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FROM THE ETHOS OF CHIVALRY TO A REGULAR SOLDIER'S CODE OF HONOUR. SELECTED HISTORICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS

3. Question: What is a soldier?

Answer: It is an armed citizen who sacrifices strength, health, and life to defend and serve the country., „Catechism of cadets”,

Approved during Educational Session on 11 January 1813.

Streszczenie: Artykuł opisuje kwestie etosu rycerskiego w realiach współczesnych uwarunkowań funkcjonowania nowoczesnych społeczeństw. Jest próbą syntezy zagadnień ukazujących system wartości żołnierzy w odniesieniu do tradycji i historii, a także w odniesieniu do współczesności. Autorzy zawarli w nim szeroki opis teoretycznych podejść do etosu rycerskiego, tworzenia elitaryzmu armii oraz systemów wartości, szczególnie etycznych. Poruszono w nim również problemy etosu rycerskiego w odniesieniu do tradycji polskiej armii oraz dynamikę zmian w systemach wartości etycznych polskich żołnierzy – nowoczesnych rycerzy.

Słowa kluczowe: etos rycerski, kodeks honorowy, systemy wartości, tradycje, elitaryzm

INTRODUCTION

As far back as in the 18th century, qualities expected from a soldier included: obedience to the superiors, accuracy in carrying out orders, prudence and caution to everything. Of importance were perseverance and courage¹. The requirements were constructed – just as two centuries before – by religiousness and knowledge of the art of war. Of importance was first and foremost patriotism, but already at that time it was typical to treat a soldier as a citizen, because “Soldier and Citizen are inseparable beings”. Part of these symbolic attributes can be found already in the works created in antiquity: in Plato, Aristotle and Homer. Some of them – religiousness, specific moral conduct, peculiarly understood “professionalism”, but also *quasi* caste system – will be present in the ethos of chivalry of the Middle Ages. Certain elements of the role of a soldier will be preserved through centuries and generations, other – for instance this “citizenship” – will be added to the requirements and expectations from those whose task is to fight as a result of political, social, economic and moral transformations.

This paper attempts to trace selected aspects of the ethos of a soldier in the European culture. The discussion, which could as well begin with the earlier mentioned antiquity, has

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¹ Compare: J. Lipski, *Katechizm dla korpusów kadeckich*, source: http://www.pbi.edu.pl/book_reader.php?p=43201&s=1, access: 30.03.2012.

been limited to a brief description of the ethos of medieval chivalry, to focus on the transformations of Polish soldiers and officers on the threshold and during partitions of Poland, after regaining independence by Poland in 1918, and in the period of systemic transformation. This selective character was determined by limitations placed on the paper, as well as a subjective view that it is these periods that will prove characteristic of the subject dealt with in this paper. The discussion ends with describing the code of honour of regular soldiers, treated as a kind of *signum tempore* of the present times, and military service as a specific profession.

1. ETHOS OF CHIVALRY IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The chivalry as a social phenomenon emerged in Europe together with the institution of accolade (I half of the twelve century)². Many phenomena influenced the emergence of this social class. Its birth was preceded by an infantryman receiving a special kind of weapon which made him become a warrior. Possession of a belt and sword was a symbol of an individual belonging to a certain social class³. Of importance was also the use of a horse by infantrymen (Vikings and Magyars) during a fight and formation of cavalry⁴. Another determinant was popularization among European aristocracy of cavalry as an element of preferred combat technique⁵. *“Of significance was also treating the art of war not only as a means for killing the enemy, but also as a certain skill”*⁶. The ethos of medieval European chivalry was connected with feudalism, and what’s more – maintaining a caste of knights combining cavalry tradition with possession of land ownership became one of the fundamental challenges for the society at that time⁷. However, one additional factor was of crucial. The early Christianity was about cultivating the idea of brotherhood of people, peace and pacifism⁸. Even Tertulian claimed that „he who lives by the sword will die by the sword”. However, as B. Balcerowicz points out, *“Radical pacifism of the early Christian thinkers, with time, as the position of Christians changed, underwent gradual transformation. As early as in the conceptions in the fourth and fifth centuries we can find the notion of acceptable wars”*⁹. In the doctrine of St. Augustine, we won’t find an absolute condemnation of war, there is however reference to the existence of a just war. This is a defence tactics but also one that is used to defend ethical order and introduce justice. The idea of a just war influences the ethos of chivalry and unwritten code of fighting. At the same time, however, *“St. Augustine’s theory soon proved to be very convenient for purposes that were anything but noble”*, because based on it *“it was possible to point out the necessity of conducting numerous religious wars,*

² L.Z. Zakrzewski, *Ethos rycerski w dawnej i współczesnej wojnie*, Warszawa 2004, p. 23.

³ R. Barber, *Rycerze i rycerskość*, translated by J. Kozłowski, Warszawa 2003, p. 34-35.

⁴ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁵ S. Tokarski, *Etos rycerski i jego współczesne implikacje*, [in:] *Tradycja i współczesność etosu oficera wojska polskiego* ed. M. Adamkiewicz, Warszawa 1997, p. 32.

⁶ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁷ N. Davies, *Europa*, translated by E. Tabakowska, Kraków 1998, p. 345.

⁸ More on this subject: K. Kołodziejczyk, A. Szymanowicz, *Pacifism variously understood*, „Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL”, 3 (161)/ 2011, p. 232-236 and K. Dojwa, *Pacyfizm jako ruch społeczny – wybrane aspekty historyczne i socjologiczne*, submitted to print: „Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL”, 1 (163)/ 2012.

⁹ B. Balcerowicz, *Pokój i <<nie pokój>> na progu XXI wieku*, Warszawa 2002, p. 23.

*including crusades or activity of knightly orders, to convert to Christianity with fire and sword*¹⁰.

The act of accolade had a multifaceted significance. From the point of view of an individual, it was an initiation into adulthood, emblem of belonging to a certain group, or even – a caste. It was also a confirmation of a warrior's knowledge of the rules of the knight's ethics¹¹. Knightly virtues were concentrated on two planes. The first was of a religious nature – thus the requirement to be devout, fight in defence of the faith, to serve Christ¹². *The idea of knighthood as the bulwark of the society against anarchy and disorder can be traced in all works on this subject and was often used as the justification of the knight's right to lead others and partly to a kind of sanctification of a feudal warrior*¹³. The second plane was moral issues – integrity and loyalty, helping widows and orphans, obedience to the ruler¹⁴.

As far as requirements that a person belonging to a knighthood had to meet, good birth was important. The emblem of pride in one's family was heraldry, and its manifestation – interest in one's own genealogy¹⁵. It can be justified by the fact that the end of the twelfth century brought exclusion from knights' tournaments of those who were not worthy of becoming knights¹⁶. Acquiring the status of a knight involved at first meeting some requirements connected with bravery, valour and devotion. However, with time, the situation begins to change. As far back as in the thirteenth century, one could become a knight as a reward for achievements on the battle field, but the candidate's wealth was also taken into consideration. With the development of cities, the status of a knight could be applied for by people from the bourgeoisie. Although a person did not become a knight by birth, it seemed that being a son of an armed knight had some influence on the further fate of an aspirant. With time, however, as the kingdom started to turn into the gentry, the knight's title became something you inherited and did not have to result from a certain conduct of an individual and his achievements¹⁷.

The medieval knight was to radiate beauty and grace, which was stressed by the dress he wore. On the one hand, this dress was rich and ornamental, on the other hand – it required from an individual to be physically strong. The build of a descendant of a knight's family could be a determinant of his later fate and professional career. So, broad shoulders and strong thighs, combined with a body's nimbleness, were conducive to making a knight's career, and their lack made one assigned to the clerical state¹⁸. A medieval knight did not fight to gain fame, he participated in duels and tournaments because victories over distinguished opponents were about creating a hierarchy. He should be proud and brave – cowardice was regarded as inexcusable and disgraceful. Courage was connected with discipline and allegiance to the feudal lord, as well as loyalty to his own social class, magnanimity towards the weak, in

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

¹¹ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹² D. Piwowarczyk, *Obyczaj rycerski w Polsce późnośredniowiecznej (XIV-XV wiek)*, Warszawa 2000, p. 60.

¹³ R. Barber, *op. cit.* p. 57.

¹⁴ F. Kusiak, *Rycerze średniowiecznej Europy łacińskiej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 94.

¹⁵ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, s. 30.

¹⁶ R. Barber, *op. cit.*, s. 54.

¹⁷ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 31-32.

particular widows and orphans. As L. Zakrzewski points out, *“these women and orphans usually came from the same social class, although Christianity introduced norms to protect not only the well-born”*¹⁹. Another element constructing the ethos of a medieval knight was his participation in a battle, which could be summed by stating that not victory but the way he fought attests to such a man’s glory. A battle may be lost and cost a knight his life but death at a battle field is something to be proud of. The knight’s fight is governed by its own rules: these are principles of fair play, respect for the opponent, having equal opportunities with the opponent – after all victory over somebody who is weaker, older or ill cannot be something to be proud of. A knight does not attack an unarmed opponent, but he also cannot retreat at the sight of an enemy²⁰. In Poland the symbol of knightly virtues was a famous knight, unbeaten in multiple tournaments and battles: Zawisza the Black of Garbów (1370-1428). He was a brave soldier, participant and winner of numerous knight’s tournaments at European courts, adviser and diplomat, participants of many fights, in which he showed courage and heroism. As Jan Długosz wrote: *“Not only in the battle in which he was taken prisoner and died but in all expeditions he proved to be a brave and distinguished knight, was famous for courage and great deeds, in which nobody could match him. He spoke so sweetly and endearingly that his kindness captivated not only good and noble people but even barbarians. He had a rare quality of showing the bravest enthusiasm in a battle but the most restrained prudence in advice. For his heroic deeds he deserves not mine but Homer’s praises.”*²¹ Zawisza the Black is a knight who undertakes every task that can earn him glory and fame. He is characterized by visual attributes and verbal capabilities, as well as such character traits and skills as: bravery, courage, unusual perseverance in battle, prudence, moderation, inborn fighting skills, and a unique knowledge of the art of being a knight²². How much of this ethos of a medieval knight will be found at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when institutional armies start to appear and the previous “dignity” is replaced by a “profession”?

2. ETHOS OF CHIVALRY AND THE POLISH ARMY

Belief in God and fighting for the faith, a certain system of values and very closely defined norms – these are only some of the aspects which made knights not only a specific class but even a professional group or caste. The model of an ideal knight seemed to be closely defined through the requirements set for the feudal lord, those who are higher or equal, enemies and friends. It covered fight, tournaments and duels, and went beyond this sphere. Its symbolic heir became a nobleman, who in later centuries fulfilled the role of an army officer. Thus at this point it’s worth looking at how those who devoted their life, or even its part, to fighting and war were presented.

In the middle of the sixteenth century a work by A. Frycz Modrzejewski appeared entitled “On the Improvement of the Commonwealth (De Republica emendanda)”, one part of

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, s. 33.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, s. 38-39.

²¹ More on this subject: B. Możejko, S. Szybkowski, B. Śliwiński, *Zawisza Czarny z Garbowa herbu Sulima*, Wyd. WiM, Gdańsk 2003.

²² M. Adamkiewicz, *Z dziejów etosu wojska*, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, Warszawa 1997, p. 111-113.

which was the book “On war”²³. The author claims that both soldiers and leaders should know their trade very well, and it is important for them to be trained and prepared. Those who are to ensure security to the general public trace the course of various wars and based on them learn how to fight. An important role is played by an individual’s predisposition – indeed, effeminate men are not suitable for fighting. Of importance are such biological attributes as ability to wear a heavy armour, helmet, weapon requires great physical strength, whereas facing up to changeable atmospheric conditions – endurance²⁴. In defence it is important to bring up the youth properly. Young people should not waste their free time for travelling, but develop their physical fitness. Of importance is here the aspect of quasi public preparation of the young generation for defence - A.F. Modrzewski writes that they should have good teachers paid by the state. The youth – in certain seasons – should turn up on the field and be trained in building embankments, enduring thirst, hunger, frost and heat. “*In this way, carrying heavy objects on their shoulders, running in armour and jumping on a wooden horse, they would become used to a soldier’s life*”²⁵. Young disciples were also to learn how to walk in formation, turn, march, and swim. A separate issue was discipline, which such a military service was to inspire and reinforce in a young man. Gaining competences was also crucial. On the one hand, it was important to get to know other armies and conditions in which they operate, on the other hand – disposition, talents and capabilities of an own soldier²⁶.

Modrzewski describes also a soldier’s way of life: he should lead an honest and moral life, he shouldn’t drink alcohol or chase after luxuries or even take great delight in eating. On the one hand, soldiers are properly selected, on the other hand, in barracks they don’t have time for drinking and extravagance, because they train all the time. Modesty, refraining from taking somebody else’s possession and satisfaction with own pay – these are the elements that were to construct the image of a warhorse at that time. Naturally, this image was idealized, hence the possibility of punishing a soldier by the commander. A Commander should be a man who is hard-working, knows the art of war, and has combat experience. It is somebody who not only has certain competences, but who proved with his conduct that he knows this art of war as well as his courage and heroism. According to Modrzewski, he does not have to come from a distinguished family. This is important from the point of view of later transformations, and high standing resulting from a high birth that was strongly articulated in other parts of Europe²⁷. From the sociological point of view, it was also important that Modrzewski, while acknowledging the gentry’s significance in defending the state against the enemy, demanded the introduction of the distinction between a nobleman and a knight, arguing that you can be a nobleman by birth but the position of a knight has to be earned²⁸.

Similar view on the army and training soldiers can be found in the treatise by Jan Tarnowski entitled “*Consilium rationis bellicae*”. Tarnowski was a distinguished statesman, a

²³ A.F. Modrzewski, *O poprawie Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] „*Dziela*”, T.I, Warszawa 1953, p. 302-357, after: Zakrzewski, p. 43 and further

²⁴ *Ibidem*, s. 319.

²⁵ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 46-7.

²⁸ W. Voisé, *Wstęp* [an introduction to:] A.F. Modrzewski, *Wybór pism*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1977, p. XLIII.

great hetman, castellan of Kraków, and voivode of Ruthenian Voivodeship²⁹. Also he stressed the importance of educating and training soldiers and their commanders – which constituted the basis of military efficiency and obedience. Knights should behave sedate and obediently, doing as the hetman orders. A soldier should be disciplined, obedient, and brave during the fight. Any form of treason is treated as desertion. Soldiers cannot commit any violence against civilians: they shouldn't rob sacred places, and they are supposed to fight only when ordered. Like Modrzewski, Tarnowski was aware of possible occurrence of negative aspects of a soldier's life (drunkenness, prostitution) which he regarded as decreasing the military efficiency³⁰.

While in the sixteenth century Poland was a strong country on the international arena, which could conduct and win wars, two centuries later the situation changed. However, this does not mean that the issue of security wasn't addressed by writers, politicians or patriots at that time. For instance, the king Stanisław Leszczyński³¹ postulated the introduction of a hundred-thousand-strong professional army, which would be able to defend the Republic of Poland against an attack. It was to be financed from taxes paid by the gentry. He proposed establishing hospitals designed for soldiers, disabled people's homes and arsenals, as well as schools of knights, which soon became the reality with the establishment, on the initiative of among others the last Polish king Stanisław August, of the Nobles' Academy of the Corps of Cadets of His Majesty and Commonwealth. The formation of the academy, as well as its later functioning, had widespread significance from educational, social and patriotic point of view. From the point of view of the issues addressed in this paper, the school was also important due to the fact that it laid the foundations for the creation of a new corps of officers of the Republic of Poland. According to "The Cadet's Catechism"³², a cadet, as a well-born man, should behave in a certain way and have certain skills. The features of behaviour characteristic of a cadet included decorum, discipline, religiousness, love of the homeland and acting for its own good. Of importance was respect for the superiors, but also absolute obedience, charity, and affection for those who are at the same position, as well as "consideration" for those who are worse-born. A determinant of a cadet's conduct should be honour and feeling of shame as an internalized control³³.

According to "The Catechism for Corps of Cadets"³⁴, a cadet should be a person brought up in the spirit of patriotism and love for the home country. In the service for the country, the following were important: good conduct, possession of useful skills, and bravery. This good conduct becomes operationalized to: religiousness, love and gratitude towards parents and guardians, as well as love for the home country shown in an active way. "The Catechism" highlighted absolute discipline shown to officers, and attention to and performance of teachers' orders, associated with applying oneself to the study. Of importance were also norms of collective coexistence, which in "The Code" were defined in relation to

²⁹ Compare: P. Jaworski, *Jana Tarnowskiego hetmana wielkiego koronnego obrona granic Rzeczypospolitej*, source: <http://www.cs.strazgraniczna.pl/teksty/tradycje/obrona3.pdf>, access: 30.03.2012.

³⁰ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 48-49.

³¹ Compare: S. Leszczyński, *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający*, Lublin 1987, after: Zakrzewski, p. 54.

³² A.K. Czartoryski, *Katechizm kadecki*.

³³ L.Z. Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³⁴ Compare: J. Lipski, *Katechizm dla korpusów kadeckich*, source: http://www.pbi.edu.pl/book_reader.php?p=43201&s=1, access: 30.03.2012.

pears. A cadet was obliged to behave politely, to live in harmony and do favours. Vices that shouldn't be found in the young corps were also pointed out³⁵. This solidarity is visible at the level of a society – state, group of mates – and a school as an institution. *A cadet should care about the honour of the Corps, whose general honour falls on its particular members, just as reprimand affects all*³⁶.

Napoleon's defeat affects the fate of our country. The issue of *the army that marched the length and breadth of Europe, that participated in a hundred battles, that everywhere and always carried the banner of Polish dignity and courage (...)*³⁷ is crucial for a Polish soldier. Quasi democratic, common or even civic tendencies that affected the Polish army fighting under Napoleon were stopped and enslaved, the process of losing autonomy and independence deepens. As T. Hołowko wrote: *Alexander I strived to destroy the civic element in the Polish army, he wished to make it lose all the characteristics of a national army, to make it an army that is obedient and blindly attached to him. So, his aim was to make it a mindless machine which nimbly and skilfully as a puppet shows off at the Saxon Square*³⁸. A thing of the past becomes the case of the order given by Kniaziewicz to the Danube Legion in 1800 in which soldiers were called to learn to read and write because it will give the realistic chances for promotion, just as the situation when soldiers who plan to march off in February complain that they have no shoes, so the commander gives his own pair of shoes to the soldier who complains most³⁹. The army in which Poles serve undergoes changes. During the first four years of Constantine's rule, 49 officers, insulted or maligned by him, committed suicide, regarding it as the only possibility of washing away the disgrace from themselves⁴⁰. Generals of Napoleon's era and many colonels kept a low profile. *Anyone who had a sense of honour ran away, only weak, docile people, who could bear everything passively and wanted only to survive until retirement stayed (...)*⁴¹ A new "model" of an officer was preferred at that time: passive, subordinated, "detached" from the society: Constantine often said that he didn't like officers who read anything more than the rules (...) and kind to soldiers: *"a stick reigned everywhere in Polish barracks."*⁴²

However the history of Poland in the nineteenth century is marked by attempts to regain independence. Poles' patriotism, both in the country divided by the partitioners and outside its borders, where the fight for freedom was taking place, was strongly articulated by the representatives of culture, ideologists, intellectualists, social and political activists. As for military people, as the author cited above pointed out: *"the people who saved the honour of the Polish army were young officer cadets"* who instigated the November Uprising⁴³. However, despite the enthusiasm of young people, as well as the involvement of part of the

³⁵ *Miękkość, gnuśność, obżarstwo, nieochętność, zgola wszelkie zbytki i dogadzanie namiętnościom*, compare: J. Lipski, *Katechizm dla korpusów kadeckich*, source: http://www.pbi.edu.pl/book_reader.php?p=43201&s=1, access: 30.03.2012.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ T. Hołowko, *Oficer polski*, Warszawa 1996, p. 45.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

³⁹ Casus in February of 1800 take place and concerns of marching out Drzewiecki's unit from Pfalzburg to the Metz. Compare: Hołowko, p. 36.

⁴⁰ T. Hołowko, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴¹ T. Hołowko, *op. cit.* p. 47.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 48.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 53-55.

“old guard” outside the institutional army, the uprising was suppressed. *“It was however a beneficial necessity. It saved the army from moral destruction, ones and for all broke the chains from the Polish soul, made it free⁴⁴.”* The suppression of the uprising did not destroy Poles’ patriotism. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, national political bonds existing over the partitions were getting stronger, cemented by the sense of unity of the Polish nation and national culture⁴⁵.

3. POLISH ARMY IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

In the first years after regaining independence, the state’s efforts focus on military issues, developing and equipping the Polish army, which will become the guarantor of the country’s independence⁴⁶. The main role in the creation of the army will be played by officers of the partitioners’ armies, who will hold prominent posts in the army’s authorities and institutions⁴⁷. Thus, two issues will become crucial – patriotism and “citizenship”. The authorities of the country that attempted to be reborn will attach great importance to a military training treated as a *“moral preparation of the nation so that it was permeated, from the youngest boy and woman to the commander and head of the state, with the idea of war and will of victory”*⁴⁸. The period of active military service is treated as systematization of knowledge on defence, but also acquiring general education. It is an equivalent of the idea of “folk university” providing soldiers with vocational education (agricultural, technical, commercial)⁴⁹. Apart from skills that are useful in everyday life, military service instils national values in an individual. Hence, the propagation of patriotism, making soldiers aware of their duties to the country and society: *So, a soldier was made aware of the duty to be faithful and loyal to the Republic of Poland. Among these deontological norms were also obligations to colleagues, and to oneself, understood as developing self-esteem.* In the army an individual was instilled with basic values, such as: bravery, courage (understood as contempt for danger during the performance of tasks), love for the home country (as the highest responsibility to the state), sense of duty, respect of national property, comradeship, ambition, discipline and self-reliance⁵⁰. The army was to face not only defence-related tasks, the social aspect of the army was also crucial. *Intelligent barracks should teach soldiers to get up early, discipline, loyalty to colleagues and civic equality of all classes, as well as making them physically fit. It is necessary that regardless of academic degree, all educated persons do actual military service in barracks equally with a simple peasant and physical worker, and not scrimshank in and offices, where non-commissioned officers in the regular army and women should work (...). An educated person should not go directly to school of cadets, he*

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ In: Mędrzycki, S. Rudnicki, J. Żarnowski, *Spółczesność polskie w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2003, p. 11.

⁴⁶ In: Roszkowski, *Historia Polski 1914-1990*, Warszawa 1991, p. 34.

⁴⁷ T. Wójcik, *Oficerowie kawalerii w Siłach Zbrojnych II Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Oficerowie grup dyspozycyjnych. Socjologiczna analiza procesu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, T. Kołodziejczyk, D.S. Kozerański, J. Maciejewski (editor), Wrocław 2008, p. 425-441, p. 426.

⁴⁸ J. Swarzeński, *Armia i naród. Podstawy armii narodowej*, Warszawa 1920, p. 13.

⁴⁹ T. Wójcik, *Historyczne aspekty funkcjonowania grup dyspozycyjnych. Nauczanie początkowe żołnierzy analfabetów w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1919-1939*, [in:] *Grupy dyspozycyjne w obliczu Wielkiej Zmiany. Kulturowe i społeczne aspekty funkcjonowania w świetle procesów integracyjnych*, J. Maciejewski, M. Bodziany, K. Dojwa (editor), Wrocław 2010, p. 593-602.

⁵⁰ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 152-153.

should *first* *complete*
*a recruit school equally with all and only then go to school of cadets*⁵¹. The expectations towards non-commissioned officers formulated at that time included: hatred for the enemy, ability to count, fluency in speech and writing, and love for the home country⁵².

Emblems of the continuation of the ethos of chivalry as well as addition of certain attributes characteristic of gentlemen⁵³ made the requirements connected with fulfilling the roles of professional officers much rigorous. The requirements to be fulfilled by officers of the Polish Army in the interwar period were concentrated on two planes. The first of them was a teaching and educational role. An officer was expected: to know regulations and be able to learn them, to be an example of obedience, reliability and punctuality; to be able to appear before the front in the role of a superior both during service and beyond; not to exceed his authority against privates and to ensure the dignity of soldiers of lower ranks; to appropriately treat people that are subordinate to him, to wisely give praises and reprimands to instil ambition and love of service in subordinates and – last but not least – to spread “protective wings” over subordinates. The second plane was command duties – physical, intellectual and moral preparation. What was expected was this knightly freshness and agility of the body, and showing self-restraint and moderation in life as well as avoiding everything that leads to effeminacy⁵⁴. Naturally, this does not mean that there was no pathology in the Polish army or deviations from the model that was postulated and implemented. It resulted from many factors. The first is connected with the beginning of Polish statehood in the twentieth century and the fact that professional soldiers were recruited from different partitioners’ armies – hence the reproduction of behaviour patterns from partitioners’ armies⁵⁵. There were also “dubious” political and social motivations of some individuals choosing military career – despite institutional political neutrality of the army, a specific “petty party politics” could be seen in it. Another issue was of ossification of views and routine of part of the professional military staff as well as subjectively understood “professionalism”, associated with unwillingness to accept and implement and implement new organizational and educational solutions. Despite institutional obstacles, a shortcoming was also a “caste system” and lack of solidarity of the staff. *However, the real danger to the army was people devoid of ideals, ostensible specialists and careerists. It is on their recommendation [...] that people of poor capabilities, knowledge and ethical conduct gained popularity and influences [...]. Acknowledging the harmfulness of this phenomenon, difficulty in its identification and quick reaction in the environment of an army, it was proposed that a somewhat utopian but solidarity-based alliance should be formed uniting all honest soldiers who could oppose to this pathology*⁵⁶. Apart from that, officers also abused alcohol, which often resulted from too many occasions for that⁵⁷. Although in the interwar period, a lot of attention was attached to

⁵¹ T. Hołówko, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁵² Z. Jagiełło, *Etos podoficera w armii. Tradycje i współczesność*, J. Maciejewski (ed.), *Grupy dyspozycyjne społeczeństwa polskiego*, Wrocław 2006, p. 259 – 271.

⁵³ More on this subject: M. Ossowska, *Ethos rycerski i jego przemiany*, Warszawa 2000, p. 116.

⁵⁴ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁵⁵ Z. Jagiełło, *op. cit.*, p. 259 – 271.

⁵⁶ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁵⁷ F. Kusiak, *Życie codzienne oficerów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1992, p. 184-91.

“tying” the society with the army, at the top of its elites attitudes could be seen that manifested “being better” than a “civil-bandit”⁵⁸.

A huge part of these vices of the army at that time was known, so not surprisingly attempts were made to counteract them in an institutional way. Hence, in *The guidelines for educational handling of the youngest officers in front-line formations*, drawn up in 1935 by the Ministry of Military Affairs’ Department of General Command, pointed out the existence of 2 pejorative personality types in the army. The first was “careerist”, that is a person who in the service and relations with the superiors is guided by the desire to endear himself. *Such an individual was focused on studying closely his principals, especially their weaknesses*. The second distinguished type of a negative conduct in the army was a “snob”. Back then, this name referred to individuals who treated service in the army as necessary evil, one that secures their living and in the long run gives them material benefits. *Typical of this attitude was avoidance of falling into disfavour with anybody and carrying about comforts during the service by putting minimum effort into performing duties*⁵⁹.

In Poland of the interwar period, the basic document (although not a legal act) regulating the principles of honourable conduct, including the principles of fighting duels, was the Polish Code of Honour of 1919, also called the Code of Boziewicz, after the name of its author. It quickly became known as the most important code of honour in the interwar period, although there were more. There have been numerous reissues of and references to it today, however the tradition of duels was treated rather symbolically. According to this work, the group of “honourable” persons, called gentlemen, include apart from the gentry also authors and persons with secondary school or higher education, and fulfilling important social functions [...] According to this principle, you should satisfy a honour of a peasant who is a deputy to the Sejm – Art. 5)⁶⁰. Thus, this document was an attempt to introduce equal treatment of honourable persons, regardless of their background, although exclusions from this catalogue (people who are not gentlemen) were numerous. In the preface to this work, its author does not state whether he supports or not the arguments for duels, but he points to the fact that in all societies that are regarded as „cultural” the tradition of duels has existed for centuries. What’s more, he notes that this custom will continue to be practiced unless the laws in a given country are harsh enough for people who insult honourable persons (the 24-hour arrest is considered by him to be insufficient). According to the principles of the bible of men of honour, an insult may be literary everything. A gesture, comment, general behaviour, accusation of ignorance, stupidity, lack of education, or insulting the honour of one’s beloved. A gentleman should even defend the honour of the lady he walks arm in arm with. He should also react when the honour of persons with whom he is on intimate terms is insulted. Art. 218 of the Code of Honour states that you can use three kinds of weapon: a sabre, sword, and pistol. Other weapon was not allowed (“only peasants came for each other with their fists”). The principles of fighting duels are numerous. Starting with the kind of weapon and ending with individual arrangements by the seconds of both the parties, that is the insulted and insulting. It is worth pointing out that a gentleman could not challenge to a duel a man who could not be regarded as a gentleman (the code contains at

⁵⁸ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁶⁰ W. Boziewicz, *Polski kodeks honorowy*, Wyd. VII, Warszawa – Kraków, <http://literat.ug.edu.pl/honor/>.

least 30 exclusions from the group of gentlemen, as mentioned above), and insult from such a man should be ignored because [...] *it ill befits a gentleman to get into an argument with e.g. a deserter of the Polish army*. Likewise, a slanderer had no “honour capacity”.

From the present perspective, the Code of Boziewicz seems to be a defunct document according to many sources. Various environments in which being honourable is very important set their own principles, only slightly based on the rules of honour contained in the discussed work from 1919. We can say that the Polish Code of Honour has now only a mythical character, and duels are associated more with the ethos of a cavalryman of lancers. Duels were fought by all kinds of officers, politicians, lawyers, journalists. In the army alone, there were 500 duels per year in the 1920s⁶¹. The most frequent reasons included: love problems, insults and work-related conflicts. The cause could be e.g. a dispute between officers about competence or a journalist’s refusal to place a disclaimer. This originally extremely dangerous ritual was gradually changing into a kind of a painless show. In one case, both men agreed to use antique pistols without sights. As a result, both bullets flew somewhere into the sky.

As a matter of fact, most of the honourable duels, which, after all, were fought by regular military men, ended completely bloodlessly or with a symbolic “first blood”. It is also worth noting that in the 1920s a person who participated in a duel, which after all was against the law and actually constituted an attempted murder, received quite a symbolic punishment. An officer was punished with a dozen days of arrest at most. Thus, detailed descriptions of duels mentioning participants’ names often could be found in the press at that time. Punishments for fighting duels started to get stricter only during the rule of Sanation, however social change proved to be more effective than penalization in confrontation with the tradition of duels⁶².

An officer of the Polish Army in the interwar period was supposed to be a person who enjoyed respect in the society he served. The Polish state set him a range of requirements to meet. Using today’s words, he was supposed to be a professional who possessed knowledge of military issues, foreign languages, was interested in raising his qualifications (especially by studying at military academies), and was characterized by mobility of acquiring skills and intellectual capabilities (lectures, war games, solving tactical tasks, field trips). *The army was supposed to be and was a breeding ground for intellectual freedom of officers’ authorities, provided that this capability was not harmful to national interests*⁶³. The bond with the formations of military forces was cultivated at different levels: at the lowest one, where it was manifested in a small patriotism in regiments – reflected in solidarity towards the environment, pride in belonging to a certain formation (regiment festivals, patron day’s celebrations)⁶⁴, customs related to transferring responsibilities, organization of events and welcome ceremonies for officers⁶⁵.

⁶¹ <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/493778,samobojstwa-i-pojedynki-miedzy-patosem-a-komizmem-miedzy,id,t.html>, downloaded 26.04.2012.

⁶² <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/493778,samobojstwa-i-pojedynki-miedzy-patosem-a-komizmem-miedzy,id,t.html>, downloaded: 24.04.2012.

⁶³ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 141, and also

⁶⁵ T. Wójcik, *op. cit.*, p. 425-441, p. 440-441

Summing up, „*The recognition that our society expressed for the army, which resulted not only from its popularity but above all patriotic thinking, was conducive to the development of a positive image of officers and soldiers in their own eyes. The people who felt responsible for the fate of the country indirectly became the symbol of its independence and creditor of the nation’s freedom. High moral standards set for regular soldiers led to the strengthening of the army’s elitism, as well as the sense of its real value. Elitism of the cadre, rooted in the national tradition and based on discipline, codes of honour, distinctive life style, and even on the values near and dear to the whole society (God, Honour, Home country), promoted this occupational group in the public opinion (...) High social position of the army attracted to it people committed to the Polish raison d’état, materially secured and politically independent*⁶⁶.

4. PROFESSIONALIZATION AND THE CODE OF HONOUR OF A REGULAR SOLDIER

The systemic transformation leads to multi-faceted changes in the Polish Army⁶⁷. Changes at the economic, political and ideological levels will inevitably affect the Polish Armed Forces. At the threshold of the systemic transformation, the Polish army will be in an unfavourable situation – which, as is pointed out, was not caused by the society’s ill will but rather a clear disapprobation of the winning anti-communist coalition’s politicians. Faced with aggressiveness shown by part of the political elites and part of the media and the Polish army being called “Polish-speaking formations of the Soviet army”, this institution will have to generate mechanisms defending “soldier’s dignity”. *The need to clear the army of suspicions of submissive attitude to the Soviet ally and to confirm its national and independent character forces a change of orientation towards military traditions*, the emblem of which will be reference to the tradition of the interwar period⁶⁸. In 2008, the process of professionalization of the Polish army took place, both connected with the changes initiated earlier and determined by Poland’s membership in the European Union and – above all – in the NATO. The problem of the professionalization of the Polish army was described in other publications, therefore we will only point out⁶⁹ that an important aspect was to adapt basic regulations concerning the military service of regular soldiers to a new political and military, as well as social reality⁷⁰. Not surprisingly then, the principles of the ethos of chivalry, “the Catechism of Cadets”, and later “Code of Honour” by Boziewicz are replaced by the Code of Honour of a Regular Soldier of the Polish Army⁷¹.

⁶⁶ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 150-151.

⁶⁷ More on this subject: J. Ząlewski, *Wojsko Polskie w przemianach ustrojowych 1989-2001*, Warszawa 2002.

⁶⁸ M. Adamkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶⁹ W. Chojnacki, *Profesjonalizacja wojska w teorii i badaniach socjologicznych*, Toruń 2008 and in: W. Horyń, K. Klupa, L. Wętyczko (ed.), *Edukacja w Siłach Zbrojnych RP w dobie profesjonalizacji*, Wyd. WSOWL, Wrocław 2010.

⁷⁰ In the context of specific regiments, the following publications may be relevant: J. Maciejewski, I. Wolska-Zogata, *Zawód oficera Wojska Polskiego w toku transformacji. Studium socjologiczne*, Wrocław 2004; and J. Maciejewski, T. Haduch, T. Iwanek, A. Pieczywok, L. Wętyczko, K. Dojwa, *Podoficerowie zawodowi Wojska Polskiego. Studium socjologiczne*, Wrocław 2008.

⁷¹ Compare: *Kodeks Honorowy Żołnierza Zawodowego Wojska Polskiego*, an annex to the announcement of the Minister of National Defence of 3rd March 2008 (item 55), Journal of the Minister of National Defence of 2008 no 5.

At present, various institutions and organizations as well as professions formulate their own ethical codes⁷². Some of them have a long tradition, other – are born together with specific organizations. Their objective is symbolic and practical: on the one hand, they define paradigms and principles of doing a certain job (doing some service), on the other hand – they define, sometimes in great detail, a catalogue of desirable and negative behaviours. What's important, the issue of professional ethics is strongly signalled in the case of other special availability groups⁷³.

The Code of Honour of a Regular Soldier mentioned above constitutes an attachment to the Announcement of the Minister of National Defence of the 3rd of March, 2008. It was published based on art. 108 of the act on military service of regular soldiers of the 11th of September 2003⁷⁴. It reads as follows: “The principles of ethics and honour and dignity of regular soldiers are defined in the Code of Honour of a Regular Soldier of the Polish Army, developed and accepted by the representative bodies of regular soldiers. The Code of honour as an attachment is divided into five basic parts: dignity and honour of a regular soldier, regular soldier during service, regular soldier in combat situations, regular soldier outside service, conduct outside the service and final provisions. It provides definitions of honour and dignity, and contains references to respecting both customary rules and legal norms. During the service, a regular soldier is expected to show good manners, subordinate own values to the needs of the home country and raise qualifications. In combat situations, respecting the international principles of humanitarian law of armed conflicts and helping comrades-in-arms and war prisoners to save life were stressed. The part “Regular soldier outside the service”, apart from the values already mentioned, also highlights concern for the welfare of the family and openness in social contacts. The part related to conduct in the matters of honour contains a quite modern element, rather absent from the Code of Boziewicz, i.e. mediation on the motion of the injured party and both parties' effort to solve the matter amicably. It also mentions appointing an independent team of arbitrators in accordance with a procedure, and defines

a catalogue of means of redressing the harm. So, the procedure is quite clear and meets the standards of modern regulations. Pointing out the obligation to have a family life and maintain good relations with friends outside job responsibilities as well as the necessity of raising qualifications can be treated as of empowerment of people serving in the army. Thus, according to the Code of Honour of a Regular Soldier, being honourable simply means being a human being, despite the stereotypical thinking that a soldier is supposed to carry out orders and shouldn't contemplate whether a given action is consistent with his own system of values.

CONCLUSION

Already since time immemorial, philosophers and forefathers of social thought have pointed out that an important element of social structure is made up by those who connected

⁷² A. Barcik, *Etyka w zarządzaniu biznesem. Rozprawa habilitacyjna*, Bielsko – Biała 1999, p. 178-205 and B. Nogalski, J. Śniadeccki, *Etyka menedżerska*, Bydgoszcz 1996, p. 143-169.

⁷³ A. Pepłoński, „Etyka zawodowa funkcjonariuszy Policji”, [in:] *Szeregowcy grup dyspozycyjnych. Socjologiczna analiza zawodu jego roli w społeczeństwie*, J. Maciejewski, A. Krasowska – Marut, A. Rusak (ed.), Wrocław 2009, p. 259-266.

⁷⁴ Journal of Laws of 2010 Issue no 90 item 593.

their fate with war. The class of warriors was distinguished in Plato's ideal polis, it was also included among communities mentioned by Aristotle. In U T. Veblen, those who carry weapon and uniforms belong to a class of slackers – as in contrast to the productive people, they produce nothing. Attributes of the former ethos of chivalry are visible even in the modern military customs. They include the way of conferring the first rank of officer (trace of former accolade), codes of honour, rules of service and fighting. An emblem is hierarchy and elitism – constituting the aftermath of the times of knights. “Thus, the ethos of a soldier is directly derived from the life style and values of knights”. Moral instructions for knights to show honour, bravery, courage, loyalty, honesty, chivalry, courtesy, and later orders to love the home country and the nation, independence and sovereignty constructed criteria of the social function and duty of a soldier⁷⁵. However, the evaluation of the strength and impact of both the former ethos of chivalry and the colonial emblem of a gentleman is up to the reader.

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Summary

The article depicts the issues of the ethos of chivalry in the contemporary conditions of the modern society. It is an attempt of synthesis presenting soldiers' system of values with reference to tradition and history, as well as to the present. The authors have included a wide range of theoretical terms for the ethos of chivalry, creating army elitism and the systems of values especially ethical ones. There have been discussed issues of the ethos of chivalry with reference to Polish army tradition, as well as the dynamics of changes in systems of ethical values of Polish soldiers – modern knights.

Keywords: *ethos of chivalry, code of honour, systems of values, tradition, elitism*