



# Competitive Poland in the EU: New inspirations

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### Summary:

One of the main effects of Polish participation in European Union should be progress in our national competitiveness position. It should be treated as partly (but only partly) success. Also results of competitiveness-oriented EU Lisbon Strategy as well as Strategy “Europe 2020” have been till now only partly satisfactory. According to the author modern competitiveness reflection should include and in fact includes also ethical and axiological dimensions: institutional reflection, social innovation, economics of happiness and well-being as well as the idea of integral development and sustainable development. Author has concentrated his attention particularly on the concept of civil economy (S. Zamagni, L. Bruni), humanistic management as well as research held by SITRA in Finland.

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## Introduction

After 10 years of the legacy of Polish membership in the European Union, an important and interesting aspect of reflection on its implications for international competitiveness appears. It should be considered in the context of the position and competitiveness of Poland (obtained through the integration processes) and the prospects for the European Union's competitiveness in the world. According to the author, however, it should not be confined to a simplified view of the competitiveness. On the contrary, at the same time one should take into account the modern approach to competitiveness, as well as an interest in the relationship between competitiveness and the concept of the common good and the quality of life. One should also analyze the experience of selected countries and learn about the latest concepts in this field. According to the author, it is necessary and justified to take a fresh look at the integration processes happening in Europe and the Polish participation in these processes, combining a modern approach to competitiveness and the concept of the common good. In this context, concepts of the authors linked to Catholic Social Teaching (S. Zamagni), the experience of Finland and the thoughts of theoretical professionals associated with the Finnish Innovation Fund SITRA may be an interesting source of inspiration.

## The concept of competitiveness and its evolution

Traditionally, competitiveness is considered as an ability to compete and to create long-term, stable and sustainable growth and development.

According to the authors of *The World Competitiveness Report 1994* [UN, 1994, p. 18] international competitiveness is the ability of a country or company to create (proportionally) greater wealth than that which is created by the competitors in the global markets. Competitiveness is a combination of resources (natural or manmade), processes (involving the processing resources in the economic effects) and the internationalization of economic activity.

In *The World Competitiveness Yearbook*, international competitiveness is defined as a country's ability to create added value and thus to increase the national wealth through proper management of



resources and processes, attractiveness and aggressiveness, taking into account the global and local dimension, as well as to integrate it all into a single, coherent economic and social model [IMD, 2000, p. 6]. It seems that such a notion of competitiveness is quite broad and does not exclude taking into account the social and community values, but rather assumes including them to a greater or lesser extent, what the author will try to show later in this chapter.

Competitiveness is recognized today as one of the most important objects of reflection in economics, political science and management. It is one of the paradigms of modern scientific thought. At the same time, it raises a number of controversies, doubts and contributes to the formation of many conflicting opinions. It is typical that the experts alongside traditional factors (generally related to the amount of resources) of the international competitiveness of countries and companies are increasingly interested in the so-called soft factors, relating specifically to the institutional environment: the cultural, ethical and religious. Not without reason, some researchers introduced a concept of institutional competitiveness to the literature.

The international competitiveness is generally considered in the micro- and macro-economic dimension, and therefore as the competitiveness of the company or a country (the national economy). Some also highlight the mezzo- (regions and industries and sectors of the economy) and mega-level competitiveness (competitiveness of large economic areas, such as the European Union). Nowadays, the interrelationship of all these dimensions of competitiveness is more and more clearly recognized.

Increasingly, attention is drawn to the fact that excessive and one-sided focus on narrowly considered competition and competitiveness may be harmful and cause dangerous and negative side effects associated with economic development. P. Krugman [1994] pointed it out to in the article *Competitiveness: a Dangerous Obsession*, criticizing an excessive and inadequate, in his opinion, focus on competitiveness at the macro level<sup>1</sup>. Among the many authors who draw attention to the dilemmas of competitiveness, researchers such as S. Ghoshal and L. Zsolnai should be mentioned, together with those associated with the so-called Lisbon group. An interesting document, composed

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<sup>1</sup> According to P. Krugman competitiveness should be analyzed primarily at micro and mezzo level. J. Dunning and M. Porter presented critique of the Krugman's views by noting the importance of the institutional environment for the development of the competitiveness of enterprises.



by representatives of that group among other works was *The Limits to Competition*, written under the direction of R. Petrila [1996]. Similar views are presented in its collective work *The Collaborative Enterprise* by A. Tencati and L. Zsolnai. They strongly criticize the one-sided focus on competition and the resulting competitiveness as the harmful and dangerous tendency from the point of view of the concept of sustainable development [Tencati, Zsolnai, 2010, p. 3].

L. Zsolnai and A. Tencati [2010, p. 9] argue that the strength of the company and its sustainable development depends on adaptation of the company and its functions to the environmental, cultural and social context. By creating value for all people strongly interested in developing business, enterprise may also achieve its business goals and success.

According to the Lisbon Group report, concern about competition and competitiveness should be balanced by placing similar emphasis on collaboration and co-operation, because only in this way, the expectations and needs of all stakeholder groups can be met [Petrela, "Lisbon Group", 1996].

On the other hand, many specialists interested in the idea of competitiveness are increasingly turning attention to the fact that the modern understanding of competitiveness is different from the traditional, and that today's discussion about competitiveness, it is also enriched by the social, ethical and environmental dimension. The most widely recognised international competitiveness rankings, such as *the World Competitiveness Yearbook*, *The Global Competitiveness Report*, *Index of Economic Freedom*, *Corruption Transparency International Perceptions Index*, also take into account institutional, ethical, social and environmental aspects of competitiveness.

Contemporary authors often stress that the simplified approach to the concept of competitiveness is still insufficient and limited, especially, when the competitiveness becomes a goal in itself.

### Poland and Europe in selected latest reports

One of the strategic goals of Poland in the last few years and still currently is to raise the level of competitiveness of our economy. It was one of the crucial arguments supporting our accession to the



European Union. The European Union itself is a part of the world characterized by comparatively high level of competitiveness and innovativeness, although below ambitions. On the other hand the member countries represent a pretty wide range of those levels. Furthermore, very often the ranking leaders are not EU member states.

In the analysis below a couple of the latest international competitiveness rankings have been taken into account: *The World Competitiveness Yearbook*, *The Global Competitiveness Report*, *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index* and finally *Human Development Index*.

All of them take into consideration more or less the concepts related to the quality of institutions, social capital and the ethical side of economy.

*The World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015* analyses the international competitiveness of the respective countries through four main groups of criteria, that is the main economic growth indicators, government effectiveness, business effectiveness, finally the development level of infrastructure. Amongst the numerous criteria of the four categories there are also those broadly related to the human and social capital<sup>2</sup>.

According to the latest *The World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015* report the leaders of international competitiveness are: USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland and Canada. As one can see, there is no EU member state in the top five, on contrary to the last years (Sweden). When it comes to our region, Finland has reached rank 20, Estonia 31, Lithuania 28 and Russia 45. Poland ranks 33, Czech Republic 29, Hungary 48, Slovakia 46 while Ukraine 60<sup>3</sup>.

*The World Competitiveness Yearbook*, however it is oriented towards competitiveness, takes into account also to some extent the social aspects and goals. When it comes to the effectiveness of the government it spans to such social and institutional concepts like the level of transparency of public life, level of bureaucracy or corruption. The business effectiveness criterion also includes aspects such as work relations, management model, level of business ethics or openness to corporate social

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<sup>2</sup> *The World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015*, IMD, Lausanne 2015.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.imd.org/research/publications/wcy/>



responsibility. An important factor of the rank are also the values dominating in the society and the enterprises.

Measuring a far bigger number of countries (140 of them) *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016* represents a similar, but slightly different methodology and set of measured and compared categories. When it comes to the methodology, according to the authors of the document countries can be grouped into those, that fuel the growth and competitiveness with traditional production means (*factor-driven*), those, that increase the growth with efficiency (*efficiency-driven*) and finally those, that rely on innovations and innovativeness (*innovation-driven*). Poland already belongs to the group situated between *efficiency-driven economies* and those in transition to towards economy based on innovations (*innovation-driven*).

According to *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016* the most advanced countries are: Switzerland, Singapore, USE, Germany, Netherlands, Japan, Hong Kong, Finland, Sweden, UK and Norway. When it comes to the Baltic republics, Estonia ranks 30, Lithuania 36, Latvia 44 and Russia 45. In this report Poland has achieved 41 place, Czech Republic 31, Hungary 63 and Ukraine 79<sup>4</sup>.

What's interesting, the authors of *The Global Competitiveness Report* acting on their care for the development of socially responsible and sustainable competitiveness create from time to time the *Sustainable Competitiveness Index*. It corrects the GCI indicators with the factors measuring the ecological and social values. The corrected index ranks the following countries as the leaders of the socially responsible competitiveness (for the 2014-2015 report): Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Japan.

Socially responsible and sustainable competitiveness is defined as a set of institutions, politics and factors, that ensure the country's high productivity level while at the same time putting the focus on social and environmental balance.

According to the latest version of the *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2014* the leaders of the ethical dimension of management are: Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Singapore. Estonia has ranked 28, Lithuania 43, Latvia 49, Poland 38. Russia however

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.weforum.org>



achieved the distant 127 (out of 178 analyzed countries). Amongst the other countries of the region the positions of Hungary (47), Czech Republic (57), Slovakia (61) and Ukraine (144) should be noted<sup>5</sup>.

A fascinating document assessing the level of development of the human and social capital is the *Human Development Index*. The report takes into consideration three groups of factors: the level of GDP per capita, life longevity and the level of health, and finally the educational level of the population. According to the *Human Development Index 2015* the following countries provide the best opportunities regarding the human growth and the quality of life: Norway, Australia, Switzerland, Denmark and Netherlands. Finland ranks 24 here, Estonia 30, Poland 36, Lithuania 37, Latvia 46, while Russia 50<sup>6</sup>. Mentioning more, the Czech Republic ranks 28, Slovakia 35, Hungary 44 and Ukraine 81.

As one can see, however a couple of EU member states rank the highest in the reports, firstly not all of them make it to the top and secondly there is a visible profound difference regarding their position and the level of progress. The Central and Eastern Europe countries (including Poland) are in most cases in a more or less peripheral position. Although Poland and its EU member states neighbors have improved their competitive ability and position significantly, it still remains a fact that the quality of institutional solutions and the innovation level stays in those countries below expectations.

### The Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and Poland

The European Union agreed at the Lisbon summit in 2000 that its ambition and goal to achieve by 2010 is to become the most competitive economy in the world, based on knowledge and on the concept of growth and sustainable development. The project is described as the Lisbon Strategy. Despite the large ambitions, it cannot, unfortunately, be described as the success. As a result, the European Union has decided to continue its program under the name of “Europe 2020”.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hdr.undp.org>



The principles implementation of the Lisbon strategy has proved to be a difficult task and only partially finished successfully. Sometimes critics point out that one of the causes of mediocre results of this concept was taking too many priorities at the stage of creating the basis of this strategy. Other sources of problems are simultaneous accession to the EU of the Central European countries, and a significantly different level of competitiveness of European countries, as well as the simultaneous implementation of these countries quite different concepts of development. Critics highlighted that the concept of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, recognized by the European Union as a priority, have been prioritized by national governments and by companies in different countries across the continent on a various level. Most often, these issues were considered important by the Nordic countries, to a certain extent by Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, in the slightest degree by the countries of Southern Europe and the new member states.

Currently, modified and improved (simplified) Lisbon Strategy was transformed into a project "Europe 2020". This project also envisages taking into account in its implementation social values, including the concept of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

In the world competitiveness rankings, Poland takes a high place on a global scale, but in comparison to the most EU member states it is a rather distant position. It remains an open question what vision of supporting the competitiveness is the best from our point of view. It seems that for Poland, as well as for other Central European countries, it is particularly important to merge strategy of promoting the competitiveness with the policy of social and territorial cohesion.

Analyzing the way of thinking on the European and Polish model of competitiveness in terms of integration, attention should be paid two groups of inspiration. On the one hand, I mean writers associated with personalism, ordoliberalism and Catholic Social Teaching. The second interesting source of inspiration is the Nordic experience and theoretical works of Scandinavian authors, especially in Finland, related to Finnish Innovation Fund SITRA.



## Personalism, competitiveness and the civic economy

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, a particular environment centered on Stefano Zamagni represents an interesting trend in considerations of competitiveness. He is one of Italy's leading economists, a professor at the University of Bologna. He is also one of the advisors and consultants of the Holy See. It is believed that he was consulted in preparation of Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. He is considered a prominent expert on the issue of catholic social teaching, social responsibility, methodology and philosophy of science (especially the relationship between ethics and economics). He is known for his studies on the economic analysis of the phenomenon of altruism, the so-called social economy, history of economic thought and social and economic history, the history of the cooperative movement and its workers, an alternative to the dominant paradigm concept of business organizations and the market economy and the methods for measuring the quality of life, social well-being and happiness<sup>7</sup>.

He is primarily a major author regarding the NGO sector and its role in the modern economy and society<sup>8</sup>. According to him, one of the ways to overcome the crisis is also, and perhaps above all, the return of political and economic elites, especially in the European context, to thinking in terms of personalism, solidarity and subsidiarity. As a historian of economic thought, S. Zamagni also drew attention to a little-known Italian approach to classical thought of the eighteenth century, which in his opinion in a much deeper way than the English enlightenment thought on the role of trust and social capital building prosperity (the concept of relational goods).

Currently Stefano Zamagni sees the coexistence of at least three models of capitalism and the market economy. In his opinion, one can distinguish the typical neoliberal model for the US and partly also for the United Kingdom, the social market economy, typical especially for Germany and most European Union countries, and finally the resurgent civil model economy, which is present in Europe (especially in Italy) until the end of the eighteenth century and now. He is a vocal supporter of the latter and promotes its development – in Italy, the European Union and other regions of the world.

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<sup>7</sup> See: L. Bruni, S. Zamagni, *Civil Economy: Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness*, Peter Lang, Bern 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Handbook on the Economics of Reciprocity and Social Enterprise*, (eds.) L. Bruni i S. Zamagni, , Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 2014.



These economic models are accompanied by three different ways of control: the free market (the price mechanism and competition), the government (state-hierarchical model) and governance, which includes various forms of cooperation. The last one is especially representative for the cooperative sector, but not exclusively. It can be observed in the case of companies operating within the social economy, “economy of communion” (creation of joint ventures by people inspired by similar ethics) and many others. According to S. Zamagni, the neoliberal model form corresponds most with competition, social market economy resonates with strong position of the state and the civil model with a spirit of cooperation.

In fact, none of the models is present in pure form. Most economic systems are to lesser or greater degree a mixture (synthesis and coexistence) of abovementioned models and methods of adjustment. Healthy economic and social system should promote such a situation. In his opinion, it is advisable to increase the number of entities of the civil economy model. According to S. Zamagni, civil economy can be an antidote to the contemporary challenges of globalization and European economic integration.

### Finland as a source of inspiration for the Baltic region

While Stefano Zamagni represents the catholic and Italian influences, on the other hand, the experience of Finland may be interesting for Poland. This is due to the fact that in recent decades, this country has become a leader in the field of building a competitive knowledge-based economy, as well as implementing corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

For the centuries, the territory of today's Finland was regarded as a clearly peripheral area. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the country belonged to the Kingdom of Sweden, and then it was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire. As a consequence, there are some analogies to Poland. The final result of the independence trends (initially quite limited) was a revolution in Russia. It was followed by the path of wide public spendings and creation of the welfare system to silence the rising communist movements. The dramatic experience of the Winter War with the Soviet Union at the turn of the year 1939-1940 and the World War II show that the country was in the Soviet sphere



of influence, but saved its independence, democracy and the market economy model. Finnish economy then relied heavily on Soviet receptive market. The collapse of the USSR in the early 90s caused a serious economic crisis, as a result of which the country introduced a major reorientation and modernization. This resulted in the accession to the European Union and the construction of a modern knowledge-based economy. From a relatively peripheral country Finland became one of the leaders of modernization in a single century.

It can be stated that Finland is today one of the countries with a particularly high level of competitiveness and significant achievements in the field of social innovation. It occupies a high position in the majority of indices analyzing economic competitiveness and quality of life; it is also among the world leaders in building competitive advantage. In addition, it is characterized by a high level of social capital and low level of corruption, high level of education and investment in research and development and, finally, innovation, information society and the welfare state<sup>9</sup>.

Rankings show that the success of Finland is based on a combination of positive change in macroeconomic indicators, care for the infrastructure (telecommunications, transport) and the environment (growth and sustainable development). Finland introduces the principles adopted in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy in this context – synthesis of a highly competitive knowledge-based economy and sustainable development, which means a strong orientation towards eco-development and the implementation of corporate strategies principles of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The high quality of public institutions on a macro level (the quality of the state), as well as on microeconomic level is also Finland's success. The advanced social dialogue in the country is, among others, an indicator of high-quality institutions. Dialogue and cooperation is an important element of the governance of public life but also a corporate culture of many companies. It seems as one of the most important experiences of Finland and Scandinavia in general, which should inspire the countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

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<sup>9</sup> M. Castells, P. Himanen, *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne i państwo dobrobytu – model fiński*, Warszawa 2009.



## Finnish Innovation Fund SITRA

An important role in the formation of the Finnish socio-economic model in recent years was played by a variety of public institutions, especially SITRA. SITRA is a state agency dedicated to promoting the competitiveness of the economy of Finland and studies of its future development. It is an organization with the status of a foundation but appointed by the Finnish authorities. SITRA president is appointed by and reporting to the parliament, which gives it a high and relatively independent status and further demonstrates the unusual nature of the agency<sup>10</sup>.

SITRA acts as a center of studies (science and research think-tank) and as a foundation supporting efforts to foster competitiveness and innovation. This institution is also involved in obtaining financing (particularly for venture capital) for initiatives supporting competitiveness<sup>11</sup>.

SITRA's particular concern are, among others, issues related to ecology and ecological investments, health care, food production (especially the healthy food), establishment of clusters, support the competitiveness of the less developed countries (e.g. India), the promotion of international cooperation (in including cross-border with Russia). SITRA's specialists are interested in studies on competitiveness in the global economy (with particular emphasis on the competitiveness of small countries) and on the social and institutional dimensions of competitiveness. In the latter case, the aim is to promote social responsibility in the economy and business, as well as to promote wider field of social innovation<sup>12</sup>.

The attention should be brought to the evolution of interests of T. Hämäläinen and other SITRA's experts. Initially they focused on the competitiveness of economies. Later the area of research has shifted towards the theory of innovation (especially social innovation) and finally towards issues such as sustainable development and well-being of society (sustainable well-being). In the latter case, it is mostly done with focus on new paths for the economic development of the country, in the context of global and domestic crises and new barriers to growth.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sitra.fi/en>

<sup>11</sup> J. Wierzbowski, *Fińska droga do społeczeństwa informacyjnego i gospodarki opartej na wiedzy*, Instytut Łączności, Warszawa 2003, s. 70.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.sitra.fi/en>



In his systemic approach, T. Hämäläinen focuses on the fact that competitiveness itself should not be regarded as an ultimate goal. It is more of a mean than the goal. It is an attempt to determine and quantify the economic opportunities of the country and its position in the international dimension in the framework of free (or rather, to some extent free) world economy. Competitive countries are those countries that may and are able to obtain benefits in the framework of an open international economy and – what is important - they are able to meet the economic and social needs. Countries that have lost competitiveness are those countries that are experiencing the associated lack of economic, political and social stability and adaptability.

T. Hämäläinen as a leading SITRA expert analyzes the success of the economy of the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and its great achievements<sup>13</sup>. But he also highlights some of its weaknesses and slowing characteristic of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fast-growing Finland has experienced a “short of breath” (it is a manifestation of Nokia's problems) and social problems, such as the scale of mental illness and suicides becoming greater than before.

As a consequence, there is a need for further elaboration on development of new strategies for innovation and innovation including building trust-based relationship which should be conducted by Finland and other countries at similar development level. Related concepts refer to the idea of systemic and holistic approach to the economy, innovative individuals and communities, user orientation and consumer-driven innovation combined with the demand, and finally, the globalization based on knowledge and the structure of a network.

In this context, the authors associated with SITRA call for the implementation of the so-called “open industrial policy”, which is better than the so-called “traditional policy”. This policy is characterized by, among others, striving to find and build new areas of competitive advantage and growth, focusing on supporting cooperation, removing barriers, reducing uncertainty. Primary instrument of this policy is to create and to facilitate the flow of new knowledge and the development of public-private partnerships. Major importance is given to effective and widely regarded political leadership and openness and transparency of the policy.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.sitra.fi/en> (Presentation of T. Hamalainen in Tallin, *Policies for Creating new Growth Areas*, Estonian Development Fund, Tallinn 2012).



The development of evolutionary targeting becomes, according to T. Hämäläinen, a specific form of a modern, open industrial policy. In his opinion, this can be seen particularly clearly when analyzing the example of Israel. This type of policy concentrates on the experiments, making strategic choices and focus on long-term public-private partnership. In general, this policy concept assumes that in a turbulent and competitive global environment, important matter becomes a synthesis of structural changes, system adaptation and the choice of priorities<sup>14</sup>.

Recent studies and research promoted by SITRA and conducted by T. Hämäläinen consider the need to combine studies on the competitiveness of the economy with the promotion of social innovation, social responsibility, and promoting studies on the well-being, which is the economic theory of happiness and quality of life<sup>15</sup>.

### Implications for Poland

It seems that the search for a new paradigm for the Poland's development in the context of the 12-year-old Polish participation in the European Union is justified. It should, more than ever, emphasize the construction of a modern knowledge-based economy, improving the quality of social capital and to more take into account not only the narrowly conceived economic competitiveness, but also the ethical and social dimension. Poland is a member of the European Union, which was the home of Solidarity movement and John Paul II. The Institute for Market Economics and associated Civic Congress has made significant effort in this direction, as well as other young R&D centers like InStrat (Foundation for Strategic Initiatives).

In the interest of our country, the researchers take into consideration the works written from the perspective of economic personalism (S. Zamagni) as well as the achievements of the Scandinavian countries. It is hard to assume whether predictions voiced by T. Hämäläinen and other SITRA experts may concern Poland. Nevertheless, they became a major source of inspiration for Estonia

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem

<sup>15</sup> T. Hamalainen, J. Michaelson, *Well-being and Beyond*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 2014.



and other countries. SITRA, as well as the Finnish innovation support model, may and should be the subject of careful study and analysis in Poland, as it happens in Estonia<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> J. Wierzbowski, op. cit., s. 109.



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