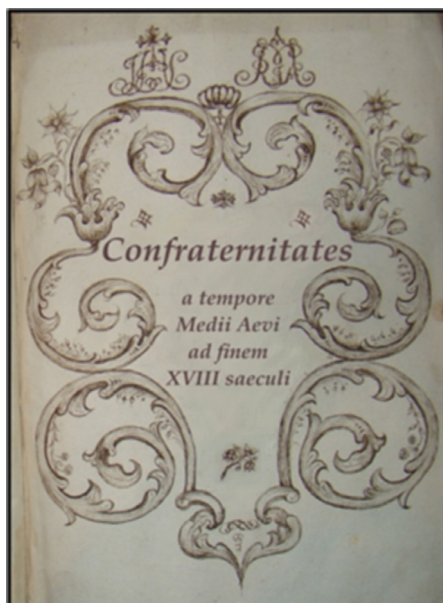


## CONFERENCE REPORT

*Religious Brotherhoods in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*  
(To the end of the 18th Century)  
An International Conference  
15–16 May 2012, Kielce (Poland)



The international conference *Religious Brotherhoods in the Middle Ages and Modern Times (to the end of the 18th Century)* was organized by the Department of History at Jan Kochanowski University in cooperation with the National Museum in Kielce. The conference took place in the seventeenth-century palace of the bishops of Krakow in Kielce. The two-day event was attended by 31 speakers from Poland and abroad.

In Polish historiography there is a lack of synthetic publications on the functioning and role of religious brotherhoods in the periods in question and so the main aim of the conference, the first of its kind in Poland, was to present the current state of scholarship in the area and to outline the directions necessary for further research.

The papers focused on the problems associated with the functioning of confraternities in Catholic Poland, Western Europe, Africa, and in Orthodox Eastern Europe. The issues addressed included the rise of religious brotherhoods (guild, parish and monastic), their legal status, internal organization, forms of business, charitable, cultural and educational activities, patron-saint festivities, and their impact on society and human relationships.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795) inherited from the Middle Ages a multicultural society characterized by the peaceful co-existence of many national and religious minorities. In the sixteenth century, when most of Europe was deep in religious wars and persecutions, the Polish-Lithuanian state was famous for its tolerance. It thus became a refuge for many political and religious emigrants, mostly Protestant. In addition, in 1596 a spectacular event took place that sought to bridge the schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches — the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa (r. 1587–1632) and the dignitaries of the two Churches signed a treaty of union in Brest (hence called the Union of Brest). Some Orthodox clergy, however, did not accept this decision and, paradoxically, instead of creating one Church from the merger of the two, they created a third — the Uniate Church, which observed the ritual and the liturgy of the Orthodox Church, but broke relations with the Patriarch of Constantinople and placed itself under the authority of the Pope of Rome. Orthodox religious confraternities played a very large role in defending the existence of the Orthodox Church in the Commonwealth. Similarly, the Uniate Church was actively supported by its confraternities in the expansion of its influence. Brotherhoods were also created by other national and religious minorities living in the Commonwealth, such as Armenians, Jews and Tatars.

These rich traditions of the First Polish Republic (as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was also known) had a significant impact on the functioning of all types of religious brotherhoods, especially in ethnically and religiously diverse areas. The subordination of Catholic institutions to the Holy See, and the many links and extensive contacts of the Polish state with other European countries point to the need of further research on Polish religious brotherhoods within a wider European context. This would allow us to identify the similarities and differences in the activities of these institutions in various parts of Europe, as well as to analyze the process whereby these structures were transplanted to other continents.

In the first part of the conference much attention was paid to confraternities in Western Europe where they first emerged. In the Middle Ages, secular forms of confraternal life were transplanted from Italy and France to Poland by way of Bohemia and Germany. The conference opened with a paper by Christopher Black (Glasgow), who discussed the situation of religious brotherhoods in Italy in the early modern period. Among other things, he pointed out that secular religious confraternities significantly influenced the evolution of early modern Catholicism through new forms of philanthropy, the teaching of Christian doctrine, and the promotion of art and religious music. He emphasized the role of the Council of Trent, followed by the rapid development of brotherhoods, with consequent difficult and diverse relations between the brotherhoods and both diocesan and parish religious authorities. Bishops, priests, religious orders and lay people competed for the opportunity to exercise control over confraternities. Using examples drawn from Venice, Mantua, Ancona, Perugia, and Brescia, Black then discussed the fascinating

question of the attitude of some of these brotherhoods towards the Inquisition.

The tertiary movement, related to religious brotherhoods, gathered and activated the faithful associated with the mendicant orders. Julia Valentinowa Rodionowa (Moscow) spoke on the community of the Franciscan Tertiaries from the Italian town of Foligno in the second half of the thirteenth century. *The Book of Visions and Instructions*, known as the *Memoriale* of the Blessed Angela of Foligno, has been used as a source for the study of the tertiary community's everyday life. To become a member of this community it was mandatory to participate in masses, pilgrimages, charitable campaigns and approach the sacrament of penance often.

Alexandra Vadimovna Valodzina (Minsk) presented a different kind of lay community, established in France and Italy during the religious revival from the late eleventh century to the 1340s. The *pauperes catholici* and *pauperes reconciliati* can be considered to be a group of Waldensian heretics who separated from the sect and sought to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church. They had their own statutes, members and property, part of which later became the basis for the financial strength of the Dominican Order.

Piotr Wróbel (Cracow) described the functioning of the brotherhoods in the medieval republic of Ragusa. He stressed the excellent organization of the municipal authorities and the laity's involvement in Church life, manifested in various forms of religious activity. The first confraternities (of carpenters and goldsmiths) were established in Ragusa at the end of the thirteenth century. It was not until the fifteenth century when some of the confraternities started to resemble professional corporations. However, despite the lush flowering of craft guilds, the number of professional confraternities in Ragusa was relatively small. They never gained such character and power as some confraternities in Italian cities (e.g. in Florence) and in cities in Northern Europe. This resulted from the deliberate policy of the noble government of the Republic who, seeking to maintain full control of city life, never allowed the brotherhoods to gain too much influence.

Ellen Decraene (Antwerp) presented the participation and role of women in religious brotherhoods in the small towns in the southern Netherlands, for example in the city of Aalst. It was interesting to see what confraternal activities women were engaged in. Decraene also examined the influence of confraternities on women's participation in both family and public life. Apart from forming various associations, clubs and guilds, religious brotherhoods played an important role in creating social and political culture of the city and in the formation of civil society. Involvement in confraternal activities was one of the few forms of participation in public life in the city for contemporary women and a getaway from everyday household chores.

Rusty Roberson (Edinburgh) spoke on the functioning of a specific confraternity in Edinburgh, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which referred to the activities of the seventeenth-century Scottish confraternities. The Society propagated the new spirit and the cur-

rents of the period, but used the methods typical of religious brotherhoods. In the thirteenth century it was legalized by the Crown as a missionary and educational institution. The starting point for discussion on the Society was the examination of the links and continuity between early Protestant confraternities and religious associations of the early British Enlightenment. Their links with the national Churches of England and Scotland were of particular importance.

Hana Patkova (Prague) spoke on brotherhoods in medieval Bohemia from the Hussite wars until the Reformation. During this important period for the Czech history, both Catholic and Utraquist brotherhoods functioned. They differed only in their approach towards receiving the Holy Communion, as Utraquists received it in two forms. Members of the confraternities of both faiths similarly attended masses on patronal days, organized funerals for brethren, and donated chalices and monstrances for churches and altars. Interestingly, starting in the second half of the fifteenth century, literary confraternities gained a foothold among both Catholics and Utraquists, often serving as church choirs. By contrast, rosary confraternities and confraternities in honor of St. James, who cared for pilgrims to Compostella, were characteristic of Catholic areas.

Religious orders used religious confraternities as a popular form of influencing the faithful. Some male branches of orders could exclusively set up specific confraternities, like the Dominicans, who set up rosary brotherhoods, and the Carmelites, who set up scapular brotherhoods. Confraternities were also founded in convents, a topic discussed by Anna Szylar (Tarnobrzeg). This interesting phenomenon has not yet been separately studied. Religious confraternities under the care of female convents in the seventeenth and eighteenth century gathered not only nuns, but also priests. The nuns' lay relatives and female convent students could also become members. These convent confraternities could be established by the sisters and abbess of individual orders, but also by lay and secular people. Financial support came from confraternal contributions and donations.

Robert Stępień (Lublin) spoke on the functioning of religious brotherhoods in Sieciechów, with particular focus on the local St. Anne's Brotherhood, founded in 1578 by Dimitri Solikowskiego, Archbishop of Lvov, at the parish church of St. Lawrence. The brotherhood was supported by successive Sieciechów abbots, as evidenced in a number of privileges granted by the Benedictines. The author also presented the economic basis for its functioning, as well as its religious, educational and charitable activities.

The religious brotherhoods at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa were discussed by Wojciech Kęder (Kielce). From the early seventeenth century until the mid-eighteenth century, the confraternities of the Holy Rosary, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Guardian Angels, St. Anne's Brotherhood, and the Brotherhood of the Coronation of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa (founded in 1718), enjoyed their glory days. At this time over 100,000 pilgrims could be found in the registers of confraternal books. These brotherhoods had

separate liturgical calendars, but a single management. At that time, the cult of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, which was the official state cult, was popular among all social classes, but especially among burghers and peasants. The end of the glory days of the Jasna Góra confraternities came with the spread of Enlightenment ideology and deteriorating support from the rulers.

The paper by Agata Chrobot (Kielce) dealt with the publishing activities of the Society of Jesus as evident in the advertisements found in the Warsaw press in the eighteenth century. Although book printing was a major challenge at the time, the Society of Jesus eventually enriched its offer with theological, didactic, moralistic, political, legal, medical, geographical, and biographical works. Among these publications were books for the Marian sodalities and for the religious brotherhoods under the care of the Jesuits. Interestingly, Jesuit printing houses also published prayer books, sermons, statutes, and biographies of patron saints for parish and monastic confraternities.

Since the early Middle Ages, cities were the environment in which brotherhoods first formed and where they developed most rapidly. In Poland, however, the first appearance of confraternities in the Middle Ages or in the early modern era was in villages. Confraternal and guild institutions offered various groups the opportunity to emphasize their prestige and to demonstrate the role they played in urban centres, something that often led to competition between various brotherhoods. Diocesan and monastic clergy used religious brotherhoods to inspire the urban community to deepen their religiosity, to perform acts of charity towards the poor and the sick, to care for schools, asylums, hospitals, and so on. Some confraternities for women were the only platform for women to take active part in the public life of the city. In his presentation, Marcin Gadocha (Cracow) focussed on this issue, analyzing the participation of women in Polish religious brotherhoods in the seventeenth century. The involvement of women in confraternities could be a result of their search for space to materialize women's piety, in particular, through participation in masses, processions, and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. A large number of women of all social classes and different financial status belonged to brotherhoods. Most confraternities accepted members of both sexes and, similarly, confraternal offices existed for men and women. But not all — some brotherhoods prevented women from performing any functions. Despite these restrictions, participation in confraternities allowed women to take part in the collective religious life and to reach beyond the home circle.

Arthur Hamryszczak (Lublin) examined the functioning of religious brotherhoods and guilds in the archdeaconry of Włocławek in the eighteenth century. He pointed to the difficulties in the interpretation of sources relating to the concepts of *confraternitas* and *contubernium*. Church visitations indicate the coexistence of religious brotherhoods of the faithful of different states and professions, and of confraternities of artisans of one or another profession. In guild statutes one can find entries similar to those in confraternal statutes: their own judiciary, care for confraternal altars, and calls for

participation in confraternal celebrations and meetings. With the economic collapse of cities, guilds began to evolve into confraternal organizations.

Dariusz Chyła (Bydgoszcz) presented a paper on the functioning of religious brotherhoods in Kuyavia in 1577–1772 that was based on his research on church visitations. He pointed to the location, number, and popularity of confraternities in the Kruszwica and Włocławek archdeaconries. Confraternal institutions were established in both urban and rural areas, but nonetheless throughout the period the number of urban confraternities was higher than that of village confraternities. The most popular were brotherhoods of the Holy Rosary and of St. Anne.

The basic kind of sources that allow us to study the activities, size, social composition, internal structure, and financial status of confraternal communities are books composed by the members themselves. Anna Jabłońska (Kielce) looked at this issue and presented the seventeenth-century books of the Trzemeszno confraternities. Stored in the archives of the archdiocese of Gniezno, two old-Polish confraternal books from Trzemeszno (those of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Rosary and of the Brotherhood of the Guardian Angel) are an excellent source of knowledge about the origin, structure and functioning of these institutions.

Some papers at the conference were devoted to the financial aspects of brotherhoods. These institutions' sources of income were very different and dependent on many factors, economic, political and social. The best endowed brotherhoods possessed real estate, benefited from lending money at interest (*wyderkaf*) and from pious legacies and bequests. Some communities also earned money from membership fees, collected into the so-called 'confraternal boxes'. Moreover, chapels and confraternal altars were endowed with valuable items such as paintings, sculptures, liturgical utensils, and vestments.

Marcin Kowalski (Lublin) spoke on the emoluments of the parish brotherhoods in the Roman Catholic diocese of Przemyśl in the eighteenth century. Kowalski drew attention to the different financial status of individual confraternities and explained the reasons for such a situation. The basic source for his study was a visitation by Bishop Wacław Hieronim Sierakowski.

Katarzyna Justyniarska-Chojak (Kielce) raised the issue of "pious" legacies for religious brotherhoods, recorded in the seventeenth-century wills found in the municipal books of Nowy Sącz. Testators supported local confraternities by equipping confraternal chapels with liturgical vestments, altar tablecloths or confraternal covers used in processions. They cared for religious brotherhoods providing them with money, personal properties, farm animals and even food products. Bożena Popiołek (Cracow) discussed testamentary bequests for devotional confraternities in Saxon times (the first half of the eighteenth century). During this period confraternities expanded the range of their activities, something typical of baroque piety. For many people, belonging to a religious brotherhood was an important part of life. Not only did the brotherhoods of the Saxon era engage in catechesis, devotion, and care for the sick, but they also served as a substitute for pawnshops and they

granted loans. They promoted different forms of Marian devotion, exemplified in many images of the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, and expanded the area of their activity to rural parishes.

Because brotherhoods were concerned with the setting of their services, they sought to own their own liturgical vestments and vessels. Wealthier members of confraternities endowed their chapels with paintings, sculptures, reliefs, altarpieces, and richly decorated crucifixes. Various devotional and votive offerings donated by the members or the faithful in general asking or thanking for the intercession of the patron saint revered by a particular confraternity were placed in chapels and on confraternal altars.

The paper delivered by Katarzyna Moskal (Krakow) discussed the relics related to the religious life of the Krakow guilds stored in that city's Historical Museum. These items served a specific function in religious practices of the guilds and were to create their dignified setting. Among others, she discussed the devotional offerings of the shopkeepers guild, a set of votive offerings donated by tanners, white-leather tanners and glove-makers; the painting and the reliquary from the chapel of the goldsmiths associated with the cult of their patron saint, St. Eligius.

Marta Pieniążek-Samek (Kielce) spoke on liturgical and ceremonial objects owned by confraternities in Lesser Poland. These were mostly paintings, gold and silver jewelry, textiles, both received as gifts and purchased by the brotherhoods themselves.

Zuzanna Mikołajek (Wrocław) discussed the artistic manifestations of the religious brotherhoods in Wrocław in the Baroque era. She pointed to their iconographic content and to the artistic craftsmanship present in confraternal chapels, whose form, shape, and decoration were adjusted to their function while, at the same time, reflecting the spirituality of the era.

Natalia Korzeniowska (Łódź) presented a paper on the cult of the Holy Mother of Consolation, so called 'Belty', at the Belty Brotherhood of the Blessed Mother of Consolation, in the town of Nowa Wieś in the Kłodzko Valley. Like Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of the Scapular, the 'Belty' Mother was seen as the advocate of the souls in Purgatory. As a result, in confraternal image found in the church in Nowa Wieś one can see souls in Purgatory and the Blessed Mother of Consolation who, as their advocate, passes them the belt which the souls try to grab with their out-stretched hands. It is one of the rarest themes in Polish art depicting Purgatory.

Beata Frey-Stecowa (Krakow) talked about liturgical equipment and utensils belonging to the Brotherhood of St. Sophia at the Church of St. Mark in Krakow, which celebrated its 600th anniversary in 2011. A large number of these confraternal relics — liturgical equipment and vestments used in services, feretories, banners, crosses, and sticks carried in processions — no longer exist, but some have survived to the present and still belong to the brotherhood.

Agnieszka Zabielska (Krakow) spoke on the religious brotherhoods in no-longer-existing churches in Krakow. When, in the first half of the nine-

teenth century, the Austrians demolished several churches, the religious confraternities that used them gradually started to disappear. Their property, including confraternal altars and their entire endowment, went into ruin or was dispersed at auction. The Brotherhood of Our Lady of Consolation, in the Church of St. Stephen in Krakow, was fortunate: despite the difficult history of the parish, the brotherhood survived and still functions today, with its seat transferred to a new church.

Several papers were devoted to confraternities operating in both Orthodox and Uniate churches. These institutions were active and vigorous and, in comparison with Catholic confraternities, had much more influence on what was happening in the Orthodox and Uniate churches. Apart from common masses and supporting fellow brothers, they founded and maintained schools, hospitals, printing houses, libraries, and new churches, providing them with property emoluments. Orthodox brotherhoods played an important role in combating the provisions of the Union of Brest. Members of these brotherhoods persecuted Uniate priests, preventing them from celebrating religious services in churches, occupied property belonging to the Greek Catholics, and rejected the authority of the leaders of the Uniate Church. Orthodox brotherhoods wanted to act as religious reformers and even sought to reform the Orthodox clergy.

Leonid Timoshenko (Drohobych) compared the forms and the scope of activity of Catholic and Orthodox brotherhoods from the perspective of Polish and Ukrainian historiography. The starting point for these considerations were the laws of the Brotherhood of Mercy and St. Anne as well as the Lviv stauropegic Brotherhood of the Assumption (f. 1586). The laws he analyzed reveal common traditions as well as the cultural and religious influence of Polish brotherhoods on Russian brotherhoods, despite the existing differences in ritual and religious culture. These similarities were seen particularly in the functioning of confraternal authorities and in the responsibilities imposed on each member of the brotherhood.

Beata Lorens (Rzeszów) spoke on the relationship between Latin, Uniate, and Armenian brotherhoods in the Commonwealth, with particular emphasis on the ethnic Polish-Russian borderland in the eighteenth century. She pointed to the statutory similarities and differences between confraternal communities, membership of the faithful belonging to different Catholic rites, and joint participation in religious services and ceremonies.

Agnieszka Gronek (Krakow) explained the role played by the Lviv Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Assumption in the adaptation of modern art forms among Orthodox Church artists. Although the members of the Lviv stauropegic brotherhood were ardent defenders of the Orthodox faith, their cultural and artistic activities contributed largely to the infiltration of the new Renaissance aesthetic solutions developed in Western Europe into Orthodox church art.

The paper by Bohdan Lazorak (Drohobych) was devoted to the historical sources for the study of the Uniate Orthodox brotherhoods in the eparchy

of Lviv, stored in the collection of that city's A. Sheptytsky National Museum. Lazarak analyzed very interesting and diverse types of sources, including foundation documents of Orthodox brotherhoods, books of statutes, conciliar and synodal constitutions, pastoral letters, visitations, court and business records, lists of members, inventories of confraternal libraries, wills, official and private confraternal correspondence with the clergy and laity, logs of bachelors of confraternal schools, confraternal diaries and marginalia in the liturgical books, which were to correct the old Orthodox texts and explain some of their individual parts.

The presentation by Slawomir Braniewski (Lublin) was related to the functioning of the St. Humphrey's Brotherhood in the Orthodox church in Siedliszcze. The brotherhood was founded in 1765 by Colonel Wojciech Węgleński of the Szreniawa coat of arms. The confraternity existed for 77 years, until 1842, and the list of its members includes 1,040 names. Its books and statutes are preserved to this day. These documents are an invaluable source for our understanding of the life of eighteenth-century citizens of Siedliszcze as well as of the functioning of the brotherhood itself.

Ewa Domagała (Kielce) discussed the problem of the eighteenth-century supplications brought by the Orthodox confraternities of the eparchy of Przemyśl. In their complaints to the bishop, confraternity members accused parsons who showed little concern for the appearance of the church and the state of its property, or who neglected their pastoral duties. Among the complaints there were also allegations of alcohol abuse and even violence against members of various confraternities. Church authorities also dealt with supplications in which parsons defended themselves against unfair allegations. These complaints illustrate how confraternities were concerned with the proper functioning of churches and confraternal schools as well as with their financial security.

Moving somewhat away from Poland and Europe, one of the papers at the conference was devoted to the religious brotherhoods in the pre-colonial Congo. Robert Piątek (Siedlce) pointed out that local confraternal communities in the Congo did not copy European models. Religious associations under the control of the local ruler existed in the Congo even before the arrival of the Portuguese. Religious brotherhoods, which formed after the arrival of the Europeans, gathered the ruling elite, who considered membership in such organizations to be a mark of distinction. Members learned the basics of the Christian faith and the Portuguese language, which allowed them later to serve as interpreters.

The presented papers at the conference stimulated lively discussions that allowed participants to share their insights and give each other valuable tips for further research. The conference was brought to an end by Wojciech Iwańczak who stressed both the broad geographical background of the papers presented and the diversity of sources used by the scholars, as well as the number of issues discussed.

The questions raised at the conference allow us to reach various conclusions and mark out various topics for further study. The faithful of the Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Uniate, and Armenian Churches perceived religious confraternities as lay communities able to pursue a variety of goals — religious, social, economic, cultural, and even political. Their concern focused primarily on the brethren, but some of the confraternities also took care of those outside their confraternal structures. The basic sources for the history of brotherhoods are quite rich and varied. Traces of their activities can be found both in the documents produced by the confraternities themselves (statutes, membership rolls, records of meetings and decisions, and financial records), in sources of ecclesiastical provenance (religious, diocesan, parish, hospital, school records) as well as in urban, state, and personal sources. It is also important to study confraternal works of art, altars, chapels, books, liturgical books, prayer books, devotional items, votive offerings, and so forth. All these sources point to the important role played by confraternities in many areas of pre-modern society.

Not only did the formation of brotherhoods depend on the decision of the authorities of the individual faiths, but it was also the result of a grassroots initiative of the faithful. The popularity of particular types of confraternities and of their patron saints changed over time. The medieval era was dominated by brotherhoods in honour of the divine persons or to the Christological mysteries, but from the sixteenth century on confraternities in honour of the Virgin Mary and of various saints began to gain an advantage, all in line with the spirit of the times and social demand.

Catholic brotherhoods followed a similar pattern in the Commonwealth as they did in Western Europe. If any differences existed, they were the result of individual political, economic, or religious situations in particular states or regions. The goals set by the Council of Trent and subsequent popes illustrate the importance of these institutions for the renewal of the Catholic Church and its efforts to counter the influence of the Protestant faiths.

The conference pointed to the need for a comparative study of the functioning of religious brotherhoods of different faiths that would offer a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences, mutual influences, cooperation and competition, and the ways they tried to adapt to the changing economic and political conditions of the times. There is also a clear need for the publication of synthetic works on the role of these institutions in the development of art and culture, hospitality, care for the poor, education, printing, economic and political activity, their contribution to the creation of civil society, to giving agency to women, and to raising the level of religious faith and practices in towns and villages. Religious confraternities and sodalities, as well as tertiaries and guilds, were an integral part of the panorama of medieval and early modern Europe.