

Armenians in Poland from the 14th century to the first years of the 21st century

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ABSTRACT

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The first groups of Armenians arrived in Red Ruthenia, Podolia, and Kyiv Ruthenia as early as in the 11th century as part of the first wave of exiles before the Seljuk invasion. At the same time the first Armenian settlements in these Polish lands were established. However, a significant development tendency of the Armenian settlement can only be mentioned concerning the reign of Casimir the Great, who also contributed to the raise of the Armenian church in Lviv to the rank of a cathedral. The greatest development of the Armenian settlement in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth took place in the 16th and 17th centuries. At the end of the 17th century, Armenian settlements stretched along the entire south-eastern border of the Republic of Poland. The Armenian colonies in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth played an important role in the organization of eastern trade. A trade route connecting the East with the West ran through the territory of the Republic of Poland. Apart from economic activity, Armenians played a significant role in the field of diplomacy. All Armenian colonies in the territory of the Republic of Poland enjoyed autonomy. The outbreak of the war in 1939 meant that Poles and Armenians shared the tragic fate. World War II dispersed the Polish

Armenians. Some of them – mainly Armenians from the city of Kutuy and its surroundings – were murdered in 1943–1944 by the Ukrainians, with the approval of the Germans. Others were taken to Soviet camps or sent to Central Asia. Few Armenians remained in Lviv. Polish Armenians who survived lived in post-war Poland. After the political transformation that took place in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, new emigrants from Armenia come to Poland. According to the 2002 national population and housing census, 262 citizens of the Republic of Poland declared themselves as Armenians.

KEY WORDS: Armenians, Armenian colonies, Catholic Archbishop of Lwów of the Armenian rite, Eastern trade, Polish Kingdom, Polish Republic, Poland, Red Russia

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Ormianie, kolonie ormiańskie, katolickie arcybiskupstwo ormiańskie we Lwowie, handel orientalny, Królestwo Polskie, Polska, Rzeczpospolita, Ruś Czerwona

Amongst different ethnic-religious groups, the Armenians played an important position in the former Republic of Poland; not number wise, as in this respect they came after the Jewish and the Tartar communities, but in terms of their role in economy, culture as well as politics. The Armenians traded with the Turkish Empire and Persia. They were the main intermediaries, through whom the wealthy and noble magnates as well as the patrician of the Polish Republic obtained their supplies, including fabrics, weaponry, horses and other items originated from the East. Their craftsmanship oriented towards the production of luxury goods, along with contacts with the East and expertise in oriental languages was not without significance. Indeed, the Armenians proved to be instrumental in the diplomatic service for the Polish Republic¹.

In 1045, Armenia was occupied by the Byzantines. Owing to this dependency, she did not stand a chance for an effective defence against the invasion of the Seljuk Turks. In 1604, the Seljuk Turks took over the Armenian capital – the city of Ani, which was later to be destroyed again by a subsequent attack led by Czormaguna in 1239². Finally, in 1385, Armenia was conquered by Timur Lenk³.

These events provoked a series of emigration of the Armenian people out of the country. The first phase of mass emigration took place in 1064 during the attack of the Seljuk Turks, as a result of which the Armenians settled down in the Caucasus, on the shores of the Black

¹ J. Bardach, *Ormianie na ziemiach dawnej polskich*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 1983, nr 90, p. 109.

² S. Barącz, *Rys dziejów ormiańskich*, Kraków 1869, pp. 47–48.

³ L. Korwin, *Ormiańskie rody szlacheckie w Polsce*, Kraków 1934, pp. 22–23.

- 4 T. Mańkowski, *Orient w Polskiej kulturze artystycznej*, Wrocław–Kraków 1959, pp. 32–33.
- 5 Kiev.
- 6 S. Barącz, *op.cit.*, p. 61, 98.
- 7 Vladimir.
- 8 M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Historia Armenii*, Wrocław–Kraków–Gdańsk 1977, pp. 144–145.
- 9 Lviv.
- 10 D. Quirini-Popławska, *Polska azy-lem europejskich emigrantów na przełomie wieków średnich i nowożytnych*, “Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce” 1993, nr 23, p. 38.
- 11 Vide: T. Gromnicki, *Ormianie w Polsce* [in:] *Encyklopedia Kościelna*, t. 17, M. Nowodworski (red.), Warszawa 1891, p. 393.

Sea and of the Caspian Sea as well as on the Peninsular of Crimea (*nota bene* their settlement predates that of the Mongols and the Tartars)⁴. The earliest Armenian settlement in Russia took place in Kijów⁵, which later became part of the so-called Kingdom of Poland and then the Republic of Poland⁶.

This is further supported by recent studies, which suggest that at the turn of the 12th centuries, there was a large Armenian colony in Kijów. After the Mongols took over Kijów in 1240, part of the colony migrated to Włodzimierz⁷, a city that had played a significant role as the centre of trade until the time of Kazimierz the Great who incorporated it to Poland. This Armenian settlement comprised of not only Kijów itself, but also the adjacent villages such as: Kaniów, Czerkasy, Żytomierz. The main professions occupied by these Armenians ranged from agriculture, horticulture to trade and craft. In Kijów, they even possessed their own district, in which there was a church and a hospital funded and managed entirely by themselves and for themselves⁸. The largest Armenian colonies in former Polish territories were found in Lwów⁹ and Kamieniec Podolski. The Armenian settlement in Lwów, Lutsk and Kamieniec Podolski appeared in the 13th century. These were intermediate commercial cities between the East and the West.

The second phase of the influx of Armenian to Lwów and Kamieniec took place after the fall of Kaffa in 1475, where the Turks committed a brutal massacre of Armenians. The already existing Armenian municipalities in Lwów and Kamieniec had eventually become the organisational prototypes for other Armenian colonies in the lands of the Polish Republic¹⁰. Upon their arrival in Lwów in the second half of the 13th century, the Armenians initially resided in the district of Podzamcze. The Armenian diaspora, having been granted some grounds, started the construction of sacred buildings, including a wooden monastery dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and a church named after St. James of Nisibis¹¹.

As a proof of such an early settlement of Armenians in Lwów, a stone dated in 1264 was found in the courtyard of the Armenian cathedral with an inscription written in Armenian¹².

After the incorporation of the Red Russia into Poland, the geo-politic borders were shifted. The Armenians now found themselves in the peripheries of the Polish Kingdom. Casimir the Great re-erected the City of Lwów in 1356 by a foundation decree, which to-date still remains the oldest written document available confirming the settlement of the Armenians in this region. On the basis of this decree, the Armenians regained their rights, which allowed them to freely exercise their own judicial system according to their customs, to build churches and to celebrate their own liturgical rite. They could even bring in their own bishop from Armenia¹³.

However, we can only speak of the significant development of the Armenian settlements during the reign of Casimir the Great, who knew how to appreciate the existence of this small but vibrant community and the benefits it brought to the Polish lands. Consequently, the King not only granted them autonomy, but has also put in much effort in helping them to gain the status of a cathedral for their parish church, which until then had served as an episcopal see for their rite. Lwów became the main centre for the Armenians in the Polish Republic. The importance of the Armenian settlement in this city was further elevated by the approval of the Armenian statute in Lwów that took place in 1519 – a statute that was applicable not only for the community in Lwów, but across all Armenians settlements in Poland.

Over time, however, the direction of Armenian emigrants shifted to the West. From the 16th to 18th century, Armenian clusters began to appear in cities belonged to the magnates¹⁴. By then, apart from Lwów and Kamieniec Podolski, there were also clusters of Armenians in Brzeżany, Jarosław, Horodenka, Lublin, Łuck, Mohylów Podolski, Zamość, Kazimierz Dolny, Stanisławów and Bałta¹⁵.

¹² T. Mańkowski, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

¹³ S. Barącz, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁴ K. Stopka, *Ormianie w Polsce dawnej i dzisiejszej*, Kraków 2000, pp. 36–37.

¹⁵ M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Historia Armenii*, p. 147.

¹⁶ B. Biedrońska-Słotowa, *Ormianie polscy odrębność i asymilacja*, Kraków 1999, p. 12.

¹⁷ Warsaw.

¹⁸ J. Suchanik, *Ormianie w Polsce*, "Rocznik Wschodni" 2004, nr 10–11, p. 13, 15.

¹⁹ K. Stopka, *op.cit.*, pp. 21–22.

In the first half of the 16th century, Łukasz Górka obtained funding from King Sigmund Augustus (Zygmunt August) for the construction of an Armenian church in Złoczów. In 1585, a magnate, Jan Zamoyski, brought in Armenians from Turkey and Persia. Other magnates, followed suit. Stanisław Koniecpolski brought them to the cities of Brody and Buczacz in 1638. In the 1670s, Armenians appeared in Łysiec and Pokucie, then in Horodenka¹⁶. The biggest development concerning Armenian settlements in the Polish Republic took place from the 16th to 17th century, where their existence was noted in Brzeżany, Jarosław, Mohylów Podlaski, Podhajce, Raszków, Śniatyń, Tyśmienica, Złoczów, Żółkiew. At the end of the 17th century, Armenian settlements stretched along the south-eastern borders of the Polish Republic. The westernmost permanent Armenian colony was located in Zamość. It should be noted that Armenians were also found in Poznań (geographically much westward than Zamość), where the entire trading system with the East from the 16th to 17th century was practically controlled by them. However, their appearance there was conditioned by trade and, strictly speaking, cannot be considered as a permanent settlement *per se*. Similarly, smaller Armenian clusters without any formalised autonomy were found in Warszawa¹⁷ and Lublin¹⁸. Due to this high mobility, the lifespan of these Armenian communities was rather unpredictable. Their existence depended to a great extent on the ever-changing economic and political situation of the host country – i.e. the Polish Republic. Furthermore, while part of the Armenians considered these former lands of the Polish Republic as places of permanent settlement, others treated them as places of transit, through which they continued their journey westward to other European cities after a period of short sojourn¹⁹.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, all Armenian colonies enjoyed a great degree of autonomy. Privileges granted to them by Polish kings enabled them to trade freely

and to undertake other craftworks. As we have already mentioned, the Armenians possessed their own judicial system based on their own laws, contained in the Statute approved by Sigmund I (Zygmunt I) in 1519 in the Parliament of Poland located in the City of Piotrków²⁰. As a result, the Armenian settlements formed their own municipalities in the aforementioned cities. All matters concerning their interests were, therefore, discussed and decided on a forum together with representatives of a given municipality. Their unity was further strengthened by their common interest: trade with the East²¹.

The governing structure of the Armenian settlements was based on an elective body, consisting of an office of mayor-aldermen. Election took place every year in the presence of the castellan or a representative of the given city. The number of aldermen ranged from 6 to 12, depending on the size of the municipality²². The authority of a given municipality was that of administrative and judicial. Its main scope was to manage common estates of the community, including houses, mills, churches, taverns, inns and bathhouses²³. In larger municipalities, such as those in Stanisławów and Kamieniec Podolski, there was a council of 40 men called *Karsunachpar*, led by a marshal. Board members were elected from amongst the urban patricians²⁴. The Armenians were encouraged to live a life of a brotherhood “daredevils”, which was of paramilitary nature and had the task of defending the city walls, which were divided by the separating walls. The brotherhoods gathered young and unmarried men capable of military service. They also provided organised protection for merchant caravans²⁵.

In terms of craftsmanship, the Armenians founded workshops producing belts, carpets, cordovans, morocco leather, tents and jewellery²⁶. They were usually concentrated within craft-guilds modelled after the Magdeburg law²⁷.

The Armenian colonies in the former Polish Republic regions played an important role in the organising

²⁰ J. Bardach, *op.cit.*, p. 115; O. Balzer, *Statut ormiański w zatwierdzeniu Zygmunta I z roku 1519*, Lwów 1910.

²¹ M. Oganiesian, *Autonomia Ormiańska w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVII wieku* [in:] *Studia z dziejów kontaktów polsko-ormiańskich*, M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa (red.), Lublin 1983, p. 68.

²² J. Suchanik, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

²³ K. Stopka, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

²⁴ C. Chowaniec, *Ormianie w Stanisławowie w XVII i XVIII wieku*, Stanisławów 1928, pp. 15–16.

²⁵ K. Stopka, *op.cit.*, pp. 34–35.

²⁶ M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Rzemiosło ormiańskie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [in:] *Studia z dziejów...*, p. 90.

²⁷ K. Stopka, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

28 Nuremberg.

29 M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Historia Armenii*, pp. 149–151.

30 T. Lewicki, *O Ormianach zamoj-skich*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 1966, nr 73, pp. 407–411; L. Podhorecki, *Chocim 1621*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 166–167; *Relacja Sefera Muratowicza obywatela warszawskiego, od Zygmunta III, króla polskiego, dla sprawowania rzeczy wyslanego do Persji w r. 1602*, Warszawa 1777.

31 Joseph.

32 Vide: G. Petrowicz, *La Chiesa Armena in Polonia e nei paesi limitari*, part. 3: 1686–1954, Roma 1988, pp. 370–376.

33 D. Tabińska-Juhasz, *Kresowi Ormianie*, <http://www.lwow.home.pl/semper/kresowi.html> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

34 Dionysius.

35 S. Nabywaniec, *Armeni-Cattolici in Polonia prima e dopo il 1989*, "Città di Vita" 2007, no. 6, p. 593.

Eastern trade. There was a trade route that stretched throughout the entire territory of the Polish Republic, connecting the East and the West. This route passed through major cities like Kamieniec Podolski, Lwów, Wrocław and Nürnberg²⁸. The increasing influx of imported goods from the East and their lucrative profits derived from high prices had enabled them to set up both commercial centres as well as workshops in these cities. In this way, eastern imports coupled with domestic goods produced by the Armenians gave rise to the so-called "easternisation" of the Polish culture during the 17th and 18th centuries²⁹.

In addition to economic activities, the Armenians also played a significant role in the field of diplomacy. With their knowledge of Eastern languages, they had become indispensable, whenever there was a need for them to participate in diplomatic missions visiting Sultans, Shas and the Tartar Khans³⁰.

Those previously lived in Lwów and also in other cities of today's Ukraine, whose number is unfortunately ever declining, together with their offsprings, form what is known as today's Armenian catholic community in the modern Poland. Post-II-World-War events had forced them to leave their formerly established colonies and wander further west and north. Their ties with these cities, however, remained strong.

The last Catholic Archbishop of Lwów of the Armenian rite was Archbishop Józef³¹ Teodorowicz³². Until 1939, there were twenty priests serving this archdiocese; there were also nuns running schools for girls. Beside these, there was a foundation for boys, named after Bishop Torosiewicz, as well as an Armenian bank called "Mons Pietatis". The outbreak of war in 1939 meant that both the Poles and the Armenians had to share a common tragic fate³³. The then administrator of the Armenian Church, Fr. Dionizy³⁴ Kajetanowicz, being hunted by the invaders, was forced to hide in the monastery of the Franciscan friars³⁵. He was both the senior of the Armenian priests

in the Archdiocese of Lwów and the closest collaborator of Archbishop Józef Teodorowicz³⁶.

World War II has completely scattered the Polish Armenians. Some of them – mainly the so-called Kucy Armenians (from the Town of Kutu) – were killed in the years 1943–1944 by Ukrainians, with the consent of the Germans; others were deported to Soviet concentration camps or to Central Asia. There were few Armenians left in Lwów. The rest – about 75% of those who survived the war³⁷ – resettled in the depths of post-war Poland³⁸. The Ukrainian historian, Yaroslav Dashkevich, insists that the Holy See had come to terms with the liquidation of the Armenian Catholic Church without even raising any protest against the authorities of the Soviet Union, even though he is aware of the fact that the Armenian Catholic Archdiocese of Lwów had never been erased by Rome from the official Vatican yearbook “*Annuario Pontificio*”³⁹. Information concerning the catholicity of this Archdiocese tracing back to 1630 can be found in the “*Annuario*”. Other data about the actual state of this Archdiocese are, unfortunately, lacking.

The extermination of the people and the faithful of the Armenian Church in Soviet Ukraine was a thorough one, as it is evidenced by the fact that after 1946 until 1947 only one priest was allowed to work in Kutu. When the Soviets closed down the church in 1947, the priest, being in the 61st year of his priesthood, blinded and forgotten, died in complete misery and desolation⁴⁰.

After the war, the Armenians lived in different Polish cities such as Kraków⁴¹, Opole, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk and Warszawa⁴². In face of the new post-war geopolitical realities, the Armenians developed their culture and tradition in three main centres: Gliwice, Kraków and Gdańsk. The integrating factor was the Armenian liturgical rite and the pastoral work of the Armenian clergy⁴³.

Initially, the main centre of the Armenians was in Gliwice. There they had their church, in which the miraculous image of Our Lady of Łysiec was held.

36 Vide: “*Gregoriana*” 1938, vol. 4, iss. 4, pp. 271–272.

37 R. Okraska, *Ormianie polscy*, “*Zakorzenie*” 2000, nr 6(8).

38 K.A. Woźniak, *Ormianie polscy*, <http://www.bohosiewicz.ip.pl/text15.htm> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

39 J. Daszkewycz, *Likwidacja wirmeno-kaatolyckoji Cerkwy w Halycyzynie*, Lwów 1998, p. 85; M. Tyszka, *Diecezja Kościoła ormiańskokatolickiego u progu trzeciego tysiąclecia*, “*Biuletyn OTK*” 2002, nr 28–29, pp. 25–26.

40 T. Zaleski, *Ks. Prałat Leon Isakowicz – proboszcz ormiański i kustosz sanktuarium w Stanisławowie. Zarys biograficzny*, “*Biuletyn OTK*” 2001, nr 24–25, p. 75.

41 Cracow.

42 A. Pisowicz, *Sześćsetpięćdziesiąt lat Ormian polskich*, “*Cracovia-Leopolis*” 1998, no. 15.

43 A. Bohosiewicz, *Powojenna historia Ormian polskich*, <http://www.bohosiewicz.ip.pl/Powojenna.html> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

44 *Ibidem*.

45 A. Mak, *Wierni Polsce od 800 lat. Ormianie*, <http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZD/ormianie.html> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

The Armenian community organised Sunday gatherings and other forms of functions according to their pre-war ways of living. Pastoral activities in Gliwice were taken care of by Fr. K. Roszko and Fr. K. Romaszkan. However, after the death of Fr. K. Romaszkan in 1973, the Armenian religious centre was moved to Gdańsk. Thanks to the then Vicar General of the Armenian Church in Poland, Monsignor Kazimierz Filipiak, the miraculous image of Our Lady of Grace was entrusted to the care of the church of Sts. Peter and Paul in this city. For many years Monsignor Filipiak was the only chaplain serving the Armenians in Poland. He maintained contacts with many Armenian families throughout the country until the end of his life⁴⁴.

Back in Gliwice, the situation improved when Fr. Józef Kowalczyk, a cleric well-prepared for the pastoral ministry according to the Armenian rite, took the Holy Trinity parish church in possession. He, an Armenian by his mother's line, a graduate of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin and of the Pontifical Armenian College in Rome, was ordained in Lebanon and appointed as the parish priest since 1985. In the nineties of the 20th century, the parish church in Gliwice, which was later on transformed into a personal parish covering the entire country, took the initiative to build a new church and a museum collecting personal mementos left by the Armenian communities. The publication of their monthly magazine, "The Messenger of St. Gregory – the Illuminator" resumed. In 1995, the Union of the Armenians in Poland was established and was named after Archbishop Józef Teodorowicz. Its statutes made references to the pre-war Archdiocesan Union of Armenians⁴⁵.

In 1989, the re-coronation of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Łysiec took place, an event during which the parish alluded to its former glory. This event was further honoured by the presence of the Patriarch of the Armenian Catholic Church based in Beirut, John Peter XVII, and the presence of the Primate of the Roman

Catholic Church of Poland, Joseph Glemp, who was officially the Ordinary of the Armenian Catholics in Poland. During his second visit in 1997, the Patriarch John Peter XVII elevated Fr. J. Kowalczyk to the dignity of Archimandrite (in Armenian *Kercharkeli*).

In Kraków, on the other hand, Fr. Francis Jakubowicz, who succeeded Fr. Andrew Łukasiewicz from Czerniowice, had been serving the Armenian Catholics until his death in 1972. Both Fr. Jakubowicz and Fr. Łukasiewicz celebrated Masses according to the Armenian rite in the church of St. Giles. After their death, in order to provide appropriate spiritual care for the Armenians, Fr. Filipiak, the last serving priest in Poland, as well as Fr. Kowalczyk had to commute between Gdańsk–Kraków and Gliwice–Kraków respectively. In 2000, Fr. Tadeusz Zaleski-Isakowicz was appointed the chaplain of the Armenians by the Polish Primate, Card. Joseph Glemp – the Ordinary of Oriental Churches in Poland that have no Ordinaries of their own. Fr. Zaleski, therefore, undertook further studies at the Pontifical Armenian College in Rome, where he was prepared for the pastoral work according to the Armenian rite in Kraków⁴⁶.

Until today, hymns based on folkloristic themes from the 8th century or even earlier are still sung during Masses in the church of St. Giles. The most important feast day for the Armenians is the Solemnity of Epiphany, celebrated according to a centuries-old tradition. During the blessing of water, a little boy would hold a cross symbolising St. John the Baptist⁴⁷.

The Armenian community in Gdańsk is currently under the care of Fr. Cezary Anunsiewicz, who comes from the old school of the emigrants. Fr. Kowalczyk, as we have mentioned, served in Gliwice. However, due to health related problems and his advanced age, he could no longer continue his pastoral work. There are, however, currently two Armenian seminarians in Poland: one is born in Belarus, currently studying in Lublin, and the other from Armenia⁴⁸.

46 <http://www.lwow.home.pl/orm.html> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

47 A. Bohosiewicz, "Horyzonty Wiary" 1998–1999, nr 9–10.

48 <http://www.lwow.home.pl/orm.html> [accessed: 7.05.2019].

- 49 D. Tabińska-Juhasz, *op.cit.*
- 50 A. Bohosiewicz, *Powojenna historia Ormian...*
- 51 D. Tabińska-Juhasz, *op.cit.*; A. Bohosiewicz, "Horyzonty Wiary" 1998–1999, nr 9–10.
- 52 K. Gołębiowski, *Ormianie w Polsce*, <http://www1.gazeta.pl/swiat/1,34296,448023.html> [accessed: 21.03.2005].
- 53 A. Pisowicz, *op.cit.*
- 54 "The Messenger of St. Gregory, the Illuminator".
- 55 Andrew.
- 56 D. Tabińska-Juhasz, *op.cit.*
- 57 A. Pisowicz, *op.cit.*

After World War II, a very important event took place. John Peter XVIII Casparian, the Patriarch-Catholicos of the Armenian Catholics, visited the Holy Trinity church in Gliwice on 3rd September 1989 and presided the coronation ceremony of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Łysiec⁴⁹. In 1999, however, a robbery took place at the chapel-shrine, presumably carried out by three men in Gliwice, who claimed the right over the image. Thanks to the firm position of Fr. Anunsiewicz, the successor of Fr. Filipiak, and of some parishioners-neighbours of the chapel, the desecration of the shrine was prevented⁵⁰.

From 25th May to 6th June 1997, John Peter XVIII Casparian made a second visit to Poland, which coincided with the 46th International Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław. The famous Armenian choir in Poland performed during the meeting with the Patriarch-Catholicos. After that, he sent a patriarchal bull to Fr. J. Kowalczyk, proclaiming the following: "As a sign of our appreciation for your long-term service and fruitful pastoral work, by the power of our authority as Patriarch, we elevate you to the dignity of *Kercharkeli* with the right to wear the pectoral cross and the ring. Dated: Dan in Bzommar, 14 X 1997"⁵¹. In June 2000, the successor of John Peter XVIII, i.e. Nerses Peter XIX Tarmuni, came to Poland⁵².

The Union of the Armenians in Poland named after Archbishop Joseph Teodorowicz, founded by Fr. J. Kowalczyk, flourished in Gliwice⁵³. It publishes a monthly magazine called "Posłaniec św. Grzegorza Oświeciciela"⁵⁴. Andrzej⁵⁵ Bohosiewicz is the chief editor. In Kraków, on the other hand, the Armenian Cultural Society was established. On 2nd May 1998, it organised the 4th Nationwide Armenian Meeting, dedicated to Archbishop Joseph Teodorowicz, commemorating his 60th death anniversary⁵⁶. In 1980, the Armenian Culture Interest Group was founded as a sub-department of the Polish Ethnological Society. Similar groups have also been formed in Warszawa and Gdańsk⁵⁷. In the same year, the first post-war reunion of Armenians residing in

Poland took place in Kraków. About 250 people attended the meeting. Such meetings were impossible previously, since Armenia was then part of the Soviet Union⁵⁸.

After the political transformation in Poland as well as other Central and Eastern European countries, a new wave of immigrants arrived in Poland from Armenia⁵⁹.

To conclude, it is worth quoting the patriarchal bull from John Peter XVIII: "For historical reasons, the Armenians in Poland have forgotten their mother tongue. But they remained attached to their root and cultural identity"⁶⁰.

According to the national census conducted in 2002, there are 262 Polish citizens declared to be of Armenian descent, of which: 73 reside in the Mazura Voivodship, 26 in the Wielkopolski Voivodship, 23 in the Śląsk⁶¹ Voivodship, 22 in the Małopolski Voivodship and the remaining 20 in the Lubuski Voivodship⁶².

After 1989, a fairly large group of new immigrants from Armenia came to Poland. Many of them found refuge and work in Rzeszów. To ensure an appropriate spiritual care for this ethnic group, the Ordinary of Rzeszów, Bishop Kazimierz Górny, has helped organising, even though at this moment on an irregular basis, pastoral care according to the Armenian rite in the rectory academic church located on 3rd May Street.

Translated: ks. Jan Maria Chun Yean Choong

⁵⁸ K.A. Woźniak, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ Centro Studi Immigrazione, *Le migrazioni interne in Europa (Centro Italiano di Formazione Europea)*, http://www.cestim.org/dossier_migrazioni/parte_2/interne.htm [accessed: 7.05.2019].

⁶⁰ D. Tabińska-Juhasz, *op.cit.*

⁶¹ Silesian.

⁶² http://www.mswia.gov.pl/mn_narod_ormianie.html [accessed: 21.03.2005].

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