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POLISH ORIENTALNESS

Orientalness occupies a particular place in the modern history of Poland. This notion should embrace not merely the different elements and relations in Polish culture which in one way or another were borrowed from the East or from the Orient. Above all, I have in mind those particular features which, whilst belonging to the collection of variables indispensable for identification of Polish society, at the same time were visibly connected with the Orient for contemporaries. I thus distinguish the Orient from the East, and therefore also easternness, as an element of the structure of the social system, from Orientalness. In this understanding, Orientalness embraces a range of varied, undefined phenomena which have become part of Poland's identity¹ in modern times. The East and the Orient, easternness and Orientalness have never been precisely defined, whilst Polish society's attitude to them has not been unequivocal. In the social consciousness the two phenomena overlapped, and sometimes simply identified with one another. So that in making such a distinction, one cannot overlook interrelations and interactions.

The notion of Orientalness does not occur in Polish historiography, as if such a concept did not seem necessary. The talk is exclusively of Orientalism in the sense of the totality of interest in, knowledge of, and research on the Orient, and at the most, Orientalization is mentioned as the reorganization of the recep-

¹ I use the concepts of identity and structure in accordance with general systems theory, especially in the interpretation of G. M. Weinberg and R. Orchard, in: *Trends in General Systems Theory*, ed. G. J. Klir., New York 1972. Cf. J. Kieniewicz, *Historyczne aspekty rozwoju w krajach Trzeciego Świata* [Historical Aspects of Development in Third World Countries], "Przegląd Historyczny", vol. LXXI, 1980, No. 4, p. 732.

tion of eastern cultures by the gentry culture.² I do not reject these two concepts, since in my opinion they reveal precisely Orientalness. To these I would add the problem of the development of the Polish attitude to the Orient, that is to say of a local and autonomous idea, different to the Orientalism developed in the West during colonial times. Orientalism in Poland and the Orientalization of the Polish gentry's style of life were, in my view, phenomena connected with Orientalness as a distinguishing feature of the Polish social system. One should therefore include in one's considerations questions related to the state of awareness of and ideas on Poland's place within Europe. This would demand definition, too, of the meaning of such notions as West and East, westernness and easternness, Orientalism and Occidentalism.

The easternness of Poland was and remains delimited by her geographical location first and foremost. It is significant, as we are at pains to emphasize, that we are talking about the eastern part of Europe, and not about the East as such.³ Geographical

² Orientalism I accept in accordance with the suggestions of E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1979 ("Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience". "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient") pp. 1, 3, cf. pp. 201-206. Otherwise, then, than it is accepted in Polish learning, where Orientalism is restricted to questions of reception; cf. J. Wolski, *Rola orientalistyki jako dyscypliny stykowej* [*The Role of Oriental Studies as an Intermediate Discipline*], "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", or J. Tuczyński, *Motywy indyjskie w literaturze polskiej* [*Indian Motifs in Polish Literature*], Warszawa 1981. The works of J. Reychman cited below interpret Orientalism more broadly. In historical research, on the other hand, Orientalism is perceived first and foremost as an element of the culture of Sarmatism, and is restricted to the 17th and 18th centuries. Cf. J. Tazbir, *Rzeczpospolita szlachecka wobec wielkich odkryć* [*The Commonwealth of the Gentry in the Light of the Great Discoveries*], Warszawa 1973, p. 145. A survey of Oriental borrowings has recently been provided by J. Tazbir, *Influences orientales en Pologne aux XVI^e-XVII^e siècles*, in: *La Pologne aux XV^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques à Bucarest, Etudes sur l'histoire de la Culture de l'Europe Centrale-Orientale*, Wrocław 1980, pp. 213-234.

³ We can already find this in the work by Maciej Miechowita, *Tractatus de duobus Sarmatiis Asiatica et Europiana, et de contentis in eis*, Kraków 1517 (the final, key version is *Descriptio Sarmatarum Asiaticae et Europaeae et eorum que in eis continentur*, Kraków 1521). A discussion is conducted on Sarmatia, its location and significance for the Polish consciousness in T. Ulewicz, *Sarmacja. Studium z problematyki słowiańskiej XV i XVI w.* [*Sarmatia. A Study on Slavonic Problems of the*

descriptions, apparently natural, have often taken on a qualificatory sense, but perhaps this is nowhere so visible and onerous as between the Odra and the Bug. Thus many will readily and stubbornly stress that Poland belongs to central Europe. Geographical, historical and psychological grounds are all mixed up here so that it is difficult to disentangle them. In any case, it is worth recalling that from the point of view of forms of socio-economic development, it has long been accepted to speak about the clear distinctness of the lands lying "to the east of the Elbe".⁴ A number of consequences emerge from this circumstance allowing one to regard Poland as an eastern country. Consistent with this, I would call western those structural elements which in Polish society proved to be analogous to solutions proper to the West from the time when one can identify the latter as the centre of the European World-Economy. It is not that important whether these elements developed spontaneously or in the form of imitation. But it does seem significant for the purpose of these deliberations that the number of structural analogies decreased during this period (i.e., from the 16th to the 19th century).⁵

15th and 16th Centuries], Kraków 1950, especially p. 47 ff. A. Jakimowicz writes: "Thus: Polishness underlined by Orientalism; Polishness in Orientalism" (*Zachód a sztuka Wschodu [The West and the Art of the East]*, Warszawa 1967, p. 6).

⁴ The concept of the division of Europe into West and East, with the boundary at the Elbe and with the exclusion of Moscow, as a process of integration and division begun in the 14th century and accelerated in the second half of the 16th century, has already been widely accepted—J. H. Elliot, *Europe Divided, 1559 - 1598*, New York 1969, pp. 44 - 48. Cf. W. Rusiński, *Some Remarks on the Differentiation of Agrarian Structure*, "Studia Historiae Oeconomicae", vol. XIII, Poznań 1978. These differences are strongly emphasized by J. Topolski (*Narodziny kapitalizmu w Europie w XVI - XVII wieku [The Birth of Capitalism in Europe in the 16th - 17th Centuries]*, Warszawa 1965, especially pp. 165, 177, and also *La regression économique en Pologne du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. VII, 1962). A. Wyczański is more cautious in evaluating differences in the economic and social structure of Poland in the 16th century (cf. *Le paysan, la tenure et le bail en Pologne au XVI^e siècle*, "Annales. Economies. Sociétés. Civilisations", 1978, No. 4, pp. 773, 778).

⁵ The increasing distance in the 17th century from "countries of rapid growth" is emphasized by J. Topolski, in: *Dzieje Polski [A History of Poland]*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 289 ff. and especially pp. 297, 345 - 348. Dualism in economic development is also given prominence by J. A. Gierowski, *Historia Polski, 1507 - 1764 [A History of Poland, 1507 - 1764]*,

The easternness of Poland has a historical and psychological nature. It dates from the time of the birth of statehood, which arrived during the period of formation in the western part of Europe of political and cultural centres claiming to lead the world, defined in terms of affiliation to Christianity. The rising state of the Piasts did not belong to the East, because according to the Greco-Roman tradition the latter was something significant, approachable and intelligible, not associated in anyone's mind with the forests and clearings inhabited by the Slavs.⁶ This East was still largely Christian at the time, and radiated splendidly in all directions, creating an enclave of influence to the east of Poland of considerable significance. However, Poland, though she resisted giving in to the western threat, accepted Christianization from Bohemia and Rome. In this way she consciously took her place on the eastern edge of the Roman Church and the great civilization which it was building in Europe.⁷ The Christian East was friendly towards Poland, and traces of contacts are easy to see in

Warszawa 1979, p. 31. The unquestionably distinct character of the Polish lands has not led to any model interpretations going beyond the context of systems theory, which can be seen from the works of J. Topolski: *Les tendances de l'évolution agraire de l'Europe Centrale et Orientale aux XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles*, "Rivista di Storia dell'Agricoltura", 1967; *Causes of Dualism in the Economic Development of Modern Europe (A Tentative New Theory)*, "Studia Historiae Oeconomicae", vol. III, 1968; *La réfeodalisation dans l'économie des grands domaines en Europe Centrale et Orientale (XVI^e - XVIII^e s.)*, *ibidem*, vol. VI, 1971, especially p. 58; *O potrzebie teorii społeczeństwa feudalnego [Concerning the Need for a Theory on Feudal Society]*, in: *Spółczeństwo staropolskie*, vol. I, Warszawa 1976, pp. 14, 20; *À propos de la conception d'un modèle de l'histoire économique de la Pologne (XVI^e - XVIII^e s.)*, "Studia Historiae Oeconomicae", vol. XIII, 1978. The only such model is W. Kula's interpretation, which places the emphasis on what was common to all feudal or pre-industrial societies in Poland's socio-economic system—*Théorie économique du système féodal. Pour un modèle de l'économie polonaise 16^e - 18^e siècles*, Paris 1970 (original edition in Polish, 1962).

⁶ T. Ulewicz, (*op. cit.*, p. 50) suggests that originally the humanistic identification of Poland with Sarmatia above all represented an underlining of her inferiority in relation to Italy. Hence it was not so much a question of eastern, as northern, coarse and barbaric. Later, however, this line of thought was modified, and by the mid-16th century had already given way to the rising tide of Sarmatian pride (*ibidem*, pp. 83 ff.).

⁷ A. Żółtowski, *East and West in European History*, London 1952. Cf. the comments of J. Tazbir on Poland and the Concept of Europe in the 16th - 18th Centuries, "European Studies Review", vol. VII, 1977, and B. Gerek, *La notion d'Europe et la prise de conscience européenne au Bas Moyen Age*, in: *La Pologne...*, pp. 69 - 94.

Polish history and in present-day Poland. Under pressure itself from Islam, however, it lost its ability to expand.

When Byzantium fell to the Turkish conquerors, the escaping intellectuals contributed to the development of the Renaissance in Italy, since that is where they sought shelter. It was only at this point that the problem of opposition between East and West began to emerge in Europe. To simplify my arguments I consciously exclude from my deliberations precisely the issues of belonging to a single Christian world, and the adaptation and assimilation processes connected with this. After all, these continued even into the 17th century. This is a somewhat different problem, for which it would be necessary to make a difficult and doubtful distinction between universal phenomena (Christianity) and phenomena proper only to the West. The Orientalness of Poland does not seem incompatible with her actual affiliation to the Christian universum, nor with the sense of union with the Catholic Church against her pagan, Orthodox, Muslim and finally Protestant neighbours. The sense of being surrounded induced closer ties, but did not detract from the particularities involved and did not lead to an increase in westernness.⁸

From the 10th century, then, Poland had the problem of actually belonging to the world of western culture and at the same time being objectively situated to the east of the most important centres of that culture. Finally, the fact was not without significance that for Poland at that time the East (geographically and historically) meant the Rus lands, and beyond that the whole of Asia.⁹ However, this more and more explicit differentiation was

⁸ J. Tazbir, *Znaczenie XVII wieku w procesie unarodowienia polskiego katolicyzmu* [The Significance of the 17th Century in the Process of Nationalization of Polish Catholicism], in: *Pamiętnik X Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Lublinie, Reports I*, Warszawa 1968, pp. 221 - 224; *idem*, *Sarmatyzacja katolicyzmu w XVII wieku* [Sarmatization of Catholicism in the 17th Century], in: *Wiek XVII—Barok—Kontrreformacja. Studia z historii kultury*, ed. J. Pelc, Wrocław 1970, and numerous other studies.

⁹ B. Zientara states that up until the 13th century Polish society was closer to the eastern Slavs than to any western societies. There then followed a similar turn-about to that which took place in Bohemia and Hungary (*L'Occidentalisation de la Pologne au XIII^e siècle: signification, conséquences, dangers*, in: *I Colloque Franco-Polonais Relations économiques et culturelles entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Nice-Antibes, 6 - 9 novembre 1980, especially p. 9, mimeographed report).

not synonymous with a sense of inferiority with respect to materialism and civilization. Nor did the Commonwealth of the gentry feel its easternness to be a handicap when the difference in directions of development became pronounced in the 15th-16th centuries.¹⁰

On these grounds one could no doubt question the justification for the distinctions made here. Association with universal Christian culture was totally sufficient authority for the gentry nation. The quest for a "respectable" genealogy from ancient times in the shape of the legend about the Roman origins of the Sarmatians can probably be regarded more as a succumbing to the literary mode of the time than as a symptom of inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* the West.¹¹ The Polish gentleman regarded his place in the Christian world as something natural and accepted the bulwark concept that much more easily.

In emphasizing their "Polishness" the nobility would not, of course, acknowledge Orientalness. Before the 16th century in Europe there was no need to distinguish between the East and the West, in the Mediterranean world there was no separation of cultures associated with Islam. All this was yet possible, but the problem of Poland's Orientalness could only arise when the powerful Jagiellonian state spread far into the east and came into direct contact with the Muslim world. This experience significantly outstripped the development of the European idea of the Orient.

The union with Lithuania and the absorption of the Ukraine and Podolia endowed the Poles with distinct features of an eastern

¹⁰ A. Wyczański maintains that "Polish culture of the 16th century did not diverge in character from the culture of other European countries, that its chief elements found close parallels in other countries, and finally that Polish culture formed part of the European culture of those times" (*Polska w Europie XVI wieku [Poland in 16th-Century Europe]*, Warszawa 1973, p. 230).

¹¹ On the relations between megalomania and complexes in the 17th century cf. J. Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce. Rozkwit—upadek—relikty [The Culture of the Gentry in Poland. Rise—Decline—Vestiges]*, Warszawa 1978, p. 144 ff. See also earlier papers by the same author: *Les modèles personnels de la noblesse polonaise au XVII^e s.*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. XXXVI, 1977, and *La culture nobiliaire polonaise au XVII^e s.*, *ibidem*, vol. XL, 1979.

country.¹² Rus and Muscovy, however, rather screened Poland off from the East and Asia, passing on a number of things from their own tradition of the Christian, and also Mongolian, Orient. The Poles had direct contact with the khanates which arose after the collapse of the Mongolian empire, and from the 15th century the importance of relations with Turkey grew continually. As we know, these were contacts through war, becoming graver and graver for the Commonwealth. The dangers were accompanied by an increasing sense of foreignness with regard to the Mohammedan believers. At the same time, however, a turn towards the Muslim Orient, a turn to the south in the direction of the entire Turkish border, from Wallachia to the Crimea, was motivated above all by the economic situation. From the 14th century a shift had been taking place in the trade-routes linking the Mediterranean with Central Asia. The old silk route had lost its significance, and the potential of the Black Sea ports had decreased.¹³ Indian, Chinese and Persian goods now came to Syrian ports and

¹² M. Bogucka, *La noblesse polonaise face à l'Orient: entre la fascination et l'effroi, XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles*, in: *I Colloque Franco-Polonais...*, mimeographed report. See also by the same author, *L'attrait de la culture nobiliaire? Sarmatisation de la bourgeoisie polonaise au XVII^e siècle*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. XXXIII, 1976, and *Culture de ville en Pologne aux XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles*, in: *La Pologne...*, pp. 153-169. Cf. J. Bieniarzówna, *Die türkischen Einflüsse in der bürgerlichen Kultur Krakaus im XVII Jh.*, in: *Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen der Türkenkriege*, Graz 1971.

¹³ From the extensive, though still not sufficiently exhaustive literature on the subject, mention should be made of the works of M. Małowist, who has repeatedly come back to the idea of the importance of Oriental trade for the shaping of the specific socio-economic character of Poland in the 16th century: *Les routes du commerce et les marchandises du Levant dans la vie de la Pologne au Bas Moyen Age et au debut de l'époque moderne*, in: *Mediterraneo e Oceano Indiano, Atti del VI Colloquio di Storia Marittima, Venezia 20 - 29 settembre 1962*, Firenze 1970, and *Le commerce de Levant avec l'Europe de l'Est au XVI^e siècle. Quelques problèmes*, in: *Histoire économique du monde méditerranéen 1450 - 1650, Melanges en l'honneur de F. Braudel*, Toulouse, 1973. These issues were also the subject of Małowist's more general interpretations, from *O niektórych cechach rozwoju gospodarczo-społecznego krajów nadbałtyckich w XV - XVII wieku* [Concerning Some of the Features of the Socio-Economic Development of the Baltic Countries in the 15th - 17th Centuries], in: *VIII Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich, Kraków 1958, Historia gospodarcza Polski*, Warszawa 1960, to *Wschód i Zachód Europy w XIII - XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych* [Europe's East and West in the 13th - 16th Centuries. A Comparison of Socio-Economic Structures], Warszawa 1973, especially pp. 186, 187, 214 - 218.

to Constantinople via the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. This led to a distinct shift towards a north-south axis of Polish trade-routes with the Levant.¹⁴ In the 15th century this was reflected in the efforts made to capture Moldavia and Wallachia.

After the fall of Constantinople and in step with the advance of Turkish expansion in the Balkans, Polish-Turkish contacts—war, military, and diplomatic—acquired a new significance. Interest grew as products of Polish fields and forests gained in price on the west-European markets. The money acquired from this source, the celebrated Spanish *reales de ocho*—the fruits of the American *conquista*, was used by the Polish gentry for buying luxury articles from the Levant. So that an ever-increasing number of commercial caravans went south, and with them went religious pilgrims making their way to the Holy Sepulchre, diplomats, spies, adventurers and the usual tourists interested in far-off lands.¹⁵ Captives taken from devastated Podolia by the Tartars were driven to the south, to the slave markets in the Crimea and in Istanbul. Assimilation was possible in both directions. All these contacts—though in various ways—served a deepening of knowledge of the East, the penetration of influences, and the Orientalization of tastes. This process intensified not only amongst the magnates and the gentry, but also amongst the middle classes. It did not visibly clash either with hostility towards the Turks as enemies on the field of battle, or as “disgusting Mohammedans”. An accumulation of these influences, though not synonymous with true knowledge about the Orient, came about in the 17th century, which was, after all, the period of the

¹⁴ See first of all A. Dziubiński, *Drogi handlowe polsko-tureckie w XVI stuleciu [Polish-Turkish Trade-Routes in the 16th Century]*, “Przegląd Historyczny”, vol. LVI, 1965, No. 2, pp. 232 ff. Cf. also J. Kieniewicz, *Droga morska do Indii i handel korzenny w latach 1498 - 1522 [The Sea Route to India and the Spice Trade During the Years 1498 - 1522]*, “Przegląd Historyczny”, vol. LV, 1964, No. 4, pp. 597, 598. On the continued existence of these routes in the first half of the 17th century cf. Z. P. Pach, *Le commerce du Levant et la Hongrie au XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles*, in: *Actes du Colloque polono-hongrois, Budapest 15 - 16 octobre 1976*, Budapest 1981.

¹⁵ For the most extensive presentation of these problems see B. Bańranowski, *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII wieku [Knowledge of the Orient in Ancient Poland up to the 18th Century]*, Łódź 1950.

most dogged struggles with the Turks and one of greatly active anti-Muslim agitation.¹⁶

The history of Poland's eastern trade is still in need of more thorough research, and awaits a synthetic work which takes into account the relationships between economic life, politics and culture. Here one encounters tremendous difficulties concerning material, and there are not even sufficient sources to allow one to determine the volume of trade. We can only surmise that there was an adverse balance in relations with the East, and that a significant proportion of silver from a Europe shaken up by the convulsions of a revolution in prices¹⁷ flowed away in that direction, via Lvov. One more question requires explanation. What the cultural lure of the Orient consisted in, in what way it overcame the hostility and foreignness, making of Christian Poland a most oriental country in Europe.

In the 16th century, then, one can already distinguish between geopolitical easternness and cultural Orientalness. From then on a process of intertwining of these matters developed, a process of great significance for the development of the gentry nation and of modern Poland altogether. On the other hand, the original Polish social system, its economic and political structures, distinguishing Poland more and more visibly from the West, cannot be regarded as sufficient evidence of belonging to the East. Poland in the 16th-17th centuries had already entered into relations with the European World-Economy, whilst still maintaining with the East, and the Orient ties independent of these relations. On the other hand, it does not seem to me

¹⁶ A. Zajączkowski, *Orientalistyka polska a Bliski Wschód* [*Polish Oriental Studies and the Near East*], in: *Szkice z dziejów orientalistyki polskiej*, vol. II, Warszawa, pp. 11-14.

¹⁷ This supposition is put forward by F. Braudel and F. Spooner, *Prices in Europe from 1450 to 1750*, in: *Economic History of Europe*, vol. IV, Cambridge 1967, p. 448. In the absence of source material, suppositions about the nature of Poland's balance of trade with the East are highly risky, cf. the remarks of H. Samsonowicz in the *Encyklopedia historii gospodarczej Polski do 1945 roku* [*Encyclopaedia of the Economic History of Poland up to 1945*], Warszawa 1981, pp. 229-231. The view concerning the drain on Poland's currency through Oriental trade is supported by A. Mączak, *Money and Society in Poland and Lithuania in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, "Journal of European Economic History," vol. V, 1976, No. 1, p. 71. See also A. Attman, *The Bullion Flow Between Europe and the East, 1000-1750*, Göteborg 1981.

that during this time Poland incontrovertibly constituted the periphery of the European World-System.¹⁸

From the 15th century Polish Orientalness appeared as the sum of borrowings in language, dress, weapons or manner of living of the gentry. It was only in the 18th century that there ensued a secondary borrowing of the Oriental fashion from the West.¹⁹ These external features were obvious to foreigners.²⁰ The question arises, however, whether all the loans accomplished can

¹⁸ This thesis was put forward by I. Wallerstein, making ample use of Polish works (*The Modern World-System. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York 1974, and *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy 1600 - 1750*, New York 1980). Various aspects of his interpretation were presented in the collection of articles, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, Cambridge 1979, especially pp. 20, 39 - 42 (*Three Paths of National Development in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, where he presents a somewhat different picture to Topolski's version, also divided into three parts). On Wallerstein's theses cf. J. Kochanowicz, M. Kula, *Feudalizm, kapitalizm, zacofanie* [*Feudalism, Capitalism, Backwardness*], "Przegląd Historyczny", vol. LXVIII, 1977, No. 4.

¹⁹ This theme has been repeatedly taken up by J. Reychman, who has gradually defined his position more clearly: *Znajomość i nauczanie języków orientalnych w Polsce XVIII wieku* [*Knowledge and Teaching of Oriental Languages in 18th-Century Poland*], Wrocław 1950; *Orient w kulturze polskiego oświecenia* [*The Orient in the Culture of the Polish Enlightenment*], Wrocław 1964, and also *Z dziejów orientalizmu polskiego w dobie oświecenia* [*From the History of Polish Orientalism During the Period of the Enlightenment*], in: *Szkice...* An attempt to discuss the scope of reception of Oriental patterns in decorative and applied craft has been made by T. Mańkowski, *Sztuka islamu w Polsce* [*The Art of Islam in Poland*], Kraków 1935, p. 115.

²⁰ Naturally, the attention of foreigners was drawn by different phenomena. In the 18th century such foreigners linked elements of dress and custom with the East (e.g. J. J. Kausch, J. H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, N. W. Wraxal, and F. Schulz), but also barbarity, a propensity to ostentation and tyranny, egoism on the part of the gentry, the apathy of the peasants, slovenliness and dirt, contrasts an forms of government (e.g. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, J. E. Biester, J. J. Kausch, and H. Vautrin). As an example, in 1777 - 79 Wraxall observed that women's attire in Poland had something Asiatic about it, recalling Greece or Turkey rather than French or German fashion (*Polska Stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców* [*Stanisław Pontiatowski's Poland Through the Eyes of Foreigners*], I, Warszawa 1963, p. 541). Not much later (1788) Karol de Ligne, in a *Memoiral on Poland for Father Czetwertyński and Bishop Massalski*, wrote that in Warsaw the best French tone prevailed, combined with a certain eastern influence—see J. I. Kraszewski, *Polska w czasie trzech rozbiorów 1772 - 1799. Studya do historyi ducha i obyczaju* [*Poland During the Period of the Three Partitions, 1772 - 1799. Studies for the History of the Spirit and Customs*], vol. II, 1788 - 1791, Warszawa 1902, p. 8. Cf. R. W. Wołoszyński, *La Pologne vue par l'Europe au XVIII^e siècle*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. XI, 1965, pp. 22 - 42.

really be sufficiently explained by pointing to the contacts mentioned above. In the Renaissance era a horse was a sign of noble birth, a synonym of social status. This was the case throughout Europe. The Poles, however, who were also in love with horses, took fundamental concepts of their language from their neighbours and enemies: the Tatars, Turks, and Persians. Saddles and harnesses were eastern or semi-Oriental, and an eastern horse became the preferred mount, and the Poles have retained this tradition to the present. Similarly, from the 16th century eastern weapons became more and more popular too, whilst Polish weapons assumed semi-Oriental features. Polish craft trades, in Lvov and elsewhere, were producing according to the tastes of the nobility, with large-scale introduction of elements of decorative art taken from the culture of the Muslim peoples. In the 17th century one can talk about a Polish style in the realm of weapons which owes a great deal to the Oriental inspiration. Gentry dress also acquired Oriental characteristics, and we come across Oriental influences in all areas of everyday life. All this was absorbed by the gentry culture before the Oriental fashion of the Enlightenment period came about. One can quote many words and concepts, behind which lay concrete material evidence of Orientalization. This has long since been recognized in Poland, and the first glossary explaining the Oriental origins of various Polish words was put together at the end of the 18th century by Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski.²¹ And although the partitions, wars and plunder, and often also a lack of discernment, led to Poland's being exceptionally divested of monuments to the past, in every museum we can find express evidence of the Oriental taste of ancient Poles. As has been said, these influences came about through trade (hence *bazar*—bazaar) and war (hence *bohater*—hero), but this does not entirely explain the force of their effect.²² I am leaving aside here the point that there were in Europe nations who had more active and wider contact

²¹ Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734–1823), Governor of the Podolian lands, *Stownikzek wyrazów przejętych do mowy polskiej z języków wschodnich* [A Glossary of Words Taken over in Polish Speech from Eastern Languages], published in "Czasopismo Naukowe Ossolińskich", vol. I. 1828. See J. Reychman, *Orient...*, pp. 253–256.

²² Cf. T. Mańkowski, *Genealogia sarmatyzmu* [The Genealogy of Sarmatism], Warszawa 1946, pp. 97, 98.

with the Orient and Islam—and not only Turkish Islam—yet who were not so strongly subject to its influences. For Oriental borrowings became most strongly rooted in Poland in the 17th century, in the second half of a century when trade decidedly dropped off. The 18th century, when war was no longer being waged, whilst trade still could not retrieve 16th-century levels, brought a growth in and intensification of these influences.

In the 16th century, the Orient and Oriental influences were mostly limited in Poland to the Near East,²³ although the most assential elements were not only of Tatar or Turkish origin, but also of Persian origin. Portuguese expansion in Asia, and then the scale of the Trading Company shipments found the Poles indifferent. Information on these matters was superficial and cultural influence practically non-existent. Everything in the material sphere which Europe gained through the developing company trade Poland obtained via the traditional Levantine routes. Whilst she did not have any rivals of the likes of Venice in the way. So that the eastern, or rather southern, trade kept going for as long as the gentry had an excess of spare cash and for as long as the Asiatic caravan routes operated. Both these factors pertained at least until the mid-17th century. It was only after this that things assumed such shape that it was easier and cheaper to get any product from Asia through the Dutch ports.²⁴

The everyday nature and obviousness of contact with the Orient gave rise to effective influence. Despite the religious alienation and the polemic fluency of anti-Turkish tracts, Oriental

²³ B. Baranowski emphasizes that there was considerably less knowledge of Arabian lands in Poland in the 16th-17th centuries than there was of Tatar and Turkish lands (*op. cit.*, p. 200).

²⁴ A. Manikowski, *Zmiany i stagnacja? Z problematyki handlu polskiego w drugiej połowie XVII wieku* [Changes and Stagnation? From the Problem Area of Polish Trade in the Second Half of the 17th Century], "Przegląd Historyczny", vol. LXIV, 1973, No. 4; M. Bogucka, *Handel bałtycki a bilans handlowy Polski w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* [The Baltic Trade and Poland's Balance of Trade in the First Half of the 17th Century], "Przegląd Historyczny", vol. LIX, 1968, No. 2, pp. 248-249; A. Mączak, *Między Gdańskiem a Sundem. Studia nad handlem bałtyckim od połowy XVI do połowy XVII w.* [Between Gdańsk and the Sound. Studies on the Baltic Trade from the Mid-16th to the Mid-17th Centuries], Warszawa 1972; and also *idem*, *The Balance of Polish Sea Trade with the West, 1565-1648*, "The Scandinavian Economic History Review", 1970, No. 2; H. Samsonowicz, *Changes in the Baltic Zone in the XII-XVI Centuries*. "Journal of European Economic History", vol. IV, 1975.

influences were not regarded as ideological diversion.²⁵ The naturalness of contact was enhanced by the presence of middlemen—Lithuanian Tatars, Kalmucks, Armenians and Karaimes.²⁶ In the course of a century they became so rooted in Polish culture and society that they lost their language, though they kept up their religion.²⁷

From amongst these were recruited translators, envoys, and intelligence workers during the Commonwealth of the gentry years. They included merchants and leaders of trade with the East. As well as becoming imbued with Polishness, they were a living proof of Oriental influences, which they cherished and preserved. Despite the efforts of many people, this tradition of the Polish Orient is still not sufficiently well-known or appreciated.

It is thought that the political power of Jagiellonian Poland the healthy nature of her internal relations brought about a situation where contact with the Muslim Orient bore fruit in the form of authentic achievements. Poland was certainly closer to the Asiatic East in the 16th century than any other European country, including Portugal. She understood and appreciated the East, and as a result enriched her own culture with works of the standard of Miechowita and Otwinowski.²⁸ Knowledge of the

²⁵ J. Nosowski, *Polska literatura antyislamiczna XVI, XVII i XVIII w. Wybór tekstów i komentarze* [Polish Anti-Islamic Literature of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries. A Selection of Texts with Commentaries], vol. 1-2, Warszawa 1974; R. Karpiński, *Polska wizja Lewantu* [The Polish Vision of the Levant], in: *Sąsiedzi i inni*, Warszawa 1978.

²⁶ B. Baranowski writes about this, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-144. Cf. the works of M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Ormianie zamojscy i ich rola w wymianie handlowej między Polską a Wschodem* [The Armenians of the Zamość Region and Their Role in Trade Between Poland and the East], Lublin 1965, and *Ormianie w dawnej Polsce* [The Armenians in Ancient Poland], Lublin 1982; *ibidem* selected literature, to which one can add recently V. R. Grigorjan, *Istoriya armjanskich kolonij Ukrainy i Pol'si*, Erevan 1980; A. Zajączkowski, *Karaims in Poland. History, Language, Folklore, Science*, Warszawa 1961.

²⁷ M. Konopacki, *Piśmiennictwo Tatarów polsko-litewskich w nauce polskiej i obcej* [The Writings of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars in Polish and Foreign Learning], "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", 1966, No. 3, pp. 193-194 ff.

²⁸ Cf. H. Barycz, *Maciej z Miechowa. Studium z dziejów kultury naukowej Polski doby Odrodzenia* [Maciej Miechowita. A Study in the History of Poland's Academic Culture in Renaissance Times], "Nauka Polska", vol. VI, 1958, and also *Maciej z Miechowa, 1457-1523. Historyk,*

East in Poland at this time corresponded to the nature and frequency of contacts with Asia, so that it was not necessary to wait for information to filter through from west European intermediaries. Nevertheless the broadening of horizons in the 16th century did not bring about any radical changes in perception, the sudden discovery of "India" did not disturb the local network of relationships. It seems, however, that precisely at this time in Poland conditions existed for the formation of her own idea of the Orient, as if in competition with the concepts and ideas just springing up in Europe.

Like the rest of Europe, Poland was not ready for contact with a world of such different civilizations. The Poles of the 15th or 16th centuries were able to find a common language in their relations with the neighbouring world of Tatar-Turkish Islam, but it was precisely this which made it difficult for them to fulfil the rôle of intermediaries *vis-à-vis* the rest of Europe.²⁹ A phenomenon occurred here similar to that which occurred in the case of the Portuguese in India. The opportunity and need to find a *modus vivendi* with a different culture, like as not made easier by the feudal character of Portuguese society, precluded the passing on of the knowledge acquired to Europe just taking the first steps along the road to capitalism.³⁰ Everything, then,

geograf, organizator nauki [Maciej Miechowita, 1457 - 1523. Historian, Geographer, Promoter of Science], ed. H. Barycz, Wrocław 1960. Samuel Otwinowski was the author of Vademecum spraw tureckich [Vademecum of Turkish Affairs] (ca. 1629), and translated by Gulistan of Saad. Cf. B. Baranowski, op. cit., pp. 78 - 107.

²⁹ On the eastern frontier of the Polish-Lithuanian state the vast borderland strip of the Ottoman Empire merged into the Ukrainian, which is to say an "eastern" rather than "oriental", borderland. The particularities of the influence of such a broadly understood borderland on cultural interaction are not always perceived. Cf. W. H. McNeil, *Europe's Steppes Frontier, 1500 - 1800*, Chicago 1964, p. 13. See also F. Gross, *Kresy: The Frontier of Eastern Europe*, "The Polish Review", vol. XXIII, 1978, No. 2, pp. 2 - 16. It would be worth considering the question of Orientalness comparatively, with regard to Transylvania and Moldavia.

³⁰ I attempted to formulate this question in the paper *L'Asie et l'Europe pendant les XVII^e - XIX^e siècles. Formation de l'état arriéré et confrontation des systèmes des valeurs*, in: *L'histoire à Nice*, 1983, vol. III, p. 217 - 229, see C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, London 1969; and also J. Kieniewicz, *Portugalczycy w Azji XV - XX wiek [The Portuguese in Asia, 15th - 20th Centuries]*, Wrocław 1976.

which Polish culture absorbed during the era of greatest contact turned out to be non-negotiable, and at the same time formed the foundation of Poland's future separateness during the elective era. For it would be difficult to suspect the dominance of Oriental influences during the era of greatest contact, in the 16th century.

This does not mean that nothing was known in Poland about far-off lands, or that Poles did not penetrate into the depths of Asia. Gabriel the Pole, mentioned by the Portuguese chronicler Diogo do Couto, was a traveller of the latter half of the 16th century and no less an expert on Asia than Marco Polo.³¹ The voyages of Poles did not arouse, however, much active interest in Poland. Interest in the world was the feature of a few individuals, the majority took a fancy rather to reading the reports of missions, both in the 16th and in the 17th century. More than one reader of such reports on Jesuit missions found himself at the Society of Jesus, and then sailing to far-off outposts in Japan or China.³² Not all acquired fame like Męciński or Boym, but amongst them were both experts in the sciences and religious martyrs.³³ In the 18th century Polish adventurers were also found in foreign

³¹ Diogo do Couto, *Decada Quinta da Asia*, Lisboa 1612. One adventurer and traveller in many Asian countries was Krzysztof Pawłowski, whose story was edited by S. Stasiak, *Les Indes Portugaises à la fin du XVI^e siècle d'après la relation du voyage fait à Goa en 1596 par Christophe Pawłowski, gentilhomme polonais*, "Rocznik Orientalistyczny", vols. III - V, Lwów 1925 - 1927.

³² Tomasz Dunin-Szpot sent to Warsaw and Vilnius from Rome copies of letters from the missions to the general of the order (L. Cyrzyk, *Polscy badacze Chin w XVIII wieku [Polish Researchers on China in the 18th Century]*, in: *Szkice z dziejów polskiej Orientalistyki*, vol. III, Warszawa 1969, p. 58. Cf. also B. Baranowski, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

³³ J. Tazbir's view, ignoring Polish participation in the missionary works of the Church, does not seem to me to hit the mark (*Problemy wyznaniowe [Religious Questions]*, in: *Polska XVII wieku. Państwo. Społeczeństwo. Kultura*, Warszawa 1969, p. 215). It may not have been significant in absolute figures, but my own feeling is that Poles were to be met with more often in the world than might have been expected. And this was in spite of the fact that the borderlands were not only open territory for restless souls, but also an area where missionary work was carried out. The extent of our knowledge on this matter has not essentially changed for fifty years, cf. K. Kapitańczyk, *Udział Polski w dziele misyjnym. Szkic historyczny [The Participation of Poland in Missionary Work. A Historical Outline]*, Poznań 1933. It is accepted that activity within the missions did not affect reception processes in respect of the

service, and penetrated to various corners of Asia.³⁴ Fate often cast Poles onto this continent in the post-partition period, and they embarked on the most unlikely careers there. A further direction, of course, was Siberia, and then the famous eastern markets of the great empire. Up until the 19th century, however, these contacts affected neither the development of academic interest in the East nor, so much the more, Poland's culture.

The situation is otherwise with respect to knowledge of

Orient, and the oblivion into which these circumstances have fallen is regarded as something self-evident, but sometimes these were vital matters. What, for instance, do we know about the activity of Mikołaj Szostak, Father Florencjusz of the Carmelite order, who for more than twenty years exercised supreme authority over the dioceses of Verapuzha, Cochín, and Kodungallur, which is to say over Kerala followers of both Latin and Syrian rite? I quote an extract from a report from Cochín by the governor of the Dutch East India Company, who took up his appointment at the beginning of 1771. "The Carmelite father Fra Florentinus a Jesu, a Pole by birth, was selected in his [Father I. B. Maria de st. Teresa—JK.] stead in the year 1751 with the title of Bishop of Areopolis. This Bishop, after having valiantly struggled through in the face of very many difficulties died in the month of July, 1773 in Verapoly [Verapuzha—JK.]; I had more than once talked with him and he appeared to me to be a pleasant, edifying and learned man." (Memorandum on the administration of the Coast of Malabar by Adriaan Moens (18 April, 1781), in: A. Galletti (ed.), *The Dutch in Malabar*, Madras 1911, p. 184). For examples of the current oblivion surrounding the achievements of Michał Boym as a sinologist—B. Szczęśniak, *The Writings of Michael Boym, Monumenta Serica*, vol. XIV, "Journal of Oriental Studies", 1949-1955, W. M. Drzewieniecki, *The Knowledge of China in XVII-Century Poland as Reflected in the Correspondence between Leibniz and Kochański*, "The Polish Review", vol. XII, 1967, No. 3, especially pp. 60-66. For remarks on the effect and significance of the vogue for Chinese studies in Poland see J. Tazbir, *Influences orientales...*, pp. 237-239.

³⁴ In the 18th century M. Wikliński served the French in India, as did M. Dzierżanowski, and J. A. Dzwonkowski was in the service of the Dutch (J. Reychman, *Polacy w obcej służbie kolonialnej w Indiach w XVIII w.* [Poles in Foreign Colonial Service in India in the 18th Century], "Sprawy Morskie i Kolonialne", vol. III, 1936, No. 1; L. Tomaneł, *Polak z XVIII stulecia w służbie holenderskiej. Pamiętniki imię p. Teodora Anzelma Dzwonkowskiego* [An 18th-Century Pole in Dutch Service. The Memoirs of Teodor Anzelm Dzwonkowski Esquire], "Kurier Literacko-Naukowy", Kraków 1929, No. 6). In the 18th century people still considered that they had a reason for returning and somewhere to return to. So that snatches of knowledge about Asia might have come back with them. In the following century Polish adventurers and career seekers entered their attainments to the account of new homelands. However, one should add that interest in Asia at the end of the 19th century was relatively more active than at the decline of the Commonwealth of the gentry.

Turkish or even Persian lands. Here, in the 16th century, regular trade and diplomatic relations simply compelled the overcoming of the language barrier. How many people knew eastern languages, and to what extent the Poles outpaced other countries in their knowledge of eastern affairs are debatable questions. It would seem that anti-Turkish demonstrations in Poland were less frequent and lamer at this time than in the Habsburg countries at least. Whereas Turkophilia was more widespread and had greater justification in Poland than in France. It is another matter that the French monarchy was able to make excellent use of an alliance with the Sultan, whilst in Poland the thought of an alliance with the Porte was, it seems, rather out of the question.

Things stood differently in the second half of the 17th century. Neither then nor before had the Oriental influence been a vogue, a novelty. It was a very deep-rooted influence, comparable only to the influence which the centuries-long rule of the Moors exerted on Spanish culture.⁸⁵ In the second half of the 17th century the Oriental elements of gentry culture were finally linked to the ideology of Sarmatism. The question has already created numerous disputes, which happily are far from being resolved which enables us to look forward to new and interesting findings on the part of the specialists.⁸⁶ It was precisely then,

⁸⁵ This observation has already been made by Mańkowski, *Genealogia...*, p. 113. As in Poland, phenomena of fascination and rejection occurred on the Iberian Peninsula, as well as comparable consequences for the psychology of society. However, this similarity is seen more distinctly from the Polish perspective—in Spanish discussions the phenomenon is not taken account of. J. Vicens Vives and J. H. Elliott drew attention to this, but since the time of the publication in Spain of W. Kula's book this tendency has distinctly decreased. J. Lelewel drew attention to the historical parallelism in the celebrated but still underrated text of 1820 (*Parallele historique entre l'Espagne et la Pologne au XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles*, Paris 1835). M. Małowist has written about this, *Europe de l'Est et les pays ibériques: Analogie et contrastes*, in: *Homenaje a Jaime Vicens Vives*, vol. I, Barcelona 1965, p. 92.

⁸⁶ The works of T. Mańkowski are still of fundamental significance: *Genealogia sarmatyzmu [The Genealogy of Sarmatism]*, Kraków 1946; *Sztuka islamu w Polsce w XVI i XVIII w. [The Art of Islam in Poland in the 16th and 18th Centuries]*, Kraków 1935, especially pp. 108–116. Then T. Ulewicz, *Il problema del sarmatismo nella cultura e nella letteratura polacca (Problematica generale e profilo storico)*, Roma 1961, pp. 126–198, also S. Cynarski, *Kilka uwag w sprawie sarmatyzmu w Polsce w po-*

when despite the victories at Chocim and Vienna, Poland failed in her eastern policy, that the influences accumulated for generations revealed themselves in full strength. This can be seen quite explicitly in the dress of the Polish gentry, and in the latter's tastes, now catered for not so much by imports and trophies as by home production, imitating and developing Oriental designs. Weapons, harnesses, belts and carpets were produced for Polish customers in the workshops of the Near East, but first and foremost in Lvov. In fact this is the clearest indication of eastern influences—semi-Oriental decorative art in goods destined for the everyday use of the broad masses of the gentry. The accounts of foreigners testify to these influences, and the iconography is no lie. The Polish gentleman of this era reminded one of a Turk rather than of a European. And what is more important, he was proud of the fact, did not want to look or behave otherwise, and did not intend to change his aesthetic predilections.³⁷

In any case we are talking about something more, which is to say a set of attitudes and values proper to the Polish gentry (and perhaps not only them), whose probable Oriental origins are less important than the consequences for the style of life adopted and accepted. Precisely these attitudes and values, in other words cultural relations, became dominant in the 17th century, creating an opportunity for a particular type of assimilation process endowing Poland, or even just a significant part of it, with an Oriental tinge. It was not the latter however, evident though it was not only to foreigners, which determined the identity of society or of the nation, but that which it is so dif-

czątkach XVII wieku [A Few Remarks on the Question of Sarmatism in Poland at the Beginning of the 17th Century], "Zeszyty Naukowe U.J.," No. 140, 1966, pp. 117 - 132. The discussion has spread beyond the borders of Poland. Cf. E. Angyal, *Manieryzm, sarmatyzm, barok* [Mannerism, Sarmatism, Baroque], "Przegląd Humanistyczny", 1962, No. 1. J. Tazbir's research collected in *Rzeczpospolita i świat. Studia z dziejów kultury XVII w. [The Commonwealth and the World. Research on the Cultural History of the 17th Century]*, Wrocław 1971, can be regarded as a summing-up of a particular phase of the discussion.

³⁷ The fullest survey is given in T. Mańkowski, *Sztuka islamu...*, and *Orient w polskiej kulturze artystycznej [The Orient in Polish Artistic Culture]*, Wrocław 1959.

difficult to pin down, a certain quality conducing to the adoption or assimilation of this Orientalness.

Oriental elements became entwined in a most uncanny manner with elements of west-European baroque, in a richer and more productive way, the nearer one came the sources of Orientalness. This blending or synthesis of the 17th century took place owing to the dominating influence of Orientalness on transformation processes. Hence the originality, the uniqueness, the nativeness of Sarmatism.³⁸ This in no way contradicts findings which draw attention to the rôle of the apotheosis of the struggle with the pagans (the bulwark myth) and to over-confidence in domestic capabilities and solutions (the granary myth).³⁹ Orientalness as a Polish characteristic allowed the gentry nation and its state to reject choosing between the East and the West. For the Poles Sarmatism justified alike affiliation to the western universum and the choice of Oriental forms of expression, and made of the more and more distinctly eastern structure an object of national pride.⁴⁰ The elements of material culture assimilated within Sarmatism should not be regarded as evidence of cultural dependence, faith in superiority in respect of other cultures extended

³⁸ J. Michalski, *Sarmatyzm a europeizacja Polski w XVIII wieku* [*Sarmatism and the Europeanization of Poland in the 18th Century*], in: *Swojskość i cudzoziemszczyzna w dziejach kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 114 ff.; idem, *Stanisław Konarski wobec sarmatyzmu i problemu europeizacji Polski* [*Stanisław Konarski on Sarmatism and the Problem of the Europeanization of Poland*], in: *Polska w świecie. Szkice z dziejów kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1972. The concept of the Europeanization of Poland in the 18th century evokes reservations on my part, as does that of modernization in the following century.

³⁹ J. Tazbir, *Stosunek do obcych w dobie baroku* [*Attitudes towards Foreigners in Baroque Times*], in: *Swojskość...*, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Jan Białoński, quoted many times by historians (*Zegar w krótkim zebraniu czasów Królestwa Polskiego* [*A Clock in a Short Collection of the Times of the Kingdom of Poland*], Kraków 1661), explained the legitimacy of employing eastern dress in terms of the eastern origins of the Sarmatian (S. Cynarski, *Sarmatyzm—ideologia i styl życia* [*Sarmatism—an Ideology and Lifestyle*], in: *Polska XVII w. ...*, p. 238). Cf. J. J. Kausch's observation in *Polska Stanisławowska...*, vol. II, p. 295. J. Tazbir writes: "Xenophobia and Sarmatism cut us off from Western Europe, reinforcing the conviction held there that Poland was an exotic country, if not a barbaric one. However, in the minds of the gentry this did not clash with the conviction that we would become an integral part of Europe, understood as something of a community based on identity of cultures, religion and political traditions". (*Stosunek do obcych...*, p. 97).

not only to eastern and southern neighbours.⁴¹ The Orientalness of 17th-century Poland was most sharply perceived by foreigners, but it was a phenomenon which actually did exist independent of the changing states of social perception.

Of course, the essence of the issue raised here is not comprised in the question of the sources of the attitude of Poland or merely of Sarmatism towards the East and the West as it existed in the 17th century. Poland was sensible of her otherness, but accepted it as uniqueness, if not superiority, in keeping with the conviction that the Golden Freedom was superior to despotism and absolutism alike. I would not therefore agree with the view that the essential thing which distinguished Poland in the 17th century was qualitatively inferior. Only the transition to development which was not self-reliant, in other words to dependence on the West expressed precisely in terms of easternness, could create circumstances of cultural dependence also, in other words circumstances involving a subjective feeling of inferiority. One can thus talk about the Orientalness of Poland at the point when her culture (the *de facto* gentry culture) was capable of adapting all kinds of stimuli, not merely Oriental ones (as evidenced by baroque church architecture), in a manner which did not involve changes in structure and identity. Polish Orientalness consists of the autonomous features which determined Poland's existence in opposition to her surroundings, but not in isolation. This feature allowed for the simultaneous conflict and reception of Oriental elements, and for Poland's coming to terms with her own easternness and standing up to the already appreciable cultural aggression of the rising centre. I therefore understand Orientalness as a feature distinguishing Poland, and at the same time as a characteristic expressed in terms of her inclination to receive certain influences but reject others, and in terms of a manner of transformation characteristic exclusively of her.

The "condensation" of a kind of Orientalness, perceived in any case chiefly in the phenomena of material culture and not too visibly in the spiritual sphere,⁴² unhappily coincided with

⁴¹ J. Tazbir, *Stosunek do obcych...*, p. 111.

⁴² Orientalness might also explain the adaptation of certain threads of Spanish culture in 16th- and 17th-century Poland (S. Borkowska -

a decline of the state, in the economy, political thought and intellectual activity. This undoubtedly had an influence on the shaping of the attitude of subsequent generations towards Orientalness, existing but not named as such. After all, the originality and untranslatable quality of Sarmatism was a secondary reason for the paradox by which knowledge of Turkish affairs in Poland was greater, it seems, in the 16th century than in the 17th century. At that time there emerged such illustrious works as Wawrzyniec Miedzielski's memorial for Pope Leo X (1514), whilst when the Orientalization of life reached its peak, more and more frequently the best translations were not always relied upon.⁴³

The concept of Orientalness can only be a proposition, particularly if one looks at the realm of mentality, attitudes, values and inner experience. I believe it immediately helps one to understand the evolution which Oriental and eastern influences went through in Poland, as well as the changes in attitude towards the East and the Orient. It also helps one to separate Orientalism as a particular idea which perhaps did not even exist in Poland in the 17th century, from Orientalization inaccurately taken to be exactly Orientalism. In Polish academic literature a distinction is accepted between Sarmatian Orientalism, embracing different eastern and Oriental features of gentry culture, and Enlightenment Orientalism in the version coming from the West in the 18th century. The first did not enjoy the interest of researchers, since they saw in it either evidence of inferiority or the origins of backwardness. The second, however, was to fulfil a vital ideological rôle as a weapon in the fight against the Old Order.⁴⁴ The collision of the two currents of thought is beyond

Ciesielska, *Mistycyzm hiszpański na gruncie polskim* [Spanish Mysticism in Poland], Kraków 1939; J. Ekeś, *Sarmacka świadomość życia i świata* [The Sarmatian Perception of Life and the World], "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce", vol. XVI, 1971. Recently, at length, E. C. Brody, *Spain and Poland in the Age of the Renaissance and Baroque. A Comparative Study*, "The Polish Review", vol. XV, 1970, No. 4, and vol. XVI, 1971, No. 1, pp. 70 ff.

⁴³ *Descriptio potentiae turcicae, 1514*, in: *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. III, pp. 168 - 181; B. Baranowski, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁴⁴ J. Michalski (*Sarmatyzm...*) indicates the internal origins of both criticism and the rehabilitation of Sarmatism. Cf. M. Klimowicz, *Cudzoziemszczyzna i rodzimność. Elementy kultury polskiej czasów oświe-*

question, any cause for doubt being given rather by the definitions employed to date.

One must acknowledge as one of the paradoxes of Polish history the fact that it was precisely the era of baroque and Sarmatism which most vividly acknowledged the Orient, whilst the Polish Enlightenment could not bring itself to unequivocally accept it. Jan Reychman writes at length about this: "[...] this Sarmatian Orientalism, the Orientalism of part shaven gentry heads, bushy whiskers, curved swords, knee-boots, was bound up in the 18th century with the fleeting world of gentry squabbles and drinking sessions, with a world of cultural and political obscurantism, and of intellectual obscurant tendencies. It therefore has nothing in common with the voguish 18th-century Orientalism."⁴⁵

This wave of west-European Orientalism, occasioned by the Jesuit reports and aiding the philosophers in smuggling in lofty ideas, arrived with the Poles with some delay, colliding not so much with Sarmatian Orientalism as Polish Orientalness. Enlightenment Orientalism belonged to the West and was bound to create conflict in Poland, which in time was reflected unfavourably in the Polish attitude towards Asia and the East.⁴⁶ All three currents should therefore be seen in 18th-century Poland: Sarmatian traditionalism, imbued by its very nature with Oriental influences representing undoubtedly conservative elements,

cenia [Foreign Influence and Native Qualities. Elements of Polish Culture in Enlightenment Times], in: Swojskość i cudzoziemszczyzna..., p. 177 and S. Cynarski, The Shape of Sarmatian Ideology in Poland, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. XIX, 1968. T. Mańkowski writes: "we always turn our attention towards what it was that linked us with the currents of thought in the West, towards their reverberations. We overlook what distinguished us from the western world, what was qualitatively different, but deeply rooted socially, what was perhaps the most essential mouthpiece of the Old Polish world", and further, "[...] not only did the fascination itself of the art of Islam play a part in Polish predilections and in the ascendancy which that art gained in our country, but also an inner sense of communion with it, the belief that in making use of it in Poland we would be renewing Sarmatian traditions" (Genealogia..., pp. 97, 98).

⁴⁵ *Orient w kulturze polskiego oświecenia..., p. 292.*

⁴⁶ This question is developed in J. Jedlicki. *Polskie nurty ideowe lat 1790 - 1863 wobec cywilizacji Zachodu [Polish Ideological Trends with Regard to Civilization in the West, During the Years 1790 - 1863], in: Swojskość..., pp. 205 ff.*

but patriotic ones at the same time after all. Cosmopolitan Orientalism, taking in the Paris fashions regardless of content and not considering any deeper meanings. (This was nothing better than foreign influence, and it is impossible to perceive any progressive content here.) Finally, there existed in Poland a quasi-Oriental trend close to the current of rationalist criticism of the feudal system prevalent in Europe. The wise vizier, the erudite mandarins, and the virtuous philosophers of the East, and the entire idealization of the system, above all the Chinese system, accompanying them, were a suitable smoke-screen in attacking the opponents of the power-hungry bourgeoisie. The extent to which these tendencies prevailed in Poland, and what phenomena should be attributed to them are matters requiring careful research. Two phenomena were of significance for Oriental influences. The first was an increase in collecting activity and following this, Orientalist studies.⁴⁷ Progress in these areas turned out to be far slower than one might have expected, however. The second phenomenon, this time a negative one, was the overlapping of domestic and foreign negative opinions associated with Asia and the East in the 19th century.

The problem becomes significantly more involved with the advent of Romanticism. There then arrived from the West the fascination for the Orient and Orientalism, a new vision of the Orient.⁴⁸ Clearly, Romanticism also had its own sources in Poland, drawing on Slavonic and folk characteristics, and borderland experiences, and it also had its own Oriental background. Hence the Orientalization of the Polish Romantics was not merely the reception of a vogue, and was not derived merely from the

⁴⁷ See the papers in: *Szkice z dziejów orientalistyki polskiej* [Essays in the History of Polish Oriental Studies], vols. 1-3, Warszawa 1957-1969. Also J. Reychman, *Orientalistyka w dziejach nauki polskiej* [Oriental Studies in the History of Polish Science], "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", 1972, No. 4, and A. Zajaczkowski, *Orientalistyka polska w latach 1918-1968* [Polish Oriental Studies During the Years 1918-1968], "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", 1970, No. 1.

⁴⁸ A critical appraisal of these influences is given in J. Reychman, *Podróżnicy polscy na Bliskim Wschodzie w XIX w.* [Polish Travellers in the Near East in the 19th Century], Warszawa 1972, pp. 115-120. A most extensive survey of "Oriental" influences arriving from the West against the background of Poland's won contacts with the East is given in J. Tuczyński, *op. cit.*, Chapter II.

academic experience at Vilnius University, but was deeply rooted in the experience of their own Orientalness. From the Romantics there began to emerge a process of fighting with one's own identity, the struggle to maintain this and efforts aimed at rejecting it. The internal disputes and conflicts initiated at this point could not be articulated under conditions of bondage. The partitions violently intensified the dissociation within the self, and lent dramatic dimensions to the split between the East and the West. It was only at this point that the real Polish complex grew up. So that idealization of the Orient was something very natural, but with the passing of time became a vogue taking the place of idealization of nativeness.⁴⁹ In step with the negation of Orientalness dependence on the mediation of the West grew, the more so as Oriental studies were very underdeveloped throughout the entire 19th century. The presence of Oriental motifs in Polish art and literature at the turn of the 20th century is incontestable, but it testifies to links with Paris or Berlin, and not to an appreciation of domestic heritage.⁵⁰

Romantic Orientalism, as a phenomenon connected with the West, had yet another political aspect in Poland. Having sustained defeat in its drift towards the east, having fallen prey to her eastern neighbour, Poland turned its back on Asia after the partitions, renounced eastern influences, and attempted to underline its affiliation to the West. This process varied socially, temporally and spatially, and did not conflict with simultaneous very clear anti-western sentiments.⁵¹ Agrarian society might have been disturbed by the prospects of change opened up by expansion of the industrialized and capitalist core. However, the defence of originality, or as some would have it, of nativeness was complicated by the politically determined questioning of easternness

⁴⁹ For extensive coverage of this topic see J. Jedlicki, *op. cit., passim*. Cf. J. Kamionkova, *Romantyczne dzieje stereotypu Sarmaty* [A Romantic History of the Sarmatian Stereotype], in: *Studia romantyczne. Prace poświęcone VII Międzynarodowemu Kongresowi Sławistów*, Wrocław 1973, pp. 217 ff.

⁵⁰ J. Tuczyński devotes his Chapter IV, pp. 111-180, to a discussion of these matters, and considers for instance that it was Orientalism which formed a link connecting Romanticism with "Young Poland" (p. 132).

⁵¹ This issue is presented in extreme form in J. Krasuski, *Obraz Zachodu w twórczości romantyków polskich* [The Image of the West in the Literary Output of the Polish Romantics], Poznań 1980.

and lack of recognition of Orientalness. Political views also gave rise to a change in attitude towards Turkey, with whom there had been no wars since as long ago as the Karłowice treaty. The attempts in the 18th century to enter into co-operation, late in the day and not very realistic, became the cause of increased Orientalist interest. There then arose the myth of the loyal Porte, which gained credence from the careers in Istanbul of Polish émigrés.⁵² However, what took place on the Bosphorus, though worth looking into further and making public, no longer had any real influence on Polish culture. For the Oriental influences were sown in that culture before the 18th century, whereas events after that could only exert influence on attitudes towards this heritage. Romantic enthusiasm emphasized the not so important elements of the Oriental tradition, transferring to the Polish context myths which sprang up in the entirely different context of the West.⁵³

A decisive turn, then, was made in Romantic literature, in which Orientalism became a part of Occidentalism, whilst that which was Oriental began to be recognized as eastern. This was not a passive process, the new Orientalism was not in a position to introduce the colonial idea into Poland. Themselves deprived of independence, the Poles were not too susceptible to ideas of white people ruling over coloured people, whilst their sensitivity increased to any kind of imputation that they belonged to the world of the East. One can therefore now pause to dwell not so much on the contribution of Oriental elements, as on the evolutions of society's attitude towards them.

Let us begin with a fundamental issue. The Oriental influences penetrated into gentry culture ; it has not so far been established if these elements were taken over to any degree at all by the peasants. There is no doubt that they filtered through to

⁵² W. Konopczyński, *Polska a Turcja (1683 - 1792)* [*Poland and Turkey (1683 - 1792)*], Warszawa 1936 ; J. Dutkiewicz, *Polska a Turcja w czasie Sejmu Czteroletniego* [*Poland and Turkey at the Time of the Four-Year Sejm*], Warszawa 1934 ; A. Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji polskiej w Turcji (1831 - 1878)* [*A History of Polish Emigrés in Turkey (1831 - 1878)*], Warszawa 1935.

⁵³ J. Bachórz, *O polskim egzotyzmie romantycznym* [*Concerning Polish Romantic Exoticism*], in: *Problemy polskiego romantyzmu*, (ed.) M. Zmigrodzka, Wrocław 1974.

middle-class culture, but the contribution of the latter to national culture taken as a whole was reckoned to be far smaller.⁵⁴ The essence of the matter is contained in the fact of their being an unusually large number within the gentry class. It was for this reason too that the Oriental influences mentioned here were noticed and underlined by foreigners. In addition, the stratification of the gentry class conducted to the penetration of its culture into the other social orders. One should further note that the Polish intelligentsia had mainly gentry cultural origins, but a *de facto* decidedly western cultural orientation.⁵⁵ It thus inherited Oriental influences, but at the same time wanted to distance itself from them. It would be an interesting thing to establish at what point the gentry, in the process of becoming landowners and intelligentsia, began to treat these ancient links with the Orient as something embarrassing. Oriental influences thus entered the national culture through the mediation of the intelligentsia, which, however, cut itself off from them in a quite distinct manner. Another channel for the infiltration of Oriental influences from gentry culture was, I believe, imitation of the gentry by the peasants, and of the landed gentry by the lower middle classes and the bourgeoisie. None of these paths conducted to taking care of the Oriental heritage.

The causes and ups and downs involved in the rejection or questioning of the Oriental threads in Polish culture were various. We should begin with the changes which occurred in

⁵⁴ T. Mańkowski conjectures that one can assume the influence of the Muslim East in the adornment of folk embroidery and tapestries (*Sztuka islamu...*, p. 106). M. Bogucka stresses that in view of the inferiority of the towns Polonization led to the adoption amongst townspeople of the culture developed by the gentry (*Miejsce mieszczanina w społeczeństwie szlacheckim* [*The Burgher's Place in Gentry Society*], in: *Spółeczeństwo staropolskie. Studia i szkice*, vol. I, Warszawa 1976, pp. 187, 189 ff.

⁵⁵ J. Jedlicki, *Klejnot i bariery społeczne. Przeobrażenia szlachectwa polskiego w schyłkowym okresie feudalizmu* [*The Crest and Social Barriers. Transformations in the Polish Gentry During the Closing Stages of Feudalism*], Warszawa 1968; R. Czepulis-Rastenis, "Klasa umysłowa". *Inteligencja Królestwa Polskiego 1832 - 1862* [*The Intellectual Class. The Intelligentsia of the Kingdom of Poland, 1832 - 1862*], Warszawa 1973. Cf. the quite fundamental views of M. Król, B. Szacka, R. Zimand *et al.* in the collection *Tradycje szlacheckie w kulturze polskiej* [*Gentry Traditions in Polish Culture*], Warszawa 1976.

Europe's attitudes towards Asia and the Orient.⁵⁶ Orientalness and Asiaticness could not have a derogatory nature so long as Europe was fascinated by Asia's riches, refinement, degree of knowledge and level of technology. This is how it was for centuries, and in the 16th and 17th centuries as well. Gradually a change took place. From as early as the 11th century changes in technology had come about in Europe which presaged the future supremacy of that continent.⁵⁷ The turning-point commenced before the Europeans had managed to set about the conquest of Asia. In the first phase of European expansion an inferiority complex developed, reinforced by the adverse balance of trade. Capitalism, just in the process of being born, was only able to alter this situation to its advantage by the use of force, turning the subordination of Asia into a lever for its own growth. European civilization during the era of rationalism and capitalism was directed to the outside, disposed to expansion, guided by notions of progress and growth. The triumph over Asia, supported in the mid-19th century by factual evidence, confirmed Europe's high opinion of herself, and the belief in her cultural superiority. The inferiority complex gave way to arrogance, admiration was superseded by contempt, whilst snobbery in respect of Orientalism turned into racism.⁵⁸

At this point one should mention that Europe's attitude towards the Asiatic cultures took on a different shape to that pre-

⁵⁶ E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford 1963; C. D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India*, Oxford 1961; S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir W. Jones. A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge 1968; A. J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India. A Study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880 - 1960*, London 1969; R. I. Lewis, *E. M. Forster's Passages to India*, New York 1979. These questions are taken up in Said's work quoted, but he only uses material relating to the Near East.

⁵⁷ L. White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, Oxford 1963, and in relation to modern times C. M. Cipolla. *European Culture and Overseas Expansion*, Harmondsworth 1970.

⁵⁸ C. Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, London 1971, but above all, R. F. Lee, *Conrad's Colonialism*, The Hague 1969. J. Conrad in a letter to K. Waliszewski (16. Dec., 1903): "When it comes to 'racial inferiority', I take leave to protest—though of course the fault is mine if I gave you a false notion of my intentions—what I propose to emphasize is the difference between the races" (*Listy [Letters]*, Warszawa 1968, p. 224).

vailing in Poland. In the first place, it was the West which had carried out the colonial expansion, and in the second place it had never assimilated as much as Poland. As a result, the East became for the West something completely different to what it became for Poland. When Sarmatism was flourishing in Poland, an idealized picture of the East had already begun to prevail in the West. When in the 18th century an anti-Sarmatian reaction had set in in Poland, the Oriental trappings had already been given up in the West. The picture of the East created by missionaries and philosophers gave way to a picture composed by conquerors. A subjugated Asia could not be a fashionable Asia, and so much the less could it serve as a model. These tendencies, which in the 19th century led to the emergence of a colonialist ideology, reached Poland a great deal later. They could only have a secondary effect on the attitude of the Poles to the Oriental elements within their own culture.

On the other hand, another phenomenon occurred. With the progress of the conquests in Asia, the reception in Europe of elements of the Asian cultures expanded, providing the foundations for an unusually developed quasi-Oriental current.⁵⁹ However, the quasi-Oriental face of European Romanticism was closely connected with the transformations within European societies at that time. Whereas in Poland the Romantic experience of the Orient, domestic and imported, struck root in a backward country which, in defending its existence, had to deny its own Orientalness. This is the background against which one might examine the development of the attitude of different classes and groups towards the past and tradition.⁶⁰ Here we have conflict, vindication and condemnation, but first and foremost the drama of a society which had to change in order to survive, defended tradition

⁵⁹ The reworking of Oriental threads in German thought from Schlegel to Schopenhauer is a separate issue unconnected with Orientalness. Cf. V. V. Barthold, *La découverte de l'Asie. Histoire de l'orientalisme en Europe et en Russie*, Paris 1946 (originally 1925); R. Schwaab, *La Renaissance orientale*, Paris 1950.

⁶⁰ B. Szacka, *Współcześni Polacy a dziedzictwo Polski szlacheckiej* [*Contemporary Poles and the Legacy of Gentry Poland*], in: *Tradycje...* J. Jedlicki, *Polskie nurty ideowe...*, *ibidem*, pp. 210 - 212, 230.

and had to reject it. Despite this, it did not manage to achieve the aims which formed the guiding principles of this struggle.

It also appears that in the first half of the 19th century, when there was a clash in the West between the views of the so-called Orientalists (conservatives) and those of the modernists, in relation to the East, Poland had more important troubles. The European controversies surrounding the evaluation of Asiatic cultures hardly reached the Poles, and in any case it does not seem likely that they would have exerted any influence. Whereas certain ideas of the colonial doctrine in its developed form met with a response in Poland at the end of the century, like enough precisely in the context of a negative attitude towards the country's own heritage. The doctrine of "the white man's burden", perhaps the most ambiguous part of the entire colonial notion, found acceptance in Poland. It was equated in an extraordinary manner with the notion of struggle "For Your Liberty and Ours", with undefined feeling for the oppressed in all corners of the globe. This is evidenced not only by the popularity of books promoting the colonial idea translated from foreign languages (e.g. the books of Kipling). We can find echoes of these in Sienkiewicz's *W pustyni i w puszczy* [*In Desert and Wilderness*] (1911), and in numerous youth adventure novels. Similar inconsistencies, indirectly relating to the Oriental tradition, might be remarked in *Trylogia* (*Trilogy*).⁶¹ These are obvious anachronisms which nevertheless had tremendous power to bring about new attitudes.

Poland's attitude to the East, but *de facto* also to her own Orientalness, was defined above all in the 19th century by the political realities. The negative attitude towards the invaders expressed itself in an aversion to everything which was eastern. It is difficult to determine exactly whether it was Asia which became the subject of negative associations in view of its con-

⁶¹ Polish translations of Kipling appeared quite quickly: *Jungle Book* in 1900, *Kim* in 1902, and *Just So Stories* in 1903. On the subject of *In Desert and Wilderness* cf. M. Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, New York 1979, pp. 301 ff. In relation to *Trylogia* cf. A. Kersten, *Sienkiewicz, Potop, Historia* [*Sienkiewicz. The Swedish Deluge. History*], Warszawa 1966. On attitudes towards the colonial world J. Tazbir, *Rzeczpospolita wobec wielkich odkryć* [*The Commonwealth of the Gentry and the Great Discoveries*], Warszawa 1973.

nection with the tsarist state, or *vice versa*. But it is worth reflecting on the words of an insurrection song: "go back to Asia, son of Jenghiz Khan...". A lot of abuse of this kind is encountered—Asia, Asiatics, the East, these were bywords for barbarity, savage despotism, and cruel bondage.⁶² Such elements also occurred in European criticism of Asia during the era of colonial conquest. In a Poland defeated by the state lying to her east, there occurred the reinforcement of a further agglomeration of such elements, this time displaying tremendous vitality. This negative attitude towards tsarist Russia identified with the East prompted a questioning of Poland's own Orientalness, and the stressing in the strongest possible terms of the rôle of western elements. During the period when the foundations of national history were being shaped, essential distortions were bound to occur, amongst which I would point for instance to the inordinate emphasis on the doctrine of Poland as the bulwark of Christianity. This notion, present also in the historiography of the time, concentrated round Poland's historical mission, understood as conveying to the East the civilization of the West.⁶³ The aversion to the heretical invaders, and intensification of Messianic trends during the times of bondage conduced to the creation of Poland as an outpost of the West. In the light of the simultaneous glorification of the past and the necessity to preserve the nation's identity, falsifications and the precipitation of Orientalness into oblivion were bound to occur.

⁶² Norwid, contrasting Poland both the East and the West, wrote: "Od Wschodu—mądrość—kłamstwa i ciemnota // Karności harap lub samotrzask z złota, // Trąd, jad i brud—From the East—wisdom—lies and obscurantism, // The knout of discipline or the snare made of gold, // Leprosy, poison and dirt (*Pieśń od ziemi naszej* [Song from Our Land], 1850). This does not conflict with the national exaltation, Slavophilism and criticism of the industrial capitalist West so common among the Polish Romantics, on which, extensively, see Krasuski, *op cit*.

⁶³ J. I. Kraszewski, wrote about Poland as being subject "on the one side to the influence of the mother east, and on the other to western civilisation," and perceived her mission not so much in being the "buckler of Christianity," as precisely in the shaping of a synthesis. But in this "union of opposition," too, everything which was eastern was nevertheless worse, and the point was "to convey the civilization of the West to the East" (*Polska w czasie trzech rozbiorów...*, vol. I, pp. 9-12 (1st ed. 1873).

Those who came into contact with the parts of Asia under tsarist rule whilst in exile, beyond Lake Baikal, in the Caucasus or in Turkestan, had a different attitude towards the matter. These people made a great contribution to Oriental studies and to knowledge of the cultures of the peoples of Asia.⁶⁴ In circumstances where the Poles lacked their own state, this could not outweigh society's generally negative associations. It was impossible to obliterate what had entered Polish culture permanently. It was possible, however, to remove from society's consciousness the fact that different phenomena had Oriental origins. This was probably accomplished to a considerable degree.

Poland did not participate in the colonial process. On the contrary, her fate in the 18th or 19th century in more than one respect recalled the fate of Asia under colonial power. Poland embarked on a course of capitalist development at an extremely late stage and in circumstances of subjection.⁶⁵ It is easy to grasp why the dominant and moneyed classes tried to accentuate what connected them with the triumphant West, and why attempts were made to cut Poland off from everything which symbolized backwardness. In the 19th century, then, an equation sign became fixed between Orientalness and easternness, and at the same time the belief was reinforced that the representative of that easternness was in Poland the peasantry. It was not important whether the peasant class had by now taken over anything from the Oriental elements of the former gentry culture. For it was not this which was essential. In the modern era a fundamental change had come about in Poland in understanding and sensing easternness. The triumph of capitalist Europe and the division into developed countries and backward countries led to the shaping of a new definition of the East. The East consisted of all passive and exploited, subjected and backward societies regarded in terms of the exotic. The poverty of the Polish countryside, eco-

⁶⁴ J. Reychman, *Podróże...*, pp. 181 - 220.

⁶⁵ W. Kula, *Kształtowanie się kapitalizmu w Polsce* [*The Development of Capitalism in Poland*], Warszawa 1955; A. Grodek, *Studia nad rozwojem kapitalizmu w Polsce* [*Research on the Growth of Capitalism in Poland*], Warszawa 1963; J. Jedlicki, *Nieudana próba kapitalistycznej industrializacji* [*The Abortive Attempt at Capitalist Industrialization*], Warszawa 1964.

conomic underdevelopment, the continuing inferiority of Polish towns prompted Poland's being regarded in terms proper to Asia, to a backward country. In the colonial era the East was everything which was not capitalistic and not "European", and Poland fitted into this schema very well.

For a long time the upper classes themselves seemed to support and justify this view on the surface. Polish Orientalness no longer meant the traditional Polish robes or the shaven heads of the gentry, nor Chinese pavilions in magnate gardens. The notion called to mind the dirt, ignorance and poverty of the Polish peasants, in other words the phenomena which had already struck European observers in the 18th century.

Without leading to any idea of reform, this critical attitude to reality in the countryside conduced to a patriotic, traditional, but pro-western interpretation of the past by the landed gentry and intelligentsia. The easternness of the Polish countryside in the Russian and Austrian sectors had been determined by agrarian relations within the Polish lands since the 16th century. In the feeling at grass-roots level, however, it was associated not so much with property relations, technology levels or attitudes towards innovation, as with the level of hygiene. I am thinking here particularly of external tidiness and cleanliness, which began to be regarded as features characteristic of western-European progress. In turn, sloth, dirt and laziness were regarded as features characteristic of the backward East. Today it is stated that a considerable proportion of the "negative" features characteristic of the populations of Asiatic countries arise chiefly from constant undernourishment. In turn, the philosophy, religion, lifestyle and mode of thinking of many countries of the East have taken shape throughout the centuries-long existence of static societies. What is most often considered to be the specific quality of the East, its soul, is the upshot of long-lasting preservation of the ecologic equilibrium (the negative feed-back between the social system and the environment). Unlike in Poland's climatic zone, the environment of many Asiatic countries, though not idyllic, did not compel their societies into making efforts to fashion a civilization of technological progress. In an ecologically equiliber system culture adopted highly ritualized forms, ap-

parently immutable and jealous of that immutability. In a word it fulfilled the function of a regulator ensuring the maintenance of functional balance.⁶⁶

Could circumstances of this kind have occurred in Poland? Certain traits of the social structure in the early Piast era would seem to indicate this.⁶⁷ During the times when Polish culture assimilated most from the Orient (in the 16th—17th centuries), the ecological equilibrium must already have been under threat, but in my view the social system remained static. The phenomena characteristic of the beginnings of economic growth did not occur, but Poland's development was still taking place on its own. I am not able to say when the change came about, but from superficial observation I would think only in the 18th—19th centuries. Anachronisms, inefficiency and disorganization in many spheres of the economy, politics and community life do not constitute sufficient evidence here of backwardness. The turning-point was Poland's inability to continue her own path of development and the cultural system's conservative nature, concomitant with danger. The extreme exploitation of the peasants, the petrification of forms of social life, and military weakness—these are all phenomena from the turn of the 18th century allowing one to draw an analogy, not between Poland and Spain this time but between Poland and India. In all three cases, however, one can only talk about backwardness at a point where attempts had been made to reform the system based on external models.⁶⁸ The inability

⁶⁶ I develop this concept in *Indian Philosophy as the Philosophy of an Equilibrium System*, "Dialectics and Humanism", vol. III/IV, 1976, pp. 233 - 243; *Indie układu stacjonarnego [The India of the Static System]*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", 1980, vol. III, *Kerala of the Stationary System*, "Hemispheres. Studies in Culture and Societies", vol. 1, Warszawa 1984. The problem of ecologic equilibrium is taken up in R. Wilkinson, *Poverty and Progress. An Ecological Model of Economic Development*, Oxford 1973. Cf. I. Sachs, *Environnement et styles de développement*, "Annales. Economies. Sociétés. Civilisations", 1974, No. 3, also more broadly in *Stratégies de l'écodéveloppement*, Paris 1980.

⁶⁷ K. Modzelewski, *Organizacja gospodarcza państwa piastowskiego X - XIII wiek [The Economic Organization of the Piast State, 10th - 13th Centuries]*, Wrocław 1975.

⁶⁸ I present these issues in *Indie układu zacofanego [The India of the Backward System]*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny", vol. IV, 1980). For certain aspects of the arisal of backwardness as a certain category of class of the social system see, more extensively, the book, *Kolonializm. Od ekspansji do dominacji [Colonialism. From Expansion to Domination]*, in press.

to reproduce someone else's path of development is a consequence and a symptom of backwardness. Orientalness belonged to the identity features of a Poland developing along its own path, in circumstances of backwardness it became a relic hindering change.

However, one phenomenon which brought 19th-century Poland closer to Asia was that of undernourishment of country people, and of lack of protein of animal origin, particularly dangerous for individual development. The question arises of whether the slovenliness and negligence should be regarded as phenomena deriving from indigence. It seems to me that such opinions prevailed in relation to the countryside in the Congress Kingdom and Galicia. The issue was certainly a very complex one, which is evidenced not only by the experience of the Great Poland countryside, but also by dozens of contemporary observations. In any case, irrespective of the sources and accuracy of past interpretations, the Oriental character of Poland was bound up in the 19th century first and foremost with the external appearance of her country villages.

On the threshold of independence Poland was regarded as an eastern country, as she was poor and backward. It is not difficult to understand that in these circumstances attempts were made to keep the Oriental relics well out of sight, so as not to reinforce the impression of easternness. In this way many authentic borrowings from the culture of the Orient passed into oblivion in the 19th and 20th centuries. Poland tried to appear in a different light, often choosing a totally spurious path. The notional cluster Orientalness-easternness-backwardness gave rise to a very clear tendency to repudiate authentically Oriental features of Poland's own culture.⁶⁹ This process was already far advanced before Poland's return to the area enclosed by the Odra and the Bug.

⁶⁹ "For centuries the Poles sought to attain maturity, and Europeanness. And therefore they threw in the dustbin the things which made their exclusive property: a capacity for expression, theatricality, immaturity [...] indissolubly welded to unconstraint, recklessness, lack of gravity. Today the Poles feel ashamed of the one era when they looked down on the world: the Sarmatian era" (J. Błoiński, *Sarmatyzm u Gombrowicza* [*Sarmatism in Gombrowicz*], in: *Tradycje...*, p. 146.

If today it is worth reflecting on the significance of Polish Orientalness, then it is probably in connection with the complex fortunes of the Oriental elements in Poland's culture. The divergence between the inclination towards the East and the western genealogy of Polish culture has been variously interpreted, and there have been different motives behind the expositions. In independent Poland the pro-western orientation was very strong and understandable. After the Second World War there followed an anti-western attitude, equally strong and equally understandable. Poland returned to the Western Territories, at the same time occupying a place within the eastern bloc states. This complicated a great many problems, but at the same time created the opportunity to mitigate the divergence.

Contemporary Poland has retained only a fraction of her Oriental heritage, and that perversely, unconsciously. At the same time it carries the burden of the more recent past, a period of bondage and reaction, and a burden not having a lot in common de facto with her former Orientalness. Poland's Orientalness then is today fiction, whilst she still has problems with a growing inferiority complex with regard to the West.⁷⁰ Among other things, this expresses itself in terms of sensitivity concerning evaluations and comparisons made by foreigners.

It would seem that Poland realized herself most fully when she had to or was able to find a formula which synthesized the contradiction between her geopolitical location and her cultural affiliation. An indicator of this ability was her capacity to assimilate Oriental influences. This undoubtedly required acceptance of Poland's inclination towards the East. Thus there was no contradiction, in my view, between the absorption and development of Renaissance influences and reorientation towards the East. The Polish-Lithuanian state appeared to have realistic prospects of synthesizing the two elements, of reconciling East with West. In that era, when Poland was equally wide open to influences

⁷⁰ W. Gombrowicz grasps with great perspicacity the links between Polish complexes and the situation of gentry culture in a peripheral area: *Tetament. Entretiens avec Dominique Roux*, Paris 1977, pp. 58-60, 115 ff. On the development of the complex about the West, J. Jedlicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 190, and J. Krasuski, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

from all the neighbouring cultures, such antagonism did not emerge.

Shifted to the west, today Poland is geopolitically more "eastern" than in the times when her borders extended to the Black Sea. From a technological and organizational point of view she has undoubtedly become more "western". Simultaneously an unusually sharp conflict has arisen between the aspirations of civilization and the legacy of backwardness. This deepening contradiction became the cause of violent reactions in the sphere of culture. In defending the country's identity it was necessary to define an attitude towards her heritage. A unique opportunity thus arises for synthesizing western and eastern influences, for creating from them Poland's own authentic values. There remains the sphere of the psychology of society, where alongside various complexes there linger pseudo-Oriental vestiges as well.⁷¹ The gradual removal of phenomena issuing from the era of obscurantism is creating the opportunity to wrest from oblivion authentic Oriental features. The possibility is again opening up for Polish society to absorb new influences coming from the East, from the Orient and Asia. Shifted to the west, more and more modern, Poland is in a position to recognize the heritage she once discarded and to enrich it with new elements. And to discard in the process the old complexes, which today have no reason for existing. After all the world has changed; though still poor, Asia has ceased to be an object of abuse.

Poland can today benefit from the change in attitude taking place towards cultures born outside Europe. The industrial civilization created by capitalism has begun to be questioned from the inside by social movements. Alternative solutions have arisen. Her superiority has been attacked from the outside by the anti-colonial movement. In the end, the world created by the industrial revolution has it self begun to call in question its fundamental tenets. We have all been confronted with the question of whether the civilization of technological progress is in a position to con-

⁷¹ Attention has been drawn to this in passing by M. Wańkiewicz and before him by W. Nałkowski, who saw Poland as "an isthmus between the oceans of the East and the West".

tinue developing, whether it really satisfies man's authentic needs.⁷² This doubt about the values of the West, irrespective of its source, steers one's attention towards the propositions offered by Poland's own cultural heritage.

(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)

⁷² Characteristic in this respect are the views assembled in the volume *On Growth. The Crisis of Exploding Population and Resource Depletion*, Utrecht 1973. Cf. J. J. Servan-Schreiber, *Le Défi mondial*, Paris 1980.