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OF POLISH-LATIN HISTORIOGRAPHY
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1.

The problem mentioned in the title is large and promising, exceeding the extent of that text. Therefore I must restrain its area, first of all materially. My paper is not bringing new assertions nor settlements. It is arranging actual knowledge according to determined assumptions. I have to begin the explanation of those assumptions and basic ideas: rhetoric consists of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, without special preferences to any of them. In the historiography of the discussed period all those elements played their roles although not always in equal rank. I acknowledge the role of rhetoric in historiography as means of persuasion and just for that reason as an instrument influencing the imaginations and opinions of the readers of historical works. Meaning so, rhetoric in historiography was not only a *literary ornament*, artistic decoration, but an indispensable feature of a historical work, amplifying the influence of that work. This way rhetoric played its ideological-political and social roles, being simultaneously an artistic factor acting on the literary, linguistic, stylistic susceptibilities of the readers of historical works. Rhetoric functioned in historical works always closely coupled with the *history* or events described in the work, being just a mean and form of their expression and interpretation. This was pointed out by G. Brogi-Bercoff in the dissertation on humanistic Phillip Callimach Buonacorsi's works. Rhetoric tradition means to me the influence of certain principles and habits on following generations of writers and also the process of changing, enrichment and decay of those habits and principles resulting from ideological and artistic factors. It is not necessary to ask about the presence of rhetorical tradition in our historiography in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is quite obvious. Instead, it is possible to ask what were the sources of rhetorical tradition, its causes and results. We shall try to show – in the domain that we are interested in – the difference between Polish-Latin historiography in the 16th and 17th centuries. Such questions were investigated for a long time by H. Barycz in the context of the whole Old Polish historiography, even written in Polish. Nevertheless Barycz as a historian of culture used different notions. Between all problems of the rhetoric he noticed only language and style. He was interested mainly in biographies and vicissitudes

of works and in their influence on the opinions of readers. Barycz was certainly one of the most competent scientists in the historical works and the period that yielded those works. The characterization of the reception of the two syntheses of the national history by Długosz and Kromer and its examination proper context of the development of historiography in Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries is one of his more important contribution. Barycz, it is well known, recognized Długosz as the most credible and *scientific* historian, and Kromer as the most *literary* and *rhetorical*. This was also the opinion of the generations what followed the greatest historical syntheses of the Old Polish period. It requires a certain correction from our point of view. Even if Długosz and Kromer are in fact two different personalities, they are apparently not on completely opposite poles in using rhetorical tradition.

2.

Ages of oblivion of Długosz's work were rewarded by the research done in the 19th and 20th centuries. Nowadays thanks to a critical edition of the complete works in the original version and in translation into Polish published in the last thirty years, Długosz is the best scientifically described Old Polish historian. The number of papers concerning Długosz written by specialists in other domains is considerable. This is why we know so much about his *history* (the contents of his works) and about his *rhetoric*. In other words: The rules guiding the conception of selection, an arrangement of contents, the style and vocabulary. Known are Długosz's successes and failures in this domain. We will limit our discussion to. Instead we may remind the most important issues:

- Długosz knew (after Cicero and contemporary humanistic works) that *fides historica* is not everything in a historical work. To accomplish its social role and fix in the memory of the contemporaries and descending things of the past, the work should be like a monument, should radiate words, touch to the quick, sink into the mind. In other words it should be a rhetoric work.

- Długosz used in his main historical work rhetorical assumptions such as the idea of synthesis of the national history, the partition of the work into books, preface and epilogue, physiographic description of Polish territories together with the description of political events, inventional diversification of the narration with the imaginary speeches and fictitious characters.

- Długosz sources were (in the domain of his rhetorical education) the works of some Roman writers (Livy, Cicero, Justinus) and Renaissance writers. Długosz did not learn new humanistic rhetoric at school. The main reason for his interest in rhetoric was – in my mind – the influence that humanistic trends wrested in the opinion of educated peoples of his times.

- Długosz was aware of his limits in rhetoric, especially in language and style. In the epilogue of the *History* he expressed hope that there will be historians, his successors and continuators, that will write down the history of the homeland not only faithfully and truthfully as he did, but also more finely and decoratively. Długosz consciously tried to change – from a chronicle collecting sources and awkwardly describing events year after year – to become a writer – humanist having imaginativeness in the domain of words and

thoughts. Długosz was so fascinated by the possibilities offered to historiography by humanistic rhetoric that he did not (or didn't want) to see the inconsistencies between *history* and *rhetoric*. Those inconsistencies were pointed out by another writer.

Phillip Callimach Buonaccorsi, once characterized by C. Kumaniecki and G. Brogi–Bercoff, brought to Poland not only the knowledge of humanistic love poetry but also a new style of historical writing abundantly enriched with rhetoric. Some of Callimach's works remained and were known only as manuscripts but the *History of King Władysław* was printed and often read because of the cult of the Varnenian existed in the 16th century in Poland. Callimach's historical prose was characterized by elements (expressing *inventio* and *dispositio*) such as geographical description in the beginning of the work, attention paid to date the events, frequent moral and philosophical reflections, imaginary speeches and events altogether with *elegant* Latin. It was a prose pleasantly readable, unlike monotonous registers of events that were medieval chronicles.

3.

Długosz's (chronological successors in the domain of Polish–Latin historiography, authors of printed works – Miechowita and Decius, cultivate rhetorical historiography to the best of their abilities and theoretical consciousness. Doing otherwise became impossible. This part of prose became a domain *humanists* or people prepared linguistically and having literary susceptibility. Complaints that the author can not write decoratively and nicely as the readers expect, may be found in Miechowita's and Decius' works. It is partially a rhetorical operation – the anxiety to gain reader's a friendliness and call his attention to the language and style not poor indeed – by an acknowledgment of weakness. Miechowita was not brilliant in the domain of language and style. He avoided long periods, constructed short sentences, his Latin vocabulary was rather limited. He excused himself as being only a modest physician and not a second Salustius, nor Trogus. He showed more enterprise in the domain of *inventio* and *dispositio*. He paid attention to chronology, genealogy of tribes and whole nations, tried to shock readers at all opportunities with new informations.

He did not miss any opportunity to make reading more pleasant. Miechowita's literary output consists of a compilative *Polish Chronicle* and the famous in his times *Treatise on two Sarmatias*. Both works are representative specimens of rhetorized (but not fully) historical prose. Even till the present day Miechowita's *Tractatus* may be read (translated) as a good report relating travels to eastern and northern parts of Europe. Decius went farther than Miechowita in the domain of rhetorical incrustation of his works. He was not a scientist, but a businessman well-read in Roman historians. They taught him respect to the history, which is able to retain and fix for a long future the names of writers and events they describe. Decius knew excellently well that in his times the weapons of a historian were not large source volumens but smartness and *expedita culta lingua*. That is why, even if he was widely complaining (in the dedication of the *Book About King Sigismundus Times*)

those ancient and contemporary historians who, trying to embellish works and get into readers favour leave the historical truth.

Historians imagination and pen may increase and clear from blame as well as decrease the value and blur everything. But Decius himself did so. He profited willingly of every possibility provided by the rhetoric (persuasive style, exempla, toposes known from oratory practise) to achieve two goals of his historical authorship – the approval of the person and policy of Sigismundus the Old and the assertion of his literary glory. Owing to, or rather in consequence of the abuse of rhetoric, historiography turned into publicism, became a reliable mean of influencing the public opinion. That opinion was generally convinced that it has to deal with a collection of documents and vision of *true history* after the pattern of Livius or Sallustius. The magnum opus oratorium of Old Polish historiography was of course Marcin Kromer's work. This was a work created consciously in a definite way to reach definite goals. Unlike his predecessors, who were self-taught persons in the domain of rhetoric and historiography, Kromer was thoroughly prepared theoretically. Interest in theory and practise of Cicero's rhetoric date from the middle of the 16th century – the period of the preparation of his *History*. Kromer found himself in the sphere of those interests. Moreover he felt a vocation to write a history adequate to his compatriot's and foreign reader's expectations. He had to write a history readable, rhetoric, the more so as he decided to write his work more beautiful and florid than did all his national predecessors – historians from Gall to Wapowski. The fact that Kromer was writing to some extent *against* his predecessors played a prominent part in the shape and expression of Kromer's work.

His assumption was synthetic. He tried to describe the beginning of Polish and Lithuanian tribes, the origin and the development of the state, its different changes, present state, the consequences of political decisions of great importance, morals for individuals and for the community – briefly – he tried to describe everything. And describe it *ad lectori gustum et captum* in an interesting and intelligible way. The investigators of Kromer's work found out that he was only to some extent an expert in sources and new historical materials. All the difference of his works and the newness of his history resulted from an other shape of the composition, style and interpretation. Kromer was able to better explain, arrange and show the well known facts. So his work a rhetorical as well as compilative historiography. The author's main effort was focused on the compositional and stylistic elaboration of the material adopted from his predecessor's works.

The 16th century was able to appreciate such achievements. This is why Kromer's work excited curiosity in the country and abroad, had several editions and gained renown to the author. But it did not give inspiration to further continuation becoming with the passage of time a more and more respectable relic. Kromer was the last to continue the tradition of historical synthese including the whole events and history of nation. A historiographic conception finished as well as the fashions of rhetorical organization of the text, composition and style connected with it. Since the second half of the 16th century no historian attempted to describe the whole history of the nation,

because the public inspiration for such work vanished. Historians dedicate themselves to work on fragments of history (usually contemporary) chosen for different reasons. Stanisław Sarnicki's work (ed. 1587) having some features of historical synthesis could not match Kromer's work.

Reinhold Heidenstein – a historiographer of king Stefan Batory, was of the opinion that history should write down and commemorate only *events worth cognition*. Of course the criteria of the selection of facts may be unrestricted. Heidenstein is in Old Polish literature the first of a generation of writers, who took part in the described events (as soldiers or diplomats) and stay in personal relation with them. The author's recollections make peculiar source records. Simultaneously, the Latin historiography ceases to be a living literature of public importance with a leading vision of development and changes of the whole state. The picture of Latin historiography in the end of the 16th century is changed by the individualism of the view at the events reaching even a memorist formulation (as in the case of Heidenstein) and panegyric tendencies addressed to a reader or a lord–patron. Nobody is writing about *everything for everybody*. That branch of historiography becomes exclusive destined to few groups of the reading public abroad, interested in Polish matters or to the court environment connected with the author or the patron of the work. The authors – specialists and observers of a sector of the history leave the large stylistic and compositional features proper to writers who did not have their own vision of the the described facts. Latin historiography approaches with its language, style and also the composition to the Latin scientific prose of that time. Even so well–read and using excellent Latin authors like Paweł Piasecki do so. The restraining of Latin historiography caused a certain senility, but protected from the invasion of the *new rhetoric* typical of baroque oratory. One of the fruits of Latin historiography is historical prose in Polish. It progressed in abundance since the end of the 16th century in the form of translations and original works.

That prose takes the function of fine, interesting history, history teaching and readable and it absorbs a lot of the ancient rhetorical tradition (especially in the domain of *inventio* and *elocutio*). The patrons of that prose in the domain of the conception and means of expressions are not Cicero nor Livius but the masters of brief style – ancient – Cesar, Seneca, Tacit and modern – Lipsius. The connection of history and rhetoric remains however of the native linguistic background.

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