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Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: the Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy

Zone di frattura in epoca moderna: Il Baltico,i Balcani e l'Italia settentrionale

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INTRODUCTION

Since the collapse of the Communist systems in East-Central Europe, zones of fracture have enjoyed a great resurgence in interest as a subject of historical research. In their search for ethnic homogeneity, multi-ethnic polities were rejected by nineteenth and twentieth century polities. As a result, many zones of fracture that existed before the rise of the nation state were extinguished from the map of Europe.

Less attention has been given to borders and zones of fracture in Early Modern Europe. Historians of the pre-national era, assessed such zones of fracture as sources of instability because their period of existence coincided with the unsteady evolution of the modern nation state; far from being mere sources of instability, in fact, such zones provide a fascinating platform from which to observe the interaction between different cultures, and the opportunity for historians to gain a truly European perspective on the specificities of certain regions. The issue of Early Modern zones of fracture and their importance for the further development of Europe was the subject of the *Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: the Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy / Zone di frattura in epoca moderna: Il Baltico, i Balcani e l'Italia settentrionale* conference, which was organised by the German Historical Institute of Warsaw in the Villa Vigoni, from 10 to 14 September 2003. Both the conference's title, and the list of participants from 14 countries demonstrate its European scope.

The main purpose of this conference was to analyse the causes of fluctuations along borderlines and zones of fracture. Border zones not only demarcate territories from one another, but also promote lively exchanges between cultures that can bridge these political borders. What determined the efficiency or failure of multi-cultural regions, and how successfully did they function as zones of inter-cultural complexity? Which models of self-perception of spaces and borders (visible and invisible) existed and what distinguished them from their neighbours?

Which economic, political and cultural factors (co-operation or demarcation) characterized these border zones? What contributed to the success or failure of rule over such 'regions without power', and to what extent was their decline pre-determined? Another group of questions circled around the terms

centre and periphery, and how they relate to each other. What types of networks or ways of interactions have been used in interregional connections? When did regional thinking, or identity, arise and what factors hindered it? Can one see any motives for the development of regionalism in the long term, and if so, what are they? And, very generally, what were the consequences of border conflicts?

Instead of isolating East European phenomena, this conference aimed to analyse the multi-cultural border regions between the Baltic and the Adriatic in a larger European context by encouraging dialogue and discussion among specialists from a wide range of European countries. Three large European regions formed the centre of the conference and represented the models for finding the specifics of zones of fracture. The panels did not only aim at comparison, but they intended to show the complexity of these regions, as well as the different experiences of these zones and how they relate to each other in the European context.

In his summary, Wolfgang Reinhard pointed out that in pre-modern times all over Europe there existed different, not identical, more or less overlapping borderlines which taken together produced a zonal frontier; zones of fracture differed from these zones mostly because of their notorious instability. Poland-Lithuania was linked with two zones of fracture: the Balkans and the Baltic. The Italian states were situated between two tectonic regions: the Balkans, and the Rhine valley. The Balkans, however, were divided by many small zones and formed the frontier of the Ottoman Empire. Further research is required especially into social life in zones of fracture, of the acceptance of foreign rule by the population and collaboration on the part of elites, into migration and intermarriage. The conference provided a basis for further investigation into these areas.

If one intends to work on borders and frontier zones, one has to start by asking in what way borders are defined and what is inside or outside the supposed regions. Furthermore one has to study how these frontiers were perceived by contemporary sources and historians. This in turn leads to complex questions of ethnicity and the formation of statehood. Two more small regions of these zones of fracture in Early Modern Europe: the Duchy of Courland-Semgallia and the Duchy of Savoy-Piedmont are compared in the second part of this work. These territories were more or less associated with powerful neighbours, but still succeeded in this intermingling of political, economic, social, cultural and religious matters at retaining a distinctly separate existence and identity of their own.

Ethnicity and the formation of statehood in Early Modern Europe

An ethnic group is generally characterised by common origins, a common language, culture, traditions and territory. However, this is only half the story. Individual social, economic and political interests give rise to a process of choice and definition. What one finds when one looks at an ethnic group is in fact the result of this process, frequently aided by other factors such as invention and mythologising.[1] It is worth asking how authentic cultural traditions really are. The concept of the ethnic group is situation-dependent, the feeling of belonging to one ethnic group depends on contrast with another, different group:[2] the *in-group* and the *out-group* of the American sociologist William G. Sumner. Primordial groups, then, which lack external contacts, cannot be considered ethnic groups. The inconstant nature of group loyalties and feelings is characteristic of the historical process. What were the driving forces, then, behind the protracted processes of political integration and disintegration?

As humans (and their institutions) organise and classify their environment, they set up relationship between themselves. In so doing, the environment, which is generally not a given, becomes populated with elements of consciousness. A process of choice between, and structuring of, an infinite range of possible relationships takes place, with the aim of achieving the maximum freedom and strength of action. The establishment of boundaries and the creation of defined spaces represent the processes by which social segregation is made practicable.[3] These divisions can be of various kinds: church, state, linguistic community, or nation. Ethnic groups, which can be understood to be separate social worlds, use their borders to protect themselves from possible invasion by dominant civilisations,[4] whilst the establishment of internal borders can also lead to the creation of ethnic subgroups. Only when the lines of communication become multiple do the borders become precise – although abstract – lines. Indeed the above mentioned border zones not only exclude external areas but also en-

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1 I. Scrubar, *Ethnicity and Social Space, in Ethnicity, Nation, Culture: Central and East European Perspectives*, eds. B. Bállint and A. Sterbling, Hamburg, 1998, pp. 47-63.
2 K.-H. Kohl, *Ethnologie – die Wissenschaft vom kulturell Fremden: Eine Einführung*, München, 2000, p. 27 f.
3 *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Differences*, ed. F. Barth, Bergen, Oslo, 1970; *Border Approaches. Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers*, ed. T. M. Wilson, Lanham, 1994.
4 *Grenzenlos? Jedes System braucht Grenzen – aber wie durchlässig müssen sie sein?*, ed. E.-U. Weizsäcker, Berlin et al., 1997.

able a lively exchange to take place, allowing active contact between areas and an overlapping of judicial systems, 'bridging the border'.[5]

If one concentrates on measurable units, such as the economy or the army, it would seem that the Early Modern state arose centrally. But successful state building also encompassed peripheral areas, with their local interests.[6] One should not therefore expect homogeneity and straightforward relationships; states were always made up of a number of complementary, and yet competing identities.

Regional thinking can lead in two political directions. Holding fast to a historical, spatial dimension can provoke nation building events (a region becomes conscious of its distinct historical nature and begins to strive towards independence).[7] On the other hand, the creation of larger spaces can have a levelling effect. Through the failure to observe a spatial unit and the creation of greater units or different connections, national consciousness can on occasion be hindered, as was the case, for example, the Illyrian Kingdom, via the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, down to Yugoslavia.

In the Early Modern period, empire, state, city commune and the Roman Catholic Church were in competition with the nation, as far as the political order in Europe was concerned.[8] Right down to the eighteenth century there was no pressing need for a 'state' to become a 'nation state'. 'State consciousness' is not always linked to 'national consciousness'. The formation of states and nations in the Early Modern period in Europe involved fundamentally different processes occurring in some cases in parallel, but for the most part in competition.

The formation of statehood is first and foremost a process of concentration and unification of sovereign powers, whereby a ruler raises himself to the status of sovereign over a territory and its people. By contrast, the origins of the nation lies in the development of ideas regarding identity by population groups who, whilst not directly interacting or communicating with each other, develop a sense of belonging with each other. Different intellectual groups play a role in this process, as Herfried Münckler points out: government officials, diplomats

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5 *Grenzen und Raumvorstellung (11.-20. Jh.)*, ed. G.P. Marchal, Zürich, 1996.

6 G. E. Aylmer, 'Centre and Locality: The Nature of Power Elites', in W. Reinhard, ed., *Power Elites and State Building: The Origins of the Modern State in Europe 13th to 18th Centuries*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 59-77.

7 T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569-1999*, New Haven, London, 2003.

8 H.-J. Schmidt, *Kirche, Staat, Nation. Raumgliederung der Kirche im mittelalterlichen Europa*, Weimar, 1999.

and legal professionals are involved in state building, whilst men of letters are active in the popularisation of ideas about the group's origins, language and culture.[9]

In Europe, differentiated processes of state building took place. Western countries such as England, France and Spain emerged quite early as *elect nations*. In the centre of Europe, there were countries, such as Germany or Italy, in which state building proceeded along two parallel tracks: one territorial, the other on a higher plane. The grand empires of Eastern Europe – Poland-Lithuania, the Habsburg and Russian Empires – were multi-ethnic. In younger states, such as the Netherlands, Switzerland or Sweden, the creation of an identity-forming myth leading to a rapidly unified state can be observed.

At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, monarchies were the most common type of state in Europe. As in the Middle Ages, dynastic connections had great significance.[10] A few individual examples of alternative types of state can be found, such as the city republics in Northern Italy, for example, Venice and Genoa, or the Swiss Confederation. The sixteenth century 'dynamic' can be seen in the development of an individual culture, beginning in the Renaissance and affecting both politics and constitutions. It can also be seen, in the centralising power of the monarch and in the rise of national dynasties. The picture becomes even more complex when one adds religious, economic and geographic dimensions.[11]

At the beginning of the Early Modern period, the finely divided system of legal relationships typical of the Middle Ages, such as personal associations or feudal systems, was replaced by a system of estates. Early Modern society was a society of estates, governing communal life.[12] The dynastic states displayed similar features; they incorporated the noble or patrician governing classes as politically active. Besides the state there were also other points of reference: multiple client systems and ties of kinship. Territorial and religious boundaries could cut through branches of noble families. The estate parliaments functioned

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9 H. Münkler, H. Grünberger and K. Mayer, *Nationenbildung: Die Nationalisierung Europas im Diskurs humanistischer Intellektueller: Italien und Deutschland*, Berlin, 1998, p. 16.

10 W. E. J. Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung: Die Entfaltung des frühmodernen Fürstenstaates', in ders., ed., *Der Fürst. Ideen und Wirklichkeit in der europäischen Geschichte*, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 1998, pp. 91-136.

11 F. Hartung, *Staatsbildende Kräfte der Neuzeit: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Berlin, 1961.

12 See the works by G. Oestreich, 'Ständetum und Staatsbildung in Deutschland', *Staat*, 6, 1967, pp. 61-73, and O. Hintze, 'Staatenbildung und Verfassungsentwicklung', in ibid., *Staat und Verfassung, Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur allgemeinen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. G. Oestreich, Göttingen, 1970.

as long as immediate agreement was possible for a given purpose. They func-
tioned less well as tension within society grew, and with it the possibility of
compromise receded.

Along with the discovery of America and its above all economic conse-
quences, and the founding of the 'media' following the invention of the printing
press, developments in the religious situation were the key determining factors
for the Early Modern period in Europe. In the relationship between ethnicity,
state and nation, the importance of this question cannot be over-estimated.
Christianity, unlike Islam with its anti-ethnic and anti-national qualities, made
a strong contribution to state and nation building in Europe.

Internal and external influences in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries set the
Christian denominations in motion. Byzantium, and thus the 'heart' of the East-
ern Church, came under the control of the Ottomans, leaving a political gap,
which Muscovy was happy to fill. The Roman Catholic Church had become
closely bound up with the dynastic families of the Middle Ages, with a *rex chri-
stianissimus* in France and a *rex catholicus* in Spain. In the Holy Roman Empire
of the German Nation, whose emperor was a political antagonist of the Pope,
such collaboration was not possible. In Eastern European countries, the church
expanded into the secular sphere by canonising deceased members of ruling
families, such as St Sava in Serbia, St Stephan in Hungary, or St Wenceslas in
Bohemia. The relationship between church and state entered a new dimension
with the sixteenth century Reformation. Consciousness of a separate religious
identity could now be used positively in state and nation building, as in the cases
of Holland and Switzerland.

The demand for a *sola scriptura* by Evangelical leaders of the Reformation
led to more of a linguistic than a theological revolution. The appearance of
literature in the vernacular had dramatic effects. On the negative side, many
languages which did not acquire a written form through the translation of re-
ligious texts were excluded, and many of the ethnic groups to which they be-
longed also disappeared, such as Cours, Livonians, and Prussians.[13] In this
sense, the Reformation set levelling processes in motion, accelerating assimi-
lation. On the positive side, the translation of religious texts preserved some
languages such as Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, even if – in the absence of
a linguistically unified educated class – this had no immediate political conse-
quences. For political systems such as those of Italy or the German Reich, which

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13 C. Schmidt, *Auf Felsen gesät. Die Reformation in Polen und Livland*, Göttingen, 2000,
    p. 232.

did not possess a national state in the Early Modern period, having a common language became an important factor in national identity.

The religiously pluralistic nature of the Reformation period strengthened the state. States no longer looked to a Rome or a 'Holy' Roman Empire for authority, but rather towards themselves, as in the autocephalous Orthodox churches, the Anglican Church, or the regional churches, or *Landeskirchen*, in the German Reich following the priniciple of *cuius regio, eius religio*. Church and state developed a close symbiosis, which in part still exists today. In this respect expelled and immigrant groups are an interesting field for investigation; in the former case: Huguenots, Czech Brethren or the Lutheran Salzburgers; in the latter case: Armenians, Jews, and Scots in Eastern Europe. What were the factors which, in some cases, led these groups to assimilate and becoming driving forces in the economy, in other cases to shut themselves off from the surrounding society and preserve their differences?

From the fifteenth century onwards, various factors such as secularisation, bureaucratisation, democratisation and commercial capitalism set a process of modernisation in motion in Europe. This had different points of departure and followed a variety of paths; likewise, historians present a number of different interpretations.[14] Benedict Anderson, John Breuilly, Otto Dann, Ernest Gellner, Eric J. Hobsbawn and others speak of a modern national consciousness arising in the eighteenth century, the period in which it incorporated all levels of society. By contrast, Benedykt Zientara sees the differences between modern nations established in this period, and earlier stages of national association, as a quantitative rather than a qualitative one.[15] Moreover, today's 'nation states', although generally accepted as such, are estimated to be 'single nation states' in only about 10 per cent of cases.[16]

These population movements left their mark in Europe. Over an extended period, ethnic groups mixed, assimilated or disappeared altogether. In Iceland, where a national identity developed in the twelfth century, geographical location naturally played an important role. Other societies passed through a monarchic phase during their development. Indeed, there are many grey areas arising between ethnicity and monarchy. 'A fixation on "state" as opposed to

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14 A. Bues and R. Rexheuser, eds., *Mittelalterliche nationes – neuzeitliche Nationen: Probleme der Nationenbildung in Europa*, Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien 2, Wiesbaden, 1995.

15 B. Zientara, *Świt narodów europejskich: Powstanie świadomości narodowej na obszarze Europy pokarolińskiej*, Warszawa, 1985, p. 18.

16 Walker Connor. Quoted after A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986, p. 15.

quasi-tribal and personal loyalties has led on in turn to a failure to recognise the enduring power of ethnicity in modern European life.'[17] Constitutional monarchies did not replace earlier ethnic loyalties, but rather exploited them. In so doing, ethnically dominant groups showed themselves capable of absorbing the elites that earlier conquered them. A 'royal ethnicity' did not arise in the process.

The situation in central Europe was not as simple as in England or France. Here, research has been very much influenced by later mythologising.[18] Since the rise of humanism, the 'nation' was viewed as the political and cultural system towards which peoples should strive; and who wants to belong to a 'belated nation'?[19] As regards Germany, this term is in fact quite unhistorical, there were a multitude of simultaneously occurring 'ethno-geneses' which, alongside *imperium* and *terrae*, make up the peculiar nature of German history. No less peculiarly, the Germans called their state the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. This supra-national Empire held the German territories together until the early nineteenth century; these were not ethnically unified groups, such as the earlier tribal duchies.

The reality of state building in Germany does not converge with any 'imagined community';[20] here, national discourse was ethno-cultural, whilst in France, nation building and state building went hand in hand, forming one political unit. The development of a French nation, through the establishment of a political and cultural centre, was possible because of tacit agreement about the processes of assimilation. In Germany, on the other hand, state building in the nineteenth century occurred 'poly-centrically', multi-denominationally and (in Prussia) bi-nationally, which excluded the possibility of a national identity based on differentiation from one's neighbours.[21] Geoffrey Cubitt writes that 'borders and the frontier regions that adjoin them [give] them an often remarka-

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17 A. P. Smyth, ed., *Medieval Europeans. Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe*, Basingstoke, 1998, p. XI.

18 H. Berding, *Mythos und Nation. Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1996.

19 H. Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation. Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes*, Stuttgart, 1935, reprint Stuttgart, 1959; R. Bendix, 'Strukturgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen der nationalen und kulturellen Identität in der Neuzeit', in *Nationale und kulturelle Identität. Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit*, ed. B. Giesen, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1996, pp. 39-55.

20 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983.

21 See examples for the nineteenth century in R. Brubacker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, London, 1994.

ble symbolic importance in the defining national identity'.[22] Could it be then, that the German territories had too many neighbours with whom they shared borders for this ordering principle to work? Was it also significant, perhaps, that a not inconsiderable number of Germans had settled in Eastern Europe and represented a complicated mixed ethnicity, for whom clear borders could not be drawn?

In Eastern Europe, for example, the Republic of Poland-Lithuania from 1569 was a complex, sensitive system of different ethnic groups, denominations and traditions, which were joined together in various state political constellations. The union of Lublin between Poland and Lithuania of 1569 determined the relationship not only between the Polish *Korona* (Kingdom) and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, but also the position of the regions, which retained partial autonomy. This system of graded self-government was always a yardstick of the relationship between the centre and the peripheral areas. Collective mentalities and regional loyalties existed below the level of the higher political unit, and an overlapping of loyalties was both possible and typical. At the same time, processes of political transformation could lead to change at any point. The situation was never static, but rather something of 'a daily plebiscite', to use Renan's phrase.[23]

Regional government lay entirely in the hands of the nobility. Although the Republic of Poland-Lithuania was one of the largest lands in Europe, it was not governed by any territorially unified (central) body beyond the self-governance of the nobility. This stands in stark contrast to other European countries. Whilst elsewhere 'professional government officials' were trained, the Polish system was, to quote Antoni Mączak, amateurish.[24] This client system functioned well at a local level, but was not effective for the Republic as a whole in the long run.

However, some general European phenomena are found in Poland-Lithuania. One good example is the tendency towards the formation of political oligarchies. In Poland-Lithuania this did not occur *de iure*, as for example, in Denmark (prior to 1660 to 1665), Sweden (after 1634) or Venice. Here, oligarchies rather developed *de facto*, as magnates with their local clients became predominant in the territorial diets.[25] In this way the political weight moved once

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22 G. Cubitt, ed., *Imagining nations*, Manchester, New York, 1998, p. 10.

23 E. Renan, 'Was ist eine Nation?', in M. Jeismann and H. Ritter, eds., *Grenzfälle. Über neuen und alten Nationalismus*, Leipzig, 1993, pp. 290-311, at 309.

24 A. Mączak, 'Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: paradoks historii?', in *Tematy polsko-litewskie; Historia – Literatur – Edukacja*, ed. R. Traba, Olsztyn, 1999, pp. 17-26.

25 A. Mączak, *Klientela. Nieformalne systemy władzy w Polsce i Europie XVI-XVIII w.*, Warszawa, 1994, p. 124 f.

again away from the *Sejm* (diet), which was in any case weakened by *liberum veto* (the right of any deputy to veto legislation), to the *sejmiki* (territorial diets), the result of which was a decentralisation of sovereignty.

A clearly defined state system, made up of a single people, is a characteristic of nations in later eras. In the Early Modern period, a unified administration of justice employed consistently for all people was not necessary; distinctions were drawn according to estate, ethnic group and denomination. Thus, for example, Orthodox Christians living in the Republic of Poland-Lithuania held the right of appeal to the Patriarchs in Constantinople up until 1676. Legislature is, paradoxically, as Michael Stolleis has shown, just as much the result of, as a pre-condition for the creation of the modern State.[26] In the Polish armies of the Early Modern period, Baltic peoples, Scots, Catholics, Evangelicals and others fought side by side as soldiers for those that paid them, and it was here that the idea of *miles perpetuus* gradually took root.

Despite the ethnic and religious differences found amongst the Polish-Lithuanian nobility,[27] a common political consciousness developed, which was that of the *naród polityczny* (the political nation).[28] This was also known as 'Golden Freedom' (Stanisław Orzechowski), which united the rights of all noblemen. A consciousness of common ethnic origins outweighed individual interests; people thought of themselves as being of the *natione Polonus*, *gente Ruthenus*, *origine Judaeus*. 'Nations maketh man'[29] – and the Noble Republic of Poland-Lithuania was an imagined one. The ideology of Sarmatism, which incorporated all nobles and drew on Eastern elements, represented a grand, integrating, consciousness-forming power in the Republic, and one which could hold all the regions together.

A nobleman in the Duchy of Courland did not consciously or consistently follow the ideology of Sarmatism; he neither grew a twisted beard nor wore the *kontusz*. He belonged in fact to a different cultural sphere. Through his Baltic

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26 The question of the relationship between legislature and the creation of the modern state is a central issue in the study of the history of rights and constitutions. M. Stolleis, *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts*, Frankfurt, 1990, p. 178.

27 Exact figures are lacking for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Estimated population numbers are 40 per cent Polish, 20 per cent Ruthenian, 15 per cent Lithuanian, over 10 per cent German, 5 per cent Jewish: A. Dybkowska, J. and M. Żaryn, *Polskie dzieje od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności*, Warszawa, 1995, p. 105.

28 B. Zientara, *Świt*, p. 16; J. Bardach, 'Od narodu politycznego do narodu etnicznego w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 37, 1993, pp. 3-16.

29 'Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.' E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca NY, 1994, p. 7.

Sea coast he had direct contact with the Dutch and the Scottish, and xenophobia and (particularly economical) 'insularity' was foreign to him. He could assume Polish manners without becoming assimilated, and was aware of the advantages of participating in the federal structure of the Republic. 'In Poland [...] the dominant lateral ethnie, which formed the state's ethnic core, was gradually able to incorporate middle strata and outlying regions into the dominant ethnic culture.'[30] Solidarity within the estates counted for more here than any nascent 'national' differentiation.[31] This higher consensus delayed the 'awakening' of a national consciousness among ethnic groups, and with it the processes of nation building.

In his *Cosmographia*, Enea Silvio Piccolomini classifies Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, the Balkans and Byzantium within Europe. Even in the sixteenth century, the Humanist irenic, inherited from the Renaissance period, classes Eastern Christian Europe together as, if no longer *respublica christiana*, then *Europa culta*.[32]

In the second half of the seventeenth century, 'the Europe of culture nations now becomes reality as a pluralistic system; on the other hand it is a very narrow European heartland, from which many not insignificant areas are excluded'[33] – amongst them the Eastern European lands named by Piccolomini. The unifying age of absolutism, which looked unwaveringly to France, allowed no alternative paths. The Republic of Poland-Lithuania, primarily through the existence of its peripheral regions, remained a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-denominational state system.

In Western European states, such as Spain, France, or England, the identification of 'religion' and 'nation' took place early, in the sixteenth century, following the introduction of a unified state religion. Initially, this was not possible in the German Reich or the East European lands. Poland-Lithuania (with the 1573 *Confederation of Warsaw*) and Transylvania (with the 1568 *Landtag of Turda*) became the state with the greatest level of religious tolerance in Europe.

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30 A. Smith, *National Identity*, London, New York, 1991, p. 55.

31 W. Schulze, 'Die Entstehung des nationalen Vorurteils: Zur Kultur der Wahrnehmung fremder Nationen in der europäischen Frühzeit', in *Menschen und Grenzen in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. W. Schmale and R. Staube, Berlin, 1998, pp. 23-49, at 34.

32 W. Schulze, 'Europa in der frühen Neuzeit – Begriffsgeschichtliche Befunde', in *Europäische Geschichte als historiographisches Problem*, eds. H. Duchhardt and A. Kunz, Mainz, 1997, pp. 35-65, at 46-51.

33 M. Maurer, '"Nationalcharakter" in der frühen Neuzeit: Ein mentalitätsgeschichtlicher Versuch', in *Transformationen des Wir-Gefühls. Studien zum nationalen Habitus*, eds. R. Blomert et al., Frankfurt-am-Main, 1993, pp. 45-81, at 69; T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture. Old Regime Europe 1660-1789*, Oxford, 2002.

The borders between denominations had not yet solidified into cultural borders, and a situation of mixing remained.

A common language, religion and customs are often taken as the characteristics of a nation. However, they can only be taken as objective 'cultural markers' when they are accompanied by 'differentiating' meanings.[34] This was lacking in the Noble Republic in the sixteenth century; Polish and Lithuanian noblemen, or merchants from Prussia or Courland, communicated with each other wherever necessary, being generally bi- or tri-lingual. One finds a co-ordinated multilingualism, whereby different languages were used in different contexts but were not assigned different status. The cultural synthesis between the original inhabitants of the Baltic Sea lands, German immigrants and nascent Polonization allowed many different forms of inter-layering and assimilation to take place.

A multitude of different 'supra-state' ethnic groups and minorities is characteristic of Eastern Europe in the Early Modern period; these groups included Dutch, Scots, Swabians, Armenians and the stateless Jews.[35] In Poland-Lithuania, the Armenians, who numbered an estimated 3.000 to 15.000 in the seventeenth century, had enjoyed their own administration of justice since the *Statut Ormiański* of 1519. Talented merchants, they lived in self-governing communities, whilst in some cities (such as Zamość) they enjoyed citizenship rights. Their Monophysite religion strengthened their feelings of solidarity. After union with the Roman Catholic Church in 1632, many Armenians began to assimilate, without, however, losing their cultural identity.

The Caraims, a Turkic people with modified Jewish beliefs, migrated to eastern parts of the Republic of Poland-Lithuania in the fifteenth century. They numbered approximately 2.000 merchants around the middle of the seventeenth century. For the most part they did not assimilate but were loyal to the Polish-Lithuanian state. By not marrying out, this non-Christian group has even managed to preserve its individuality down to the present day, where it survives in the Vilnius area.

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, Jews represented on average five per cent of the population of the Republic (in the eighteenth century this rose to 10 per cent), although the percentage was much higher in the *kresy*, the Eastern territories.[36] In contrast to the Armenians, who traded in luxury goods, the Jews traded in everyday items. They were organised not just into communi-

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34 Smith, *National Identity*, p. 23.
35 F. W. Riggs, 'Modes of Ethnicity' *Europa Ethnica*, 45, 1988, pp. 161-177, at 168 f.
36 Figures from J. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750*, Oxford, 1989, p. 27.

ties (*kehila*/*kahały*) but also at a regional (*medina*/*ziemstwa*) and territorial level. From the second half of the sixteenth century until 1764 they had their own Diet in Poland (*Sejm Czterech Ziem*), the *Waad Arba Aracot*. In this way they stood apart from the general fabric of the state, although they were naturally liable for taxes and military service.

Certain mechanisms functioning between ethnic group, state and nation can be seen as follows:

First, a complicated ethnic mix prevents a clear drawing of borders (compare modern ethnic cleansing). In the Early Modern period we find multi-ethnic states, not multi-national ones such as the USSR was later on.

Second, 'nationality' existed in law but did not yet have political substance. This meant that multiple loyalties were possible.

Third, states do not necessarily belong to single nations, as the examples of Armenians, Jews and Gypsies show. These groups could survive as 'supra-national' ethnic communities; indeed, they continued to do so until their holocausts and the founding of their own states in the twentieth century.

As far as the Early Modern period is concerned we may conclude that, in order for a process of state building to take place, there must first exist a demand for a state. This demand must develop a clear identification with, or distinction from, other units (church, dynasties, enemy threats, or theories) and bring about the mobilisation and focusing of already existing forces. State building in the early modern period displays the following characteristics:

First, without reasons of state, as opposed to those of individuals, there can be no state. These reasons of state can alter their area of influence.

Second, the Early Modern state was based on a system of estates.

Third, legitimisation (see the stream of regulations and prohibitions in the Early Modern period) is a pre-requisite, and at the same time, a consequence of state building.

Fourth, multi-confessionalism, incorporating and restructuring the whole of society, may strengthen the state. This may also be contributed to by a nascent partial symbiosis of state and church.

Fifth, state building is influenced by the transition from the antagonistic dualism of the European power system to a 'balance of power'.

Sixth, the rise of the Atlantic world economy affected the European states.

Seventh, nation building may promote state building; this, however, is not a given.

Autonomy in the peripheries? The examples of the duchies of Savoy and Courland[37]

Tributary states along the boundaries of great powers were common in early modern times. Not only in the Baltic did several zones of influence and systems collide. As a shield against Central Europe, the Ottomans created a whole series of dependencies such as the vassal principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. In Northern Italy, the Habsburg emperors created a zone of territories with different dependencies for protection against France, the Papal State and the countries in South-East Europe. In these zones of fracture there was no possibility for lasting coalitions of action or clearly fixed borders, which only developed in later centuries.

All three regions under consideration at this conference found themselves, at least in political terms, strategically positioned between more extensive and powerful political entities. To describe the exact nature of these small satellites is almost impossible. But despite their placement amid the shifting political tectonics of their larger neighbours what caused their vulnerability they survived throughout the greater part of the early modern period. So it must have been in the interests of the great powers to preserve these areas for example to use them as buffer-states. On the other hand, the rulers of these small entities could use the tensions and competitions between their neighbours for their own advantage. A comparison between the duchies of Courland and Savoy shows on the one hand surprisingly parallels, on the other hand we observe at an early stage the characteristics of '*originalità, complessità e organicità*' in the '*esperienza sabauda*'.[38]

If one takes a closer look at the geo-political and strategic position of the duchies, one realises in both cases their genesis from the splitting of former greater units (the Livonian Order, the Habsburg Empire). Courland and Savoy were important connecting links or buffer-zones between bigger neighbours; both had access to the sea and controlled the few important transit routes on land and sea.[39] The importance of the seashore is reflected on sea maps, where

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37 To make things not overcomplicated this article uses the expression Savoy without differentiation in Savoie/Savoia and Piedmont. In the same way Courland will always mean the duchies Courland and Semgallia.

38 G. Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti dell'assolutismo sabaudo. Segreterie di stato e consiglio della finanze nel XVIII secolo', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 102, 1990, pp. 796-873, at 871.

39 G. Tabacco, 'La formazione della potenza sabauda come dominazione alpina', in *Die Alpen in der Europäischen Geschichte des Mittelalters*, Vorträge und Forschungen 10, Konstanz, Stuttgart, 1965, pp. 233-244.

the contours of Courland are exactly drawn, even if Windau and Libau could not compete with the harbour of Riga. Since 1388, the harbour of Nice, which was always in the shadow of the bigger port in Genoa, secured the access of Savoy to the sea.[40] These, from the point of view of the great powers, peripheral duchies[41] have been for the most part without towns, bigger settlements as Riga (in 1550 circa 8.000 inhabitants) or until 1562 to 1563 Turin (which in 1571 had 14.244 inhabitants) did not belong to the duchies. In Savoy, the feudal lords as 'nobiltà di antico lignaggio'[42] and in Courland the knight-families, which had immigrated in the thirteenth century, ruled, and serfdom was predominant. People in both regions were multi-linguistic. The common situation was far from being easy, but there were enough resources which could be developed.

   A comparison of the dynasties in Courland and Savoy shows decisive differences in age, fertility and confession. The counts of Savoy first mentioned in 1033, gained the dukedom in 1416. They belonged to the estates of the German Reich and therefore were invited to the diets. They had no problems with fertility, from the sixteenth to eighteenth century each generation produced at least seven legitimate children for the marriage market. Marriages with the most important houses of Europe secured 'un peso sempre crescente sulla scena internazionale';[43] in the fifteenth century even a pope was elected from the Savoyards.[44] For all of this, the Catholic creed was the pre-condition. The Savoyards were well aware of their position in the European dynastical structures and they worked on their image through historiography,[45] iconografic representa-

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40 J. F. Bergier, 'Port de Nice, sel de Savoie et foires de Genève. Un ambitieux projet de la seconde moité du XVe siècle', *Le Moyen Age*, 69, 1957 and 1958, pp. 97-104. For the arts see M.-T. Bouquet-Boyer, 'Les elements Marins dans les spectacles a la cour de Savoie 1585-1628', in *The influence of Italian entertainments on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music theatre in France, Savoy and England*, eds. M.-C. Canova-Green and F. Chiarelli, Studies in History and Interpretation of Music 68, Lewiston, NY, 2000, pp. 53-67.

41 M. Rizzi, 'Centro spagnolo e periferia lombarda nell'impero asburgico tra Cinque e Seicento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 104, 1992, pp. 315-348.

42 P. Merlin, C. Rosso, G. Symox and G. Ricuperati, 'Il Piemonte sabaudo. Stato e territori in età moderna', in *Storia d'Italia*, ed. G. Galasso, 8,1, Torino 1994, p. 110.

43 D. Frigo, 'L'affermazione della sovranità. Famiglia e corte dei Savoia tra Cinque e Settecento', in *'Famiglia' del principe e famiglia aristocratica*, ed. C. Mozzarelli, Europa delle Corti. Centro studi sulle società di antico regime. Biblioteca del Cinquecento 41, 2 vols., Roma, 1988, pp. 277-332, at 278.

44 *Amédée VIII – Félix V, premier duc de Savoie et pape (1383-1451)*, eds. B. Andenmatten and A. Paravicini Bagliani, Bibliothèque historique vaudoise 103, Lausanne, 1992.

45 Zur 'Chronique des Savoie' von 1417/19, E. Tremp, 'Auf dem Weg in die Moderne. Peter II. von Savoyen und die Anfänge von Territorialstaatlichkeit im 13. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 25, 1998, pp. 481-507.

tion[46] or through candidatures for thrones.[47] And they had success: François Couperin counted in 1695 'La Piémontoise' next to the French, the Spaniards and the Imperials as 'Les Nations'.

The Kettlers, however, were common knights, who had become dukes together with the establishment of the duchy in 1561.[48] Except from the middle of the seventeenth century (with Duke James) all generations had difficulty in producing heirs. Because of their confession, marriages were only possible with Evangelical houses and therefore limited to the North of Europe. Only in 1654 did Duke James gain the *Reichsfürstenstand*.[49]

Both duchies had in the beginning two residences, for Courland, Goldingen, and Mitau for Semgallia, in Savoy, Chambéry and Turin for Piedmont. Architectural development began with the concentration of their residence in one place.[50] The dukes took their apartments in former ecclesiastical centres (such as castles or bishops palaces), which they adapted for their secular purposes. Whereas the town Mitau remained without fortifications, Emanuele Filiberto at once took over the project of a citadel for Turin.[51] The Savoyard court consisted of 202 persons (court order of 1564); the Courlandish court order from 1581 counted 163 court servants, whilst five to six persons formed the ducal counsel.[52] In European comparison both duchies counted amongst the smaller courts, but Turin managed to come to international fame in the sixteenth century through the presence of famous artists as Torquato Tasso or Claude Le-

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46 R. Oresko, 'The House of Savoy in search for a royal crown in the seventeenth century', in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in early modern Europe*, eds. R. Oresko, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 272-350.

47 E. g. R. Kleinman, 'Charles-Emmanuel I of Savoy and the Bohemian Election of 1619', *European Studies Review*, 5, 1975, pp. 3-29.

48 T. Schiemann, 'Gotthard Kettler, der letzte Meister Deutschen Ordens in Livland und erste Herzog von Kurland', in ibid., *Historische Darstellungen und Archivalische Studien. Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte*, Mitau, 1886, pp. 91-102.

49 T. Klein, 'Die Erhebungen in den deutschen Reichsfürstenstand 1550-1806', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 122, 1986, pp. 137-192, at 174.

50 The importance of an economic, political, cultural, and administrative capital for state building underlines Charles Tilly, *The long Run of European State Formation*, Rome, 1990, p. 142 f.

51 M. D. Pollak, *Turin 1564-1680. Urban Design, Military Culture and the Creation of the Absolutist Capital*, Chicago, 1991, especially pp. 1-34.

52 In Savoy it has been *gran scudiere*, *primo maestro della casa*, *tesoriere*, *controllore*, *segretario della casa*; in Courland the *Oberrat* existed by *Landhofmeister*, *Kanzler*, *Oberburggraf* and *Landmarschall* together with two doctors of law. For the *consiglio di Stato* P. Merlin, C. Rosso, G. Symox and G. Ricuperati, 'Il Piemonte sabaudo. Stato e territori in età moderna', in *Storia d'Italia*, ed. G. Galasso, 8,1, Torino 1994, pp. 62-71.

Jeune.[53] In addition, the courts differed from each other, while the dukes of Courland did not organize diplomatic representations at foreign courts, the ambassadors of Savoy were at important European intersection '*quasi sempre modelli di laboriosità, di tatto, di misura, di prudenza*'.[54]

After re-establishing the dynasties in their duchies (Emanuele Filiberto 1559 in Câteau-Cambrésis, Duke James in 1660 at Oliva) the dukes' tactics in foreign policy was quite cautious; they tried to intermediate between larger powers and seek compromises.[55] What possibilities existed for dynamic evolutions in the small duchies and in which way did the regents tackle them?

Both duchies had been theatres of war for foreign armies, and the devastation of the countryside was therefore quite common. For a longer period the most important fortresses in Savoy were occupied by French or Spanish soldiers. The first aim of the rulers was the aggrandisement of ducal territory; so Duke Carlo Emanuele I gained the margraviate of Saluzzo in exchange for fertile grounds in the North-West (Bresse, Bugey) in the treaty of Lyons in 1601; but throughout the seventeenth century, Pinerolo remained a French spine running through the duchy. The Grobin district, mortgaged to the Prussian dukes, was brought to Courland in 1609 in the dowry of Duchess Sofia, Pilten, possessed first by the margraves of Brandenburg, however, remained an enclave within the ducal territory. Whereas the dukes of Savoy conducted in this field a clearly offensive policy, the dukes of Courland made no steps towards gaining further land. The shifting of the territorial centre in Savoy from the French-speaking north-west to the Italian-speaking south-east very soon showed far-reaching political consequences.

The development of the economy and finances was essential for the strengthening of the duchies. In this matter there were similar attempts in both duchies. Indispensable for stimulating exports was the need to extend the commercial ports (such as Nice or Windau). Inside the country, the dukes built up the economy along mercantile principles, in Savoy, the glass industry, in Courland, the iron foundries. Because of its low price, there was in the seventeenth century a good market for grain and wood in Courland (that stresses the agricultural sec-

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53 M.-T. Bouquet-Boyer, *Claude LeJeune et son temps en France et dans les états de Savoie 1530-1600. Musique, littérature et histoire, Actes du colloque de Chambéry 1991*, Bern, 1996.

54 G. Quazza, *Le riforme in Piemonte della prima metà del '700*, Collezione storica del Risorgimento italiano 51-52, 2 vols., Modena, 1957, p. 99.

55 J.-M. Davies, 'The Duc de Montmorency, Philip II and the House of Savoy. A neglected aspect of the sixteenth-century French Civil Wars', *English Historical Review*, 150, 1990, pp. 870-892, at 874.

tor of this duchy), while in Savoy it was the textile industry – a qualified branch grew up in the agro-towns.[56] The weak populated countries (Courland had circa 135.000 inhabitants without Semgallia, Piedmont 900.000, and 500.000 in Savoie)[57] were lacking in workers, the duke of Savoy as well as the duke of Courland asked for immigrants with working skills; seasonal workers were quite common.[58]

The dukes could build up their territories on the premise of a regulation of the finances; for what we are excellently informed for Savoy was due to a rich basis of sources. As in all early modern territorial states, new tasks required new sources of money, and the search for these brought with it revolutions in social and economical matters. After his return to the duchy Emanuele Filiberto concentrated the finances in the hand of the 'Camera dei Conti' in 1559, he tried dramatically to cut down expenses, and he looked for new possibilities of income. Until that time domains and customs, and especially the tax for salt and tobacco, were the main, though irregular, source of revenue, so the duke introduced a new kind of 'tasso' which produced a stable sum;[59] in addition, the nobles and the church lost their immunity from taxation. The transition from indirect to direct taxes doubled the 'entrate ordinarie' between 1559 and 1580;[60] when the duke died, the finances of the duchy were in the black. The official sign for the new beginning was the introduction of the 'lira d'argento' on 29 September 1562, the foundation of banks (Monti di Pietà in 1568) and the consent for the Jews to lend money of 1576.[61]

The dukes of Courland put their right of coinage into practice, one year after ascending the throne Duke Gotthard opened a local mint, foreign coins, how-

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56 L. Allegra, *La città verticale. Usurai, mercanti e tessitori nella Chieri del Cinquecento*, Milano, 1987, p. 116; G. Chicco, *La seta in Piemonte 1650-1800. Un sistema industriale d'ancien régime*, Milano, 1995, pp. 341 ff.

57 The numbers for Savoy G. Bragagnolo and E. Bettazzi, *Torino nella storia del Piemonte e d'Italia*, vol. 1: *Dalle origini al Emanuele Filiberto*, Torino, 1915, vol. 2: *Da Emanuele Filberto ai giorni nostri*, Torino, 1919, p. 46.

58 For the seventeenth century 10 per cent of the population by D. J. Siddle, 'Migration as a strategy of accumulation. Social and economic change in eighteenth-century Savoy', *The Economic History Review*, 50, 1997, pp. 1-20, at 5.

59 S. J. Woolf, 'Sviluppo economico e struttura sociale in Piemonte da Emanuele Filiberto a Carlo Emanuele III', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 46, 1962, pp. 1-57, at 8 f.

60 A. G. Canina, *La finanza del Piemonte nella seconda metà del XVI secolo*, Torino, 1924, pp. 80-85.

61 In the Middle Ages the Jews found here already a refugium and a bridge for emigrating to Eastern Europe. T. Bardelle, *Juden in einem Transit- und Brückenland. Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in Savoyen-Piemont bis zum Ende der Herrschaft Amadeus VIII.*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden A.5, Hannover, 1998.

ever, remained in control of the money market in Courland. The monetary funds in the country itself were not large enough to make loans, and therefore only the dukes could effect bigger investments, the capital market of the Baltic countries in general still remaining in the hands of Dutch financiers. To levy taxes, the duke remained obliged to ask the nobility's permission, which much too often hesitated to allow the tax collection, the nobles themselves being exempt from taxes. Important income as the port tolls (*licences*) was lost in the first half of the seventeenth century to the Swedes. The Jews found in the duchy of Courland an (unofficial) niche in commercial transactions, as well.

The dukes' efforts for consolidation of the central powers showed different success. In general, it meant unification of the legal system, dissolution of the estate institutions, and struggles against religious splinter groups. To create more clearness in the mixture of Roman and German law, of canonical and regional law the '*Statuta Sabaudiae*' were revisited in the beginning of the 1560s;[62] in 1561 the Italian became the language of the lawyers and notaries. Only the Valdostani kept peculiarities in law.[63] In the duchy of Courland the codification of the law took a longer time, only after struggles for the constitution and with help from outside did the country fix in 1617 the '*Statuta Curlandica*', but a homogeneous common law was not defined until the end of the duchy.

For the last time the duke convoked the estates of Piedmont in 1560 and those of Savoy in 1561. Afterwards the Savoyard sovereign reigned with a small group of confidants. '*Non vi è in questa corte uomo di gran maneggio e di molto spirito … sono persone tutte nuove al governo … vanno dubitando sopra ogni cosa e mai non si risolvono*,' so the Venetian envoy.[64] Emanuele Filiberto pined his hope on old combatants, foreign specialists and he forced the education of non-noble functionaries. In the first half of the seventeenth century already 84 per cent of the fiscal officers, 78 per cent of the officers of law and 75 per cent of the administrative officials were from the middle classes.[65] One should not overestimate this '*borghesizzazione delle cariche*'; soon a nobility of state office was formed,[66] and the old elite was exchanged with the new one.

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62 1561 'Novi ordini et decreti intorno alle cause civili', 1565 'Novi ordini et decreti intorno alle cause criminali'.

63 E.g. A. Barbero, 'Una nobiltà provinciale sotto l'Antico Regime. Il Nobiliaire du Duché d'Aoste di J.-B. De Tillier', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 109, 1997, pp. 5-48.

64 *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, vol. IX: *Savoia*, eds. E. Albero and L. Firpo, Torino, 1983, p. 326.

65 E. Stumpo, *Finanze e stato moderno nel Piemonte del seicento*, Torino, 1979, p. 231.

66 G. Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti dell'assolutismo sabaudo. Segreterie di stato e consiglio della finanze nel XVIII secolo', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 102, 1990, pp. 796-873, at 855 ff., 870.

This made a big difference to the duchy in the Baltic. The duke of Courland was *primus inter pares* and the nobles remained the only (closed) estate in the country, which was politically active. Since 1617 only the nobles were allowed to fill up offices, whereby half of them were in the hands of only 15 families.[67] The regularly meetings of the diets were the forum for inner politics, duke and deputies together had to sign the conclusions. Emanuele Filiberto as '*sovrano autoritario e assoluto*',[68] or perhaps we should say as manager of politics, had much more success as the dukes of Courland, who furthermore were forced to cooperate with the nobility.

The dukes of Savoy show a vigorous guidance in cultural-confessional matters as well. For training of the administrative officials, the establishing of a good local school was a pre-condition. Emanuele Filiberto ceded the school pedagogic to the church and concentrated on the university domain; in 1560 he founded a college in Mondovì and after the retreat of the French he re-openend in 1566 a university in Turin, which concentrated on law and mathematics. The human sciences remained for the Jesuits, who opened their first college in 1561 in Mondovì, followed by Turin in 1567. It was forbidden to study abroad.

The Courlandish noblemen, on the contrary, were forced to study abroad, because there were no high schools in Courland. Why the dukes of Courland resigned from the 'trade-mark' of their own university is not easy to answer; every count in the German Reich founded a school for higher education. Was the reason that they could not install their own functionaries? The few councillors could easily get their education at the near-by university in Königsberg. Furthermore, in contrary to Italy there was lacking the tradition of the city communes with self-confident citizens eager to study. The attractions of a centralized court culture was missing in the duchy of Courland as in Poland-Lithuania as a whole.

Education in the sixteenth and seventeenth century was combined with the question of confession. The duchy of Courland was a Lutheran territorial state, but for the dukes, religious tolerance was common in this thinly populated country, which neighboured other confessions: Catholicism and Orthodoxy; there were no disputes on doctrine. The duchy of Savoy was situated amidst Catholic powers (France, Habsburgs). Martin Luther corresponded with Duke Carlo III in 1523, the same year he was writing to the Christians in Livonia.[69]

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67 More in A. Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland und der Norden der polnisch-litauischen Adelsrepublik im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Möglichkeiten von Integration und Autonomie*, Giessen, 2001, p. 116 f.

68 For the machiavellismo of the duke P. Merlin, *Emanuele Filiberto. Potere e politica nel Piemonte del Cinquecento*, Torino, 1995, p. 152 f.

69 K. Trüdinger, *Luthers Briefe und Gutachten an weltliche Obrigkeiten zur Durchführung*

In 1536, France, partly sympathising with the Evangelists, and the Evangelical neighbours from Bern together with the Spaniards occupied Savoy. In the middle of the sixteenth century, especially reformist Geneva, which still in the fifteenth century had belonged to Savoy, radiated into the environments. The dukes felt a double attack and set forth an '*ossessione ginevrina*',[70] which they tried to regain by all means. Through establishing the *nunciature* in Savoy in 1560, pope Pius IV underlined the importance of the duchy for defence against the Evangelical doctrines. The Jesuit Antonio Possevino, who was not so successful later on in Courland, helped to demonstrate how the '*ragion di stato*' could mingle with the defence of the Catholic Church, '*nella misura in cui l'omogenità religiosa del ducato era una garanzia contro la dissidenza religiosa, senza peraltro accettare interferenze limitatrici della propria sovranità*'.[71] In this context we should see the fight against the Valdensians.[72]

To realize their plans for development and to defend their countries against inner and outer enemies, Duke Emanuele Filiberto as well as Duke James realized quite quickly, that one of the most important reforms should be that of the army. Under the reign of Emanuele Filiberto an infantry militia with 22.000 soldiers was created: the '*trattenuti*', which were recruited from local units, so the duke became independent from the nobles' levy and he could count on a propaganda effect.[73] Like his colleague from Courland, the duke of Savoy invested in his own navy. Duke James' attempts to reform the army as well as his proposition of a '*peculiaris exercitus*' in 1648 were hampered by the local noblemen and the Polish king. So the duke did not succeed in any military reform. The Baltic noblemen derived their rights from the knightly-military ethos and they kept to this (old-fashioned) world view, even though they hired foreign armies;

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der Reformation, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 111, Münster, 1975, p. 27.

70 C. Donati, 'Genova, Piemonte, Stato della chiesa e Toscana nel Seicento', in *La Controriforma e il Seicento*, eds. R. Alonge et al., Storia della Società italiana 11, Milano 1989, p. 370; R. Oresko, 'The Question of the Sovereignty of Geneva after the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis', in H. G. Koenigsberger, ed., *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 11, München, 1988, pp. 77-99.

71 A. Erba, *La chiesa sabauda tra Cinque e Seicento. Ortodossa tridentina, gallicanesimo savoiardo e assolutismo ducale (1580-1630)*, Roma, 1979, p. XVII f.

72 G. G. Merlo, 'Momenti di storia e storiografia valdese', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 101, 1989, pp. 5-34; G. Jalla, *Storia della riforma religiosa in Piemonte fino alla morte di Emanuele Filiberto 1517-1580*, Firenze, 1914, p. 138 f.

73 For myth and reality W. Barberis, *Le armi del principe. La tradizione militare sabauda*, Torino, 1989; P. Merlin, C. Rosso, G. Symox and G. Ricuperati, 'Il Piemonte sabaudo. Stato e territori in età moderna', in *Storia d'Italia*, ed. G. Galasso, 8,1, Torino, 1994, pp. 71-78.

both, Courlanders and Savoyards, were soldiers in the European theatres of war. Both duchies tried in their politics during the seventeenth century to remain neutral; a condition for this was to belong to a network of a system of defensive alliances.

The turning point for the future was laid in the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the War of the Spanish Succession, the French satellite Savoy became an important partner in the European 'balance of power'. The able diplomat Vittorio Amadeo II, the '*principale motore e autore della riorganizzazione dello stato*', supported by a good army and a unified nation, succeeded in the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 to win Sicily, which he exchanged in 1720 for Sardinia, and the title of a king.[74] In domestic politics and on the intellectual level the duchy remained a backward region even in the eighteenth century. In the course of the Napoleonic Wars, Carlo Emanuele IV of Savoy had to abdicate in 1798, but he kept Sardinia.

The Great Northern War brought the balance of powers in North-East Europe to an end, in the treaty of Nystad, Russia became the predominant power in the Baltic countries. Duke Ferdinand of Courland continued to reign from Danzig, from outside the duchy. The dynasty of the Kettlers died out in 1737, what meant that the stable binding into the dynastic politics of the duchies along the Baltic Shores came to an end. The great losses of the population, the fall of the grain market, the preservation of old, inflexible structures, the political overlooking of the Latvian inhabitants: all these phenomena did not allow decisive innovations or radical changes. The potential of these countries is shown by the fact that the Baltic governments in the nineteenth century were counted amongst the most progressive in the Russian Empire.

Would a foreign dynasty in the duchy of Courland have been more profitable? Definitely they would not have had to pay regard to the other noble 'brothers' in the same way as the Kettlers did. In the beginning of the eighteenth century there were enough candidates for the ducal throne in Courland, candidates, who would have brought support from their domestic countries;[75] the repeated attempts of the Polish elected kings to establish a second branch of their dynasty in Courland failed because of the resistance of the nobles in Po-

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74 G. Quazza, *Le riforme in Piemonte della prima metà del '700*, Collezione storica del Risorgimento italiano 51-52, 2 vols., Modena, 1957, p. 13; A. Mattone, 'La cessione del Regno di Sardegna dal trattato di Utrecht alla presa di possesso sabaudo (1713-1720)', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 104, 1992, pp. 5-89; G. Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II. Absolutism in the Savoyard State, 1675-1730*, London, 1983.

75 K. Strohm, *Die kurländische Frage (1700-1763). Eine Studie zur Mächtepolitik im Ançien Régime*, Berlin, 1999, especially pp. 67-152.

land and Lithuania. Would it have been better, if Duke James had concentrated on a second European 'leg' instead in investing in far colonies? Or is it the fault of the corporate spirit of the homogenous foreign nobility and the already outdated model of the Polish-Lithuanian noble republic that the duchy of Courland ceased to exist together with the *Rzeczpospolita* in 1795? Would it in general have been possible to survive in the strategies of the surrounding powers? Or did the right of small countries to exist end with the coming of the eighteenth century? At the same time, in 1782, we observe the discussions whether the vassal states of Moldavia and Wallachia could be purchased for Austria.

The restoration of the European system of states at the Congress in Vienna in 1815 did not touch Eastern Europe. It was not in the interest of the gathered powers to re-establish the (electoral) dynasties in Courland or Poland-Lithuania as they did it in south-west Europe (e. g. Vittorio Emanuele I in Savoy). As long as the cake was divided in equal parts, the balance of the new great powers in North-East Europe, that means Russia and Prussia, continued.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, to summarise, there was certainly the chance for small states to preserve their autonomy, but they always remained dependent on the goodwill of the great European powers and their interest lay in the preservation of peace. An equivalency of the neighbouring powers or an accepted place in the right defensive alliance could guarantee survival. After a certain time in exile, both dukes, the Savoyard in the sixteenth century, and the Courlandish in the seventeenth century, were re-established in their duchies; and, as many other small countries, both lost their independence again in the end of the eighteenth century. Only the nineteenth century opened the scissors and separated their history (from outside); and this distinct end makes it so difficult to come to an objective judgement of the former history.

There are seven essential points, which explain the different courses of development internally:

First, the population in the duchy of Courland counted only one sixth of the already thinly populated Piedmont, what meant a certain limit in enterprises from the beginning.

Second, in the network of the most important European dynasties Savoy was well established, and beyond that by using modern propaganda methods they showed more skill in drawing the European public's attention to themselves.

Third, the quick exchange of the old elites and the systematic building up of the civil service consolidated the sovereign power at the ducal court in Turin and set synergic effects free. In Mitau, however, the estates functioned more or less in the old way.

Fourth, the consolidation of the budget at the court in Turin permitted invest-

ments in fields directed to the future as military, economy and culture. Even a small standing army underlined the sovereignty of the dukes of Savoy and their intention of an offensive policy.

Fifth, Duke James of Courland planned the greater public penetration of the country's economy, in this field the duke worked with the latest methods. He realised at an early point the importance of gaining economic resources outside of Europe.

Sixth, the ability of the Savoyard dukes and their councillors to gather the centrifugal forces in the country and to create a new civil society by instrumentalising economic, cultural, and the religious moments, let the duchy participate in all European parallel movements.

Seventh, the necessity of stressing their own autonomy and adapting to new facts was seen in Savoy through the influence of the neighbouring French and Spanish absolutist monarchies. The nobility in the duchy of Courland, in comparison, at all means could find his place in the defensive federal system of the *Rzeczpospolita* without any tension between integration and autonomy; which the old internal structures permitted until the end of the eighteenth century. The catharsis for a new beginning had been missed, and at that time it was not any longer readily possible.