



## **Życie naukowe / Academic Chronicle**

### **“Baltic Ports. Exchange, Conflicts, Entanglements” / “Bałtyckie miasta portowe. Wymiana, konflikty, historia powiązana,” Kulice, 24–26 March 2022**

In the years 2020–2022, the University of Szczecin and the Institute of History of the University of Greifswald jointly implemented the research project “Dwa uniwersytety nad wspólnym morzem” / “Zwei Universitäten, ein gemeinsames Meer” [Two universities by the common sea] (FMP-0349-20). The project was co-financed by the European Union under the European Regional Development Fund as well as the state budget from the Small Project Fund under the Cooperation Programme Interreg V A Mecklenburg-Vorpommern / Brandenburg / Poland in the Pomerania Euroregion. One of the elements of the project was the international conference “Baltic Ports. Exchange, Conflicts, Entanglements,” which took place on 24–26 March 2022 at the International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of the University of Szczecin in Kulice. The idea of the conference corresponded with the awarding of the honorary doctorate of the University of Szczecin to Professor Michael North, an outstanding researcher and promoter of studies on the Baltic zone. The organisers of the event were Professor Jörg Hackmann and Dr Paweł Migdalski (project coordinator).

The originator and ardent advocate of granting the honorary degree to the German researcher was Professor Edward Włodarczyk, the then rector of the University of Szczecin, and at the same time one of the most distinguished Polish historians of the Baltic region and the Baltic countries. He also advocated the dedication of the Kulice conference to Professor North. Unfortunately, during the preparatory works for the conference, Professor Włodarczyk passed away, and his students decided to dedicate the event to both outstanding figures. Due to the pandemic, its date had to be postponed and finally the meeting took place almost on the anniversary of the rector’s death. Unfortunately, Professor M. North could not participate in the session due to illness. The official media partner of the conference was the annual journal “Studia Maritima,” which was in the past edited by Professor Edward Włodarczyk for 16 years.

The ceremonial opening was made by Prof. Andrzej Skrendo – vice-rector of the University of Szczecin and Prof. Agnieszka Szudarek – director of the Institute of History at the University of Szczecin. The substantive introduction was made by Dr Paweł Migdalski and Prof. Jörg Hackmann, who pointed to the goals of the

conference as well as the significance of both the session itself and the centre in which it was held.

The first panel was devoted to the presentation of the achievements of Professors M. North and E. Włodarczyk. Dr. habil. Robert Riemer (Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr in Potsdam) presented Prof. M. North's research on the history of the Baltic Sea, while Prof. Dariusz Chojecki from the University of Szczecin discussed the research and publications by Prof. E. Włodarczyk and his studies on the Baltic ports in Szczecin, then Prof. Adam Makowski also from the University of Szczecin explored the activities of Edward Włodarczyk as the editor of the journal "Studia Maritima."

Subsequent papers were then devoted to the subject of the Baltic ports, and chronological order was applied. Carina Damm (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe – GWZO Leipzig) discussed early medieval trade emporia on the Baltic Sea. Lecturers who followed continued their deliberations on the history of ports in this period based on specific cases – Dr Wojciech Filipowiak (laboratory of the Institute of Archeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Wolin) considered the example of the port and early medieval contacts of Wolin, while Prof. Christian Lübke (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe – GWZO Leipzig) delivered his paper on Veliky Novgorod. The latter speaker not only focused on trade, but also touched upon the issues of cultural exchange. After listening to the presentations, a discussion followed, and a particularly intriguing issue proved to be the importance of the Vikings in the development of these centres. The first day of the conference ended with a lecture by Dr Jordan Siemianowski on the Levantine line of Żegluga Polska S.A. [Polish Shipping jsc] in the interwar period.

On the second day, the chronological presentation of the port issues continued. Professor Roman Czaja (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) presented the activities of the port of Elbląg (German: Elbing), then Prof. Juhan Kreem from the University of Tallinn showed the functioning of the port in Tallinn at the beginning of the 16th century, using the example of its handling of the Danish ship "Maria" in the years 1518–1519. On the basis of the analysis of the visit of the royal ship, he demonstrated how the states adjacent to the sea tried to limit the position of the Baltic port cities. The next two papers focused on the importance of port cities for the new powers in the Baltic region – Sweden in the 16th–18th centuries (Ralph Tuchtenhagen – Humboldt University in Berlin) and Russia in the 18th century on the example of foreign merchants operating in Riga and Saint Petersburg (Dr Tilman Plath – University of Greifswald). The discussion after the papers concerned mainly the threats to the functioning of port cities in the modern era.

The end of the 19th century was featured in the paper by Bert Becker (University of Hong Kong) dealing with the enterprise of M. Jebsen from Apenrade / Aabenraa in

Schleswig. Using this example, the author discussed the realities of coastal shipping in Europe and East Asia. For Doctor Marta Grzechnik (University of Gdańsk), the inter-war Gdynia was a pretext for reflection on the modernisation processes of the Baltic ports, while Prof. Bolesław Hajduk presented the history of the ports in Gdynia and Gdańsk during the Second World War.

The last two papers were devoted to the creation and consolidation of the maritime ideology. Sociologists Prof. Maciej Kowalewski and Dr Robert Bartłomiejski presented their research on the phenomenon of the Days of the Sea in Szczecin, while Dr Paweł Migdalski (all speakers representing the University of Szczecin) showed the use of sea themes in creating the mythology of the Recovered Territories, especially in the used examples of Szczecin, Wolin and Kołobrzeg.

The conference was a very good platform not only for the familiarisation of the audience with the subject of the Baltic ports and honouring two important researchers of the Baltic zone – Professors Michael North and Edward Włodarczyk, but above all constituted an opportunity to discuss the role and transformation of port centres on the Baltic Sea in a historical perspective, based on various examples. The meeting of Kulice showed that this subject still proved to be a strong source of inspiration in contemporary research, generating new questions and seeking answers to them. International and interdisciplinary research teams are particularly suited to them. It is sad and regrettable that Professor Edward Włodarczyk will not be part of them, and the illness will limit the participation of Professor Michael North.

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#### **Citation**

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