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Astrology—Emblematics—Heraldry: On Comets, Moons and Stars in the Book of Arms by Szymon Okolski*

Abstract

The paper examines the presence of astrology in the heraldic work *Orbis Polonus* by Szymon Okolski dating from the mid-1600s. While due to a growing fascination with Neoplatonism and hermetic writings, astrology had enjoyed popularity since the Renaissance, in Okolski's case its influence came mostly through early-modern books of emblems and compendia of symbols. It is, therefore, important not only to track down astrological motifs in the works of Alciatus, Cesare Ripa, Giulio Cesare Capaccio, Julius Wilhelm Zinzgref, and Diego de Saavedra to compare them with those found in *Orbis Polonus*, but also to recognise the fact that emblematics had a great impact on how Okolski perceived the import of his heraldic work as such.

The novelty of Okolski's project consisted in treating armorial bearings as universal symbols and interpreting them not only in accordance with the rules of heraldry, but also through a wide range of cultural sources, trends, and traditions. In

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order to make the symbolic significance hidden in coats of arms more apparent, the author tried to organise the heraldic entries in a new way. Apart from the usual parts describing the coat of arms (*delineatio*), its origins (*origo*) and the family that used it (*linea familiae*), he introduced subchapters dealing with its symbolic meaning. He called them “considerations”, “precautions”, or “omens” depending on which aspect of the symbolic explanation he wanted to emphasise. Especially the third of these dovetails with astrology because the symbolism of the coat of arms, including motifs derived from, or related to, astrology, is presented as the best path that should be taken by a family bearing a particular coat of arms. All the while, however, these auguries are made based on symbols as such and not on careful observation of stars, planets or comets, and Okolski was not concerned with the destiny of individual people but with more general tendencies that affected the virtue of noble families, and virtue is for Okolski the foundation of nobility.

Keywords: heraldry, book of arms, neo-Latin literature, astrology, emblematics, symbol

Saturnus in duodecima domo infortunatus, signat, quod litigabunt homines et habebunt multas inimicitias, odia et damna litibus [Saturn in the twelfth house brings misfortune, means that people will argue and experience a lot of hostility, aversion, and loss through quarrels]. This sentence was attributed to Haly Abenragel (Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, born Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Abī l-Rijāl), an Arab astrologer who lived at the turn of the eleventh century, whose compilation work *De iudiciis astrorum*, translated into Latin, was very popular in modern Europe. The question is: what does the cited sentence about Saturn’s fatal influence in the twelfth house do in a Polish (though written in Latin) book of arms from the middle of the seventeenth century, and next to the *Drogomir* coat of arms, which depicts three silver legs in armour with spurs in a red field?¹

It seems obvious that when considering this issue we should refer to the vivid interest that astrology and other occult sciences (with alchemy, magic, and necromancy at the forefront) aroused in the

¹ S. Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. 1, Cracow 1641, p. 173.

Renaissance, and which coexisted with fascination with Neoplatonism and hermetic writings.² People eager to study the mysteries written in the stars lived also in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The secrets of astrology were taught at the University of Cracow, which was the only university in fifteenth-century Europe to have a separate chair of astronomy and astrology. This discipline of knowledge and the scholars who practiced it enjoyed great recognition also in the next century, thanks, among other things, to the special favour shown to them by Sigismund II Augustus.³

The most important factor that brought about the presence of astrological maxims in the work in question was modern armorials and emblematic books. It was these works that most significantly influenced Szymon Okolski's understanding of the nature of symbol and its communicative function, and thus they constitute the context without which a comprehensive reading of his work is impossible. The links between heraldry and astrology should not be surprising, if only because of the presence of celestial bodies depicted in a large group of ancestral signs. Emblems depicting the sun, moons or stars often appeared on the cards of European armorials of the modern era. Systematic books of arms or compendia arranged according to

² In this paper, there is neither a place nor a need to dwell on these issues because there is a rich literature on the subject. See e.g: B. P. Copenhaver, "Astrology and Magic", in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Ch. B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, and E. Kessler, Cambridge 1988, pp. 264–300; S. Vanden Broecke, *Limits of Influence: Pico, Louvain, and the Crisis of Renaissance Astrology*, Leiden 2003; *A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance*, ed. B. Doole, Leiden 2014; W. Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns*, Berkeley 1973; *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C*, 41 (2010), issue 2: *Stars, Spirits, Signs: Towards a History of Astrology 1100–1800*, eds. R. Ralley and L. Kassell; L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vols 4–8, New York 1953–1958; E. Garin, *Zodiak życia. Astrologia w okresie Renesansu*, transl. W. Jekiel, Warsaw 1992.

³ See R. Bugaj, *Nauki tajemne w dawnej Polsce – Mistrz Twardowski*, Wrocław 1986, pp. 99–111. See also: T. Doktor, *Spotkania z astrologią*, Warsaw 1987, pp. 64–65; J. Kuchta, *Nauki tajemne w Polsce w XV i XVI wieku*, Lviv 1928, p. 12–13. See also: A. Birkenmajer, *Astrologia krakowska u szczytu swego rozgłosu*, [Cracow 1837].

heraldic figures and charges, such as *Tesseræ gentilitiæ* by Silvester Petra Sancta (1638), *Le Roy d'armes* by Marc-Gilbert de Varennes (1635) or *Insignium theoria*, the second part of Philipp Jakob Spener's *Opus heraldicum* (1690), wrote separate extensive subsections on them.⁴ Comets appeared rather sporadically in coats of arms, as they were considered to be—as Petra Sancta confirmed, paraphrasing Tibullus (2,5,71) and Lucan (I.529)—*belli mala signa et mutantés regna* [bad signs heralding war and change of power]. Therefore, he showed only two emblems with comets.⁵ Equally rare were coats of arms depicting a zodiac sign. John Guillim, an English heraldist, noted two emblems that depict fragments of the zodiac (the first one showing the Sagittarius, Scorpio, and Libra, another one showing the Gemini, Taurus, and Aries) and yet another one depicting the Sagittarius. It is worth noting that the latter is very similar to the Hippocentaur, popular in Polish heraldry, although not associated with any sign of the zodiac.⁶ Incidentally, it should be mentioned that zodiac signs were also used in state heraldry in the nineteenth century. Therefore, in the form of symbols, they appear in the coat of arms of Ecuador since 1830 and one of the emblems of Iran symbolically depicts the Sun in the sign of the Leo since 1846.

The presence of celestial bodies in the emblems of rulers and nobility obviously provoked questions about their meaning. The authors of modern symbolographic compendia were very spirited in establishing these meanings. The creators of rolls of arms also helped them in this process. Their inspirations included astrology, astrologers, and the zodiac itself. Alciatus published the text *In astrologos* (*On Astrologers*) in his *Emblem Book*, which is a translation from *Greek Anthology* (16, 107). It is accompanied by an appropriate drawing that

⁴ S. Pietrasanta, *Tesseræ gentilitiæ*, Rome 1638, pp. 444–466; M. G. de Varennes, *Le Roy d'armes ou l'art de bien former, charger, briser, timbrer, parer, expliquer, et blasonner les armoiries . . .*, Paris 1635, pp. 54–68; Ph. J. Spener, *Insignium theoria seu Operis heraldici pars generalis*, Frankfurt am Main 1717, pp. 268–273.

⁵ Pietrasanta, *Tesseræ gentilitiæ*, p. 467.

⁶ J. Guillim, *A Display of Heraldry*, London 1611, pp. 200–201.

depicts, depending on the edition, a man dressed in a toga, staring at the starlit sky or the fall of Icarus.⁷ The text of the epigram warned astrologers not to predict the future.

Cesare Ripa proposed as many as three different representations of Astrology.⁸ They were always women in blue dresses but they had different attributes. One Astrology had a star crown on her head, wings on her back, a sceptre in her right hand, and an orb in her left hand; she was accompanied by an eagle. Another one had an astrolabe, a book full of stars and astronomical figures, a quadrant and other instruments typical of astrology. The last one held a compass in the right hand and a blue globe in the left.⁹ Of course, *Iconology* is full of images containing stars, moons, zodiacs, and suns, and even instruments used to study them, such as astrolabe or *radius latinus*. They were used mainly to portray or represent notions and mythological figures connected with science (*Astronomy*, *Cosmography*, *Hydrography*, *Horography*, *Urania*), natural phenomena, or domains dependent on them (*Equinottio della primavera* [Spring]; *Equinottio dell'autunno* [Autum]; *Solstitio estivo* [Summer solstice]; *Solstitio hemale* [Winter solstice]; *Agricoltura* [Agriculture], etc.), and facultatively notions related to time (*Eternita* [Eternity]; *Tempo* [Time]). One of the most interesting concepts that Ripa considered worth visualizing is *Congiuntione delle cose humane e divine* [Divine and humane things in conjunction].¹⁰ The figure that represents it, however, does not depict an astrologer drawing a horoscope, but a star in the sky with a hanging chain the end of which is held by a kneeling man.¹¹

⁷ See e.g. A. Alciati, *Emblematum liber*, Augsburg 1531, f. C₇r and A. Alciati, *Emblematum libellus*, Paris 1534, p. 57.

⁸ See e.g. C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, Padua 1625, p. 54.

⁹ It does not exhaust the issue of imaging astrology, astrologers themselves and the concepts related to this discipline in the visual arts; see more on this subject: M. Battistini, *Astrologia, magia, alchemia*, transl. E. Morka, Warsaw 2006 (Leksykon), pp. 10–129.

¹⁰ Titles as in C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, or *Moral Emblems*, illustrated by Isaac Fuller, published by Pierce Tempest, London 1709.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Giulio Cesare Capaccio, using numerous examples, showed that the sun, moon and stars were an excellent material for *imprese* connected with certain persons.¹² Giovanni Ferro added models of using comets and zodiac signs for this purpose.¹³ The great number of all celestial bodies was included by Jacobus Typotius in *Symbola divina et humana*. Although the reader had to conduct a significant search to find them because the collection was arranged according to the dignity of the people with whom the symbols were associated, even a cursory review of the material contained in the *Symbols* shows the great popularity of emblems containing references to celestial bodies, not only those which were the subject of astrological research. Apart from signs depicting models of celestial spheres, figures of the whole zodiac or its individual constellations, eclipses of the sun, and comets—the book contains, among others, the symbol of Charles Borromeo, also described by Capaccio, that is the sky with the Milky Way and the note *Monstrat iter* [Indicates the way].¹⁴

The most obvious links with astrology are to be found in one of the emblems of Cosimo de' Medici. It depicts a Capricorn holding a globe and an oar between the front hooves, with a horn of plenty on its back. The whole thing is complemented by a lemma: *Fidem fati virtute sequemur* [With the help of virtue, I will follow my destination with confidence]. This sign was directly connected not only with the horoscope of Cosimo de' Medici, but also those of Octavian Augustus (the emblem itself was fashioned after his coin) and Emperor Charles V.¹⁵ Besides, the question of determining the Roman horoscope of Caesar and the place occupied by the Capricorn in it was still valid in modern times

¹² G. C. Capaccio, *Delle imprese trattato*, vol. 1, Naples 1592, ff. 21–25.

¹³ G. Ferro, *Teatro d'imprese*, vol. 1, Venice 1623, pp. 239–240 and vol. 2, pp. 725–727.

¹⁴ J. Typotius, *Symbola divina et humana pontificum, imperatorum, regum . . . ex museo Octavii de Strada . . .*, vol. 2, Prague 1602, f. 49; see Capaccio, *Delle imprese trattato*, vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁵ Typotius, *Symbola divina*, vol. 3, p. 44; see also S. Pietrasanta, *De symbolis heroicis libri IX*, Antwerp 1634, pp. 227–229.

and aroused much interest. At Rudolf II's request, even Johannes Kepler undertook to investigate and solve the puzzle, but without a satisfactory result.¹⁶

The exploitation of the benefits of astrology by authors who used emblems to illustrate political and ethical considerations may have been equally important for the works that discussed the issues of the essence of nobility and the role of the hereditary nobility. Thus, Szymon Okolski's *Orbis Polonus* contains references to, among others, the hundred ethical-political emblems of Julius Wilhelm Zingref. It does not draw directly from astrology, but even here we will find images that allow interpretation in this spirit. Special attention should be paid to emblem 38, which depicts the Sun in the zodiac dominating over the Earth with the lemma *Radiis tamen omnia lustrat* [It brightens everything with its beams], emblem 41, which depicts the globe between the Sun and the Moon and which is completed with the motto *Acceptum communicat orbi* [Shares with the world what it has received], and emblem 72, which depicts the eclipse of the Sun with the note *Cuncta refundit* [Returns everything].¹⁷

Astrology as a discipline that—even if not trustworthy in all aspects, allows a better understanding of the links between man and the cosmos created by God—was defended in the very popular collection of Diego de Saavedra Fajardo *Idea de un príncipe políticocristiano representada en cien empresas*, also known as *Empresas políticas* (Munich 1640), which was soon translated into Latin (which was important for its later reception in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth).¹⁸

¹⁶ See T. Barton, "Augustus and Capricorn: Astrological Polyvalency and Imperial Rhetoric," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), pp. 33–51.

¹⁷ J. W. Zingref, *Emblematum ethicopoliticorum centuria*, [Frankfurt am Main] 1619, ff. K₂r, L₁v, S₄v.

¹⁸ D. de Saavedra Fajardo, *Symbola christianopolitica. Idea principis christianopolitici centum symbolis expressa*, Brussels 1649. Although the author of these words did not find any direct reference to Saavedra's work in Okolski's book of arms, a certain similarity between the two texts can be discerned, which was pointed out by Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska ("Orbis Polonus Szymona Okolskiego jako świadectwo

Saavedra believed that astrology, like history, should be used as a tool for governance based on harmony and compliance with nature and the divine law. It was not about belief in individual prophecies made for individual people, but about the faith in the influence of stars on events and human nature (although it is only one of several factors that influence the fate of the world).¹⁹

Apparently, emblematic compendia were not without significance for the way in which the modern heraldic literature created on the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was shaped. No wonder that also Polish armorial creators noticed and used the affinities of astrology and heraldry. In poem devoted to the Sas coat of arms published in the *Gniazdo cnoty* [Nest of Virtues] (1578) Bartosz Paprocki discussed this heraldic device, which depicts “Half Moon, two stars at its corners, an arrow in the centre, in the red field” and tried to exploit the potential of incorporating the art of reading stars not so much into the art of reading coats of arms as for typically panegyric purposes:

As the bright moon brings us these advantages,
Which all the astrologers mention,
So the offspring that wears this crest
Brings us an advantage and fame of no lesser value.
Remember the Daniłowic, Tarnawski, Zawisza families,
About whom various chronicles write:
You say that their deeds, from which Poland benefited in need,
shine brighter than stars in the sky.²⁰

The above text is only a timid attempt to use astrology in building a sophisticated (though not exaggerated) comparison that increases

kultury literackiej XVII wieku”, in *Staropolskie kompendia wiedzy*, ed. I. Dacka-Górzyńska and J. Partyka, Warsaw 2009, p. 161).

¹⁹ See A. A. Alves, “Complicated Cosmos: Astrology and Anti-Machiavellianism in Saavedra’s *Empresas Politicas*”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), no. 1, pp. 67–84.

²⁰ B. Paprocki, *Gniazdo cnoty*, Cracow 1578, pp. 1108–1109.

the merits of the families that use the Sas seal. The possibilities offered by astrology in the field of heraldry were used more often and to a greater extent by Szymon Okolski.

The first 150 pages of *Orbis Polonus* are particularly noteworthy. It was where the formula for the coat-of-arms entry was shaped, tried and then established as applicable to all the subsequent parts of the armorial. Okolski clearly experimented both with regard to the content he wanted to present and to the form of his book of arms. The function he had set for his book was also different from previous practice.

It should be stressed that the shape of heraldic writing at the time when *Orbis Polonus* was printed was still quite undefined. Neither Długosz's *Klejnoty* [Crests] and their copies, nor fragments of Rej's *Zwierzyniec* [Bestiarium] (1562), nor minor works such as Jan Szcześniey Herburt's *Nauka Dobromilska* [The teaching of Dobromił] (1613),²¹ nor armorials by Joachim Bielski (1597), created on the margins of *Kronika polska* [The Polish Chronicle], gave a clear answer as to what a book of arms should look like. The works of the most important Polish heraldist of the sixteenth century, Paprocki, who in *Panosza* (1575), *Gniazdo cnoty* and *Herby rycerstwa polskiego* [Coats of Arms of the Polish Knighthood] (1584) proposed as many as three completely different models for the book of arms,²² were not of much help either. If we take into account Silvester Petra Sancta's *Tesserae gentilitiae* (known to Okolski), an example of a heraldic compendium arranged according to ordinaries and charges that Polish literature did not have at that time, it becomes clear that it was only natural to look for one's own way, or rather for ways, in the multitude of possibilities.

²¹ On the subject of actual authorship of *Nauka Dobromilska* signed with the name of Jan Lew Herburt, see: S. Cynarski, "Herburt Jan Szcześniey", in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 9, Wrocław 1960–1961, p. 444.

²² See J. Szymański, "Wstęp", in J. Szymański, *Herbarz rycerstwa polskiego z XVI wieku*, Warsaw 2001, pp. X–XII and A. Tułowicka, *Słowo i obraz w heraldyce. Herbarze a quasi-herbarze. Wokół konstrukcji genologicznych Bartosza Paprockiego*, Cra-cow 2011, pp. 49–119.

The phenomenon of Okolski's work is, in short, an attempt at the broadest possible interpretation of the heraldic device, understood as a universal symbol, for which it was equally appropriate to be interpreted in accordance with the art of heraldry, as well as through the prism of mediaeval or ancient tradition, be it pagan, Hebrew or Christian, and finally the latest trends, and using all available texts, whether poetic, philosophical, theological, historical, or natural, as well as graphic or verbal-visual representations as the key to the interpretation.

In order to appropriately emphasize the meanings hidden in the heraldic symbols, Okolski divided the descriptions of individual coats of arms into sections. Apart from the parts that are obvious in the case of a genealogical-heraldic book, such as the description of the coat of arms (*delineatio*), its origin (*origo*), and the history of the family (*linea familiae*), the individual sections contained subsections in which he analysed the meaning of the emblem. Both this understanding of the function of this text and the construction of the entries make *Orbis Polonus* similar to symbolographic compendia popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and readily used by Okolski himself, although this parallel does not fully describe the specific character of the work yet.

As already mentioned, the concept of Okolski's armorial was shaped gradually and underwent slight but quite significant changes. They are visible especially in the titles of subsections. In short, the idea of a book of arms understood simply as a reflection on a heraldic symbol as a sign, was realised only with regard to two coats of arms, namely *Bialina* and *Bogoria*. In these cases, the sections are referred to in the title as *considerationes*. So we have a *Consideratio in armis Bogoriorum*.²³ These considerations could be devoted to various aspects of the coat of arms, hence *Consideratio prima* and *Consideratio secunda* in the case of *Bialina*.²⁴ This was the most obvious and un-

²³ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, p. 53.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

ambiguous reference to emblematics—a sign and its interpretation provided a starting point for ethical reflection.

The concept Okolski tried to maintain the longest was a collection of warnings and admonitions to the nobility who identified with a given coat of arms. All entries up to Dąbrowa were consistent with this idea.²⁵ This approach *de facto* inscribed *Orbis Polonus* in the current of heraldry understood as knowledge not so much about coats of arms as about the very nature of ennoblement. This placed Okolski among the continuators of Paprocki, whose *Gniazdo cnoty* and *Herby rycerstwa polskiego* could be read as treatises on nobility, even if they were formally different.²⁶ However, Okolski understood his role as a heraldist in a slightly different way. It was to consist primarily in calling for the preservation of virtue as the foundation of nobility. The meaning of *virtus* as applied to particular noble families had been encrypted in heraldic symbolism that needed to be decoded. And this was the actual purpose of the armorial. Testimony to this understanding of the tasks of heraldry can be found in subsections characterised as *praecustoditiones*, *admonitiones*, etc. Sometimes, the titles themselves indicate what the noblemen are reminded of. For example, the Aichingers received *Praecustoditiones ad solertiam prosequendam* [Admonitions to use one's wit] and *Ad virtutem et laborem* [To virtue and industriousness],²⁷ while the Amadejs received *Praecustoditiones ad nobilitatem et naturam bonam conservandam* [Admonitions to maintain nobility and good nature].²⁸ In other cases such warnings were subdivided into parts that were to correspond to the entire content of the preceding subsection, without any further details as to what was going to be their subject. In one case, with the *Bonarowa* coat of arms, the admonition was addressed not

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁶ In fact, this is how they are treated, for example, by Sławomir Baczewski (*Szlachectwo. Studium z dziejów idei w piśmiennictwie polskim. Druga połowa XVI–XVII wiek*, Lublin 2009, pp. 144–165).

²⁷ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, pp. 16–17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

to representatives of the heraldic family, but to the readers in general (*Admonitio lectori*),²⁹ which clearly indicates the predicatory vocation of the author convinced of the universal character of the recommendations made and the benefits of reading.

Of course, these are not mutually exclusive concepts. Whether the starting point for a description was a sign or nobility and virtue was of secondary importance, provided that a close connection between the two components of the argument was preserved, as is the case in Okolski's work. The differences lie rather in the distribution of accents. Therefore, in one coat of arms, there may be both *considerationes* and *praecustoditiones* (*Bogoria*).

Finally, there is the third vision of a book of arms, most interesting for our line of inquiry and complementing the two previous ones. It is an armorial as a text that decodes heraldic signs perceived as *omina*—auguries. In this case, the task for a heraldist was to read the auspicious divination hidden in a given heraldic device, and thus to show the representatives of the family the path they should follow in their lives in order to preserve their nobility. Again, Okolski combined this idea with others, so one can find many coats of arms with subchapters whose titles begin with the formula of *Faustum omen* or similar and contain an admonition. The most complete in this respect is the entry devoted to *Bogoria*. It contains both considerations on the coat of arms, three happy prophecies, and *Praecustoditiones triplici omni* [A warning pertaining to the three prophecies].³⁰

Elaborative phrases that define the omen to be explained are characteristic for subsections that point to the augural power of the heraldic sign. Thus, for example, *Abdank* was the first coat of arms to contain subsections: *Faustum omen Abdanciis. Magni secretarii regum et principiis* [A fortunate prophecy for the Abdank family. Great secretaries of kings and princes]; *Maximi in regno* [The greatest in the kingdom]; *Palma virtutum* [The palm of virtues];

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–55.

Maximi scientia [The greatest thanks to knowledge]; *Summi religione* [The most distinguished by religion]. We only learn about the fact that we are dealing with happy auguries from the title of the first subchapter, but nobody would doubt that all of them were in fact subordinated to the same idea. In some entries, this particular function of heraldic signs is emphasised each time, which is why the interpretative argument about *Amadej*, divided into two parts, is entitled *Faustum omen Amadaeis. Felicitas* [The happy prophecy for the Amadejs. Felicity] and *Aliud omen: Nature optima et nobilis* [Another prophecy: The most upright and noble nature].³¹ The last entry, which clearly indicates that the interpretation of the sign is intended to reveal a happy prophecy, is *Brodzic*, which contains the chapter *Faustum omen. Praesidium divinum* [A happy prophecy. Divine protection].³² This does not mean that the very concept of the book of arms as a work that brings to light the heraldic symbols of prosperity for noble descendants changed. This is attested to by the entry on *Kruczyn*, in which [*Praecustoditio*] *pro tertio omine* [Warning about the third prophecy] can be found, although no part of it is defined as *omen*. A certain permanence of the belief in the “portending” character of heraldic signs is also indicated by the titles of some chapters in the further parts of the work, where the above mentioned terms are no longer used at all. This does not stop the author from arguing that e.g. the *Grabie* coat of arms is *Pacis prognosticon* [Prognostic of peace].³³

From this perspective, the references to astrology in Okolski’s armorial take on a completely new meaning, and it should be added that they are not infrequent and occur at different levels of the text. These relationships are easiest to show in the list of popular astrological works referred to by Okolski. Among ancient authors, he recalls the *Four Books* (*Tetrabiblos* or *Quadripartitum*) by Claudius

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

Ptolemy³⁴ and *Astronomica* by Marcus Manilius. Among the works of mediaeval astrologers he mentions the work of Guido Bonatti's *Liber astronomicus*,³⁵ considered to be the most important in this field, dating back to the thirteenth century, but he also uses, as already mentioned, the authority of the Arab expert on the subject, Haly Abenragel. This does not mean at all that Okolski studied their works in depth. More likely, he learned about them from even more popular compendia such as Simone Majoli's *Dies caniculares* or Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*. It must be said that Okolski was well versed in new publications, since the characteristics of the *Drużyna* coat of arms (included in the first volume printed in 1641) include the title *De diebus criticis*,³⁶ probably referring to *De diebus criticis et de aegrorum decubitu libri duo*, a book on astrological medicine by Andrea Argoli, first published in Padua in 1639.³⁷ It is not known whether Okolski read this work because the quoted sentence about the Sun as bringing about the subsequent seasons of the year for obvious reasons cannot be taken from the second chapter of the third book, as the reference indicates. However, this could be a printing error because the fourth chapter of the opening book by Argoli is devoted to the influence of the sun on the seasons.³⁸

In fact, not always did the quoted excerpts from the above books concern the interaction of planets. The fragment of Manilius' *Astronomy* (4, 197–199) used in the description of the *Abdank* coat of arms in no way refers to celestial bodies, but to writing, which is understandable when one considers the interpretation of the ordinary as the letter “W” or inverted “M”.³⁹ However, Okolski did not limit

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³⁵ For more information about the astrologer himself and the significance of his work, see: Thorndike, *History of Magic*, vol. 2, pp. 825–838.

³⁶ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, p. 182.

³⁷ For more information about this work and its author, see: Thorndike, *History of Magic*, vol. 7, pp. 122–124.

³⁸ A. Argoli, *De diebus criticis et aegrorum decubitu libri duo*, Padua 1639, p. 14.

³⁹ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, p. 3 and p. 1.

the use of treatises on astrology to interpret coats of arms that were naturally suitable for such explanations. Those that do not feature any stars or moons, such as the *Belty* (I. 40), *Bojczy* (I. 57), *Dryja* (I. 168), *Drogomir* (I. 173), *Drużyna* (I. 182), *Dąb* (I. 192), *Godziemba* (I. 213), or *Grabie drugie* (I. 235) are described in strictly astrological terms as well. It is also worth mentioning that references to astrology present in Okolski's armorial do not appear only in the first volume, where the concept of a book of arms as a work discussing the predictive power of heraldic devices is most clearly visible. They can also be found in the last volume, where only the most careful readers remembered the *fausta omina* from the initial pages of the first volume. In the further parts of the armorial, astrological references could accompany coats of arms that referred to celestial bodies, such as the star with eight beams of *Sztenberk* (III. 136), but they could also be completely devoid of such a natural bond, as is the case of the *Ślepogród* coat of arms (III. 129).

These are not—let us repeat—arguments confirming the broad knowledge of the author about the aspects, decans, domiciles, cosmic cycles, or astrological geography (which had such a great impact on Saavedra's work) or indicating an extraordinary fascination with the benefits of creating or studying horoscopes.⁴⁰ It would be strange if he openly declared his special interest in the latter. Astrology used for divination did not enjoy the recognition of the Catholic Church, to put it mildly.⁴¹ One of the reasons for this state of affairs was the irreversible conflict between the belief that the influence of planets determines one's fate and condition (including health) and the

⁴⁰ This paper does not aim at presenting the astrological art itself and the history of its development. Those interested in this subject will find basic information and helpful references in Jarosław Włodarczyk's work *Astrologia. Historia. Mity. Tajemnice*, Warsaw 2012.

⁴¹ Not only the Catholic Church had a problem with astrology; its opponents included also Girolamo Savonarola (later considered to be a heretic by the Catholic Church), John Calvin, and Thomas Erastus. See Shumaker, *Occult Sciences*, pp. 42–53.

doctrine of free will.⁴² A visible trace of this contradiction can be found at least in another Dominican from the previous generation, Fabian Birkowski. In the *Kazanie o astrologii* [Sermon on astrology], he does not deny that the positions of stars and planets affect the sub-lunar world, but that “astrologers of common matters, which belong to the human will, cannot guess random events and affairs”.⁴³

Maybe that is why Okolski most often used astrological sayings that were very general and unspecific. These aphorisms were primarily a “scholarly” ornament of the argument, one which was not very significant in itself but gave a pretext for further considerations, no longer having much in common with the system of planets and their influence. An example can be found at the beginning of subsection *Omen magnum. Amor Dei et patriae* [The grate prophecy. Love for God and homeland] in *Bojczya: Est aphorismus astrologicus, quod Sol fecit sibi Martem propinquissimum* [There is an astrological saying that the Sun has made Mars closest to itself].⁴⁴ The opening sentence is only intended to justify the claim that the military commander should be close to the king. This is again merely an introduction to the essential point of the argument, which is the true meaning of the three crosses in heraldry. And, as we can see from the further course of the argument, they signify three things: love for God, love for the homeland, and honour for the house, so they cannot be directly derived from the above-quoted astrological proverb.

It happens that the phrases quoted here strongly emphasize the belief about the specific effects of planetary influence. This is the case with the axiom derived from the tradition of the birthday horoscope, cited in the description of the *Godziemba* coat of arms: *Marte*

⁴² For more information on this subject, see Doktor, *Spotkania z astrologią*, pp. 148–155; see also Garin, *Zodiak życia*, pp. 23–32, 72–92; and R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, and F. Saxl, *Saturn i melancholia. Studia z historii filozofii, przyrody, medycyny, religii oraz sztuki*, transl. A. Kryczyńska, Cracow 2009, pp. 202–218.

⁴³ F. Birkowski, *Kazania o naukach tajemnych*, ed. J. Kroczyk, Wrocław 2012, p. 69, but also pp. 14–16 and 67–79.

⁴⁴ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, p. 57.

dominium obtinente evenient tumultus, irae, incendia, depraedationes, sed si Iupiter dominium simul nactus fuerit, pacis unio et bellorum compositio eveniet [During the reign of Mars, there will be riots, explosions of anger, fires, and looting, but if Jupiter reigns at the same time, there will be reconciliation and agreement]. On this foundation, the author develops his thought: *Godziembiis non solus Mars sed iunctus cum Iove dominatur, ideo robus gloriae ac firmitas honoris eorum perpetua* [Mars does not govern the Godziembas on its own but in connection with Jupiter, so the power of their glory and their honour will be eternal].

Okolski's argument is an interesting attempt at a horoscope *à rebours*. The planetary positions are not the base for the future prosperity of the family members, but instead the astrological characteristics of the influence of the planets are used to select those representatives of the name that meet the expectations determined by the characteristics that Okolski wishes to attribute to the noble family.

When a coat of arms depicts celestial bodies, the wisdom of astrologers is used to a greater extent. Such is the case with the *Alabanda* coat of arms.⁴⁵ The white crescent visible on the shield became the basis for the whole argument. One can learn from it, for example, that on the basis of the pale and reddish glow of the Silver Globe physico-astrologists predict the weather, which leads Okolski to the conclusion that the white moon *dabit serena* [will bring prosperity]. The moon is also supposed to be a barrier protecting the world under its orbit from the harmful influence of Scorpio, Leo, Aries, and Taurus. Therefore, the horse in the *Alabanda* coat of arms—as the second element of the emblem is a horse's head—was to portend prosperity for the Kingdom. And this is only a prelude to the argument, which we will not analyse here in its entirety, and which aims at the conclusion, referred to in the title of the chapter, that the *Alabanda's* destiny encoded in the coat of arms is the promotion of the Catholic faith. Warnings are maintained in a similar spirit. And, although starting

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

with an astrological maxim, they aim at strengthening the thesis that only by staying close to God will the Alabandas achieve great dignity. For that reason, they should stay away from court careers.

It would be difficult to treat this advice as astrological fortune telling. Here, astrological maxims only serve as a “scholarly” substantiation which is supposed to convince us that the cosmic plan written in the stars and the one in the coat of arms are the same. It is not even a specific plan but merely an indication of areas of activity particularly suitable for those born under a given sign, and again: not a zodiac but a heraldic one. Trusting in this clue, it will be possible not only to preserve the nobility received from the ancestors, but also to enrich it with one’s own virtues. One can follow this symbolic signpost, but one can also go in a different direction, exposing oneself to known consequences. And this is a question of will, over which neither the emblems nor the stars have any power.

The role of apt predictions preserved on the pages of historical books for the former rulers is strictly persuasive: they convince by giving a positive example. Among the signs auguring momentous events, those that are not unambiguous occupy an important place. The comet is a great example. Its ominous character was assured in most of the ancient astrological compendia.⁴⁶ This opinion was supported and disseminated by the mediaeval encyclopaedia of Isidore, who claimed that the comet brought pestilence, hunger, and war.⁴⁷ It was also repeated by modern symbological works, which, by the way, did not prevent scholars from studying this phenomenon with great determination.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, invoking the comet, which was completely unrelated to the drawing depicting the coat of arms in his entry on the *Grabie drugie* Okolski argues that according to the title

⁴⁶ See Włodarczyk, *Astrologia*, pp. 151–162.

⁴⁷ L. Thorndike, *The Place of Magic in the Intellectual History of Europe*, New York 1905, p. 14.

⁴⁸ On the special interest in comets among Polish astrologers, see *Historia nauki polskiej*, vol. 1, introd. and ed. B. Suchodolski, [part 1] P. Czartoryski, *Średniowiecze*, [part 2] P. Rybicki, *Odrodzenie*, Wrocław 1970, p. 294.

of the chapter, *Prosperitas secure*, it can mean a safe and certain success. Octavian Augustus understood the comet heralding the death of Julius Caesar as a sign of luck and took it as his symbol.⁴⁹ In this way, Okolski seems to reassure the reader that signs must not be ignored but should be used as guidance. The whole art of astrology-heraldry boils down to their proper interpretation.

The quotations from astrologers must be regarded as a necessary element supporting the assumed shape of *Orbis Polonus*, which goes far beyond a simple story of coats of arms and noble families. The armorial becomes a book which, through the interpretation of signs using all the knowledge available to Okolski, speaks about the world: the history, the present and, even though to a limited extent, the future. Such a reading would bring Okolski closer to the circle of seventeenth-century erudite writers. Their work was focused on the storage and transfer of all knowledge (even if not deeply assimilated). It resulted in encyclopaedias arranged according to a specific method,⁵⁰ excerpts from authors listed according to keywords or common places in practical or scholarly treatises, patched together from quotations.⁵¹ The compendium of knowledge created by Okolski was, so to speak, created incidentally, and not as an aim in itself, as the official objective was the interpretation of heraldic signs. It is probably impossible to reconstruct any method of presenting the content. There is no clear order here, there is no indication from the author that such order should be sought —apart from the obvious alphabetical arrangement of the names of coats of arms. The belief

⁴⁹ Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, p. 235.

⁵⁰ For more information on the specificity of seventeenth-century encyclopaedism, see e.g. C. Vasoli, *Encyklopedyzm w XVII wieku*, transl. A. Aduszkiewicz, Warsaw 1989.

⁵¹ For more information on this, see e.g. A. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, Oxford 1996; W. Pawlak, *De eruditione comparanda in humanioribus. Studia z dziejów erudycji humanistycznej w XVII wieku*, Lublin 2012; J. Dąbkowska-Kujko, *Justus Lipsjusz i dawne przekłady jego dzieł na język polski*, Lublin 2010, pp. 231–247.

that everything is connected with everything, including astrology and heraldry, is evident. What binds these two disciplines together and allows them to be discussed is the universal language of symbols.

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