

LOCAL AND NEIGHBOURS' COMMUNITIES
IN THE TOWNS OF OLD POLAND-LITHUANIA

A conference of the Urban History Commission of the Committee for Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of History and Archive-Keeping of the Copernicus University in Toruń was held in Toruń on 15 and 16 December, 1994. This working meeting, organized to exchange information on current research, implemented the maximum variant, the discussion having been expanded to include examples from the East and West of Europe. This was the subject of the first part of the debates. H. Manikowska (Warsaw) read a paper *Popolo, contrada, gonfalone — from Neighbours' Communities to Clients' Groups in Late Medieval Florence*, which dealt with territorial and administrative divisions in medieval Florence and drew the listeners' attention to neighbours' and parish communities. In 13th and early 14th century Florence these communities were institutionalized; as latest research has shown, *parrochia con popolo*, usually referred to as *popolo*, played an extremely important role in the building of social communities until the middle of the 14th century and was the basic unit of territorial and administrative division, being of great importance in the collection of taxes and administration of justice. The parish was the territorial framework of a neighbours' community; it was divided into smaller neighbours' groups called *contrada* or *vicinanza*. One of the most important research problems tackled by the Toruń meeting was Manikowska's question whether proximity of domicile created a community referred to by its members, and in what situations the individuals expressed and confirmed their group identity by referring to it.

Proximity of domicile became the foundation of formal and informal neighbours' communities. In his paper *Patrician Corporations in Hanseatic Towns in the Medieval German Empire* T. Roślanowski (Warsaw), referring to the Florentine *contradae*, spoke about traces of formal neighbours' communities, which he had found in sources concerning Hanseatic towns in the 11th century. In the 12th and 13th centuries the Hanseatic *viciniae* which were social organizations, turned into organizations fighting for power, into *coniurationes*, which had a share in the administration of their town. According to Roślanowski, the *senatorum fratres* and *fraternitas scabinorum* originated from *viciniae*.

K. Krupa (Warsaw) found traces of the existence of neighbours' communities when she examined medieval sources pertaining to Velikiy-Novgorod (her paper was entitled *Local Communities in the Towns of Late Medieval Russia, with Velikiy-Novgorod as an Example*). She pointed to the double role of streets there; a street was a democratic aggregation of neighbours and, to a greater extent, a union of the mansions built there, a closed self-sufficient enclave of enormous importance.

In a paper *The Genoese Model of an Elitist 16th Century Housing Estate* T. Zarębska (Warsaw) showed that houses built along an artery could form a harmonious unit and be elegant from the urbanistic point of view. She took as an example the residences built by wealthy Genoese families along *via magna* (*via aurea*, now called *via Garibaldi*); they were designed in the middle of the 16th century by Galeazzo Alessi, whose work met with Giorgio Vasari's approbation. The individualized palaces built on several levels, with terraced gardens and staircases were frequently replicated from the beginning of the 17th century on; they inspired the Polish king, Ladislaus IV, in the development of Warsaw.

The papers dealing with European towns also contained information on vocational communities. Rosłanowski spoke of vocational corporations which existed parallel to neighbours' organizations and which also sought power in towns as *coniurationes*. K. Krupa mentioned the existence of vocational unions in Novgorod (e.g. an exclusive union of wealthy merchants), but she pointed out that sources do not speak of the existence of craftsmen's organizations in Novgorod. In a paper *Gardeners and Vine-Dressers in Medieval Toruń* A. Czacharowski (Toruń) tried to define the social and economic status of these two groups, pointing out that there is no mention of any organization of Toruń gardeners and vine-dressers in sources.

H. Manikowska, speaking of the revolt of the Ciompi, said that "group identity must have been particularly strong" in their case, for "both neighbours' and occupational ties came into prominence" during the revolt.

P. Oliński (Toruń) came across the coexistence of neighbours', occupational and religious ties when he examined a 15th century list of the deceased members of the Toruń fraternity of purse, handbag and glove makers, which functioned at the Franciscan monastery in Toruń (*The Role of Medieval Religious Fraternities in Urban Life with the Toruń Religious Fraternity of Purse, Handbag and Glove Makers as an Example*) Oliński referred to the statements made by Zaremska in her study on Cracow medieval fraternities and recalled that their main aim was to give their members a feeling of security, help them in everyday life and in difficult situations, and hold the dead members in remembrance. An analysis of lists of deceased members of fraternities and lists of rents and statutory work for the upkeep of roads helped Oliński in his research into the sociotopography of medieval Toruń, for they supplied him with evidence that the members of each fraternity lived in specific streets or wards of a town. M. Goliński (Wrocław) also found evidence of neighbourly ties among groups of weavers and spinners of Wrocław and Świdnica (*The Guilds and Neighbours' Communities in Medieval Silesian Towns with Textile Crafts as an Example*). But there was freedom to choose one's place of domicile, especially in the late Middle Ages; consequently, craftsmen practising the same craft later dispersed (this was the case in Florence, Toruń, Elbląg, Poznań and Sieradz). They remained linked by their membership of the same corporation. The inhabitants of different parts of a town who belonged to the same guild, instead of competing, sometimes established co-operation and became economically dependent on each other; this happened, for instance, in the Old and the New Town of Toruń, where members of the above-mentioned fraternity of purse, handbag and glove makers lived (P. Oliński).

It is impossible to ignore the role of churches in research into local communities. In a paper *The Agglomeration of Cracow before the Foundation of the Town and the Urban Commune Founded on the Basis of German Law* J. Wyrozumski (Cracow) presented the situation of Cracow's 28 oldest churches which were the main points of settlement before the foundation of the town. He also established that the passage in the *Cracow Chapter Yearbook* of 1257 saying that *situs fori per advocatos et domorum et curiarum immutatur* concerned the area between the Dominican and Franciscan churches, including the parish church of All Saints.

The fundamental role of parishes in the shaping of urban communities, referred to by H. Manikowska, was also emphasized by Z. Morawski (Warsaw) in a paper *Parish Communities in Late Medieval Sandomierz*. Morawski drew attention to the constitutive role of parishes in the establishment of urban communes and discussed their internal structure and social range.

M. Słoń (Warsaw) read a paper *Religious Communities in 15th Century Lwów*, in which he presented the predominance of religious ties in parishes. He included not only guild corporations and fraternities in the group of religious communities but also communities whose members (mansionarii, Tertiaries, Beguines) lived together, participated in liturgy and took their meals together (common domicile did not apply to altarists), thus becoming similar

to families; according to the author, single persons regarded these communities as their family. Several such groups (including inmates of hospices) were attached to each Catholic church in the city of Lwów and its suburbs. Their legal status varied.

A. Klonder's paper *Hospices in Early Medieval Cities — Isolation or Integration (Outline)* dealt with relations between the inmates of hospices and the outside world, that is, the town. Hospices were excluded from city area, they were, to a large extent, self-sufficient economically and their regulations restricted the inmates' contacts with outsiders and foresaw severe penalties for taking anything out, including food; all this isolated the inmates from the outside world. Economic ties between the town and hospices (the fact that they were managed by municipal authorities, bequests by townsmen, the use of craftsmen's services) integrated hospices with the town, and so did the "spiritual" services rendered by the inmates to townsmen (masses and prayers for benefactors).

The participants in the conference emphasized that clergymen took an active part in the economic and social life of their town. They granted loans and were sometimes real potentates on the local credit market (as were, for instance, the canons, vicars and mansionarii of Sandomierz). They developed their activity among burghers and frequently came from that class themselves. They were either from a neighbouring monastery (Lwów) or belonged to the local lay clergy (Sandomierz). A. Radziwiński (Toruń) drew attention to the increase in the number of burgher's sons among the lower cathedral clergy, but in his opinion this was due to the legal obstacles which townsmen encountered in obtaining a benefice in cathedral chapters (Radziwiński's paper was entitled *Townsmen in Medieval Cathedral Chapters in Poland against the Background of the Nobility's Growing Exclusiveness*). The relatively strong ties between Cracow burghers and the clergy of the local cathedral chapter were something exceptional in 14th century Poland; they are yet another proof of the important status of Cracow burghers, compared with that of burghers in other cathedral towns, such as Włocławek, Gniezno and Płock.

Most of the information on clergymen's and lay people's communities, whether parish ones or brotherhoods congregated round a church, concerned Catholic churches. But some information was also provided about the role of non-Catholic communities. M. Słoń, who discussed Lwów, a multinational city with many denominations, raised the question of smaller groups within communities of a higher order, i.e. non-Catholic ethnic-cultural communities of Armenians, Ruthenians and Jews. In speaking of St. George's monastery, the most important Ruthenian church, the sole Armenian church in Lwów and a synagogue, he pointed to the lack of Armenian brotherhoods and admitted that it was not known what kinds of communities were formed at non-Catholic churches.

Some speakers spoke of the Jewish ethnic-cultural community, which played a more important role in the life of Polish towns than any other non-Catholic community.

The architects Maria and Kazimierz Piechotek (Warsaw) contributed a paper *Jewish Agglomerations in the Spatial Structure of Towns in Old Poland-Lithuania*. They briefly outlined the history of the Jews in Poland and showed how important this community was for the economy of Polish towns in changing historical conditions. They emphasized, on the one hand, the religious distinctiveness of the Jews, which made it necessary for them to isolate themselves from their non-Jewish environment and, on the other hand, the attempts made by the Christian authorities to isolate them. They also spoke of the principles governing the formation of Jewish agglomerations in Polish towns in various historical periods. In their study they used modern plans of towns as a source.

Another three papers devoted to Jews concerned the 17th and 18th centuries. In a paper *The Jewish Self-Government in Polish Towns (1623-1764)* A. Leszczyński (Warsaw) presented its organization, starting with the kahal (commune), districts and regions with Jewish dietines, up to the Parliament of Polish Jews which had existed since 1580; in 1623, when the Lithuanian Jews formed their own organization, it was called parliament of the Jews of Poland.

This form of self-government was abolished by the Convocation Sejm in 1764; only the kahals were left to collect taxes. The question of the coexistence of Jews with other ethnic groups in nationally and religiously differentiated towns was raised by J. Krochmal (Przemyśl) in a paper entitled *Jews in the Urban Community of Przemyśl in the Late 17th and 18th Centuries*. Krochmal drew attention to the fact that in consequence of the dynamic economic and demographic development of the Jewish community in Przemyśl, Jews began to leave their quarters and occupy houses situated in the main streets and in the square. The Piechoteks had described this process with regard to other towns. As a result Jews became serious economic competitors of the burghers of Przemyśl. The division of the townsmen into Catholics and adherents of the Orthodox Church became less important, for both groups felt endangered by Jews. It was not until the agreement of 1645 that Jews were allowed to engage in economic activity. In the 18th century co-operation became the dominant form of the coexistence of Christians and Jews (e.g. the co-operation between the butchers' guild and Jewish butchers, between Jewish barbers and their Christian counterpart; there were even sporadic cases of Jews being admitted to guilds).

P. Fijałkowski (Warsaw) presented a paper entitled *Jews and Protestants in the Borderland between Great Poland and Mazovia in the 18th Century — Common Characteristics*, in which he discussed the legal and economic status of Jews and compared it with that of the Protestants, especially Mennonites and Lutherans. He pointed out the similarities in the legal status of the Protestant and Jewish populations and drew attention to the fact that the Catholic clergy had a similar attitude to both groups; in his opinion this exerted an influence on the attitude of Christians.

The relationship between the various communities functioning in a territorially limited area of a town takes us back to the question of proximity of domicile. The fact of being neighbours enforced certain activities and behaviour also in the everyday life of the whole community of a town. Some of these activities were discussed by U. Sowina (Warsaw) in a paper entitled *Proximity of Domicile and Urban Infrastructure in the 15th and 16th Centuries (contribution to research into the role of water for neighbours' groups)*. She analyzed the significance of open drains for the organization of life in the individual parts of a town, citing examples from sources to show neighbourly co-operation between Cracow burghers and the Dominicans, the Cracow citizens' co-operation with neighbours and neighbourly co-operation in Kalisz and Sandomierz.

The important role of streets in the shaping of basic local ties was repeatedly referred to. H. Zaremska (Warsaw) raised this question during a discussion. Referring to the statements made by H. Manikowska, T. Zarebska and P. Oliński, she said that in conducting research into defamation trials she had found that the lists of litigants were drawn up by streets (quarreling women living in one street). In her paper *Homo bonae famaе. Opinion on Man in a Medieval Town*, Zaremska showed that a good name was of great importance in neighbourly and corporative life. It was a condition for being admitted into the ranks of municipal citizens, which implied the right to hold municipal offices and conduct economic activity within the framework of a guild. Improper conduct could lead to a person being deprived of *ius civile*. A person's good name was tarnished by the practice of a discreditable occupation, including prostitution, though this did not necessarily mean that such a person was denied municipal citizenship.

A. Karpiński (Warsaw) discussed the Cracow milieu practising prostitution and deriving profit from it in a paper *The Cracow Demi-Monde in the 16th, 17th and Early 18th Centuries (remarks on the Cracow milieu of prostitutes and souteneurs)*. This milieu was a group belonging to the social fringe. Prostitutes and souteneurs were linked with the criminal world, if they did not belong to it. The lack of their own "vocational" corporations and an itinerant way of life made it impossible for them to develop close links with the city.

In accordance with its aims, the conference acquainted the participants with the research conducted in Poland into the communities existing in the towns of the old Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The European background outlined in some papers made it possible, though to a limited extent, to compare Polish communities with the communities in medieval foreign towns. The Toruń conference showed once again the diversity of local communities, for neighbourly, occupational and religious ties on the basis of which the urban local communities were formed frequently coexisted, supplementing each other. It was proposed to devote the next meeting of urban historians to the question of streets (H. Zaremska) and the foundation of towns. Attention was also drawn to the necessity of cataloguing and classifying hospices in old Poland.

Urszula Sowina

The CIHEC Congress

(Lublin, 2–6 September, 1996)

General Subject:

CHRISTIANITY IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND THE EAST

Section 1 — Antiquity

Ancient Christianity in the area of what later became East Central Europe (up to the 7th century).

An attempt at summing up the research on Christian communities and centres, as well as on the penetration of Christianity north of the Roman–Hellenic world.

Section 2 — The Middle Ages

A) Christian missions and the “new Christianity” countries around A. D. 1000. A decisive stage of the forming of Europe (8–11th centuries).

B) Christianity of present East Central Europe between the East and West (12–15th centuries):

- 1) Church structures,
- 2) Pastoral programmes and religious life,
- 3) Religious movements, both orthodox and heretic,
- 4) Pilgrimages,
- 5) Christianity of west and east — points in common and tensions.

Section 3 — Early Modern History (16–18th centuries)

A) Christian humanism of the second half of the 15th and the first half of the 16th century.

B) Coexistence of Churches and Christian communities (the 2nd half of the 16th and the 1st half of the 17th century).

C) Political and Church elites and the traditional religious culture in the Age of Enlightenment.

Section 4 — The 19th century

- A) The policy of Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna and Istanbul (Constantinople) towards the Churches.
- B) The relations of Churches to states and nations in Western Europe
- C) The Churches and nations of present East Central Europe.

Section 5 — The 20th century

Totalitarian systems and the East Central European Churches. Summing up destruction and changes.

Section 6 — A historical atlas of Christianity

- A) An Atlas of Social and Religious History of East Central Europe.
- B) A comparison and review of Christianity atlases projects and attempts at the application of computer methods and techniques (data banks, cartographical approach, etc.).

Call for papers!

General Notes on the Programme

- 1) East Central Europe comprises, generally, territories between German and Italian speaking countries and Russia, with a wide intermediate zone (the central part of which was a subject to historical changes).
- 2) Different interrelations between and influences upon this region and its neighbours in the North, South, East and West, as well as their reflection in its mentality lie within the scope of the interest of the Congress.
- 3) Papers dealing with various countries and regions outside East Central Europe and adopting a comparative approach, stressing similarities or differences in structures, cultures, situations, etc., between them and East Central European countries.
- 4) It is possible — especially if the need for a wide comparative approach arises — to organise round table debates of specialists, focused on specifically determined subjects, phenomena, persons or events (e.g. Jan Łaski and his religious activity in Europe; St Adalbert — the Bishop of Prague; East Central European Churches and the Vatican II; etc.).

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