

The aim of the project is to analyse connections between economic/demographic development and normative systems dominant in a given culture. The authors of the project focus their attention on religion as one of the elements of such normative systems. According to many theoreticians, in historical times religion played a key role or was even superior to other elements of normative systems.

The vast majority of publications focus on one hand on official statements and teachings of religious leaders, and on the other hand, on economic and philosophical theories proposed by scholars who associated themselves with particular religions or denominations. To date hardly any archival research aimed at studying economic practices of particular. The authors of the project believe that sources that survived from the early modern period provide ample data to allow quantitative studies into the influence of religion and religious denominations on economic and demographic development of early modern societies. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth appears to be an excellent subject of such detailed study because of its unique religious diversity, which did not preclude relatively peaceful coexistence of many religions on its territory.

As the majority of population lived in the countryside and in small towns, our study will concentrate on these two locations. In geographical sense, we will focus on the Polish-Lithuanian borderland and the lands of Red Ruthenia, both inhabited by the population that was very ethnically and religiously diversified. Limited availability of source material and the character of our research strategy (creating empirical tests for the main hypothesis) are the reasons why our investigation will take the form of a number of micro-studies in economic history and historical demography. They will concern:

- a) Connections between religion and credit activity
- b) Connections between religion and the number of working days in a year
- c) Economic effectiveness of institutions connected with particular religious groups
- d) Age at first marriage and number of children per family.
- e) Different models of household organization
- f) Differences in the level of development of human capital

The most important primary sources that we plan to use in our analyses are of mass character (court records, baptismal/marriage/death certificates, confession registers, status animarum, civil and military registers). These mass sources will be used to create databases that will then be used in statistical analyses. Statistical analysis will be complemented by classical historical analysis of primary sources such as synods' records and pastoral letters.

The results of these micro-studies will be used to synthesize the problem of religion and its impact on economy and to present a more practical way in which different religions influenced economic development. Our findings will be analysed and interpreted in the context of a current debate about the causes of differences between family forms in Europe and about the causes of little divergence (i.e. the process in which the development of different European regions and its tempo were gradually moving in opposite directions).