71), an elected king of Hungary and the first prince of Transylvania, was supported by Suleiman the Magnificent, whom he visited in 1556 to pay homage. János Zsigmond converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism in 1562 and from Lutheranism to Calvinism in 1564. In the seventeenth century the Protestant princes of Transylvania, fearful of the Catholic policies of the Habsburgs, asked the sultans for Ottoman military help.

The Protestants and the Catholics accused each other of secret agreements with the Turks, pointing out that their adversaries had a more common background with Islam than with Christianity.<sup>53</sup> In the age of religious wars, Protestants and Muslims had common interests, an embarrassing truth that gave plausibility to the smears of those Catholic polemicists who accused Protestant foes of ‘*Calvino-Turkism*’.<sup>54</sup>

In the mid-sixteenth century, one could witness dramatic changes in the clothing habits of both Hungarian and Polish noblemen, who increasingly followed the Oriental/Ottoman fashion.<sup>55</sup>

All the ambassadors and their noble retinue had to be dressed in the Ottoman garment offered them before an audience with the sultan. After the ceremony, the *kaftans/khilats* – the robes of honour – were gifted to them on behalf of the sultan.<sup>56</sup> If Western diplomats sold

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), 111.

<sup>53</sup> Andrei Pippidi, *Visions of the Ottoman World in Renaissance Europe* (New York, 2013), 162; Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1993), 91.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 306.

<sup>55</sup> Adam Jasieński, ‘A Savage Magnificence: Ottomanizing Fashion and the Politics of Display in Early Modern East-Central Europe’, *Muqarnas: Middle East and Islamic Studies*, xxxi, 1 (2014), 173–205.

<sup>56</sup> Harriet Rudolph, ‘The Material Culture of Diplomacy. The Impact of Objects on the Dynamics of Habsburg-Ottoman Negotiations at the Sublime Porte (1530–1650)’, in Gunda Barth-Scalmani and Christian Steppan (eds.), *Politische Kommunikation*



their kaftans in Istanbul,<sup>57</sup> Polish noblemen took them back to Poland as a sign of prestige. At the same time, the Ottomans considered the ceremonial wearing of kaftans by ambassadors as a sign of their subjugation. The ceremonial dressing of kaftans, as well as banqueting with Ottoman meals, quite clearly expressed the idea that the sultan cares for his subjects by providing them with food and clothes.<sup>58</sup> This is why after the Ottomans were defeated by the Holy League, the Peace of Karlowitz (1699) had a particular paragraph, stating that the Habsburg ambassadors were no longer obliged to wear a *khilat* during audiences with the sultan.<sup>59</sup> This did not take place in the Polish case, since in the seventeenth century the Oriental attire was no longer perceived by the nobility as foreign, but as a Polish/Sarmatian national costume.

The change in attire was an important part of the conversion ceremony. Renegades took off their old clothes, dressed themselves in the Ottoman dress and put on white turbans.<sup>60</sup> Some Polish renegades made successful careers in the Ottoman Empire, for instance, a nobleman Jan Kierdej (ca. 1490 – ca. 1557).

Thus, one should not be surprised that the Polish Catholic clergy saw the change of attire/appearance as resulting from, or leading to, the religious conversion to ‘Lutheran/Arian heresy’ or Islam.

It was Grzegorz of Sambor (1523–73), a Professor of Cracow University, who simultaneously attacked those Poles – actually the noblemen – for following the ‘Lutheran heresy’ and wearing Oriental attire, in his poem *Censtochova* (1568):

How do you dress yourselves, you Poles, what arms you have?  
 The whole Poland now is looking like Turkey.  
 Those faithless are abandoning the way of Christ.  
 They are imitating the Saracens by dress, thought, and head.

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zwischen Imperien. *Der diplomatische Aktionsraum Südost- und Osteuropa* (Innsbruck, 2013), 222–8.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 238.

<sup>58</sup> Tetjana Grygorjeva, ‘Symbols and Perceptions of Diplomatic Ceremony: Ambassadors of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Istanbul’, in Yvonne Kleinmann (ed.), *Kommunikation durch symbolische Akte. Religiöse Heterogenität und politische Herrschaft in Polen-Litauen* (Stuttgart, 2010), 115.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Peace of Karlovitz’, in Fred L. Israel (ed.), *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History: 1648–1967* (New York, 2002), Art. 17, 879.

<sup>60</sup> Rudolph, ‘The Material Culture’, 226.

Why are thee, a ruthless Turk, threatening us with your shining armor?  
For those who are similar to you want to be yours.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, changes in dress and of faith were seen by the Catholic clergy as interconnected, and were rhetorically attached to the fears of an Ottoman military threat. Thus a rather negative image was attached to the Armenian merchants – as middlemen between Poland and the ‘lands of infidels’ and as the suppliers of Oriental luxury – in the writings of Polish Catholic clergymen.

## VI

### FROM THE VICTIMS OF OTTOMAN TYRANNY TO THE SULTAN’S INFILTRATORS: CHANGES IN THE CATHOLIC CLERGY’S PERCEPTION OF ARMENIANS

It took some time until the negative perception of the Armenian Diaspora was clearly expressed by the Catholic clergy. In the early years of the Counterreformation, the Armenians of Poland were rather perceived as one more ‘lost sheep’.

The first papal nuncio to Poland after the Trident Council, Cardinal Giovanni Francisco Commendon (1563–5), visited Lwów in 1564 and was present at the liturgy in the Armenian cathedral. Commendon’s interest in Armenians is reflected in his biography, written by his secretary Antonio Maria Gratiani (1536–1611):

The Armenian nation living in that city [Lwów] has its Archbishop. Under the press of Turkish tyranny, they left their old places and moved across the Black Sea and from the estuary of Danube came through Walachia in Rus’, where they settled with the permission of the king. And Armenians are useful for Rus’ because of their trade with the Turks, and the Persians, and with other inhabitants of the Black Sea [region]. They import a lot of foreign [merchandise] into Poland. And they are freed from taxes in Barbarian countries, as it is said that [this privilege] was granted to them by Mahomet, who is considered among the heavenly forces and worshipped as God by the Turks and many [other] Oriental nations.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Quoted after Krzysztof Stopka, ‘Między Samborem a Częstochową. Oratorskie peregrynacje XVI-wiecznego akademika krakowskiego’, *Alma Mater. Miesięcznik Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, 94 (2007), 28.

<sup>62</sup> *Antonii Mariae Gratiani, De vita Jannis Francisci Commendon cardinalis libri quatuor* (Paris, 1669), 166–7.

Though Gratiani – and his high-ranking patron – were aware of Armenian commercial privileges in the Muslim countries, he did not question their loyalty to Poland and Christendom in general. On the contrary, he identified Armenians as victims “of Turkish tyranny”. Finally, Gratiani defined their trade in Oriental goods as useful for the Rus’ palatinate of Poland.

Benedykt Herbest (1538–98), a Catholic preacher and later a Jesuit, in the years 1555–8 was a rector of the municipal school in Lwów, and undoubtedly had some first-hand observations of the local Armenians. In a letter written in 1566 to Stanisław Herbut, a chatelaine of Lwów, Herbest describes local Armenians as people “of the same creed as us” since “they are openly acknowledging the primacy of our [Catholic] archbishop of Lwów over their bishop and priests, are gladly visiting our [Catholic] churches, are honestly present at the mass, and, finally, if necessary they take the sacraments in our churches.”<sup>63</sup> Then Herbest gave an example how close Armenians were to the Catholic Church. He described how the previous year one of them – “Jurek, an Armenian, a merchant well-known in the whole of Rus’” – fell ill during a fair at Mościska (not far from Przemyśl) and made his confession to a Catholic priest, took from him his last sacrament, and was buried in accordance with the Catholic rite.<sup>64</sup>

Marcin Kromer (1512–89), then Roman-Catholic Coadjutor Bishop of Warmia (1570–9), in his general description of Poland (1575) reported that Armenians dwelled in some cities of Rus’ and Podolia, observed their rite, used their language in liturgy, and acknowledged the primacy of the Roman Church and Roman Pontiff.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1560s, Armenian churches in Lwów and Kamieniec were visited by the local Catholic bishops, who made observations on the Armenian rite and creed.<sup>66</sup> This is not surprising, since the Armenian Church was seen as one of ancient Oriental Churches, therefore maintaining many of the features of early Christianity. The discovered resemblances in liturgy and theology helped the Catholic hierarchs to overcome the attacks of Protestant polemicists, who blamed the Roman

<sup>63</sup> ‘Opis podróży Benedykta Herbesta’, in Michał Wiszniewski (ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej*, vii (Kraków, 1845), 574.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Martini Cromeri, De Situ Poloniae, et Gente Polona’, in *Martini Cromeri, Polonia, sive De origine et rebvs gestis Polonorum libri XXX* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1589), 500.

<sup>66</sup> Stopka, ‘The Religious Culture’, 194–7.

Church for abandoning the true faith of the early Christians. This is why the reports of the Catholic observers emphasized the proximity of the Armenian faith to the Catholic one.

Nonetheless, slight changes in the perception of the Armenians could be noted already in late 1570s. Piotr Skarga (1536–1612), a Jesuit (1569) and royal court preacher (1588–1612), who had spent some time in Lwów in the 1560s, in his work ‘On the Unity of the Church of God’ (first published in 1577) reported on the origins of “Armenian mistakes” when describing the Council of Florence in 1439. According to Skarga, because of the Armenians’ wrong-headedness “[t]hey were punished by God with the pagan Turkish captivity, and were dispersed over many kingdoms.”<sup>67</sup> One can see here an allusion to the Jews, whose dispersion was seen in Christian tradition as punishment for their sins.

In the 1590s one could witness in Poland a growing number of writings accusing the Jews as spies in the service of the sultans, but now they found themselves in company with the Armenians and some other non-Catholic nations.

The increase in xenophobic statements and in fears of the Ottoman threat can be partly explained by the so-called Thirteen Years’ Habsburg-Ottoman War in 1593–1606, and the Polish-Ottoman war in 1620–1. If the Polish Catholic clergy were for joining the anti-Ottoman coalition, the Polish nobility tended toward anti-Habsburg neutrality. The attempts by the Habsburgs to be elected as kings of Poland led to the military conflicts in 1576 and 1587–8, thereby strengthening the anti-Habsburg mood of the Polish nobility. There was also a growing tension between the Polish nobility and Sigismund III (1587–1632), supported by the Catholic clergy. This tension in the upper political and religious spheres also affected their attitudes toward the trading Diasporas.

An original idea – that the suspect Diasporas would have to pay for the defence of Poland’s eastern borderlands from the Turks and Tatars – was openly expressed by some Catholic hierarchy. Józef Wereszczyński, Catholic Bishop of Kijów (Kiev) also known for his appeals for a war against the Turks and Tatars (*Ekscytarz*, 1592; *Pobudka*, 1594; *Votum*, 1597), in his message (*Publika*, 1594) to the regional assemblies of

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<sup>67</sup> Piotr Skarga, *O rządzie i jedności Kościoła Bożego pod jednym pasterzem* (Kraków, 1590), 264.

Polish noblemen (dietines, i.e. *sejmiki*) proposed to establish in Ukraine (*na Zadnieprzu*) a military academy (*Szkoła Rycerska*) and a detachment based on the rules of the Order of Malta, in order to defend this borderland from the Turks, Tatars, and Muscovites. Among other ways of financing these two units, he proposed the implementation of a poll tax to be collected from Jews, Armenians, and Gypsies – a gold coin per capita.<sup>68</sup> If any nobleman would try to protect the Jews from this tax, Wereszczyński reminded them that the Jews were “enemies of God and of us”.<sup>69</sup> Wereszczyński claimed that Armenians, Jews and Gypsies “are taking away the secrets and making all deals of the Polish kingdom known to the foreign nations.”<sup>70</sup> This accusation was repeated in 1622 by an anonymous author of the pamphlet *Hayduk Mikłusz exchanging an ort with a Jew*.<sup>71</sup> Both Wereszczyński and the anonymous author accused the Jews and Armenians of causing the outflow of money from Poland to Turkey.<sup>72</sup>

Jan Dymitr Solikowski, Catholic Archbishop of Lwów in the years 1583–1603, in his ‘History of Poland’ attached the local Armenians to the Ottoman threat. He described a trial between the Catholic magistrate and the local Armenian community which took place in 1578 in the presence of King Stephen Báthory (1576–86). Armenians stated that the city magistrate restricted their economic activities.<sup>73</sup> Solikowski wrote that all the restrictions were necessary to prevent the transformation of their economic power into social power. From Solikowski’s point of view, the Armenians were too rich and were suspicious because of their close commercial ties with and trips to Turkey:

Because of the exceeding wealth of Armenians, who frequently negotiate with the Turks with whom they speak the same language, in the case of [granting them] equal rights with the Catholic citizens they [Armenians]

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<sup>68</sup> Józef Wereszczyński, *Pvblika ... Ich M. Rzeczyposp: na Seymiki przez list obiasniona ...* (Kraków, 1594), 20, 22, 29.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, 30–1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, 32.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Hayduk Mikłusz odmienia ort u Żyda’, ed. by Karol Badecki, *Pamiętnik Literacki. Czasopismo Kwartalne Poświęcone Historii i Krytyce Literatury Polskiej*, xiv, 1/4 (1916), 114.

<sup>72</sup> Wereszczyński, *Pvblika*, 32; ‘Hayduk Mikłusz’, 114.

<sup>73</sup> Myron Kapral (ed.), *Pryvilei nacionalnyx hromad mista Lvova (XIV–XVIII st.)* (L’viv, 2000), 298–9.

will soon be able to dominate the entire city and transform it from Catholic into heretic – which would be very dangerous to the Kingdom.<sup>74</sup>

Since the lawsuit took place five years before Solikowski's consecration as Archbishop of Lwów, his interest in it was probably provoked in 1597 when the city magistrate asked King Sigismund III to revoke the decree of 1578, and Solikowski was appointed as the head of commission of conciliation. In his report to the Roman Curia in 1595, Solikowski pointed out that Armenians of Lwów, by virtue of their “dexterity, wealth and power” (*artes, opes et potentiam*) partly occupied the city and seized almost all commerce from the Catholic burghers.<sup>75</sup>

Another incident provoking Solikowski's stance could have been the successful march of the Tatar army in July 1594 through Polish Pokuttya (Pokucie) and the Carpathians to Hungary, where they aimed to join the Ottoman army. Because Hetman Zamoyski could not stop the advancing Tatars, he was accused by some critics of a deliberate anti-Habsburg stance.<sup>76</sup> This event was seemingly echoed in Solikowski's description of the aforementioned litigation of 1578:

This time Fortuna smiled on the Armenians, because the king granted them equal rights with other citizens of the city. Many criticized the king for not being preoccupied with defending the rights of the city natives, because he was a foreigner himself (*Peregrinus Rex*), because of his own profit, or because of his favour toward those who protected the interests of Armenians.<sup>77</sup>

Undoubtedly, when mentioning powerful protectors of Armenians, Solikowski hinted at Chancellor Jan Zamoyski (1578–1605), who was the main advisor of the king and who settled Armenians – as well as Jews, Greeks and Scots – in his private town of Zamość and granted them privileges in 1585.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Ioannis Demetrii Solicovii, Commentarius brevis rerum Polonicarum a morte Sigismundi Augusti* (Dantisci, 1647), 108.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Relacja J.D. Solikowskiego z 1595 r.’, in Teofil Długosz (ed.), *Relacje arcybiskupów lwowskich 1595–1794* (Lwów, 1937), 29.

<sup>76</sup> Szymon Dąbrowski, *Wiersze Rymowne o przejściu tatarskim do Węgier Z Listu Jego Miłości Wielmożnego Pana Hetmana Koronnego wybrane. Roku. 1594. 9. Octobris* (Kraków, 1594); Ioan. de Zamoscio, *De transitu Tartarorum per Pocutiam, anni MDXCIII. Epistola* (Dantisci, 1595).

<sup>77</sup> *Ioannis Demetrii Solicovii, Commentarius brevis*, 108.

<sup>78</sup> Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Ormianie Zamojscy i ich rola w wymianie handlowej i kulturalnej między Polską a Wschodem* (Lublin, 1965), 266–72.

The rumours circulated in 1594 that the Tatar army was guided through Pokuttya by Gypsies and assisted by an infamous nobleman, a Ruthenian, Karaite Jews, and a captive Hungarian.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the suspected “others” were attached to the external enemy.

Jan Solikowski is also considered as a possible author of an anonymous pamphlet published in 1596 and signed with cryptonym J.S.S.K. Since the pamphlet was addressed to the nobility sitting in the Diet, Archbishop Solikowski – a second in terms of importance member of the Senate – covered his authorship and entitled the pamphlet *Vote of a Polish Nobleman*.

Among other ways to boost the state treasury and defend the Ruthenian lands from the Turkish-Tatar threat, the author advised to collect a poll tax (*pogłównie*) from the Jews and to raise the tolls on expensive goods imported by “Armenians and all other merchants”, or even to ban their import. The author blamed the extravagant consumption, “unknown to our ancestors”, for causing the outflow of money from Poland to Italy and Turkey. The ban on imports would stop the outflow of cash, thereby providing financial sources to pay the army, and finally, this measure “will prevent God’s and our enemy from enriching himself at our expense.”<sup>80</sup> It is revealing that unlike most of the examined noble authors, the author of the *Vote of a Polish Nobleman* readily attached Armenian merchants to the Oriental luxury, “newly-appeared” excessive consumption, and the outflow of money.

## VII THE CATHOLIC CLERGY’S ATTITUDE TO THE ORIENTALIZED ‘SARMATIAN’ OPULENCE AND ITS ARMENIAN SUPPLIERS

The Catholic clergy placed severe blame on Oriental luxury, along with the nobility’s social egoism and its economic cooperation with non-Catholic trading Diasporas. Piotr Skarga, in his *Preaching to the Diet* (1597), in the sermon entitled ‘The tyrants for themselves’, points out that the nobility abused its wealth (*zbytek z dostatku*), which in turn

<sup>79</sup> Aleksander Czołowski, ‘Tatarzy w Karpatach w 1594 r. Epizod z najazdów tatarskich na Polskę’, *Złoty Szlak*, i, 4 (1938), 12.

<sup>80</sup> *Votum szlachcica polskiego Oyczyznę wiernie mitującego O założeniu skarbu Rzeczypospolitey y o obronie krajow Ruskich Napisane od Authora Roku 1589, A teraz miedzy ludzie podane* (Kraków, 1596), 32.

led to a rivalry within the noble estate and the oppression of some nobles by more powerful ones. According to Skarga, the noblemen should use their wealth in a proper way – that is to make donations to the Church and to fortify their castles in order to defend Poland from its external enemies.<sup>81</sup>

Szymon Starowolski (1588–1656), a Polish intellectual and Catholic priest, in his description of Poland (1632) complained that the Poles – actually the noblemen – were easily affected by foreign habits.<sup>82</sup> Starowolski condemned the nobility for their excessive consumption of Western and Oriental commodities.<sup>83</sup>

Starowolski noted the role played by Armenian merchants in the Oriental trade: “This nation gladly dwells in the Kingdom of Poland on account of its avarice, and they provide us with various commodities, partly from Persia, partly from the Turkish Kingdom, and especially horses of good stock.”<sup>84</sup>

In following the Oriental fashion, the noblemen themselves endangered their religious identity. In his treatise *Reformation of Polish Habits* (ca. 1653), Starowolski criticized the Polish nobility for “the new habits, not just foreign, but heathen, Tatar, and Muslim”.<sup>85</sup>

As Bishop Piotr Gembicki (1585–1657), Chancellor of Poland, pointed out in his instructions to the Polish ambassador dispatched to the sultan in 1640: “It is impractical for our Commonwealth to have our [permanent] representative [in Istanbul, as Western nations do]. Although there are several Armenian carts going to Turkey, they do more harm to the Commonwealth than good.”<sup>86</sup>

A purely mercantilist diagnosis of the Polish economy was given by Starowolski in 1632:

If only we export from the Kingdom more of our goods than we import foreign ones – in particular the unnecessary and redundant things – as a result we would not be treated as totally poor in comparison with other

<sup>81</sup> Piotr Skarga, *Kazania sejmowe* (Skultuna, 2008), 39.

<sup>82</sup> Szymon Starowolski, *Polska albo opisanie położenia królestwa Polskiego* (Gdańsk, 2000), 101–2. Originally published in Latin: *Simonis Starovolsci, Polonia sive status Regni Poloniae descriptio* (Coloniae, 1632).

<sup>83</sup> Starowolski, *Polska*, 111.

<sup>84</sup> *Simonis Starovolsci, Polonia, nunc denuo recognita et aucta* (Wolfenbüttel, 1656), 41.

<sup>85</sup> Szymon Starowolski, *Reformacja Obyczajów Polskich* (s.l., [ca. 1653]), 37.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted from: Przyboś (ed.), *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego*, 175.



European nations, significantly outnumbering us by their quantity of goods, the number of various artisans, the volume of bullion, and, finally, by their rational economic management.<sup>87</sup>

Powerful magnates protected the merchants in their service, to whom they granted letters of free passage.<sup>88</sup> As a rule, in such cases merchants argued that the commodity under question was not their property but the property of a magnate, since the nobles were officially freed from fees and tolls.<sup>89</sup> As Starowolski (1656) pointed out: "... under this pretext they [the noblemen] help many merchants – locals as well as foreigners, [including] Italians, Germans, Armenians, Scots, Jews – to evade tolls in exchange for a payoff."<sup>90</sup>

Jan Andrzej Próchnicki, Catholic Archbishop of Lwów, in his report to Rome written in 1622 clearly juxtaposed Catholic and Armenian merchants as engaged in, respectively, fair and unfair trade: "Only our Catholic circumspection does not allow them (Armenians) to trade by deception and fraud, to buy by falsity and to gain profit by destroying their soul. For our Catholics also do their trade, but they keep safe their conscience, and don't suffer from losses."<sup>91</sup>

The only clergyman who devoted a book to the Armenian faith was a Polish Jesuit Mateusz Bembus (1567–1645), a preacher to Sigismund III in 1611–18 and the author of *Ormiańskie nabożeństwo* [Armenian liturgy] (1630).<sup>92</sup> He did not blame Armenians for their economic or political misdeeds, but pointed out their religious errors. At the same time, he described the Armenians in a rather positive way, labelling them as "people of a respectable nation" (*Ludzi Narodu tego zacnego*) and giving some examples of Armenians as good Catholics in the past.

Thus, the 1590s could be defined as the turning point in the Polish Catholic clergy's perception of Armenians. Prior to the 1590s, Armenians were considered as a field of missionary activity. They were not attached to the criticism of Oriental luxury and warnings about

<sup>87</sup> Starowolski, *Polska*, 111.

<sup>88</sup> Szymon Starowolski, *Reformacja Obyczaiow Polskich* (Kraków, 1656), 169.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, 171.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 169.

<sup>91</sup> *Litterae Episcoporum historiam Ucrainae illustrantes (1600–1900)*, i: 1600–1640 (Roma, 1972), 87–9.

<sup>92</sup> Mateusz Bembus, *Ormiańskie nabożeństwo; y wzywanie Ludzi Narodu tego zacnego, do Jedności w Wierze y w Miłości Kościoła ś. Katholickiego Rzymskiego* (Kraków, 1630).

the Ottoman threat. In the discourses on the Armenians constructed in 1590s and later, the main attention was devoted to Armenian merchants, their commercial trips, and the outflow of silver to Ottoman lands, as well as the expansion of Oriental fashion, which was alleged to both bring about the moral decline of the Polish nobility as well as misbalance the Polish economy. Because their writings were addressed to Polish nobility – not interested in the errors of ‘Armenian heresy’ – none of these authors ever made references to the treaties of Andrzej Lubelczyk (*Baptismus Armenorum*, 1544; *Liturgia seu missa Armenorum*, 1549), a canonic of the Lwów cathedral, and Bembus (1630). The main aim of the Catholic clergymen was to influence the nobility’s foreign policy and economic model, and to denounce its partnership with the trading Diasporas.

The discourses on the Armenians constructed by Polish Catholic clergymen were in sharp contrast with the efforts of Catholic missionaries – mostly Italians and Frenchmen – sent in 1664 by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide from Rome to Lwów to unite Armenians with the Roman Church. These missionaries were not engaged in Polish political and mercantilist discourses and focused their attention on the Armenian ‘religious errors’, trying to assist them in achieving their salvation through their enlightenment and the revival of their language and culture.<sup>93</sup>

### VIII BURGHERS’ CONSPIRACY NARRATIVES ON THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA

Armenians are mentioned in only a few works written by Catholic burghers, all of whom were dwellers of Lwów or, at least, spent some time there. The Armenians were probably mentioned because of the growing tension between the city magistrate and the Armenian community. One can trace a certain dependency between an author’s attitude towards the Armenians and the period of his stay in Lwów.

<sup>93</sup> Małgorzata Mieszek, ‘Kilka uwag o intermediach z lwowskiego kolegium księży teatynów’, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis, Folia Litteraria Polonica*, ix (2007), 53–61; Edward Tryjarski, ‘Ze studiów nad rękopisami i dialektem kipczackim Ormian polskich. II. O nauce języków obcych w kolegium teatyńskim we Lwowie’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, xxiii, 2 (1960), 30–55; Dmytro Błażejevskij, *Ukrainian and Armenian Pontifical Seminaries of Lviv (1665–1784)* (Rome, 1975).

Sebastian Fabian Klonowic (1545–1602) dwelt in Lwów before the litigation of 1578 between the Armenians and Catholic burghers, and later made his career in Lublin. In his poem *Roxolania* (1584), Klonowic described the Armenian community of Lwów as importing Oriental luxury goods to the city: “There a long-haired Armenian, abundant in spices, brings from the Orient his countless merchandise ...”.<sup>94</sup> Klonowic gives his general opinion on the Armenian community of Lwów as such:

Armenians – a folk of ingenious men –  
There [in Lwów] chose their place of abode after they left their land.  
They brought there their priests and church-ware,  
And built a church for their religion.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, Klonowic presented Armenians in a quite positive way, as pious men who supplied the city and the whole country with necessary goods. When describing a fair in his hometown, Klonowic listed many countries sending their goods to Lublin – and among them “the treasures of Armenia” (*Armenicae opes*)<sup>96</sup> – thus representing the city as an important commercial centre.

However, in his poem *Flis* [The Rafting] (1595) Klonowic already criticises the extravagant luxury. In his opinion, the agricultural products grown through peasants’ hard work and rafted down the river Vistula to Gdańsk are exchanged there for redundant luxury. Thus, in Gdańsk the “haughtiness provokes extravagancy”.<sup>97</sup> In *Flis*, Klonowic openly mocked the Armenians, putting them in the list of exotic peoples like the fish-eaters (*Ichthyophagi*), egg-eaters (*Oonae*), and locust-eaters (*Acridophagi*):

The mushrooms grew up to the Armenians after the Flood  
When the waters flowed down the homeland’s mountains,  
When Noah’s ark landed on a rock  
And escaped the shipwreck.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Sebastian F. Klonowic, *Roxolania = Roksolania, Czyli, Ziemie Czerwonej Rusi*, ed. by Mieczysław Mejer (Warszawa, 1996), 92.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, 70.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Flis’, in *Dzieła Fabiana Sebestyana Klonowicza* (Lipsk, 1836), 35.

<sup>98</sup> Sebastian F. Klonowic, *Flis*, ed. by Adam Karpiński (Warszawa, 1984), 39.

In this way, Klonowic reinterpreted the famous Biblical story of Noah's ark landing on the Ararat mountains. The Flood was reduced to an ordinary rain causing a rapid sprouting of mushrooms, as if it happened somewhere in Poland. Though at first glance Klonowic seemed to be writing about the 'universal' Armenians, his mockery was directed against the wealthy Armenians of Poland. The mushrooms were daily food in Poland, accessible to the poorest strata. Thus, the allusion was made to the Armenian highland as a poor country, which so many Armenian migrants left in search of a better life elsewhere. By profaning the story of Noah's ark, Klonowic diminished the Armenians' symbolic capital and therefore undermined their aspirations for higher social status in the host society. The Italians and their cuisine became Klonowic's next target.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, Klonowic – as well as subsequent authors – reflected the anxiety of the Catholic urban patricians, who saw their dominance endangered by the trading Diasporas backed by the aristocracy. And once again the 1590s could be defined as the turning point in Klonowic's perception of the Armenians.

The sumptuousness of Armenians was also noted by Ioannes Alembek (Alnpekius) (ca. 1570–1636), a humanist and apothecary, in his *Topographia civitatis Leopolitanae*, composed between 1603 and 1605.<sup>100</sup> He gave the psychophysical and gender-age account of four *nations*, or confessional communities of Lwów. About the Armenians he wrote that "their men are astute and sumptuous" (*virī astuti et sumptuosi*).<sup>101</sup> Alembek also noted that originally the Armenians were believers of the Roman Catholic Church and only after the Ecumenical council in Chalcedon in 469 (actually in 451) did they become followers of the heresies of Eutychius and Dioscorus. Alembek also mentioned the ancient liturgical instruments, books, and clothes brought from Armenia and used by the Armenian clergy in Lwów. Alembek was the sole author who 'provided' his Armenians with a statehood and history, since he mentioned the Armenian king Abgar, who sent envoys to Christ, and some Armenian kings of Cilicia

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*, 40.

<sup>100</sup> For more details, see Alexandr Osipian, 'German Humanist Ioannes Alembek from Lemberg and his "Topographia civitatis Leopolitanae" (1603–1605)', *Berichte und Forschungen. Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa*, xvii (2009), 39–59.

<sup>101</sup> Ioannes Alnpekius, 'Topographia civitatis Leopolitanae', in Stanisław Rachwał, *Jan Alnpek i jego 'Opis miasta Lwowa' z początku XVII w.* (Lwów, 1930), 25.

(1198–1375).<sup>102</sup> Alembek also noted some linguistic peculiarities of his Armenian neighbours: “They use their native tongue in the church service; while at home they ordinarily speak Tatar”.<sup>103</sup>

When describing the foundation of Lwów by Prince Lev, son of Daniel, ca. 1270, Alembek mentioned Armenian settlers first:

In Lwów [he] settled Armenians, Asian warriors with Tatar armoury, clothes, and language who [Armenians] had arisen under their [Tatar] dominance between the mountains of Taurus and Caucasus, and then occupied Cilicia, with whose assistance his father [Daniel] defeated or subjugated to his own will the hostile factions of Ruthenian princes, and became very powerful and established almost a monarchy in Southern Rus’.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the Tatar language of contemporary Armenians and their imagined deep-rooted ties with the Tatars, Alembek did not accuse the Armenian ancestors of alleged military service in the Tatar (Mongol) army, as did the magistrate of Lwów in a compliant to the court of King Sigismund III in 1597.<sup>105</sup> Alembek also did not blame Armenians for importing Oriental luxury to Poland or for the outflow of money to the Ottoman Empire, probably because his description of Lwów was addressed to the European readers of *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*.<sup>106</sup>

In the same years, an anti-Armenian pamphlet was published by Sebastian Petrycy/Petrici (1554–1626), a professor of the Academy of Cracow, who spent ten years (1591–1601) in Lwów. In 1605, Petrycy published his Polish translation of Aristotle’s *Politics*. In his comments, Petrycy devoted a brief but very aggressive invective to the Polish

<sup>102</sup> Alnpekus, ‘Topographia’, 19–20.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, 20.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted by Jaroslav Daškevič, ‘Drevnjaja Rus’ i Armenija v obščestvenno-političeskix svjazjax XI–XIII vekov. (Istočniki issledovanija temy)’, in *Drevnejšie gosudarstva na territorii SSSR. Materialy i issledovanija* (1982 g.) (Moskva, 1984), 195. For more details, see Alexandr Osipian, ‘The construction of historical identity among Polish and Armenian patricians in L’viv, 1570s–1670s’, in Cristian Luca and Laurentiu Radvan (eds.), *Social and Political Elites in Eastern and Central Europe (15th–18th centuries)* (London, 2015), 65–83.

<sup>106</sup> An abbreviated version was published as: ‘Leopolis, Russiae Australis urbs primaria, celeberrimum orientalium mercium emporium’, in Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarum. Urbium praeciparum totius mundi* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1617), 6, 49.

Armenians.<sup>107</sup> Some copies of the book also included an attached pamphlet entitled *Are the Jews more Suspicious and Worse to the Republic than the Armenians?*<sup>108</sup> Petrycy's pamphlet is a good sample of guesswork, as he himself recognized: "We can't know for sure but have many reasonable causes to presume".<sup>109</sup> In the pamphlet he listed typical contemporary accusations of Jews. He accused Armenian merchants of the destruction of the Polish economy through the import of expensive luxury goods and outsourcing of money from Poland to Turkey. The commercial privileges granted to the Armenian merchants in the Ottoman Empire were interpreted by Petrycy as one more sign of their secret cooperation with the Turks.<sup>110</sup> He asserted that the Armenians were secretly forging their separate Commonwealth in Poland by winding into the aristocracy's favour.<sup>111</sup> According to Petrycy, Armenian merchants corrupted the morale of urban society with their expensive clothes and excessively ornate homes. Finally, Petrycy concludes that the Armenians are even more dangerous to the Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita*) than the traditional enemies of Christendom, the Jews.

Petrycy returns to the issue of Armenians and Oriental luxury in a poem published in 1609. In a separate chapter named *Zbytek nieprzytojny* [Unbecoming luxury], Petrycy described his beloved motherland as under attack by foreign goods and exotic food. He reserved two lines for Armenian merchants and Oriental rugs, mentioning them, among others, as signs of the moral decline of contemporary Polish noblemen as opposed to their virtuous ancestors, who "never dealt with foreign Armenians for hanging rugs on walls."<sup>112</sup>

Petrycy did not read the medieval anti-Armenian writings.<sup>113</sup> At least, he never made any references to the Armenian religion. Probably

<sup>107</sup> Sebastian Petrici, *Polityki Aristotelesowej, to iest rządu Rzeczypospolitey z dokładem ksiąg osmioro* (Kraków, 1605), 14.

<sup>108</sup> *Idem*, 'Iesli Zydowie więcej podeyrzani y gorszy są Rzeczypospo: nizli Ormianie', in *idem, Polityki Aristotelesowej*, cxxix–cxxxiii.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem*, 'Iesli Zydowie', cxxxiii.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*, cxxxi–cxxxii.

<sup>111</sup> *Idem, Polityki Aristotelesowej*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> *Idem, Horatius Flaccus w trudach więzienia moskiewskiego*, ed. by Adam Trojak (Kraków, 2004), 60.

<sup>113</sup> More on the topic, see Claude Mutaflan, 'Quatre pamphlets Catholiques Antiarmeniens', *Handes Amsorya. Zeitschrift für Armenische Philologie*, cxxvi, 1–2 (2012), 447–68.

his work was based on the information he got from the patricians of Lwów, who very likely commissioned him to write the pamphlet. Since Petrycy's invective and pamphlet were included into Aristotle's *Politics*, one can suppose that his anti-Armenian criticism was addressed primarily to the nobility, in whose hands politics rested.

Petrycy's arguments were repeated by a nobleman Wojciech Gostkowski in his treatise *An Inquiry into the Excise of his Royal Majesty and of the Commonwealth* (1622),<sup>114</sup> devoted to the reform of tax administration. Gostkowski condemned Armenian, Jewish and Scottish merchants for the economic decline of the Polish townspeople and espionage. He proposed to confiscate their property and expel them from the Kingdom.<sup>115</sup>

One can observe similarities in the Catholic intellectuals' attitudes toward the Jewish and Armenian Diasporas in the 1590s and early decades of the seventeenth century. In Poland, the Jews were accused of committing ritual murder as early as in 1547, when in the town of Rawa two Jews were executed and the whole community was expelled.<sup>116</sup> However, further charges did not lead to a guilty verdict. Moreover, King Stephen Báthory, in his decree of 1576 ordered the punishment of those who would falsely accuse the Jews of committing ritual murder.<sup>117</sup> The accusers complained that the authorities were bribed by the Jews, who were protected by the nobility.<sup>118</sup> Thus the guilty verdict issued by the Crown Tribunal in Lublin in 1598 stimulated a wave of anti-Jewish pamphlets.<sup>119</sup> However, most of the accusations in the pamphlets are of an economic nature, thus reflecting the growing competition and social tension in the royal cities.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Wojciech Gostkowski, *Detectio accessy skarbu Króla J. Msci y Rzeczpospolitey. O czym radzić in publico. Rycerstwu koronnemu do uważania podana* (s.l., 1622).

<sup>115</sup> 'Bibliografja. 1622. Pisma Wojciecha Gostkowskiego', *Dzwon Literacki. Pismo Zbiorowe*, ii, 2 (1853), 204–7.

<sup>116</sup> Zenon Guldon and Jacek Wijaczka, *Procesy o mordy rytualne w Polsce w XVI–XVIII wieku* (Kielce, 1995).

<sup>117</sup> 'Stefan Batory na temat nieuzasadnionych oskarżeń Żydów o mord rytualny, 1576 r.', in *Żydzi w Polsce. Obraz i słowo*, i (Warszawa, 1993), 106.

<sup>118</sup> Szymon Hubicki. *Żydowskie okrucieństwa nad Naświętzym Sakramentem, y Działkami Chrzescianskimi* (Kraków, 1602), 17.

<sup>119</sup> Przeclaw Mojecki, *Żydowskie okrucieństwa, mordy i zabobony* (Kraków, 1598).

<sup>120</sup> David Gershon Hundert, 'Jews, Money and Society in Seventeenth-Century Polish Commonwealth: The Case of Cracow', *Jewish Social Studies*, xliii, 3–4 (1981), 264–5.

In one of these pamphlets, the Jews were blamed together with other diasporic nations. Polish Catholic polemicists declared the principle that all ethnic or religious groups should act only in the proper *economic niches* allegedly prescribed to them in the olden times. As Sebastian Śleszkowski (ca. 1576–1648)<sup>121</sup> formulated it: “A Gypsy must be a Gypsy, a Scot must be a Scot, an Armenian must be an Armenian, a vagabond must be a vagabond, and a Jew must be a Jew.”<sup>122</sup> According to the Catholic authors, Armenians arrived in Poland “as needy re-settlers, from distant lands, from Turkey”,<sup>123</sup> – so they were “exotic newcomers” (*advenae exotici*)<sup>124</sup> who could not be treated as equal to the Catholic burghers.<sup>125</sup> The Catholic merchants were able to tolerate Armenian merchants as their partners only with respect to trade in Oriental goods.<sup>126</sup>

According to the Catholic authors’ logic, in the second half of the sixteenth century Jews, Scots and Armenians went beyond their economic niches and became competitors to the Catholic townspeople.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the economic and social advances of the trading Diasporas had provoked the anxiety of social disorder. As William Bouwsma (1990) pointed out: “Social identity depended on the boundaries between communities and classes, within which the individual was contained and at home. ... Anxiety was thus transmuted into a fear of transgressing the boundaries defining the cultural universe.”<sup>128</sup> In accordance with the alarmist claims of the Catholic moralists, the growing demand for luxury clothes had spread over the upper and lower classes, leading to the bodily expressed social disorder.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>121</sup> In 1621 Sebastian Śleszkowski was a physician of Szymon Rudnicki, Bishop of Warmia. After the bishop’s death, Śleszkowski served at the royal court of Sigismund III.

<sup>122</sup> Sebastian Śleszkowski, *Odkrycie zdrad, zlosliwych ceremoniy, tajemnych rad, praktyk szkodliwych Rzeczypospolitey, y straszliwych zamyslow Zydowskich* (Brunsberg, 1621), c. 42v.

<sup>123</sup> Petrici, ‘Iesli Zydowie’, cxxx.

<sup>124</sup> *Litterae Episcoporum historiam Ucrainae illustrantes*, i, 87.

<sup>125</sup> Petrici, ‘Iesli Zydowie’, cxxxi.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibidem*, cxxix.

<sup>127</sup> Sebastian Miczyński, *Zwierciadło Korony Polskiej Urazy ciezkie, y utrapienia Wielkie, Który ponosi od Żydów Wyrażaiące Synom Koronnym Na Seym Walny w Roku Pańskim 1618* (Kraków, 1618), 31; Petrici, ‘Iesli Zydowie’, cxxxii.

<sup>128</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1990), 171.

<sup>129</sup> Szymon Starowolski, *Lament vtrapioney Matki Korony Polskiej, iuz iuz konaiący: na syny wyrodne, zlosliwe, y niedbaiący na rodzicielkę swoię* (s.l., 1655), 13.



The 'price revolution' could be seen, among others, as the reason for the rise of xenophobia from the late sixteenth century. During the period from 1555 to 1575, the increase in prices amounted to 265 per cent, and in the 1590s – 627 per cent.<sup>130</sup> The growing demand for food in Western Europe caused an increase in the export of agriculture products from Poland, thereby provoking a sharp rise in prices on the Polish market, which was particularly high in the 1590s and 1600s. And the burghers were much more affected by the extortionate prices than any other social group. The industrious Armenian, Jewish and Scottish merchants were deeply involved in this trade, and therefore blamed by their contemporaries for the increase in prices.

In the course of the crisis of 1648–60, when Poland was attacked by almost all its neighbours and many Poles switched their loyalty to foreign rulers, Armenians demonstrated their constancy and loyalty in many ways. In 1654 they were granted by King John Casimir equal rights with the Catholic burghers, and in the next decade some of them were ennobled by the king for their diplomatic services. Despite this, or perhaps rather because of it, a story about the fictional Armenian-Tatar alliance was repeated, with some new 'details', by Józef Bartłomiej Zimorowicz (1597–1677), a mayor of Lwów, in a city chronicle *Leopolis Triplex* written in the 1660s. In accordance with Zimorowicz's invention, the Armenians allegedly were in the Tatar service – initially as camp-followers, then adopted into troops – until Prince Lev recruited them into his army and then settled in Lwów.<sup>131</sup>

Among other arguments used to criticize contemporary Armenians, Zimorowicz borrowed a sentence from Tacitus's *Annales* (II, 56) in his work entitled *The famous men of Lwów* (written in 1671, published in 1693). Describing the process of settling the city as it was founded by Prince Lev, Zimorowicz linked the Armenians to the Tatars, thus representing both nations as allies in their incursions into Poland: "Finally, ardent in military arts, the Armenians and Tatars, ambiguous as testified to by Tacitus, were invited as warriors and granted citizenship".<sup>132</sup>

<sup>130</sup> *The New Cambridge Modern History*, iii: *The Counter-Reformation and Price Revolution, 1559–1610*, ed. by Richard B. Wernham (Cambridge, 1968), 19.

<sup>131</sup> Józef B. Zimorowicz, 'Leopolis triplex', in *idem, Opera quibus res gestae urbis Leopolis illustrantur*, ed. by Korneli J. Heck (Lwów, 1899), 43.

<sup>132</sup> Józef B. Zimorowicz, 'Viri illustres civitatis Leopolensis', in *idem, Opera*, 293.

Catholic patricians saw the Armenian merchants' aspirations for social advancement as undermining their dominant position in the city. This is why Zimorowicz tried to turn Armenians into ignoble neighbours, thereby signalling their ambiguity to the King in the hope that he would refrain from further acts of grace and empowerment towards Lwów's Armenians.<sup>133</sup> Thus, he suggested that if in the older times the Armenians cooperated with the Tatars against Poland, one ought to expect the same from their present-day descendants.

## IX CONCLUSIONS

The examined sources reveal that the perception of the Armenian Diaspora in Poland was not homogeneous. The public discourses on the Armenians depended on their authors' social affiliations. Typically, the Armenians themselves were not of primary interest to the authors. In the public discourses of the examined epoch, the references to Armenians were made more frequently in connection to the debates focused on three issues: i) the outflow of money; ii) the import of redundant luxury; and iii) the Ottoman threat – all three discussed in moralist, economic and political terms. It is not surprising that every social estate defended its own interests, and thus the attitudes toward the Armenians varied accordingly.

Armenian merchants supplied the aristocracy with Oriental commodities, provided noblemen with loans, managed their manors, and exported oxen, wood, potassium and grain to Western countries. Thus, Armenian merchants were perceived by the noblemen not as a religious minority, but as a professional group – an effective economic tool, i.e. in the same way as contemporary Jewish and Scottish merchants. Usually the noble authors – except for some Protestants – were not very curious about the history or religiosity of the Armenian merchants. Their knowledge of the Armenians was based mostly on the authors' empirical observations. The noblemen mostly dealt with Armenians as merchants on the market, as helpful fellow travellers

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<sup>133</sup> For more details, see Alexandr Osipian, 'Constructing Noble Ancestors and Ignoble Neighbours: Uses of the Cornelius Tacitus' "Germania" and "Annales" in J.-B. Zimorowicz's "Leopolis triplex" (1650s–1670s)', in Giovanna Siedina (ed.), *Latinitas in the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Its Impact on the Development of Identities* (Florence, 2014), 47–67.

and interpreters during diplomatic trips to Istanbul, and as mediators in the redemption of relatives from Ottoman/Tatar captivity. Thus, in the nobility's discourses the Armenians had neither a motherland nor a history.

The nobility economically instrumentalized the trading Diasporas and their cooperation led to the decline of royal cities, thereby turning the Catholic burghers into devoted allies of the Church. In numerous writings, the Catholic clergymen and patricians who adhered to the royalist camp employed various fears – religious, political, social, and economic – to influence their readers. In the pamphlets, Jews and Armenians alike were depicted as suspect because of their trade 'in the lands of infidels'. Therefore, both Diasporas were rhetorically attached to the Ottoman political and military threat and accused of the outflow of money from Poland to Turkey, and even of being the sultan's spies. In accordance with the pamphlets' arguments, the protection of the wealthy Jews and Armenians by the aristocracy promoted their social advance and endangered the whole social order. Both trading Diasporas were accused of importing luxury goods and causing the moral and economic decline of the nobility. The Diasporas' 'unfair trade' would lead to the decline and decreased standing of the Catholic burghers and the rise of 'infidel' residents in the cities, who allegedly would welcome the approaching Ottoman troops.

The dynamics of the Catholic clergy's and burghers' attitudes to Armenians underwent a dramatic turn in mid-1590s, when Armenians for the first time were blamed for being the sultan's infiltrators and having taken part in the Tatars' incursions against Poland in the late thirteenth century. *Conspiracy narratives*, as they emerged during the period of religious confessional conflicts, always made use of some unknown facts and events by inserting invented ones and connecting all with a *causal explanatory narrative*. Because of the religious and ethnic 'otherness' of the trading Diasporas, their strong social cohesion inside the networks and multiple commercial ties with co-believers abroad, their pragmatic strategies and practices were aimed at the generation of profit, and were mostly (and deliberately) misrepresented by the critics as unfair, illegal, designed to crush their Polish Catholic competitors, and to do harm to the royal cities and even the Polish economy in general.

The Polish Catholic clergymen and city patricians – albeit for different purposes – employed the rhetorically constructed 'Armenians' in their writings, which were mostly addressed to the nobility. Thus,

the rhetorically constructed ‘Armenians’ – as ambiguous and suspect – were provided with many realistic and imagined features such as a distant past, remote motherland, privileges in ‘the lands of infidels’, services provided to the Ottomans/Tatars, and presented as harbouring many harmful intentions against Poland. Therefore the references to ‘Armenians’, as well as to other ethnic minorities employed and protected by the nobility, were intended to make the authors’ arguments more vivid and convincing in order to influence the decision-making of the political elite.

*proofreading James Hartzell*

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