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A NEW APPROACH TO THE HISTORY OF CUSTOMS*

Anthropologists divide societies into those in which an individual's status depends on his talent and work and those in which it is determined by birth, by membership of a family, a clan, a caste or a community and also by customs. The first type is usually linked with the development of market economy. There is not a shadow of a doubt that the old Polish society belonged to the second type. Consequently, it attached great importance to the institution of the family, estate divisions and customs, which determined an individual's place in the social structure. Interest in old Polish customs is therefore justified not only their attractiveness and by the fact that affection is usually bestowed on relics of the past, but also by their significance for the society of pre-partition Poland. Nevertheless, 19th and 20th century studies of old Polish customs consisted mainly of descriptions of picturesque rites, revelries, feasts, garments and home furnishings, and failed to show the dependence of customs on social and economic changes; nor did they present them as a controller and regulator of social relations, a guarantor of social order. Even such an exceptional scholar as Jan Stanisław Bystroń never wrote such a study, and Zbigniew Kuchowicz's attempts to link the history of customs with the biological and medical aspects of human existence were unsatisfactory and were criticized by many historians. Historians of law also underestimated the role of customs as a

* In connection with Maria Bogucka's book *Staropolskie obyczaje w XVI-XVII wieku (Old Polish Customs in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1994, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 232 pp.; revised and enlarged edition in English: *The Lost World of the "Sarmatians". Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times*, Warszawa 1996, Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, 200 pp.

system of norms binding on society¹ (except for their role in shaping customary law).

Maria Bogucka has presented Polish 16th and 17th century customs in an innovatory way, not as a collection of traditional manners and rites but as the most important regulator of social relations, alongside the law, as a tool for group control over individuals and for the domination of some groups over others. Bogucka says that in a situation where the legal system and state apparatus were weak, as was the case in the old Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, customs took over a large part of control and regulation of social relations (Polish edition p. 25). This was the reason why they played such an important role in old Poland. This is a very apt statement, but the problem seems to be much more complex, for in countries where the legal system was undoubtedly much more developed and where the state apparatus was more efficient and powerful, as for instance in modern France and England, customs also played an important role as a regulator and controller of social relations, and their forms were much richer than in Poland. Some sections of social life, e.g. family and society life, could be regulated only by custom, not by law. Well developed forms of customs testified to the high level of social culture in those countries; they facilitated (and sometimes complicated) life, made it possible to avoid or mitigate many conflicts. It is difficult to compare the value of customs existing in countries which have different historical traditions, but we do not think it would be possible to prove that old Polish customs were superior to those of France, Spain and England, as was asserted by the Polish nobility in the 17th century; however, the superiority of these countries' legal systems over the laws and socio-political system of the pre-partition Commonwealth and the greater efficiency of their state machines seem to be obvious to present-day historians.

Old Polish customs stood guard over the existing social structures and hierarchies, supporting the legal system in this respect. "The nobility and the Church, the two dominant forces in Polish society, found in customs an important tool by means of which they determined their role and subordinated both individuals and entire social groups to themselves" (p. 25). The nobility's position and its monopoly in political life were guaranteed by royal privileges and laws adopted by the Sejm, but customs significantly strengthened these legal guarantees. A distinctive way of dressing, secured by the law on luxury which forbade plebeians to dress in the nobility's way, the model of education which included knowledge of Latin, not taught to

¹ In a book dealing with various systems of norms, *Wiążące wzory zachowania. Rzecz o wielości norm (Obligatory Patterns of Behaviour. The Multiplicity of Normative Systems)*, Warszawa 1995, S. Ehrlich writes about law, religion and morality, but does not mention customs.

plebeians (knowledge of Latin as a distinctive sign of elitist education was maintained in the curricula of Polish secondary schools until the 1940s), these are but a few examples showing how customs backed up the old Polish social hierarchy. The magnates' distinctness from the rest of the nobility was based not only on their financial position but also on customs, and these were extremely durable. Even during the inter-war period, when all legal distinctions between the estates had been abolished, the inhabitants of some small Polish towns who did not differ from peasants from the economic point of view and by their living standards maintained a distinctive, though anachronic, way of dressing which distinguished them from the peasants. But as regards noblemen, townsmen and peasants, these distinctive features were in recent times only relics of the customs of the past. The case of the Catholic Church and clergy was different; the Church's dominant position in the pre-partition Commonwealth also had a strong material and legal basis (Polish and Lithuanian laws as well as canon law of a supranational character), but the subordination by the Church of vast important sections of the life of old Polish society (family and sexual life) to its control was based on custom, not on the law. This has survived until today.

Robert Redfield has introduced into anthropology the concepts of "great" and "small" tradition. "Great" tradition is the culture of the elite, that is, classical culture based on written testimony, a culture propagated in schools and universities, supported by the official Church, by scientific and artistic institutions. "Small" culture is folk, plebeian culture which uses oral transmission². Peter Burke has rightly pointed out that it is impossible to strictly separate these two traditions, two spheres of culture and custom. Elites create and take part in the "great" tradition, but they also participate in plebeian culture³. Let us add that the plebeians, too, do not participate only in "small" tradition; they reach for "great" tradition when they are offered an opportunity to make use of it or when fascinated by it, they follow the examples held up by it as a model. Bogucka has raised this subject in her excellent study on the attractiveness of noblemen's culture⁴. But let us go further. In a heterogeneous society — and all societies in modern Europe were heterogeneous — there were many cultures, many "great" and "small" traditions, many customs which influenced and penetrated each other. At the outset of her book Bogucka rightly emphasizes that in the 16th and 17th centuries the society in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was extreme-

² R. Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago 1956.

³ P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, New York 1978, pp. 23–64.

⁴ M. Bogucka, *L'attrait de la culture nobiliaire? Sarmatisation de la bourgeoisie polonaise au XVII^e siècle*, "Acta Poloniae Historica" vol. XXXIII, 1976, pp. 23–42.

ly heterogeneous. She says: "The noblemen's Commonwealth was a conglomerate of strongly individualistic regions. "And further on: "Close neighbourhood and coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups (here she enumerates the multiple nationalities and religions) must have meant contacts between various traditions, mental attitudes, ways of life and behaviours. This variety and coexistence could not but exert an influence on old Polish customs, burgeoning at that time" (pp. 12–13). Jan Stanisław Bystron expressed this in a similar way. Bogucka puts forward an interesting theory that customs performed an important integrative function in the heterogeneous old Polish society. The question requires further thorough research which should include not only the interpenetration of "great" and "small" traditions, elite and plebeian cultures (this can be noticed in all countries) but also the osmosis of the various ethnic cultures coexisting in the Commonwealth.

Perhaps we should revise the well known stereotype of the nobleman-landowner-stay-at-home, perpetuated first and foremost by old Polish noblemen's literature which sang the glory of "the quiet merry village" and "happiness at one's fireside"⁵. Not all Polish noblemen in the 17th century were home-birds. The diaries of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, Jan Florian Drobysz Tuszyński, Władysław Poczobut Odlanicki, Jan Antoni Chrapowicki and many others show that their authors spent little time at home in the bosom of their families, but constantly wandered all over the Commonwealth, either serving in the army or travelling for other reasons. How could one otherwise explain the multitudes of pilgrims who, looking for assistance or inspired by piety or mere curiosity, not only visited local sanctuaries but also made their way towards Częstochowa, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and later Święta Lipka from remote regions of the country? Dietine records show that a nobleman who treated his civic duties seriously and wanted to use his political rights had to leave his home many times a year in order to take part in dietines and noblemen's assemblies. The others who stayed at home, did not serve in the army and took no part in pilgrimages or dietines, willingly listened to the stories and narrations of those who had the opportunity of seeing Poland or even a foreign country, as is testified to by the genesis of Pasek's diary. This mobility of 17th century noblemen not only broadened their geographic and mental horizons but also shaped their mentality and knowledge of the world; it must have also integrated them as a social group on the scale of the Commonwealth and it must have integrated their customs, and this is what Bogucka wants to show.

⁵ J. Tazbir, *Wzorce osobowe szlachty (The Personal Patterns of the Nobility)*, in: *Szlaki kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 46–47.

Political life was a different question. This sphere was subject to legal regulations. The law determined the way of appointing officials and their competence, the way of convening dietines and the Sejm and the powers of these institutions: it determined which persons had political rights. The Henrician articles (1573) defined precisely how often the Sejm should be convened and how long its sessions should last. Acts adopted by the Sejm defined exactly not only the composition of the senatorial chamber but also the precedence of senators, and consequently, the order in which they should speak. But many questions were regulated by custom, not by law. It was custom and not law that regulated relations in the parliamentary factions and political parties, which had no statutes and were not subject to any laws of a higher order. Connections between patrons and their clients, which were of great importance for political life and social relations, were regulated by custom⁶. The debates of dietines were based on custom, not on written regulations (only the debates of the Provincial Estates of Royal Prussia were governed by rules which were confirmed by King Ladislaus IV), and so were the debates of the deputies' chamber⁷. The efficiency of Polish parliamentarianism in the 16th and partly also in the 17th century shows that custom was an adequate and effective norm and that it was held in high esteem. This field has escaped the attention of historians of customs; it has aroused the interest of historians of political systems and researchers into political culture, sometimes also historians of social relations, but they failed to see that custom was a norm supplementing the law.

Adoption of foreign laws, inclusion of foreign legal norms in the system of native law is a well known phenomenon, especially when native law is inefficient and less developed than foreign law⁸. It is a well known fact in Polish history that in addition to the adoption of Roman law, Poland also adopted German law during the colonization of villages and towns in the 13th and later centuries, and that in modern times *Constitutio criminalis Carolina* (1552), issued by the emperor Charles V in Germany, was included

⁶ Cf. W. Tygielski, *Stronictwo, które nie mogło przegrać (The Party which Could Not Lose)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. LXXVI, 1985, № 2, pp. 207–230; A. Mączak, *Klientela. Nieformalne systemy władzy w Polsce i Europie XVI–XVIII w. (Clientele. Informal Power Systems in Poland and Europe from the 16th to the 18th Centuries)*. Warszawa 1994, *passim*.

⁷ Cf. M. Wróde, *Elekcja posłów na sejm Proszowice 1689. W sprawie zasad głosowania na sejmikach przedsejmowych (Election of Sejm Deputies. Proszowice 1689. The Rules of Voting at Pre-Sejm Dietines)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. LXXVI, 1985, № 2, pp. 264–288; W. Krieger-Seisen, *Sejmiki Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej w XVII i XVIII wieku (Dietines in the Noblemen's Commonwealth in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 36–78 and the bibliography listed there.

⁸ Cf. S. Ehrlich's remarks, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–196; J. Bardach, *Recepcja w historii państwa i prawa (Adoption of Laws in the History of State and Law)*, "Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne" vol. XXIX, 1977, № 1, pp. 1–60.

in the code of municipal laws worked out by Bartłomiej Groicki (1558). But what about customs regarded as a system of norms? Foreign customs were adopted too. Bystron wrote about this, but he treated it only as a cultural phenomenon.

Private, family and canon law regulated the life of old Polish families only to a certain extent⁹. Laws defined the procedure of contracting lawful marriages, regulated property questions between the spouses and the inheritance rights of children and relatives. But relations within the family were regulated mainly by custom; it was custom that set up patterns of behaviour and was the most important norm. And yet I disagree with Bogucka's assertion that "there were not many single persons in old Polish society" (p. 50) and that consequently, family norms established by custom were applied generally. It is true that — as Bogucka says — the living and working conditions made it difficult or even impossible to function singlehandedly, but there is no reason to suppose that things were different in the Commonwealth than in West European countries, where the proportion of single, unmarried persons who never set up a family sometimes exceeded 50 per cent¹⁰.

Demographers have pointed out that the percentage of persons living in perpetual celibacy rose when the age at which the first marriage was contracted increased¹¹. This applied not only to lower, poorer social strata,

⁹ The insusceptibility of family relations to legal regulations and the importance of extralegal norms in family life has been emphasized by S. Ehrlich, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–103.

¹⁰ J. C. Russell, *Late Ancient and Medieval Populations*, "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society" new series, vol. 48, part 3, 1958, p. 18; A. Wyrobisz, *Rodzina w miście doby przedprzemysłowej a życie gospodarcze. Przegląd badań i problemów (The Family in Pre-Industrial Towns and Economic Life. A Review of Research and Problems)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. LXXVII, 1986, № 2, p. 307 and the literature cited in fn. 4 and 5; A. McLaren, *A History of Contraception. From Antiquity to the Present Day*, Oxford 1990, pp. 106, 113, 141. In 17th century England the proportion of unmarried persons oscillated between 4.2 per cent and 27 per cent in successive five year periods (E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871*, Cambridge, Mass. 1981, p. 260; the two authors regard the percentage of persons living in perpetual celibacy as a very important demographic index; cf. the opinion of M. Zell, *Industry in the Countryside. Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge 1994, p. 70). In Amiens 12.5 per cent to 20 per cent of women were unmarried, depending on the parish and the inhabitants' wealth, in the 17th and 18th centuries (P. Deyon, *Amiens, capitale provinciale. Étude sur la société urbaine au 17^e siècle*, Paris 1967, p. 42). It would have seemed that a medieval craft workshop could not have been run by an unmarried man, but such a situation was foreseen in statutes (D. Frappier-Bigras, *La famille dans l'artisanat parisien au XIII^e siècle*. "Le Moyen Age" vol. XCV, № 1, pp. 48–49). P. Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730*, Paris 1960, pp. 41–42 (19 per cent of women were unmarried in Beauvais in 1764). G. Daliile, *Famille et propriété dans le royaume de Naples (XV^e–XIX^e siècle)*, Paris 1985, tables 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35. D. S. Reher, *Town and Country in preindustrial Spain. Cuenca, 1550–1870*, Cambridge 1990, p. 194, table 6.1 (18.9 per cent of the inhabitants of Cuenca were unmarried in 1724, the percentage for the neighbouring villages amounting to 14.7). R. Wall, *Woman Alone in English Society*, "Annales de Demographie Historique" 1981, pp. 303–316.

¹¹ E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, *op. cit.*, pp. 257, 265.

servants, unemployed people or vagrants (contraction of marriage always required a financial situation adequate to set up and maintain a family) but also to the elites¹².

The fragmentary researches so far conducted by Polish demographers show that first marriages were contracted at an advanced age and that the number of single persons in pre-partition Poland was relatively high¹³. In noblemen's and magnates' manor houses there were many resident spinsters and unmarried male residents¹⁴. The king's sister, Anna Vasa, never married, and Anna Jagiellon was in practice an old maid for she contracted her unsuccessful marriage at the age of 53. Kasper Niesiecki writes of an unknown princess, Anna Zbaraska, the last member of that family (she was still alive in 1637), "who chose a maiden's life until her death". Many representatives of the Polish political elite in the 16th and 17th centuries die unmarried at a ripe if not an old age. The reason why they did not get married was neither a lack of financial resources and of social prestige, nor an unstable situation, as could have happened in the case of poor people servants, retainers; their decision was motivated by personal, psychological reasons or customs which we do not know, but which are worth researching. In any case the question of persons living in perpetual celibacy existed despite strong pressure by all Churches and religious communities and despite the pressure of public opinion (celibacy was accepted only by the

¹² Ch. Klapisch-Zuber has found out to her surprise that according to the Florentine cadastre of 1427 there were more single women among the wealthy inhabitants of Florence (the average for all age groups over 18 was 10 per cent) than among the poor inhabitants (*Célibat et services féminins dans la Florence du XV^e siècle*, "Annales de Demographie Historique" 1981, pp. 294-295). At the end of the 17th century more than 20 per cent of English aristocrats lived in perpetual celibacy (T. Hollingsworth, *The Demography of the British Peerage, supplement to "Population Studies"* vol. XVIII, 1964, № 2, p. 17). Among the Milan patriciate's offsprings born in 1650-1699, 56 per cent of the men and 48.5 of women were unmarried (D.E. Zanetti, *The patriziato of Milan from the domination of Spain to the unification of Italy: an outline of the social and demographic history*, "Social History" № 6, 1977, pp. 745-760).

¹³ In 18th century Warsaw 22-23 per cent of men and 10-12 per cent of women lived in perpetual celibacy — C. Kuko, *Rodzina w osiemnastowiecznej Warszawie (The Family in 18th Century Warsaw)*, Białystok 1991, pp. 168-173; i d e m, *Kobieta samotna w miastach Europy przedprzemysłowej jako przedmiot badań historycznych (Single Women in the Towns of Pre-Industrial Europe as a Subject of Historical Research)*, in: *Miasto — region — społeczeństwo*, Białystok 1992, p. 289. In 1787 nearly 24 per cent of all adults in Solec, a small town on the Vistula, were single persons; however, most of them were servants and vagrants; A. Wyrobisz, *Struktura społeczna miasta polskiego w XVIII w. (The Social Structure of Polish Town in the 18th Century)*, in: *Studia nad gospodarką, społeczeństwem i rodziną w Europie późnofeudalnej*, Lublin 1987, pp. 118-119. In the poll tax register of 1673 P. Koral has found 10 per cent single noblemen in the Sieradz voivodship, *Rodzina szlachecka w województwie sieradzkim i ziemi wieluńskiej w świetle rejestrów podłównego z 1673 r. (The Noble Family in the Sieradz Voivodship and Wieluń Region in the Light of Poll Tax Registers of 1673)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. I.XXXVII, 1995, № 3-4.

¹⁴ See A. Laszuk, *Szlachta w województwie krakowskim w świetle rejestrów podłównego z 1662 roku (The Nobility in the Cracow Voivodship in the Light of Poll Tax Registers of 1662)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. I.LXXIX, 1988, № 3, pp. 446-447, 452-453.

Catholic and Orthodox Churches for persons wishing to take orders)¹⁵. We should therefore take a critical view of the assertion propagated by anthropologists and sociologists and unrestrainedly used in Catholic propaganda both in the past and now that the family was and is the basic social unit. What of a basic unit is it if onethird and even a half of society can remain outside it? However, we must remember that the persons who did not marry and did not set up their own nuclear family were not completely outside all family structures. They belonged to clans and enlarged families; persons in service dependence (apprentices, journeymen, domestic servants, farmhands) formed part of households and were subordinated to the head of the family (the term *pater familias* was used in the old Polish period). And what about concubinage, which was censored by all religions and systems of moral norms linked to them, but which nevertheless existed (as is proved by the countless Polish words for the Latin *concubina*) and was a kind of unmarried family?

Nota bene the official doctrine of the Catholic Church (the Calvinists fully agreed with it) during the period of Counter-Reformation treated marriage only and exclusively as a guarantor of legal procreation and an instrument controlling sexual life and preventing debauchery; it completely ignored its emotional aspects. The Church, however had not only morals in view but also property. Recognition of concubinage would have undermined the legal order in this sphere. Jack Goody has pointed out that the Church had always competed for legacies with family members. From the 4th century on, the Church had solicited for legal regulations and introduced customs which made it difficult to keep family property intact and facilitated its transfer to ecclesiastical institutions. Thus, relatives of collateral lines and illegitimate children did not enjoy the right of inheritance, concubinage was condemned and women were discriminated against in questions concerning inheritance. The Church endeavoured to eliminate endogamy which facilitated the retention of property in the hands of the same family, and tried to force through the principle of exogamy, which led to the dispersion of property or, if there were no rightful heirs, to the property being taken over by the Church. Hence the Church's ban on marriages between relatives four or even seven times removed, which were defined as incest; the ban applied not only to persons related by blood (*consanguinei*) but also to those related by marriage (*affini*) and spiritually connected (e.g. godparents)¹⁶. This could

¹⁵ Cf. A. Wyrobisz, *Patterns of the Family and Woman in Old Poland*, "Acta Poloniae Historica" vol. LXXI, 1995, pp. 71–72.

¹⁶ J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge 1983; cf. J. Casey, *The History of the Family*, Oxford 1989, pp. 68–70.

be seen in full in the post-Tridentine period. The financial basis of the Catholic Church has been undermined by the Reformation and it was necessary to reproduce it. During the Counter-Reformation the nobility in Poland tried to oppose the Church's craving for noblemen's estates. In 1665 the Sejm adopted an act which restricted transfer of property to the Church¹⁷, but it was ineffective.

Despite the fact that not all persons set up their own family, the family was in fact an important social group in the old Polish period; it was the basis of social order. The family allowed the political class of those days, that is, the noblemen and magnates, and in towns the patriciate, to make use of their political rights; family agreements and connections served political objectives. Hence the most important "spectacles of life" — to repeat an expression used by Bogucka in Chapter IV — i.e. spectacles linked with births, weddings and death, were family spectacles and also important social and political events; the customs connected with them became important regulators of the life of old Polish society. The patriarchalism of the old Polish world, the subject of Chapter IV of Bogucka's book, was a kind of social order, and custom was expected to back it up.

While appreciating the importance of the old Polish family in social life, I would warn against its idealization, against the presentation of the family as a harmonious community free of conflicts. The tragic fate of Halszka of Ostróg narrated in detail by Łukasz G ó r n i c k i or the misfortunes of Anna Stanisławska, described by herself in second-rate verse, do not seem to have been exceptions. Zofia, the wife of Hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, whom Bogucka euphemistically describes as an "energetic" woman whose marriage with the hetman was a "friendly" union of partners "intimate with each other" (pp. 66, 68, 69), was in fact a morbidly jealous, capricious, hysterical woman who terrorized her husband by her whims, as can be judged by their correspondence¹⁸.

Bogucka has enriched the history of customs by subjects not yet tapped by historians. She has presented the perception of time in old Poland and the changes taking place in this field, which were of great importance for the mentality and consequently also for the customs of society (pp. 17–24). She says: "old Polish customs were born within the framework of a tradi-

¹⁷ *Voluntaria legum*, vol. III, f. 855.

¹⁸ Ł. G ó r n i c k i, *Dzieje w Koronie Polskiej (Events in the Polish Kingdom)*, in: *idem, Pisma*, vol. II, ed. R. Pollak, Warszawa 1961, pp. 623–654, 684–690; A. Stanisławska, *Transakcja albo opisanie całego życia jednej sieroty przez żalodne treny od tejsze samej pisane roku 1685 (Transaction or a Description of the Whole Life of an Orphan-Girl in Plaintive Laments Written by Herself in 1685)*, ed. I. Kotowa, Kraków 1935; *Korespondencja Jana Karola Chodkiewicza (The Correspondence of Jan Karol Chodkiewicz)*, ed. W. Chomętowski, Warszawa 1875, pp. 31–97.

tional perception of time, typical of agricultural societies which were inclined to regard time as cyclical (not linear — A.W.) and were averse to haste” (p. 24). Without that explanation it would be difficult to understand old Polish customs, for they were customs of a rural society living in harmony with the rhythm of nature. This was the reason for the intensive society life and hospitality of the Polish nobility which in this way relieved the monotony of rural life (p. 150) but, let us add, also assured itself of an inflow and exchange of information. The rural character of Polish society was probably the reason for the late development of the theatre in Poland, for a professional public theatre can exist only in large urban agglomerations, in a society preferring the urban way of life. The dwarfish size of old Polish towns and their anemic cultural life prevented the development of a public theatre; it was not founded in Warsaw until the reign of Stanislaus Augustus. This was a characteristic trait of old Polish customs. English, Spanish and French noblemen were infatuated with the theatre as early as the 16th and 17th centuries (see the diary of Samuel Pepys). A Polish nobleman had only now and again an opportunity to see a performance of a school or court theatre, if he was invited.

Bogucka has also included in her book an innovatory chapter on gesture as a means of communication, an expression of emotions and a sign of estate membership (pp. 81–96). It is a pity that in presenting old Polish domestic architecture (pp. 97–106) she has not dealt with the question of “privacy”, i.e. accommodation meant for individual, strictly personal private use, such as individual bedrooms, parlours, boudoirs, rooms for study and even dining rooms, inaccessible to outsiders and unwanted people. In England private quarters were set apart as early as the 14th century and in Florence in the 15th. They were of great importance for they not only denoted living standards but also shaped a specific mentality and sensitivity¹⁹. In the Polish language there is no equivalent of the English word “privacy”, and privacy must in fact have been difficult in Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries not only in peasant cottages (frequently consisting of but one room) but also in burghers’ houses, noblemen’s manors and magnates’ palaces, if even beds were not always used by the same individual. Old Polish life went on openly and in public; secrecy and intimacy were regarded as wicked. This is a subject worth being researched.

¹⁹ J. Casey, *op. cit.*, pp. 156–157; R. Goldthwaite, *The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture*, “American Historical Review” vol. LXXVII, 1972, N° 4, pp. 977–1012; *idem.* *The Rebuilding of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore — London 1980; M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, London 1980 (*non vidi*); K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600. Good Governance and Politic Rule*, Oxford — New York 1988, p. 170.

The last chapter of Bogucka's book *Sarmatian Heaven, Sarmatian Sensitivity* deals with old Polish religiousness, superstitions, sense of humour and attitude to art and Nature. In other parts of the book Bogucka practically does not use the word "Sarmatism" and does not try to define the term. According to her, old Polish customs were closer to the culture of Western than Eastern Europe, and in her view the orientalising of Poland, regarded as a component of Sarmatism, has been exaggerated (p. 214). I would be inclined to agree with the second part of this opinion, but have doubts about the close affinity of old Polish mentality, customs and material culture to those of the West. The surprise frequently expressed in the correspondence, diaries and accounts by Polish and foreign travellers who came in contact with the Polish or West European reality proves that there was a great disparity between the Commonwealth and Western Europe. Bogucka attributes this to the "great originality" of Polish culture, compared with West European culture (p. 214). But it is quite possible that this originality did not consist in the combination of Western and Eastern elements, as was generally thought so far, but in the heterogeneity of old Polish culture, composed of Polish, Lithuanian, Ruthenian as well as Jewish, Armenian, Tatar, German, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian and Turkish elements.

As to old Polish religiousness, Charles Ogier's remark on the reasons for the absence of Carthusian monks in Poland and the lack of contemplative eremitical orders with strict rules (according to this French diplomat "the restless Polish spirit cannot be bent to their quiet seclusion") is pointless (p. 197) and is a typical example of a foreigner's poor knowledge of Polish reality. Carthusian monks reappeared in Poland soon after Ogier's visit (they had first appeared in the Middle Ages) and Camaldolese monks were held in great esteem in Poland, an esteem unheard of in other countries (during Ogier's stay in Poland they already had two monasteries). *Nota bene* if the Camaldolese order could be set up and then be revived in Italy in the 16th century, if the Camaldulians could strike root in Italian society known for its loquacity, why should they not have gained popularity in Poland? Ogier may not have known about the many monasteries and convents of Carmelites. Discalced and Calced Carmelites (the latter set up a separate Polish province in 1617 and in the first quarter of the 17th century opened 11 new convents), Augustinian Hermits (25 monasteries in the first quarter of the 17th century), about the appearance of Reformists in Poland, the exceptional popularity of the Benedictines of Chelmno, the restoration of the Order of

Brigittines, about new foundations of the Premonstratensians after 1600²⁰. The popularity of the model of ascetic life propagated by the Reformists and Discalced Carmelites is testified to by the growing number of bequests to these orders. It is most peculiar and interesting and also characteristic of the Baroque, which was so fond of flagrant opposites, that alongside the Sarmatian cult of the joy of life (to which even the Franciscan Observants, known in Poland as Bernardines succumbed), there existed forms of extreme asceticism, and mysticism flourished.

Bogucka's book reads very well, it thus performs a popularizing function. It would, however, be an irreparable loss if we failed to see its scholarly value and the innovatory way in which the author deals with the history of customs and introduces new questions and themes.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

²⁰ *Kościół w Polsce (The Church in Poland)*, vol. II: *Wiek XVI–XVIII (16th–18th Centuries)*, Kraków 1969, pp. 523–526, 547–548, 553, 557–558, 743–745, 748, 755; L. Zarewicz, *Zakon kamedulów, jego fundacje i dziejowe wspomnienia w Polsce i Litwie (The Camaldulians' Order, Its Foundations and Historical Reminiscences in Poland and Lithuania)*, Kraków 1871, pp. 22–23; 32; C. Gil, *Karmelici bosi w Polsce 1605–1655 (Discalced Carmelites in Poland 1605–1655)*, "Nasza Przyszłość", vol. XLVIII, 1977, pp. 14–129, 131–134, 138–141; B.J. Wanat, *Zakon karmelitów bosych w Polsce. Klasztory karmelitów i karmelitanek bosych 1605–1975 (The Order of Discalced Carmelites in Poland. The Discalced Carmelites' Monasteries and Convents 1605–1975)*, Kraków 1979, pp. 55–56; M. Brykowska, *Architektura karmelitów bosych w XVII–XVIII wieku (The Architecture of Discalced Carmelites in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1991, p. 9. Cf. also K. Górski, *Żarys dziejów duchowości w Polsce (An Outline of the History of Spirituality in Poland)*, Kraków 1986, pp. 92–193; A. Jobert, *Od Lutra do Mohyla. Polska wobec kryzysu chrześcijaństwa 1517–1648 (From Luther to Mohyla. Poland's Attitude to the Crisis of Christianity 1517–1648)*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 217–230.