

### Religious Contacts in Scandinavia in Early Modern Times

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Scandinavia does not automatically come to mind when it comes to religious contact in early modernity. Nevertheless, as the last European region to still encounter living tribal religion, coupled with a long border separating Western and Eastern Christianity, the region can offer important insights that might not be found elsewhere in such a clear form, which is why KNUT MARTIN STÜNKEL (Bochum), ANNA KONSTANZE SCHRÖDER (Schwerin), and ULF PLESSENTIN (Bochum) organised a workshop in Bochum to delve into religious contact in early modern Scandinavia. Schröder was unfortunately unable to participate at the workshop itself, but the six remaining presentations showed a wide range of topics and approaches to this highly interesting region.

During the two days, there were several interconnected strands of thought that were addressed repeatedly. One of them was the role of the *Missionskollegiet* in Copenhagen, the central missionary organisation, which organised and co-ordinated Lutheran mission for the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom in all directions. The *Missionskollegiet* was founded in 1714 as the first public Lutheran missionary administration, which then was taken as the model for later enterprises, such as the Basel Mission 100 years later. It played a major role especially in the presentation by PATRICK KRÜGER (Bochum), who analysed the early modern Danish Mission in southeast India. While it was called the Danish Mission and was officially administered at the *Missionskollegiet*, the missionaries were mainly German pietists from Halle (Saale), who approached the missionary field with the pietistic goal of trying to transform the individual to a life with Christ. They learnt the local language and corresponded with local re-

ligious specialist in order to better understand the target of their mission. This ethnographic approach later informed the establishment of the disciplines of Indology and other Oriental Studies. Moreover, it inspired a reconceptualisation of the cabinets of curiosities, which appeared across Europe, to make them more systematised and educational.

The *Missionskollegiet* also played a role for KAI MERTEN (Marburg), who presented the success story of Hans Egede and his son Poul, who tried to conduct Lutheran missions in Greenland in the 18th century. Hans is usually portrayed as the pioneer of the Greenland mission, whereas Merten claimed Poul had been more successful, because he understood the cultural references of the Greenlanders. In the peaceful Greenland culture, power struggles should be solved by ridiculing the opponent until one of them gave up. Once Poul understood this and decided to start ridiculing the Greenlandic religious specialists, he was able to convince the lay population. His father Hans had tried to answer with rational arguments, which did not win over many locals. An interesting factor of the mission to Greenland was that next to the Egedes, there were also Moravian (Herrnhut) Brethren who tried to convert the Greenlanders. Early on they decided to clearly demarcate their respective territories, which led to a peaceful coexistence, even though the reminiscences of this relationship diverged radically.

Finally, also the mission among the Sámi population in Northern Norway was coordinated by the *Missionskollegiet*. The two presentations by DIKKA STORM (Tromsø) and SIV RASMUSSEN (Tromsø) were devoted to this mission. While Storm focused on geographical and demographical aspects of the mission, including the relationship between the missionaries and the centre in Copenhagen, Rasmussen turned more to the Sámi population the missionaries encountered. According to her, the Sámi were not a heathen people, as most missionaries and commentators later claimed. Instead, the earlier, Roman Catholic missionary efforts had been successful insofar that they had become quasi-Christians, who integrated Catholic practices more or less truthfully into their everyday life. The Lutheran efforts to dismiss Sámi religious

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life as the devil's work were somewhat misguided, as much of it should have been recognised as Catholic practice.

The two remaining presentations covered two rather different developments, which however fit well into the overall workshop theme. TEUVO LAITILA (Joensuu) turned to the county of Kexholm, which was integrated into Sweden-Finland with the Peace of Stolbova in 1617. In this border region to the Russian principalities of Novgorod and Muscovy, the population consisted mainly of Karelians, an orthodoxicised Finno-Ugric people. Laitila recounted how the initial Swedish plan to force the entire population to convert to Lutheranism was gradually abandoned in favour of rational arguments and subtle pressure, such as resettling Lutherans in Kexholm. By the end of the 17th century, the two confessions had found a *modus vivendi*, which more or less stayed in place until World War II, when Karelia was integrated into the Soviet Union.

Knut Martin Stünkel presented an 18th century work by the Swedish officer of German descent Curt Friedrich von Wreech, who had spent a decade as a Russian prisoner of war in the provincial Siberian town of Tobolsk. Stünkel highlighted the relatively benign conditions in Tobolsk, where the prisoners – at least the officers – had very much time at hand to read and think. During this time, von Wreech had a pietistic 'reading experience', which led him to extensive correspondence with the Halle Pietist August H. Francke. Francke provided the ideological and material backbone of the Swedish School, which the prisoners were able to open in Tobolsk. While Pietism was outlawed in Sweden as an unlawful opposition to the state church, von Wreech, once he came back to Sweden, sought to introduce pietistic elements to the country. Under the influence of Francke, he argued that the true church of the individual can exist within the visible structures of the outer church.

The presentations of this workshop, while far from exhausting the list of topics Scandinavian early modern religious contacts may offer, highlighted some of the main research fields where Scandinavia is worth looking more closely into. There is the interaction be-

tween missionary endeavours and their administrative centres; more importantly, the interaction between missionaries and local non-Christian populations, be they formerly missionised or completely indigenous. Moreover, the attempts of static church structures to homogenise the population, especially in the borderlands, are clearly identifiable in Scandinavia, as is the interaction between pietistic currents and more static church structures, which could have been more thoroughly analysed. While Scandinavia might still not be the first region to look for early modern religious contacts, this northern part of Europe is definitely worth examining as well.

#### Conference Overview:

Dikka Storm (Tromsø): The Pietistic Mission: An Analysis of the Complex Religious Situation in the Mission District of Senja and Vesterålen in the Early Eighteenth Century – Network, Space and Local Knowledge

Siv Rasmussen (Tromsø): The Luitheran Sámi Mission – Encounters with Indigenous Religion or Roman Catholic Faith?

Teuvo Laitila (Joensuu): Religious Change in the Kexholm County in the 17th Century

Knut Martin Stünkel (Bochum): Halle – Stockholm – Tobolsk (and back). Curt Friedrich von Wreech and his *Wahrhaftte und umständliche Historie*

Kai Merten (Marburg): Ridicule as Method – Religious Encounters between Shamans and Missionaries in Greenland in the 18th Century

Patrick Krüger (Bochum): Protestant Poreachers and Researchers. The Danish Mission and the european Image of India

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