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POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH.
POLITICAL GAMES, SOCIAL COMMUNICATION,
DIPLOMACY

Edited by
Aleksandra Ziober and Alessandro Boccolini



EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: LA RIVISTA

Il Comitato redazionale e scientifico è lieto di presentare al pubblico la rivista scientifica *Eastern European History Review*.

Con un carattere internazionale e interdisciplinare, una cadenza annuale e una fruibilità *open access* la rivista focalizza i propri interessi sulle dinamiche occorse nell'Europa Orientale durante tutta l'età moderna (XIV-XIX). *Eastern European History Review* è espressione del Centro Studi dell'Università della Tuscia CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna) nato nel 1997 per intuizione del Prof. Gaetano Platania, Direttore Emerito della Rivista.

L'iniziativa editoriale che presentiamo nasce dall'evidente mancanza in Italia di una rivista scientifica relativa alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale in Età Moderna, nonostante la penisola abbia giocato un ruolo fondamentale per la Storia e la Cultura di una parte integrante del continente, a torto considerata come lontana e periferica.

Consapevoli di questo, il Comitato ha posto quale obiettivo primario della *Eastern European History Review* quello di offrire uno spazio di riflessione e di discussione su temi che appartengono alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale, e insieme alle relazioni - politiche e culturali - che questa vasta area del Vecchio Continente ha avuto con l'occidente d'Europa, e l'Italia in particolare, incoraggiando il dialogo tra studiosi e esperti di settore, e tra differenti approcci della ricerca scientifica.

Il Comitato Redazionale e Scientifico

EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: THE JOURNAL

The Editorial and Scientific Board are proud delighted to present the *Eastern European History Review* under the aegis of Sette Città Editore.

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XIV-XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997, from an idea of Prof. Gaetano Platania, today Director Emeritus of this journal.

It publishes articles with significant approaches and original interpretations in all research fields concerning Central and Eastern Europe, with specific attention to the History sciences.

The editorial initiative we present comes from the obvious lack of a journal, in Italy, concerning the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the Modern Age, this despite its fundamental role in the history and culture of that part of the continent, wrongly considered distant and peripheral.

Quite the contrary is true, in fact. Main objective of the journal is to create a space for reflection and discussion on topics pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, but also relations with Continental Europe, encouraging dialogue between scholars and experts in the field, and between different approaches of scientific research.

The Editorial and Scientific Board

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**THE ART OF PERSUASION AND POWER:
PROFILES OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POLISH THRONE AFTER THE ABDICATION OF
JOHN II CASIMIR IN THE LIGHT OF PAMPHLETS¹**

<http://hdl.handle.net/2067/53002>

ABSTRACT

The article explores the art of persuasion during the royal elections in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth following John II Casimir's abdication in 1668. Special attention is given to pamphlets, which served as key tools for shaping public opinion, often highlighting or discrediting candidates based on attributes like lineage, military experience, wealth, and political alliances. The study examines how cultural expectations, such as the Baroque emphasis on sensory impact, influenced communication strategies. It also highlights the interplay between political power and noble attitudes, as elites sought to preserve their privileges while selecting a ruler capable of ensuring the Commonwealth's stability. By studying these elements, the article sheds light on the dynamics of political persuasion and the broader cultural and social factors that shaped the election process.

KEYWORDS: Royal Elections; Polish-Lithuanian; Commonwealth; Baroque Culture; Interregnum; Pamphlets.

The interregnum represented a crucial moment in the socio-political landscape of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The opportunity presented itself for the nobility and the magnates to vigorously engage in political maneuvers, potentially leading to personal advancement and enhanced socio-economic standing. Frequently referred to as a period fraught with peril, it left the nation without a monarch, who was crucial for ensuring political stability². Therefore, it was an ideal time for the nobility to intensify their activities, as they saw the interregnum as an opportunity to expand their political influence, enrich themselves, and obtain lucrative offices. Since various candidates were claiming the throne, a complex political game began between factions supporting specific individuals. However, it is important to remember that in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the greatest political influence was held by the magnates, who exerted a significant impact on the political attitudes of the middle and lower nobility.

1 The article results from research conducted as part of the SONATA 17 project titled "Social and economic clientele of Jan Stanisław Sapieha: A study of the history of factions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (project no. 2021/43/D/HS3/01419) financed by the National Science Centre in Kraków.

2 Compare with: Urszula Augustyniak, *Wazowie i "królowie rodacy". Studium władzy królewskiej w Rzeczypospolitej XVII wieku* (Warszawa: SEMPER, 1999), 68; Felicia Rosu, *Elective Monarchy in Transylvania and Poland-Lithuania, 1569–1587* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

The primary objective of this article is to scrutinize which attributes were deemed most significant in the candidates for the throne from the perspective of the Polish-Lithuanian elite, and how these attributes were utilized by both supporters and opponents of the various pretenders. This research seeks to understand how opinions regarding the ideal monarch's characteristics shifted depending on the interests of different social and political groups. In the context of public debates and political propaganda, particular consideration will be accorded to the arguments employed in the political struggle for support among the nobility. We will also examine how candidates leveraged their political, material, and cultural positions to garner favor from the elites and the nobility. The significance of this is undeniable. This issue is especially important because no comprehensive study has been conducted on the characteristics of the candidates for the throne following John Casimir's abdication, especially in the context of public debates and political propaganda. The choice of the next monarch carried profound significance for the future of the Commonwealth, influencing both its internal framework and political representation. It is possible to gain a more profound understanding of the political mechanisms that shaped the decisions of the elites, as well as the methods employed to influence the opinion of the nobility. Through the lens of age, lineage, wealth, and upbringing, it becomes clear that different factions attempted to shape the debate on the future ruler and which persuasion techniques were used in this struggle for power. This analysis of the arguments and strategies used to garner support from the nobility reveals that the political persuasion and mobilization techniques played a crucial role in the political game within the Commonwealth.

To analyze the aforementioned matter, I shall refer to the election held in 1668–1669, subsequent to the demise of John II Casimir. The primary sources for this investigation are the numerous pamphlets, tracts, and political writings that circulated during the interregnum following John Casimir's death. These pamphlets, often commissioned by magnates or political factions, were key tools in shaping public opinion regarding the potential candidates for the Polish throne. These works were written in a style that was accessible to the nobility and functioned both as political manifestos and tools for persuasion, aimed at influencing the decision-making process of the electoral diet. Each of these writings reflected the diverse interests of various factions, with each text presenting arguments in favor of their preferred candidate while challenging the credibility and suitability of rival contenders. Although the majority of these pamphlets emphasized the individual candidates' strengths, such as their age, wealth, political acumen, and cultural comprehension, a few also engaged in *ad hominem* attacks and attempts to discredit the opposition. The writings used vivid metaphors, allegorical references, and rhetorical devices to get strong reactions from the readers. In this particular context, these pamphlets not only reflected the political realities of the time but also served as a crucial instrument for contesting and shaping political power. Therefore, they form the core of the sources that provide insight into the political strategies, ideals, and ambitions that governed the election process. We can gain a deeper understanding of how political narratives were constructed and how the nobility's loyalty was influenced by the strategic deployment of political rhetoric during this pivotal moment in Polish history by analyzing these texts.

THE IMPACT OF ATTITUDES ON POLITICAL OUTCOMES DURING POLISH ROYAL ELECTIONS IN THE 17th CENTURY

Over the years, the nobility has devised strategies aimed at streamlining the administration of the Commonwealth and strengthening it against external adversaries. During the interregnum, the challenge of electing a new ruler was a significant concern, leading to a surge in political activity among the nobility, especially the magnates. They perceived the election of their preferred candidate to expand their political clout, acquire new offices, and secure profitable economic opportunities. The interregnum frequently led to increased tensions and rivalries between different noble factions. Each faction attempted to exploit the power vacuum, which resulted in a dynamic and often volatile political scene. The absence of a central authority also contributed to the vulnerability of the Commonwealth to foreign interference, as neighboring states attempted to influence the election in order to align with their own interests. The interregnum period also demonstrated the ingenuity and resilience of the Polish-Lithuanian political system. Despite the absence of a monarch, the system successfully navigated these power vacuums through intricate negotiations and strategic alliances. The uncertainty, though perilous, was a testament to the ability of the Commonwealth's political structures to adapt and endure amidst challenges. The interregnum, therefore, was not only a period of peril, but also a time of significant political creativity and innovation within the state³.

The concept of attitudes played a crucial role in the early modern Commonwealth's political influence during royal elections. As defined by various scholars, attitudes encompass the relatively stable dispositions towards evaluating objects or individuals and reacting (sometimes) emotionally towards them. During the interregnum periods, the attitudes of the nobility and magnates were significantly agitated, leading them to actively engage in political maneuvers aimed at influencing the outcome of elections⁴.

3 Edward Opaliński, "Elekcje wazowskie w Polsce. Stosunek szlachty do instytucji okresu bezkrólewia", *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 42/3 (1985): 533; Wojciech Tygielski, and Andrzej Pośpiech, "Społeczna rola dworu magnackiego XVII–XVIII wieku", *Przegląd Historyczny*, 69/2 (1978): 232; Id., "Klientela: więzi społeczne-grupy nacisku", in *Władza i społeczeństwo w XVI i XVII w. Prace ofiarowane Antoniemu Mączakowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, eds. Marcin Kamler, et al. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1989), 261-82; Henryk Lulewicz, *Elita polityczno-społeczna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w połowie XVII wieku*, PhD Thesis kept in the Library of the Historical Institute of the University of Warsaw (Warszawa, 1984), 240; Aleksandra Ziober, "Dwie ostatnie elekcje Wazów jako przyczynek do awansu majątkowego i urzędniczego wybranych rodzin Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego", in *W kręgu myśli Władysława Czaplińskiego. Wrocławskie prace z Historii Nowożytnej*, vol. 1, eds. Filip Wolański, and Leszek Ziątkowski (Wrocław: Stara Szuflada, 2016), 123; Aleksandra Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego wobec elekcji Władysława IV Wazy i Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego* (Kraków: Wyd. Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020), 11.

4 Gerd Bohner, and Michaela Wanke, *Attitudes and Attitudes change* (London: Psychology Press, 2002), 5-7; Elliot A. Aronson, Timothy D. Wilson, and Robin M. Akert, *Social Psychology* (Boston-London: Pearson Education Limited, 2016),

The election period was marked by intense political activity, where the attitudes of nobles were often influenced by their interests and ambitions. These attitudes were not merely passive states but were actively expressed through behaviors and strategic alliances. The cognitive component of attitudes, which involved beliefs and knowledge about the candidates, played a fundamental role in shaping the electoral choices of the nobility. They gathered information, evaluated the candidates' merits, and strategized on how to advance their own status and influence through the election of a favorable candidate. Sometimes, the nobles and magnates were driven by feelings of loyalty, ambition, fear etc. Candidates' emotional reactions could include admiration or distrust, which were crucial in forming coalitions and supporting bases. Their affective component often translated into passionate speeches, public endorsements, and even propaganda in order to influence others' opinions. Behaviorally, these attitudes manifested themselves in active campaigning, negotiations, and sometimes even bribery or coercion. Attitudes were influenced by concrete actions such as organizing support among other nobles, participating in political gatherings, and using economic resources to influence votes. This period required nobles to be highly proactive and engaged, leveraging their attitudes to navigate the complex political landscape⁵.

Throughout the electoral process, the attitudes of the nobles were influenced by both historical experiences and current political realities. Furthermore, precedents, such as previous kings' policies and their impacts, informed their attitudes towards contemporary candidates. Additionally, their attitudes and actions were influenced by their immediate political context, including alliances and rivalries among magnates⁶.

These attitudes were stable over time, as they were deeply ingrained in the political culture of the nobility. However, they could also adapt to changing circumstances, showing both the stability and flexibility of political attitudes. This adaptability was essential for nobles to maintain their influence and navigate the changing political landscape of the interregnum. The concept of attitudes in the context of 17th-century Polish elections demonstrates the complex interplay between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components in political influence. The nobility's involvement in the electoral process was driven by their attitudes, which were shaped by a mix of personal ambitions, historical experiences, and current political dynamics⁷.

190-91; Dolores Albarracín, Blair T. Johnson, Mark P. Zanna, and Tarcan T. Kumkale, "Attitudes: Introduction and Scope", in *The Handbook of Attitudes*, eds. Dolores Albarracín, Blair T. Johnson, and Mark P. Zanna (New York-London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2005), 3-15.

5 See more: Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 11 and next.

6 I wrote more about this topic in a monograph, where I compared the circumstances of the interregnum after the death of Sigismund III Vasa and the abdication of John Casimir Vasa: Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 53-71.

7 Bogdan Wojciszke, *Psychologia społeczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2011), 200; Elliot A. Aronson, Timothy D. Wilson, and Robin M. Akert, *Psychologia społeczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2006), 314; Böhner, and Wanke, *Attitudes and Attitudes change*, 7; Mark P. Zanna, and John K. Rempel, "Attitudes: A New Look at an Old Concept", in *The Social*

The primary challenge regarding literature whose aim was to influence attitudes does not lie solely in its arguments, but rather in its dissemination scope. It is arduous to discern which pieces gained greater momentum and consequently exerted greater influence on attitudes, whether eliciting immediate shifts or instilling long-term convictions. We rarely encounter direct references or accounts discussing specific literature or the arguments they convey. Despite the possibility of gleaning fragmentary insights from correspondence, it is evident that such narratives fail to encompass broader perceptions within the noble society. Equally crucial is the consideration of quantity, format variations (printed versus handwritten), and the dissemination channels employed for propaganda literature. Despite meticulous research efforts, the responses to crucial inquiries regarding noble sentiments towards throne candidates and the impact of propaganda writings remain elusive. We lack clarity on which writings garnered the most attention, eliciting positive or negative responses from the nobility. Given the raging insights from the social sciences, we can attempt to draw tentative conclusions, but definitive answers to these inquiries remain elusive.

The creators of propaganda writings employed diverse strategies to garner support from the nobility. One strategy involved cultivating a favorable perception of the sender among readers. Typically, authors abstained from disclosing their authentic identities, cognizant of the potential harm to their work's credibility, particularly if they were associated with a particular political faction. Consequently, these writings frequently utilized various pseudonyms to elicit favorable responses from readers. The degree of trust engendered in the author was correlated with the likelihood that readers would identify with them and embrace the arguments presented. Consequently, the pseudonyms selected were frequently obscure and implicitly associated with the rhetorical customs of the aristocracy, evoking sentiments of patriotism and camaraderie. Titles such as *Political Dialogue of a Native Landowner*, *A Replica of a Cordial Correspondence between Friends*, or *Polish Citizen to Another Polish Citizen* were commonly used, fostering a sense of familiarity and closeness between the author and the reader. It was crucial to create an impression that anyone could have authored the document or that it was the work of an educated individual. This was simple, yet effective tactic ensured that readers, unaware of the author's identity, were uncertain about the political affiliations or arguments presented in the literature⁸.

Psychology of Knowledge, eds. Daniel Bar-Tal, and Arie Kruglanski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 315-34; Gerd Bohner, and Norbert Schwarz, "The Construction of Attitudes", in *Intrapersonal Processes (Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology)*, eds. Abraham Tesser, and Norbert Schwarz (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001); Gerd Bohner, and Nina Dickel, "Attitudes and Attitude Change", *Annual Review of Psychology*, 62 (2011), 392-94; Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 289 and next.

8 BNF, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-4783, ff. 1-3; "List poufałego przyjaciela de Piasto eligendo", in *Pisma polityczne z czasów panowania Jana Kazimierza Wazy 1648-1668. Publicystyka-egzorbitancje-projekty-memoriały*, vol. 3: 1665-1668, ed. Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska (Wrocław-Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), 278-84; "List do poufałego przyjaciela albo raczej respons na awizy", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 285-93; "Respons na list jednego poufałego

THE IDEAL QUALITIES OF A FUTURE RULER

The election of a monarch during the era of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth required not only consideration of political and international alliances but also a detailed analysis of the candidates' personal qualities. In this text, we will examine the key criteria that were important to the nobility and the most common expectations placed on prospective rulers. During the election process, various aspects were considered, which could determine whether a particular candidate was capable of ensuring the state's stability, security, and the protection of its liberties.

THE MILITARY EXPECTATIONS OF THE POLISH NOBILITY

During the interregnum following the abdication of John II Casimir, the future ruler's martial abilities and military experience were a crucial topic of debate. The Sarmatian cultural ideal of the noble knight as protector of the homeland heavily influenced this perception of the monarch's role. These traditions were deeply ingrained in the mindset not only of the Commonwealth, but also of the wider European community. The monarch was expected to be prepared to lay down his life for his nation, using his abilities to safeguard the state⁹.

Gottfried Leibniz, who advocated for Philip William of Neuburg, emphasized the prince's capacity to lead conflicts without seeking them. His military prowess, proven in battles against the Elector of Brandenburg, was well respected, and his calm demeanor during peace negotiations highlighted his balanced nature. Philip William was also commended for his horsemanship, considered essential for a war leader. He has been compared to King Ladislaus IV, who was successful in ending several wars early in his reign. This makes him an ideal ruler for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, some opponents, particularly those supporting the Moscow candidacy, downplayed his military achievements, dismissing comparisons to Ladislaus IV as misguided¹⁰.

Louis de Condé, despite his negative reputation, was recognized for his military skills. Condé's prowess on the battlefield was acknowledged by Andrzej Olszowski, the Crown Vice-Chancellor, but he doubted his ability to adapt to the Polish military system and political environment. Henry, Condé's son, was criticized for inheriting

przyjaciela”, in *Ibid.*, 295-301; Aronson, et al., *Psychologia społeczna*, 328-37; Wojciszke, *Psychologia społeczna*, 217-19.

9 Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 239; Janusz Tazbir, “Wzorce osobowe szlachty polskiej w XVII wieku”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 83/4 (1976): 787; Joanna Orzeł, “System wartości obywatelskich w kulturze szlacheckiej Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII wieku”, in *Parlament–konstytucja–demokracja w edukacji historycznej i obywatelskiej*, eds. Stanisław Roszak, Małgorzata Strzelecka, and Agnieszka Wieczorek (Toruń: Stowarzyszenie Oświatowców Polskich, 2013), 234; Urszula Świdorska-Włodarczyk, *Mentalność szlachty polskiej XV i XVI wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Świętego Wojciecha, 2003), 202-03; Edward Opaliński, *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587–1652. System parlamentarny a społeczeństwo obywatelskie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1995), 55.

10 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, trans. Tadeusz Bieńkowski (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo PAN, 1998), 157, 159; “Respons jm. p. kasztelana liwskiego p. Łuszcowskiemu”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 275.

his father's flaws without his virtues. Leibniz argued that Conde's warlike nature would endanger the Commonwealth, which needed peace to rebuild¹¹.

Charles of Lorraine also gained admiration for his military expertise, particularly his participation in the conflicts against the Turks¹². In contrast, the Florentine prince was rejected due to his lack of military experience («In wars, and having no spirit or inclination for war and military matters»), as the Commonwealth needed a ruler capable of recovering lost territories¹³. Similarly, doubts were raised regarding the sons of the Russian Tsar, Alexei, due to their youth and lack of proven military leadership¹⁴. The nobility, especially in Lithuania, was concerned about further destruction from wars and was keen to secure peace, which led to support for a Muscovite candidate. Several opponents expressed concern that the selection of a Russian prince could potentially result in conflicts with Sweden, Turkey, and the Tatars¹⁵.

Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki was praised for his military heritage, being the son of the famous commander Jeremi Wiśniowiecki, although this was largely propaganda as Michał had little military experience¹⁶. Nonetheless, the emphasis placed on military capabilities during the debates underscored the nobility's expectation that the future king would ensure external security, particularly for Lithuania, in the face of persistent threats¹⁷.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE FUTURE RULER'S IDENTITY AMIDST THE CONFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The perspectives of the elites on the future ruler's stance towards religious tolerance should be examined against the backdrop of a widespread political movement

11 Andrzej Olszowski, *Censura candidatorum sceptri polonici. Ocena kandydatów do tronu polskiego*, eds. Kazimierz Przyboś, and Adam Perlakowski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Akademicka, 2014), 49, 51.

12 AMAEF, CP, Pologne, vol. 35, "Reflexions qui la serenissime Republique de Pologne dois faire sur la personne qu'elle choisira pour son Roy, brak miejsca, 1668", f. 138r; AGAD, Nabytki oddział I, sign. 199, "Dostateczna próba i ratie, któremi Xiążę Je. Msc Lotharińskie Carol, nad inszych concurentów, do Korony Polskiej miałby bydź przy wolnych głosach Conclusii królem obrany", f. 70r; LvNB, f. 4 (Zbiór rękopisów Biblioteki Baworowskich), op. 1, nr. 266, ff. 7-8r; Mirosława Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała Wiśniowieckiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2006), 109.

13 «in bellis i żadnego do wojny animum et exertilium nie mający». VUB, f. 5, A27, nr 4753, "Konkurenci do sceptrum polskiego z cudzej ziemi którzy na przyszłej da Pan Bóg elekcyj przez posłów swoich konkurować i falcjami certować będą naprzód", f. 1.

14 AMAEF, CP, Pologne, vol. 35, "Reflexions", ff 118v-19.

15 TNA, SP Poland and Saxony, SP 88/12, Robert Yard to NN, Gdańsk 1 IV 1669, f. 21r-v.; "Copia listu p. Dąbskiego", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 279.

16 Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 95.

17 Marian Chachaj, "Młodość Michała Tomasza Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego przyszłego króla polskiego", *Czasy Nowożytne*, 28 (2015): 109; Tadeusz Korzon, *Dola i niedola Jana Sobieskiego*, vol. 2 (Kraków: Akad. Umiejętności, 1898), 146.

opposing dissenters, particularly after the abdication of the last Vasa monarch. This movement was particularly prominent in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where the Pac family led vigorous opposition against dissenters, specifically targeting Bogusław Radziwiłł. During the interregnum, the Grand Chancellor and the Grand Hetman of Lithuania attempted to introduce several measures aimed at limiting the influence of dissenters. These efforts encompassed issuing directives to local assemblies and attempting to exclude the prince from the Chamber of Deputies. During the electoral parliament, Michał Kazimierz even referenced the Horodło privilege from 1413, granted by Ladislaus Jagiełło, to demand that the future monarch not award titles to non-Catholics. This period was marked by significant political division in Lithuania. One part of the nobility favored a monarch who would safeguard the rights of dissidents, whereas others sought a monarch who would curtail their privileges and revoke their positions of authority¹⁸.

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The environment supporting the candidacy of Prince of Neuburg was aware of the prevailing sentiments in the Commonwealth and, despite its association with the Calvinist Bogusław Radziwiłł, sought to present its candidate as an exemplary yet tolerant Catholic. Leibniz observed that Philip William displayed considerable understanding of religious matters. His second wife, Elisabeth Amalie of Hesse-Darmstadt, converted to Catholicism before their marriage through his intervention, demonstrating his moderation and tolerance towards dissenters and his skill in converting them. Philip William's religiosity was also evident in the upbringing of his sons, some of whom were destined for ecclesiastical service¹⁹.

In the Commonwealth, numerous untrue narratives circulated regarding the Condé family's lack of reverence for religion. Olszowski claimed that Prince d'Enghien, Henry, exhibited disrespect towards God and did not adhere to «the Christian humility of faith». It was also alleged that Condé disapproved of Catholicism and was intrigued by religious novelties²⁰. The view that “Non est cum Deo, qui favet Condeo” became widely accepted. Condé was also accused of violating the commandments by alleging that he consumed meat during a Friday meal in Paris with the Calvinist Bogusław Radziwiłł. This was intended to undermine both Condé and his favored candidate, the Prince of Neuburg. Leibniz also expressed unfavorable sentiments towards the religious beliefs of the Condé family, alleging a lack of tolerance and referring to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre²¹. Despite such criticisms, propaganda pieces depicted Condé as a reasonable Catholic²².

18 AGAD, AR, IV, nr 838, Jerzy Billewicz to Bogusław Radziwiłła, Poroszeny [?] 22[?] October 1668, ff. 20-3; Ibid., Jerzy Billewicz to Bogusława Radziwiłła, Poroszeny [?] 20 I 1669, f. 24; Konrad Bobiatyński, *W walce o hegemonię. Rywalizacja polityczna w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w latach 1667–1674* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2016), 59-60.

19 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 158.

20 «chrześcijańskiej pokorze wiary». Olszowski, *Censura Candidaorum Sceptri*, 49.

21 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 68.

22 TNA, SP Poland and Saxony, SP 88/12, Robert Yard to NN, Gdańsk 31 III 1668, ff. 17rv; LvNB, f. 4 (Zbiór rękopisów Biblioteki Baworowskich), op. 1, nr. 266, ff. 60-2r; AGAD, Nabytki oddział I, nr 199, “Rationes contra Moscum”, ff. 41-4;

In general, Charles of Lorraine was regarded as a virtuous Christian. According to Olszowski, he was a Catholic who was influenced by the piety of his forefathers. Furthermore, he was not interested in religious novelty, and his ancestors had participated in the Crusades. Many in noble society appreciated his education, which he primarily received in Jesuit schools during his youth. This fact was often emphasized in literature supporting his candidacy²³.

Candidates from non-Catholic denominations attracted considerable attention among the nobility, especially regarding the Brandenburg candidacy, which was criticized for the elector's Protestant faith. The candidature of the Moscow tsar, along with that of his sons Aleksey and Fyodor, was particularly noteworthy. Moscow statements claimed that Michailovich had promised to convert his son to Catholicism, and that he frequently highlighted the potential for a union of Christian denominations. The doctrine faced considerable promotion, as reflected in numerous opposing writings and reports from foreign envoys who expressed concern about its implications. According to documents from the period, including one by the pseudonymous author H. Zdanowicz, Lithuanian nobles were considering offering the crown to the tsar if he agreed to adopt Roman Catholicism and fulfill other conditions. However, skepticism regarding Michailovich's assurances regarding his son's conversion and the feasibility of a union remained prevalent among the noble society. As emphasized by Andrzej Olszowski, the most formidable opponent of the Moscow candidacy was the Holy See. He argued that the tsar would never be a true Catholic, and the Church did not trust the tsar's plans for union, as demonstrated by the concerns of Apostolic Nuncio Galeazzo Marescotti.

It was evident from the existing legal provisions that the Polish-Lithuanian elites held towards the future king's religion that he must adhere to the Catholic faith. The situation was slightly different in dissident circles, where entirely different traits and values were considered, with political faction affiliation serving as a strong stimulus for attitudes. The apparent strong support for the Moscow candidacy in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania may have been more about political maneuvering by the Pac family than a genuine desire to assist the tsar in gaining the Polish crown.

THE INTERREGNUM DEBATE: SAFEGUARDING NOBLE LIBERTIES

The preservation of noble rights and freedoms was a crucial matter during the interregnum that ensued following the demise of John Casimir. The discussions surrounding the introduction of *absolutum dominium* and its implications for noble

“Respons jm. p. kasztelana liwskiego p. Łuszczewskiemu”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 272-77; “Zwierciadło na elekcyją króla polskiego wystawione in casu abdicationis anno 1668, w którym w Polsce trzeba has necessitates candidatos comitantes upatrować”, in *Ibid.*, 314-16; Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała*, 49, 93-5.

23 AGAD, Nabytki, oddział I, nr 199, “Dostateczna próba i ratie”, f. 70; LvNB, f. 4 (Zbiór rękopisów Biblioteki Baworowskich), op. 1, nr. 266, “Prabatio sufficiens et rationes firmissimae quibus sermy princeps Lotharingaiae Carol Hyacinthus potior esse deberet caeteris, qui concurrunt ut in regem eligantur à liberis vocibus Polonorum”, ff. 9-10; Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 57.

liberties became increasingly prominent in propaganda writings²⁴.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz raised objections against the French candidacy and the proposal for an election *vivente rege* (election during the reigning king's lifetime). He argued that the candidate supported by Versailles sought the throne even before John Casimir's abdication, and that Philip William, a potential candidate, respected the customs of the Commonwealth by waiting for the king to step down. Leibniz noted: «Though others pursued him, he did not cease to win minds, as far as it could be done without political intrigues»²⁵. Concerns about candidates from absolutist regimes were prevalent, with particularly directed fears directed toward French pretenders and the Muscovite Tsar, as citizens associated them with tyranny and the loss of noble freedoms. Lacki, representing Lithuanian nobility, poignantly cautioned that:

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For if we submit our necks to the Frenchman,
Say farewell to freedom, for the proud Gallus²⁶.

Despite his warnings, Lacki did not perceive the Muscovite Tsar as a imminent threat, indicating a complex perception of potential rulers²⁷. The majority of authors of the writings shared the sentiment that the emergence of a tyrant was linked to candidates from absolutist states, posing a risk to the liberties of the nobility²⁸. The need to preserve existing freedoms emerged as a crucial argument supporting particular candidates, alongside considerations of faith. One pamphlet warned: «Gentlemen Poles, a tyrant is attempting to take us and our state by force»²⁹. The interconnectedness of candidates with influential patrons was another common concern, as it could jeopardize noble interests. Particularly concerning was the perception that candidates from France, such as Prince de Conde and Charles de Lorraine, were under the control of Louis XIV, which prompted apprehensions regarding the potential erosion of Commonwealth autonomy³⁰.

Despite the elite's flexibility regarding candidate selection, they opposed any concessions that might expand royal power or alter the existing political structure. The reluctance to relinquish influence over central authority meant that any agreements extending royal prerogatives were dependent upon alignment with noble interests. The Polish and Lithuanian magnates maintained a careful balance,

24 Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 256-57, 259.

25 «że inni go ubiegają, nie ustawał jednak w zjednywaniu sobie umysłów, o ile to można było zrobić bez intryg politycznych». Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 69, 159; Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała*, 97-8.

26 «Gdyż jeśli Francuzowi swe karki poddamy, Pożegnać się z wolnością, bowiem Gallus hardy». Juliusz Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Dwaj królowie rodacy*, ed. Stefan Nieznanowski (Warszawa: Pax, 1980), 8.

27 Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 260.

28 Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 260-61.

29 «Panowie Polacy, że nas gwałtem i nasze państwo wziąć usiłują tyrana nie pana prowadzą». LMAVB, f. 17, nr 12, ff. 249-62.

30 LMAVB, f. 17, nr 12, ff. 249-62.

unwilling to allow any candidate to undermine their established rights. Interestingly, while the nobility (especially the Lithuanians) showed favorable sentiments toward the Muscovite candidacy, which had associations with cruelty and despotism, this support stemmed more from political maneuvering than from a genuine belief in the merits of Muscovite candidates.

The debates and conflicts that transpired during this turbulent period exemplified the intricate issues pertaining to noble rights, the political terrain of the Commonwealth, and the profound apprehensions regarding the balance of power and authority within the state. The nobility's attempts to safeguard their freedoms shaped their reactions to potential candidates and their willingness to engage in the electoral process, underscoring the fragility of their privileges in a rapidly changing political environment.

THE ROLE OF AGE, HEALTH, AND FAMILY IN THE POLISH THRONE SUCCESSION

The issue of age, health, and family background among the candidates for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth reveals a complex landscape of preferences and concerns among the nobility following John Casimir's abdication. The nobility showed a favorable attitude towards young, unmarried candidates, in order to ensure that a new king could forge a marital alliance that would benefit the Republic or enhance its international standing. Nobleman Andrzej Olszowski emphasizes that this was a significant factor in the selection of Henry of Valois, Stephen Báthory, and Sigismund Vasa, noting that even subsequent kings such as Ladislaus Sigismund and John Casimir were also without wives at the time of their election.

Advocates for young candidates argued that individuals of mature age (often referred to in Latin as *maturum*) were already set in their ways, making it challenging to change ingrained habits. The concern was that such candidates might conflict with the nobility's expectations, which could lead to tensions with the new ruler. There was even a fear that choosing an older candidate would lead to governance issues, as expressed in the sentiment: «we would rather defeat him than improve his bad habits». In contrast, a young king, who was not accustomed to governance practices, could be molded to fit the nobles' expectations and customs. The idea was that a younger ruler would assimilate the traditions of the Commonwealth and learn the laws and statutes faster. However, it was believed that a young monarch would be more capable of learning Polish, even if he had no prior exposure to the language³¹. Contrary to popular opinion, some voices argued against selecting a candidate who was too young. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz argued that a good ruler should be able to govern independently, which would be impossible for a minor. This scenario would result in the regents assuming power, prolonging a period of interregnum. Leibniz's perspective primarily focused on the candidacy of a Moscow prince, emphasizing the significant drawback of his sons' youth³². Others echoed these sentiments, expressing that a minor cannot be entrusted with the authority of the state, leading to governance challenges³³.

31 «wprzód go zagryziemy, niżeli we złych nałogach poprawiemy». “Copia listu p. Dąbskiego”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 280.

32 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 55-6.

33 “Respons jm. p. kasztelna liwskiego p. Łuszczewskiemu”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol.

Philip Wiliam, the candidate from Brandenburg, was subjected to severe criticism regarding his age and health. His capability to govern effectively due to his advanced years suggests that he might not be on the throne for long before another interregnum ensues. Various works indicated his frail health, with assertions like «his vigor is fading». Similar sentiments were echoed in *Reasons Against the Conspiracy of Duke Neuburg Against the State* and *A Landowner's Discourse on the Candidates for the Polish Crown* [“Rationes przeciwko konjuratyei X. neyburskiego na państwo” and “Discurs ziemianina o kandydatach Korony Polskiej”], which lamented that the near 60-year-old Neuburczyk was on the brink of death, unable to bear the burdens of leadership. Jakub Dąbski further criticized Prince of Neuburg, stating that at fifty-eight, he was not only mature but “rotten”, implying he was unfit for the role³⁴.

Adam Oborski pointed out, however, that Philip Wiliam was only a few years younger than the abdicated king and, therefore, could soon succumb to fate, which would lead to another interregnum. Meanwhile, others suggested that a mature candidate could be more reliable than a very young one who would struggle with independence in ruling. Oborski also refuted the notion that Neuburg would be incapable of handling military obligations, asserting that his numerous sons would be willing to lend their assistance and shoulder the associated responsibilities³⁵.

Neuburg's supporters stressed his commitment to health and his opposition to harmful drinking and pleasures³⁶. They pointed to his healthy offspring, even noting that his wife had given birth to another son just three months prior, despite him being 53 at the time. This was considered a testimony to his lifestyle of purity and temperance. Leibniz posited that a man's fertility signified his health, youthfulness, and was a sign of a prolonged lifespan. The author emphasized that he maintained physical and mental vigor comparable to younger rivals, not relying on medicines, but engaging in hunting and other noble pursuits to preserve his health³⁷.

Leibniz defended the Neuburg candidacy against age-related allegations by asserting that wisdom and prudence were more crucial attributes for a ruler than mere physical health. It was stressed that physical strength could be delegated to others, while mental leadership could not be easily replaced. He warned against the impulsiveness often found in younger candidates and advocated for selecting someone more mature. His arguments particularly favor Neuburg over the Moscow and Lorraine candidates³⁸.

Concerns regarding the health of Louis de Condé also emerged. Olszowski critiqued him for being “exhausted from hardships and weakened by youthful debauchery”, further noting that he was often carried in a litter. Furthermore, he raised doubts

3, 274.

34 Philip William was actually 53 years old in November 1668; “Copia listu p. Dąbskiego”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 281.

35 “Copia listu p. Dąbskiego”, in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 275.

36 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 157.

37 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 56-57, 157.

38 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 57-9; Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 49, 53, 59; Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała*, 98.

about the mental health of Condé son, suggesting a hereditary risk. The 26-year-old Charles de Lorraine was viewed with admiration for his youth, believing he would quickly pick up Polish and adopt customs.

Family size and marital status were crucial factors in evaluating candidates. Charles de Lorraine stood out as he had no children or wife, which was seen favorably by the nobility. There were discussions regarding a potential union with Eleonore Maria Josefa of Austria or Sophia Alexeyevna Romanova, which were deemed advantageous alliances. This was especially appealing to Lithuanian nobles, who were aware of the potential benefits of such ties³⁹.

Philip Wiliam's eleven children, however, caused considerable concern among the nobility, who feared the financial burden of supporting them. The notion of electing a candidate with many offspring was fraught with worries over the potential financial strain on the Commonwealth, as expressed by the author of *Mirrors on the Election of the King of Poland* ["Zwierciadła na elekcyję króla polskiego"], fearing that many state properties might have to be pledged to secure funding Leibniz, aware of the prevailing sentiments, countered the arguments against Wittelsbach, emphasizing the utility of having many children to assist in physical endeavors. He asserted, «it is beneficial for a candidate to be of mature age and especially to have sons», arguing that a childless ruler would merely be a caretaker, while a ruler with offspring would ensure the prosperity of the Commonwealth, safeguarding its future through his heirs⁴⁰. Several polemical writings lauded the youth of Alexis, the fifteen-year-old son of the Moscow tsar, despite Dębski's attempts to misrepresent his age, claiming he was twenty. There were hopes of marrying him to Eleonora, further strengthening ties with the Habsburgs and dissuading adversaries such as the Swedes. However, the younger son, Fyodor, was considered too young at only eight years old⁴¹. Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki was viewed positively due to his lack of numerous relatives. In conclusion, the preferences regarding the age and family of candidates were complex. While the nobility sought to elect a monarch who was neither too old nor too young, strategic marital alliances with influential European dynasties were of utmost importance, particularly with Habsburg daughters. This highlights the intricate interplay between personal traits and political imperatives in the selection of a ruler⁴².

ELECTION IN THE SHADOW OF WEALTH: HOW AFFLUENCE INFLUENCED ROYAL CHOICES

After the abdication of John Casimir in 1668, the social-political position and wealth of the candidates were crucial factors in the selection of the next king. Distributed writings emphasized the necessity of an affluent ruler who could contribute his wealth to the needs of the Commonwealth. On the contrary, there were apprehensions regarding candidates possessing excessive power, as they could

39 Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 59, 61; AGAD, Nabytki, oddział I, nr 199, "Dostateczna próba i ratie", f. 70.

40 "Copia listu p. Dąbskiego", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 283; Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 61.

41 "Copia listu p. Dąbskiego", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 280.

42 Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 267.

potentially jeopardize the rights and liberties of the nobility while broadening royal prerogatives. Political influence was often associated with dependence on key European players, such as France or the Habsburgs, which was generally viewed unfavorably in propaganda texts. As a consequence, efforts were made to discredit certain candidates by disseminating information about their alleged poverty or low social standing. It was intended to portray potential contenders as independent of foreign powers, thus ensuring the protection of the Republic from external threats⁴³. Aleksander Teodor Lacki argued that the Tsar of Russia offered the most significant material benefits for both the state and the nobility. He stated:

My advice is that they take the Tsar,
For with him old coin will return to us,
Silver and gold coins, sword talers,
Pearls, lynxes, sables, and other goods⁴⁴.

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However, the economic benefits that would arise from electing the Tsar son as king were only highlighted in a few supportive writings. These texts asserted that Mikhailovich would be willing to return the lands of Zaporozhye and Siewierz, as well as other Lithuanian territories he had seized, and that an alliance with Moscow would aid in countering the Republic's adversaries and even reclaim Livonia. Nevertheless, opponents of the Muscovite candidacy argued that such benefits were merely illusory, as the Tsar would not be obliged to fulfill them, and his election might lead to numerous wars, ultimately resulting in "subjugation to tyrant". Some emphasized that the Tsar's sons had no wealth of their own, relying solely on their father's riches⁴⁵.

It is also believed that Alexei Mikhailovich did not demonstrate enough initiative in the struggle for the Polish throne, and the candidacy of his sons faltered even before the electoral diet began. The wealth of a candidate was of utmost importance, as they were expected to offer substantial sums of money in exchange for support during the election. Mikołaj Jemiołowski remarked that the Tsar did not make enough efforts to secure a throne for his son, stating that «he did not corrupt anyone», leading to the belief that his candidacy was «in vain». Similarly, Aleksander Hilary Połubiński expressed in a letter to Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł that «there is some inclination towards the Muscovite, but he himself lazily makes an appearance, and not all votes concur on this»⁴⁶.

43 Augustyniak, *Wazowie i "królowie rodacy"*, 56; Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, 273.

44 «Moja rada, że wezmą sobie cara, Bo z nim do nas powróci i moneta stara, Srebrne i złote dzięgi, mieczowe talary, Perły, rysie, sobole i inne towary». Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna*, 8.

45 "Copia listu p. Dąbskiego", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 279; "Respons jm. p. kasztelana liwskiego", in *Ibid.*, 273-74.

46 Mikołaj Jemiołowski, *Pamiętnik dzieje Polski zawierający: (1648–1679)*, ed. Jan Dzięgielewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2000), 181; Zbigniew Wójcik, "Pacowie wobec kandydatury rosyjskiej na tron polski w latach 1668–1669 (misja Połkowa na Litwie, 1668)", *Przegląd Historyczny*, 60/1 (1969), 145; Id.,

Various writings also addressed the wealth of other candidates for the throne. Lacki mocked the material contributions of the French contender, Conde, suggesting he would not bring the throne.

What fruits will we get from the Frenchman? We will have leagues, Ribbons, flounces, flounders, and exotic figs⁴⁷.

Philip William's candidacy was often criticized for its lack of political influence and poverty. The first argument was based on the size of his family and the need for substantial funds for their support. Leibniz observed that Neuburg's small holdings could be seen as an advantage since the duke would not be able to bring foreign troops to the Republic, which was a concern for the nobility who feared they would have to support such forces from their own resources⁴⁸.

Charles of Lorraine also faced criticism for not having adequate financial resources. One article even argued that there was no guarantee that he would inherit Lorraine from his uncle Charles IV, given that Louis XIV may assert claim to those territories. Additionally, it was claimed that the prince proposed lower sums of money for the Republic than Neuburg. Others, however, argued that the Lorraine would inherit a vast estate from his uncle, which could be used to restore the currency and raise an army. It should be noted that poverty was also attributed to the duke of Parma⁴⁹. Olszowski believed that it would be beneficial to elect Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki as king, who, after dealing with his affairs beyond the Dnieper, would allocate resources for the soldiers. Supporters of the election of the "Piaśt" argued that although the native king was not wealthy and lacked significant international standing, this did not affect his chances of being elected, since the financial obligations of kings outlined in the *pacta conventa* were generally not fulfilled. They believed that his lack of extensive political influence was beneficial, as it meant that he would not violate the rights and freedoms of the nobility. Like foreign rulers, any money he got would go to the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom instead of going abroad⁵⁰. It appears that the attitudes of both the Crown and the Lithuanian nobility regarding the wealth and social position of the future king were similar. In general, there was a desire for the next monarch to replenish the treasury of the Republic or allocate certain amounts for military recruitment. However, the Lithuanian elites certainly did not want a "Piaśt" king who lacked significant financial resources and possibly

Między traktatem andruszowskim a wojną turecką. Stosunki polsko-rosyjskie 1667–1672 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1968,) 142.

47 «Z Francuza co za frukta? Będziemy mieć ligi, Wstążki, perki, fląderki i zamorskie figi». Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna*, 8.

48 "Rationes przeciwko conjuratiey", f. 92; "Copia listu p. Dąbskiego", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 281-82; Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 135.

49 AGAD, Nabytki oddział I, nr 199, "Concurrenci do sceptrum polskiego z czudzey ziemi ci są y przez posłów na elekcijey da P Bóg przyszłej concurować y factiami certować będą", f. 192r.

50 Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 84-91; "List do poufałego przyjaciela albo", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 298.

the means to acquire them. Similar to the Crown nobles, Lithuanians also did not want a ruler who was too powerful and significant on the international stage. Such a ruler could threaten their rights and freedoms, intending to introduce absolute rule.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE ELITES TOWARD THE UPBRINGING AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF THE COMMONWEALTH AMONG CANDIDATES FOR THE THRONE

Following the demise of John Casimir, a significant attribute sought in the future ruler was his upbringing and familiarity with the culture of the Commonwealth. Special attention was paid to the ability to speak Polish. According to the dominant claims in the literature, deficiencies in this area could lead to difficulties in communicating with the new ruler and the need for a translator. This could result in numerous misunderstandings. In this respect, the Slavic cultural background of the Moscow candidate was emphasized, suggesting that the Tsar's son would quickly master the Polish language. Supporters of the candidate from Lorraine claimed that he knew as many as eight European languages and that, being young and talented at acquiring foreign vocabulary, he would soon be able to communicate with the inhabitants of the Commonwealth⁵¹.

Several writings mention that Polish should not be a mandatory requirement for candidates to the throne. This was notably argued by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his *Model of Political Evidence* where he contended that the most important language in Europe was Latin, which any potential candidate for the throne should master. However, it became apparent that the more languages the future king knew, the better. Leibniz cited the Duke of Neuburg as someone who fulfilled all these criteria, claiming he was fluent in Latin, Italian, German, French, Spanish, and Dutch, and additionally "knows and likes the Polish language". He also asserted that there was nothing convincing in the argument that the presumed "Piaśt" knew the native language, as the future ruler could function in the Commonwealth equally well without it⁵².

Andrzej Olszowski also placed a significant emphasis on the education of the future ruler in his work. He believed that Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki was the ideal candidate for the throne, who, after his father's death, came under the care of the Bishop of Wrocław, Carol Ferdinand Vasa, and later Queen Marie Louise Gonzaga, who provided him with education worthy of a future ruler. Nevertheless, this assertion was not entirely accurate, as Wiśniowiecki, unlike numerous other representatives of the magnate families, did not receive a proper education abroad. Nonetheless, Olszowski supported his argument with the queen's words, who allegedly stated during a private conversation with the chancellor that Prince Michał «was considered worthy of the throne»⁵³.

Olszowski also emphasized the young Wiśniowiecki's excellent knowledge of

51 AGAD, Nabytki oddział I, sign. 199, "Dostateczna próba i ratie", f. 71; J.(?) Gacki, "Obraz elekcyi króla Michała (ks. Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego)", *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 4 (1846): 325; "List do poufałego przyjaciela albo", in *Pisma polityczne*, vol. 3, 297; Chachaj, *Młodość Michała Tomasza*, 108.

52 Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, 55, 134, 156-57.

53 «był uznany za godnego tronu». Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 95; Chachaj, *Młodość Michała Tomasza*, 109.

languages, although this opinion seems exaggerated. Władysław Konopczyński was particularly critical, stating that Michał Korybut, although he knew eight languages, had nothing interesting to say in any of them. The multilingualism of the elected prince is confirmed by letters written in Warsaw in June 1669 by Jan Ludwik Piccinardii Costa to Prince Ranucci II Farnese of Parma. In one of them, the envoy stated that Wiśniowiecki, in addition to many other virtues and skills, had an excellent command of ten languages – «la perizia perfetta di dieci linguaggi diversi»⁵⁴. According to French envoy Pierre de Bonzy, the new king spoke French, Italian, and German well. Johann Christian von Boineburg, on the other hand, believed that Wiśniowiecki only had a solid command of the first two languages. Hence, it can be inferred that his proficiency in German was rather limited. It is difficult to determine which languages Michał Korybut was proficient in, and to what extent. According to Marian Chachaj, he was proficient in French, Italian, Latin, and possibly German⁵⁵.

Of course, a key argument for the “Piaśt” was his upbringing and knowledge of the culture of the Commonwealth, which none of the foreign candidates could boast of. It is worth emphasising that all “Piasts” were expected to have a thorough understanding of all the privileges and rights of the nobility, as well as the complexities of the political system⁵⁶.

Regrettably, it has not been feasible to obtain comprehensive assessments from the elite of the Grand Duchy regarding the upbringing, comprehension of the culture, and proficiency in the Polish language of the prospective heir to the throne. However, it appears that these attitudes were similar to those presented in writings. It is probably that they desired a ruler who could speak Polish or, at the very least, one who could swiftly acquire it to a level that would facilitate free conversation, which would undoubtedly facilitate communication with the new king during sessions of the Sejm. The introduction of a translator may indeed pose numerous challenges. A proficient comprehension of the rights and freedoms of the nobility, as well as the fundamental principles of the functioning of the Commonwealth’s system, was also viewed favorably. This could be complicated for a newcomer, especially from a Western European cultural background. The candidacy of the “Piaśt” fulfilled these criteria; however, it did not result in an increase in its popularity among Lithuanians, who may have been more concerned about the potential rise in the political influence of the Crown nobility in the event of a Pole being elected as king.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the royal election of 1669 reveals the intricate political landscape of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the pivotal role that public discourse, conveyed through printed writings and distributed manuscripts, played in shaping

54 Chachaj, *Młodość Michała Tomasza*, 108

55 BCzart., Ms. 2247/IV, “Copie de la lettre de Mr. l’evesque de Beziers, en datte de Warsovie le 21 juny 1669”, f. 187; Chachaj, *Młodość Michała Tomasza*, 108-09; Władysław Konopczyński, *Dzieje Polski nowożytnej*, vol. 2, ed. Mirosław Nagielski (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1986), 47.

56 Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri*, 89, 95.

the electoral process. The debates over the qualifications of the various candidates – ranging from their age, health, and wealth to their cultural understanding and military capacity – demonstrate that the nobility's preferences were not solely driven by immediate political needs, but also by broader concerns about preserving their liberties and avoiding monarchical absolutism. These criteria were framed and contested within a rich body of polemical literature, underscoring the importance of rhetorical strategies in influencing the outcome of the election.

By analyzing these pamphlets, it becomes evident that the political elites employed diverse and at times contradictory arguments to defend their preferred candidates, reflecting the fluidity and complexity of political alliances. The intersection of personal attributes with broader geopolitical concerns, such as relations with Moscow, France, or the Habsburgs, further illustrates how external and internal pressures shaped the discourse.

188 Ultimately, this study contributes to a more profound understanding of the mechanisms of political persuasion in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, emphasizing the significance of communication strategies in the political decision-making process. It also highlights the need for further research into the ways in which printed texts and manuscripts influenced noble opinion and political outcomes, offering a valuable perspective on the role of media in shaping the Commonwealth's electoral politics.

ABBREVIATION

AGAD: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie.

AR: Archiwum Radziwiłłów.

AMAEF: Archives Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International République Française à Paris.

CP: Correspondance Politique.

BCzart.: Biblioteka im. Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie.

BNF: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

LMAVB: Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka.

LvNB: Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv [Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені В.Стефаника].

TNA: The National Archives – London.

SP: State Papers Foreign.

VUB: Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka.

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