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Life and work of Wojciech Bobowski revisited. Bobovius (Ali Ufkî) in Polish source material¹

Abstract

Wojciech Bobowski (ca. 1610–1675) is one of the most remarkable figures in the history of cultural contacts between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. His numerous works on Ottoman Turkish music, language and culture are widely recognised and have attracted increased interest from researchers in recent years, but Bobowski's life story remains rather mysterious. This is especially true of the first part of his life, which he spent in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. My current research reveals that the Polish lore concerning Bobovius differs from what is generally written about him in Turkish and Western European literature. In this paper, I present the results of my research in Polish and Ukrainian archives along with excerpts from 17th–19th-century Polish literature that have not previously been available to international academia. I aim to provide new facts of the life of Bobowski by looking for clues hidden between the lines of his works (mainly *Serai Enderum*) and by tracing his possible contacts with Poles in the course of his long and fascinating life.

Keywords: Ali Ufki, Ali Ufuki, Bobovius, Bobowski, Wojciech Bobowski

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Introduction

Wojciech Bobowski is one of the most remarkable figures in the history of cultural contacts between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. His numerous works have received their due recognition and have enjoyed increased interest from researchers in recent years, but their author's personal story remains clouded in mystery. This is especially true of the first part of his life, which he spent in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In his numerous works that have survived until now, he left scarce references to his personal story, views, and beliefs. Most of the currently available details come from second-hand accounts. 17th-century witnesses to his life and present-day researchers have interpreted these scraps of information in different ways, depending on the sources available to them. For this reason, the biography of Bobovius is largely half-truths, anecdotes and misstatements that led to the emergence of contradictory versions as early as the 17th century, when he lived and worked. This in turn leads to discrepancies in the recent literature on the subject.²

The latest review of both factual information and the prevailing theories on Bobowski's life was provided by Judith I. Haug in her monograph on the musicological content of MS Turc 292 held in *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris.³ Her research confirmed that Bobovius' life story was divided by fate into three distinctive stages, which I like to refer to as "acts". The first act unfolded in the lands of the former Rzeczpospolita, where he was allegedly born into a noble family as "Albertus/Wojciech" (see below). Later, under circumstances not entirely known to us, he became an Ottoman subject and a Muslim with a new name: "Ali". As he moved up in the hierarchy of Topkapı Palace – the sultan's main residence in Constantinople – he became known as "Ali Bey", i.e., "Mr. Ali", who as a court musician and poet used the pen name "Ufki" ("Ufukî"). The third and last act of his life started about 20 years later. Once he had been released from the palace service, Bobowski's main occupation was explanation of Turkish language and culture for Europeans, and vice versa for the Ottomans (via translations, dictionaries, grammars and treatises on culture and religion which he wrote). As a teacher and interpreter under the Latinised name "Bobovius", he became an important liaison between the East and the West.⁴

² I have analysed this issue before, see: Agata Pawlina, 'Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki) – Polak na osmańskim dworze', in: *Wschód muzułmański w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym. Ludzie – Teksty – Historia*, eds. Grzegorz Czerwiński and Artur Konopacki, Białystok 2017, pp. 147–165.

³ Judith I. Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in 'Alī Ufukî's Compendium, MS Turc 292: Analysis, Interpretation, Cultural Context. Monograph*, Münster 2019, pp. 39–85, Viewed 10 May 2024, <<https://miami.uni-muenster.de/Record/cdcbc9ca-52a4-4f05-9665-f0df9eca6292>>.

⁴ Bobowski's case is frequently mentioned within the framework of transcultural studies on the Ottoman "go-betweens". The newest publication on this topic in Polish scholarship was authored by Agnieszka Aysen Kaim, see: A.A. Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur. Wybrane przypadki transgresji kulturowej Polaków w Imperium Osmańskim w XVII, XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2020. For the state-of-the-art on the complex Ottoman identities, see Tobias P. Graf, 'Of Half-Lives and Double-Lives: "Renegades" in the Ottoman Empire and Their Pre-Conversion Ties, ca. 1568–1610', in: *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, (eds.) Pascal Firges et al., Leiden 2014, pp. 131–149. <<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004274686>>; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two*

In this paper, I will concentrate mainly on the first, the “Polish”, act of Bobowski’s life. This will allow me to expand the known facts of his biography by using the new source material I found in archives and libraries in Poland and Ukraine during my research in 2019–2022. I discovered that the dating and course of events presented in Polish subject literature written since the 17th century differs from the information presented in Western European and Turkish publications. Regrettably, the only Polish source that is consistently cited by international scholars is an outdated and partly inaccurate entry by Franz Babinger in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, published in 1935.⁵ Therefore, another objective of this paper is to update the information provided by Babinger and to enable researchers who do not know the Polish language to gain access to new material, thus gaining a hitherto unknown perspective.

Wojciech, not “Albert”. Sources from the 17th and 18th centuries

The earliest indirect source for researching the biography of Bobovius that is written in Polish is a fragment of the introduction *Do Czytelnika* (‘To the Reader’) from *Monarchia Turecka* (1678); this is a translation of Paul Rycault’s *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1668) to which Bobovius contributed. The author of the Polish version, Kłokocki⁶, reports that:

Above all, he [Rycault] learnt the most detailed descriptions contributed by a Pole who had spent nineteen years at the Ottoman Court, and and who he [Rycault] referred to as, *Wojciech Bobowski*. Therefore, it is only right that the work he undertook, with a help of this Pole, should now benefit the Polish people.⁷

Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State, Berkeley, CA 1995; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, CA 2020. <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804777858>>; Natalie E. Rothman, ‘Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51/4 (2009), pp. 771–800, Viewed 10 May 2024, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40270362>>; *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca, NY 2012, Viewed 10 May 2024, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7z7g4>>.

⁵ Franz Babinger, ‘Bobowski Wojciech z Bobowej, h. Jaxa (Bobovius Albertus, jako Turek Ali-Bej)’, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, ed. Władysław Konopczyński, vol. 2, Kraków–Wrocław 1935, pp. 156–157.

⁶ The translator signed his work as “Polish nobleman”, hence we do not know his name for sure. Scholars ascribe the work to Stanisław, Hieronim or Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki, see Karol Estreicher, ‘Ricaut Paweł’, in: *Bibliografia Polska*, vol. 26, Kraków 1915, p. 293; Wolfgang Schweickard, ‘Paul Rycault, the Present State of the Ottoman Empire. Textual Tradition and Lexical Borrowings from Turkish’, *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Jagellonicae* 132/3 (2015), p. 190. <<https://doi.org/10.4467/20834624SL.15.017.3938>>.

⁷ [Nadewszystko najdoskonalszą informacją wziął od pewnego Polaka, który się lat dziewiętnaście na Dworze Otomańskim bawił, i tam go na pewnym miejscu wspomina, Wojciecha Bobowskiego. Słuszna tedy aby się ta jego praca, do której mu Polak pomógł, Polakom na pożytek obróciła.] – Paul Rycault, *Monarchia Turecka opisana przez Ricota sekretarza posła angielskiego u Porty Otomańskiej residującego*, Shuck 1678, p. 2. All Polish-English translations shown in this paper were done by its author.

The Polish equivalents of the Latin names *Albertus* and *Adalbertus* are “Wojciech” and “Albert”, while “Wojciech” is more often used for *Albertus* and “Albert” for *Adalbertus*.⁸ As we can see, Kłokocki, who lived in approximately the same period as *Albertus Bobovius*, used the equivalent “Wojciech” for Bobowski’s Latin name. In my opinion this is a sufficient indication to consider the widespread use of the name “Albert Bobowski” in the present-day literature as a subsequent and incorrect interpretation. I discovered that the name “Albert” did not appear in the Polish sources until the entry in the encyclopaedia of Felix Bentkowski, published in 1814.⁹ Throughout the 19th century, this name was prevalent in Polish popular art and literature on Ali Ufkî; most likely from there, it made its way into 20th-century scholarship.

In the 18th century, the only source mentioning Ali Ufkî was one of the first Polish encyclopaedias, entitled *Zbiór potrzebniejszych wiadomości porządkiem alfabety ułożonych*, by Ignacy Krasicki (1781). We read:

Ali-Beg, *dragoman* or the first interpreter to the Ottoman Porte, lived in the previous century. There are many who believe that he was born in Poland and was taken by the Tatars at a young age, then he became a renegade and was sold to Turkey. That he was capable of fulfilling the duties of his office [i.e. being a *dragoman*], his proficiency in languages, of which he knew seventeen, is the best proof. He allegedly contributed considerably to Rykoł’s [sic!] writings on the state of Turkish affairs, which he [Rycaut] published under his own name. He translated the Bible into Arabic [sic!]; one copy is held in Leiden. He also wrote *De Turcorum* [sic!] *Liturgia – de peregrinatione Meccana – de circumcissione – de visitatione aegrotorum*.¹⁰

We know that Krasicki based his encyclopaedia on several Western European sources. The articles on oriental terms and subjects were mainly derived from entries presented in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–1772) and d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697).¹¹ In these works, however, I did not find

⁸ See: Józef Bubak, *Księga naszych imion*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1993, pp. 27, 31–32, 322–323; Jan S. Bystroń, *Księga imion w Polsce używanych*, Warszawa 1938, pp. 102–103, 356–357; Witold Paweł Cienkowski, *Sekrety imion własnych*, Warszawa 1965, p. 102; Henryk Fros and Franciszek Sowa, *Twoje imię. Przewodnik onomastyczno-hagiograficzny*, Kraków 2002, pp. 78–79, 536; Jan Grzenia, *Słownik imion*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 41, 331.

⁹ Felix Bentkowski, *Historia Literatury Polskiej*, vol. 2, Warszawa–Wilno 1814, pp. 596–598.

¹⁰ [Ali-Beg, Dragoman albo pierwszy tłumacz Porty Otomańskiej żył wieku przeszłego. Wielu jest tego zdania, iż urodzony w Polsce, w młodym wieku od Tatarów w jasyr wzięty, zbisurmaniony i przedany do Turek został. Że był zdatnym do zadość czynienia obowiązkom urzędu swego, biegłość jego w językach, których siedmnaście umiał, najlepszym dowodem. Miał się znacznie przyłożyć do napisania ksiąg, które Rykoł [sic!] pod swoim imieniem wydał o stanie państw tureckich. Biblią na język arabski [sic!] przełożył, i tej jeden egzemplarz znajduje się w Lejdzie. Pisał jeszcze: *De Turcorum* [sic!] *Liturgia...*] – Ignacy Krasicki, *Zbiór potrzebniejszych wiadomości porządkiem alfabety ułożonych*, vol. 1, Warszawa–Lwów 1781, p. 68.

¹¹ Paweł Siwiec (ed.), *Orientalia w ‘Zbiorze potrzebniejszych wiadomości porządkiem alfabety ułożonych’ Ignacego Krasickiego*, Kraków 2015, pp. VII–VIII.

any articles about “Ali-Beg”, and I was not able to establish on what basis Krasicki created his encyclopaedic entry. Importantly, he did not mention Ali Ufkî’s Polish or Latinised name, nor detailed dating. Despite being written in Polish, this particular source should be considered a part of the Western European lore on Bobowski’s biography. In fact, it appears that “Bobovius” was entirely forgotten in Poland until the beginning of the 19th century.

Bobovius’ story and Polish Romanticism

According to the currently available sources, we can establish that Wojciech Bobowski and his works gained the attention of Poles as late as the 19th century. I would argue that this sudden interest was related to a) the popular trend to search for “great ancestors” that was typical of the period of Poland under the partitions, and b) the good relations between stateless Poles and the Ottoman Empire, which led to an outburst of “love for Turkey (*filoturkizm*) among the 19th-century Polish emigrant élite”.¹² I have no doubt that the most popular image of Bobovius, presented here (Image 1.), was created under precisely these influences. The steel engraving made by Antoni Oleszczyński in 1830, published in the album *Variétés polonaises* in Paris (1833) is well-known in the international academia. It perpetuated the image of Bobovius as a “typical” nobleman of 17th-century Poland – well fed, with a big moustache and wearing a *żupan*¹³, with an oriental twist in the form of a turban on his head.



Image 1. Wojciech Bobowski,
according to Antoni Oleszczyński (1830)
(<http://polona.pl/item/400828>)

¹² Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, “Stosunki Dawnej Rzeczypospolitej z Turcją i Tatarami: Czy naprawdę byliśmy przedmurzem Europy?”, in: *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 4(26) (2017), p. 20. <<https://doi.org/10.14746/prt.2017.4.1>>.

¹³ *Żupan* was part of the official upper-class male attire: long, dress-like, often silk-lined garment worn by noblemen in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the picture you can see it underneath a coat-like *delia*, and tied with a belt called *pas kontuszowy*.

This stylised representation of Bobowski continues to influence the imagination of both general readers and researchers. Therefore, I would like to emphasise that the biographical note written under the image in Oleszczyński's album (1833) differs significantly from the Polish, Western European, and Turkish lore regarding Bobowski, and it is almost entirely incorrect in the light of the latest scholarly findings.

Another 19th-century source rooted in the literary topoi of Polish Romanticism rather than historical facts is a novel by Stanisław Jaszowski, entitled *Albert Bobowski Renegat Polski (Powieść historyczna od r. 1670 do 1675)* ['Albert Bobowski, a Polish Renegade (A historical novel of the 1670–1675 years)']. The author claims that his novel on *Ali Bej*'s final years in Constantinople and the fate of his Polish-Turkish family inspired Franciszek Siarczyński to write the first article on Bobowski's life and work in Polish scientific literature (see below).¹⁴ Interestingly enough, Jaszowski also claims that the tale of a forbidden love conquering all and longing for the homeland and Christian faith he presents in the novel had been orally relayed to him by Bobowski's descendants [sic!]. At the end of the novel, we read:

This story was first told in 1730, fifty-five years after the death of Albert [sic!] Bobowski, under the reign of King Augustus III; and to me it was repeated again, in the autumn, near a large chimney fire, 96 years later, by the grandson of Władysław – the commander of the *Petyhorcy* [mentioned in the novel] – [who was, i.e. the grandson] the former chamberlain of King Stanisław Augustus; this story he often heard from his grandfather.¹⁵

This statement seems like a ground-breaking discovery, but we should not believe the “romantic” writer of the 19th century. I have tried to trace all the characters mentioned in the paragraph above but I was not successful. Hence, we should consider Jaszowski's words rather as a mean of artistic expression designed to increase the power of his narrative, not as a new lead for Bobowski's biography.

Act I. Tracing Bobowski's birth data. Writings and records

Lamentably, the greatest hope that motivated me to conduct the present research was not fulfilled. I have not succeeded in finding a conclusive documentary proof regarding the date and place of Wojciech Bobowski's birth, nor have I discovered any documents indicating where he received his comprehensive linguistic and musical education in

¹⁴ Stanisław Jaszowski, 'Albert Bobowski Renegat Polski (Powieść historyczna od r. 1670 do 1675)', in: *Powieści historyczne polskie Stanisława Jaszowskiego*, vol. 2, Lwów 1829, p. 6.

¹⁵ [Opowiadanie to nastąpiło r. 1730 w lat pięćdziesiąt pięć po śmierci Alberta Bobowskiego, pod panowaniem Króla Augusta III, a mnie znowu wnuk Władysława, owego Rotmistrza Petyhorców, były szambelan Króla Stanisława Augusta, także w jesieni przy dużym kominowym ogniu powtarzał w lat dziewięćdziesiąt sześć później, opowiadanie to często od dziadka słyszane.] – Ibidem, p. 35.

Rzeczpospolita. Nevertheless, the documents that I did find allowed me to draw conclusions regarding the potential timeline and the plausible unfolding of the first 10–15 years of Bobowski's life. I have also explored several possible scenarios under which he might have fallen into Tatar and Turkish captivity and eventually ended up in the sultan's palace in Constantinople.

Wojciech Bobowski was probably born around 1610. If we trust his own words – he was born in Lviv: in the colophon of the manuscript translation of the Bible into Turkish (1664), he signed himself as *Alberti Bobowij Leopolitani*; on the title page of “Grammatica Turcicolatina” (1666) he signed himself as *Alberti Bobovy Leopolitani*.¹⁶ Cornelio Magni, who most likely knew him personally, invokes Bobowski in his diaries twice using *Leopolitano* cognomen and the phrase *Polacco da Leopoli*.¹⁷ Alas, I have not discovered records that would conclusively confirm Bobovius' belonging to the “Lviv branch” of the noble family called *Bobowsky herbu Gryf (Jaxa)* [‘Bobowsky bearing the coat of arms Gryphon’].¹⁸

In the so-called “Lviv Collection” (*Zbiory lwowskie*) at the Ossolineum in Wrocław, I found three fonds containing genealogical information relating to the *Bobowsky* family.¹⁹ In the changing legal environment of post-partition Poland, from the late 18th century, this type of documentation was prepared by noblemen in order to prove their line of descent.²⁰ Regrettably, on the Bobowsky's family trees included in the Lviv Collection, there is no one with the name “Wojciech/Albert/Albertus” who lived in the 17th century. Manuscript collection MS DE-6312(or. 59), entitled *Papiery rodzinno-majątkowe Jana Bobowskiego* [‘Jan Bobowski's papers concerning [his] family and its possessions’] contains a brief note about the figure of our interest. The loose card that opens this fond presumably originates from the early 19th century. It reads: “Albert Bobowski, known as Ali-Bek, who became a renegade in Turkish slavery. He spoke and wrote in many languages”.²¹ Alas, the existence of this note may be due not to the author's knowledge of his family history but to his familiarity with the encyclopaedic entries about Wojciech

¹⁶ See: Hannah Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible Translation by Yahya bin 'Ishaq: also called Haki (1659)*, Leiden 1994, p. 371; ‘Wojciech Bobowski and His Turkish Grammar (1666): A Dragoman and Musician at the Court of Sultan Mehmed IV’, in: *Dutch Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures* 2 (1996), p. 187; Fafo Telatar, Yaşar Tokay, and Nurdan Besli (eds.), *Ali Ufki Bey (Alberti Bobovy) Grammatica Turcico-Latina (1666)*, Ankara 2020.

¹⁷ Cornelio Magni, *Quanto di più curioso, e vago ha potuto raccorre Cornelio Magni nel primo biennio da esso consumato in viaggi, e dimore per la Turchia...*, Parma 1679, pp. 500–502.

¹⁸ In the years 2019–2020, I also conducted research on the “Małopolska branch” and the “Lublin branch” of the *Bobowsky* family. Research in the state and church archives in Kraków, Warszawa, Bobowa, Nowy Sącz, Tarnów, Kraśnik and Lublin did not bring any ground-breaking results.

¹⁹ Collections are currently held in the Stefanyk National Science Library in Lviv and are available online, see below, paper's bibliography: MS DE-6312 (or. 59), MS DE-8529 (or. 22), MS DE-17097 (or. 753).

²⁰ Roman Marcinek and Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Materiały do genealogii szlachty galicyjskiej*, vol. 1, Kraków 1996, pp. 5–6; Krzysztof Ślusarek, ‘Austria wobec polskiej szlachty z Galicji w latach 1772–1861’, *Studia Historyczne* LV/2(218) (2012), pp. 185–200.

²¹ [Albert Bobowski pod imieniem Ali-Beka, który w niewoli Tureckiej będąc zbisurmanił się. Mówił i pisał on niemało językami.] – Stefanyk National Science Library in Lviv, Collection (Fond) 141/II „Zbiór Aleksandra

Bobowski that emerged in Polish literature at that particular time. Hence, we cannot deem this note as a conclusive evidence of Bobovius' noble descent.

More encouraging results emerged from the research I conducted at the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv. It proved that the *Bobowscy* family indeed lived in Lviv as early as the beginning of the 17th century. Manuscript collection MS 618/2/2629 contains records of baptisms held in the Roman Catholic cathedral in Lviv in the years 1600–1607. In folio 257v, we read that on 20 March 1606 “Albertus, son of Mathias Bobowski and his wife Elizabeth” was baptised.²² This is an intriguing note, but one should be careful with its interpretation. According to the Polish subject literature, Bobowski was taken into Tatar captivity in 1624 (see below). If the “Albertus” from the above-mentioned record in question is the one who later became Ali Ufkî, he would have been about 18 years old when he became a prisoner of war and left Rzeczpospolita. When he died in 1675/1676, he would have been 69–70 years old. This “Polish timeline” seems plausible so far; however, we know from other sources that Ali Ufkî spent 19–20 years in the palace service. On this timeline, his liberation would have taken place around 1644, but this is not possible. Ali Ufkî still served as a court musician at Topkapı Palace in September 1651, when he witnessed the assassination of Kösem Sultan.²³

Therefore, in my opinion and in the light of the source material available today, we cannot recognise the “Albertus” who appears in the record from 1606 as the later “Bobovius”. The only detail we can ascertain from this document is that the members of *Bobowscy* family of the “Lviv branch” were Roman Catholics and that they used the name “Albertus-Wojciech” for their male descendants. Perhaps the person who eventually became Ali Ufkî was another son who was born later into the same family?²⁴

Tracing Bobowski's noble descent. Armorial and *Serai Enderum*

The oldest armorials (published from the 18th century onward) do not mention Wojciech among the descendants of the *Bobowscy herbu Gryf*, whose history dates back to the 14th century. From these sources, we can only learn that – starting in the mid-17th century – members of the *Bobowscy* family held important offices in Lviv and other regions of Podolia.²⁵ The first Polish biographer of Bobovius, Franciszek Siarczyński (1758–1829),

Czołowskiego”, MS DE-6312 (or. 59) *Papiery rodzinno-majątkowe Jana Bobowskiego*, p. 1, Viewed 10 May 2024, <https://dbs.ossolineum.pl/kzc/wyniki_pl.php?RL-004082>.

²² [Albertus filius Mathias Bobowski et coniux Helisabeth] – MS 618/2/2629 *Метрична книга Катедрального костелу у Львові*, f. 257v. Reproduction of this record is available in the monograph, see: Pawlina, *Bobovius – Ali Ufkî*, pp. 24–25.

²³ See: Hannah Neudecker, ‘An Ottoman Palace Revolution as Witnessed by a Court Musician’, in: *Dutch Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures* 1–2 (1997), pp. 163–192.

²⁴ On the tradition of giving the same name to siblings and the affiliation of names to particular families, see: Bystroń, *Księga imion w Polsce używanych*, pp. 26–30.

²⁵ Kasper Niesiecki, *Korona Polska przy Złotej Wolności...*, vol. 1, Lwów 1728, pp. 113–114; Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (ed.), *Herbarz polski Kaspra Niesieckiego powiększony dodatkami z późniejszych autorów, rękopismów,*

interprets this omission as a conscious decision made by the authors of the armorials that he attributes to Bobowski's conversion to Islam.²⁶ This 19th-century Piarist scholar was probably right. In 17th-century Europe religious conversion to Islam was often perceived as treason. This may have also been why Wojciech's relatives did not attempt to free him from his captivity. This is an intriguing fact because in that period envoys traveling from Rzeczpospolita to Constantinople and Bakhchisaray often successfully negotiated the liberation of captives and prisoners of war. It is possible (although not very likely) that the documents or correspondence written between Ali Ufkî and his family or his patron on this very subject are still hidden somewhere in the archives, waiting to be discovered.

Regardless of the reason for the earlier omission, the first armorial that enlists Wojciech Bobowski as a member of a noble family is *Herbarz polski* by Hipolit Stupnicki, published in 1855. It reads that Bobovius was:

born in Lviv, taken prisoner by the Tatars at a young age during their raid on Podolia in 1624, then sold and taken to Constantinople where he was educated in the Muslim's faith; having gained the favour of the vizier [sic!], he was given the office of the state interpreter. Apart from his official duties, he wrote a Turkish grammar and translated the Psalms of David, the Holy Scriptures, and many learned treatises on Islamic jurisprudence [sic!] into Turkish language. He was promoted to the rank of basha under the name *Ali-Beg*; he planned to go back to his homeland [sic!] and return to the Christian faith [sic!], but death took him in 1676.²⁷

This entry is likely based on two earlier detailed accounts of Bobowski's life and work: one written by Franciszek Siarczyński in 1828, the other authored by Ignacy Chodynicki in 1829.²⁸ The latter clearly duplicated the findings and interpretations of Siarczyński. Similarly, all subsequent written sources that outline Bobovius' biography were based on Siarczyński's article including the prevailing version of the timeline authored by Franz Babinger and published in the early 20th century.²⁹

dowodów urzędowych..., vol. 2, Leipzig 1839, p. 179.

²⁶ Franciszek Siarczyński, 'Wiadomość o Woyciechu Jaxie z Bobowej Bobowskim, czyli Hali-Beiu Terdziumanie Paszy Machometa IV', in: *Czasopism Naukowy Księgozbioru Publicznego Imienia Ossolińskich* 1 (1828), p. 103.

²⁷ [[R]odem ze Lwowa, w młodym wieku podczas najazdu Rusi r. 1624 od Tatarów w jasyr zabrany i do Carogrodu zaprzędany, odebrał tam wychowanie w wierze mahometańskiej, a zyskawszy następnie względy wezyra, otrzymał posadę tłumacza rządowego. Wśród zatrudnienia obowiązku swego, pisał on gramatykę turecką, przetłumaczył psalmy Dawida i pismo ś. na język turecki, i wiele szacownych rozpraw o prawodawstwie Islamizmu. Wyniesiony następnie na godność Baszy pod nazwiskiem Ali-Bega, zamyślał już do ojczyzny, a potem na łono wiary chrześcijańskiej powrócić, gdy go w tem w r. 1676 śmierć zabrała.] – Hipolit Stupnicki, *Herbarz Polski i imionospis zasłużonych w Polsce ludzi wszystkich stanów i czasów...*, vol. 1, Lwów 1855, pp. 38–39.

²⁸ Siarczyński, 'Wiadomość o Woyciechu Jaxie z Bobowej...'; Ignacy Chodynicki, *Historia Stołecznego Królestw Galicyi i Lodomeryi Miasta Lwowa od założenia jego aż do czasów teraźniejszych*, Lwów 1829, pp. 433–435.

²⁹ Babinger, 'Bobowski Wojciech...'. Lamentably, more recent Polish publications repeat unverified information from Babinger's entry, see: Sibel Jagoda, 'Wojciech Bobowski (alias Ali Ufkî) i jego dokonania', in: *Muzyka*

To conclude the subject of Ali Ufki's alleged noble descent, I should emphasise that Polish metric, heraldic and encyclopaedic sources found to date, do not rule out my earlier theory that Bobowski's noble origins may have been attributed to him by 19th-century authors influenced by the political and artistic ideas of Polish Romanticism.³⁰ Nonetheless, I believe that during my analysis of the *Serai Enderum* I have found an indirect confirmation that he could and should be recognised as a nobleman.³¹ Some passages of Bobovius' description of Topkapı Palace shed faint light on his experiences and opinions. In my interpretation, he indirectly implies his noble descent through his choice of words in his comparisons of the way of life of the "high society" in Europe and in the Ottoman Empire. Bobowski always refers to European customs by using phrases such as "in our lands", "with us" and "ours". The most direct reference to the "nobility" is a sentence in which he informs the reader that in the Ottoman Empire "all nations are equal; they can distinguish themselves only by merit and prudence, and [it brings nothing] to boast [about one's] noble blood".³² Perhaps this statement echoes his own experience, when he "boasted about his noble descent" but still had to follow strict discipline and rules to advance in the palace ranks.

Tracing Bobowski's education. Lviv as a centre of culture and learning

In other excerpts from *Serai Enderum* we can recognise Bobovius' strong opinion about the level of education in the palace school. It gives a sense of how passionate he was about learning and scholarship. He highly valued attaining higher levels of education, and he considered intellectual development to be the most effective and quickest way to gain freedom and leave the *seraglio*. If we consider the present knowledge about the quantity and high quality of the various works Bobowski left behind, his approach is not surprising to us. From his writings emerges an individual of outstanding linguistic and musical talent, gifted with fine observation skills, cross-cultural sensitivity, and the ability to transfer observations onto paper in both, indirect (translations, dictionaries or grammars), and direct forms (descriptions of places and events, numerous musical scores). This raises a question that interests all researchers dealing with his legacy: Where and when did Bobowski begin his comprehensive education?

21/6 (2007), pp. 23–24; Jerzy Siemisław Łątka, *Słownik Polaków w Imperium Osmańskim i Republice Turcji*, Kraków 2015, pp. 56–57; Siwiec (ed.), *Orientalia w 'Zbiorze Potrzebniejszych Wiadomości...'*, p. 55.

³⁰ Pawlina, 'Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki)...', pp. 153–154; on the possibility of the commoner becoming an educated musician in the 17th century Lviv, see also: Leszek Mazepa, 'Szkolnictwo muzyczne we Lwowie (XV–XX w.)', in: *Lwów. Miasto, Społeczeństwo, Kultura*, vol. 1, Kraków 1995, pp. 21–22.

³¹ Within the framework of the project mentioned in footnote 1., I analysed and translated into Polish the Italian manuscript of *Serai Enderum* (1665) held in the British Library as MS Harley 3409 (Western Manuscripts Collection), see: Pawlina, *Bobovius – Ali Ufki*.

³² [[T]utte le nationi sono di pari sorte, solo si distinguono con le singolari virtù e prudenza, non vol il vantarsi della nobiltà di sangue.] – MS Harley 3409, pp. 90–91. I thank Dr Sandra Strugała for the transcription and translation of all the passages of *Serai Enderum* presented in this paper.

As a young nobleman living in the 17th-century Lviv, then a multicultural centre of trade, religion, education and political life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he would have had easy access to education. In the capital city of Podolia, he could have learnt music, classical and modern languages, and even some basics of oriental languages.³³ Judith I. Haug was the first to recognise that Bobowski wrote about music (and also medicine) mostly in Italian. Furthermore, based on the marginalia and glosses appearing in the musicological manuscripts of Ali Ufkî, she deduced that he must have been *thinking* in this language about the theory of music.³⁴ I believe this is a crucial clue that could eventually lead us to ascertain where Bobowski received his education during the first, the “Polish act”, of his life.

At the beginning of the 17th century in Rzeczpospolita, music was taught either through private lessons (often given by foreign, mainly Italian masters) or in various educational institutions. Lviv was an important centre of musical education: musicians were trained in city schools, church schools (Catholic, Orthodox and Greek Catholic) and monastery schools (managed by Dominican, Franciscan and Jesuit orders)³⁵. In my opinion, Bobowski’s use of Italian and Latin as the main languages of work may indicate that he was educated at the Jesuit College (*Kolegium Jezuickie*) in Lviv, established in 1608 with music boarding school (*bursa muzyczna*) operating from 1615.³⁶ The Jesuit archives in Rome hold promising records, i.e., lists of teachers and alumni of schools, colleges, and seminars run by the order.³⁷ I was able to access photocopies of these records kept in the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Kraków, alas I did not find the name “Bobowski” on any of these lists.³⁸

Act II. From Lviv to Adrianople and Constantinople

The place of Bobowski’s education as well as the circumstances under which the young man found himself in Turkish captivity remain a mystery. It was Franciszek Siarczyński who first put forward the assertion that Bobowski had been taken by Tatars

³³ Adam Balcer, *Turcja, Wielki Step i Europa Środkowa*, Kraków 2018, pp. 27–42; Piotr Borek, *Ukraina w staropolskich dziennikach i pamiętnikach: bohaterowie, fortece, tradycja*, Kraków 2001; Henryk W. Żaliński and Kazimierz Karolczak (eds.), *Lwów. Miasto, Społeczeństwo, Kultura*, Kraków 1995.

³⁴ Judith I. Haug, ‘Being More than the Sum of One’s Parts: Acculturation and Biculturalism in the Life and Works of Ali Ufkî’, in: *Archivum Ottomanicum* 33 (2016), pp. 179–190; ‘Medical Knowledge in ‘Alî Ufukî’s Musical Notebook (Mid-17th Century)’, in: *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6/1–2 (2018), p. 126. <<https://doi.org/10.1163/2212943X-00601009>>; *Ottoman and European Music in ‘Alî Ufukî’s Compendium*, *MS Turc* 292, p. 84.

³⁵ Mazepa, ‘Szkołnictwo muzyczne we Lwowie’, p. 33.

³⁶ Grzegorz Łuszczak, *Nauczyciele i wychowawcy szkół jezuickich we Lwowie 1608–1773*, Kraków 2010; Mazepa, ‘Szkołnictwo muzyczne we Lwowie’, p. 23.

³⁷ Andrzej Paweł Bieś, Ludiwł Grzebień, and Marek Ingot, *Polonica w Archiwum Rzymskim Towarzystwa Jezusowego*, vol. 1, Kraków 2002.

³⁸ Pawlina, *Bobovius – Ali Ufkî*, p. 32.

in 1624.³⁹ Indeed, in the spring of that year the Budjak Horde led by Khan Temir invaded eastern provinces of Rzeczpospolita. In June, the Horde encroached so deep into the territory that even citizens of Kraków were warned about the coming danger.⁴⁰ Siarczyński's theory was accepted as true by all the subsequent Polish writers, even though Khan Temir's raid had ended with the Tatars' defeat and the release of the captives.

Recent Turkish and Western European literature follows the assumption of Cem Behar,⁴¹ who claimed that the second, the "Turkish" act of Bobowski's life had started later, around the year 1633. The biggest Polish-Tatar skirmishes of that decade happened during the so-called "Abaza-Pasha war" (1633–1634).⁴² I agree that the early 1630s is the most probable period when young Wojciech might have left Poland, but I do not believe that it happened during the raids on Kamianets-Podilskyi, as Behar claimed. I also reject the information presented by Hannah Neudecker that Bobowski started his servitude in the Ottoman Empire as a child.⁴³ Based on the unquestionable skills shown by Bobowski in his works, particularly his ability to notate music from hearing and to use several European languages in writing, I believe that he was taken into captivity as an older teenager (16–18 years old) or even in his 20ies.⁴⁴

The capturing of Bobowski did not necessarily take place during the major Polish-Tatar clashes mentioned above. He could have been taken during the minor raids on Podolia region that recurred regularly in the 1620s and 1630s.⁴⁵ In the absence of verified information and even some misinformation surrounding the circumstances under which Bobowski ended up in Istanbul (which we observe even in sources from the 17th century),⁴⁶ we should not completely rule out other possible origins of Bobowski's "Turkish life".

³⁹ Siarczyński, 'Wiadomość o Woyciechu Jaxie z Bobowej...', p. 92.

⁴⁰ Janusz Pajewski, *Buńczuk i Koncierz: Z dziejów wojen polsko-tureckich*, Poznań 1997, pp. 67–70.

⁴¹ Cem Behar, 'Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki): Hayatı ve Eserleri (1610?–1675)', in: *Musikiden Müziğe. Osmanlı Türk Müziği: Gelenek ve Modernik*, İstanbul 2008, pp. 17–55.

⁴² Pajewski, *Buńczuk i Koncierz*, pp. 70–73; Stanford J. Shaw, *Historia Imperium Osmańskiego i Republiki Tureckiej*, (trans.) Bartłomiej Świetlik, vol. 1, Warszawa 2012, pp. 308–309; Halil İnalcık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu üzerine Araştırmalar. II. Tagayyür ve Fesād (1603–1656): Bozuluş ve Kargaşa Dönemi*, İstanbul 2020, pp. 220–221.

⁴³ Hannah Neudecker, 'From Istanbul to London? Albertus Bobovius' Appeal to Isaac Basire', in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, ed. Alastair Hamilton, Leiden 2005, p. 175. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047416562_012>.

⁴⁴ If we were to believe that Bobowski was born in 1606 (based on the aforementioned archival record from Lviv), we could take into consideration also the earlier Tatar raids on Podolia, for example, the one in the years 1620–1621, after the battle of Cecora (Sept–Oct 1620). We know that during that invasion Tatars reached the city walls of Lviv. In this timeline, however, Wojciech would have been 14–15 years old at the time of being taken captive.

⁴⁵ Pajewski, *Buńczuk i Koncierz*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ Claes Rålamb, who met and worked with Bobovius, left in his journal a biographical note which is contradictory to all other 17th-century sources. We read: "I had the good fortune to receive a most particular account (...) from a renegado *Albertus Bobovius*, well versed in the French, Italian, German, Latin, Greek, Turkish and Arabian tongues, who since his being taken prisoner in the Venetian war [sic!], had served ten years for a musician in the seraglio, but was lately set at liberty (...), [he] lived in the English ambassador's house, in hopes of getting, by his help, out of Turkey, and among Christians again, being in his heart still addicted to his former religion of the reformed profession [sic!]" – Claes Rålamb, 'A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople', in: *A Collection of Voyages*

History of Lviv provides us with instances of town councillors who – when faced with a potential siege – would make a pact with the Tatar invaders and, in exchange for them withdrawing from the city, would offer them riches guaranteed by hostages. These hostages were young, educated noblemen who constituted a certain profit at the slave market – if the Polish party would not honour its agreed obligations.⁴⁷ Could Wojciech Bobowski have been one of such hostages?

There is yet another possibility: perhaps young Wojciech learned the basics of oriental languages in Lviv and voluntarily travelled east for further study and future “foreign service”. If that was the case, then he would not have been the first Pole to actually choose to become a *renegade*.⁴⁸ To speculate even further: What if he had been sent to Constantinople in secret, as a spy, by the king or (more likely) a Podolian magnate, after receiving basic education in Lviv?⁴⁹ Magnates were a rising power in the Rzeczpospolita of that period and were keenly interested in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

The exact circumstances under which Bobowski found himself in the Ottoman Empire constitute a subject that needs further investigation. However, according to his own words, he spent the initial period of his “Ottoman life” at the sultan’s seat in Adrianople (today’s Edirne). In *Serai Enderum*, he recalls the beginnings of his palace career in these words:

When I arrived [at Topkapı Palace] from Adrianople, *kapı ağası* assigned me to the chamber [of axemen – *baltacı*], and so I joined them. Then [their] captain came grabbed me around the waist and pushed and pulled me without any warning. I did not defend myself. I allowed him to drag me around and I almost fell down. They concluded that I was not strong enough to join them [i.e. the *baltacı*]. Thus, I was assigned to the Great Chamber [i.e. *Büyük Oda*].⁵⁰

and Travels, Some Now First Printed from Original Manuscripts, Others Now First Published in English. In Six Volumes, vol. 5, London 1732, p. 703.

⁴⁷ Łątka, *Odaliski, poturczeńcy i uchodźcy*, p. 29; Antoni Józef Rolle, ‘Zakładnicy Lwowski’, in: *Opowiadania Historyczne*, vol. 7, Lwów 1891, pp. 173–210.

⁴⁸ Bohdan Baranowski, *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII wieku*, Łódź 1950; Dziubiński, ‘Poturczeńcy Polscy’; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, ‘Permeable Frontiers: Contacts between Polish and Turkish-Tatar Elites in the Early Modern Era’, in: *Foreign Drums Beating. Transnational Experiences in Early Modern Europe*, eds. B. Forsen and M. Hakkarainen, Helsinki 2017, pp. 153–168; ‘Stosunki Dawnej Rzeczpospolitej z Turcją i Tatarami’; Jan Reychman, *Życie polskie w Stambule w XVIII Wieku*, Warszawa 1959. Further reading and the state-of-the-art on the Ottoman *renegades*, see above, footnote 4.

⁴⁹ The term ‘magnate’ (*magnat, magnaci*) in the context of the history of Poland is used to denote a member of the highest social class, the richest nobility (*szlachta*).

⁵⁰ [[E]ssendo io venuto dal seraglio di Andrianopoli, il *kapa agasi* comandò che io fosse messo in quella stanza, così fecero, doppo venne il luogotenente e mi prese per la cintura, tirandome forte verso di sé, dal che mi ho lasciato tirare in abbandonarmi, mostrandoli l’esser debole delle rene, perciò non fui ricevuto come insufficiente di forza a sostentare tanti travagli da onde son stato mandato alla Gran Camera.] – MS Harley 3409, p. 77. This passage makes it seem as if Bobowski deliberately pretended to be weaker than he really was in order to avoid being conscripted into the *baltacı* corps.

Before this colourfully described scene could happen, Bobowski had to convert to Islam and adopt a new name: “Ali”. This must have already taken place at the Palace of Adrianople. In *Serai Enderum*, he often compares the rules guiding life in Adrianople Palace with the even greater discipline of Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. The in-depth analysis of Bobowski’s work allowed me to estimate a plausible dating of the “palace” period of his life. He often refers to the customs observed in the *seraglio* under the rule of Murad IV (1623–1640); therefore, I assume that the initial period of Bobowski’s education in Adrianople occurred during the final years of this sultan’s reign. The colophon of the *Serai Enderum* indicates that “Ali Ufkî” came to Topkapı Palace during the reign of Ibrahim I (1640–1648) and was still serving there as a court musician under his successor, Mehmed IV (1648–1687).⁵¹ The content of *Serai Enderum* gives further clues that the latter was a young boy when Bobowski observed him at the palace.

The conclusion of the above analysis supports the theory that Bobowski left the lands of Rzeczpospolita in the early 1630s. He then spent several years learning and serving in Adrianople and was eventually transferred to the sultan’s main seat in Constantinople, in 1640 at the earliest. Based on the discoveries made by Hannah Neudecker,⁵² combined with my own analysis of the *Serai Enderum*, I believe that Bobowski left Topkapı Palace during the years 1651–1653.

Act III. Bobovius and his connections with Poles and “Polishness”

From the mid-1650s, the musician and poet “Ali Ufkî” gradually transformed into a famous teacher, translator and interpreter, known throughout almost all of Europe as “Bobovius” or simply “Ali Bey” (in dozens of spellings). Thanks to Hannah Neudecker, Cem Behar and Judith I. Haug, we now possess an impressive number of source material indicating how Bobowski’s life unfolded after his *çıkma* (i.e., leaving the palace service). Alas, we do not know when exactly Ali Ufkî’s *çıkma* happened, we do know – based on *Serai Enderum* – that it was possible due to the patronage of Galatalı Kara Mustafa Paşa.⁵³ This information can further be interpreted as a confirmation that Bobowski indeed “travelled to Egypt as a servant of an Ottoman nobleman, became a free man and came back to Constantinople” as stated by Thomas Hyde in 1690.⁵⁴ Mustafa Paşa was

⁵¹ Full title of MS Harley 3409 is as follows: *Serai Enderum* [sic!], cioè Penetrare dell’*Seraglio detto nuovo dei G.Sri e Re Ottomani; la descrizione del loro vivere e costumi e altri essercitij, da me Alberto Bobovio Sequolitano* [sic!] *Polaccho fatta, al qual tempo di Sultan Ibrahim strangolato et nel tempo del presente G.S. Sultan Memetto, Figliolo del predetto Sultan Ibrahim, ha qui con ufficio di Paggi di musica parecchi anni habitato.*

⁵² Neudecker, ‘An Ottoman Palace Revolution’; ‘From Istanbul to London?’.

⁵³ MS Harley 3409, pp. 62–63; for the crucial fragment in Polish, see: Pawlina, *Bobovius – Ali Ufkî*, p. 146.

⁵⁴ [[U]nde ut Magnatis alicujus Famulus abiit in Ægyptum, & hoc modo factus Liber, tandem ad Constantinopolim rediens.] – Thomas Hyde, *Ad Lectorem Praefatio* to ‘Tractatus Alberti Bobovii Turcarum Imp. Mohammed IV olim Interpretis primarii, De Turcarum Liturgia, Peregrinatione Meccana, Circumcisione, Ægrotorum Visitatione, &c’, in: *Itinera Mundi*, ed. Thomas Hyde, Oxford 1690.

appointed governor of Egypt in mid-1656. He was forced to leave the post and go back to Constantinople in 1657.⁵⁵ Did Bobowski accompany him? Did he meet his Egyptian wife during his stay in Cairo?⁵⁶ Again, we cannot know for sure.

In the vast source material on the international contacts that Bobowski made during the “third act” of his life, it is striking how little we know about his acquaintances with Poles. The 17th century was a period of very intense contacts between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire. Polish diplomats travelled regularly from Rzeczpospolita to Constantinople. Why would they not contact their fellow countryman, Bobowski, who had been active as an informant and Turkish language teacher since the 1650s and as a state interpreter since the mid-1660s? Recently, it has been confirmed by scholars that from the mid-1660s Bobovius was thinking of returning to Europe.⁵⁷ We know that he thought about serving in the English and French courts. Why did he prefer that, rather than returning to his “homeland”?

We can name only two “Poles” who met Bobowski while he was living in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The story of his dealings with the polonised Lorraine, François à Mesgnien Meniński, is known to the international academia.⁵⁸ Meniński learned the Turkish language from “Ali Bey” during his first stay in Constantinople (1653–1656)⁵⁹, and he received a copy of Bobowski’s Turkish translation of Comenius’ *Janua linguarum reserata* (1658) during his second stay in the Ottoman capital (1657–1659). He later used it as a source for his famous *Thesaurus linguarum orientalium*⁶⁰. The other Pole who met Bobowski is mentioned only in the Polish subject literature. Encyclopaedias indicate that, in the years 1672–1673, Wojciech worked with a Jesuit missionary, Teofil Rutka. After finishing his mission, Rutka returned to Rzeczpospolita with two manuscripts of *Al-Hidāya* that had been given to him by Bobovius.⁶¹ He handed them over to the Jesuit College in Lviv – the same institution that I mentioned above in the context of Bobowski’s possible early education.⁶² It is said that Rutka “tried to convince [Bobowski] to return

⁵⁵ Alberto Bobovio and Nikolaus Brenner, *Saray-ı Enderun. Topkapı Sarayı’nda Yaşam*, (trans.) Türkis Noyan, İstanbul 2013, p. 58.

⁵⁶ For confirmation of Bobovius’ marital status, see Behar, ‘Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufkî): Hayatı ve Eserleri’, p. 29; Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in ‘Alî Ufukî’s Compendium*, MS Turc 292, p. 69.

⁵⁷ Haug, *Ibidem*; Neudecker, ‘From Istanbul to London?’.

⁵⁸ Paul Babinski, ‘World Literature in Practice: The Orientalist’s Manuscript between the Ottoman Empire and Germany’ (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2020), pp. 172–176; Behar, ‘Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufkî): Hayatı ve Eserleri’, pp. 25–27.

⁵⁹ Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, ‘Mesgnien-Meniński Franciszek’, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, ed. Emanuel Rostworowski, vol. 20, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, pp. 464–466; Łątka, *Słownik Polaków w Imperium Osmańskim i Republice Turcji*, pp. 268–269.

⁶⁰ Franciscus à Mesgnien Meniński, *Proemium in: Thesaurus linguarum orientalium, Turcae, Arabicae, Persicae...*, Vienna 1680.

⁶¹ I assume that these are the “learned treatises on Islamic jurisprudence”, allegedly translated by Bobovius according to Stupnicki’s armorial quoted above. The manuscripts are now kept in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna under the signature Cod. A. F. 74, and they are written in Arabic, not Turkish.

⁶² Ludwik Grzebień, ‘Rutka Teofil’, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 33, ed. Henryk Markiewicz, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1991, pp. 203–204; Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia Polska*, vol. 13, Kraków 1894, p. 183; Joseph

to the Catholic Church [sic!] and even received an oath from him that he would do so as soon as he returned to the homeland [sic!]"⁶³, however, I did not find any further evidence of cooperation between Bobowski and Rutka.

Bobovius' potential contacts with envoys, missionaries and translators sent from Rzeczpospolita to the Ottoman Empire in the mid-17th century remain an unexplored area of research. I should hope that in the archives and libraries in Europe we may still find forgotten reports, correspondence, journals or other documents that would expand our knowledge on this subject. Traces of Bobowski's "Polishness" in the archival collections that we currently know of are surprisingly scarce. In the well-researched MS Turc 292 (*Bibliothèque nationale*), I found only 13 passages in Polish and most of them are single glosses, names or sentences. The longest of these – a recipe for acacia gum, a description of a *fighel* ('a prank') performed with hands, and a translated Latin proverb – were recently made available to the Polish reader by Agnieszka Ayşen Kaim.⁶⁴ In the equally large manuscript collection kept in *Bibliothèque nationale*, MS Turc 221, only two pages contain notes in Polish, and these are mainly names – probably of Poles involved in negotiations with Petro Doroshenko.⁶⁵ Researching the names of these Polish dignitaries could be a first step in any future investigations of the subject. Furthermore, there are several spelling choices made by Bobowski in his Latin transcriptions of the Ottoman Turkish words that may be a faint remnant of his education received in Rzeczpospolita. In various manuscripts we come across the orthography resembling Polish spellings, i.e. letter *l* for Turkish 'dark [l]'; *cz* and *ci* for [ç]; *sz* for [ş]; *dz* and *dzi* for [c]; *ch* for [h], and even *q* and *ę* for nasal variants of [o] and [e].

Bobovius and religion

To conclude my article, I would like to address one last unresolved matter of keen interest to contemporary scholars: the religion professed by Bobowski throughout his life, especially in his earliest years. International researchers are eager to list him among the Ottoman "Christians of Allah"⁶⁶. Some implicitly state that he was a Protestant by

Hammer-Purgstall (ed.), *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*. 6, *Von der Grosswesirschaft Mohammed Köprili's bis zum Carlowiczzer Frieden: 1656–1699* (Pest 1830), Budapest 1963, p. 80; Jan Reyman, *Znajomość i nauczanie języków orientalnych w Polsce XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1950, p. 26.

⁶³ [[S]tarą się także przywieźć [go] na łono katolickiego kościoła i nawet przyrzeczenie od niego miał iż to uczyni, kiedy wróci do kraju] – Samuel Orgelbrand, *Encyklopedia Powszechna*, vol. 3., Warszawa 1860, p. 820.

⁶⁴ Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur*, pp. 116–118; see also: Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in 'Alī Ufukī's Compendium*, MS Turc 292, p. 407.

⁶⁵ Ilya V. Zaycev, 'La politique turque de Petro Doroşenko. Documents du fonds de Wojciech Bobowski à la BNF.', in: *Cahiers du monde russe* 50/2 (2009), pp. 511–532. <<https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.9727>>; see also Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur*, pp. 144–145.

⁶⁶ Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur*, pp. 139–143; Haug, 'Being More than the Sum of One's Parts'; *Ottoman and European Music in 'Alī Ufukī's Compendium*, MS Turc 292, pp. 48–52; Neudecker, 'From Istanbul to London?'; 'Two Hitherto Little-Studied Turkish Translations by Wojciech Bobowski Alias Albertus Bobovius', *Oriens* 45/3–4

birth.⁶⁷ The latter is based on Claes Rålamb's 17th-century reference (which we already know to be partly incorrect; see, footnote 46) and Bobowski's alleged preference for collaboration with Anglicans and Calvinists. However, the metrical records held in Lviv prove that the *Bobowsky* who lived in Podolia practiced Catholicism, not Protestantism (as discussed above). If Wojciech Bobowski was a descendant of the *Bobowsky* from Podolia, he would have been a Catholic by birth.

Turkish scholars insist that in the second part of his life Bobowski was a sincere Muslim⁶⁸ or even a Sufi sheikh.⁶⁹ This assumption is based on the religious and spiritual poetry included in Ali Ufkî's musical manuscripts. Based on the *aşık* repertoire recorded in his notation collections, one should also consider Ali Ufkî's ties to Bektashism, the main religious system among the Janissaries, with whom he lived in Topkapı Palace for more than a decade. Musicologist Walter Feldman claims that Bobowski belonged to the Celvetîyye *tarikât* (i.e., a sufi order),⁷⁰ but, regrettably, he does not provide the source of this information and I was unable to verify it. Judith I. Haug is also inclined to acknowledge Ali Ufkî's ties to the Halvetîyye *tarikât*.⁷¹

In my opinion, the question of the "true confession" of Wojciech Bobowski is an anachronism. I would argue that for the shaping of Bobowski's bicultural personality⁷², whether he was raised as a Catholic or a Protestant, did not matter as much as we are inclined to think today. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that both ways of upbringing would have been possible in the 17th-century Lviv. Bobowski left Rzeczpospolita in the early 1630s, that is, before the Counter-Reformation began to impact the fate of followers of the "Reformed faith" by threatening their lives and forcing them to leave their homeland.⁷³ Given the multicultural and multireligious nature of both, the 17th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Ottoman Empire, perhaps the transition from the cultural landscape of Lviv to the urban culture of Constantinople was not such

(2017), pp. 330–363. <<https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-04503002>>. See also Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les chrétiens d'Allah: l'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, Paris 2006.

⁶⁷ İpek Aynuksa, 'Ali Ufkî Bey (Wojciech Bobowski) – Well-Known Musician, Forgotten Political Figure. A Luminary in the 600 Years of Turkish-Polish Diplomatic Relations', *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations* 52/1 (2016), pp. 271–284. <<https://doi.org/10.7366/020909611201614>>; Lucas G. Freire, 'Between Calvinism and Islam: Mimicry, Hybridity and Ali Ufkî's Ottoman Psalter' (unpublished paper presented during the 'EXCEPS Postgraduate Conference 2011. Cultural Encounters: Researching Ethnicities, Identities, and Politics in a Globalised World', Exeter UK, 21 May 2011).

⁶⁸ Cem Behar, *Ali Ufkî ve Mezmurlar*, İstanbul 1990; 'Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufkî): Hayatı ve Eserleri'; see also Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur*, pp. 139–140.

⁶⁹ Ali Ufkî, *Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mecmûa-i Sâz ü Söz: Tıpkıbasım*, (ed.) Şükrü Elçin, İstanbul 1976, p. IX; Ahmet Say, *Müzik Ansiklopedisi*, Ankara 1985, p. 45.

⁷⁰ Walter Feldman, *Music of the Ottoman Court: Makam, Composition and the Early Ottoman Instrumental Repertoire*, Berlin 1996, p. 68, 90; *From Rumi to the Whirling Dervishes. Music, Poetry, and Mysticism in the Ottoman Empire*, Edinburgh 2022.

⁷¹ Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in 'Alî Ufukî's Compendium*, MS Turc 292, p. 49.

⁷² On biculturalism of the Ottoman subjects and several forms of transgression that could lead to it, see: Kaim, *Ludzie dwóch kultur*, pp. 17–85.

⁷³ Maria Bogucka, *Dawna Polska: narodziny, rozkwit, upadek*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 211–262.

a dramatic experience as it might seem to us who embrace the contemporary point of view on transgression and religious divisions. As a young man living in Lviv, Bobowski would have witnessed daily how Christians of different confessions and ethnicities – Poles, Ruthenians, Lithuanians, Armenians – worked side by side with Jews, Karaites and Muslim Tatars. In Turkey, he experienced a similar religious and ethnic mosaic in both the palaces of the sultan and in the streets of the capital city of the Ottoman Empire.

In the full title of the *Serai Enderum* (see footnote no 51), Bobowski named himself a *Sequolitano* [sic!] *Polaccho* – a ‘Polish secular man’. Perhaps, his choice of the adjective ‘secular’ was a statement emphasising his objective point of view while describing Ottoman cultural and religious customs. Based on the depth of his translations (or more precisely – adaptations) of religious poetry and scriptures between the “Western” and “Oriental” traditions, as well as the unbiased narrative in his works on Turkish customs and religion, I am inclined to interpret Bobovius as a ‘spiritual man’ or a ‘man of spirit’. From Bobowski’s diverse work emerges a man who believed in an universal higher power overseeing his fate, rather than Christian “God” or Muslim “Allah” – both associated with, and confined by religion.

In the context outlined here, I believe that the answer to the question of Bobowski’s “true religion” was most accurately articulated by Samuel Orgelbrand who in the encyclopaedic entry on Bobovius paraphrased Franciszek Meniński’s words in this manner:

He was born a Pole, fluent in many languages; he appeared to be a Muslim, but what his actual religion was – only God knows.⁷⁴

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⁷⁴ [Był to rodem Polak, biegły w wielu językach, wiary na pozór tureckiej, lecz w istocie, Bóg wie jakiej.] – Orgelbrand, *Encyklopedia Powszechna*, p. 819.

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