

## MIDDLE CLASS HISTORIOGRAPHY IN 17TH CENTURY POLAND (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ROYAL PRUSSIA)

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LECH MOKRZECKI

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Middle class historiography in Poland of the Baroque period is a particularly interesting phenomenon. It developed in a different way to the output of authors from the nobility and it is worth noting that it represented ideals and postulates of townspeople both as a whole social class and as citizens of individual cities. Still, the factor that built up the middle class character of the output was the authors' identification with the needs and viewpoints of that class, and not necessarily their actual social background.

We can easily notice differences in understanding history and the aims of historiography among city-dwellers depending on their education and the place they studied at. That is why historical works written by professors of academic gymnasiums (grammar schools), as well as of many parish schools, clearly reveal a broad knowledge of scientific assumptions accepted in various leading European countries, and often reflect solutions proposed there<sup>1</sup>. References to foreign assumptions took the form of either acceptance of or of polemics with some of the tendencies. The type of attitude depended on convictions dominating the middle class in a given territory.

As from the 15th c. Royal Prussia included the territories of three Polish voivodships: the regions of Pomerania, Malbork, Chełmno and their vicinities, and Warmia. The area abounded in wealthy cities like Danzig, Toruń, and Elbląg. After the Reformation a majority of the population was

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<sup>1</sup> From the mid 16th c. Royal Prussia had three academic gymnasiums which observed the curriculum of initial college years: in Elbląg (founded in 1535), in Danzig (1558), and in Toruń (1568). See: L. MOKRZECKI, *Errungenschaften des lutheranischen Schulwesens in Polen in der Zeit der Aufklärung* in: "Informationen zur Erziehungs- und Bildungshistorischen Forschung", No. 24, vol. II, Hannover, 1984, p. 177; Id., *Academical Gymnasiums in Poland in 16th-18th c., Their Bonds with Universities Abroad* in: *Higher Education and Society. Historical Perspectives*, vol. I, Salamanca, 1985, p. 479; see also: J. MATERNICKI, *Kultura historyczna dawna i współczesna* (Historical Education in the Past and in Modern Times), Warsaw, 1979, p. 370.

of Lutheran faith, rarely Calvinist or Catholic, and religious disputes constituted an additional factor influencing the development of any scientific writing.

Discussions were evoked by problems of a political, economic, governmental, educational, or religious nature. The hitherto accepted educational ideals and teaching methods often began to be questioned. The 17th century witnessed an intensification of discussions between advocates of the belief that the role of an authority should be observed, and representatives of a conviction that experience and one's own considerations were decisive in cognition. Science and knowledge found their way to lower classes raising the need for education and a drive to seek new solutions to various problems. Those phenomena had wide political, social, economic, and scientific consequences. Their results were most clearly seen just in the literary and scientific output of the Northern Polish regions. Thus, anything we might say about Pomerania applies to that region of the country which was relatively most creative in the 17th c. We must admit that there also existed significant centres of scientific life in Great Poland (e.g. in Leszno, the town of J.A. Komeński). Still, as far as middle class historiography is concerned, the latter region's achievements did not exceed those of Danzig, Toruń, and other cities in Royal Prussia.

Polish research on the Baroque epoch which was rightly called 'Le Grand Siècle' or 'Scientific Revolution' enabled us to specify criteria which then served to evaluate the total output of the 17th century. Scholarly research in the Renaissance period had been dominated by rhetoric and philological, or philosophical trends. The teaching process included an overwhelming amount of didactic, moralizing instructions.

The 17th c. trend in middle class historiography as applied to education referred to a great extent to Cicero's postulates. It paid much attention to precise stylistics and choice of argumentation based on rhetorical conceptions. Still, such an approach dominated philological works as well as speeches delivered by historians rather than other basic scientific works. It is enough to analyze the output of J. Pastorius and J. Schultz-Szulecki from Danzig or K. Hartknoch from Toruń to detect their connections with trends present in German, French, and English historiography as represented by J. Bolland, K.S. Schurzfleisch, J. Bodin, D. Papebroch, J.J. Scaliger, G. Buchanan, S. Pufendorf, T. Hobbes, J.A. de Thou, etc<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> J. PASTORIUS (1611-1681) was the author of numerous historical treatises devoted to historiography and historiosophy (*De praecipuis historiae auctoribus*, *De potissimis historiae argumentis*), ancient history (*Theodosius Magnus*), contemporary times (*Bellum Scythico-Cosacicum*). He also wrote the first school course-book on the history of Poland (*Florus Polonicus*). J. SCHULTZ-SZULECKI (1662-1704) was a lecturer in law and history. He was also the author of the *Tractatus historico-politicus de Polonia nunquam tributaria*. K. HARTKNOCH (1644-1687) wrote outlines of the history of Poland and her socio-political system (*Respublica Polonica*), the history of Prussia (*Alt und Neues Preussen*), and the history of church (*Preussische Kirchen-Historia*). See: J. SERCZYK, *Warsztat historyczny Krzysztofa Hartknocha*

Cicero's maxim: "historia magistra vitae est" was continuously remembered and a number of practical indications and theoretical considerations derived from the idea. Yet, the aims of history as the master and teacher for contemporaries were already understood differently. Representatives of middle class historiography did not attempt to write one more rhetorical lecture on historical facts and events which could be most illuminating for the present and most instructive for the future.

The reasons of the attitude lay in the fact that, particularly in the initial period of the epoch (until 1660), people developed a pragmatic view of history stressing its utilitarian and educational values useful in forming personalities and viewpoints as well as in foreseeing the directions of the development of particular states. The above trend dominated education in the period in particular cities, and thus influenced and shaped the ideas of graduates of those educational units.

Royal Prussia was also familiar with the ideas of L.V. de la Popelinière who appreciated progress in historical research and stated that his contemporaries had access to a much wider range of materials and much more versatile criticism than scholars of the ancient times<sup>3</sup>. B. Keckermann, a professor from Danzig, a disciple of Heidelberg, was the author of a treatise entitled *De natura et proprietatibus historiae commentarius* which stressed the importance of progress in history. That opinion was referred to by a widely known professor from Oxford, D. Wheare, in his work *De ratione et methodo legendi utraq. historias civiles et ecclesiasticas* (1637)<sup>4</sup>.

In Polish middle class historiography of the 17th c. we can trace some references to the trend called Baroque gothicism and hence an approach to the theological school of the Renaissance<sup>5</sup>. A significant achievement of the times was undertaking analyses of church history on the basis of reliable documentary source material and seeking proofs *ex silentio*, examining inscriptions and numismatics, questioning the authenticity of documents, etc. We must stress the tendency to retain objectivism in dealing with matters connected with the history of the church in general or in Poland. Naturally historians based themselves primarily on the Magdeburg *Centuries* by M. Flacius Illyricus because their attitude to source materials collected by Catholic writers was restricted. Still, different points of view on the same

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(1644-1687) (Historical Workshop of Christopher Hartknoch 1644-1687) in: *Księga Pamiątkowa 400-lecia Toruńskiego Gimnazjum Akademickiego* (Commemoration Book of 400th Anniversary of the Toruń Academic Gymnasium), Toruń, 1972, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup> L. V. DE LA POPELINIÈRE, *Histoire des Histoires avec l'Idée de l'Histoire accomplie*, Paris, 1599, vol. I, p. 159. See: H. BUTTERFIELD, *Man on His Past*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> B. KECKERMANN (1572-1609) was a Danzig scholar whose philosophical, geographical, or economic works were particularly popular in Europe. See: A. MOMIGLIANO, *Contributo alla storia degli studi classici*, Rome, 1955, p. 33 and the following.

<sup>5</sup> See: E. ANGYAL, *Świat słowiańskiego baroku* (The World of Slavic Baroque), Warsaw, 1971; R. MANDROU, *La France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, 1970.

question were not rejected, as can be seen in the work by K. Hartknoch: *Preussische Kirchen-Historia* (1686).

In Hartknoch's mentality we can trace the conflict between two contradictory tendencies: on the one hand it was the orthodox Lutheran faith enriched with numerous elements originating from Catholicism, on the other hand it was a critical mind often questioning the authenticity of hagiographic stories. In order to increase reliability and to enrich research methodology he often referred not only to the above mentioned *Magdeburg Centuries*, but also to the *Annales* by Cesar Baronius, *De emendatione temporum* by J. J. Scaliger, and even to J. B. Bossuet. A similar viewpoint was characteristic of Danzig theologians A. Strauch and S. Schelwig who wrote the history of the church in the 17th c.

In middle class historiography an interesting question is the attitude of particular authors towards problems connected with chronology. In the early 17th c. there existed different systems of period organization. The most widely known was the pattern of four monarchies (Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman) introduced into church historiography by bishop Orosius. The division was popularized in education by way of the work by J. Sleidan: *De quattuor summis imperiis*, and was referred to by some Pomeranian historians even at the end of the 17th c. (J. Schultz-Szulecki) since it enabled them to present a certain continuity of history.

However, the previously mentioned Hartknoch supported a different solution also based on ancient patterns but even more distinctly stressing the developmental character of historical processes. The prototype of the schema was created in the 3rd c. by the Roman historian Censorinus in his work *De die natali*. The author assumed three phases in the development of each nation: "tempus obscurum", "tempus fabulosum", and "tempus historicum"<sup>6</sup>.

Still, in their works concerning world history and written in the second half of the 17th c. (after 1660) middle class historiographers referred to modern chronology first introduced by Ch. Cellarius in the work: *Historia universalis in antiqua et medii aevi ac novam diversa*. The approach rejected the earlier conception in favour of dividing history into the ancient age, the Middle Ages, and contemporary times. The division was approved of by the townsmen writing occasional historiographic essays, as it remained in accordance with the chronological order of their chronicles, diaries, or notes accentuating the course of events in the years contemporary to them. For these reasons we can observe a gradual abandonment of the four monarchy pattern in the second half of the 17th c. The process was due to works of Ch. Cellarius as well as an old treatise by J. Bodin: *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* which shook the belief in the continuation of the Roman Empire in contemporary Germany. The question of chronology and

<sup>6</sup> It is applied by K. HARTKNOCH in *Alt und Neues Preussen* (1684).

division of times into "historia vetus", "media", and "nova" was also known from works of I. Casaubon, J. A. Bose, G. Horn, and G. Leibniz<sup>7</sup>.

The rejection of the assumption of the cyclic character of history weakened the stress so far laid on the educational significance of historical examples which had been derived from Cicero's statements. Beginning with that moment writers concentrated mainly on critical analysis of facts according to the already acknowledged development of the historical process. Less attention was paid to question of stylistics in scientific treatises.

The 17th century brought about a gradual secularization of historical research which in turn influenced the separation of "historia sacra" from "historia profana" in middle class historiography. At the same time the subject range of research enlarged<sup>8</sup>. However, an intensification of religious disputes in the second half of the 17th c. observed in cities of Royal Prussia hindered a faster development of new tendencies among representatives of middle class historiography. On the other hand lively scientific contacts maintained with numerous European centres, the phenomenon of patronage, studies abroad, buying and exchanging books, constituted factors facilitating the formation of an attitude open to new trends in human thought<sup>9</sup>.

We can equally find some other factors inspiring different groups of townsmen to undertake historiographic works. Among them we can name such elements as observation of the realities of life, the desire to prevent past events from fading in men's memory, care for the fate of the family, the city, the region, and the country. We can undoubtedly state nonaccidental parallelism between intensification of war events, internal social and economic difficulties and greater creative activity in the field of history. That is why it seems that it was the need of a better understanding and evaluation of actual events that became a significant condition inspiring the development of historiographic writing among the middle class of Royal Prussia in the Baroque epoch.

An examination of the subject range dealt with in the 17th c. allows us to distinguish two main trends which originate from different traditions and requirements of the authors. The first, bearing the character of either private or scientific writing was less dependent on the influence and the

<sup>7</sup> In the vast majority of historiographic works the conception popularized by J. Sleidan was abandoned though his course-book was used in schools up to the end of the 17th c. See: L. MOKRZECKI, *Studium z dziejów nauczania historii* (An Essay on History of History Teaching), Danzig, 1973, p. 190.

<sup>8</sup> A. KLEMP, *Die Säkularisierung der universal-historischen Auffassung. Zum Wandel des Geschichtsdenkens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 1960.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that many middle class youths travelled abroad to gain education facilitated earlier penetration of new intellectual trends into Royal Prussia. The places most often visited were Leyden, Groningen, Delft, Wittenberg, Frankfurt a/O, Altdorf, Oxford, Königsberg, Paris, Orléans, etc.

needs of the surroundings. Authors belonging to the group considered theoretical questions, sometimes joined in disputes on *Weltanschauung*: they brought into prominence differences in interpretation of past reality and eagerly returned to events of ancient history and traditions of past monarchies. The other trend was directly dependent on the demands of everyday life, actual needs, the necessity to appraise and realize a number of important questions which applied to the middle class in Poland or in the region more closely related to the author.

We must stress that historiographic writing was also instigated by professional demands, the need to shape public opinion, research ambitions, the desire to show the merits of the middle class and towns to the whole country, the influence of foreign ideals, etc.

If we take into consideration scholarly criteria, the way of carrying out scientific investigation and the choice of historiographic subject matter we can differentiate at least four main groups among middle class historiographers of the 17th c.

The first group of the greatest significance from the point of view of scientific achievements consisted of people fully deserving the name of historians *sensu stricto*. They dealt with problems which were fairly distant chronologically, they kept some distance in the evaluation and interpretation of particular questions, they considered objectivism and historical truth to be the matter of greatest importance, aimed at reconstructing facts in the most faithful way possible, sought the roots of events basing themselves on a thorough analysis of all existing and known documents and works. This type comprised primarily teachers of the best schools, as well as some representatives of the patriciate and members of city councils who carried out monographic research.

The second group consisted of those who can be called annalists of their own epoch. They related times contemporary to them, current facts, events in which they often took part themselves or which they knew from eye-witnesses. Some of them wanted to present their records to city authorities or to a wider group of readers. Only scarcely did they note particular facts merely for their own use. A part of these authors based themselves on source materials, the rest limited themselves to their own observations and opinions of other people, which made it difficult for them to remain objective while presenting particular events. This group primarily included people closely related to city councils or church institutions.

The third group can be classified as consisting of historical publicists. They dealt with matters of particular topicality. Their publications frequently initiated an exchange of opinions or heated polemics on different subjects<sup>10</sup>. This trend in middle class historiography in Poland was characterized by the great passion and personal involvement of the authors.

<sup>10</sup> Heated disputes in the 17th c. were aroused by religious questions (A. Strauch, E. König, A. Calovius), maritime trade duties and taxes (F. Lacke, K. Riccius, M. Borck) etc. See: J. TAZBIR,

The fourth group consisted of those who held various records mainly for private purposes. The records included political events, home affairs, they described actions of the authors as seen in the background of events of wider importance, recorded history of a given family or the author's own biography. It is symptomatic that these private treatises were generally constructed without any reference to clearly identified documents and only sporadically quoted any historical source material. The qualifications and education of people representing the fourth group were relatively speaking the poorest and were generally limited to a parish school<sup>11</sup>.

The phenomenon of middle class historiography of the period is strictly connected with the question of existing literary genres. There are great differences between publications and works remaining in handwritten copies, publications addressed to a wider range of readers, and those written *pro domo sua*. The choice of form was dependent on the subject, conceptions and aims of research, the level of education and the erudition of the authors.

The published works include most frequently dissertations, monographic treatises and disputes, while the manuscripts include chronicles and diaries<sup>12</sup>. Here we must remember that in Royal Prussia of the 17th c. the diary genre included broad reports on contemporary events written in the form of diaries and memoirs.

Scientific treatises and various dissertations were most representative for the output of professors of particular schools, mainly academic gymnasiums. The works differ in their subject or chronological range, sometimes in the distance the author kept while reporting events, the degree to which various sources were used, the writer's knowledge of literature, etc. In the field of didactics great popularity was gained by discussions on historical subjects which later resulted in published disputes containing either a schematic plan of a speech or a broader exposition of the main theses presented in points and followed by quoting appropriate documents on which the author based himself. The disputes were either individual works or were undertaken in collaboration under the sponsorship of a professor<sup>13</sup>.

To a widely known genre often met in Poland at the time there also belonged numerous chronicles written by middle class authors. The greatest

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*Sozinianismus in Gdańsk und Umgebung* in : "Studia Maritima", vol. I, Wrocław, 1978, p. 76. See also: *Socinianism and Its Role in the Culture of the XVI-th to XVIII-th Centuries*, ed. by L. SZCZUCKI and Z. OGONOWSKI, Warsaw, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> M. BOGUCA, *Mentalität der Bürger von Gdańsk im XVI-XVIII Jr.* in : "Studia Maritima", vol. I, Wrocław, 1978, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> L. MOKRZECKI, *W kręgu prac historyków gdańskich XVII wieku* (Among Works of Danzig Historians of the 17th Century), Gdańsk, 1974, passim.

<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that it was in Danzig in the year 1600 that its academic gymnasium as the first in Poland introduced regular lessons of history. Besides lectures teachers organized numerous disputes concerning the past.

part of the output comes from cities in Royal Prussia<sup>14</sup>. In the 17th c. historiographic chronicles comprising the history of the whole world were exceptional. Middle class writers were far more interested in the history of Poland, Royal Prussia or particular cities and their institutions (schools, churches, etc.). Generally the authors chronologically reported outlines of the complete history of a given institution or concentrated on periods considered by the authors to be the most important. Chronicles were often compilatory and included lengthy fragments frequently simply copied from earlier works. Sometimes the source was not indicated at all. That is why part of the chronicles revealed considerable skill in selecting and combining materials according to the conception of the author.

Speeches on historical subjects bore a more rhetorical character. They frequently dealt with the theory of history, methodological questions, or presented political matters followed by historical argumentation.

A particularly great number of 17th century authors connected with the city councils wrote official and private diaries. As far as their topic range is concerned we can divide them into three groups: monothematic diaries devoted to one, usually the most actual, subject; polythematic diaries comprising a greater number of problems appearing in a chronologically wider period; and diaries of the "varia" type. The latter works contained series of various thoughts and remarks of particular interest to the authors, presented on a canvas of a sketched chronological background<sup>15</sup>.

Middle class historiography of the 17th c. also included works of a historical-publicistic character. Their authors mainly employed such literary genres as disputes or epistolographic forms. The main aim of such works was to convince the reader of the correctness and validity of the author's own convictions. In order to emphasize the reliability and authority of the views presented the writers included a particularly great number of footnotes and references. In Baroque times we can also come across publications which included commentaries of works by other authors who had published their studies earlier. The commentaries supplemented or corrected the original authors' course of argumentation. Careful attention was always paid to collecting and compiling information applying to crucial facts of national significance, events valid for the region or the city. Numerous documents were copied and stored in handwriting or prepared for print<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> We know of similar research in Cracow (H. Pinocci, J. Markowic, J. Furmankowic, and others), however, the total number of works is much smaller in comparison to Danzig. See: J. BIENIARZÓWNA, *Mieszczanstwo krakowskie XVII wieku*, (Townsmen of Cracow in the 17th c.), Cracow, 1969, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Most of them still remain in manuscript and are stored in the archives of Bydgoszcz, Danzig, Toruń, and Malbork.

<sup>16</sup> Wide publicity was obtained by a work translated into Latin and enriched with an elaborated commentary by a secretary of the City Council in Danzig, R. CURICKE, dealing with maritime law of Hansa towns: *Civitatum Hanseaticarum Ordinatio Nautica et Ius Maritimum* (Bibliopolae 1667, reprinted in Halle in 1740). Similar interest was raised in Toruń by the



In the course of the 17th c. two aims dominated all middle class historiography in Poland. The first goal was to meet pragmatic, utilitarian tasks such as fulfilling the needs of the region, city, church, or even a particular group of citizens. That pragmatic trend in historiography could be easily traced in the output of tutors and clergy. Most often the trend comprised educational functions inherent already in the tradition of the Renaissance often referred to in the times. We can observe the authors' attempts to meet educational aims through their propagation of various personality models which were to aid the process of forming characters, and political and religious beliefs.

Middle class historiographers abandoned the uncritical worship of ancient culture and pragmatic questions were much more familiar to them than the cult of antiquity. Due to this fact the 17th century witnessed a wide broadening of the circle of heroes presented as ideals to be followed, with evident preference for heroic acts taken from contemporary times<sup>17</sup>.

The second basic aim of middle class historiography in the 17th c. sprang from the tendency to treat history primarily as a science, as a field comprising a wide range of problems, which aimed at discovering and determining the real course of past events, both of general and individual character. Thus we can already speak of the scientific and cognitive functions of historiography in the period. The emergence of those functions was rendered possible by introducing ever more refined research methods. In a number of works a cognitive aim was often combined with educational goals, since some authors wanted their publications to broaden the knowledge of the past, to verify the existing state of research, as well as to fulfil pragmatic and educational goals with reference to the readers.

In Danzig, Toruń, or Elbląg the cognitive and scientific functions of historiography were mainly reflected in publications by outstanding middle class authors connected with academic gymnasiums, as well as in treatises written by some councillors, secretaries, and pastors. The authors dealt with questions connected with the role and range of historical research. They stressed the necessity of an objective reconstruction of past reality already understood as a historical process. In a few cases history was presented as a compilation of facts organized chronologically. While realizing cognitive aims writers considered laws which determined the development of the world in a cyclic or cumulative way. Attempts were undertaken to detect and define the sources of progress, as well as to analyze the history of a region or city as seen against the background of the whole country or even

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*Chełmno Privilege* from 13th c. See: K. ZIELIŃSKA-MELKOWSKA, *Pierwotny i odnowiony przywilej chełmiński*, (The Original and the Renewed Privilege of Chełmno – 1233 and 1251), Toruń, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> Wider circles of society were remembered for example the personalities of outstanding military commanders of the 17th c.

Europe<sup>18</sup>. Appreciation of the cognitive function also contributed to deepening theoretical reflections on history, broadening erudition, perfecting research, giving more precise argumentation for theses presented, enlarging bibliography.

By analyzing the total historical output of the Baroque age we can find out what source materials and bibliography were most often taken into account, what research methods were applied, what criteria were used for the selection of materials, what was the degree to which the author's narrative agreed with documents, what was the attitude to acknowledged systems of chronological organisation. Some of these questions have already been given closer attention in the course of our considerations.

It is worth emphasizing that as far as methodology and historiography are concerned bonds with traditions of the Renaissance were still vital. In the first half of the 17th c. dissertations by ancient authors were often considered most authoritative and valuable for any later research in history<sup>19</sup>. The extent to which the output of ancient times was exploited depended on three factors: firstly on the place of studies and the standard of education level of the authors, secondly on the considered historical period, thirdly on the range and associations of the subject matter. Speaking in most general terms we can state that knowledge of the scientific literature of ancient Greece and Rome dominated primarily in historical publications written in particular schools while other works included that knowledge to a far smaller extent.

It seems that authors not professionally connected with schools existing in particular cities first of all made use of the most current sources and publications, as they were not obliged to present a full orientation in scientific output of past ages, century by century. However, they also happened to refer to ancient literature, though the number of ancient writers taken into account by them was much smaller and generally consisted of a few names<sup>20</sup>. We can seek for the reasons of frequent instances of ignoring the output of ancient science in the relatively positive reception and propagation of postulates connected with the development of the idea of cumulation which stressed the role of progress in history. Another reason can lie in the fact that scholars concentrated mainly on more isolated subjects connected with the history of their own town or region. Obviously such events could not be reflected in masterpieces written centuries before. Still

<sup>18</sup> For instance publications from the 17th and the 18th c. by J. P. Schultz, E. Praetorius, G. Centner, J. Schultz-Szulecki, G. Lengnich, D. Gralath, K. B. Steiner, etc. See: S. SALMONOWICZ, *Toruń w czasach baroku i oświecenia* (Toruń in the Times of Baroque and Enlightenment), Warsaw, 1982, p. 50 and the following.

<sup>19</sup> The fact is supported by remarks included in publications of Danzig scholars, P. Oelhaf, or J. Pastorius.

<sup>20</sup> Scholars usually referred to Thucydides, Livy, Florus, Herodotus, Sallust, and Cicero. See: I. LEWANDOWSKI, *Recepcja rzymskich kompendiów historycznych w dawnej Polsce* (Reception of Roman Historical Compendia in Ancient Poland), Poznań, 1976, p. 98.

an other reason can be found in the fact that for shortcomings in education some authors might have been scarcely familiar with the output of ancient times.

The vast majority of dissertations representing middle class historiography is characterized by erudition and takes advantage of new, contemporary works. A crucial methodological postulate of the period was to make oneself acquainted with various publications on the subject of planned research. That is why the majority of authors did not start studying a given question without a previous review of the related literature<sup>21</sup>.

Great difficulties arise when attempting to measure the degree to which individual authors were familiar with other source materials and analyses. Scholars of the 17th c. could not always cope with differentiating their nature and sometimes treated all material in the same way considering abstracts, dissertations and chronicles, particularly those including footnotes and references, to be of equal importance as documentary material. Thus, speaking of sources, they sometimes quoted certain fragments of earlier works. Still, they acknowledged the importance of collecting, analyzing and storing documents which in turn contributed to creating archives, preparing official historiographic deliveries in cities, and even editing collections of documents together with commentaries<sup>22</sup>.

Extensive search for source material generally formed the foundation for preparing disputes and historical-publicistic dissertations which referred to or opposed ideas accepted in that particular period. Chronicles, on the other hand, mainly comprised works on the history of Pomerania or Poland. Thus, in the case of treatises, dissertations and chronicles the existing literature and source material were made use of while referring to appropriately selected and collocated excerpts. Diaries, on the other hand, were based on different sources<sup>23</sup>. Particular works of this kind were written by individual citizens in the course or immediately after the events described. To a considerable extent diaries made use of observations and remarks of the author himself or eye-witnesses. While reporting on various and often significant events historiographers emphasized their own participation in them and pointed out which fragments of their works were written on the basis of other people's reports.

As far as the way of using source materials is concerned we can identify three different convictions among middle class historiographers. While reporting on broader chronological periods representatives of the first group revealed a higher criticism in relation to reports on contemporary times, and generally fully accepted available revelations about the past. Representative

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<sup>21</sup> Of the more recent works by foreign authors the most often referred to were J. Bodin, J. Sleidan, G. Calvisius, F. Guicciardini, A. Krantz, T. Boccalini, H. Conring, J. B. Brunemann, K. S. Schurzfleisch, F. Bacon, J. A. de Thou, and others.

<sup>22</sup> These were often by municipal authorities.

<sup>23</sup> Most diaries are still in manuscript: M. BEHM VON BEHMENFELD, *Excerpta ex diario Behmiano...*; E. DILGER, *Diarium Gedanense*, and others.

of the second group had contrary views — they treated reports on epochs distant in time with great reserve, and accepted claims concerning contemporary times. The third group of authors treated all the so far existing works and material with equal criticism and inquisitiveness.

Historiographers from Royal Prussia differed also in their views about the importance of source materials and scientific literature in research. One of the advocates of the opinion that source material plays the main role was a citizen of Danzig, A. Engelcke. He differentiated two types of material which must be included in the phase of research, the more important type being all source records, particularly official acts. Engelcke valued the latter material much more highly and stressed its documentary quality, its factual identity and its conveying true information free of tendentious comments. While speaking of various analyses the author suggested that they should be made use of cautiously, as such works often reflect the private convictions of particular authors which is why they might not be fully objective. Engelcke openly stressed that gathering various material and analytic works constituted an indispensable condition for undertaking any research. Having in mind the reliability of conclusions he put an emphasis on the necessity of thorough studies and taking into account different views and interpretations of particular questions. This attitude should render possible a detailed analysis which in turn would allow for identification of the true events<sup>24</sup>.

The fact that middle class historiographers so greatly acknowledged the importance of source as a base was strictly connected with their proposal to undertake detailed research in the archives. They understood the value of works preceding their own research, particularly publications dealing with a concrete subject. They also appreciated a proper analysis of source records gathered in the course of long lasting research in public and private archives. The idea of exchanging information and documents with archives kept in other cities was often propagated<sup>25</sup>.

Some historiographers advocated the belief that data extracted from existing analytical works were of greater importance for research. Particular emphasis was laid on the fact that with that sort of material at hand a scholar had greater possibility of comparing or accepting a critical view of facts and generalizations presented in such works<sup>26</sup>.

Middle class historiographers gradually broadened their knowledge of the literature of the Renaissance and the Baroque. They tried to realize some postulates included in that literature, like those concerning the grounds for choice of research subjects, detailed emphasis on the most important facts while simultaneously accounting for propositions to be realized on the way

<sup>24</sup> A. ENGELCKE, *Historischer Auszug von Verenderung der Religion in Dantzic*, Gedani, 1651.

<sup>25</sup> Among others the already mentioned K. Hartknoch or the mayor of Elbląg, D. Seyler, collected source material from various libraries. See: M. PAWLAK, *Z dziejów świetności Gimnazjum Elbląskiego...* (Of the Glorious History of Elbląg Gymnasium), Gdańsk, 1985, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Annales Prutenici das ist Preussische Jahr-Geschichte* written about 1689.

particular events were to be interpreted. Beginning with the mid 17th c. more and more scholars abandoned the chronological system of quoting different opinions without presenting their own view. At the beginning of the 17th c. more stress was laid on the importance of written sources, while with the second half of the century particular attention was paid to excavations and material supplied by archeology, ethnology, ethnography, numismatics, genealogy, etc<sup>27</sup>. The conviction that historical research must be based not merely on written records, but also on the output of other branches of science auxiliary to history became more and more popular. An evident shortcoming of 17th c. historiography was the credulous acceptance of claims approved of by the majority of contemporary authors. Instances of such an attitude can be noticed in many works of the period.

In the second half of the 17th c. some middle class historiographers began to seek the origins of analyzed historical phenomena in the cross influences of economic, political, or legal and governmental, factors. While analyzing contemporary events they tried to find out the reasons which determined the whole course of events. They also tried to identify current conditions dependent on the development of the general economic, social, religious, commercial, or military situation<sup>28</sup>. That is why broadening erudition, particularly as far as collecting source material is concerned, the development of inquisitiveness in relation to past reality, creating an internally consistent historical picture on the basis of the comparative analysis of material — all these phenomena marked the main directions of the evolution of research in middle class historiography of Royal Prussia in the 17th c.

A factor facilitating the realization of the accepted tasks was the structure of particular dissertations, chronicles or diaries. The majority of works were still organized chronologically: subsequent facts were recorded one by one, and sometimes the author included his own remarks on possible future solutions. However, in treatises, disputes, and in some chronicles and diaries as well the writers already tried to isolate particular events dealing with one subject out of the chronological whole. Thus, we can already speak of a chronological-systematic arrangement of the content. Sometimes scholars clearly defined the goals they had accepted and their own point of view.

When characterizing the subject range dealt with by middle class authors in the 17th c. we must differentiate several basic groups of subjects, first of all theory of history and methodological questions, and theory of teaching history. Less popular were works on general history, but those dealing with the history of Poland always aroused great interest. Still, most works referred to the past of particular cities, the history of Royal Prussia as a state, and the development of religious, social, economic and cultural

<sup>27</sup> A good example can be the activity of the rector of the academic gymnasium in Toruń, J. Wende (1635-1705).

<sup>28</sup> See the treatises of H. Pinocci in Cracow or J. Köstner, J. Schröder and M. Behm von Behmenfeld in Gdańsk.

relations within the state. Owing to this fact we can recognize historiographic works themselves as an important source of knowledge about opinions and public feelings of the society of the times, we can also learn what attempts were made to influence public opinion, and what directions were favoured.

The subject range we have already dealt with was representative for the whole period in question, though in the first half of the 17th c. scholars were still more often interested in ancient history, whereas after the year 1650 they preferred to discuss matters connected with military events, diplomatic negotiations, home affairs and religious relations, questions of trade and economy. More frequent were also instances of popularizing opinions and views included in the New Science and philosophy (*philosophia recentiorum*). Scholars popularized the works of Descartes, the achievements of the natural sciences, they commented on treatises of Bacon, Hobbes, and Leibniz. The scholars of Royal Prussia were the first in Poland to abandon a full, uncritical acceptance of Aristotle's conception<sup>29</sup>.

This survey has allowed us to show the special position middle class historiography took in Poland in the 17th c. That particular position was especially taken by historiography originating in Royal Prussia, where output in the field was the richest and the most diversified in character. It was just historiographers working in cities, representing numerous professions who were first in Poland to overcome the fascination with the ancient world, the cult of antiquity. Dealing with matters contemporary to them they revealed the progress that had already taken place in human history. Because of religious reasons historians referred mainly to the output of Protestant science, but they were also familiar with treatises by J. Bodin, C. Baronius, J. Mabillon, and then G. Vico. Those authors were often quoted

<sup>29</sup> One of the first was an outstanding mathematician from Danzig, P. Krüger (1580-1639) who undertook a dispute over Aristotle's views already at the beginning of the 17th c. See: B. BIEŃKOWSKA - T. BIEŃKOWSKI, *Kierunki recepcji nowożytnej myśli naukowej w szkołach polskich. 1600-1773* (Ways of Reception of Modern Scientific Thought in Polish Schools. 1600-1773), Part I, "Przyrodznawstwo" (Natural Sciences), Warsaw, 1973, p. 38; L. MOKRZECKI, *Protestant Scholars in Poland in 17th-18th c.: Supranational Importance of Their Output in the Field of Exact and Natural Sciences*, in "Abstracts of Papers Presented in Scientific Sections, XVIIth International Congress of History of Science, Acts, vol. I, Berkeley, 1985, p. Qc; ID., *Knowledge of the Sea in Poland in XVI-XVIII Centuries*, in "Studia Maritima", vol. IV, Wrocław, 1985, p. 82; ID., *The Link Between Theory and Practice in the Achievement of Polish Scientists and Scholars of the Baroque and the Enlightenment Periods (17th-18th c.)*, in: *National and International Diffusion of Scientific and Technical Knowledge*, International Standing Conference for the History of Education, Oxford, 1983, p. 67; ID., *Das Bildungswesen in Gdańsk und seine Beziehungen zur Rostocker Universität (16.-18. Jahrhundert)*, in: "Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität", J. 34, No. 7, Rostock, 1985, p. 53.

in analyses, and their works were frequently referred to while establishing methodological grounds. Finally it is worth stressing that middle class scholars from Royal Prussia were amongst the first in Poland to propagate scientific conceptions of the Enlightenment. Scientific societies were called into being in Danzig: the *Societas Litteraria* (1720) and the *Societas Physicae Experimentalis* (1743), made way for new conceptions concerning research in different fields of knowledge<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> These were the first modern scientific societies on Polish territories.

