BOOK REVIEWS

David Frick, *Kith, Kin, and Neighbors: Communities and Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013. 529 p. ISBN 978-0-8014-5128-7

We have received the important study on Vilnius and its inhabitants in the 17th century by Professor David Frick, of the University of California, Berkeley (USA). He has looked at the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the socio-topography of the city, and the prism of mutual coexistence and interaction between the communities and religious groups of the city's inhabitants. This is the result of thorough and long research lasting 15 years. The professor's numerous published articles and the study in the Polish language on 17th-century Vilnius residents published in 2007 marked phases of this research.¹

In preparing the work on Vilnius and its inhabitants in the 17th century, Frick set himself ambitious goals (p. 4): to explore the socio-topographical picture of Vilnius, that is, to determine the link between the physical map of Vilnius and the confessional and ethnic topography of the city. In other words, to determine in which neighbourhoods of Vilnius one or another religious and ethnic community dominated at that time, and where they intermingled. There was also an attempt to grasp in what way, as a city with a complex religious and ethnic composition, Vilnius was special among the cities of Europe at that time, which often also did not have uniform religious and ethnic compositions. Another important goal was to determine how the Counter Reformation, triumphing in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th century, affected relations between the religious communities of Vilnius inhabitants. Finally, the professor has tried to reveal how Vilnius' inhabitants, not only lay people but also clergy, belonging to different religious communities, tried to balance their interests and resolve conflicts and tensions arising from differences of faith at many levels of the city's general life, in the private and public spheres, in lay fraternities, in jointly inhabited houses or possessions, often even in the same room, and, of course, in religiously mixed families.

Daily interaction in the 17th century among Vilnius inhabitants of different faiths and cultures was chosen as the object of the research. Both

¹ D. Frick, *Wilnianie. Żywoty siedemnastowieczne* (Warsaw, 2007).

published sources from the 17th century such as polemical religious works, and primary sources, stored in archives and the manuscript collections of libraries, reflecting the life of 17th-century Vilnius residents, were analysed.

The chronological framework of the book does not include the whole 17th century. The author explains that due to the lack of sources, the actual starting point of the period researched is the year 1611 (p. 14). This is understandable. The fire of Vilnius in 1610 destroyed the archives of the city council. In spite of all the problems posed by the lack of sources, and their unevenness, Frick has successfully resolved the tasks he set himself.

The structure of the book consists of a comprehensive introduction, and the objectives of the research are resolved in the 14 chapters and the epilogue, in which conflicts of a religious nature that occurred in 17th-century Vilnius are described. The plans of quarters of Vilnius and the two supplements, a comparative table of street names and genealogical tables of four important Vilnius families, help to orient the reader.

A thorough understanding of the realities of 17th-century Vilnius has allowed the author to form a number of initial theses, helping us to understand better what Vilnius was in the 17th century, and in what way it was unique in Europe at that time. Frick agrees with the recently endorsed more sober approach to the population of Vilnius at that time. At the time of the city's greatest expansion, around 1650, together with the suburbs and all jurisdictions, not only of the magistracy, but also of the chapter and castle commendant (*horodniczy*), the population of all estates would have been about 20,000 (p. 7). Shortly afterwards, disaster struck: in 1655, Vilnius was taken by the Moscow army, and the city was devastated. Later, there was also a plague. The demographic losses incurred were barely offset by the end of the 17th century. Frick also agrees with the idea, widespread in historiography, that the uniqueness of Vilnius among other multinational and multi-confessional cities of Europe was the fact that the tradition of coexistence of communities of different faiths living together in Vilnius arose very early, in the 14th century, and later tradition and custom were further supplemented by a law defending the rights and peaceful coexistence of these communities. In the 17th century in Vilnius there was not only a community of Jews, quite often found in Europe, but also another non-Christian group, Muslim Tatars. In fact, they did not have, as Frick assumes, the right to live in the area enclosed by the city wall, from the late 14th to the early 15th century they settled in the suburb of Lukiškės. The variety of Christian communities was also unusual. By the 16th century, not two, as was usual in Europe, but five communities had formed. Out of the tradition of Western Christianity, three communities, Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran, had emerged. The concept of followers of the Roman faith written in the privileges granted to Vilnius residents in the 16th century included these three communities. Another two, Orthodox and Uniate (the

latter recognising the authority of the Pope, but retaining Orthodox rites), the so-called 'Greeks', represented the tradition of Eastern Christianity. In a privilege granted by the ruler in 1536, parity had been established in the Vilnius City Council between followers of the 'Greek' and the 'Roman' faith (Catholic). Exclusive rights to the duties of the *vaitas* (mayor) of the city established the legal supremacy of the latter. From the end of the 16th century up to 1666, members of all five Christian faiths could join the appropriate quotas of 'Romans' and 'Greeks' in the City Council. In 1666, this right was restricted to Catholics and Uniates. However, the dual rule in making up the city government persisted until the destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian state at the end of the 18th century. Protestants and Orthodox remained in the merchants' guilds and craftsmen's guilds after 1666. Members of the prevailing religion, Catholicism, did not monopolise the city government in Vilnius to the extent that was usual elsewhere in Europe, and even in Poland (for example, in Lviv, where Orthodox believers were barred from the city government and merchants' and craftsmen's guilds). The author could have emphasised more strongly how, over the course of time, the meaning of this legal division of residents of Vilnius into communities of the 'Roman' and 'Greek' faiths changed. The ruler defended the rights of Catholics by establishing legal parity in 1536. Only Orthodox were elected to the city council that year, so the privilege of the ruler did not allow Catholics to be marginalised. And in the 18th century the principle of parity did not allow the Uniates to be driven from the city government and the Catholics to usurp power. The 17th century was transitional, when the 'Greeks' became weaker, and the Catholics stronger.

The first chapter of the book discusses in detail the socio-topography of the city. It discloses in which neighbourhoods of the Lithuanian capital a specific religious community assembled, which parts of the city were more prestigious, and which were poorer. The prevailing settlement locations of Lutherans, mostly Germans, were specified. In the description of the part of the city that was inhabited by Calvinists, between Castle Street and St Michael's Church, one could miss the clarity of what happened here after 1640, when the Calvinist Church was ordered to move outside the walls of the city, to near the Protestant cemetery. The reader might get the impression (especially from the Epilogue (p. 408)) that, together with the right to have a church here, the Calvinists also lost their property rights, and only a few families of Calvinists remained. In fact, those possessions remained the property of the synod of Lithuania's Calvinists; the houses were rented. This chapter of the book shows that in the 17th century in Vilnius, the areas inhabited by Jews and Catholics expanded, while the areas where Orthodox and Uniates, and both Protestant communities, prevailed, slowly shrank.

In the second chapter, the author discusses ‘neighbours’, the immediate neighbourhood among tenants and owners living in the same house or possession. It turned out that renting rooms to individuals professing another faith was normal in Vilnius. Christians often also rented out premises in their houses to Jews. The third chapter discusses interaction between people of different faiths in the private sphere. The fourth chapter ‘Bells of Vilnius’ discusses the coexistence of different communities in the public sphere, and the possibilities for church processions and other public events. The colour of Vilnius was a ‘cacophony of bells’, when the church of each Christian faith would invite its own members to church services. Non-Christians had to be satisfied with verbal exhortations. Particularly interesting and significant is the fifth chapter, which discusses the use of languages, spoken and written in 17th-century Vilnius. At that time the Polish language prevailed in the public sphere, carrying out the role of *lingua franca* of Vilnius, that is, the language of communication between different groups. In addition to that, an inherent feature of the population was its multilingualism. It was difficult to identify the spread of spoken languages, especially among the poor. The author makes the assumption that in Vilnius, especially among people of a lower social status, a hybrid jargon of Polish and Lithuanian was widespread. There could not have been many Lithuanian speakers; there could have been more only in the suburbs (p. 114). Borrowings from the Ruthenian language, which was still prevalent in the city, had an influence on the spoken Polish language. Other languages, German, Scottish, Yiddish and Tatar, were also used in the city. Later, the author discusses important areas of relations and the family life of people at that time, such as births, christenings, the selection of godparents (chapter six), and the education and training of children (chapter seven), noting in particular the mixed families in terms of faith. Naturally, the problem is further developed in chapter eight, which is devoted to matchmaking and marriages, in which increased attention is again paid to mixed families. The family theme is further explored in the ninth chapter, in which attention is focused on family conflicts and divorces. Then the author goes into the public sphere. The tenth chapter deals with guilds of merchants and craftsmen, and fraternities. The 11th chapter deals with legal disputes of Vilnius residents, the ‘language of litigation’. The 12th chapter is devoted to a special period, the occupation by the Muscovites (1655–1661). A picture of Vilnius’ inhabitants in the 17th century naturally completes the last two chapters. The 13th discusses how problems dealing with old age and the care of the poor were resolved. The 14th chapter deals with peculiarities of the wills of Vilnius residents, and their funeral customs. The Epilogue concludes this study of 17th-century Vilnius and its people, the coexistence of religious and ethnic communities uniting them in the public and private spheres. Although the title implies a generalisation of instruction, it is, however,

a completely independent part of instruction. The author focuses on an overview of the religious conflicts in 17th-century Vilnius. At that time, there were often attacks on Calvinists and Jews. The author devotes more attention to the disputes between resident Christians and their conflicts with the ever-growing Jewish community. Disagreements sometimes erupted in the form of riots. The thesis is posed that they were managed outbreaks of violence, rarely spontaneous, generally occurring on an already tested model with an aim, often a material one, usually coinciding with Catholic religious holidays. The city, Church and state governments also tolerated a certain level of violence, directed against people of different faiths. An inherent attendant of the religious riots or smaller disputes was litigation. This conclusion to the book was probably meant to consolidate the impression of readers that the coexistence between religious communities in 17th-century Vilnius was not an idyll. Living at close quarters and the constant reciprocal communication did not mean that hatred for residents of other faiths could not be expressed at the same time. So we cannot talk about 'tolerance' in 17th-century Vilnius, but only about 'tolerating' other believers. We have to agree with this approach. Religious tolerance in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th and 17th centuries had its limits. In the cities it can rarely be associated with belief, but more with the necessity to come to terms with the reality of quite numerous communities believing in another way. However, in this discussion of religious conflicts, we might miss the development of trends. In the 17th century, intolerance of other beliefs and communities increased across the whole Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The non-Catholic nobility felt particularly great pressure; at the beginning of the 18th century their civil rights were also constrained. The Anti-Trinitarians were treated even more strictly in the middle of the 17th century. In the late 16th and early 17th century the communities of Calvinists were practically pushed out of the royal cities of Poland. At that time in Vilnius the life of this community was made very difficult, but it was not suspended. And the community of Jews, despite all the excesses occurring in the 17th century, grew rapidly.

Frick's is valuable, original piece of professional scholarly research about Vilnius and its people. The value of the work is further increased by the fact that it is written very fluently in a language that is acceptable to a wide circle of readers. So we should expect that an abundant circle of English-reading researchers of history and readers interested in history will learn about this study of the history of 17th-century Vilnius and its people.

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