

Religion, Rationalism and Enlightenment: exploring documents on Polish-Dutch connections

This project will restore and make accessible a set of fascinating sources on two early-modern minority religions that operated between Poland and the Netherlands in the 17th century: Polish Socinians and Dutch Remonstrants or Arminians. As a result of their shared history, Dutch archives contain several important documents on the Polish Socinians. This project will lay the groundwork for a future project on the role of these groups in the rise of the culture of rationalism in the Enlightenment.

The Socinians were a branch of Protestantism with very specific views on the nature of Christ, which were considered heretical by all other Christian demoninations. In the context of relative religious tolerance in Poland during the 16th century they flourished in Poland and soon became known as the 'Polish brotherhood' or Anti-Trinitarians. From the end of the century onwards however, under the pressure of the Catholic Counter-reformation, their creed came under increased pressure in Poland they started to look for affiliations abroad.

Around the same time, the Dutch Revolt against (Catholic) Habsburg hegemony had led to a very 'mixed' religious situation in the Netherlands with a number of Christian demoninations co-existing more or less peacefully. In the early 1600s however, religious and political tensions re-emerged between the Calvinist Reformed church and those of Remonstrant conviction.

From the side of their Calvinist opponents the Remonstrants were framed as 'crypto-socinians' because of their religious views, while from the other side delegations of Polish Socinians insistently approached the Remonstrants with proposals for cooperation or even unification between their respective churches. These attempts were inspired by the view among the Socinians that they had important ideas in common with the Remonstrants. Many individual Remonstrants seem to have shared that sense. Given their own struggle for survival however the Remonstrant leadership were not keen on forging this alliance.

In retrospect the intellectual discussions between Socinians, Remonstrants and their respective opponents developed many themes that subsequently became central themes of the European Enlightenment, with respect to the nature of Man, rationalism, secularisation and toleration.

This project will make accessible to researchers and to the general public two important source documents for these debates:

1) - the large convolute manuscript *Maxima Polonica*, now kept in Rotterdam, and collected by Andrzej Lubieniecki (1590 - ca.1667), that contains a wide collection of Socinian treatises, documents and memorabilia. The project will build a website where all the documents in *Maxima Polonica* can be viewed and that documents and explains their origins, contexts etc. The *Maxima Polonica* have begun to attract some research attention in recent years, but this research is hampered so far by the lack of an accessible edition of the manuscript.

2) - the diaries on the years 1626-1629 of the main organiser and founder of the Remonstrant fraternity, Johannes Wtenbogaert. These diaries reflect the years in which the Remonstrants, after a period of exile, returned to the Netherlands and began to re-build their church against the opposition and suppression from the Calvinist side. The project will produce both a paper and a digital edition of these diaries, which have so far never been published.

Thirdly, the project will investigate the Remonstrant archives in the Netherlands for materials relating to the relationships with the Socinians and all materials relevant to the 17th-century and proto-Enlightenment debates on the nature of Man, rationalism, secularisation toleration and other relevant themes.