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**The Lost Legacy.
The Little Known Heritage of Azerbaijani Emigration Literature
in Poland on the Example of Mehmed Emin Resulzade's Works**

*The friendship the Poles greeted us with in
their country – us, the people deprived of their
homeland – is beyond description...¹*

M.E. Resulzade

Abstract

After the collapse of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in April 1920, the Azerbaijani intellectual and political elites suffered repressions from the Bolshevik authorities. The most prominent figures had to leave the country fearing for their lives. Among them was the renowned journalist, publicist and head of the Musavat party – Mehmed Emin Resulzade. Fearing the Bolshevik expansion westwards, Polish authorities strived to weaken and destroy the Soviet Union's integrity. Their goal was to create a "sanitary cordon" of independent states between Poland and Bolshevik Russia. Thanks to the direct financial support from the Polish government, the political emigration from Azerbaijan, Georgia, North Caucasus and other states published their magazines and newspapers. In the second half of the 20th century, there was a political rapprochement between Turkey and the Soviet Union. As a result, the political situation of anti-Soviet emigration worsened. Therefore, the main burden of Azerbaijani emigration, headed by Resulzade, moved over the Vistula. The Polish period was very important for the publishing activities of the whole Azerbaijani emigration, represented by Resulzade. He mainly contributed to anti-Soviet press, tied to the Promethean movement, but not only. The author will

¹ Mehmed Emin Resulzade, *Azerbejdżan w walce o niepodległość*, Warszawa 1938, p. 161.

present here rarely known Resulzade articles on other topics. The article also presents his book in Polish *Azerbaijan in its Fight for Independence*.

Keywords: Mehemmed Emin Resulzade, Azerbaijan, emigration literature, promethean movement

The issue of Azerbaijani emigration to Poland is both difficult and sad. Difficult – as it requires thorough research in libraries and archives of several countries. When the researcher thinks he already browsed through everything, it turns out that only a part of available documents was checked. Many sources are still in private hands and are seldom made public or ultimately lost after their owner’s death. Sad – because in spite of the authors’ efforts and emotional engagement, many texts written in pre-war Poland were lost during the war. Many years ago, when I started my research on Caucasian emigration, I was really kidlike happy each time I found an article, a magazine or a book written by an author who is now of legendary status. But the first thing that often caught my attention was that the pages were not separated one from another – a sign that most of the time I was the first reader of those texts...

After the collapse of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in April 1920, the Azerbaijani political elite suffered repressions from the Bolshevik authorities. The most prominent figures had to leave the country fearing for their lives. Due to relative language and cultural proximity, they mostly left to Turkey. Among them was the renowned journalist, publicist and head of the Musavat party – Mehemmed Emin Resulzade. Since the very first days of his emigré life in Turkey Resulzade continued his political and publicist activities and founded political organizations of Azerbaijani emigration.

In 1923 Resulzade began to publish a political-literature magazine “Yeni Kafkasya” (The New Caucasus). In December 1925 Turkey signed a non-aggression pact and the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. Based on those agreements both sides refrained from supporting any third-party acts of political or military aggression against each other. Soviet diplomacy pressed on to ban publishing of any anti-Soviet press and so Turkish authorities soon closed down “Yeni Kafkasya”. The Caucasus was then deemed as an “internal matter of the Soviet Union”. Resulzade had to resign from the troublesome title. But already in early 1928 the Azerbaijani emigration began to publish another newspaper, namely “Azeri Türk” (The Azerbaijani Turk). In March 1929 another magazine surfaced – it was “Odlu Yurt” (The Homeland of Fire). Presumably, the editors feared direct naming because of political consequences – that is why they used a metaphor in the title.²

At the end of 1931 Turkey and USSR signed a protocol prolonging the treaty for five years. A secret clause was included, according to which Ankara was obliged to deport

² Sh. Kazimova, *Działalność antysowieckiej emigracji kaukaskiej w Turcji*, “Nowy Prometeusz”, 2 (2012), p. 218.

the most active anti-Soviet emigrants and counteract any anti-Soviet propaganda on its territory. Hence, Resulzade, who left for Warsaw to attend a conference in February 1930, was not admitted back to Turkey. With that, the decision making centre of Azerbaijani political emigration moved to Poland.

Fearing Bolshevik expansion westward, Polish authorities strived to weaken and destroy the Soviet Union's integrity. Their goal was to create a "sanitary cordon" of independent states between Poland and Bolshevik Russia. Thanks to the direct financial support from the Polish government, the political emigration from Azerbaijan, Georgia, North Caucasus and other states published their magazines and newspapers. One of their core activities included publishing and informing the Western public opinion about the fate of suppressed nations under the Soviet regime. In November 1926, a new magazine called "Le Prométhée" was founded. Later on, the term "promethean" was also used to describe the non-Russian dissident movements fighting the Kremlin.³

The Polish period was very important for the publishing activities of the whole Azerbaijani emigration. While in Poland, Mehemed Emin Resulzade mainly contributed to anti-Soviet press, tied to the promethean movement: "Wschód", "Gortsy Kavkaza"/ "Severnij Kavkaz", "Rocznik Tatarski".

On July 14, 1934 the representatives of national centres of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North Caucasus in exile signed the Caucasian Confederation Pact in Warsaw. The document obliged the sides to form a confederation after breaking free from the Soviet Union.⁴ "Severnij Kavkaz", a journal of the North Caucasians, in print since May 1934, readily published articles by Azerbaijani authors. The third edition of the journal was wholly devoted to the Caucasian Confederation Pact. On the occasion of this event Resulzade wrote:

The idea of the Caucasian Unity is the result of real circumstances experienced by the Caucasus now, due to historical events. Geographic

³ E. Charaszkiewicz, *Przebudowa Wschodu Europy*, Warszawa 1983; W. Bączkowski, *Prometeizm na tle epoki. Wybrane fragmenty z historii ruchu*, "Niepodległość", vol. 17, 1984, pp. 28–54; I. Werschler, *Federalizm i prometeizm w poglądach oraz działalności Tadeusza Hołównki*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1–4 (1982), pp. 3–21; S. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1971; J. Lewandowski, "Prometeizm" – koncepcja polityki wschodniej pilsudczyzny, "Biuletyn Wojskowej Akademii Politycznej", Seria Historyczna 1, No 2/12 (1958), pp. 3–16; 2, No 1 (1959), pp. 31–52; J. Lewandowski, *Imperializm słabości. Kształtowanie się polityki wschodniej pilsudczyków 1921–1926*, Warszawa 1976; A. Grzywacz, Grzegorz Mazur, *Ruch prometejski w Polsce*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 110 (1994), pp. 74–85; M. Kornat, *Ruch prometejski – ważne doświadczenie polityki zagranicznej II Rzeczypospolitej*, "Nowa Europa Wschodnia", 02(2008), pp. 76–86; R. Wojtak, *The Promethean Movement in Interwar Poland*, „East European Quarterly”, vol. 18, No 3 (1984), pp. 273–278; É. Copeaux, *Le mouvement "Prométhée"*, "Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien", No 16 (1993), pp. 1–36; G. Mamulia, *The Struggle for the Independence of the Caucasus: M. E. Resulzade and the Georgians in the Promethean Movement (1926-1936)*, "Pro Georgia. Journal of the Kartvelological Studies", no 20 (2010), pp. 97–111; G. Mamulia and R. Abutalibov, *Strana ogniej. V bor'bie za svobodu i nezavisimost'. Politicheskaya istoriya azerbaydzhanskoj emigratsii 1920–1945 gg.*, Baku 2014.

⁴ Mamulia and Abutalibov, *Strana ogniej*, p. 379.

unity, economic and strategic commonwealth – those are the foundations of the Union!⁵

An article titled “The Rising Sun”, written on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Japan’s triumph over Russia, is among those catching attention.⁶ Resulzade mentions that the victory had a big influence on the political life of his generation.

Victorious Japan gave our young generation a feeling of national rise. When our fathers succumbed to the illusory might of Russia and sought their salvation in prayers, the youth eagerly stepped onto the revolutionary path. In this way Japan’s victory (...) became a factor strengthening the national movements of peoples under the Russian rule. As one Istanbul newspaper wrote, at that time all Turkish hearts around the globe were with Japan.⁷

Resulzade foresaw the conflict between the Soviet Russia and Japan to happen again, he wrote about Japan’s growing economic power with great enthusiasm. As Moscow continued its expansionist policy, he deemed the Russo-Japanese conflict inevitable. He thought of Japan as having the mission of crushing the Bolsheviks and liberating Russian people from their rule. He hoped that also other nations inhabiting Russia would be set free along with that:

While Russians suffer from the Bolshevik rule, non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union suffer from both the Bolshevik and Russian occupation. Japan, which joined the international scene with its historic mission, may not limit itself to liberating the Russian nation. Because the problem of Russia does not only touch Russians. It is first and foremost a problem of nationalities in Russia (...).⁸

Resulzade argued that those nationalities, both politically and ideologically were on a higher level than in 1904–1905, so they could be deemed allies. The article demonstrates that Resulzade, foreseeing the worldwide conflict sought allies and extended hand to anyone interested in waging war with the Soviet Union.

It is worth mentioning that also Polish politicians, with Józef Piłsudski among them, counted on Japan.⁹ This was one of the common experiences of Resulzade and Piłsudski. They both began their political careers in the Russian Empire as revolutionaries, they

⁵ M.E. Rassoul-Zadé, *Un acte historique*, “Prométhée” 92 (1934), p. 17.

⁶ M.E. Rasul-zade, *Voskhodiashiee solntse*, “Şimali Kafkasya. Severniy Kavkaz” 2 (1934), pp. 12–14.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁹ J. Cisek, *Największym wrogiem Polski pozostała Rosja*, in: *Polska Piłsudskiego. Epoka, czyny i dziedzictwo Marszałka*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 26 March 2009, No 8, pp. 4–5.

fought for both national and socialist issues and they perceived Russia as the main enemy of their nations. This was the foundation of deep understanding between the two politicians. After Piłsudski's death in 1935, Reulzade wrote an article full of admiration and gratitude to the great statesman.¹⁰

A few years later Reulzade wrote an article on the occasion of the death of another great politician – Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.¹¹ Despite Atatürk being an ally of the Bolsheviks and it was during his rule that Reulzade was denied political asylum, the article praised the Turkish statesman. He blamed the Western powers for the rapprochement between Turkey and Moscow, since Western politicians did not understand the negative effects of the economic blockade of Turkey and contributed to directing this country towards Russia. Reulzade highly appreciated Atatürk's tactics, because he was able to use the stratagem of cooperation with the Bolsheviks to strengthen his position and the republican regime while not yielding to the ideological influences of communism. This was attested to by the fight against local communists:

His miracle is that starting from the war against Europe, he led to the Europeanization of Turkey; based on friendship with the Soviets outside, he fought communism within (...).¹²

Reulzade was known not only as an author of political publications, but also a literary critic. He wrote the article "The festive of Ferdowsi", devoted to the millennium of the great Persian poet.¹³ Reulzade was an admirer of Persian poetry, especially of Ferdowsi (940–1025) and his poem *Shahname*. He wrote that Ferdowsi had collected folk stories and made them into a national epic. Interesting is the look of Reulzade on the poet as an Iranian nationalist in the positive sense of the word, because the purpose of his masterpiece was the spiritual and cultural revival of Persia, deprived of Arab national attributes acquired as a result of Arab annexation. Reulzade claimed that Ferdowsi's works are nationalist in character, not only because of their contents. In the whole poem, apart from the fully assimilated Arabic words, the poet did not use any foreign words, while maintaining closeness to a living language. This, according to Reulzade, was the ideal of national literature, which should strive to awaken the national identity.

Based on his thesis lectured on January 17th in Paris "On the contemporary literature of Azerbaijan", Reulzade wrote an article and a booklet of the same title.¹⁴ It was published in Russian in Warsaw in 1936. The author begins his analysis of the 20th

¹⁰ M.E. Reul-zade, *Jozef Piłsudski*, "Şimali Kafkasya. Severnij Kavkaz", June 1935, No 14, pp. 3–4; Reul-zade, *Jozef Piłsudski*, "Şimali Kafkasya. Severnij Kavkaz", May 1935, No 13, pp. 13–16.

¹¹ M.E. Reul-zade, *Śmierć Kemala Atatürka*, "Wschód", October–December 1938, No 4, pp. 18–22.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 21.

¹³ M.E. Reul-zade, *Firdevsi bayramı*, "Şimali Kafkasya. Severnij Kavkaz", September–October 1934, No 5–6, pp. 2–3.

¹⁴ M.E. Reul-zade, *Sovremennaya literatura Azerbajdzana*, "Şimali Kafkasya, Severnij Kavkaz", February 1936, No 22, pp. 26–30; M.E. Reul-zade, *Sovremennaya literatura Azerbajdzana*, Warszawa 1936.

century literature from the works of Muhammad Fizuli – the first literature written in Azerbaijani language. However, Resulzade deemed Mirza Fatali Akhundov/Akhundzade (1812–1878) the godfather of contemporary Azerbaijani literature. His works began the initial stage of development of the national literature, which lasted until the revolution of 1905. This period was marked by the development of drama and educational ideas in literature which attacked remnants of the feudal order and religious fanaticism. The idea of national renaissance emerged in the second stage, which began after the 1905 revolution and lasted until the October Revolution of 1917. This period brought relative freedom of speech which favored emerging ideas of national press, literature and theater. On the other hand, the aftermath of the Balkan wars strengthened the feeling of distinctiveness among the Turkish people of the Russian Empire. According to Resulzade, the literary authors were more politically engaged than their predecessors.

Resulzade defined the third period in Azerbaijani literature's history as the one developed after the Bolshevik occupation of the country. He argued that in spite of harsh Soviet censorship the national literature would still be active and any attempts to artificially create a "proletariat" literature and arts would fail, not being able to influence and move the local population.

The quarterly "Wschód" (The Orient) published several articles by Resulzade, including: (1) "The Azerbaijani Republic"¹⁵ which contained general information about the country, its history, economy, literature and the uprising movement; and (2) "The idea of the Caucasian Confederation"¹⁶ where he described the objective conditions of the Caucasian unity. It was his polemic with those who compared the situation in the Caucasus to that of the Balkans and were sceptical about the idea of unity in the region:

(...) together with [those of] national integrity, there exist [examples of] federations of multinational composition, for example the Swiss Confederation where three major ethnicities: French, German and Italian, are closely tied together by the Swiss citizenship and statehood that survived the times where great European nations, related to each of the Swiss ethnicities, waged wars with each other. (...) The history of liberation movements in the Caucasus is developing more similarly to the Swiss rather than to the Balkan scenario.¹⁷

In the article Resulzade presented thesis which I described earlier, while mentioning "The historical act" published in "Severnyi Kavkaz":

(...) we have [in the Caucasus] representatives of both Christian and Muslim cultures. The cultural-religious difference is additionally deepened

¹⁵ M.E. Resul-zade, *Rzeczpospolita Azerbejdżańska*, "Wschód", December 1930, No 2, pp. 26–29.

¹⁶ M.E. Resul-zade, *Idea Konfederacji Kaukaskiej. The Caucasian Confederation*, "Wschód", July 1931, No 2, pp. 37–44.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 41–42.

by ethno-linguistic composition. (...) But setting those factors aside, there are certain traits common to all the Caucasians, that make us all, psychologically speaking, closer and similar to each other, forming a homogenous, generalized Caucasian type, a kind of a cultural amalgam”.¹⁸ Resulzade admitted that the consolidation of Caucasian nations was greatly influenced by the Russian rule over the territory. He underlined, though, that the main “glue sticking the nations together” was the strive for freedom. A common political ideology was the force behind the independent Caucasian Confederation.

An interesting story is linked to the book by Resulzade *Azerbaijan in its Fight for Independence*, published in Polish by the Eastern Institute in 1938. Many years later, Resulzade’s wife mentioned the details of the story:

Printing [of this book] was done right before the war broke out. During the bombing of Warsaw, its full stock was stored at the printing house.¹⁹ After the bombardment finished, when <the allies> stood on the other bank of the Vistula river, the printing works’ owner hastily looked for any possibility to dispose of the load, fearing the <comrades>.²⁰ Ultimately, it was transported to Hoża street, to the basement of my family house. Allegedly, a few years later it was marketed in the street carts. However, we didn’t find any trails of it – even if it survived the bombing, it was destroyed during the [Warsaw] Uprising.²¹ In 1940 when thanks to the Turkish consul I left Warsaw, I had in my suitcase two copies which I handed to my husband.²²

Resulzade published the first initial version of *Azerbaijan in its Fight for Independence* in Paris in 1930.²³ It was then a 36-page booklet. In Warsaw he expanded it, adding new information based on his numerous articles. The book was in fact a summary of his publicist activities of the 1930s. The first part, entitled “The Azerbaijani Republic”, provides the general information, historical overview, national and political rebirth, emergence and fall of the republic. The second part focuses on contrasting the achievements of the independent Republic with the wanton destruction brought by the Bolshevik rule,

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 42.

¹⁹ The description of the circumstances shows that Resulzade’s wife meant the events of 1944, the Warsaw Uprising.

²⁰ The author means the Soviet army.

²¹ The book survived and is available in Polish libraries.

²² From the letter of Wanda Resulzade to Edmund Charaszkiewicz, written in 1968 in Ankara, Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, Akta Edmunda Charaszkiewicza, inv. no. 38/4, k. 13.

²³ M.E. Rassoul-Zadé, *Azerbaidjan en lutte pour l’indépendance*, Paris 1930.

as well as the people's resistance to the new regime. This part also covers the activities of Azerbaijani emigration, including press publishing.

The third and final part contains three articles: "Polish-Azerbaijani relations", "Economic structure of Azerbaijan", and "From national-revolutionary poems. Gul Tekin. Icy Hell", as well as a list of works of the Azerbaijani National Centre. The first article is especially interesting, as Resulzade describes various Polish encounters with the Caucasus and the Turkish world, as well as shares some childhood memories of his contacts with the Poles.

My thoughts bring back the memories of a military medic of the Baku garrison, a Pole named *Mienżyński*, he was sincere and kind to the local community, he was in good relations with my late father, a clergyman. He always spoke well of *Mienżyński*, as a man "worth of being a Muslim".

(...) I recall a professor of physics and mathematics, *Bajczewski*, who taught us not only science, but also hatred towards the regime and supported our revolutionary spirit against the tsardom. We used to perceive all Russian-speaking people as Russians and only after a certain time we got to know the people better and we learnt to distinguish the surnames. It turned out that all the people who were kind and friendly towards us, like *Mienżyńscy* and *Bajczewscy* – were Polish. Such Poles were many, even among the bureaucratic milieu. It may have been that the Baku "governor", *Starosielski*,²⁴ benevolent towards the foundation of the first Azerbaijani newspaper "Ekinchi", was also Polish.²⁵

Resulzade also mentioned that Poles often supported Azerbaijani nationalists.

During the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly, the Poles voted for the list number 10, designating the Azerbaijani Musavat party and the National Committee. [Overtime] I met some Poles in Warsaw, who told me they had been my voters.²⁶

In 1935 the Eastern Institute organized a meeting of chief editors of the promethean magazines. The attendees were: Barasbi Bajtugan ("Severnyi Kavkaz"), Wassan Girey Dżabagi ("The Islamic Review"), Najman Mirza Leon Kryczyński ("The Tatar Annual"),

²⁴ Dmitriy Semenovich Starosel'skiy (Дмитрий Семенович Старосельский) – the governor of the Baku city since May 29, 1872. He came from a noble family from Central Ukraine. He supported the initiatives of the local intelligentsia and promoted the development of the city's culture and press. He was perceived as a democrat and reformer. Most likely this is why Resulzade thought of him being a Pole, although there is no confirmation of this fact.

²⁵ Resul-Zade, *Azerbejdżan*, pp. 154–155.

²⁶ Resul-Zade, *Azerbejdżan*, pp. 156.

the Turkiestani editor-in-chief Ajas Ishaki (“Yana Milli Yol”), and Mehemmed Emin Resulzade.²⁷ In August 1936, the Azerbaijani national party Musavat organized a summit in Warsaw. As an effect, the party published its bulletin in which it proclaimed a call to increasing cultural cooperation between representatives of all Turkic nations.²⁸ Behind the scenes the cultural cooperation was supposed to consolidate the anti-Russian movements among the political forces.

After the German occupation of Warsaw, Resulzade went to Romania and then to Hungary and after long and exhausting exile he came to Turkey again. He left his publicist heritage in each of those countries. One of his the most renown works was a book on the medieval poet Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1210). Most likely, Resulzade began working on this publication in the 30s, while still in Warsaw. Despite difficult circumstances during the war he continued to work on the book. Its main content was ready already in 1941, on the 800th anniversary of the poet’s birth. However, it was impossible to publish it during wartime. Ultimately, the book was finished in 1948 when Resulzade settled in Turkey. It was published in 1951 in Ankara under the title *Azerbaycan şairi Nizami* (Nizami the Azerbaijani poet)²⁹. In the preface the author admitted his regret that the book could not have been published earlier, but at the same time this allowed him to collect more material, make the commentary more extensive and utilize publications which surfaced since 1941. The book is comprised of the preface, four chapters, eight additional articles and the index. Resulzade described Nizami’s biography and analyzed his poems. The main purpose of the book was to prove that Nizami belongs to Azerbaijan’s cultural legacy. According to Resulzade, *Turkic* was understood by Nizami as being synonymous with ‘beauty’, ‘spiritual purity’, ‘bravery’ and ‘rules of justice’.³⁰ Resulzade also analysed the women topic in Nizami’s works. He proved that female characters are not only beautiful and charming, but also pure, with strong characters and confident personalities. Being an ideologist of Turkism, Resulzade attributed those traits as being typical to Turkic and Caucasian traditions, an inspiration for Nizami. Resulzade did not hide his own political views. In the concluding chapter, he placed his own poem, presenting the poet seen from *Azerbaijani* perspective:

<i>Farsçılığı yok onun,</i>	There is no Persian element in him,
<i>Türklüğe çok bağlıdır;</i>	He feels strongly his Turkish connection;
<i>Kafkaz diye zevk alır;</i>	He gladly writes about the Caucasus
<i>Rustan canı dağlıdır;</i>	He feels resentful to Russia;
<i>Güzel kadın tipleri,</i>	His female characters are beautiful,

²⁷ M.T. Żuk, *Emigracja z Północnego Kaukazu do Polski Wassana Girej Dżabagi*, in: *Emigracja rosyjska. Losy i idee*, Łódź 2002, p. 378; Ireneusz Piotr Maj, *Działalność Instytutu Wschodniego w Warszawie 1926–1939*, Warszawa 2007, p. 76.

²⁸ V. Guliyev (ed.), *Iz nasledia politicheskoy emigratsii Azerbajdzana v Polshe*, Toruń 2010, p. 412.

²⁹ M.E. Resulzade, *Azerbaycan şairi Nizami*, Ankara 1951.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

Ya Türk, ya Kafkaslıdır. They are of either Turkish or Caucasian origin.
Şüphesi yoktur ki O, There is no doubt in the fact that
 31 *Bir Azerbaycanlıdır.*³¹ He is an Azerbaijani.

While reading these verses it can be clearly seen that Resulzade writes about Nizami or at least about whom he wanted to see in him. Maybe about himself? Despite not being totally objective, he definitely put a lot of effort in preparing this monograph. The book contains his own Persian-Turkish translations of Nizami's works. It is a pity that this publication is not widely known neither in Turkey nor in Azerbaijan. It is barely yet another exotic cover on the bookshelves of Turkology institutions.

The life and political activity of Resulzade in exile passed over in silence or were defamed, much like that of other political emigrés of that time. Today, piece after piece, scattered around various archives, old library catalogues and private collections, works of Resulzade are being unravelled. His publications covered not only political issues, but also described the history, literature and traditions of the Azerbaijani nation. Azerbaijan lost not only Resulzade's legacy, but also the intellectual heritage of its political and social elite.

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³¹ Ibidem, p. 223.

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