

### Religious Contacts and Interactions in Poland-Lithuania in Early Modern Times

**Veranstalter:** Käte Hamburger Kolleg Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe, Centre for Religious Studies, Ruhr-University Bochum

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This one-day workshop was devoted to a region which has heretofore been rather under-researched in the KHK *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe*, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the early modern period. Arguably, this region lies exactly on the boundary between Europe and Asia, making it a crucial region for religious interactions on a local level. Instead of taking the traditional approach, praising Poland-Lithuania for its early approach to religious tolerance – already the Warsaw Federation Act of 1573 had guaranteed the nobility the right to freely choose their religion –, this workshop was structured more along localised subjects, focusing on religious contact areas. The original plan having a programme highlighting different regions of the former Commonwealth, did not exactly work out as it was intended, because all of the participants were from Germany or Ukraine. However, this did not diminish the value of the contributions, although Lithuanian or Polish perspectives, and a talk on Protestantism could have been included with benefit.

After an introduction by the organisers KNUT MARTIN STÜNKEL (Bochum) and OLGA KOZUBSKA (Bochum / Lviv) and a presentation of the online journal of the Central European Research Journal (CERES), *Entangled Religions*, the first speaker was ANDRII YASINOVSKYI (Lviv), who analysed the role of Greek links to the Ruthene lands after the fall of the Byzantine Empire. His focus was on the Academy of Ostroh, where the students in the 16th century were taught trilingually – to the extent that they could freely switch between the languages without much effort. The traditional Western canon of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew was reinterpreted in Ostroh to include Greek, Latin, and Church

Slavonic. The concrete links to Greece were assured by the teachers of Greek, who were often recruited from Greek academies.

The two presentations in the second session both turned to Islamic influences in Poland-Lithuania. STEFAN ROHDEWALD (Giessen) focused on texts by Muslim Tatars, who embraced the reformatory antitrinitarian terminology known in Poland-Lithuania and were referring abundantly to the translation of the Bible by Symon Budny – an Antitrinitarian. Thus, at a high level of theology, Muslims were enscribing themselves into the fashionable polemics on Trinity which were spreading across Europe. However, since these polemics were written with the Arabic script in Ruthenian, they were only addressed to the Muslims and not spread among Christians. Rohdewald argued that this was an example of the integration of the Muslims in Poland-Lithuania.

The presentation by Olga Kozubska also focused on the Tatar minority in Poland-Lithuania. The Tatars had been invited to Lithuania by Vytautas the Great at the end of the 14th century, and tried to keep their faith and customs among the Christians. They used their religious identity to emphasise honesty and endure poverty. Since there were no builders among them, their mosques were constructed by Christian architects and construction workers. As a result, the mosques often looked like the surrounding houses, or even resembled churches. Moreover, the Tatars adapted so well to the surrounding culture that they were perceived as infidels when they travelled to Istanbul.

ALEXANDER OSIPIAN (Leipzig / Kramatorsk) provided a tour-de-force of the history of Armenians in Poland-Lithuania. This group originally came to this region in the 13th and 14th centuries, mainly as merchants, who managed to keep their merchant empires in their new homes. According to sources, there were about 7.000 Armeians in Galicia in the mid-17th century, and they had judicial autonomy. Moreover, since they were rich, in contrast with the Tatars, the Armenians could build churches modelled on those in Armenia, even though an apparant process of adapting to the architectural surroundings can be seen here as well. In the face of the Counter-

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Reformation during the 1680s, many Armenians saw their only hope in an Union with Rome, and also other processes of adaptation appeared during the 18th century.

Following Osipian, KYRILL KOBSAR (Kiel) presented an aspect of his PhD-thesis, namely the commemoration of the dead in the Catholic, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches of the Commonwealth. According to Kobsar, there was an important difference between the Orthodox traditions of Poland-Lithuania and those of Muscovy, which were more rigid and systematic. Most importantly, the Union of Brest from 1596, which created the Greek-Catholic Church in the Ruthene lands, did not markedly change the commemoration practices, which continued as before. The list of commemorated bishops even saw no differentiation, and bishops of both the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Church were commemorated side by side.

OLEH DUH (Lviv) in a way continued this topic, speaking about monasteries in Ruthenia after the Union of Brest and their Latinisation. For Duh, it was clear that the monasteries did not see the union with Rome as a break with their traditions, nor did they see any reasons to initiate change. At the same time, several of the monastics were unaware of any change, as the Union was an affair of the bishops and most believers simply did what the bishops did. However, inevitably, numerous Latin influences started sifting into the Uniate Monasteries in the course of the 17th century, although they kept their distinct Ruthenian identity.

The presentation by IRYNA PAPA (Aarhus / Lviv) focused on the traveller's account of a Danish diplomat, Just Juel, who travelled together with the theologian Rasmus Æreboe across Poland-Lithuania in the early 18th century, and described what they saw on their way. According to Papa, this account is more than simply an artefact of early Danish-Russian relations, as it contains ethnographic descriptions of the people and events the travellers witnessed and even some descriptions of their religious rites. The diary does not delve into theological details when describing foreign faiths, even though Æreboe should have been able to do so.

The final presentation by Knut Martin

Stünkel concerned the controversy surrounding Jacob Joseph Frank, an 18th century Jewish reformer in the tradition of Sabbatai Tsevi. It is interesting that this controversy did not remain a dispute within the Jewish community, between those wishing to uphold traditional Judaism and the Frankists, who had introduced gnostic and mystic elements. Rather, Frank managed to convince the bishop of Kameniec-Podolski to guide the inner-Jewish disputations. This way, he had ensured that the traditional Jews would come up short regardless of the outcome, since the bishop was eager to prove both sides wrong.

Altogether, the workshop was a successful overview of various situations of religious contacts that occurred in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early modern period. Both developments on the level of the history of ideas as well as concrete developments in the history of events were covered and they all confirmed that religious 'dissidents' had a relatively free hand in Poland-Lithuania. The Warsaw Federation Act from 1573 had granted the nobility freedom of religion, and it remained in force. The Polish crown repeatedly tried to win back the other estates, however, but most of these efforts were in vain, mainly because of the ineffective central authority of the huge Commonwealth. This, in return, encouraged other religious groups that were persecuted in their home countries to seek refuge in Poland-Lithuania, which reinforced the process. From Muslims and Armenians to Uniates and Jews, religious plurality in Poland-Lithuania was not the exception, but rather the norm. These groups did not perceive this as a problem, but rather sought to adapt to the culture of their common homeland in various ways. The contributions to the workshop nicely illustrated that.

#### **Conference Overview:**

Andrii Yasinovskyi (Lviv): Mediterranean Intellectual Repercussions in the Social and Cultural Development in the Ruthenian Lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

Stefan Rohdewald (Gießen): Antitrinitarian Polemics in and between the Religious Reformatory and Muslim Texts in Poland-

Lithuania

Olga Kozubska (Lviv / Bochum): Muslim Minority in the Times of Counterreformation: Lithuanian Tatars in Religious Interactions of Poland-Lithuania (16th-17th Centuries)

Alexander Osipian (Leipzig / Kramatorsk): Religious Life in the Global Trading Diaspora: Armenian Church in Early Modern Poland

Kyrill Kobsar (Kiel): The Orthodox Commemorations of Dead in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Church Union of Brest 1596

Oleg Duh (Lviv): Uniate Monasteries of the Kievan Metropolitanate in the Early Modern Times: Between the Byzantine-Ruthenian Identity and Latin Influences

Iryna Papa (Aarhus / Lviv): Protestant Visions of the Orthodox Religious Culture (based on Travel Accounts of the 18th Century)

Knut Martin Stünkel (Bochum): Staging a religious *Ménage à trois*. Frankists between Jews and Christians in the Disputations at Kameniec-Podolski (1757) and Lwów (1759)

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