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CROSS-CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF TYRANNY AS DEPICTED IN JESUIT SCHOOL PLAYS PERFORMED IN THE POLISH- -LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

ABSTRACT

Deeply influenced by Ciceronian and Aristotelian political doctrines on the 'republic', political thinkers in the decades of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth addressed the issues of the 'nature or health of the commonwealth, the nature of mixed government, the notion of just war, the limits of monarchy i.e. the despot versus tyrant'. These debates were immortalized in an abundance of political writings on the limits and power, the nature of good government and the importance of civic virtue and civic liberties, which sought to approach these issues in practical terms with respect to the republic or commonwealth as one 'political community'. It is in this backdrop of rich political debate on the nature of the Commonwealth, that the Jesuits who first came to Poland in 1565, introduced a schooling system based in Christian humanism and which educated in civic virtues. Jesuit theatre played a crucial role in the education of young men, many of whom would later become distinguished statesmen and churchmen in the country. This paper will provide an analysis of chosen Jesuit school playbills that exploit the motif of the monarch-tyrant as represented in Jesuit plays that of Chinese or Japanese motifs. The assumption is that the very choice and rendition of topic provides and reveals the early modern Poland-Lithuania sentiments and reflections on the limits of power and right to individual freedoms. By doing so, this paper hopes also to elucidate why this topic so appealed to the minds and audiences of Early Modern Jesuit School and explain the significance of the chosen playbills school theatre understood within its culture-specific historical context.

Key words: Jesuit school, civic education, Jesuit school theatre, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jesuit theatre, print culture

Deeply influenced by Ciceronian and Aristotelian political doctrines on the 'republic', political thinkers in the early decades of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, at a comparatively early stage in European early modern political thought sought to answer questions on good government and statecraft. What is good government? Who is the just ruler? What are the limits to power and who is the good citizen? What is the common good? The answers to these questions were sought in practical terms with respect to the republic or commonwealth as an 'organic political community'. For instance, one of the most influential thinkers in this early decades of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1503-1572), who in his work *Commentariorum de Republica emendanda libri quinque* (On the reform of the Commonwealth, Kraków 1551) spoke of the republic or commonwealth as an 'organic political body', in which the health of the organism as a whole is dependent on the health of its separate parts.

It is in this backdrop of rich political debate on the nature of the Commonwealth, that the Jesuits who first came to Poland in 1565, introduced a schooling system based on the principles of *Christianitas* and *pietas*, which formed in civic virtues by teaching subjects such as rhetoric, philosophy and national history. Within this program, Jesuit theatre played a crucial role in the education in rhetoric but was also an opportunity for the schools to promote themselves, as these performances were not only performed for the pupils of the school, but also to their families and relatives and the rest of the townsfolk.

The omnipresence of political writings and abundance of political reflections, which particularly appealed to the imagination of the youth inscribed in Jesuit schools, many of whom belonged to noble families or *szlachta* reveals the extent and depth of cultural accommodation which the Jesuits engaged in on embarking the task of instruction in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As scholar Kazimierz Puchowski has argued elsewhere, history played an important role in this program of civic education. It is to use the words of Jolanta Rzegocka, the Jesuits *tuned in their model of education to the needs of a country which cherished classical republican ideas and whose political thinkers constantly discussed the nature and goals of political community, the arrangement of its political institutions, and the roles and duties of its citizens and rulers.*¹

It is therefore not surprising that alongside the wide variety of themes of Jesuit drama, the art of government and statecraft were amongst the topics they exploited. Who was a good monarch, and in contrast what is tyranny? How does a monarch become a tyrant? These are just some of the frequent 'arguments' or overall themes, which these plays dealing with tyranny sought to address.

For reflecting on the nature of tyranny is in effect a reflection on the nature of the limits of power and the nature of the commonwealth. Tyranny is about the abuse of power, when one man's will becomes the rule of law, and one man becomes the sole measure and source of legal judgement. Any reflection on tyranny implies reflections

¹ J. Rzegocka, "Civic Education on Stage: Civic Values and Virtues in the Jesuit Schools of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth", in R. Maryks (ed.), *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, Leiden-Boston 2016, p. 42, cf. also pp. 41-60.

on civic virtues and the values it encroaches, that is the common good, the commonwealth, as a good to which all men of the kingdom or nation should contribute, a common good which all men should defend and a common good from which all should benefit, as Modrzewski himself states in his book *De republica emendanda*. *For the Commonwealth is like one animal whose body cannot be ruled solely by any of its parts, neither the eye, nor hands, nor legs but rather all parts shall commonly rule for the cause of the other parts. For such is the rule of each part so as to benefit the entire body: so that if one of the parts is well, so is the entire body; but if one of its parts is unwell, so the rest of the body suffers.*²

Modrzewski makes the distinction between the three types of governments, monarchy, aristocracy and politeia as opposed to tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, distinguishing those systems of government, which are ruled by men of virtue or by men of vice. Preference is however made on the republican political system, mixed state or *respublica mixta*, which incorporates all the elements of monarchy, aristocracy and politeia, and formed the basis of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.³ *But that republic which is best is that which bears each of the three kinds of republics, where the monarch rules all, office is entrusted to wise men, whilst all men are free to reach fame and honour if only their bravery so allows them to.*⁴

Tyranny is a disruption of this civic order. It is not only an imperfect but also unjust form of government that arises from its abuse of power and lack of rule of law. If the Commonwealth was to be perceived as an organic unit, then its every part regardless of its role and function is important and has a contribution to make and more importantly is equally subject to the rule of law, regardless of position or rank. *For the Commonwealth is like the body of an animal, for whom all its parts are nourished by one spirit and all its actions are drawn from one source; it is like the spiritual body of the Church, whose head is but one, Christ. And since Christ gave one body to all its parts, of which is the Church, then why should not one law apply to all men, who are all nourished under One Lord. [...] For the Commonwealth should be ruled not by the will of the King, but according to the written law. Tyranny, on the contrary is the rule of the King's will, who dictates the rule of the law. This only comes from the corruption of the heart, and should be prohibited, and even banned from the Commonwealth. [...] As Aristotle wrote, it is not man, whom we allow to rule, but reason; and this is the Natural Law, for wise men need reason for dealing with affairs. For men are only guardians and defenders of the Law. For it is not right for anyone to have the law in his might: this would be tyranny.*⁵

² A.F. Modrzewski, *O naprawie Rzeczypospolitej*, transl. by C. Bazylik, Łosk 1577, book 1, ch. 1, p. 3. All translations from Polish into English are the author's.

³ For a thorough discussion of this cf. R. Frost, *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania*, vol. 1: *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, 1385-1569*, Oxford 2015; D. Pietrzyk-Reeves, "O pojęciu 'Rzeczypospolita' (res publica) w polskiej myśli politycznej XVI wieku", *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, vol. 62, no. 1 (2010), pp. 37-63; B. Wagner-Rundell, *Common Wealth, Common Good. The Politics of Virtue in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania*, Oxford 2015.

⁴ A.F. Modrzewski, *De republica emendanda*, Venice 1577, book 1, ch. 2, pp. 3-4.

⁵ Idem, *O naprawie Rzeczypospolitej*, book 3, ch. 1, pp. 100-101.

It was in this country immersed in a deep cultural tradition of lively political debate that respected negotiation and consensus that the Jesuits found themselves in when introduced here by the Cardinal of Warmia, Stanislaus Hosius in Braniewo in 1565. The Jesuit College of Braniewo would find itself in an enclave of Protestant culture, and so the need to polemicise and engage in apologetical debates that inspired the program of instruction. The school would also open to these young men the prospect of missionary works, in Germany or Scandinavia but also to the more exotic lands of Jesuit missions in Far East Asia.

Indeed one obvious reason for including Far Eastern Asian elements in Jesuit school plays was the promotion of the Jesuit Missions in China, Japan and India. As Jan Okoń has argued elsewhere, the Jesuits from its earliest plays, stressed the global extent of their missions, so as to demonstrate the universality of their pastoral work and introduce elements of novelty by incorporating elements of exoticism from the culture of the New World and Far East Asia in their school plays. It is worth remembering that as early as 1552, the Basque Jesuit, St. Francis Xavier reached the island of Shangchuan in the Southeastern coast of mainland China whilst the Italian Jesuit, Matteo Ricci reached mainland China by 1582. A careful analysis of the sources as listed in the plays, often enumerated as the 'the source' in the playbills, show that the Jesuits disposed of earlier historiographical accounts written by missionaries by Jesuit missionaries to the Far East, such the Waloon Jesuit Nicole Trigault, the Italian Martino Martini and Philippe Couplet, both accompanied the Polish Jesuit Michał Boym mission to to the Yongli Emperor and Prince of Gui, Zhu Youlang (reigned 1646-1662). Citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, mainly Polish Jesuits who travelled mainly to China and Japan as missionaries of the Catholic faith such as Wojciech Męciński (1598-1643), Andrzej Rudomina (1596-1641), Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki (1610-1656), Michał Boym (1614-1659) and Jan Chryzostom Bąkowski (1672-1731) have left testimonies in authored printed and manuscript works and correspondences.⁶

⁶ It is interesting to note that Polish sinologists, Janusz Chmielewski (1916-1998) and Jan Reychman (1910-1975) look to the work of these Polish Jesuits as the beginnings of Polish sinological studies. Cf. J. Chmielewski, J. Reychman, "Witold Jabłoński (1901-57) i warszawski ośrodek sinologiczny", in J. Reychman (ed.), *Szkice z dziejów polskiej orientalistyki*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1966, pp. 190-205.

Table of existing Jesuit playbills with Asian motifs performed in the years 1689-1749⁷

Author	Title of Source	Title as it appears in the playbill	Place of performance	Year of performance	Number according to W. Korotaj, <i>Dramat staropolski</i> , 1970 (the number of the volume is provided in brackets)
no author provided	no source provided	Ingeniosus Amor probatum	Glogow	May 1689	vol. 2, part 1, no. 90
	Ex hist. jap.	Arbor Vitae seu Crux meliorem	Vilnius	1691	vol. 2, part 1, no. 532
Maffei, Giovanni Pietro, SI (1530-1603)	Historiarum Indicarum	Tutela crucis in Xumitanda	Vilnius	1693	vol. 2, part 1, no. 536
	Ex historia relatione de Ortu et progressu Fidei Orthodoxae in Regno Chinensi	Lusus Fortunae Genialis	Vilnius	16 February 1695	vol. 2, part 1, no. 539
Kircherus, Athanasius, SI (1602-1680)	China monumentis qua sacris qua profani ... illustrata	China humanarum scientiarum occasione	Vilnius	1 July 1695	vol. 2, part 1, no. 540
Couplet, Philippe, SI (1623-1693)	Tabula Chronologica Monarchiae Sinicae iuxta cyclos annorum LX Ab anno ante Christum 2952. Ad annum 1693	Montes aurei pretiosa magni Chim-Tam Sinensium	Vilnius	31 July 1703	vol. 2, part 1, no. 555

⁷ This table of 29 playbills has been extracted from the 720 plays recorded by Władysław Korotaj.

Delaet, Ioannes (also Joannes de Laet, 1581-1645)	Indiae verae num: 10	Conviva dolus in Abdulgano Syndae principae	Vilnius	9 February 1709	vol. 2, part 1, no. 566
Bartoli, Daniello (1608-1685)	Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù	Opoka krwawe z siebie tocząca zdroie	Vilnius	18 April 1710	vol. 2, part 1, no. 571
Tanner, Matej, SI (1630-1692)	Societatis Iesu, usque ad sanguinis et vitae profusio- nem mili- tans Europa, Asia, Africa et America contra gentiles	Epulum in fame et siti adolescentibus Christianis	Grodno	1712	vol. 2, part 1, no. 114
Szpot, P [perhaps Szpot, Dunin Tomasz]	Collectanae hi- storiae Sinensis abo A. 1641 ad 1700	Terminus inter- minabilis amo- ris crucis	Grodno	14 March 1712	vol. 2, part 1, no. 115
Trigaut, N SI [Trigalt, Nicolas, 1577-1628]	De Christianis apud Japonis	Terminus inter- minabilis amo- ris crucis	Grodno	14 March 1712	vol. 2, part 1, no. 115
Iuvencius, Ioseph, SI (Jouvancy, Joseph, 1643-1719)	Historiae Societatis Iesu pars quinta ab anno 1591 ad 1616	Pondus ignis in statera doloris	Warsaw	1713	vol. 2, part 1, no. 445
Maffei, Giovanni Pietro, SI (1530-1603)	Historiarum Indicarum lib. 10	Anni crescen- tiae in flore aetatis	Warsaw	8 April 1713	vol. 2, part 1, no. 446
Iuvencius, Ioseph (Jouvancy, Joseph, 1643-1719)	Historia Societatis Iesu, pars quinta	Persona promota Homunanga olim	Vilnius	1716	vol. 2, part 1, no. 589
Lyraeus, Hadrianus, SI [Adrien van Lyere ?] (1588-1661)	Lib. 7, cap. 1, ex. Hist. Japon.	Corona doloris	Braniewo	8 February 1722	vol. 2, part 1, no. 24
	Ex Ann[alibus] Jap[onicis]	Conviva do- lus, ad laetas Bacchi	Braniewo	6 February 1723	vol. 2, part 1, no. 26

	Ex Ann[alibus] Jap[onicis], fol. 344	Arbor Vitae crux Christi	Braniewo	20 March 1723	vol. 2, part 1, no. 27
Martino, Martini, SI (1614-1661)	Sinicae histo- riae decas pri- ma, lib. 8	Flos regum inscriptus nomine	Vilnius	6 February 1723	vol. 2, part 1, no. 607
	Ex Ann[alibus] Jap[onicis]	Arbor Vitae crux Christi	Braniewo	20 March 1723	vol. 2, part 1, no. 27
	Hist. Jap. par: 2, lib 4, C. 1	Flaminia inver- sae Romae	Vilnius	13 April 1723	vol. 2, part 1, no. 608
		Theatrum or- bis eruditi	Vilnius	14 July 1733	vol. 2, part 1, no. 630
Hazart, Cornelius, SI (1617-1690)	Historia Japonicae ec- clesiae, part 6, cap. 4	Castor et Pollux	Braniewo	1724	vol. 2, part 1, no. 29
Martino, Martini, SI (1614-1661)	Sinicae hi- storiae decas prima	Sol ab umbra clarior orbi	Grodno	31 July 1724	vol. 2, part 1, no. 127
Iarricus, Petrus, SI (Du Jarric, Pierre, 1566-1617)	Historia Indica [Thesaurum Rerum Indicarum]	Punctum honoris ad rotundam	Grodno	7 February 1728	vol. 2, part 1, no. 130
Tanner, Matej, SI (1630-1692)	Societatis Jesu usque ad sanguinis et vitae profusio- nem militans in Europa, Asia, Africa et America contra gentiles	Liber passus ligatae ilin	Vilnius	July 1738	vol. 2, part 1, no. 635
Possinus, Petrus, SI (1609-1686)	Historia Societatis Iesu pars quinta	Victor et victus	Vilnius	28 February 1740	vol. 2, part 1, no. 637
Sacchino, Francisco, SI (1570-1625)	Historia Societatis Iesu pars quinta	Victor et victus	Vilnius	28 February 1740	vol. 2, part 1, no. 637
Tanner, Matej, SI (1630-1692)	Societatis Iesu, usque ad sanguinis et vitae profusio- nem mili- tans Europa, Asia, Africa et America contra gentiles	Victor et victus	Vilnius	28 February 1740	vol. 2, part 1, no. 637

Iuencius, Ioseph, SI (Jouvancy, Joseph, 1643-1719)	Historiae Societatis Jesu	Felicitas con- stantiae comes sue Titus	Vilnius	1749	vol. 2, part 1, no. 643
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Thanks to the wide reception of the Jesuit plays, and geography of Jesuit schools which were scattered throughout the Commonwealth, these plays were often the first opportunities through which the locals of a city could learn of exotic lands, which served as an opportunity for the Jesuits to boast of the far-reaching extent of their missions.

In the analysis of Jesuit school plays of Far Eastern elements in Jesuit play performed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, it is surprising to find that alongside the theme of conversion, the portrayal of martyrdom of the Chinese Christian convert who remains faithful to the newly discovered faith, plays that portrayed the tyrant ruler were likewise quite a popular theme and comprised one third of the topics of these plays. This very choice of topic is a testimony to the prevailing deep sensitivity to individual and civic liberties, and the antipathy to absolute power, which prevailed in the Commonwealth. This is understandable and in a way unique for its time. On the one hand, the Jesuit system of instruction with its emphasis on civic virtue, public rhetoric and debate best equipped its young students to later engage in public disputations in Church, in court and most important in the Polish *Sejm*, or Lower House of the Parliament.⁸ This was especially valued in a country where consent and negotiation were values esteemed in government, hence the capacity to negotiate and debate on religious issues in the case for Churchmen, the capacity for public debate on the one hand and deep respect for individual liberties were crucial, hence the great emphasis Jesuit education on rhetoric and even public performance. School theatre was the natural environment where both the practical skills of speech and performance and the cardinal virtues of justice and temperance could be conveyed to the youth. But also as mentioned above the very choice of theme, reflect the sensitivities of the period which demonstrate a keen awareness for the limits of power and rule.⁹

Let us now proceed in analysing of one particular play, and demonstrate how it is on the one hand an important artefact of Jesuit cultural accommodation, but should also be seen in the context of the reflections on the limits of power. The play focuses on the tyrant's abuse of power and what it leads to – rebellion and mutiny, hence civic resentment and disorder.

⁸ For a thorough discussion of the significant role of Jesuit education in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth cf. K. Puchowski, *Edukacja historyczna w jezuitckich kolegiach Rzeczypospolitej 1565-1773*, Gdańsk 1999. For the contribution of the Jesuits in early modern Polish-Lithuanian culture cf. L. Grzebień, S. Obirek (eds.), *Jezuici a kultura polska. Materiały sympozjum z okazji Jubileuszu 500-lecia urodzin Ignacego Loyoli (1491-1991) i 450-lecia powstania Towarzystwa Jezusowego (1540-1990)*, Kraków, 15-17 lutego 1991 r., Kraków 1993.

⁹ I refer the reader to Jolanta Rzegocka's article, "Civic Education on Stage...", pp. 41-60, where she deals extensively on how civic education was transmitted through theatre in Jesuit schools.

In 1695, the 'noble and splendid youth of the Academy of Vilnius' performed for the 'public' a play entitled *Lusus fortunae genialis inter tragicas honoris regii, livoris et doli ruinas in xunchi chinorum rege lamaque eiusdem regni profligatissimo tyranno ab iuventutis eloquentiae acad. Vilnensis s.i. In spectaculum anticenerale propositus* (A play on the Capricious Fortune on the Tragic Fall of the Royal honour, envy and treason in Shunchi emperor and Lama the despicable tyrant of that kingdom as witnessed by the kingdom of China, performed by the noble and splendid youth of the class of rhetoric of the Academy of Vilnius as a Lenten play in the year 1695.)

As the title informs us, the play was performed in 'public' during 'Lent', which liturgically is the period of Christian penitence and conversion. The play tells the story of the how justice is cruelly measured on the King, so for men regardless of position and rank it is a warning against a life of vice. The title itself puts a clear judgment on the main protagonist of the play, the Shunzhi the Emperor and Lama, calling them 'the despicable tyrant'. It informs us of the tyrant's humiliation, his loss of 'royal honour', calling his 'fall' as 'tragic' being the result of 'envy and treason'. This play is in three acts is set in the seventeenth century of the third reign of the Qing Dynasty, the first of that dynasty to rule the entire of China, during the reign of tells the story of the Shunzhi Emperor (reigned 1641-1666) and Lama, the leader of a group of rebels. Lama, through the scheming manipulation is condemned by the Tribunal of Mandarins and the Emperor is sentenced to exile, and who in turn is informed of this verdict whilst in a feast. Lama's most loyal collaborator, Talinga, who comes to the feast in search of his master – Lama, and in fact is tricked into thinking that Lama has already left the country. Talinga in the meanwhile is poisoned, and this leaves the rebelling Ming loyalists without a capable leader, making them thus at the mercy of the Emperor Shunzhi. The Emperor pleased with turn of events turns to the oracle, and is informed of the fall of his reign. In the meanwhile Lama succeeds in capturing the palace and kills Emperor Shunzhi. Lama then sits on the throne and his head turns into a head of a monkey. He is then arrested by the Mandarins and killed. The play ends with an allegorical summary of the play, personified Fortune and the 'Genius' of Shunzhi forces the 'Genius' of Lama to leave the country, the 'Genius' of Lama however is prevented by the personified vices of 'Envy and Treason'. The 'Genius' of Lama together with 'Envy' and 'Treason' suffocate Emperor Shunzhi. Lama occupies the throne for a moment, only to be eventually thrown away by 'Fortune' despite 'Envy' and 'Treason's' attempts to keep him on the throne.

The playbill informs us that this play was taken from a book written in its shortened title, *Ex historica relatione de Ortu et progressu Fidei Orthodoxae in Regno Chinensi*. This in all probability the *Historica relatio de Ortu et Progressu Orthodoxae in Regno Chinensi per Missionarios Societatis Jesu ab Anno 1581 usque ad Annum 1669. Ratisbonae* by the German Jesuit and astronomer Johann Schall von Bell. Born in Cologne in 1592, he joined the Belgian Jesuit Nicole Trigault in 1618 and eventually died in China in 1666. During the Ming-Qing Transition, he was able to install himself at the Shunzhu Court and at one point became the Director of the Imperial Observatory and Tribunal of Mathematics. His political position allowed him to acquire the Emperor's

permission to build Jesuit Churches across the country. Unfortunately, after Shunzhi's death, von Bell Schall was arrested, temporarily released due to poor health conditions and eventually died in 1666.

This particular play is believed to have been written by Polish Jesuit and Neo-latin writer Krzysztof Eynarowicz (1644-1714). Aside from the detailed rather insider knowledge of Chinese imperial history, the play also incorporates elements of Chinese mythology, such as the changing of Lama's head into a monkey. The transformation of the Emperor's face into a monkey via as we can understand by a metaphysical power is used to signify the moral degradation of Lama, who overcome by the vices of 'Envy and Revenge' is degraded in the order of beings and turns into a kind of monster.

Aside from these exotic elements, the play uses this story to convey the moral degradation and civic disorder which comes with the abuse of power. Abuse of power leads to rebellion, mutiny and civic disorder. Shinzhu who is described as '*Tyrannus solium ascendens*' comes to power himself through the abuse of power, this in turn begets the rebellion and discontent of his subjects. But more importantly, the play is also a commentary on what moral degradation of a life of vice can lead to, as exemplified in Lama's head turning into a monkey. Vice cannot be orderly, honourable or but 'vile and ugly'. It makes a statement then on the importance of virtue, be it moral or civic virtue and the limits of human power and abuse, evil will beget evil and punishment will come to those who deserve it. Hence, men do not have the last say, rather there is someone or something beyond man, who puts measure on his abuses. Lastly, as this was performed in during '*In spectaculum anticenerale propositus*' there is the implied message to use the play to reflect on the need to repent and convert, and live a life of Christian virtue.

By way of comparison, a similar theme of a tyrant, who encroaches his right to power and commits a crime is also portrayed in another play performed in the Academy of Vilnius in 1753. *Maurycjusz cesarz surowej sprawiedliwości Boskiej przykład* (An Example of the Strict Divine Justice as portrayed in Mauricius the Caesar) was performed to the public on February 27, 1753 by the 'fine young men of the Academy of Vilnius'.¹⁰ The play depicts an incident in the life of Byzantine Emperor, Mauricius Flavius Tiberius (c. 539-602) which has been immortalised in a fresco in the Church of St. Mary Peribleptos in today's Istanbul in which the Emperor refused to pay a small ransom to free his soldiers who had been captured from the Avars. As a consequence, his soldiers died of famine and their General Phocus was subsequently humiliated in the city of Constantinople.

As the 'argument' of this playbill informs us, Mauricius, was once a pious and devout king who showed coldness of heart and lack of mercy for his own subjects, he refused to pay small ransom of subjects who were imprisoned as prisoners of war. At one point, realizing his lack of charity and compassion, he asks God for forgiveness, expressing his willingness to suffer any punishment, which seems to come in the form of the mutiny and betrayal of his sons and army.

¹⁰ *Maurycjusz cesarz surowej sprawiedliwości Boskiej przykład*, Vilnius 1754, p. 1, Copy of Jagiellonian University Library Shelfmark BJ 32821, 155 x 180 mm.

This story of the Byzantine Emperor, Mauricius was particularly popular in late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was performed in many Jesuit school throughout Europe. Jan Okoń notes that it there were up to 47 recorded performances in Jesuit schools alone throughout Europe during the years 1603-1768.¹¹ And this excludes six performances noted in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the years 1671-1761. These include performances in Jesuit and Piarist Schools in Wilno in 1671 and 1678, Zamość in 1747, Przemyśl in 1753, Wilno in 1754, Poznań in 1754 and Chelm in 1761. What should account for the popularity of this work in these years? There is the obvious theme of repentance making it an ideal play, which was performed during the Lenten season. Here we have a King, who having realized his sin, his own lack of mercy and compassion to his imprisoned and captured subjects, abandons himself to Divine Justice so as to ask for forgiveness. The Emperor patiently bears his sufferings, which are the just punishment for his sins, even it meant the loss of all his power and his own children. We also have the implied reflection on the nature of the Just King, above whom stands Divine Justice. Hence, the story of the Ruler, whose coldness of heart and lack of mercy makes him treat his subjects unjustly by refusing to safeguard their freedom rings a tone of warning and reprimand on future rulers, lest they forget the measure and strength of their power. It is perhaps a reminder of the nature of Divine Justice, which duly comes and is measured on all, regardless of rank and social status.

The theme of the tyrant, as depicted in the two plays discussed above, betrays not only the historical context in which they were performed but more importantly the virtues and values which citizens of the Commonwealth esteemed and aspired for. Their time allocation being performed in the Lenten season makes the theme of the conversion of a tyrant a powerful medium to convey the significance of justice and mercy, repentance and reparation. As in the case of Emperor Shunzhi and Lama and Emperor Mauricius, the story of these two monarchs shows them as tyrants who abuse of their power. However, as both plays also show that the power of the tyrant shall also be measured against him – by the Fortune or Divine God. On the more culturally specific context of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, these two plays which illustrate the story of rise, fall and conversion of tyrants reveal the civic virtues and values most esteemed during the period of religious tolerance and *demokracja szlachecka* (nobleman's democracy). The plays conveyed the evil of tyranny and the need for delimitation of power, as any form of absolute monarchy – as depicted in these plays – only leads to corruption of both the ruler and the nation. The very choice therefore of these themes to be performed in Jesuit schools, which educated the sons of noblemen of the Commonwealth, could not ring an even stronger note of warning to the audience. The tyrant is primarily seen as the incarnation of vice, as one who lacks moral and civic virtue – Emperor Shunzhi falls into greed, Lama is fuelled by revenge and treason and

¹¹ W. Hahn, "Nieznany dialog chelmski o cesarzu Maurycjuszu z r. 1747", *Pamiętnik Literacki*, vol. 27, no. 1/4 (1930), p. 499; J. Okoń, *Dramat i teatr szkolny. Sceny jezuickie XVII wieku*, Wrocław 1970, pp. 394-395; W. Korotaj et al. (eds.), *Dramat staropolski od początków do powstania sceny narodowej. Bibliografia*, vol. 2: *Programy drukiem wydane do r. 1765*, part 1: *Programy teatru jezuickiego*, Wrocław 1976, pp. 257, 550-551.

Mauricius shows the disorderly love of wealth, lack of sympathy and compassion, in being unwilling to pay the small ransom that would free his subjects. Hence essentially, the tyrant is also seen as the enemy of the state, who brings disorder and injustice and therefore had to be duly punished if social order is to be restored.

These plays, seen within the formational role and function of Jesuit education, in a natural way are plays that deal with the triumph of virtue over vice, even in those extreme cases of complete moral degradation, as long as the sinner is open to conversion. These plays illustrate that the road to virtue is open, but one has to recognize one's fault, repent and convert from his ill ways. Seen however in the socio-political context, the need to live a life of moral virtue was expected of the ruler, who by virtue of his social and political status had to be exemplary in his own civic life. In a way, this could have as a lesson transmitted to the young boys of the Jesuit schools, many of whom came from noble families and had real prospects of being included within the ranks of civil servants, in the court, diplomacy or Church hierarchy. The life of moral virtue, promoted in these schools as portrayed in these plays, was expected of such young men, who were to be employed in political office and had thus had to be models of virtue and lead exemplary lives of moral conduct.

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