religions

MDPI

Article

The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Account of Albania by Marcin Czermiński, SJ—A Discourse Analysis in Light of the Context Model

Bożena Prochwicz-Studnicka

Faculty of Cultural and Communication Studies, Ignatianum University in Cracow, Kopernika 26, 31-501 Cracow, Poland; bozena.prochwicz-studnicka@ignatianum.edu.pl

Abstract

This article examines the representation of Islam and Muslims in the account of the Polish Jesuit Marcin Czerniński based on his journey to Albania in 1892. The aim of the article is to show the extent to which the dominant ideologies of the time (understood, according to Teun A. van Dijk, as the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group) shaped the representation of the reality described by the author, as well as to examine whether, and to what degree, he went beyond these frameworks and introduced his own individual observations. The study draws on van Dijk's discourse–analytical approach, particularly his concept of the context model, understood as a "system of control" governing discourse production, which allows for the identification of ideological layers in the source text as well as the interpretative frames employed by the author. The results of the analysis indicate that the text exemplifies the reproduction of stereotypical representations of Islam prevalent at the time, situated within a Catholic and, more broadly, European perspective. At the same time, it reveals more nuanced observations that reflect Czerniński's own perceptions of Islam and Muslims. The article thus shows how a missionary's firsthand observations coexist with collective ideological frameworks and partially breach them.

Keywords: Christianity; Islam; interactions; Balkans; coexistences; conflicts; Marcin Czerminski SJ; Catholic Church; Albania; discourse analysis; context model

1. Introduction

In nineteenth-century Poland, which lacked its own statehood, ethnographic and ethnological research interests were gradually developing into an academic discipline. Alongside this development, knowledge about other cultures and religions was still often provided not only by travelers but also by missionaries, who journeyed to various parts of the world and recorded their observations.

One such figure was Marcin Czerniński, a Jesuit, traveler, and missionary who spent his life in Krakow, then a city in Western Galicia, part of Austria-Hungary[1]. In 1892, he undertook a journey to Albania, which resulted in the book *Albania. Zarysy etnograficzne, kulturalne i religijne* (*Albania: Ethnographic, Cultural, and Religious Sketches*), published in 1893 by the editorial office of the Jesuit periodical *Misje Katolickie* (*Catholic Missions*) in Krakow.

Czerniński provides a particularly valuable case study for examining representations of Islam and Muslims in late nineteenth-century Albania. His account was written during a period of profound political and social transformation: Albania remained part of the Ottoman Empire; Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox communities coexisted within the same

Check for updates

Academic Editors: Petko Hristov and Mila Maeva

Received: 1 October 2026
Revised: 16 November 2026
Accepted: 18 November 2026
Published: 24 November 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.

social space; modern Balkan national movements were emerging; and European observers were constructing influential images of both the Balkans and Islam. Within this context, Czerminski was not a typical Western European traveler. As a Jesuit priest and a Pole from Galicia, he represented a Catholic perspective that had developed on the periphery rather than at the center of the Western European colonial world. The purpose of this article is not to argue that Czerminski held a more progressive attitude toward Muslims than other Jesuits or Catholic clergy of his time. Rather, his significance lies in his representativeness. His peripheral position does not make his views exceptional; instead, it offers a distinctive vantage point from which to examine how dominant missionary discourses were applied to the specific realities of Albania. At the same time, his discourse is analytically significant because it reveals a tension between the ideological frameworks characteristic of the period and the author's attempts to understand local social realities, which occasionally added nuance and even challenged those frameworks.

The aim of this article is to discuss the representation of Muslims and Islam in Czerminski's account from the perspective of Teun A. van Dijk's (b. 1943) approach to discourse analysis, with particular emphasis on ideology—i.e., the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group, which organize and justify actions and shape the way the world is perceived (van Dijk 1998). The analysis is guided by two questions: (1) to what extent does the representation of Islam and Muslims reflect collective ideological frameworks shared by the author's group; and (2) to what extent does it reflect the author's individual observations and experience, which at times add nuance, challenge, or even transcend these frameworks.

The article is structured as follows: after presenting, in Section 2, a brief biography of Marcin Czerminski, an overview of his text *Albania. Zarysy etnograficzne, kulturalne i religijne*, and an introduction to the discourse analysis approach developed by Teun A. van Dijk, I will present the research findings (Section 3). Next, in Section 4 I will reconstruct Czerminski's context model, focusing primarily (though not exclusively) on the social representations (socially shared knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes) that were dominant in the author's nineteenth-century social environment. Then, I will conduct a discourse analysis of the text within this framework, examining both the content and the linguistic strategies used to represent Islam and Muslims, in order to address the question of how Czerminski perceives Islam and Muslims. Finally, I will summarize the extent to which, and in what ways, ideologies guided the author in the production of discourse, since ideology constitutes foundation upon which a worldview is built (van Dijk 1998).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Marcin Czerminski, SJ and His Albania: Zarysy Etnograficzne, Kulturalne i Religijne

Marcin Czerminski was born on 7 January 1860, in Glinsk near Vinnytsia, in the Lviv region[2]. He attended St. Hyacinth's Gymnasium in Krakow and then continued his studies at the Gregorian University in Rome from 1878 to 1885, where he earned a doctorate in philosophy and a licentiate in theology. He was proficient in classical languages as well as several modern ones. While in Rome, he was ordained a priest in 1883 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. After completing his studies in 1885, he returned to Galicia and joined the Society of Jesus in Stara Wieś in the Podkarpacie region.

He served at St. Barbara's Church in Krakow and also worked as a lecturer in Church history at the Jesuit college in Krakow (1888–1889). From 1889 to 1919, he was the editor-in-chief of *Misje Katolickie*, the first Polish-language periodical devoted to the missionary work of the Catholic Church, which was published by Krakow Jesuits under the partitions. He also collaborated with other journals and authored numerous articles and books on missionary topics, Church history, Mariology, hagiography, and biographies of Polish Jesuit

missionaries, including Wojciech Męciński (d. 1643), active in East Asia; Maksymilian Ryłło (d. 1848), associated with the Middle East; and Jan Beyzym (d. 1912), who worked among lepers in Madagascar. He published 116 works and compiled 5056 sermons.

Marcin Czermiński participated in the Podlasie mission, conducted by Jesuits among the Uniates, as well as in popular missions, mainly among Polish seasonal workers, and also undertook foreign missions and travels. The aim of these missions was to provide pastoral care for Polish emigrants. He visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Dalmatia and Montenegro, Crete, Turkey (Adampol), as well as Sweden, Germany, and France.

The publications resulting from his travels include, among others: *Albania. Zarysy etnograficzne, kulturalne i religijne* (*Albania: Ethnographic, Cultural, and Religious Sketches*) (1893), *W Dalmacyi i Czarnogórze* (*In Dalmatia and Montenegro*) (1896), *Z podróży po Bośni i Hercegowinie* (*From Travels in Bosnia and Herzegovina*) (1899), *Wspomnienia z misji między Polakami nad Bosforem, w Bośni i na Krecie* (*Memories from Missions among Poles on the Bosporus, in Bosnia and Crete*) (1901), *Z Grecyi i Krety* (*From Greece and Crete*) (1902), and *Kolonie polskie w Bośni* (*Polish Colonies in Bosnia*) (1902). All of these works were published in Krakow.

During the First World War, he served in a military infectious-disease hospital in Łagiewniki near Krakow, celebrating Mass and hearing the confessions of sick soldiers. At that time, he also worked on organizing the archives of the Galician Province of the Society of Jesus. Toward the end of his life, Marcin Czermiński developed heart disease. He died on 8 January 1931, in Lviv.

His *Albania. Zarysy etnograficzne, kulturalne i religijne* (hereafter: *Albania*…) is not a typical travelogue, although Marcin Czermiński visited the country in the summer of 1892 and drew on his own observations and experiences when writing the book. The style of *Albania*… can be described as descriptive–narrative, with a distinct ethnographic emphasis. It is not without apologetic and polemical elements, particularly where the author discusses the persecution of Catholics, Ottoman rule, and the morality of Islam. The text is therefore hybrid in character: historical–ethnographic, missionary, and at times polemical.

The author set out to describe the social, cultural, religious, and political situation of Albania, which had been under Ottoman rule since the 15th century. He devoted considerable attention to the history of Albania (chapters II–V), preceded by a description of the country's geography and the beauty of its landscape (chapter I). In his book, he provides a synthetic overview of Albanian history, focusing on the period of Ottoman conquest and rule—presenting the stages of Ottoman penetration into Albania and the life of Skanderbeg (d. 1468), the Albanian national hero and hostage raised at the Ottoman court who returned to lead Albanian troops against the Turks, and describing the sieges of cities and the defenders' battles. Special attention is given to the military resistance of the Albanians, emphasizing their perseverance and dedication. The book also discusses Albanian customs (chapters VI–VII, IX) and the administration of the country (chapter VIII). The situation of the Catholic Church in Albania—from its earliest times to the author's present day—is covered in chapters X–XIV, where he describes the Albanian Catholic dioceses[3]. The last two chapters (XV–XVI) focus on missionary activity in the mountains. The text is illustrated with thirty-nine engravings.

In 2014, Czermiński's book was published in Albanian (*Shqipëria. Përshkrime historike, etnografike, kulturore dhe fetare*, Onufri, 2014), translated by Leonard Zissi.

2.2. The Discourse Analysis Approach Developed by Teun A. van Dijk

Teun A. van Dijk is a Dutch linguist, one of the most influential scholars of discourse, and the originator of an interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis. He uses the term discourse (van Dijk 1997) in the sense of a communicative event grounded in the specific situation, knowledge, intentions, and emotions of the language user, which operates in three

main dimensions: language use, communication of beliefs (cognition), and interaction in social situations. Within the concept of discourse, van Dijk includes not only spoken language (talk) but also written language (text).

The study of language use involves identifying characteristic words or expressions in a text/talk, and analyzing style, rhetorical figures, and structural patterns. The study of communication of beliefs, in turn, focuses on what is being communicated, that is, on the meanings conveyed, reinforced, or constructed through discourse. The analysis of interaction in social situations consists of examining the social functions of discourse (van Dijk 1997, 1983).

The foundation of discourse analysis is the study of texts/talks within their social, cultural, and cognitive contexts; however, according to van Dijk, it is not the context itself that directly influences the language user, but rather the context model. This is a subjective model of the communicative situation that a participant in a given communicative event (e.g., writer, speaker, or listener) constructs for themselves. As van Dijk (1998, p. 212) writes, "context models feature an important evaluative component. That is, they not only represent the knowledge or beliefs of language users about the social situation, but also their opinions about it."

The point of reference in this article is van Dijk's concept of the context model. For the purposes of this study, particular importance is attached to the local dimension of context—such as place, time, circumstances, intentions, goals, functions, or social representations (van Dijk 1997), which will be discussed in Section 4.1.

Context models are a specific form of mental model[4], containing a representation of the situational context (political, social, and cultural) (van Dijk 1998) in which the sender or receiver of a text/talk operates. The context model is therefore individual, differing from one user to another, constructed over time, and variable (van Dijk 1998).

In relation to the topic of this article, it is precisely Czerminski's context model that influenced the way he wrote about Islam and Muslims and represented Muslims, events, and practices, both linguistically and conceptually. It is a subjective "filter" shaped by his knowledge, beliefs, intentions, and social role, among other factors. Consequently, this study focuses on only one side of the discourse, namely the sender: the author and his text.

Van Dijk's methodological framework was selected because it enables discourse to be analyzed in relation to the contextual and ideological factors that shape its production. Since the aim of this article is not only to identify representations of Islam and Muslims in Czerminski's account but also to explain the factors that influenced them, and to determine the extent to which they reflect ideologies shared by the author's social group as opposed to his individual observations, the concept of the context model provides a particularly useful analytical tool. It enables the reconstruction of the author's subjective interpretation of the social, cultural, religious, and ideological framework within which he wrote, thereby making it possible to distinguish between socially shared representations and their individual manifestations. Because the author of a historical text cannot be studied directly, the context model has been reconstructed on the basis of biographical data, historical sources, the purpose of the work, and its intended readership, and then confronted with the text itself.

3. Results

The analysis presented below demonstrates that the representation of Islam and Muslims in Marcin Czerminski's account was shaped by the interplay of religious and cultural discourses, particularly those associated with ecclesiocentrism, Eurocentrism, Balkanism, and Orientalism. The application of Teun A. van Dijk's discourse–analytical framework made it possible to identify the linguistic mechanisms involved in constructing the image of the Muslim "Other" and to reveal the relationship between representations of Islam

and the broader ideological context of the period. At the same time, this study shows that the author's personal experiences occasionally led him to formulate judgments that transcended dominant interpretative frameworks, resulting in a more nuanced portrayal of Christian–Muslim relations in Albania at the turn of the twentieth century.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Context Model

The context model makes it possible to reconstruct Czerminski's subjective interpretation of the situation in which his account of Albania was produced. Initially, Czerminski intended to limit himself to a few articles; however, after consulting the available materials and speaking with Albanians and missionaries, he decided to write a more extensive work. As he himself states, the purpose of writing the book on Albania was to fill a gap in the Polish literature concerning the country, which in his time remained forgotten, marginalized, and almost entirely unknown to the broader public (Czerminski 1893).

Marcin Czerminski wrote as a Catholic priest and missionary. He also wrote as a Jesuit, that is, as a member of a religious order with a distinctly apologetic and missionary profile in the nineteenth-century Church, shaped by a tradition in which the defense and propagation of the faith were primary tasks (Ludwig 1998). It is also significant that he was a devout man of prayer with deep spirituality (see the sources listed in Section 2.1, note 2). This may have influenced his particular interest in the situation of the Catholic Church in Albania[5]. He devoted more than half of his work to this topic. Apart from a few brief references (cf. Czerminski 1893, pp. 102, 116), the author did not address the Orthodox Church, which was also present in Albania[6]. This may have been due to the Polish priest's feelings of reluctance toward Orthodoxy, which at that time was associated with the Russian partition.

His main intention[7] was not only to acquaint Polish readers with the Albanian Catholic dioceses but—I would argue—also to foster solidarity with the Catholic community in Albania and to promote missionary work and the missionary ideals to which he was committed, including in his role as editor-in-chief of *Misje Katolickie*.

The book's primary audience, therefore, consisted of the periodical's readers—Catholics interested in missions, that is, in the history of missionary work in Albania, the pastoral activities of local missionaries, and the situation of Christianity in Rumelia (the European province of the Ottoman Empire), as well as the culture of the Turks, who, especially following their defeat at Vienna, were no longer seen as a power to be feared but began to arouse curiosity and interest (cf. Orientalism).

The readership must have been considerable, given that the periodical itself had a large circulation (30,000 copies)[8], and was distributed throughout all the partitions (Wrzos 2023)[9]. It is also worth noting that in the second half of the nineteenth century, readership in Krakow was growing dynamically, as the number of printing houses, bookstores, and libraries (private as well as those run by various associations and organizations), and the popularity of the press and literature, increased[10]. Participation in the city's cultural life, including reading habits, extended beyond the intelligentsia to the bourgeoisie.

Czerminski's *Albania*... primarily served an educational function[11]—at that time, access to knowledge about the wider world was limited (Wrzos 2023)—and it also encouraged readers to support missionary work, highlighting the need to assist the local Albanian Church.

In addition to place, time, circumstances, purpose, intentions, and function, social representations—such as socially shared knowledge, social, religious, or cultural beliefs—play a key role in the formation and updating of context models (van Dijk 1998).

As a priest and missionary, Czerminski would have possessed a thorough knowledge of the Catholic Church's stance toward followers of other religions. As editor-in-chief of

Misje Katolickie, he regularly received reports from missionaries around the world, which provided him with insight into the practices, beliefs, and language used to describe other religious traditions.

In the nineteenth century, Europe was a leading power in science, technology, military strength, and the economy, and a sense of cultural and civilizational superiority over the rest of the world became entrenched in European consciousness, along with the belief that the values of Western civilization were universal[12]. Eurocentrism, as it came to be known, was a complex worldview and practice that regarded Europe as the central reference point for the history, culture, and civilization of the world[13]. As Dussel (2000, p. 471) writes, "[b]eginning in the nineteenth century, this 'modern Europe,' which since 1492 occupied the center of world history, defined all other cultures as its periphery for the first time in history."

Eurocentrism legitimized colonial actions and facilitated domination over other cultures. In colonial discourse—understood as the Western way of thinking and speaking about other cultures—Europeans were seen as having a moral duty to "civilize" other peoples, who were regarded as inferior, immature, and in need of guidance. Colonial discourse was based on oppositions such as civilization and barbarism, maturity and immaturity, developed and developing, progressive and primitive, which reinforced a stereotypical and prejudiced image of the Other (for further discussion, see Said 1978; Gandhi 2019).

It should be emphasized that in writing his book about Albania, Czermiński drew not only on his own travel experiences. The sources he used (those he mentions explicitly, since not all are listed) include manuscripts, correspondence, and published works. The first category comprises reports and accounts by clergymen serving on missions in Albania, diocesan archives, and private correspondence—particularly with Fr. Domenico Pasi (1847–1914), an Italian Jesuit from Verona, superior of the Albanian mission and founder of the Jesuit Missionary Center there. Among the most important published sources are the following:

1. *Illyricum Sacrum*—a multivolume history of the Catholic Church in the Balkans written in Latin by Italian historians Daniele Farlati (d. 1773) and Giovanni Giacomo Coleti (d. 1827). The work provides access to numerous historical sources (not all of them verified)—including bishops' letters, chronicles, and papal documents—but it also contains legendary material. Today, it should be approached with caution and its claims verified against other sources.
2. *Albanesische Studien*—a monumental three-part work in German devoted to the history of Albania and the Albanian language, written by Johann Georg von Hahn (d. 1869), an Austrian diplomat and linguist, on the basis of his personal observations and many years of residence in the Balkans. It is regarded as marking the symbolic birth of Albanology as a scholarly discipline.
3. *Histoire et description de la haute et basse Albanie*—an ethnographic work by Louis Hyacinthe Hecquard (d. 1866), a traveler and French consul in Shkodra. It focuses on the northern, mountainous regions of Albania and describes everyday life and customs, as well as the religious and social situation in the nineteenth century.
4. *Oberalbanien und seine Liga: ethnographisch-politisch-historisch*—a work by Spiridon Gopčević (d. 1928), a Serbian–Austrian journalist, traveler, and astronomer. Although rich in field observations and of some documentary value (the author claimed to rely on the classic descriptions of the region by Johann Georg von Hahn and Hyacinthe Hecquard), the book is partly journalistic and politically biased, and mythologizing in nature, and presents a distorted and negative image of Albania.

Apart from the last of these, whose scholarly reliability has since been questioned (Schmidt-Neke 2006; Dzino 2008), Czermiński drew on materials considered classic and

valuable. The combination of printed critical sources, scholarly studies, and archival materials provides a solid methodological foundation, attesting to Czerminski's high level of scholarly awareness, sense of responsibility, and ability to work with a broad range of sources. It should be remembered, however, that each of these works reflects the perspective typical of nineteenth-century European scholarly and travel writing, describing Albania from the viewpoint of a Western outsider and perceiving the Other through the lens of the observer's own cultural norms and values.

In nineteenth-century Catholic thought, a clearly ecclesiocentric perspective prevailed—the Church, and Christianity as mediated by it, served as the normative point of reference for assessing other religions, and the Other was evaluated in terms of faith, salvation and morality. This perspective was reinforced by the fact that Christianity was the religion of the European powers that dominated much of the world, and that Christian missions[14] expanded alongside colonial and commercial contacts, with the Jesuits being particularly prominent in Catholic missionary work (Ludwig 1998). Ecclesiocentrism thus often coexisted with Eurocentrism, but the two are analytically distinct: the first judges by religious truth and morality, the second by civilizational progress.

In the encyclicals issued at the time, often devoted to missions, the Church addressed non-Christian religions. These religions were presented as erroneous systems—for example, "nevertheless, in the vast reaches of the earth, many are still deprived of the truth, miserably imprisoned in the darkness of superstition!" (Pope Leo XIII 1893)—and their adherents as "those who are called out of the filth of vice and the shadow of death; and who, being made partakers of eternal life, are also brought out of barbarism and a state of savage manners into the fullness of civilized life" (Pope Leo XIII 1880). In contrast, missionaries were portrayed as those who "fearlessly fight the Lord's battles against heresy and unbelief by private and public speech and writings. They are inspired with a burning love and undeterred by rough roads and heavy toil. They search out those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death to summon them to the light and life of the Catholic Religion" (Pope Gregory XVI 1840).

At that time, a dialogical approach was not yet known. It emerged only in the second half of the 20th century with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and a landmark document indicating the Church's new approach to the modern world is Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963) (Heyne 2013; Urban 1999).

In summary, Marcin Czerminski lived and worked in a period when the Catholic Church generally did not officially address non-Christian religions, with the exception of missionary documents, in which other religions were presented as erroneous systems and their followers were depicted negatively as living in a state of moral and civilizational decline[15].

As editor-in-chief of *Misje Katolickie*, he dealt extensively with missionary topics, which included descriptions of missionaries' work in various parts of the world and the difficulties and dangers they faced, travel reports, and the presentation of exotic cultures, customs, and religions (initially, these were texts translated or reprinted from other European missionary periodicals). Although the texts were generally intended to provide balanced accounts and had a clear educational purpose, they often portrayed the non-European world in a stereotypical manner through the lens of ecclesiocentrism and Eurocentrism. In the context of Islam, negative characterizations occasionally appeared. For example, an article on the Shiite festival of Ashura begins with the sentence: "Before we present our readers with a striking picture of Muhammadan fanaticism, we must go back to the earliest period of Islam" (Uroczystość "Muharem" u perskich "Szyitów" 1888, p. 43). Islamic customs are described as "repulsive" (Pamiętnik niewolnika afrykańskiego 1891, p. 58), and Islam itself is called "the greatest plague of Africa ... from which all evil flows" (Słowo wstępne 1892, p. 2). The "revitalizing influence of Christianity" is contrasted with the "destructive scimitar of Islam" (Hauran 1891, p. 115). Muslims are depicted as "corrupt", "of deep ignorance

and savage fanaticism", and as enemies of "all morality, progress, and true civilization" (Missye OO. Kapucynów 1888, pp. 336–37; Zanguebar angielski 1892, p. 13). Although such statements represent a relatively small portion of late nineteenth-century missionary discourse, and missionaries often attempted to engage more deeply with foreign cultures than through mere factual description, they nonetheless retained established patterns of thought. Islam was portrayed as the antithesis of Christianity, a destructive force fostering moral corruption and spiritual decline. Within this narrative, Christianity appears as the sole path to moral renewal, progress, and civilization, and the task of the Catholic Church was presented as the "conversion of the infidel" („Z Algieru" 1888, p. 7).

One must also mention the Balkanist discourse[16] that began to emerge in Europe at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with which Marcin Czermiński, an educated man who had studied abroad, traveled extensively throughout Western Europe, and engaged with the scholarly literature mentioned above, was likely familiar. As Cufurovic (2017, p. 40) writes, "This [i.e., Ottoman—B.P-S.] legacy marked the Balkans as «the 'other' within» Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century when scholars and travel writers began to attach political connotations to the name. More explicitly so, the Balkans [...] were referred to as 'European Turkey' or 'Turkey-in-Europe,' in addition to the Balkan label, emphasizing its Ottoman past as well as the process of 'othering' those associated with Turkey and its history."

Although the Balkan region was historically and culturally diverse, Western discourse constructed a stereotypical and simplified image of it—one that influenced both the region's self-definition and its relations with the rest of the continent. This image was widespread among Western intellectual and political elites, present in the media, travel writing, reportage, political essays, and journalism, and it gradually penetrated popular consciousness (Todorova 1997). The term "Balkans" gradually ceased to function as a purely geographical designation and became a widely accepted negative metaphor in politics, journalism, and even everyday language. The Balkans were portrayed as an inferior, backward, and wild part of Europe, a region of violence and conflict, difficult to fully integrate with the "true" Europe (Cufurovic 2017). It was also perceived as a region of incomplete identity: "because of its transitory history—moving from being influenced by and adapting to different civilisational ideologies and cultures—the Balkans ‹are constructed as an incomplete self›" (Cufurovic, pp. 43–44). These features produced the image of the region as a peripheral, culturally ambivalent, and conflict-ridden space—one marked by its Ottoman heritage, situated in opposition to the West, and struggling with internal tensions and difficulties in defining its own identity.

The penultimate aspect to be addressed in outlining the key elements of social, religious, and cultural knowledge and beliefs surrounding Czermiński is the common Polish perception of Turkey and the Turks.

In the nineteenth century, Polish perceptions of the Turks were largely stereotypical and often negatively charged[17]. The Polish term Turek referred to a follower of Islam, that is, a Muslim. The Turk was also perceived as an enemy of Christianity[18]. Contrasted with the European, he was seen as a barbarian and an uncivilized Asiatic who oppressed the conquered "infidels" (*giaurs*), though he was no longer viewed as a valiant warrior. Turks were believed to be proud and arrogant toward "infidels", traits thought to stem from their "limited intellect and low level of civilization" (Niewiara 2000). For instance, during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, initial expectations of a peaceful takeover were soon replaced by reports of fierce resistance from Muslims. In the Galician press, this determination was attributed to the "fanaticism" and "savagery" of Muslims and their alleged "lack of discipline." The authorities, seeking to justify the occupation and compensate for the social costs of the war effort, cultivated the image of the

enemy as culturally and religiously alien. Published accounts abounded with gruesome depictions of atrocities, such as the killing and beheading of soldiers fighting for the emperor. Thus, even in the nineteenth century, the image of the Turk as brutal and cruel continued to be reinforced (Lis 2023).

An equally persistent characteristic attributed to the Turks was also their greed and tendency toward deceit (Niewiara 2000), as well as laziness (Lis 2023). There was widespread awareness of polygamy and of the fact that wealthier Turks kept harems (Niewiara 2000). Women, in turn, were regarded with sympathy as victims of oppressive Islam (Lis 2023).

This, however, represents only a partial picture. One must also consider the Orientalism that developed in Europe (roughly from the late eighteenth century), a multifaceted current that reached its peak in the nineteenth century and expressed the West's interest in and fascination with the East (the Orient). Orientalism, understood here not in the sense of Said's critique of the relationship between knowledge and colonial power but as a broad cultural current, encompassed not only scholarly studies of Oriental cultures and languages, but also the arts—literature, painting, architecture, music, theater, opera, and design. The West drew on motifs and inspirations from Oriental cultures, while also producing its own exoticized images and fantasies about them (McKenzie 1995). In topographical terms, interest in the Orient included the territories of the then Ottoman Turkey. In nineteenth-century Poland, Orientalism was present, inspired by its European counterpart, and manifested primarily in the arts, especially painting, literature, applied arts, and architecture. There was a fascination with the exotic, with an emphasis on the opulence, sensuality, and mystery of the Orient (including Turkey). Yet this image remained deeply ambivalent: the Orient still remained the Other—dangerous and symbolizing the opposite of the Western "self" (McKenzie 1995). This distinguishes Orientalism from Balkanism, in which the region was perceived as part of Europe, albeit an "incomplete" one (see note 16).

4.2. The Image of Islam and Muslims in Czerminski's Account—Discourse Analysis[19]

4.2.1. Ottoman Turks[20]

In Czerminski's work, we encounter a historical narrative that describes the Turkish invasion and presence in Albanian territory in a relatively neutral manner—the author's language when referring to the Turks is primarily informative, and his accounts are factual. However, there are also passages in which the image of the Ottoman Turks becomes a discursive construct marked by negative evaluation. In these instances, Czerminski employs specific semantic strategies (i.e., those influencing the meaning and interpretation of discourse, van Dijk 1983) to depict the Turks and their actions.

Czerminski uses distinctive vocabulary. As synonyms for "Turks," he uses words such as *barbarzyństwo/barbarzyńcy* ("barbarism/barbarians," pp. 155, 248, 253), *niewierni* ("infidels," pp. 152, 182), and *poganie* ("pagans," pp. 118, 190, 191, 247). He also uses verbs to describe the actions of the Turks, such as *pustoszyć [kościoły]* ("to devastate [churches]", p. 255), *zrównywać z ziemią* ("to raze to the ground", pp. 151, 165), *mordować [księży/wszystkich mieszkańców]* ("to murder [priests/all inhabitants]", p. 55), *rabować do szczętu/ze wszystkiego* ("to plunder completely/of everything", pp. 218, 263), and *dopuszczać się najokropniejszych nadużyć* ("to commit the most horrible abuses", p. 71). Although these expressions refer to factual events, their selection contributes to an emotionally charged perception of those events.

The Turks are also described through the use of epithets, for example: "In order to tear the faith from the hearts of the brave Albanians, [the Turks—B.P-S.] did spare no means that *savage*[21] barbarism could employ; many were deprived of their property, others were murdered" (p. 150), "The persecution temporarily ceased, yet hatred still smoldered in the hearts of the *infidel* Turks and at times burst forth in even stronger flames [...]. Thus

it continued until 1875" (p. 254),"On this now pagan land, sorrowful memories awaken" (p. 254), "It was as clear as day, that once the combat starts, the *savage* Muslims would murder all" (p. 218).

The text conveys a specific representation of the Turks and of the relationship between them and the Christian/Catholic population of Albania. The author's statements do not concern individual persons; he presents the Turks as a homogenous group characterized by shared attributes. The repeated use of words such as "barbarians" and "savages" serves not only to describe events but, above all, to reinforce a stereotypical, one-dimensional image of the Turks as an uncivilized people.

The Turks are portrayed as invaders who devastated Albania for a long period and committed numerous morally reprehensible acts (among others, they destroyed churches, converted them into mosques, expelled bishops from their dioceses, took women and children captive, killed members of the population, seized their property, and persecuted them for their faith). The description of the Turks' actions—through the use of the aforementioned verbs and expressions such as "the most horrible abuses" or "plundering of everything"—reinforces the image of the Turks as a threat. It implies their brutality, violence, and lawlessness, thereby strengthening an unequivocally negative moral judgment.

Furthermore, he uses expressions that reinforce the negative image of the Turks, such as *jarzmo tureckie* ("Turkish yoke", pp. 37, 66, 172), *zaciekłość turecka [w prześladowaniach katolików]* ("Turkish ferocity [in the persecution of Catholics]", p. 254), or *srogie prześladowania katolików* ("severe persecution of Catholics," p. 227). In contrast, he employs evaluative expressions referring to Christianity and Christians in Albania—especially Catholics—such as *biedni Albańczycy/mieszkańcy/biskupi* ("poor Albanians/inhabitants/bishops", pp. 58, 66, 151), *smutny stan Albanii* ("the sorrowful state of Albania", p. 151), *śmieszna i bolesna ta reprezentacya chrześcijan* ("ludicrous and painful was this representation of Christians", p. 117)[22], and *najstraszniejsze boleści [prześladowanych kapłanów]* ("the most dreadful sufferings [of persecuted priests]", p. 154), which also have a hyperbolic quality, enhancing the image of martyrdom. These emotionally charged expressions deepen the contrast between the Turks ("they") and the Christians/Catholics ("we" or "those belonging to us").

This juxtaposition of Turks with Albanians or Catholic priests constructs a group-based schema in which "our people" are the victims and "they" are the oppressors. Likewise, the terms "pagans" and "infidels" contrasted in the text with "Albanian Christians/Catholics" reinforce the stereotype of the uncivilized Turks, that is, Muslims, in opposition to civilized Christianity.

This contrast is also evident in the description of taxation, according to which Christians were burdened much more heavily than Muslims; in some villages, Turkish officials even exempted Muslims from taxes while charging Christians twice as much (p. 120).

He employs a similar strategy when writing about the composition of the *mejlis* (council)[23] in the Shkodër *vilayet*, where the additional expression *a jednak* ("and yet") suggests surprise, since, according to the Hatt-ı Hümâyûn edict, religious proportionality was supposed to be maintained in public administration:

> "And yet, out of fourteen members of the *mejlis*, twelve are Mohammedans and only two are Christians, although in Shkodra itself more than one-third of the population is Christian, and in the entire Shkodra *vilayet* more than half of the subjects are Christians! But even these two can do nothing in the *mejlis* for the benefit of their fellow Christians, for the governor usually does not ask their advice, and their other colleagues likewise ignore their Christian companions, do not ask for their opinion, so they hold power only to the extent that they sign the resolutions adopted by the Mohammedans" (pp. 116–17).

The above description reinforces the pattern of Turkish dominance and the effective marginalization of Christians within administrative institutions, despite the appearance of equality, by highlighting a clear disproportion. Czermiński emphasizes that, despite the formal provisions for equality in the *mejlis*, power remained in the hands of Muslims. The presence of Christians within the governing body was merely illusory and devoid of real influence. The discourse highlights both the existing inequalities and the mechanisms of social exclusion within the power structures of the Ottoman Empire.

The administrative system is portrayed as inherently oppressive and corrupt; the author illustrates this through examples of everyday abuses, including bribery, tax injustice, and the imprisonment of innocent people (pp. 118, 119–20, 216, 220). Although a *nizamiye*[24] court operated in the Albanian territories, the Turks made no provision for representatives of any faith other than Islam to sit on it[25]. Czermiński writes: "The testimony of a Christian before a *kadi* means nothing, even when the dispute occurs just between Christians. In such cases, Christians must hire witnesses from among the Mohammedans, and it is not difficult to obtain false testimony" (p. 117). It follows from this account that Albanian Christians had no means of resolving their disputes in their own courts under their own laws; nor was there a system of justice involving representatives of different religious communities. In this way, an image of systemic injustice is reinforced—one that reflects not only physical but also administrative violence inflicted by the "others" on "us." All of the above examples employ the mechanism of polarization to portray the two groups as having fundamentally different values.

Among other semantic strategies, Czermiński frequently employs the technique of giving examples, primarily of the persecution of Catholic clergy by the Turks (pp. 151–52, 152–54, 155, 180, 251, 253, 258). By referring to specific events or individuals, he lends credibility to general statements about the persecution by grounding them in concrete cases, thereby helping readers visualize the situations and reinforcing the negative image of the Turks.

The meaning of Czermiński's statements is further shaped by the use of generalizations. For instance: "The rule of the Sublime Porte *always* aimed, as far as possible, to restrain any development in these mountains ..." (p. 151), and, "As *throughout the East*, so here [i.e., in the city of Durrës—B.P-S.], the pagan hand of the Turks destroyed *everything* that was beautiful" (p. 247). In the latter case, the negative actions of the Turks are generalized to encompass the entire East, while the second part of the sentence, a hyperbolic generalization, suggests total destruction without exception. Such generalizations imply that these specific negative actions—whether hindering development or destroying beauty—are not isolated or accidental but rather enduring, widespread, and systematic. At the cognitive level, the text conveys a perception of the Turks as exerting a perpetually harmful influence on the subjugated community.

One of the semantic strategies identified by van Dijk (1983) is accusation, which can take the form of blaming, attacking, or criticizing. In *Albania*..., Czermiński uses this strategy to blame the Turks, attributing to them the persecution of Christians as well as the imposition of heavy taxes, which led to the widespread phenomenon of crypto-Christianity (particularly before the eighteenth century, pp. 151, 255–56, 258). Christians adopted Muslim names and sometimes married Muslims[26]. Despite the complex social and political context in which Albanians and Turks coexisted, Czermiński places primary responsibility for these practices on the Ottoman authorities.

At the same time, *Albania*... contains a rupture in the narrative: the author acknowledges that, after the proclamation of the Hatt-ı Hümâyûn edict, the conditions for practicing the Catholic faith under Turkish rule began to improve (pp. 190–91). The Turks ceased persecuting Christians and destroying churches, allowed Mass to be celebrated within city

limits (as illustrated by Shkodra, where previously it had been permitted only outside the city, in a Christian cemetery), and permitted the construction of churches, albeit in limited numbers and at discreet locations (one church per settlement). Religious life in the public sphere became more visible, as illustrated by the changing use of church bells: from a primitive bell on a string to larger bells, and from sporadic ringing to daily ringing marking the start of Mass and the Angelus. Finally, local clergy could be educated by European missionaries: "The education of the clergy is carried out properly, and a larger contingent of missionaries tends this very neglected and abandoned vineyard of the Lord" (p. 160).

In this passage, the image of the Turks shifts somewhat. The gradual progress achieved and the religious tolerance granted can be interpreted as positive aspects of Turkish policy. Previously portrayed as enemies of Christians, the Turks now appear as a governing authority that—albeit reluctantly—respects the rights of its subjects to some extent. At the cognitive level, this may indicate a rupture in the otherwise consistent stereotype, revealing an empirical experience of more normalized conditions.

4.2.2. Islam and Muslims

In Czermiński's work, Islam and Muslims are generally not presented neutrally. Here too, negatively charged vocabulary appears. The author describes the life of Muslims as one lived *wśród zepsucia* ("amid corruption", p. 211), referring both to their customs and to Islamic traditions, which he views through the lens of Christian norms and values.

Additionally, when describing Islam, terms such as *rozkiełznana* ("unbridled") and *wyuzdana zmysłowość* ("licentious sensuality") are employed, for example: "The religion of Muhammad is a religion of unbridled sensuality; in contrast, Christianity restrains sensuality within bounds" (p. 157; see also p. 267). The term "unbridled" denotes something that operates without any constraints; in the context of "unbridled sensuality," it conveys uncontrolled and unchecked operation of the senses and drives. "Licentious" carries a pejorative connotation, indicating a lack of moral restraint, and when combined with sensuality, denotes lustfulness or intemperance in bodily pleasures.

Czermiński links these traits to the practices of polygyny and concubinage in Islam, presenting them as sources of corruption characteristic of Muslims as a whole[27]. Both terms in Polish draw on the metaphor of control (to tame/bridle) and its loss (to unbridle/run wild), portraying sensuality as a trait that must be restrained. This usage generates a negative, moralizing judgment, clearly contrasting order and control (represented by Christianity) with disorder and lack of restraint (represented by Islam). Such language functions as a stigmatizing tool, simultaneously legitimizing the perceived superiority of one group over the other.

The metaphor *upadek uczuć religijnych* ("decline of religious sentiment", p. 190) found in *Albania*... also carries negative connotations, suggesting the degradation and loss of the capacity for genuine religious experience, a kind of spiritual crisis that contributes to the broader notion of moral corruption. Islam, in Czermiński's view, is associated with this decline, as he observes (p. 190) that Muslims are reluctant to pray and do not refrain from work on Fridays. The author interprets the communal Friday prayer (*salat al-jum'a*) through a Christian lens, according to which Sunday as a sacred day should be free from unnecessary labor. In contrast, within Islamic culture, Friday as the day of communal worship does not entail a general suspension of daily activities.

Moreover, the author associates Islam with the expressions *smrodliwa woń* and *woń wstrętna* ("foul odor" and "repulsive smell," p. 157), linking a physical sensation (smell) with the symbolic notion of impurity or repulsion. Czermiński notes that since the 17th century, missionaries had been aware—something confirmed by historical Church documents—of the practice of baptizing Muslim children. Muslims sought baptism for their offspring in

order to remove "the foul odor, various diseases, and the dangers of sorcery" (p. 157), a fact the author additionally corroborates with his own experience. The Albanian Church repeatedly prohibited such fictitious baptisms. In response to pressure from the Muslim community, Pope Urban VIII (d. 1644) allowed clergy to use a special formula that did not constitute a sacrament. Czermiński concludes with the reflection that the aforementioned odor may be a disease or a divine punishment, once again presenting Islam as a religion of sensuality in contrast to Christianity's self-control over the body. By constructing an image in which Muslims seek baptism for magical rather than religious reasons, and in which baptism removes an odor, the text diminishes Islam and questions the authenticity of Muslim religious practice.

The rhetorical question, "Is this foul odor not the mark of the religion of Muhammad?" (p. 159), encourages the reader to affirm the author's negative judgment and subtly suggests that Islam is, by its very nature, a stigmatized religion—morally and spiritually inferior to Christianity.

A semantic strategy already mentioned, namely blaming, also appears in the context of Islam, where it consists of attributing negative behavioral patterns to Muslims. Due to contact with them, some Catholics (mainly highlanders) had assimilated certain practices, such as polygamy and the selling of daughters into harems. Czermiński describes such conduct as *wielkie nadużycie* ("great abuse," pp. 160, 279, 302). The term *nadużycie*, clearly marked with negative connotations, signifies a transgression of established boundaries, primarily legal or moral ones, and denotes actions perceived as harmful and unacceptable. The adjective *wielkie* underscores the magnitude and seriousness of the phenomenon. Thus, "great abuses" not only describe specific practices among Catholics (polygamy and the selling of daughters) but also imply that Muslims are to blame for their occurrence, as they are portrayed as practicing polygamy and maintaining harems.

The fact that Catholics adopted from Muslims customs and behaviors that, from the perspective of Christian norms and values, constituted serious transgressions suggests that Islam functioned as a demoralizing force, undermining traditional Christian values. Indirectly, these "transgressions" become a symbol of social threat and moral danger.

Christians also adopted from Muslims certain practices related to the upbringing of girls. The lives of young Albanian Muslim women are briefly described by Czermiński, who provides a relatively neutral account of their situation ("brought up according to the precepts of the Qur'an," "they learn to read and write under the supervision of women," "they engage in sewing, embroidery, and the production of silk fabrics," pp. 83–84). However, he emphasizes their social restrictions upon reaching the age of twelve: "they must remain hidden in their parents' home," "they never leave their parents' house" (p. 83). Both statements underscore their seclusion and lack of freedom. At the same time, Czermiński contrasts them with Albanian Christian women, who are said to enjoy "incomparably greater freedom," "respect," and "dignity" (p. 84). Through this strategy of contrast, Muslim women appear as oppressed, while Catholic women emerge as free and respected. On the cognitive level, the use of contrast, as noted earlier, reinforces the polarization between "those who belong to us" and "the others."

In Czermiński's text, however, there are examples that disrupt the predominantly monolithic and negative image of Muslims. The author recounts a story (pp. 138–40) involving a certain Paskal Junchi, an Albanian priest who was visited late at night by a Muslim man. The visitor came to inform him that he had found a mortally wounded Catholic in the mountains (a victim of a blood feud, which formed part of Albanian customary law) who had asked for a priest to be brought to him.

The Muslim greets the priest with a traditional salutation, addresses him with respect, offers him a second horse, and together they ride to the site of the incident. Czermiński

highlights the Muslim's desire to fulfill the dying man's last wish and his sense of duty, which transcends religious affiliation. The account emphasizes trust, solidarity, and cooperation across confessional boundaries.

A similar dynamic can be observed in Czermiński's description of blood brotherhood, a custom particularly common among Albanian highlanders. He explains this social institution and the ceremony of its establishment in a neutral, matter-of-fact tone. Among Albanians, it represents a spiritual bond of fraternity formed between two young men who pledge mutual assistance and protection throughout their lives. A ritual brother is regarded as a member of the family, and the bond is considered so strong that marriages between their families are often discouraged. The ceremony varies by region. Czermiński notes that it also occurs between individuals of different faiths. When a Muslim and a Christian enter into such a bond of fraternity, each pours a few drops of his own blood into a separate cup and offers it to his blood brother to drink while taking an oath of loyalty in the presence of witnesses. The bond is regarded as sacred and permanent, often leading to the shared upbringing of children, cohabitation, and joint ownership of property (pp. 93–94).

The fact that Czermiński distinguishes between different forms of ritual brotherhood for various religious groups demonstrates his awareness of the existence of boundaries, even among the brothers-in-faith themselves, for whom the ceremony takes a slightly different form, but also indicates that these boundaries are, in fact, crossable.

At the cognitive level, this discourse can be read as a narrative countering the stereotype of an unbridgeable divide between Muslims and Christians. It supports the idea of the possibility of fraternity and loyalty among adherents of different religions without the need to relinquish one's confessional identity.

The last two examples serve as a kind of counterpoint to the dominant negative discourse, creating a space that highlights the possibility of everyday dialogue and coexistence.

4.2.3. Elements of the Muslims' Material and Immaterial Culture

Czermiński devotes several passages to presenting elements of both the material and immaterial culture of the Albanians, offering descriptions that are primarily factual and precise. He provides detailed accounts of Albanian houses, clothing, cuisine, dining ceremonies, and weddings, with occasional references to their Muslim variants. To convey these distinctions, Czermiński employs a strategy of contrast, emphasizing differences between Muslim and Christian cultural practices. For instance, he notes: "Low and narrow windows are usually fitted with iron bars; in the harem and in rooms facing the street, they also have very dense grilles. In Christian homes, the windows are wider and larger" (p. 107); "Muslims never use wine at the table; by contrast, Christians never drink water during meals ..." (p. 112); and "Christian townspeople [...] do not have the custom, as Muslims do, of always carrying weapons with them" (p. 103). Through these examples, Czermiński highlights cultural differences while maintaining a descriptive and observational tone, guiding the reader to recognize the diversity of Albanian life across religious and social contexts.

These comparisons once again serve not merely a descriptive function, but also a symbolic one: they delineate and maintain a clear boundary between the two worlds, emphasizing their distinctiveness.

The comparisons often carry an evaluative element that undermines the neutrality of the description, for example: "Meals among Albanian Christians are much more modest; they make do with very little, living most frugally [...] The beginning of the meal is more or less the same as among the Mohammedans, though far simpler" (p. 112), or: "The dress of Albanian Christian townswomen, although equal in richness and beauty to that of Muslim women, is distinguished by great modesty" (p. 106). In this way, the modesty of Christians

becomes a virtue, and frugality becomes a marker of restraint. The splendor and refinement of Muslims' daily life, meanwhile, are not condemned, rather, they appear to the author more as an aesthetic curiosity than a moral flaw.

Similarly, the description of a Muslim wedding procession contains elements of subjective evaluation and emotional coloring: "The procession accompanying the bride to her future husband's home is sometimes far more magnificent and picturesque [than among Christians—B.P-S.]. The Muslims, armed and elegantly dressed, ride spirited steeds [...], the sound of gunfire combined with music and singing gives the whole procession an air of extraordinary liveliness" (p. 92). The epithets *dzielne rumaki* ("spirited steeds"), *niezwykłe ożywienie* ("extraordinary liveliness"), and *wytwornie ubrani muzułmanie* ("elegantly dressed Muslims"), while focusing on the outward appearance of the phenomenon, carry a positive emotional charge that moves the account away from neutrality. They suggest admiration and, if not outright fascination, then at least a genuine curiosity about otherness and exoticism.

Foreign-language terms also feature prominently, particularly in the context of Muslim culture, though not exclusively. For instance, when describing the layout of a Muslim household, Czerminski identifies its two sections by name: *selamlik*, intended for receiving guests, and *harem*, reserved for women (p. 107). In the context of dining, the guest who begins the meal utters *bismi-llah ar-rahman ar-rahim* ("in the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful") and also signals the end of the meal (p. 112). In a passage on clothing, the author notes: "Muslims always leave the house armed. Their weapons are pistols, carried in a *sülah*—a belt composed of several pieces of red leather. Tucked behind this belt are also a *yatagan* and a *harbi*, an iron rod used for loading weapons" (p. 103). Through the use of these foreign, orientalizing terms, Czerminski once again emphasizes cultural otherness and distinctiveness.

Finally, it is worth noting that Czerminski is aware that Albania, which territorially forms part of "European Turkey," is perceived as a country belonging to the "Asiatic East." The author concurs with the vision of the region's peripheral status in relation to Europe and its cultural and social otherness (p. 246), although the distinctiveness of certain customs does not always stem from their Islamic character as examplified by the customary Albanian law of blood feud.

5. Conclusions

The above discourse analysis, following van Dijk's framework, allows for several key conclusions regarding the mechanisms through which Czerminski constructs his representations of Islam and Muslims, as well as the role of ideology in shaping these representations.

In Czerminski's discourse, that of a man devoted to the service of the Church—educated, well-read, and cosmopolitan—one can discern the ideological frameworks that seem to have (rather unconsciously) influenced his subjective interpretation of reality: ecclesiocentrism, as well as elements of Eurocentric, Balkanist, and Orientalist thought characteristic of nineteenth-century Europe. His context model was further shaped by his personal identity, rooted in spirituality and piety, as well as by his missionary zeal (even though he did not travel to Albania as a missionary). Other related situational properties—or rather their subjective mental constructions—such as his purpose and intentions in preparing a work on Albania, also influenced which aspects of reality he considered significant and how he chose to represent them.

Czerminski adopts an ecclesiocentric perspective to a far greater extent than a Eurocentric one, emphasizing the superiority of Christianity and treating its norms and values as a universal frame of reference for understanding the Other. The normativity and universality of the Christian system—though not always explicitly stated—are clearly present: Czer-

miński's discourse presupposes a particular religious and cultural order through which other systems are evaluated, constructing Islam as something alien, incomplete, or even inferior (Islam as an immoral system; Muslims as pagans, infidels, and barbarians of weak religiosity and superficial practice). This reflects the perspective of a Catholic missionary, situated within the missionary discourse of the time, in which such an assessment was the norm rather than an individual departure from it. His narrative consistently relies on the "us–them" opposition, which in the nineteenth century constituted a fundamental means of organizing the world. In delineating the Other, Czermiński primarily employs religion as the axis of civilizational evaluation.

As the reconstruction of the context model (Section 4.1) shows, the "us–them" polarization was largely consistent with the genre of the text, the perspective of its sources, the purpose of the publication, and the author's formation as a Jesuit and editor of a missionary periodical, while a dialogical approach was not yet available as an interpretive framework.

Czermiński perceives the threat that Islam poses to the Albanian Catholic Church and, at the same time, seeks to demonstrate the need for evangelizing efforts and spiritual support for the faithful and their identity. In other words, his interpretation of the situation is grounded in a concern for preserving the purity of faith and religious identity in the face of the challenges posed by Islam—depicted against the backdrop of real difficulties such as persecution by the Ottoman Turks, the shortage of priests, crypto-Christianity, conversions to Islam, and changing social customs[28]. At the same time, the author shows a clear effort to avoid the dehumanization of those of other faiths and to refrain from fostering a hostile sense of distance. In this respect, the polarizing framework found in Czermiński is occasionally disrupted.

Therefore, in *Albania*..., the discourse is nuanced through the example of a "good Muslim" and through examples of cross-confessional bonds and mutual loyalty between Muslims and Christians within kinship networks. Even in the description of the Ottoman Turks—not only as Muslims but especially as an ethnic element—whose traits are generally presented negatively in line with contemporary stereotypical perceptions prevalent in Polish popular consciousness, there are positive examples regarding changes in religious freedom. Although these are only a few instances, Czermiński clearly signals that harmonious coexistence across confessional barriers, based on mutual respect, was possible and socially accepted. These observations accord with the view of a number of scholars that Islam constituted a durable element of social life in Albania and, more broadly, throughout the Balkans. As an integral component of the region's social and cultural fabric, it contributed to shaping local patterns of coexistence and interaction between Christian and Muslim communities (Tanasković 2007).

Czermiński's discourse also reflects two related but distinct representations. Balkanism is visible at the sociocultural level: he perceives Albania as a country peripheral to Europe and more closely tied to the East, and the Ottoman Turks as a "de-Europeanizing" element. Orientalism, understood here as fascination with the Orient combined with its perception as distant and Other, appears in his selection of topics related to both the material and immaterial aspects of Islamic culture and in the evident curiosity with which he presents them. In this domain, the difference is emphasized without a negative value judgment; the reader perceives this "Muslimness" not as evil or a threat, but as a form of otherness that invites acquaintance and understanding.

In summary, the ideologies embedded in the historical nineteenth-century *épistémè*—that is, the underlying, often implicit rules of thinking that define the framework for producing knowledge and formulating truth (Foucault 1966)—set the tone and boundaries of Czermiński's discourse. Nevertheless, they did not entirely suppress the author's individuality:

his observations of local life, though framed by these ideologies, at times transcended and qualified them.

Funding: This article was prepared as part of the project "Enhancing Research Capacity in Cultural and Religious Studies in the Area of the Jesuits' Cultural Contribution," funded by the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education under the "Regional Initiative of Excellence" (RID) programme.



Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

1 On Galicia in the nineteenth century, cf. Davies (2012).

2 The biography was compiled based on the following sources: Cieślak (2017), Gregorczyk (1991/1992), Grzebień (1981), Krzyszkowski (1938), Sędłak (2016), and Urbanik (1985).

3 At the end of the nineteenth century, there were six Catholic dioceses in Turkish Albania (three archdioceses and three bishoprics). The author additionally included a description of the Diocese of Antivari, which, although, it belonged to Montenegro at that time, had historical ties with the Albanian dioceses. Pastoral care for Albanian Catholics fell under the authority of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The right to exercise the so-called Kultusprotektorat—religious patronage over Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire—was granted to Austria by the Turkish sultans as early as 1616 and was subsequently confirmed in peace treaties following various wars (including the Austro-Turkish War of 1683–1699). Thanks to this patronage, Austria began to exert increasing influence in northern Albania from the mid-nineteenth century, primarily for political purposes: by supporting Catholics in northern Albania, it sought to strengthen its influence in the region, weaken the Ottoman Empire, and counter the political ambitions of Orthodox Christians in the southern Balkans. With Austrian support, schools and churches were established and renovated in northern Albania (Elsie 2010).

4 A mental model describes the way reality is represented in the mind. It refers to personal, subjective, and temporary representations of specific events, situations, people, or actions in an individual's mind. According to van Dijk (1998), mental models are individual but consistent with the belief system shared by the participants of discourse. They are variable and context-dependent, shaped by the communicative purpose, social situation, and the roles of sender and receiver. Mental models contain not only knowledge but also evaluations and beliefs, including those that are unconscious.

5 It should be remembered that the Catholic Church played an important role in shaping Albanian national identity and, more broadly, in education. Among the religious orders active in Albania, the Franciscans—present since the 13th century—played an invaluable role. In the mid-nineteenth century, they initiated educational projects, establishing a Franciscan school in Shkodra, later known as the Collegium Illyricum, which was the first to teach in the Albanian language. They also opened a Franciscan seminary where instruction was conducted in Albanian; until the nineteenth century, due to a ban imposed by the Turks, Catholic schools used Italian as the language of instruction. Around the same period, the Jesuits arrived in Albania. Despite their relatively short history in the country, their contribution to education and culture was significant. Their main goals were the training seminarians for the priesthood and the promotion of the faith. They founded seminaries, built churches, and engaged in publishing activities, thereby substantially raising the level of education and culture in Albania. In 1877, they established the College of Saint Francis Xavier (Kolegja Saveriane) in Shkodra, which later developed into a higher school. With its emphasis on instruction in both Albanian and Italian, it produced many prominent Albanian writers and national heroes in the early twentieth century (Elsie 2010).

6 In the nineteenth century, Albania was a country with a diverse religious structure. Alongside Islam, which was gradually becoming the dominant religion, there were significant Orthodox communities (mainly in the south) under the authority of Constantinople, as well as Catholic communities (mainly in the north).

7 Intentions do not need to be ideological in nature; they can stem from the personal circumstances and biography of the language user (van Dijk 1998).

[8] Initially, the periodical was published as an annual volume without division into monthly issues; later it appeared in monthly installments, which were nevertheless issued as one annual volume.

[9] None of the sources available to me provided information on the print run of Czermiński's book.

[10] Despite the absence of Polish statehood, the autonomy granted to Galicia between 1860 and 1873 fostered the development of Polish education, administration, and culture in Krakow. Krakow was not merely a provincial city of the Habsburg monarchy, but a space where tradition and modernity, religion and science, art and politics intersected (for further discussion, see Estraicher 1941).

[11] While intentions and purposes are mental representations of language users, functions are social (van Dijk 1998).

[12] Poland was also considered part of Western civilization, although it was viewed as lagging somewhat behind the West (Niewiara 2000).

[13] According to Dussel (2000), the origins of Eurocentrism can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance, and especially to the period following the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

[14] Although religious motives undoubtedly inspired missionary work, and the stance of the Church (and Christianity more broadly) toward colonialism was complex and evolved over time, the association of colonial policy with conversion to the Christian faith in the nineteenth century was nonetheless a historical reality (Ludwig 1998).

[15] Of course, throughout the history of Christianity there were individual voices expressing openness toward Islam on the theological or, more broadly, intellectual level. Ultimately, however, even these approaches tended to aim at including Muslims within missionary activity (for a broader discussion, see, e.g., Urban 1999; Armour 2002).

[16] Maria Todorova introduced the term Balkanism to describe an intellectual and political discourse that developed over the course of two centuries and crystallized particularly during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. She argues that Balkanism is not identical to Orientalism: whereas the Orient was imagined as a radically separate Other, the Balkans were perceived as part of Europe, albeit an "incomplete" one (see Todorova 1997, Introduction: Balkanism and Orientalism: Are They Different Categories?).

[17] The negative image of Turks (and, more broadly, of Muslims) was not a phenomenon unique to Poles but rather part of a broader European narrative concerning followers of Islam (Lis 2023, see also Marchand 2009).

[18] This feature was particularly evident in the imagination of the Polish nobility earlier, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Poland regarded itself as the "bulwark of Christianity" and the defender of the faith. At that time, the Turk was perceived as a cruel and fearsome enemy, an adversary of the Christian world, and his religion was seen as idolatry, paganism, and superstition, while admiration and respect for the powerful Ottoman state and its army mingled with fear and contempt (Niewiara 2000).

[19] Due to space limitations, the discourse analysis is confined to the most representative examples of language use.

[20] Although Czermiński uses the term "Turks" as a synonym for "followers of Islam" or "Muslims" (e.g., "Albanianized Turks, that is, of the Mohammedan faith", p. 82), he makes an ethnic distinction between Turks and Albanians who adopted Islam, referring to the latter as "Albanian Muslims" or "Mohammedan Albanians." In this subsection, I focus on passages that explicitly concern the Ottoman Turks as a foreign element, while the following subsection is devoted to Islam and Muslims. Although most of these passages refer to Albanian Muslims, the author's observations may also be extended to ethnic Turks—Muslims residing in Albania. The line between the two groups, therefore, is not clearly defined.

[21] The italics in the quotations here and below are mine.

[22] The issue concerns the representation of Christians in the *mejlis* (council) following the promulgation of the Hatt-ı Hümâyûn edict by Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1856. The decree, issued as part of the Tanzimat reforms (1837–1898), guaranteed equality to all subjects of the Ottoman Empire regardless of their religion. As a result, Christians gained access to positions in public service and became subject to military conscription, though exemption could be obtained through payment. The reforms, however, were implemented unevenly across the Empire, and in certain regions a gap persisted between the law and its actual implementation.

[23] The *mejlis* was a local administrative or advisory council appointed by the *vali* (governor of a province—*vilayet*). According to Czermiński himself (p. 116), the council's authority was very broad: "It decrees everything pertaining to administration and police, dispenses justice, and even in civil matters may annul the verdicts of a *kadi*. It would seem that the *mejlis* [...] must be a blind and obedient tool in his [i.e., the *vali*'s—B.P-S.] hand; however, this is not the case. This council may exercise a certain kind of control over the governor's conduct, as it knows the country and local relations better than the *pasha*, who is replaced almost every year."

[24] The author uses the expression sąd mięszany ("mixed court", p. 117).

[25] During the Tanzimat period, a judicial reform was introduced whereby, alongside the traditional Şeriat (Shari'a) courts, secular courts known as Nizamiye courts were established. These courts applied a new civil code called Mecelle-i Ahkâm-ı Adliye, which represented an attempt to systematically collect and organize the dispersed norms of Shari'a law into a codified form. As Rubin (2011, p. 30) notes, "the code echoed principles derived from French law in terms of substance and structure." The influence of French law was connected with the Ottoman Empire's entry into the sphere of global commerce. In practice, as the state developed and legal reforms progressed, the role of the Şeriat courts (which also adopted the Mecelle) gradually diminished in favor of the secular Nizamiye courts. These were staffed by appointed professional judges, including not only Muslims but also members of

other faiths, which made them more pluralistic and representative of various religious communities. Consequently, non-Muslims came to be governed by the law administered by secular courts rather than by their own religious law, but they could also be called as witnesses before these courts (see Rubin (2011) for a detailed discussion).

[26] Due to the absence of a uniform code of canon law in the nineteenth century, views on mixed marriages varied depending on the diocese or country. In general, the Church's attitude toward such marriages was negative: bishops were expected to warn the faithful against them and to withhold dispensations unless there were serious grounds for permitting the marriage. A dispensation could be granted only after certain conditions had been met (Fus 2003).

[27] Islamic law does not prohibit concubinage and permits a man to marry up to four women, provided that he treats them equally (see Walther 1993).

[28] It should be noted that under Ottoman rule, Albania's Christians did in fact experience certain forms of persecution, although these were not always overt or systematic. Mass conversions to Islam typically occurred in the aftermath of armed uprisings against the Turks and were often motivated less by theological conviction than by economic factors—particularly increasing tax burdens (Czekalski et al. 2009; Elsie 2010). Such conversions were, for the most part, superficial. Members of the Albanian elite adopted Islam primarily in order to obtain administrative positions within the imperial bureaucracy. By the 18th century, most of the Albanian upper classes had converted to Islam; however, as Vickers (1999, p. 16) notes, "[t]hroughout their turbulent history Albanians had shifted with relative ease from one religion to another: Catholic, Orthodox or Muslim according to momentary interests" (see also Czekalski 1996). A phenomenon widespread among Albanians—and mentioned by Czermiński—was crypto-Christianity, which was condemned by the local synod of Alessio in 1703. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Albania was a society almost evenly divided between Muslims and Christians (Czekalski et al. 2009), with a slight predominance of one or the other group depending on the region. By the early 20th century, Muslims constituted approximately 60–70% of the population, while Catholics made up around 10% (see, e.g., Elsie 2010; Czekalski et al. 2009). Interestingly, Albania was the only Balkan country where religion and nationality were not synonymous (Rouček 1948).

References

Primary sources

Czermiński, Marcin. 1893. *Albania. Zarysy Etnograficzne, Kulturalne i Religijne*. Kraków: Nakładem Redakcyi «Missyj katolickich».

Hauran. 1891. *Missye Katolickie* 10.5. pp. 113–20. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136157/edition/151207/content (accessed on 26 June 2025).

Missye OO. Kapucynów. 1888. *Missye Katolickie* 7.11. pp. 333–39. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136077/edition/153353/content (accessed on 27 June 2025).

Pamiętnik niewolnika afrykańskiego. 1891. *Missye Katolickie* 10.3. pp. 57–60. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/edition/151205/content (accessed on 27 June 2025).

Pope Gregory XVI. 1840. *Probe Nostis*. On the Propagation of the Faith. Available online: https://www.papalencyclicals.net/greg16/g16probe.htm (accessed on 21 July 2025).

Pope Leo XIII. 1880. *Sancta dei Civitas*. On Mission Societies. Available online: https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13mis.htm (accessed on 19 July 2025).

Pope Leo XIII. 1893. *Ad Extremas*. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Seminaries for Native Clergy. Available online: https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13nat.htm (accessed on 21 July 2025).

Słowo wstępne. 1892. *Missye Katolickie* 11.1. pp. 1–4. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136195/edition/151215/content (accessed on 26 June 2025).

Uroczystość „Muharem" u Perskich „Szyitów". 1888. *Missye Katolickie* 7.2. pp. 43–47. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136019/edition/153336/content (accessed on 27 June 2025).

„Z Algieru". 1888. List od Jednego z Tamże Przebywających Polaków. *Missye Katolickie* 7.1. pp. 7–11. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136018/edition/153335/content (accessed on 27 June 2025).

Zanguebar angielski. 1892. *Missye Katolickie* 11.1. pp. 11–19. Available online: https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/136195/edition/151215/content (accessed on 26 June 2025).

Secondary sources

Armour, Rollin S. 2002. *Islam, Christianity, and the West. A Troubled History*. New York: Orbis Books.

Cieślak, Stanisław. 2017. Słowo Wstępne do Książki ks. M. Czermińskiego SJ *Z podróży po Bośni i Hercegowinie* [Polish-language manuscript of the Foreword to the Book by Fr. M. Czermiński SJ *Z podróży po Bośni i Hercegowinie* for Albanian edition entitled *Nga udhëtimi nëpër Bosnjë dhe Hercegovinë*]. Translated by L. Zissi. Tiranë: Botimet Flesh, courtesy of the author.

Cufurovic, Mirela. 2017. Fully Known Yet Wholly Unknowable: Orientalising the Balkans. *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 2: 39–58. [CrossRef]
Czekalski, Tadeusz. 1996. *Zarys Dziejów Chrześcijaństwa Albańskiego w Latach 1912–1993*. Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS.
Czekalski, Tadeusz, Jerzy Hauziński, and Jan Leśny. 2009. *Historia Albanii*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich—Wydawnictwo.
Davies, Norman. 2012. *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe*. London: Penguin Books.
Dussel, Enrique. 2000. Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, 3: 465–78.
Dzino, Danijel. 2008. 'Becoming Slav', 'Becoming Croat': New Approaches in the Research of Identities in post-Roman Illyricum. *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 14: 195–206. [CrossRef]
Elsie, Robert. 2010. *Historical Dictionary of Albania*. Lanham, Toronto and Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press.
Estraicher, Stanislaw. 1941. Galicia in the Period of Autonomy and Self-Government, 1849–1914. In *The Cambridge History of Poland, 1697–1935*. Edited by William F. Reddaway, John H. Penson, Oskar Halecki and Roman Dyboski. Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, pp. 432–60.
Foucault, Michel. 1966. *Les Mots et les Choses. Une Archéologie des Sciences Humaines*. Paris: Gallimard.
Fus, Edward A. 2003. Mixed Marriages, Prohibition of. In *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. Executive Editor Berard L. Marthaler. Detroit, New York and San Diego: Thomson Gale, vol. 9, p. 747.
Gandhi, Leela. 2019. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Gregorczyk, Dariusz. 1991/1992. Działalność duszpasterska i społeczna polskich księży katolickich w Bośni, Albanii i Chorwacji na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* XIX–XX: 379–85.
Grzebień, Ludwik. 1981. Czerminski Marcin. In *Słownik Polskich Teologów Katolickich 1918–1981*. Edited by Ludwik Grzebień. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, vol. 5, pp. 263–67.
Heyne, Johannes. 2013. *The Ecumenical Movement: Did Pope Pius XII Condone Ecumenism?* Available online: https://cmri.org/articles-on-the-traditional-catholic-faith/the-ecumenical-movement-did-pope-pius-xii-condone-ecumenism/ (accessed on 16 July 2025).
Krzyszkowski, Józef. 1938. Czerminski Marcin. In *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Edited by Władysław Konopczyński. Warszawa: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, vol. 4, pp. 338–39.
Lis, Tomasz J. 2023. Bośniaccy muzułmanie w opinii Polaków i Czechów na przełomie XIX i XX wieku (do wybuchu I wojny światowej). *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* 150, 2: 317–336. [CrossRef]
Ludwig, Ralph. 1998. Trudna droga kościołów do samodzielności. Wiek XIX, 1800–1899. In *Kronika Chrześcijaństwa*. Warszawa: Świat Książki, pp. 322–77.
Marchand, Suzanne L. 2009. *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
McKenzie, John M. 1995. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
Niewiara, Agnieszka. 2000. *Wyobrażenia o Narodach w Pamiętnikach i Dziennikach z XVI–XIX Wieku*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, pp. 183–96.
Rouček, Joseph S. 1948. *Balkan Politics. International Relations in No Man's Land*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Rubin, Avi. 2011. *Ottoman* Nizamiye *Courts. Law and Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
Schmidt-Neke, Michael. 2006. Pseudologia phantastica und Orientalismus. Albanien als imaginäre Bühne für Spiridion Gopčević, Karl May und Otto Witte. In *Jahrbuch der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*. Edited by Klaus Eggers, Martin Lowsky, Ulrike Müller-Haarman and Hartmut Pütz. Hamburg: Hansa Verlag, pp. 151–83.
Sędłak, Marlena. 2016. W Dalmacyi i Czarnogórze Marcina Czermińskiego jako przykład zainteresowania antykiem chrześcijańskim w drugiej połowie XIX wieku. In *Starożytność Chrześcijańska. Materiały Zebrane*. Edited by Jan C. Kałużny. Kraków: Papieska Akademia Teologiczna, vol. 4, pp. 163–88.
Tanasković, Darko. 2007. Islam In The Balkans, Islam Within The Balkans. In *Islam at the Balkans in the Past, Today and in the Future*. Edited by Dragoljub B. Đorđević, Dragan Todorović and Ljubiša Mitrović. Niš: Yugislav Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, pp. 9–14.
Todorova, Maria. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Urban, Józef. 1999. *Dialog Międzyreligijny w Posoborowych Dokumentach Kościoła*. Opole: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.
Urbanik, Władysław. 1985. Czerminski Marcin. In *Encyklopedia Katolicka*. Edited by Romuald Łukaszyk, Ludomir Bieńkowski and Feliks Gryglewicz. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, vol. 3, column 834–35.
van Dijk, Teun A. 1983. Cognitive and Conversational Strategies in the Expression of Ethnic Prejudice. Paper presented at the Second International Conference on Psychology and Language, Bristol, UK, July 18–22.
van Dijk, Teun A. 1997. The Study of Dicourse. In *Discourse as Structure and Process*. Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Edited by Teun A. van Dijk. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, vol. 1, pp. 1–34.
van Dijk, Teun A. 1998. *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Vickers, Miranda. 1999. *The Albanians: A Modern History*. London, New York and Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic.
Walther, Wiebke. 1993. *Women in Islam*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.
Wrzos, Marcin. 2023. Jezuickie „Missye Katolickie" (1882–1891). Początkowy okres działalności pierwszego polskiego czasopisma misyjnego. *Studia Włocławskie* 25: 290–314. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.