

# Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

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# Sixteenth-century anti-Turkish literature in Poland and Lithuania

DATE About 1550-75

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Latin

## DESCRIPTION

The first contacts between the Kingdom of Poland (joined with Lithuania by the personal joint rule of the king, then after 1569 as the Commonwealth of both Nations) and the expanding Ottoman Empire began in 1414 and were diplomatic in character. However, the Ottoman expansion into central, south-eastern and eastern Europe brought it into a collision course with Polish interests. The first military encounters, in the form of the failed quasi crusade led by King Ladislaus, which was defeated at the battle of Varna (1444), the loss of access to the Black Sea ports of Kilia and Belgorod in 1484, and the failed Moldavian campaign of King Jan Olbracht (1497), served as an effective warning to exercise restraint when considering a military engagement with the Ottomans. Efforts were made to maintain peaceful relations for several decades. Nevertheless, the Crimean Tatars, who were politically dependent on the Porte after 1475, launched frequent campaigns against the south-eastern provinces of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, sometimes with the support of Ottoman military units, looting and taking captives, who were then sold on the Crimean and Ottoman slave markets. The growing power of the Ottoman Empire was witnessed with increasing concern. This led to a considerable body of 'anti-Turkish' works, known as *turcyki*.

The intuitive assumption that these works were also anti-Islamic is proved only in the fact that 'the political' and 'the religious' were constantly conflated in the general attitudes of the times, for in fact the *turcyki* contain very little 'religious' material. Their authors were more concerned either with bemoaning the discord among Christians, or with depicting the Turks in a derogatory manner and persuading the audience to take military action against them before it was too late. Nevertheless, the *turcyki* contain scattered hints about their authors' knowledge of the Turks and attitude towards them as Muslims. As in other European regions, 'Muslims' were increasingly perceived through the Turkish perspective, to the point when 'the Turk' became a synonym for 'the Muslim'

(e.g. in Mikołaj Radziwiłł's account of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and trip to Egypt in 1582-4). This pattern reflected mainly political relations with the Ottoman Empire, which was considered a more serious rival than the Crimean Tatar Horde, though in Polish literature the distinction between the Turks (only rarely referred to as the 'Ottomans') and the Tatars was often not clear cut. Both were referred to interchangeably as *bisurmanie* (sing. *bisurman*), an early Polish adaptation of the word *musulman* (if not explicitly derogatory, then rather condescending). This term seemed to be more often applied to the Tatars, though it was also used in a verbal form: *zbisurmanić* / *pobisurmanić się* synonymous with *poturczyć się* ('to become a Turk' = 'to convert to Islam').

Efforts to learn more about the Turks, especially their military power, had already been made in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Works written on this topic are usually classified as 'anti-Turkish', since that knowledge was gained with the purpose of using it against the Ottomans. Mikołaj Lasocki (1380-1450), the envoy at the papal court speaking for Poland and Hungary, is considered to be the author of the first Polish anti-Turkish speech advocating war against the Turks. It was delivered to Pope Nicholas V in 1448 (ed. 1876).

Philip Callimachus Buonacorsi (1437-96), an Italian fugitive implicated in a plot against Pope Pius II, allegedly spent some time in Istanbul before joining the service of the royal court in Kraków. He authored at least three tracts dealing with the growing Turkish threat: *Historia de rege Vladislao, seu clade Varnensi* (probably in 1487, printed in Augsburg 1518; later published a few times under slightly different titles) is a description of King Ladislaus's campaign of 1444; *Historia de his quae a Venetis contra Turcos tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis* (after 1483, printed in Haganoae, 1533) recounted Venetian efforts to win Tatar and Persian support against the Ottomans between 1473 and 1487; *Ad Innocentium VIII pontificem maximum de bello inferendo Turcis oratio* (printed in Kraków, 1524) was a speech delivered in Rome in 1490 pointing out the mistakes in anti-Turkish activities on the part of the popes and advocating a more serious reliance of the Holy See on the Kingdom of Poland in future anti-Turkish actions. Though Callimachus posed as an expert on 'Turkish affairs', his knowledge of the Turkish world was rather scanty, and religious matters were not his concern. He advocated the notion that it would be easy to defeat the Turks because their military power was deficient. This theme can be found in a number of other 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century tracts and speeches.

Anti-Turkish motifs, conflating the Tatars-Mongols-Turks with Muslims, had already appeared in 15<sup>th</sup>-century poetry written in Latin (and earlier in some liturgical texts). They became more noticeable in political speeches and pamphlets (some in Latin later translated into Polish, others in Polish) in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, and they intensified from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when contacts between the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire deteriorated and turned into a series of wars in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The late-16<sup>th</sup>-century works can be more appropriately treated with the anti-Turkish literature of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and will be omitted here, as will works written by authors who died after 1600.

#### Early 16<sup>th</sup>-century works

Early locally written works either bemoaned the destruction caused by the Tatar and Ottoman raids, or gave information about the Ottoman advance into Central Europe, e.g. Mikołaj Hussowski's (1475/85-after 1533) *Nova et miranda de Turcis victoria* (1524), or else – as e.g. in Andrzej Krzycki's (1482-1537) *Religionis et reipublicae quaerimonia* (1522) – they used the Turkish threat to attack either the social and moral vices of the ruling class (egoism, greed, living beyond their means) or political adversaries, as the struggle between the pro- and anti-Habsburg factions intensified. Because the Habsburgs tried to involve the kingdom ruled by the last Jagiellonians in war with the Ottomans, anti-Turkish works were suspected of being commissioned by the Habsburgs rather than arising from deep conviction. Krzycki also wrote an epigram about the Germans who had expelled the divine cult and the images of the saints from their churches and boasted that they would crush the Ottomans if they dared to invade German lands. Meanwhile, he mockingly observed, the dragon (i.e. the Ottomans) ravaged German possessions with impunity because these same Germans had expelled St George the dragon-slayer from their churches (Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna*, p. 122).

In other cases the Ottoman issue, with an obvious religious undertone (the Ottomans were the religious 'other'), served as an element in a diplomatic game between Christian rulers. Traces of dealings with 'guilt' for not siding with the Christians against the Muslims can be detected in Jan Dantyszek's (1485-1548) *De nostrorum temporum calamitatibus* (1530). He was the envoy of King Sigismund I the Old in the negotiations between Pope Clement VII and the Emperor Charles V at Bologna, and he struggled to gain recognition for Jagiellonian diplomatic attempts to secure a

long-lasting peace treaty with the Ottomans in the wider context of negotiations to build an anti-Ottoman coalition. Dantyszek tried to exculpate his royal patron, and in his poem he described the history of the Ottoman conquests in Europe up to the 1529-30 siege of Vienna, and appealed to Christian leaders for unity in defence against a common enemy. While encouraging the pope to sign a treaty with the emperor that could give him command over the armies of the Christians, Dantyszek rebuked the emperor for being a part of the problem (the quarrelsomeness, pride, greed and avarice of European Christian rulers) that allowed the Ottomans to launch effective attacks on the Hungarian kingdom. Dantyszek tried to convince his readers that, had the Christians really united, the Jagiellonian forces would have joined their side against the Ottomans (however, he was also known for issuing the recommendation that the Jagiellonian-Ottoman peace treaty should be respected).

#### Later 16<sup>th</sup>-century works

Among the works containing wishful thinking, unrealistic war plans or diplomatic juggling of arguments, there were also works (or parts of them) apparently containing more serious information and deeper analysis of the situation. *Descriptio potentiae Turciae. Ordinatio belli contra illam 1514*, a tract included in the speech of Wawrzyniec Miedzieleski (or Międzyzyleski, d. 1529), the Polish royal envoy to Pope Leo X, though presenting unrealistic plans for defeating the Ottomans, contained a more accurate assessment of Ottoman military power, as apparently did the tract *Consilium rationis bellicae* (1558) by Hetman (General) Jan Tarnowski (1488-1561).

C. Göllner in his *Turcica. Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Bucharest, 1961, 1968, 1978) lists a number of Polish authors who wrote anti-Turkish tracts and speeches before the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: Sebastyan Marszewski (or Marzewski, Marschevius), *Ad equites Polonos de bello Turcis inferendo* (1543); Jakub Przyłuski (c. 1512-54), *Ad equites Polonos pro sacerdotibus Turcicum bellum una cum illis suscipientibus et pro Petro Gamrato . . . elegia* (1545); Stanisław Orzechowski (1513-66), *De bello adversus Turcas suscipiendo . . . ad equites Polonos oratio* (1543, translated into Polish and published in the same year), and *Ad Sigismundum Poloniae Regem turcica secunda* (1544, translated into Polish in 1590); Andrzej Lubelczyk (c. 1500-c. 1557), *Bellum theologicum*

*ex armamentario omnipotentis adversus Turcas instructum ac ordinatum* (1545, 1597<sup>2</sup>).

Some scholars, such as Bohdan Baranowski, have dismissed *turcyki* as of little value (not providing reliable information) as they were propagandist in intent.

#### *Stanisław Orzechowski*

Stanisław Orzechowski, who was a prominent orator at gatherings of local nobility and during parliamentary sessions, made acclaimed anti-Turkish speeches. However, both his *De bello adversus Turcas suscipiendo* and *Ad Sigismundum Poloniae Regem turcica secunda* only touch on religious issues in passing. He briefly presents Muḥammad as a Christian renegade who gathered some fugitives and, taking advantage of quarrels between Christian rulers, started his own conquests. Orzechowski bemoans the religious quarrels and wars between Christian rulers (especially in German lands) while they neglect efforts to form a unified front against 'the Turk', who does not waste time on debates but takes military action. He also presents the 'Turks' as threatening the social order and the Christian faith, looting churches, destroying altars, uprooting the graves of ancestors, and raping daughters and wives in the presence of their captured relatives. On several occasions, Orzechowski mentions that in the lands they have captured the Turks dedicate Christian churches to Muḥammad. They are treacherous and faithless because they do not respect treaties or promises (he cites the massacre of the defenders of Kolozsvár).

#### *Andrzej Lubelczyk*

Andrzej Lubelczyk's *Bellum theologicum* seems to be the only work that contains substantial references to the religious dimension of contacts with Muslims, though even there they appear to be only of secondary importance.

Lubelczyk was a Roman Catholic priest more known for his anti-Reformation polemics (particularly against Philipp Melanchthon's views) and concern for bringing the Armenians into union with Rome (he spent part of his life in Lvov, a city with a vibrant Armenian minority) than for anti-Turkish publications. Defence of the true (Catholic) faith against all threats was his main concern. His *Bellum theologicum*, written in Latin in a very ornate style that at times obscures the message, does not deal exclusively with the Turkish threat but uses it to

issue a call for improvement of moral life in what he saw as an overall atmosphere of decay. He bemoans lapses in morals among Christians, protests especially against Ottoman influences on dress and food, and accuses his compatriots of adopting a luxurious and easy lifestyle from the Ottomans, habits that diminish the physical and spiritual strength of the nobility. He accuses those who remain in the territories conquered by the Ottomans of developing non-Christian manners, and laments the sad fate of the Christian youth who have been taken into Tatar and Ottoman captivity.

He indicates that the fight against the rising threat of the Ottomans cannot be conducted solely by force but has equally to be waged on the spiritual level (by prayer, Christian virtues, preaching the Gospel). Lubelczyk calls on the king and other Christian rulers to add spiritual armour to their weaponry (he points out that it is not to be disregarded, as for example the Corpus Christi procession has power to disperse the 'Saracen army'). He sees the Saracens (= the Ottomans) as the contemporary symbolic 'demon of evil', the epitome of 'God's wrath' against Christians for their moral laxity.

Lubelczyk endorsed a view that political tyranny resulted in immorality linked to heresy. Reminding his readers of the example of the Roman Empire and its practice of imposing the imperial cult, he uses the Ottomans as the contemporary example of the danger that can result from linking faith and religious practices (religion) with political power (state rulers) and making the first dependent on the second. He spoke against what may be called 'a theocratic state' and underlined the importance of religious freedom. People needed to be honest in professing their faith and could not be coerced by any political authority. If religion was not chosen and practised out of free will, there was a risk of insincerity and opportunism. He believed that the Ottoman authorities had imposed their religion on people. The opposition of 'freedom-tyranny/slavery' was increasingly used and elaborated by authors in the Commonwealth, as the nobility took a progressively more active part in running the state and began building up a system of guaranteed civil liberties (the so-called 'golden liberty'). The early admiration for some aspects of the organisation of the Ottoman state system (e.g. in Mikołaj Rej's poem *Turczyn* or in Erazm Otwinowski's observations during a diplomatic trip to Istanbul in 1557), such as the possibility of social advancement, respect for and serious implementation of justice in contrast to the situation at home, gradually gave way to concerns and worries about a possible loss of freedom and civil liberties.

*Klemens Janicki*

Klemens Janicki (1516-43) touched on issues of contacts with the Ottomans in some of his elegies written in Latin (VI, written in 1540; VIII, in 1541; and IX in 1542). However, religious matters were not his main concern. He described the stages of the Ottoman conquest of Hungary (VI), directed accusations against the Emperor Ferdinand for causing the Hungarian calamity (VIII), and gave a pessimistic prognosis for Europe, strengthening it with a vision of Poland conquered by the Ottomans (IX). In another work, *In Polonici vestitus varietatem et inconstantiam dialogus* ['A dialogue against the diversity and changeability of Polish dress'] (printed in Antwerp, 1563), Janicki bemoaned the indolence of the nobility in the face of the Ottoman threat. Göllner lists Janicki's *De bello adversus Turcas suscipiendo* (Cracow, 1543) which is an epigram in honour of Orzechowski bearing the same title as Orzechowski's first *turcyka* and comparing its author to Cicero.

*Maciej Strykowski*

The growing concerns were strengthened by Maciej Strykowski (1547-93) who, after returning from Istanbul as a member of a diplomatic mission, wrote a poem *O wolności Korony Polskiej i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* ['On freedom of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania'] (1575) in which he vividly described the consequences of a possible conquest by the Ottomans – reduction of the nobility to the position of serfs and new fiscal burdens – and called on his countrymen to defend the homeland.

*An attempt at refocusing the perspective*

Early anti-Turkish motifs appeared in lament poetry focusing on particular heroes and, drawing on earlier pious religious texts, used the ecclesial interpretation of the conflict with the Tatars/Turks as a religious one and an expression of God's justice on sinful Christians who should repent (the latter motif used also by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski in *De republica emendanda*, 1551).

Literary critics point out that Jan Kochanowski in his *Canto V (Pieśń o spustoszeniu Podola* ['Lament on war-ravaged Podolia'], 1575, printed in Kraków, 1586) introduced important changes in approaching the subject of Polish-Tatar/Ottoman relations. It should be stressed, though, that he rarely treated this subject in his poetry. In *Canto V*, the lyrical subject

ceased to be solely a 'pious Christian', but became a guard and defender of his home country. He was reminded of his duty to defend the fatherland and his responsibility for the country's future honour in the face of the nomadic barbarians' and pagans' attacks. In the new approach adopted by Kochanowski, the nobleman could not only repent and supplicate God while submitting to God's rulings, but he could also try to repel the threatening danger by giving towards the war effort, and making use of his courage and readiness to defend the fatherland. In applying such an approach, the poet seems to be less inclined to see the Tatar and Ottoman (=Muslim) attacks as Muslim-Christian (religious) war than to perceive them as a result of the moral failings of the inhabitants of the Commonwealth (inclination to luxurious lifestyle, effeminacy, indifference towards the state and fate of the country). The poet's focus shifts from Christianity (Christendom) to that of the Commonwealth (i.e. homeland) and, while his interpretation of the conflict is not devoid of religious dimension, the focus has shifted more towards the 'moral' aspect of human behaviour (Krzewińska, *Pieśń ziemiańska*, pp. 31-8). This new approach did not replace the earlier one, which underwent a certain revival during the difficult times of bitter wars with the Ottomans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Works by foreign authors*

Apart from the texts written locally, some works of foreign origin were also (re)printed in the country, e.g. *Epistolarium Turci Magni* by Ludovico Vezzanense, a collection of documents aiming to show the treachery, faithlessness and unreliability of the Ottomans (Kraków, 1513, 1618<sup>2</sup>); Stephanus [Istvan] Brodaricus's *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Turcis ad Mohacz verissima historia* (1527); Mathias Franconius's *Oratio protreptica ad Chrystiani orbis principes* (Kraków, 1542); Michael Hillebrant's, *Die rechte Christiche Weisze wider den turcken zustreyten* (Kraków, 1542). Others were published after the victory of Lepanto: *De victoria Christianorum* by G. Rasario (1571), *De insigni et memorabili Christianorum ex Turcis victoria* by A. Santutus (1571), and *Prawdziwe y osoblwe kazdey sprawy wypisanie*, a Polish translation of the work by F. Membre (1572).

The works of Bartholomaeus Georgius (Georgiewicz), a southern Slavonic writer, were quite popular in Poland. They were published and republished in parts either in Latin or in Polish translation (Jocher, *Obraz bibliograficzno-historyczny literatury*, 1840-57, vol. 3, p. 605; Nosowski, *Polska literatura polemiczno-antyislamiczna*, vol. 1, pp. 48-66, 369-70; vol. 2, pp. 16-20). *Pamiętniki janczara* ('Memoirs of a Janissary') by another

southern Slavonic author Konstantin Mihailović, though circulating in manuscript form, must also have been quite popular, judging from the number of extant copies.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The anti-Turkish literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century deals more with military-related matters than with social-cultural-religious issues. It concentrates either on assessing Ottoman military power (with various degrees of accuracy), or on encouraging the ruling class (the nobility) to undertake actions against the Ottomans before they invade the country. The latter attitude is increasingly linked with the conviction that the Ottomans pose a grave danger to the cherished liberty of the nobility, including loss of freedom in religious matters, as the public were told that the Ottomans would impose Islam on the conquered peoples. Striking the chord of a possible loss of the freedom enjoyed by the Commonwealth nobility was particularly sensitive, as that was the sphere that the nobility guarded with great jealousy. The authors do not appear to be very interested in the 'religious other', apart from using him as a sort of mirror or contrasting background on which problems troubling the country and their compatriots were presented, abuses criticised, and solutions indicated. This moralising attitude did not, however, prevent the authors from being hypocritical. For example, Lubelczyk protests against coercion by the political authority in religious matters, especially the Ottoman sultan, while at the same time taking steps to promote what he sees as the sole acceptable form of religion, i.e. Roman Catholicism. Re-editions and translations of various works over the years signify that this type of literature was much in demand.

#### EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

As this entry deals with several different authors, the editions are listed in alphabetical order of author:

- I. Brodaricus, *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Turcis ad Mohacz verissima historia*, Kraków, 1527
- P. Callimachus Buonacorsi, *Historia de his quae a Venetis contra Turcos tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, Haganoae, 1533; (also as *De his quae a Venetis contra Turcos tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, in P. Bizzari (Bizaro), *Rerum Persicarum historia*, Frankfurt, 1601, pp. 402-31; and *De his quae a Venetis tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, ed. A. Kempf and T. Kowalewski, Warsaw 1962)

- P. Callimachus Buonacorsi, *Ad Innocentium VIII pontificem maximum de bello Turcis inferendo oratio*, Kraków, 1524 (repr. Haganoae, 1533; Solebii, 1603; Warsaw, 1960)
- P. Callimachus Buonacorsi, *Historia de rege Vladislao, seu clade Varnensi*, Augsburg 1518 (republished several times under slightly different titles)
- J. Dantyszek, *De nostrorum temporum calamitatibus silva*, Bononia, 1530 (also Kraków, Cologne and Antwerp in the same year)
- M. Franconius, *Oratio protreptica ad chrystiani orbis principes*, Kraków, 1542
- A. Frycz Modrzewski, *De republica emendanda*, Kraków, 1551
- B. Georgius (Georgiewicz), *Pro fide Christiana cum Turca disputationis habitae et mysterio Sanctae Trinitatis in Alchorano invento, nunc primum in latinum sermonem verso, brevis descriptio. Authore Peregrino Bartholomaeo Georgieuits*, Cracoviae, 1548 (Polish trans. 1548: *Rozmowa z Turczynem o wierze Krzesciyanskiej i o tajności Troyce świętej, która w Alkoranie stoi napisana. Przez Bartłomieja Georgewits, który czternaście lat był więźniem Tureckim*).
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- A. Krzycki, *Religionis et Reipublicae quaerimonia*, Kraków, 1522; Poznań, 1606
- M. Lasocki, *Oratio ad Dominum Apostolicum per Lasoczki facta Anno Domini 1448*, in J. Szujski (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, Kraków, 1876, vol. 2/2, pp. 51-4 (earlier published with mistakes and incorrect date of 1442 by M. Wiszniewski, *Historia literatury polskiej*, Kraków, 1841, vol. 3, pp. 390-6)
- Laudivio (Vezzanense), *Epistole Turci Magni*, Vienna, 1512, Kraków, 1513, 1618<sup>2</sup>
- A. Lubelczyk, *Bellum theologicum ex armamentario omnipotentis adversus Turcas instructum ac ordinatum*, Kraków, 1545, 1597<sup>2</sup>
- S. Marszewski (Marzewski, Marchevius), *Ad equites Polonos de bello Turcis inferendo*, Kraków, 1543

- W. Miedzieleski, *Descriptio potentiae Turciae et ordinatio belli contra Turcam 1514*, in S. Gorski (ed.), *Acta Tomiciana*, Posnaniae, 1853, vol. 3, pp. 168-81
- S. Orzechowski, *De bello adversus Turcas suscipiendo... ad equites Polonos oratio*, Kraków, 1543 (Polish trans.: *Książki o ruszeniu ziemie polskiej przeciw Turkowi*, Kraków, 1543)
- S. Orzechowski, *Ad Sigismundum Poloniae Regem turcica secunda*, Kraków, 1544 (Polish trans. by J. Januszkowski: *Oksza Stanisława Orzechowskiego*, Kraków, 1590; both anti-Turkish speeches published together in Basel, 1551; Romae, 1594)
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- J. Tarnowski, *Consilium rationis bellicae*, Tarnów, 1558
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- Information on the authors and a selection of texts can also be found at: Virtual Library of Polish Literature, <http://literat.ug.edu.pl/~literat/books.htm>

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- J. Nosowski, *Polska literatura polemiczno-antyislamiczna. XVI, XVII i XVIII w. Wybór tekstów i komentarze* ['Polish polemical and anti-Islamic literature. 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Selected texts and commentaries'], 2 vols, Warsaw, 1974
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