

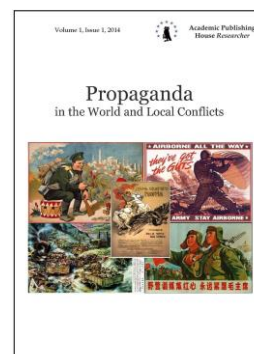
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Published in the Slovak Republic
Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
Has been issued since 2014.

E-ISSN 2500-3712
2019, 6(2): 50-54

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2019.2.50
www.ejournal47.com



Articles and Statements

Describing the Enemy: Images of the Turks and Tatars in “Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z tatarzy” by Marcin Paszkowski

Volodymyr Pylypenko ^{a, *}

^a The Chernihiv Collegium National University named after T.G. Shevchenko, Ukraine

Abstract

Political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth implied active participation of the nobility in the political life of the state. Literature was widely used to disseminate and popularize certain ideas. In particular, in the political literature one can find colorful descriptions of the main foreign policy enemies of the state, i.e. the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate. The article is devoted to the description of the Turks and the Tatars in the works of Polish poet and translator Marcin Paszkowski “Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatarzy”. The author created one of the first encyclopedias of Turkish life and traditions, describing them vividly in his work. At the same time, describing the Turks and the Tatars, Marcin Paszkowski used epithets that had a hidden meaning, but were clear to the readers of the time. Thus, the author called the Turks and the Tatars dogs and wolves. These animals were associated with the chthonic world and had mostly negative connotations. The Tatars were described as ugly people, since the outer ugliness was associated with the inner ugliness. Description of the Turks as homosexuals has Biblical roots. Since in Christianity such sexual orientation was considered sinful, this way the author was emphasizing the sinfulness of the Turks in general. Paszkowski was stressing that the Tatars did not eat bread and wine, which was not true. But for a Christian reader it was an understandable hint that the Tatars were not part of the Christian world. Political theory accuses the Turks of having no law in their state, just the right of the Sultan only.

Keywords: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, propaganda, political literature, image of the enemy.

1. Introduction

A distinctive feature of the political life of the Polish-Lithuanian state was a large amount of propaganda literature. It concerned both domestic and foreign policy of Warsaw. One of the important foreign policy issues was the Turkish issue, i.e. relations with the Ottoman Empire, which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had never had smoothly developed. The 1610s became the time of activating anti-Turkish propaganda. After unsuccessful attempts of enthroning False Dmitry in Moscow, the troops that supported the impostors began to return. Including a large number of the Zaporozhye Cossacks. They, having received no remuneration for their service, resumed their plundering sea campaigns to the cities of the Crimean and the Turkish coasts, which,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: pylvova@gmail.com (V. Pylypenko)

as expected, provoked an increase in the Tatar attacks / campaigns to the Ukrainian provinces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In such a situation, normal diplomacy between the states was out of the question, and there was a public demand for anti-Turkish and anti-Tatar literature. And since all's fair in love and war, the authors of the texts describing enemies, tried to show them from the worst side.

2. Materials and methods

The subject of this article is the ways of describing the Turks and the Tatars in political journalism as potential enemies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It should be noted immediately that the entire body of anti-Turkish literature cannot be covered in a single study for at least two reasons. Firstly, the number of such texts is indeed huge. Among them there are both solid religious-philosophical treatises and low-grade poems. Secondly, there is no unified catalogue of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth anti-Turkish literature. Therefore, the source base of the study had to be limited.

Another comment of a methodological nature should be made. Speaking of anti-Turkish literature, I consciously combine under this term anti-Turkish, anti-Tatar and anti-Islamic literature, which, strictly speaking, have different directions in the political journalism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Where it is important, I will clearly separate these texts.

3. Discussion and results

Against the background of a large number of anti-Turkish literature pieces, the work by Marcin Paszkowski "Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatory" ([Paszkowski, 1615](#)) stands out. There's almost nothing known about the author himself. Most likely, he came from unimportant nobility, had a good education (as evidenced by his texts). The researchers suggest that Paszkowski may have been in Turkish or Tatar captivity for some time. Peak of the writer's creative activity fell on the 1610s. The greatest glory was brought to him by the translation of "European Sarmatia Chronicles" by Guagnini. When they speak about Paszkowski as a poet, they first of all remember "Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatory". This work is not of a great, but of a continuous interest of historians and philologists in Poland and Ukraine. Ukrainian historians are interested in descriptions of Ukrainian nature in the poem, in particular, the rapids on the Dnipro, and the fighting against the Tatars in which the main character took part. The relevant parts of the work have been translated into Ukrainian several times and commented on ([Virs'kii, 2016](#)). At the same time, "Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatory" enjoy bigger popularity in the Polish historiography. Polish researchers note that Paszkowski's work was one of the first attempts of the Ottoman language studies in Europe (the language was called Turkish in the text), as the book included a small Polish-Turkish dictionary of 700 words. In general, half of the poem's text was devoted to the Turkish culture, traditions, life and religion, which made "Dzieie tvreckie..." a kind of encyclopedia ([Baranowski, 1950: 79](#)).

The work was published in the printing house of Mikołaj Lob in 1615 and was a logical continuation of the author's interest in the "Eastern issue", i.e. Polish-Turkish relations. This interest has already manifested itself in Paszkowski's first publications, and over time has become firmly established during the work on the translation of the "Chronicle" by Guagnini. There was also his interest in the Ukrainian Cossacks, and Paszkowski added a lot for himself to the translation of "Chronicles" about the Ukrainian Cossacks and their continuous struggle with the Tatars, which was not in the original.



Fig. 1. Engraving from the front page of the "Chorażew Wandalinowa" verse by J. Jurkowski (Jurkowski, 1607). In the upper right corner of the banner held by Wandalin, there is an allegorical figure of a semi-wolf (semi-dog) that symbolizes a Tatar.

Paszkowski's works were analyzed by Michał Kuran in his study on Marcin Paszkowski (Kuran, 2005), and the text of "Dzieje tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatarzy" was republished in 2018 with a substantial commentary (Siemieniec-Gołaś, 2018), so there is no need to repeat it.

Nevertheless, the author and his writing were "children of their era" and shared the ideas and beliefs characteristic of their time. It is for this reason that "Dzieje tureckie" is filled with vivid images, interesting comparisons about the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate. But if you look closely, it turns out that most of the comparisons and images are the *topoi* that were clear to the contemporaries and contained information about the object.

Marcin Paszkowski, like his contemporaries, did not spare epithets to describe the enemies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The most common characteristics of the Tatars were: blasphemous, wild, cunning, treacherous. Paszkowski called the Turks, and especially the Tatars, dogs (wild dogs). The image of a dog/wolf is often found in the mythological systems of Slavic peoples. It seems to me, Paszkowski specifically used a symbol that was understandable to his contemporaries and had negative connotations. It should be noted that the image of a dog / wolf is ambivalent and has also a positive meaning. Although Paszkowski exploited the negative meaning of the image exclusively. The image of the wolf is connected with the chthonic world and is associated with the world of the dead. It is also associated with evil spirits. Ethnographers record a Polish legend that the devil turns into a wolf, or the wolf is the devil's horse (Gura, 1997: 128-129). The Tatars and the Turks were called dogs. Negative connotations were read into this nickname as well as into the wolf's image. For example, it was believed that plague, cholera and other diseases come in the form of a large white dog. Thus, the front page of Jan Jurkowski's verse depicts the figure of a semi-wolf that symbolizes the Tatars (Jurkowski, 1607). During the Counter-Reformation and the strengthening of religious commitment, the folklore representation of the wolf as the devil, and the Tatars via it, as servants of the devil, had a fertile ground. All the more so because publicists called the Tatar attacks a punishment for the fall of morality and piety in Polish society.



Fig. 2. Engraving from the “Sem majowy” verse by Marcin Bielski (Bielski, 1889) The top part of this xylography depicts an eagle (Emperor) hovering over a wolf (Ottoman Empire) that is holding the ring of St. Stephen (symbolizing the part of Hungary conquered by the Turks) in its mouth. A pelican (The Pope) looks at it, but does not take part in what is happening. The approach of the enemy is symbolized by a crescent moon that floats along the river and approaches the shore. The Harpy (Tatars) are also monitoring the conflict, but do not interfere in it.

Describing enemies, poets and writers often focused on their terrible appearance. And Paszkowski was no exception:

*And the face, if you look, is terrible
a z twarzy strażni na poyrzeniu (Paszkowski, 1615: 3)*

Perhaps it was a simple binary opposition: we are handsome, our enemies are ugly. But, in my opinion, the roots of this characterization should be sought in the aesthetic ideas of the late Middle Ages and early Modern Age, and they go back to Antiquity. In accordance with the ancient principle of *kalokagatia*, everything in man should be harmonious, outer beauty should be supplemented by the inner one. If the author was pointing out the outer "ugliness" of the Tatars, he wanted to show not their anatomical features, but their inner ugliness.

It was remembered several times in the text of "Dzieie tvreckie" that the Turks were sodomites. The author was emphasizing this specifically when describing the main character's stay as captive. The main character killed the young son of his master when he tried to persuade him to homosexual relationship. I believe that repeated mentioning of homosexuality of the Turks should have strengthened the reader's thoughts about the sinfulness of the entire people (Turks and Tatars). And here the historical authenticity was to give way to the ideological component of "Dzieie tvreckie". In fact, Paszkowski knew Islamic traditions quite well and most likely knew that homosexuality is considered a sin in Islam, just like in Christianity.

An interesting way to demonstrate the nasty nature of the Tatars was to say that they did not consume wine and bread (Paszkowski, 1615: 3), which, of course, was not true. The author's statement has Biblical roots. For a Christian reader, wine and bread meant the body and blood of Christ. Paszkowski was showing in such an exquisite way that the enemies of Poland were not Christians.

Many of the images used by Paszkowski come from the political theory of the time. The poet wrote that the Turks and Tatars do not have an established law and legislature:

*A very cruel people who live a filthy life,
Have no honesty or law.
Find justice in the square
Mars attends to matters in a contest.
Narod to zbyt okrutny, żywota sprosnego*

*Wiary y Cnoty niema, ni prawa żadnego.
... Naydzie tam sprawedliwość pretką na rynku,
Mars sprawę wnet odprawi w takim pojedynku* (Paszkowski, 1615: 2-3).

For a Polish nobleman, the absence of law in a country was impossible. If there is no law in the state, it ceases to exist. The nobility constantly emphasized that *nierzqd* (disorder, bad state of law) is better than *biezrzqd* (lack of law, anarchy), since a bad condition of law can be improved by good laws. The right, in the understanding of the law, was respected by the nobility unequivocally. According to the nobility, the law is the sovereign in the state (*prawo pospolite*), and not the King who is a mere servant of the law.

As a consequence of the lack of law, the Turks and the Tatars were subject to the unlimited power of the Sultan:

*It is only by the will of the Sultan that everyone acts,
If he tells them to kill, they will kill, slaughter, burn and poison
Lecz wolą Cesarzką wszyscy postępuią,
Każe zabić zabią, zetną, spalą, struą.*

Opposite this verse, there is a note of explanation in the text: *Such a terrible thing in Turkey is the will of the Sultan* (Paszkowski, 1615: 49). This situation of rightless existence in the state was absolutely unacceptable for the Polish nobility who considered the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth administration model (*monarchia mixta*) ideal.

Paszkowski called the Tatars a nomadic people. On the one hand, this is an obvious statement. On the other hand, in the political theory of the 16th and 17th centuries nomadic peoples were considered to be humble in origin compared to settled farmers. This way the author once again demonstrated the Polish advantage over their opponents.

4. Conclusion

Thus, Marcin Paszkowski in his poem "Dzieie tvreckie y utarczki kozackie z Tatary" tried to create one of the first country-research descriptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The narrative to which the author was beading the information was the story of "a simple, not noble man whom his fate sent to different parts of the Ottoman Empire" (Kuran, 2005: 51). Despite the obvious successes and independence, the non-compilativity of the work, the author could not free himself from the prejudices of his time. First of all, they concerned the descriptions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ancestral enemies, i.e. the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate. Part of the text had subtext, and had to convince the Polish reader of Warsaw's advantage over Istanbul. To do this, Paszkowski used a system of topoi which was clear to the reader. These topoi were coming from the religious worldview, ethical, aesthetic and political theories of the late Middle Ages and the early Modern Age.

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