

The evolution of notions about neighboring societies is probably a process as long as the very history of human communities. Over the centuries, the Polish-German neighborhood also generated mutual images and stereotypes. Some of them were elements of neighborly relations only for a short period of time, whereas others displayed great durability. An example of such a long-lasting stereotype is the conglomerate of notions covered by the term '*polnische Wirtschaft*', meaning the supposed Polish thriftlessness and disorder and dating back to the 18th century. Interestingly, existing studies on German stereotypes about Poland and Poles have never gone back to earlier periods so it is possible that some of them have even longer history.

This project will have two main objectives: firstly, to study elements of the image of Poland in German society from the period of the 'long' 17th century (i.e. 1573-1700), and secondly, to analyze whether and, if so, to what extent these elements have evolved into stereotypes. Source material will be travel literature: travel accounts, journals, memoirs, and travel guidelines. What links all these types of texts is the author's encounter with the then reality of the Commonwealth and his contact with Polish society. This feature enables studying the works with specific questions in mind: did the authors have some notions about Poland prior to their trip? did these notions influence their observations and impressions? The analyzed texts constitute as well an undoubtedly interesting source of information on other areas of life as they include, among others: an account of a trip taken by a young nobleman, journals of a Dominican descending from a Protestant family, memoirs of a mercenary, and a report of an intelligence service agent. Each of these people came from German culture area and gave an account of his visit to Poland.

These texts will be subjected to a 2-stage study. The first step will consist in an introductory analysis. It will provide a grasp of the matters raised in the source material, as well as enable selection of terms from the fields of statehood, social relations, culture, and topography. Together with the categories of identity and space they will play a crucial role in selection of material for more thorough research, as well as serve as an interpretative key. The next step will be the analysis of the selected elements of the image (e.g., what did they consist of, what context did they appear in, what were they conditioned by, whether and, if possible, why did they evolve with time), which will provide answers to the question of the role of stereotypes and the way they worked in the said period of time.

Such a study will contribute to the development of research on German image of the Polish society, as well as on stereotypes and identity in the 'long' 17th century. Analysis of hitherto uninspected material will enable academics from other fields to work on new sources. It is worth noting that conclusions drawn from the study will help to better understand Polish-German relations in the period in question. The planned analysis will make it possible to observe what interested German people the most in Poland, among others, what were the attitudes towards numerous wars the Commonwealth waged against Turkey, Moscow, and Sweden, what were their opinions on the increasing importance and influence of the nobility, on the concept of Sarmatism and on the 'Golden Liberty', as well as where did they place Poland in their mental maps. The answers to those questions will serve as a starting point for investigating the effects the events of the 'long' 17th century and their perception had on subsequent Polish-German relations, including the present time.