

ANNUAL FAIRS IN GREATER POLAND FROM THE LATE MIDDLE AGES TO THE DELUGE (1385 – 1655)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

RESEARCH PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The central goal of this project is investigating periodic fairs in Greater Poland in the late middle ages and early modernity (from 1385 to 1655). Periodic fairs in Europe were fundamental in the exchange of goods within the continent as they formed the backbone of European land trade. The focus of my investigation in the fellowship will be placed on Greater Poland functioning as a gateway between East and West in the transalpine Europe. The selected period begins with the year of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, which marks the beginning of a new political and economic entity, and ends with the period of wars against Sweden, which caused heavy damage to the country and radically changed economic conditions. The research questions that should be addressed by this investigation can be summarised in the following points: the manner in which fairs were privileged and established, the manner in which fairs built a far-reaching network, the factors which had an influence on the process of fair formation, with a special focus on what kind of merchandise was traded, the way in which the development of fairs affected development of towns and vice versa, as well as the type of the connection between fairs of Greater Poland and the European fairs network. The outcome of this study should be compared with studies of other European regions in order to place this case study in the European context and determine whether the identified developments were specific to Greater Poland or whether they apply to other regions where similar paths existed.

RESEARCH PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve methodological compatibility with published research, I will adapt a questionnaire designed by F. Irsigler for the research provided by members of International Commission for the History of Towns. Furthermore, I will sort the obtained data using digital tools such as Gephi, Geographic Information System and a manuscript indexation application. I will analyse the pre-sorted data by modern methods such as qualitative network analysis and database analysis. This will enable the verification or falsification of previous theories regarding the trade in this era. For example, Stuart Jenks's concept of a "distribution revolution" will be an item of my research.

EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE, CIVILIZATION AND SOCIETY

This research project is expected to produce a noteworthy impact on both science and society. On a scientific level, the project seeks to advance our current understanding of the significance of the Greater Poland fair network in the context of trade between east and west in the transalpine Europe. The project will utilise primary sources that have been minimally investigated in the past, in effect documenting the contents and making these sources easier accessible to other researchers. Furthermore, the methodology of the project will allow for a seamless integration of data with other European research projects past and present, due to use of the above-mentioned questionnaire propagated by International Commission for the History of Towns. The questionnaire will be combined with new methods and tools such as Geographic Information System and qualitative network analysis. The project fills a local but conspicuous gap in the research which has been raised in the literature for a number of decades and therefore is already met with interest, evidenced by the on-going discussions for co-operations with the universities of Regensburg, Bamberg, Göttingen, Würzburg and Leipzig.

The impact on society is reflected in the importance of understanding fairs in the development of Greater Poland. The system of markets and fairs transported merchandise across the West-East-route and integrated this region into the much larger network of European trade and culture. In effect, it directly impacted the wealth of the region at the time, and is reflected in the region's material heritage today, through which it continues to subtly influence the region's modern society. This project hopes to procure an improved understanding of some of the roots of a small but important region and can help contextualise the modern challenges of the continuing economic integration of Europe.