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*Religious Fasting as a Kind of the Food Taboo in Poland  
in the 16th-17th Centuries*

I

Fasting should be regarded at the same time as a religious and cultural phenomenon. That double face of fasting is undoubtedly an interesting research problem enlarging our knowledge on human behaviour and cultural models of life. Great religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity included fasting to their rules and to their tools of influencing religious feelings and practices.

Christian fasting, which is the main topic of my paper, unlike the Judaic and Muslim ones, did not develop special dietary laws and customs to be observed during the whole year (along with the observance of several annual fast days), is limited to specific days and periods of the liturgical year. Only within these days or periods some limitations concerning food, which influenced more or less intensively the diet, were ordered.

In my further remarks I will analyse these limitations and their influence on the nutritional habits but first let me pose the question if the Christian fasting and the abstinence from specific food in a given days or periods of the year can be regarded as a form of the classical taboo.

What is taboo? Taboo, generally, is a prohibition (concerning not only food or drink) accepted by a given society, which-independently of its roots-includes the idea that a breach or defiance of the taboo will automatically be followed by some kind of punishment (for example a lack of success in some activity) <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, II, London 1991 (Macropaedia), p. 484.



The Christian fasting is a more complex religious and social (cultural) phenomenon, while, in my opinion, still a special kind of taboo. The specificity of the Christian fasting regarded as a taboo consists in its less rigorous character and in the predominantly other forms of punishment in the case of a breach of the rules. Less rigorous character of fasting in the Christian religion is connected with the existence of different motives are rather simple: the fear of punishment and, eventually, of the one's own social group disapproval.

Let me add here that we find a special form of fasting which is because of its rigorous character-very close to the classical taboo. It is the interdiction to eat meat in the refectories of the Dominicans Friars' monasteries. These monks (only of the so-called first rule or "observants") could eat meat outside refectories, in the guest-room, outside the monasteries, or while they were invited to dine out. In their cells they could eat meat only dispensed by the abbot (in the case of a sickness). That room taboo didn't exclude the "normal" religious fasting. Other Dominicans Friars were dispensed from such a room taboo<sup>2</sup>.

Generally speaking we observe in Poland in the early modern period the process of the palliation of the fasting rules. It was a general phenomenon which we observe in all Christian Churches from the Middle Ages. Thus fasting was more and more losing its taboo traits.

## II

The motives of the Christian fasting, according to the catholic and Protestant theologians, were double. First, fasting was (and still is) regarded as a virtue or as a moral quality aiming at the moral improvement of the individual. Such a virtue is an "overcoming of the natural lust for food and drink"<sup>3</sup>. Fasting, in this interpretation belongs to the virtue of temperance (*temperantia*), which can manifest itself through *abstinentia* from food and *sobrietas* as far as drink is concerned.

Theologians distinguish two degrees of *abstinentia* and *sobrietas*. We have to do with the first degree of the virtue of *abstinentia* and *sobrietas* when one is eating and drinking without exceeding or satisfying the natural needs of the organism and of the one's profession. Human beings are obliged to

<sup>2</sup> J. KITOWICZ, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* (Description of Polish Custom During the Reign of August III), Warszawa 1985 (PIW), pp. 85-86.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyklopedia kościelna* (Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia), Warszawa 1894, XX, p. 466.

preserve their life and forces in order to attain the higher aims. That obligation should not be fulfilled *per excessum* or *per defectum*.

The second degree of *abstinentia* and *sobrietas* is the essence of fasting (*jejunium*) and consists in the abstinence from food or drink which leads to the consumption beneath the "natural" and professional needs of a given individual. Only through such a degree of abstinence is possible to strengthen one's own will and domination over one's own passions.

The second motive of the Christian fasting is the religious rule, obligatory for the faithful. According to the theological interpretation such a fasting is a kind of moral and religious recompense for the human guilty consciousness, especially for the original sin consisting in the consumption of the forbidden fruit. The interpretation of the fasting rule was, already in early history of Christianity, controversial. Is it an ancient traditional custom which has been integrated into the body of the religious behaviour or a kind of the God's commandment? I will return to this problem in the analysis of the forms of punishment for breaching the fast.

Fasting as a religious rule (custom, commandment) was from the early Christian history divided into "natural fasting" (*jejunium naturale*, *jejunium totale*) and "ecclesiastical fasting" (*abstinentia jejunium semiplenum*). Natural fasting is in this interpretation a total abstinence from food and drink while ecclesiastical fasting is limited in two different ways: is fixing some forbidden (taboo) elements of the diet and is determining some days and periods of the year when the fasting (total or semi-total) is obligatory. These days and periods were normally constant but it was possible, and we observe in our Polish material from the early modern period, to order a special fasting to conciliate the God in the time of troubles or for other occasions. These other occasions were also the days of the administration of the Holy Communion and of the baptism of an adult person.

## III

The exclusion of certain food in the fast-days (in the ecclesiastical fasting) concerned (not only in early modern Poland) meat and other products (like grease, milk, eggs etc.) of animal origin. That exclusion concerned only the terrestrial animals and only the vertebrates, like cattle, swine, sheep or poultry. The genuine products for the fast days were therefore of vegetable origin. Other alimentary products, like fish and sea-food were regarded rather as the substitutes for "real" meat and the "natural" fast-days alimentation. The same one can say about snails. The Polish nobility ate not so rarely these products.



There were some other restriction concerning the fast-days and at the same time different regional customs. A general rule, often repeated by the popes (like Benedict XIV in 1756, Clemens XIII in 1759) and by the local ecclesiastical authorities (like the primate Michael Poniatowski in Poland in 1785), was to limit oneself to only one meal daily. It was rather strictly forbidden to mix during this single meal fish and meat, even if a given person was dispensed from the fast. Such a person could eat meat but could not have a combined table.

One distinguished at that time the meat table and the fish table influenced by the fasting rules. The first was the substitute for the latter and could be as luxurious and rich as the meat-table. Therefore as far as the Polish richer nobles and the magnates is concerned they, by shifting in the fast-days from the meat-table to the fish-table, were not really fasting (according to the rules even of the natural abstention). They ate as much as rich as normally not excluding drinks (like wine or vodka). For the Polish magnates the table was too important as a sign of their social position to disregard this mean of influence on their clients.

Other restrictions (in principle of the customary character) observed in the fast-days were the limitation of drinks (rarely observed in the practice) and - in some, difficult to say how frequent cases - the consumption of only non-cooked products.

The early modern period witnessed in Poland a significant development of the fish table with its several new recipes. The fish served were first of all pikes, zanders, sturgeons, crucian carps and carps. Smoked and dried fish as well as herrings from the Baltic Sea were eaten rather by the poorer strata of the society. The richer cuisine used also salmons and eels. Also were eaten different local fish (like perch or European catfish).

On the court of Klemens Branicki, one of the richest Polish magnates, one served for the Christmas-Eve supper in the middle of the 18th century such fasting dishes as pikes ("enormous"), carps (very "broad"), flounders, small and normal salmons, dried sturgeons (imported from Lithuania), tenches (prepared in a "special" way), perches (stuffed), zanders, eels (one ell long), then oysters, frogs, snails and, what is interesting, beaver tail (as a special "titbit")<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> E. KOWECKA, *Dwór "najrzędniejszego w Polsce magnata" (The Court of the "most resourceful magnate in Poland")*, Warszawa 1991 (IHKN PAN), p. 179.

This beaver tail included to the fasting meals indicates that the definition of animals forbidden during the fast-days was sometimes interpreted very broadly. Beavers were included to the fast animals because they live in water (like fish), although they are mammals.

The fish table of Branicki is really impressive and, what is easy to remark, with the religious idea of fasting (as an abstention has nothing in common). Here in a very clear manner we observe the cultural role of fasting. In such a role fasting is a symbolic behaviour. The quantity of food was enormous (fish sometimes were prepared, like sturgeons, in different ways), prepared in a very professional manner (the magnates including the royal court were exchanging recipes and also sending for instruction their own cooks to other courts, also to the royal court in Warsaw). In such a fish table there was no abstention as far as drinks in concerned. The court poet wrote that it would be difficult to enumerate drinks served during the Christmas-Eve supper at the Branicki court in Bialistok because he kept a cellar "known in the world"<sup>5</sup>.

Let me add some words about the meat table of the Branicki court. The preferred meal at that time in Poland was beef, then veal, pork, less mutton eaten in Poland with no special predilection. They imported sometimes meat-products from Italy, and Germany (the name "salceson" imported from Italy was borrowed from the Italian "salsiccia" - sausage).

Other meat present on the Branicki's table were rabbits and poultry: hens, ducks, gees. Preferred were fowls and capons, but the first place was reserved for turkeys.

Because of the importance of hunting in the aristocratic civilisation the venison was present in different form on the magnates meat-tables. It was the meat of deers, fallow deers, pheasants, mallards, snipes, fieldfares, thrushes, partridges. Besides from hunting were supplied to the magnate's table hares, brown and many other kinds of wild animals.

Another problem connected with the fasting rules was to supply the cooking with fat necessary for different dishes and everyday use. In the fast days forbidden was animal fat. There were however different degrees of this interdiction. The most anti-fast greasing was with animal fat (like port fat or suet). The middle position was attributed to butter while the real fast was plant oil (predominantly extracted in Poland from colza and sunflower).

It was impossible for the culinary reasons to depend in the higher (i.e. magnates, nobles, richer) cuisine on plant oil. Even the use of the pork fat or

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.



suet in the non-fasting days was for such a cuisine inappropriate. Therefore in the practice in such a cuisine butter was in the common use. So called "butter-fast" was distinguished from the so called "oil-fast". The first signified the fast with the use of butter, while the latter with the use of oil. Let me stress that in early modern period butter, even in the peasant households, was rarely used. The peasants and the poorer towns people used much cheaper oil or, in the non-fasting days, predominantly pork fat. The difference in prices between butter and oil was enormous. For peasants more important was the exclusion of eggs for the fasting-days food. A flour soup (i.e. the fermented flour), which in the monasteries and in the middle and the richer cuisine was a typical fast-days meal, was for peasantry an everyday meal. They were, so to say, fasting because of their low.

The possibility of the exclusion of the dairy produce and eggs from the fast diet was open in the church during the early modern period. Some dioceses had such a possibility (given by the pope) in Germany already in the 14th century. In Poland, acting on behalf of the pope, the primate Michal Poniatowski has suppressed the interdiction of the dairy produce and eggs in the year 1773 for the dioceses of Gniezno, Warsaw and Plock. This exclusion did not concern however the three last days of Lent. This was, one can say, a kind of legalisation of the existing practice.

A famous Polish memoirist Jędrzej Kitowicz in his *Description of customs during the reign of August III* (written in the years 1743-1804) in the chapter about the Polish clergy observed: "Many bishops were offering the open meet tables in the fasting days (as is the non-fasting days were not sufficient, as if there was no fish or as if they could not afford it); and they themselves, although fresh and healthy, together with the invited company, composed of the Catholics and the Protestants, stuffed with meat"<sup>6</sup>.

He wrote also that "the abbots following the bishops in their refined life nevertheless observed the fasting days; if some of them in order to please the meat-avid - company offered the meat table, proposed at the same time the fasting meals and if such an abbot himself preferred meat then at least explained his behaviour in front of the company that fasting is harmful for his health or that he is sick and doctors excluded fish from his menu"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> J. KITOWICZ, *Opis obyczajów*, cit., III, p. 106.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

## IV

Natural fasting, i.e. the total abstention from food and drink, observed by the Protestants (also in Poland in early modern period) signified that one could eat once a day, normally in the evening. It was possible during that fasting to drink obviously water and probably also beer (and eventually wine), as it was the case of the Catholics. "*Jejunant enim saepe, semel in die, (plerumque vesperi)*" - we can read in the 17th century history of the Czech Brethren<sup>8</sup>.

The Czech Brethren fasted on special occasions, such as before ordaining ministers, before Communion and great church feasts, also before important public events (as the session of the parliament, the election of the king), before the war expedition, during the plague. They fasted also during the Ember days.

Other Polish Protestants (it was a common rule among them) fasted in the same manner but the Ember Days. There were also fasts as a penance to expiate the sins.

We can find several informations about the fasting behaviour in the synodical acts of the Protestant Church. I will quote some of these informations. In the year 1587, because of the election of the king Sigismundus III (1587-1632), the Synod in Turobin ordered fasting "on Wednesday before election and for the second time on Friday when the election should start in order that God brings a pious king"<sup>9</sup>.

The Synod of Lublin in 1594 fixed fasting in every first Wednesday of the month (without any food), recommending at the same time to the ministers to fast more frequently. The fasting day should be devoted to the "prayers and learning"<sup>10</sup>. In order that the peasants could observe the Wednesday fasting it was decided to liberate them in this day from the *corvée*<sup>11</sup>.

During the so-called Zebrzydowski rebellion the Synod of Belzyce (held on 1.7.1606) decided to fast (with prayers) every Wednesday and Friday (before the beginning of the rebellion fixed for 6 August 1606<sup>12</sup>). Then, already when the rebellion started the Synod in Oksza (14 July 1606) because of the "troubles" ordered the prayers for the Kingdom (called "Republic")

<sup>8</sup> J. LASICKI, *Historiae de origine et rebus gestis Fratrorum Bohemicorum liber octavus...*, Lecznio 1649, p. 105. My thanks for professor J. Dworzaczkowa for this information.

<sup>9</sup> *Acta Synodalia Ecclesiarum Poloniae Reformatarum*, II, Polonia Minor 1571-1632, ed. M. SIPAYŁŁO, Warszawa 1983, n. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213 (the year 1600).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.



and fasts in the days of the parliament sessions<sup>13</sup>. Such decisions concerning prayers and fasts were then repeated in other times of troubles (*turbulenta tempora*)<sup>14</sup>. In 1622 the Synod in Góry decided to fast every Wednesday<sup>15</sup>. It was repeated by the Synod in Oksza in 1623<sup>16</sup> and in 1632<sup>17</sup>. The same Synod ordered also fasting because of the new election (of the king Ladislaus IV, 1632- 1648). In the same year Polish Calvinists decided to fast also during the Ember days<sup>18</sup>.

The "natural" fasting of the Protestants did not influence, as it did the Catholic fasting, the cuisine. A total abstention from food did not evoke the problem of the food substitution and the creation of special kind of "tables".

## V

In the Catholic synodal resolution the problem of fasting was rather rarely taken into consideration. General rules of fasting were generally known and fixed (see point VI) while the Protestants fasted more often on special occasions. Other difference between the Protestant and Catholic Synods was that the latter were much more interested in shaping the lower clergy behaviour which very often provoked sharp critics of the church authorities.

One of the most criticised "bad deeds" of the clergymen which provoked the reaction of the synods was the abuse of drink (liquors vodka and wine) and food. As far as liquors is concerned they were not enough "moderate". Therefore the synods were ordering often the moderation in drinking during different receptions offered on the occasion of birth, wedding or death. For example the synod of Luck in 1512 ordered the moderation in drinking during the funeral banquet adding that clergymen participating in such gathering should return home "before evening"<sup>19</sup>.

The same admonition concerned the inns where priests were ordinary guests. "*Tabernas edendi vel bibendi causa ne ingrediantur*" - we read among the resolution of the Plock Synod of 26-28 March 1593<sup>20</sup>. In these admonitions we meet also the suggestion to complete fasting with the lecture of the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 429-430.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 199.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 450.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 606.

<sup>19</sup> *Consilia Poloniae*, ed. J. SAWICKI, III, Warszawa 1949, p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, Warszawa 1952, p. 341.

"holy" texts or with the listening of such texts<sup>21</sup>. Special paragraph concerning the observance of the church feasts and fast-days was included into the conclusion of the Synod held in Przemysl in 1641.

The bishops were complaining that the church feasts became converted into the profane activities like public rejoicing or fairs what is connected with the non-observance of fast restrictions in food and drink. They ordered the priests to influence the faithful that they eat and drink according the rules of the church<sup>22</sup>.

## VI

The catholic Church observed at the end of the Middle Ages Fridays, Wednesdays and Saturdays as fast days. It was the regular fast which should be observed every week as a fundamental religious obligation of the Catholics. They were besides obliged to fast 40 days during Lent. The first three days of the first week of this 40-days fast (so called the Great Fast) were regarded as special fasting-days (a kind of prolongation of Ash Wednesday) that should be observed, as Ash Wednesday, more rigorously. There were also other fasting-days connected with several church feasts. Sundays were always (also during the Great Fast) excluded from fasting.

The synod of the Poznan dioceses has codified the fasting obligations in the middle of the 15th century as follows:

*"De jejuniis*

*Jejunis aute hec et non alia populo servari sunt precipienda scilicet: vigilis Nativitatis Christi, Mathei apostoli, Ascensionis Domini, Pentecostes, Johannis baptiste, Petri et Pauli, Jacobi apostoli, Laurentii martiris, Assumptionis S. Marie, Bartholomei apostoli, Mathei apostoli et evangeliste, Simonis et Jude apostolorum, Omnium Sanctorum, An-*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, Wroclaw 1955, pp. 251-252: "De observatione festorum ac ieiuniis. / Plerumque depravatae consuetudinis vitio dies in festos in usus profanos convertit iisdemque mercatus, nundinas et foralia, non sine magna fidelium a divinis aversione exerceri ieiuniaque ab Ecclesia Dei instituta, exemploque Christi domini ac magistri nostri commendata, in desuetudinem abire deprehendimus. Idcirco hortamur in Domino omnes toparchas ac dominos dioecesis nostrae, iurisdictionem temporalem habentes, ut in posterum praedictos mercatus, nundinas et foralia non pro ipsis diebus festis, sed altero post expeditam celebrationem festi die, indici ac publicari, zelo pietatis ac divinae gloriae non inturbandae studio faciant. Salvo nihilominus iure illorum locorum, in quibus vel immemorabilis vel praescripta contrarium ieiuniorum aboleri per parochos volumus, praesertim in iis, qui corporalis abstinentiae molestiam exquisitis ac pretextu collationis vespertinae repetitis cibis superare ac consolari volentes, pia vero exercitia, divina officia, elemosynas, orationes, ecclesiarum frequentationem intermittunt. Tales igitur singulis dominiciis finita contione ex suggestu admoneri, ac qualiter sese circa celebrationem festorum observationem ieiuniorum gerere debeant, circa promulgationem seio erudiri volumus ac praecipimus. A qua obligatione omnes illos eximimus, quos sancta Mater Ecclesia exemptos esse voluit, dummodo ab eis nihil in contemptum Ecclesiae et cum scandalo proximi fiat".



*dree, Thome apostoli, ferie quarte et sexte et dies sabbati in singulis quattuor temporibus anni. Item singuli dies Quadragesime, incipiendo a die Cinerum usque ad paschua, exceptis diebus dominicis. In die ante sancti Marci evangeliste et feria secunda et feria tertia Rogationum consuetudo teneatur et servetur; ad alia autem jejunia populus hortari potest, sed non cogatur*"<sup>23</sup>.

This list of fasting-days which closes the Middle Ages and opens the early modern period, valid for Poland, distinguishes several kinds of these days:

- 1) Weekly fast: Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays;
- 2) Great fast (40 days);
- 3) Special fasting-days before liturgical feasts;
- 4) Individual voluntary fasting.

There were also other fasting-days not listed in the mentioned synodical information: fasting as a sign of penance, fasting before Communion, on special occasions (as in the Protestant Church) and also other possible fasts.

In sum, without these special fasts and without individual voluntary fasting, obligatory fasting days within the Catholic Church came up to above 200 days annually (i.e. ca 55% of the year's days).

This situation had two consequences: the growing non-observance of the fasting-days and the pressure on the church authorities to lessen the fast prohibition.

The negligence of fasts was in early modern Poland a common phenomenon. The fasts were more and more regarded as an element of the cultural behaviour deprived of its ordinary religious meaning. They were connected with the intensification of the amusements with, if it was economically possible, heavy eating and drinking, before the Great Fast and on other occasion when fasting was ordered. In practice only Fridays (what was a part of the Good Friday esteem), were observed as a fasting-days more or less rigorously.

The pressure of the church authorities to lessen the fasts existed already in the early history of Christianity and very soon led to the regional decisions in this matter. For example, Henry, archbishop of Colonia in Germany in his statutes of 1307 agreed: "*jejunium vero sabbati locorum consuetudinibus duximus committendum*"<sup>24</sup>. One could quote many of such resolution.

<sup>23</sup> *Concilia Poloniae*, VII, Poznań 1952, p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> *Encyklopedia kościelna*, cit., XX, p. 485.

Along with the tendency to eliminate the Saturday fast one can observe the same tendency concerning Wednesday. In Poland already in 1508 the Gniezno chapter begged archbishop of Gniezno (and the primate of Poland) to wheedle from the pope the abolishment of the Wednesday fast<sup>25</sup>. We do not know if it was successful.

## VII

The less rigorous character of the Christian (especially the Catholic one) fasting in comparison with the classical taboo consisted (and consists) not only in the growing limitations of the fasting-days and its regionalisation but also in different personal exclusions from the religious fasting duty. Two kinds of these exclusions were known: the general exclusion of some persons from the obligatory fasting and the dispensation from fasting granted by the priests down to the parish-priests.

One can presume that in the early modern period were valid at least the same exclusions as listed in the church publications of the 19th century. According to the "Church Encyclopaedia", which summarised a long church experience the following categories of persons are excluded from fasting: 1. demented ones, 2. sick and convalescent after serious sickness, 3. poor who have no possibilities to prepare fast meals or have not enough food at all, 4. old persons (at the time the age limit was 60 years), 5. all these, as the soldiers, who were dependent on the others table, 6. the hard working persons, also persons during the exhausting travels, 6. all persons who were helping to the others with a hard service which could not have been postponed for a non-fasting-days<sup>26</sup>.

Bishops had the possibility of dispensation limited however to their own dioceses. The dispensation faculty of lower priests could stem only from the bishop's authorisation.

Also, as I have already stressed, the punishments involved in the system of Catholic fasting, are different as in the case of the classical taboo, although in the kinds of the ordered fasting, as in the taboo, the defiance of the fast is supposed to be followed by some kind of trouble for the offender (obviously only for the believers of taboo or of religion). Even in case of the private

<sup>25</sup> J. KORYTKOWSKI, *Prymasowie i metropolici polscy od roku 1000 aż do roku 1821* (Polish primates and metropolitans from 1000 till 1821), II, Poznań 1888, p. 570 ("Item de usu carniū feriis quartis vult scribere Sanctissimo ut istud revocet").

<sup>26</sup> *Encyklopedia kościelna*, cit., XX, pp. 472-473.



fasting (going beyond the "normal" fasting obligations) a person exercising such a voluntary fasting can feel some possibilities of troubles if, eventually, he would not keep his promise (to the God) of fasting. Let me add a special trait of fasting. Fasting was also "used" as a form of punishment for sins. Such a possibility did not exist and do not exist in case of taboo.

The most fundamental punishment for a breach or defiance of the fast was the inclusion of such a fact to the "sins" which-as sins-demand an appropriated penance. In this matter however the fundamental question to what extent the non-observance of fast days or food restrictions could be qualified as a sin.

In the Polish ecclesiastical encyclopaedia which reflected the opinion of the Polish Catholic Church in the 19th century the law of food and drink abstention (but the cases when such facts were justified on "physical or moral" grounds) was qualified rigorously as sins with the proviso that every act of eating of the forbidden food (even in the same day) had to be counted as a separate sin. When the quantity of the forbidden food eaten in a given act of consumption was "small" the sin was "venial" and when it was (in one act of consumption or during the whole day) in "greater quantities", then the sin was "mortal".

In the synodical resolutions of the 15th-18th centuries concerning different Polish dioceses we do not find such a severe approach to the non-observance of the fasting-days, at least this act of defiance of the church prescriptions was not qualified as a "mortal" sin. The synod of Przemyśl of the 1621 year composed a register of sins which could be absolved only by the bishops. The breach of fasting was not listed in this register<sup>27</sup>.

The synod of Przemyśl of the year 1641 without indicating the non-observance of fasting as a sin enumerates the punishments which were appropriated in such cases. These acts of penance listed in the resolutions of the synod were: exercising the "pious" deeds, charity, prayers and to frequent church<sup>28</sup>.

## VIII

Fasting as a part of the Polish culture and civilisation had an important influence on the historical reality. The growing demand for fish was one of the most important factors which has created in Poland (especially in the

southern Poland), as well as in Bohemia and Moravia, a powerful branch of the rural economy organised by the nobles. They needed fish and the traditional fishery was not able to supply sufficiently with fish (from lakes or rivers) and the commonly consumed herrings from the Baltic sea (salted, smoked or dried) were not good enough for the noble cuisine. Besides, the transport costs were not insignificant unless a given noble did not export grain to Gdansk bringing back also herrings. In such a case however they were rather destined for the poorer people distribution on the local market.

That powerful branch of the rural economy created by the growing demand for fish from all the strata of the population was the carp-breeding in ponds (normally artificially excavated and arranged). The 16th-18th centuries witnessed a real boom for such an activity. In the domains of the nobles in the 16th century analysed by Wojciech Szczygielski the income coming from the fish economy reached on the average about 10 percent of the total income<sup>29</sup>.

Another form of influence of fasting for the shape of the Polish culture and civilisation in early modern period were changes in the cuisine habits and, generally speaking, in the development of the already mentioned "fish table". It would be impossible in the framework of this paper to analyse in more detail this problem, as well as the problem of the fish trade and fish breeding. I would like only to mention one interesting observation of the already quoted memoirist Jędrzej Kitowicz. He wrote, among other things, also about the "new fashioned" dishes. In this chapter he distinguishes also the "fish-dinners".

The cook - writes Kitowicz - "offered the fish-dinners like the meat-dinners: a half of fish they cooked in a kettle adding fresh (green) spices in order to get the taste, Only in that taste they cooked the fish destined for the presentation at the table, therefore they were delicious. Some cooks, exposing their métier, were cooking fish in the meat sauce, and for the carp used at the bottom a piece of bacon, doing it when nobody could see this treachery [it was a double treachery: against the rules of cooking and against the rules of fasting which defended mixing fish and land animal meat - J.T.]. They however arrived to the conclusion that the fish taste, i.e. the extract from the cooked fish, added to fish more tasty than the fish prepared with the use of the meat sauce or bacon"<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> See W. SZCZYGIELSKI, *Zarys dziejów rybactwa śródlądowego w Polsce* (An Outline History of the Inland Fishery in Poland), Warszawa 1967, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> J. KITOWICZ, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta*, cit., III, pp. 229-230.

<sup>27</sup> *Concilia Poloniae*, VIII, Wrocław, 1955, pp. 204-205.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.



