

Tomasz Kempa, *Konflikty wyznaniowe w Wilnie od początku reformacji do końca XVII wieku* [Confessional Conflicts in Wilno from the Early Reformation Period to the Late Seventeenth Century], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, 2016, 800 pp., annex, bibliog., indices

The book under review is certainly an outstanding study. All the same, the author has made some minor errors or omissions and has not entirely well balanced his views or opinions, which I am going to prove below.

Tomasz Kempa is known to the milieu of Polish historians as an eminent expert in religious issues in the early modern-age Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. His most recent book has been meant as a comprehensive insight into the negative facet of the religious contacts in the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The core subject of this monograph is indeed an extremely interesting research area not only for historiographers but no less for sociologists, religion experts, or cultural anthropologists. Although for years it has been arousing interest among Polish as well as Lithuanian historians, it was not before the present book came out that it was researched in a satisfactory manner.

The monograph in question is composed of an introduction, eleven chapters, a conclusion, appendix, reference literature, list of illustrations, and index of personal names. The extensive appendix (pp. 667–719) comprises twenty-eight interesting documents related to the occurrences described in the book. Some of these documents have been published before, but mostly as part of foreign publications and therefore it has been the apt thing to include them in this particular appendix. Some individual documents come from the Raczyński Library of Poznań, the Czartoryski Library in Cracow, the Wróblewski Library of Vilnius and the Russian State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg, whilst a definite majority of them have been found by Kempa at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw and in the National Library of Lithuania. As to the latter place, all the documents concerning Reformed Protestants in Vilnius are available online on the Cultural Heritage of Lithuania website¹ (which clearly is not to the detriment of the Annex's content).

The Introduction explains the author's choice of the topic, summarises the literature and the other relevant sources. The proposed chronological caesuras are fairly acceptable, which also refers to the division of the period concerned into three segments, following Marcelli Kosman's concept of the development of the religious relations: i – “fast development of religious novelties in Lithuania”, until the arrival of the Jesuits in Wilno (1569); ii – “the confessions confronting one another”, concluded at the end of the sixteenth century; iii – “the moment the Reformation (and the Orthodoxy, as Kempa complements Kosman's categories) clearly recedes”, until mid-seventeenth century. The sources used in the monograph have been abundant, including printed and manuscript matter. The author has made use of manuscripts from archives and libraries in Poland as well as primarily in Vilnius, Moscow, Petersburg, L'viv, Kiev, and Minsk. An impressive collection of source publications complements the source-base picture.

The structure of the book is well thought-over, with the chronological-and-problem criterion coming to the fore. While most of the sections focus on the primary subject-matter, Chapter Ten (“The Jews of Wilno and the Łukiszki Tatars in the sixteenth to seventeenth century. Anti-Jewish tumults”) goes somewhat beyond the main framework as the argument includes confessors of the non-Christian religions at this point. Chapter Eleven takes the reader again into the complicated world of intra-Christian relations in Wilno, which is this time shown through the prism of last wills of certain dwellers of the city and the specificity of the local guilds.

The first chapter attempts to draw a picture of the Grand Duchy's multicultural capital before the Reformation. The focus is on the significance of Wilno, the nations or ethnicities populating it at the time, the city's urban layout

¹ <http://www.epaveldas.lt> [Accessed: 2 April 2018].

(which greatly influenced the character of the denomination-related riots) and its function as the capital city. This chapter, although one of the shortest, is certainly a valuable summary introducing the core of the monograph.

Chapter Two deals with the emergence and development of the Protestant communities in Wilno, the assumed cut-off moment being marked by the arrival of the Jesuits in the city in 1569. In my opinion, following the author's declared intent to render the periodisation proposed once by Kosman more detailed or specific, the date might have been shifted to 1579, particularly in the context of the 'conflicts' heralded in the title. The very fact of establishing the Jesuit Order in the area had no critical bearing on the emergence of severe tensions or clashes. Several disputes did occur, but no violent acts yet. The latter did not come before 1581, when the local students, just two years after their university was set up, were used to destroy the Evangelical publishing house and burn the books. As it thus seems, rather than the bringing over of the Jesuits, the setting up of the Wilno academy was of primary importance (true, under the Order's patronage and management), along with the bestowal of the justiciary privileges on the student youth.

Also the third chapter, which deals with the earliest stage of the Counter-Reformation and the first religious conflicts between the Catholics and the Reformed Evangelicals, extends to issues involving the local Jesuits. The chapter in question is one of the core sections in terms of the research problem under discussion, and is the largest one (volume-wise). The author meets there a serious challenge as he has had to determine the historical facts based upon the often mutually contradicting accounts of the conflicting parties. He manages the task very well: the events from the years 1581, 1588 and 1591 are reliably described as to the facts and meticulously analysed; the author strives to determine their origins and implications. The chapter moreover describes, very competently, the aforementioned disputes between the Evangelicals and the Jesuits. The author has not avoided the temptation to be seduced by the earlier authors, who quoted the data based on the Jesuit Society's exaggerated reports: he somewhat thoughtlessly informs us that the headcount of students in Wilno was apparently in excess of 700 in a number of years, peaking up to the improbable 1,210 (p. 110). Kempa uses the term 'schoolboy' (Pol.: *uczeń*) and 'student' (which refers in Polish to tertiary-level student) alternately, and hence most probably the inflated figure. I definitely understand the need to use synonymous terms in avoidance of unnecessary redundancies or for the sake of style; this, however, leads at times to serious instances of abuse. The researchers, from Ludwik Piechnik up to Tomasz Kempa himself, have mostly tended to confuse the two dissimilar institutions (and categories): the Jesuit College and St. John's School, the latter also run by the Society, both attended by schoolboys, and the Wilno Academy with its students. In fact, those attending lectures at the latter, having

sworn the oath to the Rector and completed the immatriculation procedure, were the only ones to enjoy the name of student and the privileges their status implied. The students formed a minority group among all the pupils educated by the Jesuits, whilst the latter most probably quoted an aggregated figure (to what extent the numbers of their wards might have been overstated cannot possibly be determined today).

Poland-Lithuania's second capital city had a similar situation: according to the estimates, the Liberal Arts, the largest of the faculties at the Cracow Academy, had some 300–350 students attending at a time.² It is therefore not quite plausible that the actual number of students (adding those in the elitist faculties of Theology, Medicine, and Law) could have ever exceeded 500. This comparison, again, shows that the data regarding the numerical force of Wilno 'students' are exaggerated and need being rectified. A (small) portion of criticism is also deserved by the descriptions and interpretations of the denominational tumults of the years 1581 and 1591. On p. 142, following the *Apologeticus*,³ the author tells us that the rioters "took away the Evangelical books from the libraries, and ordered for them to be burnt at where the traitor[s] were beheaded." The author concludes that the choice of the burning site was not coincidental and was meant to defile the religious opponents. This argument is not wrong, to my mind, and yet not completely right either. One might legitimately risk the hypothesis whereby a religious tumult is an act that consists in taking over the competencies of authority by the crowd at the moment the existing authority remains passive; in the context in question, passive in the face of the threat incited by the 'heretics'. Most of such events took place in broad daylight and in public. The victims or the movable properties belonging to the Evangelicals were oftentimes taken to the site of torment or the square in front of the town-halls; this, as I interpret it, in order to not only demonstrate how powerful the tumulters were, but also to exercise the competency of the official authority (often at the sites where acts of power were delivered) in punishing and disciplining the offenders by those locals who felt empowered to do so.

² Such is my own calculation, based on the immatriculation documents for the *Artes* faculty (in the peaking decade of the sixteenth century, 174 students per year were immatriculated) and the efficiency of earning the consecutive academic degrees. Cf. Henryk Barycz, *Historja Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w epoce humanizmu* (Kraków, 1935), 320; Irena Kaniewska, 'Młodzież Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego w latach 1510–1560. Studium statystyczne', in Kazimierz Lepszy (ed.), *Studia z dziejów młodzieży Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego w dobie Renesansu* (Kraków, 1964), 1–89.

³ *Apologeticus, to jest obrona konfederacyjnej. Przy tym seditio albo bunt kapłański na ewanieliki w Wilnie z wolej a łaski miłego Boga przed harpanem wynurzony* (Wilno, 1582), reed. Edmund Bursche (Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich, 84; Kraków, 1932).

With respect to the proposed interpretation of the 1591 tumult, let me voice a minor objection, in the light of the sources the author has had access to. Albeit the records would not point out to the Jesuits as the perpetrators, Tomasz Kempa has been deceived, to some extent, by the notoriety associated with the Society of Jesus and thus ascribes to the Jesuits some contribution to the inspiration of the riot – though the way he expresses this opinion is rather inhibited.⁴ During my own query at the Wróblewski Library in Vilnius, I did come across a stapled document containing hitherto-unknown records related to this particular event, which dramatically alter the picture and clearly identify the actual perpetrators.⁵ These newly found documents remarkably broaden our knowledge on the context behind the burning of the Protestant church, as they comprise testimonies of witnesses from the investigation held at the Lithuanian Tribunal; subsequently follow the detailed legal actions of the injured Evangelicals against the accused students before the episcopal consistory. These testimonies clearly indicate the local Bernardine community as those who instigated the incineration. The discovery alters the image of the religious conflicts in Wilno, especially if the 1591 occurrences be considered together with the tumult of 1639, in which the Order of Friars Minor were evidently strongly engaged.

Chapter Four is on the Union of Brest, 1596, and the tumults that appeared in the late sixteenth century. These threads are followed up in the subsequent chapter which basically focuses on the disputes between the Uniates and the Orthodox Church members. Both these chapters offer what is the most interesting, and most valuable, about this book: as far as research into the history of political and social Orthodox and Uniate confessors, or the contacts between the ‘Greek’ world and the Catholics and/or Evangelicals, is concerned, Tomasz Kempa is an unchallenged authority – and the book under discussion confirms it once again.

Chapter Six describes the period 1610–32, when the Reformed Evangelical church was destroyed anew (in 1611); consequently, the archive of the Lithuanian Brethren (Pol.: *Jednota Litewska* – the Lithuanian Church’s provincial union) was fatefully damaged. The period in question marked a climax in the Uniate Church’s struggle against the Orthodox Fraternity of the Holy Spirit.

The next chapter describes the tempestuous years between the death of Sigismund III and the displacement of the Reformed church outside the ramparts of Wilno under the parliamentary verdict passed during the reign of said king’s successor (1632–40). The 1639 tumult, known to the earlier authors, with the resulting removal of the said church, is also covered. It might

⁴ “The occurrence must have owed something to the inspiration, be it indirect, from some of the Wilno Jesuits”, Kempa, *Konflikty wyznaniowe*, 171.

⁵ Vilnius, The Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (*Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka*), F40-1024.

be regretted, though, that the author missed the chance to reinterpret this so-well-documented happening in a cultural depiction.

Chapter Eight deals with a short though significant period in Wilno's history (whose importance is partly based on the religious relations) – the city's occupation by the Muscovite troops in 1655–62. This excellent section is largely based on foreign literature and the author's own research. The subsequent chapter describes the last of the periods covered, the latter half of the seventeenth century. The focus is, once again, on the conflicts between the Orthodox and the Uniate communities, as well as the last demolition of the Reformed Evangelical church (then already outside the city walls) in 1682. The author aptly appreciates the specificity of this particular tumult, which took place in unprecedented circumstances: the Calvinist community was significantly debilitated, if not defenceless; there was no actual reason behind the attack, whilst the rioters appeared ruthless more severely than ever before. These circumstances apparently won the Calvinists some sympathy from a part of the Catholic community, given the exacerbating Counter-Reformation trends (pp. 508–9).

The tenth (and penultimate) chapter describes the relations of the two non-Christian groups, namely the Jews and the Muslim Tatars, with the Christians, mainly of the Catholic denomination. As has already been said, this takes the author behind the main framework, superfluously perhaps. The section heavily draws on the older literature, rather than his own research, and thus does not much contribute to our knowledge of the subject-matter.

The last, eleventh, chapter is an attempt to glance at Wilno “as a phenomenon of multi-religious and multicultural urban hub”, meant to balance the negative picture of the local religious relations and conflicts, which has consistently been drawn throughout the monograph (in line with its lead theme). In my opinion, such an effort – and the chapter as such, indeed – is basically irrelevant. The author's choice of the research topic was not accidental; the relevant comments and remarks in respect of Wilno's multi-religious and multicultural character are encountered in the introductory section and scattered across the chapters. A conscious reader would be well aware that the history of Wilno is not that of confessional riots alone but the unrests were interspersed by periods of relative peace: after all, this message can be drawn from the monograph itself. Irrespective of the relevance of the section, it is clearly based for most part on the existing literature, mainly the studies of David Frick and the source edition he has compiled.

With a closer insight in the contents of the testaments analysed, a rather depressing image emerges as their authors (and recipients) mainly tended to enclose themselves within the confines of their own ethnicity or cultural circle (as a narrow concept), if not, merely, denomination. While some (however limited) social ties did appear between the Evangelicals and the Orthodox, no such contacts are attested for the Catholics and the Evangelicals – though

they did exist, as we can otherwise learn from the other sources. Judicial records, which are closer associated with the study's topic, have remained unused. These records reflect the whole spectrum of the burghers' responses to the religious violence (which coincides with the main line of the study), covering the broad array of actors and facts: from the inspiration of the riots through the active participation of the onlookers supporting either of the parties to the conflict, casual sneak-thieves taking advantage of the turmoil, up to the defenders of the confessional group under attack. This particular issue might have deserved a separate section, perhaps.

Having reviewed the monograph's content, a handful of particular comments can be attempted. The Introduction concludes with "some terminological remarks", where the author explains his understanding and use of the terms such as "(the) Reformation", "(the) Catholic reform", and "(the) Counter-Reformation", along with contradistinctions such as "(the) Orthodox Church vs. (the) Orthodox church", "(the) Church/(the/a) church/(the/a) Protestant church". However, the key notion of 'conflict' and its relative terms – 'tumult', 'riot(s)' or 'unrest(s)' remain unexplained. Kempa often tends to use these latter words in questionable contexts, not infrequently interchangeably with 'conflict'. With the semantic field of 'tumult' assumed in line with its Latin etymology,⁶ its application to the 1591 events should be named inappropriate (pp. 19, 171). Although the Reformed church in Wilno was destroyed for the first time then, it occurred out of a secret incineration perpetrated by unknown individuals. In turn, the occurrences from 1639 are correctly describable in terms of a 'tumult' (pp. 409 ff.): the church was not demolished then but mutual religiously motivated attacks continued for several days thereafter, leading almost to a regular battle as the Catholic crowd besieged the church in an attempt to destroy it. Such an evident violation of the routine of the town's life, where neither the castle-based nor the town-hall authorities prove capable of subduing the rioters can definitely be described as a 'tumult'.

Although this book is on Wilno, its author makes attempts to compare its various factors or aspects against the other towns within the Grand Duchy, as well as Cracow and L'viv; analysed in such terms is, for instance, the situation of a given religion or comparable confessional excesses. Not all of these excursions are successful since the author lacks at some points a deeper knowledge of the local context for the town he is referring to – just to name Cracow in this respect. For example, we can find (p. 169), with no reference to a source, that a tumult occurred in the course of the funeral of

⁶ According to a Latin-Polish dictionary for lawyers and historians (Janusz Sondel, *Słownik łacińsko-polski dla prawników i historyków* [Kraków, 1997], 960), *tumultus* stands for (i) noise; (iii) commotion, turmoil, upheaval; (iv) unrest; (v) agitation; (vi) riots, revolution; (viii) war.

a certain Regina Filipowska, and the Cathedral Chapter “expressed their regret and brought about the punishment of the perpetrators”. The undersigned is unaware of any such perpetrators (namely, students) having been punished; not to say, of the Chapter’s support in this respect. The Chapter’s members in fact responded to the protest lodged by the Evangelicals as follows: “c[a]eterum studiosos non esse in sua potestate neque iurisdictione, unde puniri eos non posse.”⁷ They naturally promised later on that in case any of those is found guilty of having participated in the riot, he shall be penalised as appropriate. The sincerity of this response can be doubted, though, since at the early stage of the Reformation movement in Cracow the local Evangelical community was mostly the more aggressive party; the Chapter records contain information on violent acts committed by the Evangelicals against the Catholic priests and the Cathedral itself in the years 1556–7, almost immediately preceding the aforementioned funeral tumult.

We come across another awkward statement on the following page, where we can read that “Five death sentences were passed and delivered on the causers of the tumult at that time [i.e. after the first demolition of the Cracow Protestant church in 1574].” The ‘causers’ were some individuals caught as they had with them low-value objects stolen from the church, or even picked up in the street. The point was that numerous valuables and private noble privileges disappeared from the church (the nobles as well-to-do burghers had amassed a great deal of wealth at that church (Pol.: *zbór*), which had a privilege from the king), whereas those sentenced individuals had taken off from the building some pieces of iron sheet-metal, which got sold afterwards for five grosz, three locks, or a Polish gallon (Pol.: *garniec*) of butter.⁸ They were, clearly, incidentally encountered persons who had just used the sudden opportunity, and by no means the violators. Those to blame was a gang of students who initiated the attack on the church and then protected the others who stormed and plundered it against the relief force from the castle and municipal offices. It was these students who reappeared as the perpetrators in a number of protestations, such as the one lodged by the deputy starost (Pol.: *podstarości*) of Cracow who came to the church’s aid but was repelled by the armed group of students. The *podstarości*’s testimony is credible: he certainly knew whom he fought. Those who might still doubt about the role of local Academy students and other members of the milieu will probably be finally convinced by the fact that not long after the tumult,

⁷ Roman Źelewski (ed.), *Materiały do dziejów reformacji w Krakowie. Zaburzenia wyznaniowe w latach 1551–1598* (Materiały Komisji Nauk Historycznych, 6; Wrocław, 1962), x, 12.

⁸ ‘Protokół badania i skazania pięciu uczestników zajęć za włamanie i kradzież’, in Waław Uruszczał, Anna Karabowicz and Maciej Mikuła (eds.), *Księga kryminalna miasta Krakowa z lat 1554–1625* (Kraków, 2013), 281.

the privilege of a certain Rafał Leszczyński, previously kept at the *zbór*, was found at the Collegium Maius.⁹ Nevertheless, none of the students was ever sentenced; most certainly, no capital punishment was executed. Thus, the fears shared by the local noblemen were confirmed; as they wrote to their 'brethren', the main violators ought to primarily be punished, "so that it may be imputed not for there after what they commonly say: *dat veniam corvulus, vexat censura columbas*, or: they hang the minor thief and bow to the great one."¹⁰

Yet, all these imprecise or awkward enunciations do not affect the main subject of the study; neither do they essentially alter the comprehensive image of the confessional relationships in Poland-Lithuania. In summing up, let me emphasise that since the monograph is a quite successful attempt at a comprehensive approach to the religious conflicts in the Commonwealth's Wilno, I have decided to mostly focus herein on its flaws or drawbacks (sparse as they are). This ought not to affect the overall image offered by the study under review. The book is well designed and thought-out – most evidently, a result of the many years of work and (re)search. Its unquestionable merit is that it deepens and helps (re)arrange the knowledge on confessional relationships in Wilno. To embrace and process such an extensive material, not infrequently based on contradicting accounts or testimonies, was a really demanding task – and Tomasz Kempa has skillfully met the challenge.

The disputes over competence when it came to judging the tumults are ably described. The precedent importance of the specific decisions is emphasised, and their impact on how the religious conflicts were further solved is indicated. The Wilno occurrences are shown in a broad context on the countrywide (i.e. Commonwealth) scale. The influences of the dietines (Pol.: *sejmiki*) and the parliament (Pol.: *sejm*) on the local denominational situation is described. Most of the arguments put forth by the author can easily be complied with; the others are inspiring enough to pose further research questions and increasingly daring hypotheses.

trans. Tristan Korecki

Dawid Machaj

⁹ Żelewski (ed.), *Materiały do dziejów reformacji*, I, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, xlv, 36.