Relics in Exile: A Collection of Armenian Sacred Objects between Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire, 1672–1699

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Abstract

Despite the historians’ growing interest in material culture, collections of sacred objects have largely been overlooked by scholars of religious history and art history alike. While the former tend to reduce church artifacts to their religious function, the latter focus mostly on individual items of singular artistic import. This essay examines a collection of displaced relics from the perspective of their shifting meanings and multiple uses as ritual objects, offerings, gifts, and commodities. Charting the parallel displacements of objects and people during the Polish-Ottoman wars of 1672–1699, I argue that the mutability of the relics shaped the refugees’ attempts to deal with the conflicting social obligations and economic pressures of exile. Drawing on the church inventories and trial records of the Armenian communities in Poland-Lithuania, this essay offers a wider analytical framework with which to approach the problems of migration, displacement, and collective possessions in the early modern world.

Keywords

material culture – exile – refugees – Armenian diaspora – Poland-Lithuania – Ottoman Empire

Introduction

In 1682, the king of Poland-Lithuania, Jan III Sobieski (r. 1674–1696), visited Lviv (Polish Lwów, Latin Leopolis) in the southeast of the Commonwealth to inspect the region’s preparedness for the ongoing war with the Ottoman
Empire. One of the elements of the royal entrance to the city was a welcome address delivered by a community of Armenian refugees from Podolia. This is how the leader of the refugees, Kaspar Butachowicz, described his community’s expulsion in late 1673:

... the frightened barbarians [i.e., the Ottomans] ... attempted to expel us quickly from Kamianets, [and] shortly thereafter we were indeed punished with horrible exile, and were removed to the Macedonian and Thracian Balkans across vast lands and seas with our property and precious pledges lost.¹

According to this brief account, the Armenians were forced to leave their hometown and move to Ottoman Bulgaria, about a thousand kilometers south. After spending several years there, they returned to Poland-Lithuania in the late 1670s.

Of the many other hardships of exile, Butachowicz explicitly mourns only the loss of “property and precious pledges.” Although he does not specify what exactly he means by fortunarum and pignorum, other contemporary sources strongly suggest that these were not only private but also collective possessions, primarily church money and devotional objects.² In fact, as I argue in this article, the displacement of the community posed a constant threat to the distinction between private and public possessions, as church objects were repurposed and commodified on an unprecedented scale. Throughout their odyssey across southeast Europe, the Armenian refugees literally survived on their own offerings and ritual objects, like costly chalices, crucifixes, Gospel manuscripts, and lavish liturgical textiles, which they took with them from Kamianets and later sold or pawned to help the community get through the hardships of displacement. Elaborating on some historical and

¹ Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine, Lviv (thereafter LNB), f. 5, d. 1, MS 1644/l, Kaspra Butachowiczra rozmaitości, f. 101v–101v: perterriti barbari .. prędko nas z Kamieńca exturbare conantur, iakoż defacto wkrótce horrido exilio multamur, y za Balkany Macedonskie y Trackie terra marique maximo cum despendio fortunarum, carorumque pignorum relegamur.

² The Latin word pignus means a pledge or security deposit. As Patrick Geary has suggested, from the early Middle Ages on, the word took on another meaning, namely that of saints’ relics “as guarantees of their continuing interest in the earthly community,” see Patrick Geary, “Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics,” in The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York, 1986), 176. Forced to pawn many of their church possessions, the Armenian refugees might have referred to pignora in both senses as pledges and relics, that is sacred objects rather than actual parts of saints’ bodies.
anthropological studies on material culture, my article shows how emergen-
cies, like mass forced migrations, reveal the great significance of collective
ritual objects in making social ties resilient and adaptable to volatile political
and economic circumstances.3

The main argument of this study is that the state of displacement entailed a
profound change in how individual refugees, both people and objects, related
to their community as a whole. The focal point of this transformation was col-
lective property, namely a collection of church objects whose devotional pur-
pose was increasingly challenged by their economic value. To put it in Arjun
Appadurai’s terms, these artifacts were diverted from their limited ritual use
into a commodity phase of their social life.4 The exile, therefore, was the com-
modity context that rendered these objects exchangeable and alienable. At
a critical moment in exile, the commoditized items provided financial assis-
tance for the overwhelming majority of the Armenian refugees.5 At the same
time, some of the most significant items were put aside for ritual purposes or
pawned to fulfill temporary financial obligations, only to be regained later.6
In the 1680s, when the refugees resettled in Poland-Lithuania, they began
restoring the ecclesiastical collection to its original condition, acquiring new
items and reclaiming those pawned to some members of the community.
Quite paradoxically, the movement of the ecclesiastical objects through the
different phases of their social life in exile left an extensive trail of legal sources
documenting the spatial movement of the refugee community across south-
east Europe.

This article adds to the growing body of scholarship on material culture
and religion in early modern Europe. Social and religious historians have long
relied on sacred objects to get a better grip on religious practices and beliefs.7

3 See Paula Findlen, ed., Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800 (London,
4 Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in The Social Life of
5 For an insightful analysis of charity and relief for the poor in refugee communities, see
Timothy G. Fehler, “Coping with Poverty: Dutch Reformed Exiles in Emden, Germany,” in
Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe: Strategies of Exile, eds. Timothy G. Fehler, Greta
6 Igor Kopytoff has called this process singularization, see Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural
7 For some of the earlier historical studies of sacred objects in medieval Europe see
Patrick J. Geary, Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages (Princeton, 1978),
Stephen D. White, Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western
France, 1050–1150 (Chapel Hill, 1988).
This trend has become much more extensive in recent decades, exerting increasing influence on major debates in the field. Studies of early modern Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism have made use of church and synagogue inventories as well as actual surviving artifacts in order to reconstruct changes and continuities in popular piety. From the relics of saints to ritual textiles and tombstones, sacred objects are considered powerful tools in shaping collective memory and confessional identities. Such an approach to material culture is especially true of Reformation studies, which have highlighted church objects, primarily images and altars, as major sites of confessional struggle between Catholics and Protestants. As a result, the growing interest in the material side of early modern religions enables historians to engage with a more diverse range of sources, shedding light on beliefs and practices overlooked in narrative documents.

In this article, I attempt to expand the notion of sacred objects and their modes of operation by following their movement across political borders and modes of exchange. Instead of the conventional and rather rigid view of sacred objects as *semiophores* whose purpose is always overdetermined by their symbolic meaning, I have adopted a more flexible approach that allows for the shifting meanings and multiple uses of these objects. Drawing on Bruno Latour’s notion of agency, this article treats relics as “full-blown actors” whose complex and mobile life as refugees lay at the heart of collective actions

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9 Krzysztof Pomian’s notion of *semiophore* is based on the rigid dichotomy of meaning and usefulness: “Usefulness and meaning are mutually exclusive, as the more an object is charged with meaning, the less useful it is, and vice versa,” Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, 1999), 30.

and power relations of the Armenian community in exile.\textsuperscript{11} The case of the Armenian refugees, therefore, provides fascinating historical material with which to scrutinize what Nicholas Thomas calls “the promiscuity of objects,” that is, “the mutability of things in recontextualization.”\textsuperscript{12} Under the circumstances of forced migration, silver chalices or crucifixes adorned with gemstones could easily move through a number of different states: offerings, gifts, ritual objects, commodities, and items to be pawned. It is their very mutability that enabled their and their community’s mobility. As Thomas has succinctly put it, artifacts are never insulated from the cultural and social changes they articulate or help initiate.\textsuperscript{13}

I

The story of the Armenian refugees from Podolia began in late August 1672, when the Ottoman army captured the fortress of Kamianets (present-day Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine) and thereby started a series of wars with Poland-Lithuania. The fall of Kamianets took the royal court in Warsaw by surprise, although the Ottomans had been vocal about their intention to capture this strategically located fortress. Kamianets, the most important Polish stronghold on the Ottoman border, was believed to be unconquerable. However, when the besieging forces started bombarding it with their new French artillery, it took them only nine days until the regiment of Kamianets surrendered. On September 2nd Sultan Mehmed IV solemnly entered the town and celebrated the Friday prayer at the former Catholic cathedral, converted into a mosque.\textsuperscript{14}

According to the conditions of surrender, all town dwellers were allowed to leave Kamianets unless they wanted to stay and become subjects of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, \textit{The Ottoman Survey Register of Podolia (ca. 1681) Defer-i Mufassal-i Eyalet-i Kamaniçe} (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 6; on the destructive force of the French artillery used by the Ottomans see Jan Tomasz Józefowicz, \textit{Kronika miasta Lwowa: od roku 1634 do 1690}, trans. M. Piwocki (Lwiv, 1854), 375: “W tedy to zagrzmiały straszliwie z obozu nieprzyjacielskiego śmiertelne działa z Kamieńca przywiezione, kartanami zwane, które do obozu naszego 48 funtowe kule miotały; nadto kule zapalne śmierć w sobie i ogień niosące ustawicznie rzuczano, które do 120 funtów ważyły, aby ludzi zabijały, albo gdyby ciał ludzkich niedosięgły, paszę dla koni zapały lub zarażały, wody zatruwały i powietrze, sroższe nad wojną, do naszego obozu zanosły.”
\end{footnotes}
sultan. Most of the Polish nobles as well as the Catholic clergy and citizens decided to move to the neighboring Ruthenian palatinate. The rest of the population, mostly Ruthenians, Armenians, and Jews, stayed in town. As the Ottomans kept moving into the interior of the Commonwealth, they quickly occupied the rest of Podolia and even laid siege to the Ruthenian capital, Lviv. In October 1672, the Buchach treaty was signed, officially recognizing Ottoman control of Podolia and thereby turning it into the northernmost province of the Empire. The signing of the treaty provoked another wave of emigration from Kamianets, with almost all the Polish nobles and townspeople leaving the town. The nobility of Podolia would soon continue its regional dietine in exile (sejmik in hostico), first in Halych and later in Lviv.

Within this rather tolerant religious framework, Armenian church property was moved long before the community actually left Kamianets. In late 1672, when the main Armenian church of St. Nicholas was turned into a mosque, the devotional objects there were at risk of being desecrated and confiscated. Although conversion did not pose a threat to Armenians or any other Christians living in Kamianets, it did imperil their sacred places and objects. While churches could be and were actually turned into mosques, Christian ritual objects, like crucifixes and chalices, were confiscated and converted in a rather literal sense, that is sold or pawned. To avoid or at least postpone this from happening, a great deal of St. Nicholas’s treasury was probably transferred to a safer place, most likely one of several Armenian churches still functioning in town. Forced out of their home church, these objects became the first refugees of the Armenian community.

15 Stolicki, Egzulanci Podolscy, 15.
16 The siege of Lviv lasted for a few weeks, from late September to mid-October 1672. Since it was rather late in the year for the Ottomans to continue warfare, they decided to end the siege in return for a ransom of 10,000 thalers. As the chronicler Józefowicz mentions, the Armenians of Lviv contributed as much as half the sum by pawning some church objects to get cash in gold and silver, as the Ottomans did not accept “church silver.” For contemporary accounts of the siege see Josephus Bartholomeus Zimorowicz, “Leopolis a Turcis, Tartaris, Cosacis, Moldavis anno 1672 obsessa,” in Josephus Bartholomeus Zimorowicz, Opera quibus Res Gestae Urbis Leopolis Illustrantur, ed. Cornelius Heck (Lviv, 1899), 216–279; Józefowicz, Kronika miasta Lwowa, 310–319.
17 Stolicki, Egzulanci Podolscy, 107–108; see also Akta sejmiku podolskiego in hostico, 1672–1698, ed. Jarosław Stolicki (Kraków, 2002).
18 Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, Ejalet kamieniecki: Podole pod panowaniem tureckim, 1672–1699 (Warsaw, 1994), 188.
19 Jacek Chrząszczewski mentions at least three more Armenian churches in Kamianets in the seventeenth century, namely the chapel of the Annunciation, the churches of the Assumption, of St. Gregory the Illuminator, and of the Holy Cross, see Jacek Chrząszczewski, Kościoły Ormian polskich (Warsaw, 2001), 48–50.
The constant threat of confiscation during the first few years of Ottoman rule was what set the Armenian church objects into motion, and thus paradoxically secured their survival within the community, albeit in different forms. One of the most radical ways to keep the objects circulating within the community was to get rid of their ritual identity altogether. Melting down the church silver achieved this result most effectively, since later accounts of the Armenian church property did not even mention what exactly had been melted down. Instead, they referred to the commodified product of the operation, namely over 95.5 grzywnas (around 19 kg) of gilded silver sold for 525 Dutch lion thalers (talary lewkowe) and 74.5 grzywnas (almost 15 kg) of plain silver (białego srebra, literally white silver) sold for 372.5 thalers. The rest of the melted silver, namely thirteen unidentified items with a total weight of 51.5 grzywnas, was pawned to four wealthy members of the community for 210 thalers. To remain within the community at least in some form, these unspecified church objects had to be melted down and commodified so that the Ottomans did not confiscate and displace them in a more radical manner.

However, commoditization was not always an option in a besieged city with only limited economic activity. Therefore, when it came to the reproduction of church possessions through individual donations, commoditization was actually a major obstacle. A case in point is the will of Armenian elder and merchant Zachariasz Krzysztofowicz Beznosy, who died shortly before the arrival of the Ottomans. He left a significant sum of money to the Armenian clergy, but the conditions of his will made it impossible to fulfill. The sum of 165.5 thalers was supposed to be spent on some merchandise, like leather and cloth, to be later auctioned among local merchants. Only after that, the earned money was to go to the clergy as a donation. Already under Ottoman rule, the executors of Beznosy’s will bought almost two hundred bales of saffian leather, fifty bales of muslin cloth (musulbez) and five carpets (kilim), but they were not able to auction off any of these items. When the community was threatened with expulsion, the merchandise had to be hastily distributed among local Armenians, including several priests, as alms. As a result, the “commodity potential” of these staples of long-distance trade could not be fulfilled, and they were prematurely turned into charity.

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21 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 172v–173r.
The growing convertibility of church possessions anticipated the expulsion of the Armenian community from Kamianets. After the Polish-Lithuanian army defeated the Ottomans at Khotyn (Pol. Chocim) in November 1673, the municipal authorities decided to get rid of most civilians in order to accommodate more soldiers.22 As a result, the overwhelming majority of Armenians and Jews had to resettle in one of the cities in the Ottoman Balkans or in Istanbul. Armenians were given only two days to pack and leave town. Because of the rushed departure, they had to leave most of their church treasures buried (zakopane) in Kamianets.23 The rest of their possessions were given to a number of community leaders for safekeeping (in sequestro) while they were in exile.24 After travelling on carts for about four weeks, the exiles reached the Black Sea coast, probably the Ottoman fortress of Akkerman, where they rented three ships to sail further south.25 Finally, in late 1673, they disembarked in Sozopol in Ottoman Bulgaria, where they would spend the winter and then move on.

For the majority of the refugees, the final destination was Plovdiv, also known as Filibe in Turkish and Philippopolis in Greek. Plovdiv was a major trade and crafts center in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, with a mixed population of Slavs, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Vlachs.26 Smaller groups of refugees either stayed in Sozopol or moved to other places, including Istanbul, Edirne, and Burgas.27 The sacred objects evacuated from Kamianets were mostly split between Plovdiv and Sozopol, where the mayor (woyt) Kuryło Milkiewicz kept part of the sacred objects. His untimely death in late 1674 caused the Armenian elders to compile one of the first inventories of displaced “church equipment” (apparaty kościelne), taken over from the deceased mayor. The inventory contained a great number of precious objects, ranging from forty crowns for images of the Virgin Mary and Child (also known as the Armenian Madonna) to more than sixty items of ritual

22 Kołodziejczyk, Podole pod panowaniem tureckim, 141; Monika Agopsowicz, “O, Kochana Ojczyzno, jako żeś zniszczona!” Ormiańcy wygnani z Kamieńca 1673 roku wobec Polski,” in Polscy Ormianie w drodze do niepodległej Polski, eds. Stanisław Dziedzic and Janusz Paluch (Kraków, 2018), 122–123.
23 Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (BN), Zakład Rękopisów, akc. 12.904, Wygnani Ormiancy Kamieńca Podolskiego w Turcji (1675–1677), s. 3. I thank Dr. Dominika M. Macios for kindly sharing reproductions of this document with me.
24 BN, akc. 12.904, s. 4.
25 Sadok Barącz, Żywoty sławnych Ormian w Polsce (Lviv, 1856), 418.
26 Vartan Grigoryan, Istoriya armyanskikh koloniy Ukrainy i Polsby (Armyanye v Podolii) (Yerevan, 1980), 90.
27 All these cities were mentioned as destinations of charity payments from Beznosy’s bequest to support the Kamianets poor and the priests who moved there, ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 173r.
textiles, including chasubles, humerals, maniples, and antependiums. Each entry listed a short profile of the object, with its material, color, special decorations (if any), and the donor’s name (if known). For example, one crown for the Virgin Mary, donated by Pani Jakubowa, was embroidered on red velvet and decorated with pearls and precious metals. It was specifically mentioned that thirty gilded silver crowns were formerly attached to different images.\textsuperscript{28} Other objects on the list included vestments made of damask and goldwork embroidery (złotogłów), silver monstrances, chalices with patens, and crucifixes.\textsuperscript{29}

Only a small number of these objects were supposed to serve their ritual function. The inventory mentioned two chalices and patens, two crucifixes, two Gospels, two crowns, two chasubles, one altar curtain, one humeral and one altar covering as “being left to give praise to God.” The rest of the church equipment was placed into two bags (węzły), a basket (sepet), and a small box (skarbniczka), each of them sealed and given to two different elders for safekeeping.\textsuperscript{30} Ultimately, they were meant to be commoditized at some point. Another inventory of church objects was compiled in Sozopol shortly after the first one, on February 6, 1675. This time it was called a “list of ornaments from both churches” (Spisek obojga Kościołów Ornamentów), that is, St. Nicholas and the Virgin Mary (most likely, the church of the Assumption), kept in deposito by two elders, Murat Seferowicz and Zachariasz Jakubowicz. The ornaments on the list include rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and small crucifixes made of precious metals and decorated with pearls and gemstones. The basic characteristics of most of the items were briefly mentioned, including the size, material, decorations, and monetary value, ranging from 47 złoty (czerwonych) for a long chain (łańcuch) of 116 large links to 2 złoty for a small golden crucifix.\textsuperscript{31}

The way these objects functioned in the devotional life of the community is not quite clear, but given their classification as ornaments, the jewelry must have decorated church images. In fact, a small category of ornaments was entitled “Pearls for the neck of the Virgin Mary’s image,” referring to the most venerated local relic, namely the Image of the Armenian Madonna (Obraz Matki Boskiej Ormiańskiej) from the church of St. Nicholas in Kamianets.\textsuperscript{32} Unlike almost anything else on the list of the ornaments, these three necklaces did not

\textsuperscript{28} BN, akc. 12.904, s. 5.\textsuperscript{29} BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 5–7.\textsuperscript{30} BN, akc. 12.904, s. 8.\textsuperscript{31} BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 9–12.\textsuperscript{32} The Image of the Armenian Madonna was also in exile, but it was never listed on any of the inventories. On its history see Jacek Chrzawczewski, Kościoły Ormian polskich (Warsaw, 2001), 42–43; Dominika Maria Macios, “Wyposażenie kościoła pw. Św. Mikołaja w Kamieńcu Podolskim – zarys problematyki,” in Ormianie między Wenecją a Lwowem:
have a value listed, which probably meant that they were not yet supposed to be sold.\textsuperscript{33} Some other objects associated with the Armenian Madonna, including two crowns from the first list, were similarly kept from commoditization even in exile, since they were later mentioned on another inventory compiled in Lviv in 1685.\textsuperscript{34} Due to the great significance of the Armenian Madonna, the ornaments decorating her image were treated almost like her personal property, and this special status imposed much tighter restrictions on the community than the rest of the church possessions.\textsuperscript{35} The practice of adorning the Virgin's images with silver and gemstones was most likely based on the Byzantine tradition of metal “performative icons,” to use Bissera V. Pentcheva's term, which Polish Armenians could have learned either from their Eastern Orthodox neighbors in Poland-Lithuania or first-hand in Istanbul during their commercial sojourns in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{36}

The two inventories of church equipment and ornaments show a twofold concern of the newly displaced community. On the one hand, they manifest a concerted effort to keep track of the collective possessions hastily evacuated from Kamianets. Since many of them were left behind, buried in a safe place, the compilation of these inventories was probably a first attempt at actually learning and documenting which objects had ended up in exile. On the other hand, both lists were clearly meant to prepare the evacuated objects for commoditization by highlighting their commodity potential. Brief references to the origins, materials, colors, and decorations of these artifacts were intended to evaluate their monetary value, thereby setting them on the commoditization trajectory. However, these very same characteristics also helped fix these objects' identities in relation to each other and to the community. Quite paradoxically, the mechanism of inventory enabled better control of the collective possessions by the community as well as greater mobility through commoditization.\textsuperscript{37} This “effect of inventory” had even more far-reaching implications in the coming years, when the refugees were forced to sell and pawn most of their church possessions.

\textsuperscript{33} BN, akc. 12.904, s. 10.
\textsuperscript{34} There were three pairs of crowns and an embroidered dress attachable to the Image of the Virgin Mary and Child, ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 44r.
\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Thomas, Entangled Objects, 50.
The refugees began selling parts of the evacuated church property early on, seeking the financial means to get them through the exile. Most of the time, they needed money to send envoys to Istanbul to advocate for the community before the Ottoman authorities. One of the first documented sales was launched on February 25, 1675, shortly after the inventory of church ornaments had been compiled. Four delegates (ablegaty) went to Istanbul to get permission for the entire community to move from Sozopol further west to Yambol (called Ianpol in the community records). The total expenses of the mission amounted to 731 thalers 18 groszy, which must have included both travel costs, fees, and gifts for Ottoman officials. The bulk of this sum, that is 690 thalers, was derived from selling twenty-one okkas (about 25 kg) of church silver, including chalices and crucifixes. The commodity potential of these objects dictated the itinerary itself, taking the delegates to Edirne (called Adrianopol by the refugees), the closest large city that could offer a market big enough to trade such a considerable amount of silver.38 Although the exact outcome of the mission is not entirely clear, the community was allowed to move even further west to Plovdiv, a city much bigger and more vibrant than Yambol.39

The next delegation to Istanbul was dispatched from Plovdiv several months later, in July. This time the agenda was much more extensive, involving issues of trade, tax exemptions, a new church for the community, and a travel permit for some refugees to go to Kamianets and sell the property they had left there. Another portion of church silver was given up for sale to fund this mission. The total of fourteen okkas and 230 drachms of silver included a bishop’s miter (infula, probably from a bishop’s image), a silver monstrance, twenty crowns from different images, eight crucifixes, an old censer (turribularz) and four chalices with three patens. Also, a number of church textiles, namely coverings (kapy), antependiums, maniples, humerals, and chasubles, were meant to be sold in Istanbul. When the delegates returned to Plovdiv in mid-August, they reported “only 217 thalers and 14 groszy” earned from the sale of the silver objects, while the textiles and the silver monstrance had to be pawned to Abro

38 BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 13–14.
39 By the time the Polish Armenian refugees came to Plovdiv, many Ottoman Armenian refugees had settled there, fleeing from Eastern Anatolia (Western Armenia) in the wake of the Celali revolts at the turn of the seventeenth century. As Henry R. Shapiro argues, “the Great Armenian Flight” took on such enormous proportions that it caused a refugee crisis in the northwestern Ottoman province of Rumelia. See Henry R. Shapiro, “The Great Armenian Flight: Migration and Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 67–89.
Çelebi (Czelebi), a prominent Ottoman Armenian merchant, for five hundred thalers. The latter sum resulted from a rather curious combination of pawning and charity donation, as Abro Çelebi originally intended his payment for the pawned objects to go to the needy Armenian refugees (in usum niedostatnych) in Plovdiv. Sometime before his death in late 1675, he decided to redirect the money to his larger charity effort of renovating a church building for the refugees who, in turn, would soon regain their pawned items and sell them.⁴⁰

Eventually, the commoditization of the church objects turned out to be much more consequential than their economic potential had first suggested. Although Abro Çelebi must have been known to the Polish Armenian merchants long before the exile, his five hundred thaler payment for the pawned church valuables launched his family’s sustained support of the displaced community. Later, Matheos Çelebi took on his father’s charity commitments, providing full funding for the first Armenian church in Plovdiv which has been functioning there ever since. The church of St. George itself resulted from another kind of convertibility of sacred objects, as the old Greek church of Agios Georgios (Αγιος Γεωργιος) was renovated and turned into the Armenian church of Surp Kevork (Սուրբ Գեուրգիոս).⁴¹ It served as a temporary refuge for displaced people and objects. However, the very convertibility of the church objects that made this possible posed a continuous threat to the newly acquired stability of the refugee community.

In 1676, the sale of church equipment and ornaments continued at the same pace. By August, the refugees had made more than 1,340 thalers by selling a wide range of objects, including silver crowns (by far the most expensive items on the list), crucifixes with gemstones, silver lanterns, pearl necklaces, and dozens of other smaller items. Part of the sum was spent on other delegations to Istanbul and Edirne, covering the costs of transportation, meals, gifts, and alms for the poor. The bulk of the money, however, around 1,000 thalers, was collected for a rather new purpose, namely for financial assistance to the community. Although some form of relief for the poor was practiced throughout the exile, the growing economic fallout of displacement assumed unprecedented proportions, causing the vast majority of refugees to ask for money from the churchwardens and clergy. The first payments were made already in May 1676, under the rubric “lent to the needy in distress.” Unlike alms, this money was paid in the form of small-sum loans, most likely at no interest.⁴² This practice, therefore, closely resembled the operations of monti di pietà which had grown

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⁴⁰ BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 15–16.
⁴¹ Grigoryan, Istorinya armenianskikh koloniy, 90.
⁴² BN, akc. 12.904, s. 15: potrzebnym w niedostatku ad ra[tio]nem pożyczanych.
more popular in seventeenth-century Poland-Lithuania, particularly among Armenians in Lviv.\footnote{See Bohdan Janusz, “Mons Pius” ormian lwowskich (Lviv, 1928); Renata Król-Mazur, “Kościelne bractwa ormiańskie w Kamieńcu Podolskim w wieku XVIII,” Lehahayer 1 (2010): 103–122.}

Two other sales of church objects were intended solely for funds to help the community (\textit{na pospólstwo, in rem pospolitego [sic]})) for several months. In August 1676, the necessary amount was finally obtained and proportionately distributed among 121 families. Split into four groups, the refugees received four different amounts of money that must have corresponded to their social and economic standing within the community. The largest donations of eighteen thalers each went to a group of twelve men. In other contemporary documents, some of these men were mentioned either as community officials (\textit{officialistowie}) or delegates (\textit{ablegaty, deputowani od żupelnego Pospólstwa}).\footnote{BN, akc. 12.994, ss. 21–24; ZNiO, MS 1732/II, \textit{Protocollum actorum consistorii}, f. 175v.}

However, most elders were not on the list, probably because they did not need the financial assistance. Another three groups of twenty-four, twenty-five, and sixty people received individual donations of twelve, eight, and five thalers respectively. Women comprised more than half of all the recipients in these three groups, around sixty entries out of 109. Most of them were referred to by their husband’s names, sometimes even without mentioning their first names.\footnote{E.g., Stepana Dryngacza żona, Stepan Dryngacz’s wife, or Donigowa z córkami, Donigowicz’s [wife] with daughters, ZNiO, MS 1732/11, \textit{Protocollum actorum consistorii}, f. 174v.}

While this obviously indicates the lower status of women in early modern society, the sheer number of female names on the list also suggests their growing significance in exile. Actually, it might have been a continuation of a broader tendency exemplified by the Armenian women of Lviv, who “completely monopolized” the credit operations of the church brotherhood in the last decade of the seventeenth century.\footnote{Andrzej Karpiński, \textit{Kobieta w mieście polskim w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII wieku} (Warsaw, 1995), 107.}

A detailed account of the community meeting at which the assistance was distributed provides a sobering summary of the refugees’ efforts to grapple with the economic and social hardships of exile. The nature of the sacred objects was at the very heart of the problem. Initially, the clergy and elders resisted the idea of using church funds to provide assistance for the entire community. They gave two major reasons, namely that the church equipment and ornaments were consecrated to God, and also that they had been bequeathed by pious people to support priests and nuns. As it turned out, the one thousand thalers obtained from the sale of church objects were actually
deducted from the five thousand thaler endowment of Armenian nuns who used to run a hospital in Kamianets. A generous donation from the recently deceased elder Beznosy, the endowment must have partly consisted of precious objects functioning as assets that could be commodified anytime there was a need for money. It seems, therefore, that these objects were thought of as having commodity potential from the very moment they were endowed to the church. The real problem, however, was their commoditization in favor of laypeople instead of priests, nuns, and ultimately God, as was intended by the benefactors.

The priests and elders eventually agreed to use the church funds to help the community. After almost two years in exile, most refugees had no stable income, as they could not practice crafts or trade on a regular basis. A few influential merchants involved in long distance transactions must have been able to continue with trade at least in Istanbul, Wallachia, and Transylvania, but the overwhelming majority of the refugees relied on much more localized sources of income, scarcely available in Plovdiv. Only seven days after the general meeting, on August 28, another delegation was dispatched to Istanbul to complain about the deteriorating condition of the community. According to the instructions given to the envoys, the refugees were suffering from the recent outbreak of an epidemic (they claimed that up to two hundred people had died, which must have amounted to roughly half the community in exile), famine, and the hostility of the local population. Quite surprisingly, the Armenian newcomers were now hosted by local Turks, as the Greeks did not want to tolerate them anymore. Finally, attempts to sell private and church possessions left behind in Kamianets were unsuccessful, for a number of reasons. On the whole, the community must have been in extremely poor shape in order to necessitate financial assistance for almost every family.

To make up for the depletion of the endowments of the priests and nuns, the elders had to keep selling church objects. This time, however, they decided to pawn some of the most valuable objects directly to the priests and nuns. The list of pawned objects includes four pairs of crowns that seemed to have been actually taken from church images, including most likely the Armenian Madonna. Given that their donors’ names were also mentioned (the wives of Jakubowicz, Łukaszewicz, and Kirkorowicz), the crowns must have been regarded as important offerings. In other words, the same objects ended up participating in three different exchanges: ritual, offering, and pawning. What is most striking, however, is that none of the three exchanges could be fully

47 BN, akc. 12.904, s. 21–22; ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 173v.
48 BN, akc. 12.904, s. 21; ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 173v.
49 BN, akc. 12.904, s. 24.
realized under the existing circumstances. Although the crowns were displaced from their images and alienated from the church possessions, they could not be sold by their new owners, that is the priests and nuns, without the consent of the elders. At the same time, keeping them within the community was an easy way of respecting them as objects consecrated to God at the will of their donors. As a result, these artifacts ended up in limbo, where they could function simultaneously as potential ritual ornaments, offerings, and pawned items by reconciling and perpetuating the obligations stemming from these different exchanges.

As this last episode demonstrates, the fundamental ambiguity of displaced sacred objects as ritual paraphernalia, offerings, pawned items, and outright commodities was premised on the peculiar spatial and temporal dynamics in which they were entangled. Uprooted from their assigned places in their home churches, these objects could easily oscillate between the poles of ritual and economic exchange, as long as their movement was documented and perceived as temporary, that is, to be compensated for in the future. In other words, the sacred objects could be repurposed inasmuch as they kept operating as categories in the church inventories. The overlapping spatial mobility and social convertibility of the displaced objects seem to be premised on what Michel de Certeau called “a clever utilization of time” as a defining characteristic of tactics. Stemming from the same “absence of a proper locus” lying at the heart of the refugee experience, tactics enables the weak to navigate foreign terrain by seizing momentary opportunities, performing tricks, and taking an order by surprise. The way some Armenian church objects were repurposed in exile perfectly exemplifies the tactic mobility of the refugee community. Due to their entanglement in a web of overlapping religious, social, and economic relations, these objects could sustain the resulting obligations only by suspending them all until a more opportune moment arose.

III

The Armenian refugees must have started planning to return to Poland-Lithuania in late 1676, when political circumstances rendered their resettlement more likely than ever. On October 17, the Zhuravno armistice was concluded,
which would lead to a relatively long seven-year period of peace on the Polish-Ottoman frontier. In January 1677, the refugees sent another delegation to Istanbul to negotiate their possible return with the envoy of Poland-Lithuania Andrzej Modrzewski via his interpreter, Bogdan Spendowski, himself a Polish Armenian. The Armenian delegates were supposed to address the envoy with a brief but evocative speech about their nation’s centuries-long loyalty to the Polish crown, which had only grown stronger during their community’s “Egyptian captivity” in the Ottoman Empire. The actual petition to the envoy, however, contained none of this Old Testament imagery, and dealt exclusively with the material issues that the refugees expected to confront in case of their exodus from Plovdiv. They appealed for an Ottoman allowance for the journey \( (na\ viatik) \) to Poland-Lithuania, as a form of compensation for the Armenian property confiscated in Kamianets. They also asked for those Armenians who had remained in Kamianets to be allowed to leave the town with all their domestic and ecclesiastical paraphernalia \( (supellctili,\ tam\ domestico,\ quam\ et\ ecclesiastico) \) and join the community. Finally, the refugees sought a guarantee that the church of St. George would belong to the local Armenians of Plovdiv in perpetuity. As it happened throughout the exile, the mobility of the refugee community was contingent on the rearrangement of collective property, that is, on easing or tightening ties with church possessions.

The refugees must have left Plovdiv sometime after April 1677, when the last delegation to Edirne was dispatched to sell another portion of church objects for 414 thalers. They seem to have moved north in small groups of several families, travelling via Bucharest in Wallachia and Bistrița in Transylvania. The majority of the refugees must have reached Lviv by October 1677, where they collectively petitioned the local Armenian elders to advocate for their resettlement in the city. Although the newcomers were allowed to stay, their exile was hardly over, as they would not be able to return to Kamianets, still under Ottoman rule, for more than twenty years. Of course, Lviv offered a much more favorable social and economic environment for the refugees to start resuming some semblance of normal, pre-war life. The local Armenian community was the economic and ecclesiastical center of the diaspora in Poland-Lithuania. With anywhere from 73 to 128 families (about 5% of the


\[54\] BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 26–27.

\[55\] BN, akc. 12.904, s. 29.

\[56\] ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 59v.

\[57\] ZNiO, MS 1723/11, Protocollon spraw regiminis et ordinis, f. 76v.
population in the city center) in the second half of the seventeenth century, Armenians in Lviv owned more than a third of the entire city’s wealth.\textsuperscript{58} They also enjoyed extensive self-government and controlled an autonomous ecclesiastical structure with an archbishop at the head, whose authority extended over all Armenians in Poland-Lithuania, Moldavia, and Wallachia.\textsuperscript{59}

More importantly, the refugees could expect to navigate more easily the familiar terrain of Polish Armenian trade networks centered in Lviv, of which pre-war Kamianets was a major hub.

Despite the evident benefits of moving to Lviv, the refugees were slowly and only partially integrated into the local community. Both the displaced people and their sacred objects were caught in the ambiguity of a new situation in which they were neither fully in exile, nor quite at home. To begin with, the legal status of the newcomers was always defined through their former citizenship or residence in Kamianets. Even after some of them had been given city rights, they were still referred to as both former citizens of Kamianets and current citizens of Lviv. More importantly, the refugees themselves did not rush to put down roots in the new city. None of them applied for citizenship until 1684, when the first identifiable repatriate from Plovdiv, Bernard Isaiewicz, became a citizen. Within the next fifteen years, thirteen more Armenians from Kamianets would be granted citizenship.\textsuperscript{60} Similarly, the church possessions seemed to continue functioning in exile mode, that is, they were significantly depleted and dispersed during the first several years after the resettlement. The earliest reference to their presence in the city appeared in the will of the Armenian archbishop Mikołaj Torosowicz, dating from October 1681. Referring to the “Kamianets affair,” Torosowicz renounced any claims on the church goods and the money retained by some refugees, while the Image of the Armenian Madonna from Kamianets was kept in an Armenian church, most likely the cathedral, in Lviv.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{58} Myron Kapral, \textit{Natsionalni hromady Lvova XVI–XVIII st.} (Lviv, 2003), 271.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Album civium Leopoliensium: Rejestry przyjęć do prawa miejskiego we Lwowie, 1388–1783}, vol. 1, ed. Andrzej Janeczek (Poznań-Warsaw, 2005), 328.
\textsuperscript{61} LNB, f. 5, op. 1, MS 1657/11, \textit{Munimenta in rem kościoła katedralnego lwowskiego ormiańskiego}, f. 30r: “w sprawie Kamienieckiey, ponieważ znajduję się takowi między kamieńczany (sic), którzy Dobra kościele, Legata Testamentalia, Skrzynki Brackie przy sobie trzymają, do których się ia nie interesowałem, ponieważ Obraz Panny Naswiętszej nazwany Kamieniecki w Kościele Lwowskim Ormiaskim zasie, aby czasu swego Takowe Dobra reponowali.”
Around the same time that the refugee leaders started applying for citizenship, the church objects and funds were also being accommodated in this new situation, a prolonged transition from exile to home. They were gradually reassembled into a more or less coherent collection stored at the Armenian cathedral of Lviv and supervised by a rather unusual coalition of new community leaders and ecclesiastical authorities. Although the intention was only to restore the church treasury to its initial, pre-war condition, the very logistics of reclaiming loans and pawned objects in Lviv entailed a number of major rearrangements within the community. The leadership seemed to shift away from the council of elders to the merchants’ brotherhood of St. Michael, which was granted extensive rights to regain church possessions and place them under shared church-lay supervision. The fact that this shift did not happen earlier in exile suggests that it might have been prompted by the increasingly Catholicized Armenian clergy of Lviv in order to promote church brotherhoods as a more easily controlled form of lay spirituality and public life.62

This change involved another important innovation, namely the rise of ecclesiastical control over public affairs, for centuries dominated by lay Armenian elites, especially in Kamianets. The elders seemed reluctant to agree on the expansion of church jurisdiction, while the brotherhood eagerly cooperated with the Armenian archbishops to litigate the overdue loans and pawned objects in the ecclesiastical court.

In October 1685, the brotherhood of St. Michael launched its first legal action against a number of borrowers from Kamianets who ended up resettling in Ivano-Frankivsk, formerly known as Stanisławów, eighty miles southeast of Lviv. Although the money at stake was corporate rather than public or ecclesiastical, the acting Armenian archbishop, Deodat Nersesowicz, got involved in the litigation, setting a trend for the next several years. Recognizing the brotherhood’s rights to reclaim the loans, Nersesowicz himself was to go to Ivano-Frankivsk with one of his priests and negotiate with the borrowers on behalf of the merchants.63 The archbishop’s authority would greatly help the brotherhood’s cause while challenging the extensive privileges of the lay Armenian elites. However, the refugee leaders had little choice but to seek ecclesiastical approval and support in order to retain some control of the dispersed community. Archbishop Nersesowicz, on the other hand, must have seen this situation as an opportunity for the traditionally weak Armenian clergy to increase its

62 On the role of church brotherhoods in early modern Catholicism see Nicholas Terpstra, ed., The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy (New York, 2000).

63 ZNiO, MS 1732/II, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 24r.
standing in the diaspora. One of the first graduates of the Armenian Pontifical College in Lviv, he was a product of Catholic missionaries sent by Rome to ensure the Polish Armenians’ compliance with post-Tridentine Catholicism.64 His direct engagement in the refugees’ public affairs was most likely informed by the clerical ideals of the Counter-Reformation.65

The displaced church possessions ended up at the heart of this unexpected alliance between the Catholic Armenian archbishops and the Armenian community of Kamianets, once the most resistant to Catholic reforms. In November 1686, the same brotherhood of St. Michael took charge of the long process of reassembling dispersed church funds and objects. This time, the new archbishop Vartan Hunanian, who had just returned from Armenia, appointed four custodians, two clerics, and two laymen from the brotherhood to oversee the church possessions brought from Kamianets. One of the lay custodians, Kaspar Butachowicz, was granted “full authority” (*plenariam facultatem*) to claim any ecclesiastical goods “from people of both sexes and of any status” in any legal way, but primarily by litigating in the church court. All the recuperated money and objects were to be stored in the cathedral treasury, referred to as the archive (*archivo*).66 According to the new inventory, the collective possessions of the refugees included objects saved from commoditization and put aside for ritual purposes back in Plovdiv, as well as a sizeable number of new articles acquired recently in Lviv. Quite symptomatically, the latter were mostly ornaments that decorated the Image of the Armenian Madonna, such as a silver dress, nine silver plates, two pearl necklaces, two earrings, a belt of gilded silver, several lamps, antependiums, and a curtain.67 The fact that the image decorations were prioritized over other sacred objects indicates that the Armenian Madonna was probably perceived by the refugees as the true locus of their collective identity within the broader religious space of the host Armenian community of Lviv.

The inventory clearly reflects the refugees’ sustained effort to restore the church collection to its original condition. Needless to say, commoditization was an integral part of this process, as the objects first had to be turned into commodities in order to rejoin the church possessions and become sacred

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64 Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide (ASPF), Rome, SOCG, Asia 4, vol. 224 Armeni di Polonia, pt. 1, f. 196r.

65 The Theatines who ran the Pontifical College in Lviv were among the most ardent proponents of clerical reform in early modern Catholicism, see Simon Ditchfield, Liturgy, Sanctity, and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular (Cambridge, 1995), 5–6.

66ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 46v–47r.

67 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 44v–45r.
Even when some of the surviving objects were regarded as too significant to be sold, they were saved by the commoditization of other, less significant items. For example, a large string of pearls from one of the Madonna’s crowns, a chalice, and a small crucifix were sold in order to recover the chalice and another crown of purple atlas silk pawned to the priests and nuns in November 1676 in Plovdiv. The inventory does not mention explicitly why these two items had to be saved at the cost of three others, but unlike the latter, the chalice and the crown were closely associated with their donors, Pani Seferowa Pirumiczowa and Pani Łukaszewiczowa respectively, both probably wives of prominent merchants and community leaders. The two objects, therefore, giving a tangible expression to the special relationship between donor families and the community, had a strong, singular significance that overrode their systemic character as both sacred artifacts and commodities. Though objects like these were not insulated from being pawned and therefore partly commodified, it was their composite mode of operation as church objects, economic goods, and private donations that kept them from a more radical form of displacement.

Some pawned objects, however, were inevitably difficult to keep track of, let alone retrieve, after they had been dispersed and displaced for such a long time. From 1686 to 1690, the brotherhood of St. Michael initiated a number of ecclesiastical proceedings to reclaim such objects. The most revealing was the case against Augustyn (Axent) Milkiewicz, who was charged on account of two golden necklaces (torques, łańcuszki) pawned for 100 thalers “for the needs of the church.” Although the exchange was said to have happened in Kamianets before the exile, it must have been essentially the same kind of commoditization practiced by the refugees in the Ottoman Empire, when church objects were sold or pawned to compensate for cash shortages. The recently appointed custodian, Butachowicz, represented the brotherhood and by extension the entire refugee community, and accused Milkiewicz of withholding the necklaces. A member of the merchants’ brotherhood himself, Milkiewicz began his defense with a calculated attack against the unusually close cooperation between the brotherhood and the church. First, he questioned the authority of the ecclesiastical court even to hear this case, arguing that only the brotherhood of St. Michael with its “ancient royal privileges” could judge disputes over

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69 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, *Protocollum actorum consistorii*, f. 45r.
71 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, *Protocollum actorum consistorii*, f. 47v.
church possessions from Kamianets. His argument was quite valid and must have elicited the tacit approval of the wider Armenian community, whose lay leaders had controlled church funds and treasures for generations through the office of eretspohan (from the Armenian երէցփոխան for a vice officer or deputy priest) with little, if any, clerical oversight. This was exactly the case for all transactions involving church property in exile through the mid-1680s. St. Michael’s brotherhood was not even mentioned, as all decisions about selling or pawning were made by the council of elders, including eretspohans and priests, though the latter seemed to have a very limited say. The conspicuous absence of the brotherhood during the exile in the Ottoman Empire suggests that its extensive authority over all church possessions may have been retrospectively determined in Lviv, under the influence of the Catholic archbishops.

Unsurprised by Miłkiewicz’s argument, Archbishop Hunanian seized the opportunity to assert his ecclesiastical authority over traditionally lay-dominated matters. In his response, the archbishop stated that “according to the sacred canons and decrees of the church synods, claiming even the smallest [amount of] ecclesiastical possessions belongs only to the spiritual court.” Although this might have sounded a little too radical to Butachowicz and other lay members of the Armenian elites, they had to go along with Archbishop Hunanian in order to get their collective property back from people whom they could not control in exile as easily as they did at home. When Miłkiewicz tried to turn the archbishop’s response against Butachowicz, claiming that as a layman he should have no authority over church objects, his objection elicited another statement of growing ecclesiastical ambitions. The archbishop responded that as a secular custodian, Butachowicz was supposed to pass all retrieved objects over to the public “archive” of the Armenian cathedral, in the shared custody of priest Onophry Asłanowicz and Hunanian himself. In other words, the clergy and the archbishop in particular assumed real control of the collective property, at least until the liberation of Kamianets. The role of the lay custodians was only to bring the church possessions into the hands of the clergy. As this initial confrontation between Miłkiewicz and Butachowicz clearly demonstrates, the refugees and their lay leaders had to sacrifice a great

72 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 48r.
74 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 48v: “Quoniam vel minimarum Rerum Ecclesiasticarum vindicatio, ex vi sacrorum canonum, Constitutionumne Synodalium dispositionum, mere Foro Spirituali competat.”
75 ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 51r–51v.
deal of their authority in order to keep the disintegrating community of people and objects together.

The dispute continues with a number of exciting, albeit brief testimonies of refugees, who had supposedly, at some point in the past several years, seen or heard of the golden necklaces held by Miłkiewicz. The necklaces must have been relatively recognizable, because all nine witnesses claim to have come across them or at least something that resembled them. The first golden necklace, also known as Pirumiczowski (a donation from Anna Pirumowiczowa), was identified as having a ruby rose. The other one, called Haftarkowski (probably a gift of a certain Haftar), had one hundred and ten links, some of which were tangled (contortos).76 The ruby rose and the tangled links seem to be the main identifiable characteristics of the necklaces. Nevertheless, no one was sure if the necklaces they had seen or heard of were those for which Miłkiewicz was tried. Most witnesses claimed that the lost pawned items might have been kept by David Miłkiewicz, probably one of Augustyn's relatives, who had remained all this time in Kamianets. He was believed to have given one of the necklaces for the release of an Armenian from Ottoman captivity, while the other one was apparently worn by his daughter at her wedding.77 Another witness, however, said that those were actually different items, never pawned to Augustyn Miłkiewicz.78 The testimonies, therefore, sowed even more confusion than there was at the beginning of the trial. Due to the lack of solid evidence of his guilt, Miłkiewicz was acquitted.79

The two golden necklaces seemed to have been lost in the transition from home to exile. They may never have left Kamianets, as most witnesses suggested, but they were no less displaced than the rest of the Armenian artifacts commodified in the Ottoman Empire or resettled in Lviv. As an integral part of the refugee community, the objects also shared the experience of social instability that imperiled their identity, while also making them more mobile and easily convertible. The case of the two gold necklaces also exposes the fragility of the displaced objects whose motion (or its absence) had been overlooked by the community. Throughout the exile, the refugees kept detailed accounts of their possessions, compiling inventories and registering all transactions involving church objects. Since all the original records seemed to have been written in Armeno-Kipchak (a Tatar dialect transcribed in Armenian characters), increasingly abandoned by most Polish Armenians at the time, the refugees

76 ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 53r, 73r.
77 ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 52v, 55r.
78 ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, ff. 70r–70v.
79 ZNiO, ms 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistorii, f. 73r.
had to translate their account books into Polish.\textsuperscript{80} The main purpose of these translations was to facilitate possible litigation at the ecclesiastical court in Lviv, which had already switched to Polish and Latin. In fact, the disputes over church objects involved yet another translation of some of these documents into Latin, as their evidence was summarized and weighed up by the court. In other words, the translation of the church objects from exile to temporary refuge in Lviv was contingent upon the translations of their documentary traces from Armeno-Kipchak to Polish and Latin. The two movements went together, bringing the refugees into unexpectedly close cooperation with the new Catholic hierarchy of the Armenian church. The mobility and convertibility of the sacred objects, therefore, resulted in the mobility and susceptibility of the refugee community to the confessional and linguistic influences of the wider Armenian diaspora of Poland-Lithuania.\textsuperscript{81}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Armenian refugees were able to return to their hometown in mid-1699, when the Ottoman Empire passed Kamianets back to Poland-Lithuania.\textsuperscript{82} This return finally put an end to more than twenty-five years of displacement, which took the Armenian community across southeast Europe in a number of shifting contexts. “Until Kamianets is liberated from the Turks” was the temporal horizon of all major operations conducted by the refugees in exile.\textsuperscript{83} It is no coincidence that almost every time this formula was invoked, it referred to the changing legal and social status of the displaced church objects. Commoditization was certainly the greatest threat to the stability of the church treasury, but this danger was far from unexpected or unrestrained.

\textsuperscript{80} Sometime between late 1677 and early 1683, a certified translation of the inventories and receipts was made by Grzegorz Milkiewicz, a brother of Augustyn and former mayor of the community, BN, akc. 12.904, ss. 3–4.


\textsuperscript{82} On the long process of rebuilding Armenian churches in the post-Ottoman period see Renata Król-Mazur, Miasto Trzech Nacji: Studia z dziejów Kamieńca Podolskiego w XVIII wieku (Kraków, 2008), 352–354.

\textsuperscript{83} ZNiO, MS 1732/11, Protocollum actorum consistiorii, f. 47r: “Quoadusque Camenecia, suffragante Ope Diuina, a Turcis eliberata fuerit.”
As I have shown in this article, many sacred objects were actually meant to be sold sooner or later to raise money for priests, nuns, and the charitable institutions they ran. Therefore, the elders must have been prepared to manipulate and improvise with already established patterns of commoditization in order to deal with the new conditions of life in exile. Whenever there was a need to deal with the many challenges of displacement, it was the devotional objects and money from the church treasury that made collective action possible, funding the community’s resettlements and providing financial assistance to refugees in need. Therefore, the mobility and mutability of the objects was the sine qua non of the community’s mobility and survival.

The convertibility of the sacred objects, however, entailed some continuity of their identity, at least in the community to which they belonged. To be able to change their significance and mode of operation, the objects had to have a minimum of shared qualities that could be relinquished in exchange for other qualities, mostly of economic character. One such unifying characteristic was their attachment to each other as parts of the same collection of church equipment and ornaments. After the expulsion from Kamianets, the collection was divided and rearranged into a number of small portable assemblages entrusted to several members of the community for safekeeping and transportation. Along the way, the collection was increasingly depleted via commoditization and dispersed among a wider number of people through pawning and loans. Nevertheless, the rigorous documentation of the church possessions and their movements enabled the survival of the collection in inventory form. Despite the mutability of individual items, their totality was preserved through practices of documentation that perpetuated each object’s existence as an entry on the lists of church equipment and ornaments. Though obviously only a fraction of the dispersed items could be recovered, the legal obligations and social links that they helped forge are secured by the inventories, their translations, and tactic incorporation in court records.84

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my two anonymous reviewers, as well as Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Lydia Barnett, Ed Muir, Michelle Molina and Dominika M. Macios for their comments and suggestions.