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**The synthesis of Polish and Tatar identity in Selim Chazbijewicz's and Musa Czachorowski's
poetry**

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Table of contents

Introduction	3
Material and methods	3
Results	5
Publications on the topic	7

Introduction

The poetry of the Polish Tatars serves as a preserver of Tatar identity and proof of belonging to the Polish people. Culture and the vivid cultural life have always played an important role throughout the history of this small ethnic group. Currently the Polish Tatars are one of the most exotic and smallest minorities of modern Poland. The Tatars have lived in the territory of today's Poland for six hundred years. Despite their small population, they have always had a very rich written tradition, and their written memories also confirm their strong ties to Poland, but also to the Muslim East. The main question of my doctoral thesis is whether the ethnic identity connecting Polish and Muslim traditions manifests itself in the Polish Tatar poetry. Poetry is the perfect embodiment of reflections on the environment, social events, and life experiences, and the most accurate means of expressing the creators' worldview. Therefore, according to my hypothesis, the poetry of Musa Czachorowski (1953) and Selim Chazbijewicz (1955), as contemporary Tatar poets, will be able to provide answers to the questions related to the synthesis of Polish and Tatar identity, and even their poetry is proof of the connection between the European lifestyle and Muslim traditions.

In my work, I wanted to show the coexistence of the above-mentioned two seemingly apart worlds in the souls of the creators, as their works are suitable for documenting this special minority's existence, which is extremely different from the Polish society, but still connected by a thousand threads and traditions to the Polishness that surrounds them.

Material and Method

The literary manifestation of the synthesis of Polish and Tatar self-consciousness has not yet been addressed. The literature of Polish Tatars has been dealt with more seriously since the eighties of the last century, Czesław Lapić, Piotr Borawski and Arkadiusz Kolodziejczyk examined the Tatars from a historical and ethnographic point of view, but Czesław Lapić also started researching the so-called kitab-chronicles of the Tatars. Those were manuscripts recorded religious and community events in Poland and in Lithuania since their settlement in the medieval Kingdom of Poland. Since the second half of the 2000s, the research of Polish Tatars has been experiencing a renaissance in Polish academic circles, however, the current works study the ethnographic aspects of Islam and Polish self-consciousness. Tatars are often treated not as an ethnic minority but as a religious minority.

This view causes a lot of controversy, because according to the Tatars, one has to be born a Tatar and a Pole does not become a Tatar just because embracing Islam, because of that in the case of the Tatars in Poland, their ethnicity cannot be categorised as an ethnic religion. An important branch of research therefore focuses on documentation and preservation of Tatar identity and traditions. Those researchers who consider the Tatars as an independent ethnic group found that literacy is the most important guarantee for the preservation of the Tatar identity and the strengthening of the Tatars' separate status within the majority society. During the interwar period, journalism was the most important branch of Tatar culture.

After the collapse of communism in Poland the Tatars have been editing high-quality publications. The small community has already produced prominent poets like Selim Chazbijewicz and Musa Czachorowski. The prominent poets are concerned about the future of their people, so the Tatars' attachment to the written culture has remained important until today. The pieces of written tradition as the so-called written records, articles, documents and poems have been helping the Tatars to remember their tradition and culture since their settlement to the lands of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The poetry of the Polish Tatars has not yet been researched from the point of view of the role of ethnic self-consciousness, although we can observe a foreshadowing of this in the works of Agata Nurzyńska, according to whom writing is the most important guardian of identity and culture of the Tatars.

Other researchers are investigating in the field of literature, such Grzegorz Czerwiński, who examines the appearance of geographical archetypes in the poetries of Selim Chazbijewicz and Musa Czachorowski. In his studies, Czerwiński pays special attention to the location of the Tatars, pointing to

the fact that this small group had predominantly lived on the border of three states and cultures on the intersection of Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian borders and cultures. Czerwiński also discusses the role of Tatar poets as a bridge between East and West, however omits the question of identity.

I would present the poetry of Musa Czachorowski and Selim Chazbijewicz with the themes they describe and the development of their work, and I would also show the motives of Polish identity and their attitude and relationship toward their neighbours and Polishness. Next, I would examine the religious motifs in their poetry together with the cultural aspects linking them to Islam. I also compare the use of the aforementioned motifs with similar motifs found in the works of modern Muslim and Christian religious poetry in order to answer the question of whether the poetic motifs used by Polish Tatars toolkit, is closer to European, including Polish, traditions, or do their texts include enough Muslim or Tatar references, which significantly distinguish and separate them from European literary traditions. Literature, which is the cultural manifestation of the Tatars' ethnic separation apart from Islam, also determines their separation from the Poles. The common motifs, emblems and symbols used by Tatar poets are found in almost all Tatar writers in Poland and are unique to them. Such motifs are the strengthening of identity, the expression of belonging to the Tatars, recalling the glorious, often wild past, and emphasizing their heritage. Geographical descriptions were often used as symbols of ethnic bond, and journeys were described in the mythical geography of the Tatars, which are also the places of Tatar existence and transcendent meeting points. In the Polish literary public, there is little mention of the poetry of the Tatars in Poland, although Musa Czachorowski, for example, publishes in literary magazines such as *Odra*, *Poezja*, *Kultura*, *Odgłosy*, *Kultura Dolnośląska* in addition to specifically Tatar newspapers. Despite this, the critics always come up with the same topos about the Tatars: small, unknown, exotic, curious, frontier...

Grzegorz Czerwiński, a professor at the University of Białystok, began to really delve into the world of the two Tatar poets and even Tatar amateur poetry. He considered it important to establish the essence of Tatar literature before examining it. He was the first to ask the question whether this kind of literature can be considered Polish literature, or a Tatar literature written in the Polish language, or perhaps an ethnic, Tatar literature in the strict sense. He came to the conclusion that this is a Polish literature created by Tatars, similar to, for example, the literature of the Jews in Poland, so it is a minority literature that draws from a cultural heritage with a Polish and a "foreign" root.

The above statement is completely true for the poetry of Selim Chazbijewicz and Musa Czachorowski, but apart from the work of the two, there is also a very lively Tatar amateur literary life, which was largely fertilized by the aesthetics and worldview of the two great poets, contributing to the further enrichment of the written culture of the Tatar people in Poland. Today's Tatar poets therefore try to copy the verse forms, motifs, themes and lyrical speech used by the two standards, and based on these, it is possible to outline some of the most important characteristics of the literature of the Tatars in Poland. Despite the small number of Tatars in Poland who live or lived in Poland, they created a very serious cultural corpus in comparison, which is remarkable not only from a literary, but also from an anthropological and sociological point of view. In my opinion, the two latter sciences should also be used to decode and understand the poetry of the Tatars in Poland. Not only the so-called professional literature has produced significant poets, but amateur Tatar poets also pour their works on the topics they consider important, contributing to the survival and documentation of the life of this small ethnic group.

The poetry of the Tatars in Poland rests on very strong autobiographical foundations, even though the cultural contexts that define it are extremely diverse. On the one hand, it is strongly connected to the historical past, it refers to the ancient Mongol-nomadic culture, as well as to the Turko-Muslim tradition system, but it also has serious ties to Polish literary traditions. Admittedly, one of the main aspirations of Tatar poetry is to act as a bridge between the aesthetics of the East and the West. The material of the investigation was the poems written by Selim Chazbijewicz and Musa Czachorowski. To analyze the poems, I used different interpretation strategies to reveal the multi-layered cultural references and interpretation possibilities appearing in the poetry of the Tatars in Poland. The first and most important interpretive strategy of this kind is *Kafka: Pour une Littérature Mineure* (1975), published in 1975 by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in which they examine the

nature of minority literatures. I used different interpretation strategies to reveal the multi-layered cultural references and interpretation possibilities appearing in the poetry of the Polish Tatars.

According to Riceur, the literary text is about the world of creation. This is applicable to the literature of the Polish Tatars, as their texts depict a special, inner world that invites the reader into an ancient Tatar existence that exists outside of time. Of the two, it is mainly Selim Chazbijewicz who creates the possible space of common existence for the Tatars in his poems, which connects the Tatars and this link materializes in Chazbijewicz's lyrics.

In the case of minorities, the correct interpretation is not the interpretation according to the cultural background of the minorities, but only a point of alignment, which may lead to a more accurate interpretation of poetic images and devices, revealing the hidden, "ethnic" contexts of the texts.

The next theory that I used to interpret the poetry of the Tatars in Poland is Stuart Hall's model of cultural coding-decoding, which makes it easier to interpret the texts, since a kind of cultural translation between the author and the reader is necessary when reading them. This cultural translation applied by the reader is part of the decoding process itself, as a result of which the hidden cultural layers are revealed during the decoding of the created text by the reader.

The next theory applied to examine the texts of the two Tatar poets is Néstor Garcia Canclini's theory of cultural hybridization, which he originally presented using the example of Argentina, but which can also be perfectly applied to the description of the cultural development and literature of the Tatars in Poland. Hybridization develops after cultural exchanges and interactions, in the case of the Tatars, this process has been going on for six centuries and actually started at the time of their immigration, after they settled in a Polish, Lithuanian or Ruthenian cultural environment. In their chosen country, they also adopted the language and customs of the cultural environment that surrounded them, thus creating a hybrid heritage rooted in Eastern-Muslim and Western-Christian cultural circles. Hybridization is closely related to the loss of the Tatars' own language, because the use of Ruthenian, Lithuanian or Polish language started their assimilation and accelerated the cultural exchange between them and the peoples around them.

The rhizome theory developed by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, which was published in *Mille plateaux* published in 1980, is well suited for modeling the components of the culture of the Tatars in Poland. According to them, the rhizome is a system of connections similar to a root network made up of many elements, which, due to its shape, can be a great representation of thought networks and connections, thus even suitable for displaying the thought map of hybridized cultures. In the case of the poetry of the Tatars in Poland, the image systems and cultural toolkits used by the authors do not appear to be in any way related to each other, but due to the fact that the elements of their poetry stem from their hybrid identity, they are related to each other, and we can even represent these relational networks with a rhizome system.

Results

According to Herder, every culture can be described as a closed monolithic system, and communication and mixing between different cultures, is not possible, only collisions are possible. This idea is quite widespread, however, it must be recognized that it was completely out of date even at the time of its formulation. Every culture is made up of several layers and influences. The culture of each people is subject to and has been subject to many external influences over time. This theory was formulated by the German philosopher Wolfgang Iser in 1990 and he called it transculturality. According to him, if we examine them from the former point of view, then every culture that still exists today was resulted by a synthesis of several foreign and home grown cultural elements, through centuries of interaction. This type of culture is observed by the majority of European ethnicities, or such hybridization occurred even in the Japanese culture, which is considered to be very closed and unique, however many of its elements are nourished by the traditions of the Chinese and surrounding peoples. In a transcultural sense, the culture of the Tatars is special only to the extent that it united two very distant traditions: the Christian-Polish and the Muslim-Tatar culture. However, if we examine it even more closely, as a result of the work of the two great Tatar poets, even the ancient nomad-Tatar element

gained an important role in the identity of the Tatars in Poland, because thanks to the efforts of the two poets, this tradition was entirely included as well. This tendency can be seen by Czachorowski as an undeniable influence of Chazbijewicz, which influence can be seen in the works of contemporary amateur Tatar poets as well.

Thus, it can be stated that the culture of the Tatars in Poland realizes the synthesis of two worlds, but those two worlds are actually three: the Polish-West, the Muslim-East, and the nomadic-Tatar. The identity and therefore the culture of the Tatars in Poland is located somewhere in the intersection of the three cultures, while it is a member of all three and is fed by all three, it is not really a member of any of them.

The identity of the Polish Tatars is the result of a cultural hybridization and synthesis, which is well supported by their poetry. In poetry, which is a proof that cultures are more open and interact with each other, and they have many points of connection and in many of their intersections. The Polish Tatars fill in between two civilizations sectional or bridge role, as evidenced by their remarkable poetry. In the poems of the two prominent poets and their peers, it is common to encounter the memory of the ancestors and the care of the memory of the ancestors as a frequent motif. Important elements of the poetry of the Polish Tatars are the greats of Tatar history, with Genghis Khan and officers who fought in the service of the Polish kings. Those soldier embodied the complex identity of the Tatars as a kind of metaphor, while Genghis Khan and the rulers of the Golden Horde appear as ancestors, the Polish-Tatar ulhans and soldiers stand for the unified Polish and Tatar identity.

It is an extremely important aspiration of all poets and writers to contribute to the survival of the Tatar nation through their texts by presenting the traditions and by constantly mentioning the elements of the Tatar identity. As a result of these efforts, a very complex, but at the same time permanent poetic system was formed, which includes, idyllic depictions of ancient times, daydreaming about the steppe and the military past. One can also often find traces of typical Polish-Tatar weaponry or military lifestyle in the poems. Such are the sabre, the javelin, the spear, the arrow, the bow and the horse-tailed flag.

It is also characteristic of Musa Czachorowski that he often contrasts dreams with reality, dreams show a return to ancient times, a return to the origins of the Tatars, while reality is always full of doubts, gray and dominated by the feeling of alienation or the feeling of the future fear.

In several of his poems, Chazbijewicz makes a pilgrimage to the land of his ancestors in carefully documented visions and shows the reader the cornerstones of Tatar history and identity, discovering the complexity of the special world of the Tatars poem by poem.

In terms of poetic forms, Tatar poetry is dominated by free verse, but Selim Chazbijewicz likes to use Eastern verse forms as well, such as rubai or ghazal, the poet born in 1955 places himself and his work between East and West, he is greatly influenced by Sufi mysticism, The culture and history of Central Asia, and at the same time these influences fit perfectly in his poetry with the philosophy of Heidegger or Jung, the aesthetics of Western romanticism and the values of Młoda Polska. His poetic role models are Omar Hajjám and Jalal ad-Dín Rúmi, but also Józef Czechowicz and Tadeusz Miciński. Chazbijewicz's avowed goal is to achieve a synthesis of the two cultural circles in his poetry. He stands by his identity with complete naturalness, in his poetry he mainly researches its origins, elements and components, enriching his own poetic tools with new and new metaphors and images, as he carries out his philosophical introspection

Czachorowski, on the other hand, is the self-reflection of the modern man, he faces his own identity as a result of long and gradual internal struggles, since he comes from an assimilated Tatar family. His youth poetry is dominated by the description of the feeling of foreignness, the search for a place, and the use of special linguistic similes, with which it seems that the language used in common with the majority society would try to capture a missing cultural code.

His poetry is not philosophical, like Chazbijewicz's, he does not want to achieve a synthesis, but with his search for a way he still achieves a kind of unity, that of the modern Western man, with the Muslim believer of the East, who is looking for the way to the Absolute. In Czachorowski's poems, one can follow the journey of a person searching for his identity to himself, his works created in recent years testify to the fact that he confidently uses the tools typical of the literature of the Tatars in Poland, of which he himself has become a shaper.

The poetry of Chazbijewicz and Czachorowski is quite varied and diverse, there are texts that elicit the recognition of Polish critics, but one can also find poems that follow the same patterns reflecting to the Polish Tatar cultural heritage. However, it can be said that the role and influence of these two poets in the cultural life of the Tatar community is enormous. The poetry of the two not only achieved and presented the synthesis of Polish-Tatar culture and identity, but ensured the survival of this small ethnic group perhaps for a long time to come.

Publications on the topic:

Lengyelországi tatárok == Pro Minoritate, 2016/III

Identitások metszetében == Magyar Napló, 2018/10

A kitabok megtartó ereje a lengyelországi tatárok kultúrájában == Interdiszciplinaritás a Kárpát medencében, ELTE Márton Áron Szakkollégium, Budapest, 2019.

Musa Czachorowski and his Obca collection of poetry. == Polish Review, University of Illinois Press, 67.2., 2022