

Magdalena Ochmańska

Department of English Philology, UWM (Olsztyn, Poland)

## **„Minority and Majority” in Cultural Relations in the Borderlands**

The „Minority and Majority” conference was the first meeting in Olsztyn of scientists involved in the study of the broadly understood cultural, historical and social borderland. Many institutions supported the Faculty of Humanities of the UWM, the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Circle „Borderlands” and the ASS Foundation in the organization of this event. The speakers came from many national universities, but among the guests there were also scientists from Russia, Lithuania, the USA, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine, m.in. A wide range of topics resulted in an extremely rich thematic program. Presentations were presented in Polish, Russian, English and Ukrainian, and during subsequent discussions, participants broke language barriers for the sake of science.

The conference was opened with plenary lectures delivered by renowned scientists.

Henryk Stroński (UWM Olsztyn) presented the issues of national minorities and national policy in Ukraine in the last quarter of a century. This was shown in the context of the formation of an independent Ukrainian state against the background of political events. The cultural borderland in Senegal from a historical perspective along with the current situation was discussed by Iwona Anna Ndiaye together with Bara Ndiaye (UWM Olsztyn). An interesting aspect of the presentation was the indication that the political division of the area does not correspond to cultural and religious divisions, which is a source of tension and cases of exceptional coexistence. The introductory topics already showed the global scope of the conference. These lectures set the direction for further deliberations, broadly covering the issues of the borderland.

The first and second day of the conference was held in three simultaneous sections. The presented considerations were related to the eponymous minority and the majority from many surprising perspectives. The speeches mentioned below addressed the most interesting issues of the conference.

Mykhailo Pasichnyk and Susanna Pasichnyk (Lviv Publishing Academy, Lviv Army Academy) touched on the frequently discussed issue of Polish-Ukrainian relations. Their joint speech concerned the shape of relations in the 17th century, a period of great unrest and wars in the border areas.

A similar topic was also presented by Robert Boroch (University of Warsaw), who attempted to systematize the definition of the borderland on the basis of Polish-Ukrainian relations. The same goes for Jacek Szymała (University of Wrocław), who referred to the figure of Bohdan Chmielnicki and his memory in the current reality of the south-eastern borderlands.

The picture of the society of Biskupiec in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the basis of the analysis of the baptism book was presented by Justyna Zyśk (UWM Olsztyn). The collected source material made it possible to present the social margin among the inhabitants of the city at that time. On the basis of a seemingly not very rich amount of information, the speaker made a fairly detailed reconstruction of society.

During the conference, the issue of the German minority was also mentioned. Dariusz Matelski (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) discussed the situation of this minority group in the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian borderland. The diachronic perspective allowed to show the changes that took place in relation to the German minority in the place where such specific cultures meet.

The Polish-Lithuanian borderland was of interest to Joanna Kozłowska (University of Warsaw). Focusing on the Vilnius Voivodeship, she presented the cultural situation in this area during the interwar period.

Tetiana Bondaruk (Institute of State and Law of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) also presented a paper on Lithuanian culture. In her speech, she showed the relationship between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Commonwealth in terms of legal doctrines and legislative processes in the period of close relations between these countries.

Several speakers devoted their attention to Jewish culture. In her speech, Jagoda Wierzejska (University of Warsaw) presented the problems of existence of the Jewish population in Galicia. Her research focused on the period of the Great War and the fights between Poles and Ukrainians at that time.

Aleksandra Bączek (UWM Olsztyn) talked about the cultural borderland outside the circle of European culture. Based on the book „Mexico” by Ed Vulliamy, she related the concept of no man’s land to the current situation on the border between the United States and Mexico. The conclusion drawn from the analysis of the source material confirms the fact that neither side feels responsible for the situation at the border, and the inhabitants of both countries generate conflict situations in their daily lives. This is even more destructive than the drug cartel fights in the area.

The above report discusses only some of the speeches, as their thematic diversity and number do not allow for the discussion of all of them. The speakers also analyzed the psychological manipulation of the inhabitants of the borderlands, ethnic awareness (e.g. of the Masurian people) and early medieval relations in multicultural areas. Interesting were the topics showing the influence of the past on the present, visible, m.in, in the names of proper places. There were also literary and reportage analyses related to the borderlands depicted in selected works.

The cultural borderland has proven to be an area of research in which every researcher is able to find their niche. Cultural scholars, sociologists, literary scholars and linguists joined the historians' deliberations. Lively discussions during and outside the debates allow us to hope that the first edition of the event will result in further meetings and research on the scientifically and culturally significant phenomenon of cultural relations in the borderlands.