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Martin Gruneweg (1562–nach 1615)  
Ein europäischer Lebensweg

Martin Gruneweg (1562–after 1615)  
A European Way of Life

2009

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## PREFACE

The Dominican friar Martin Gruneweg left almost 2000 pages of notes from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author, whose work shows an iridescent way of life, moved between different ethnicities, confessions and spaces. Numerous travels through the Eastern parts of Europe broadened his mind in a considerable way. His pointed gift for observation enabled him to write down the most important information briefly and succinctly. In many cases, including Warsaw, his notes are the oldest surviving descriptions of towns with valuable detail from the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For the history of religion after the Council of Trent, as well, new knowledge may be drawn from his manuscript, for example, to draw insights into popular culture. Art historians find unexpected means of reconstructing architecture, such as the cathedral in Cracow. Illustrating the various subjects from a life so full of different facets was the aim of a conference which took place to mark the publication of a four volume edition of the work of Gruneweg<sup>1</sup> at the Dominican monastery in Cracow, the place of origin of the manuscript, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Historians, theologians, Byzantinists, art historians and Germanists from eight countries discussed the European importance of this unique source.

Thanks are due to all who contributed to the success of this conference by giving papers, as well as to the brethren of the Dominican monastery in Cracow, who housed both the conference and the connected exhibition. The Gerda Henkel foundation, which had already co-financed the edition, supported the printing of this conference volume as well.

Warsaw, Spring 2009

Almut Bues

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1 Almut Bues (Hg.), *Die Aufzeichnungen des Dominikaners Martin Gruneweg (1562-ca.1618) über seine Familie in Danzig, seine Handelsreisen in Osteuropa und sein Klosterleben in Polen*, Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau, *Quellen und Studien* 19,1-4, Wiesbaden 2008.

ALMUT BUES

## INTRODUCTION

“For the most part people live by stories. [...] Without stories we should lose our memories, fail to find our place in the present and remain without hope or expectation for the future. [...] The story of my life can be my own life story only in so far as it has become a chapter of the Dominican family story.” (Edward Schillebeeckx)<sup>1</sup> Martin Gruneweg’s life, too, is not only his personal story, but also represents a tile in the mosaic of the history of the Dominican order.<sup>2</sup>

Martin Gruneweg was born on 25 April 1562 in Danzig as the son of merchant; his sister Barbara was born three years later. Gruneweg was proud of his Danzig origins all his life; he was to take the *Gedanensis* with him when he joined the order. The death of his father in 1569 marked a decisive point in the life of this sensitive child. The step-father who entered the house two years later and loved the children as if they were his own died after six months, whereupon Martin’s mother fell into a deep depression. Ten-year-old Martin was therefore sent to Augustin Herzberger as a boarder. As it has been common in those days Gruneweg spent his thirteenth year in Bromberg to learn Polish. At the age of 16, the merchant’s son was old enough to start work.

In 1579 Gruneweg went to Warsaw to work for the Protestant Georg Kersten from Nuremberg, who traded mainly in fine materials, spices, wine, and other goods for the court.<sup>3</sup> His trading partners were in Danzig, Posen, Breslau, Lublin, and Warsaw. At that time Warsaw was a small town in Masovia with a population of not quite 6,000, but as the place where the Imperial Diet convened, it could have courtly flair. Gruneweg’s employer lived in the Old Town. His house on the market place was in a prime location. As the result of a quarrel,

1 E. Schillebeeckx OP, *Dominikanische Spiritualität*, in: *Dominikanische Spiritualität*, ed. U. Engel, *Dominikanische Quellen und Zeugnisse* 1, Leipzig <sup>2</sup>2000, pp. 43-69.

2 For details see A. Bues (ed.), *Die Aufzeichnungen des Dominikaners Martin Gruneweg (1562-ca.1618) über seine Familie in Danzig, seine Handelsreisen in Osteuropa und sein Klosterleben in Polen*, *Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien* 19, 1-4, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 1490-1494.

3 For his stay in Warsaw A. Bues, *Warszawa z lat 1579-1582 w zapiskach gdańszczanina Martina Grunewega*, in: *Rocznik Warszawski* 35 (2007), pp. 151-178.

Georg Kersten got into financial difficulties, and Gruneweg made use of this situation to establish contact with Armenian merchants from Lemberg in 1582.

In Lemberg, Gruneweg tried to change his identity. He obviously no longer wanted to be German, and replaced his German clothes with Polish ones. Gruneweg's first business trip to the Ottoman Empire lasted from September to December 1582.<sup>4</sup> Everything was new and exotic for him. He was exposed to southern vegetation and travelling in a Muslim country for the first time. For commercial travellers, the bazaars were a small paradise. The Armenians impressed him with their exotic ways and their lives lived between various cultures.

Gruneweg's journey to Moscow, which took almost a year, from October 1584 to September of the following year, was also an intense experience.<sup>5</sup> In the Grand Principality of Moscow, it was not only the clothes and customs that were worth writing home about. The journeyman merchant came into contact with the totally under-developed indigenous economy. Further business trips, however, took him back to south-eastern Europe. On one trip in 1586 he fell ill with the plague in Edirne and vowed to enter the Order. This, however, was not a straightforward process. It did not happen for another two years, after he had made repeated vows to become a friar.

In spring of 1587 Gruneweg was in Danzig for the last time. On this visit his mother handed him the family chronicle and asked him to copy it for her grandchildren.<sup>6</sup> For the time being, however, this was forgotten. In the autumn of the same year, Gruneweg held his first talks with Pater Antoninus Kasprovicz, less about theological details than about the unity and ancient nature of the Catholic church. As Gruneweg put it: *Sae auch klar, das sie alleine ist eine huette rinne der warheit, darume molestierte ich nicht fiele den Priester mit hoefflichem nachfragen, sondern ergab mich dem heiligen gehorsam mit freuden meines hertzen* (fol. 1494). On this, he quoted from the Confessions of St Augustine: "nec deputabo te inter christianos, nisi in ecclesia Christi uidero" (Conf. 8,4). The New Year's sermon which Piotr Skarga gave in St Barbara's church in Cra-

4 Particulars by A. Bues, *die umschmupferten unsere wagen* – Alltagskontakte eines Handlungsgesellen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Orient und Okzident, in: *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Neuzeit*, ed. Karl Vocelka et al., Wien 2005, pp. 425-445.

5 See A. Л. Хорошкевич, *Образ России 1584-1585 гг. в „Записках Мартина Груневегга“*, in: *Россия-Польша. Образы и стереотипы в литературе и культуре*, ed. В. А. Хорев, Москва 2002, pp. 34-43.

6 J. Strebitzki, *Lubbe's Chronik. Ein Beitrag zur Culturgeschichte Danzigs*, in: *Altpreußische Monatsschrift* 11 (1874), pp. 242-251.

cow at the beginning of 1588 strengthened Gruneweg's determination to put his promise into practice. In April 1588 he converted to Catholicism, a deed which he sealed with a pilgrimage to Tschenstochau.

On 6 September 1588 he made good his vow and entered the Dominican Order in Lemberg to which, figuratively speaking, he was closest. In the monastery he went through the usual functions, his ordination as a priest took place in May 1593 and his first mass was held in August of the same year. Gruneweg held a number of positions within the Order, mostly to do with spiritual ministry, as administrative offices were not to his taste. He was Subprior for almost a year, including four months Prior 'in capite'. During this period there were many quarrels and disputes.

Differences of opinion within the monastery, divergent views on reform, and confrontations with the new prior meant that Gruneweg no longer felt comfortable in Lemberg. His solution was to escape from the monastery overnight and to flee to Rome. This Italian journey represented a further stage in his life.<sup>7</sup> Gruneweg used his return journey to stay within the Polish Dominican province.

After brief stops in Dominican monasteries in Ratibor and Bochnia, Gruneweg, now aged 40, spent more than two years in the Trinity monastery in Cracow, most of the time as master of the novices. Here he was living not only in the Polish capital and a university city, but also at the spiritual centre of the Polish Dominican province. He probably saw his transfer to Płock in 1605 as a demotion; in any case, he now decided to end the account which he had been writing up to this time.

From the files, we can see that Gruneweg spent Christmas 1608 in the Adalbert monastery in Breslau, and that from October 1609 he was acting as *terminarius* at the newly established Dominican monastery in Warsaw. His last known signature dates from 1615.

The papers of this volume will illuminate various aspects of this multi-faceted life. In the early modern period, life in this area was highly multi-ethnic. Whether in Danzig, Warsaw, Cracow, or Lemberg, the population had to deal, on a daily basis, with complicated and changing communicative situations in which different languages or dialects confronted each other. Linguistic-geographical areas, with their transitions between language regions, allow us to draw conclusions about cultural and linguistic processes, about contacts and overlaps.

7 A. Bues, *Die Italienreise des Dominikaners Martin Gruneweg im Jahre 1602*, in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 86 (2006), pp. 321-347.

The cities mentioned were important trading centres. Tradesmen and merchants had long been attracted to far-distant places. Among some, a wandering life could awaken the desire for a life of contemplation, as the life of Jakob Griesinger, for example, shows. Although a structural change and thus a separation between transport and trade were becoming visible in western Europe from the fifteenth century, eastern Europe continued to be dominated by itinerant merchants. Danzig's domination of the Baltic Sea and the Baltic region was matched by Lemberg's position in relation to the routes to south-eastern Europe, Constantinople, and Persia. This trading connection was largely dominated by the Armenian merchants travelling in caravans. Their community, which Gruneweg compared with a monastery, was highly organized. Everyone knew their place. In any case, trading was an honourable business; merchants and tradesmen, including foreigners, were highly respected in the Orient.

The encounter with foreign religions and the collective prejudices about them could mentally unbalance people. The formation of denominations within central Europe was reaching its peak in the late sixteenth century, and the emergence of a number of denominations had been accompanied by a feeling of competitiveness. Phenomena such as propaganda, the reorganization of the education system, the exclusion of those of a different faith, and the reform of institutions affected all denominations. In Danzig in particular, various denominations often came into sharp conflict with each other at the end of the century.

Gruneweg's grandfather had converted to Lutheranism, and his half-sister had married the first Lutheran pastor, Jakob Knothe, in 1525. At the age of 5, Gruneweg attended St Mary's school. His short journey to school took him through the nave of this church, and on his first school day, he experienced a vision in front of St Catherine's altar (fo. 501). St Mary's church, which had belonged to the Lutherans since 1557, was used in common with the Catholics until 1572.

In Lemberg Gruneweg came into contact with Orthodoxy. With the son of his master, Gruneweg attended an Orthodox service and passed the time with impetuous laughter (*und vertrieben die tzeit mitt heftigem lachen*, fol. 900). According to Gruneweg, the Dominicans did not have an untroubled relationship with the Orthodox population either. There was no cause for dispute concerning doctrine. Religion must have concerned Gruneweg very deeply because, in an Armenian setting, the 24-year-old Lutheran resolved to convert to Catholicism during a stay in a Muslim country. At the age of 26 he entered the Dominican Order.

By deploying publicity effectively (prints, images), making specific concessions, and having a clear concept, the Catholic church was quickly able to

make up lost ground in Poland-Lithuania towards the end of the sixteenth century. For the history of the Dominican Order, an eyewitness account of this turbulent period after the Council of Trent is of great significance. The Order managed its transition from a defensive to an offensive position in the 1580s, signalled externally by an increase in the number of people entering the Order, and a revival or re-establishment of the Rosary brotherhoods.<sup>8</sup>

Gruneweg took part in the protracted quarrels concerning the province of Saint Hyacinth, and witnessed the canonization of Hyacinth Odrowąż and Raimundus Peñafort. The great jubilee celebrations of 1603 in Cracow, the building of a Dominican monastery in Warsaw (from 1603), and the violent disturbances in Breslau in 1608 – all took place during the time when he was active.

In his own words, the idea of writing his notes came to Gruneweg in a letter, dated 7 March 1601, from his niece, who was six months pregnant at the time. He started writing while in Lemberg, from 25 April 1601 to May 1602, where he drafted at least half of his manuscript. He must have taken his writings with him to Rome, and continued them in the Trinity monastery in Cracow after his return in the autumn of 1602. While in Cracow he probably got as far as fol. 1920, the actual length at the time. Only another six pages were added in Plock, where Gruneweg finished his work on 27 April 1606.

It was not possible to find out how the manuscript, comprising almost 2,000 pages, found its way into the city library established by the Danzig patricians in 1596. Today it is still held in the now called Biblioteka Gdańska maintained by the Polish Academy of Sciences, under the class mark Ms 1300. It is clear, however, that Gruneweg was writing not only for his family in Danzig, but mainly for the community of Dominicans – *wir S. Dominiks Kinder* (fol. 923).

8 J. Kłoczowski, Polska prowincja dominikańska w XVI wieku 1520-1600, in: Sprawozdania TN KUL 19 (1970), pp. 99-102; A. Bruździński, Bractwa religijne w siedemnastowiecznym Krakowie. Zarys problematyki, in: Historia świadectwem czasów, Fs. T. Zahajkiewicz, ed. W. Bielak and St. Tylus, Lublin 2006, pp. 103-147.