

Polish epic writing of the 16th and 17th century shows a marked effort to offer an ideal worth following to the, to a certain extent traditionalistic, aristocracy. Unlike the society in the Western Europe, whose literature had long abandoned the traditional knightly ideals, Poland, owing to its strategic position in the then Eastern Europe, the spheres of political interests and, last but not least, the intentionally formed myth of Poland as the bastion of European Christianity in relation to the Turkish threat, feels a need to revive the ancient ideal of the Knight of Christ and fill it with a new content. The traditionally exquisite literary form taken over from the antiquity is supposed to contribute to this. Although the internal structure of the then Polish society was unchanged, the knights had turned into landowners, who were willing to grasp arms in a situation of utmost need, but only for the necessary period and at the lowest possible costs, expecting soon to return to the quiet of their yards. This makes it difficult to create a great national epic meeting the demanding and socially required criteria; therefore, the period teems with translations and paraphrases of works by illustrious European authors, where the gradually forming national tradition combines with the originality of language, idea and art. In this period these efforts reached their climax in the paraphrase of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* by the Polish Baroque period poet and translator Piotr Kochanowski.

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