

## “Ad fontes”: International Conference to 400th Year Anniversary of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

*Reviewed by Zhenya Sakal*

Every five years the History Department of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy welcomes scholars from all over the world to discuss the problems of early modern Eastern Europe. In 2015, the conference was dedicated to the 400th-year anniversary of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The theme of the conference – “Ad fontes” – called for reconsidering the intellectual and political origins of the Academy in the period between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Fifty scholars from Poland, the United States, the Russian Federation, Canada, Italy, and Ukraine engaged in an intensive 3-day conversation on the problems of intellectual networks, schooling, and identities.

Unlike church synods, good scholarly conferences are not called to settle debates or sanction conclusions. They create a forum where scholars with a keen interest in the subject can exchange their insights and engage in discussion. This year was not an exception. In particular, the insightful remarks of Professors Yakovenko and Iaremenko kindled many intellectually stimulating and vigorous discussions that lasted well after the official ending of the last panel.

Remarkably, several young, but promising, undergraduate and graduate students presented their first findings on the same panels with the most distinguished experts in their fields. Evidently, a democratic approach bridges the gap between renowned intellectuals and newcomers by providing the sense of an inclusive intellectual community. For the young people, participation in the conference provides an opportunity to test their ideas and get insights for new research.

The conference welcomed a trans-national approach, offering a broad cultural and political context. Panels were organized thematically, covering such topics as the legal foundations of higher studies, informal networks, the curriculum, rhetoric, visual and ceremonial traditions of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and its theological and homiletic heritage, among others.

A session on the “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and its Contemporaries” included papers by David Frick (University of California, Berkeley) and Ihor Skochyliias (Ukrainian Catholic University). Both papers examined cross-confessional communication. Dr. Frick’s paper offered an interesting perspective on the universe of a Ruthenian churchman. Using the example of Meletii Smotrytskyi, Dr. Frick demonstrated the range of possibilities available to the learned Orthodox clergy that ranged from ecumenical dialogue with the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope to the struggle with the Metropolitan of Kyiv, Petro Mohyla. Professor Skochyliias’ paper examined Basilian Schooling in the 18th century. The results of his research provoked a lively discussion touching upon the issues of the “uniqueness” of the Basilian school model. From a different perspective, Natalia Pylypiuk (University of Alberta) compared the curricula of the early Kyiv-Mohyla Academy with those of the Jesuit Colleges in the New World, demonstrating their differences and similarities.

Another panel examined the theological and homiletic heritage of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Yaroslav Zatylyuk (Institute of History of Ukraine) and Margarita Korzo (Institute of Philosophy RAS) focused on the legacy of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Yaroslav Zatylyuk offered a thought-provoking view of the “invention” of the Bratsk Icon as the Mohylanian shrine. Margarita Korzo analyzed the influence of the Kyiv catechetical tradition on Russian 18th century dogmatic texts. Questions discussed at the panel touched upon the wider problems of the “invention of tradition”

and cultural appropriation. I believe that the issue of cultural appropriation is extremely intriguing. Given that the intellectual process always involves balancing between the incorporation of the new and the preservation of the old, we have little information when certain practices cease being regarded as “alien” and come to be viewed as “native.” For instance, the influence of the Kyiv learned clergy on the Moscow church is a well-known fact but to date no one has questioned when the intellectual heritage ceased being viewed as alien and was appropriated by the Moscow tradition.

The rhetoric and the visual traditions of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy received much attention from Italian and Ukrainian scholars. Giovanna Brogi-Berkoff (Milan University) chaired a panel that included papers by Volodymyr Aleksandrovykh (Ivan Kryp'yakevych Ukrainian Institute, NAS of Ukraine) and Natalia Sinkevych (National Kyiv-Pechersk Historic-Cultural Preserve). Volodymyr Aleksandrovykh examined engravings in the *Anfolagion* collection of sermons (1619) demonstrating their visual continuity with the images of the second half of the 15th century. Natalia Sinkevych analyzed the rhetorical arsenal of Sylvestr Kosov, one of the first professors at the Kyiv-Mohyla Collegium. To bridge the gap between visual representation and rhetoric, Maria Grazia Bartolini (Milan University) investigated illustrations of Lazar Baranovych's “Truby Sloves Propovidnykh” (1674) in the discourses of sacred hermeneutics and the Mohylian philosophical curriculum.

Two sessions addressed the philological and the philosophical traditions of the Academy. One session presented several papers on the Baroque literary tradition at a crossroads of hagiography, school drama, and apocalyptic sermons. Despite the interesting approaches and questions raised, the presentations left the impression that the literary works could be analyzed outside their historical context. Another section focused on the genealogy of the philosophical texts written by professors at the Academy. Yaroslava Stratiy (Institute of Philosophy, NAS of Ukraine) analyzed the scholastic context of the first Orthodox treatise on moral theology, Innokenty Gizel's *Traktat pro dushu*. Mykola Symchych (Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy, NAS of Ukraine) presented on courses of dialectics at the Academy, while Viktor Kozlovsky (NaUKMA) investigated the reception of European practices in teaching philosophy. Larysa Dovga (Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine) analyzed the concepts of *dobro* and *blaho* in Ukrainian eighteenth-century texts. Her paper provoked an interesting methodological discussion on how to differentiate between concepts and words.

The conference as a whole was excellent. It succeeded in attracting outstanding scholars and inspiring thought-provoking discussions. However, some problems did surface. A presentation of new publications (the Encyclopaedia of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, monographs by Sergiy Golovashchenko, Maksym Iaremenko, Natalya Yakovenko, and the journals “KA,” and “Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal”) was held on the third day of the conference. After the presentation, participants and guests expected the opportunity to purchase the new books and academic journals. However, despite the best efforts of conference organizers, the publishing houses were uncooperative and the some of the featured books had not yet been published. Considering ineffective inter-library cooperation when it comes to acquiring Ukrainian books abroad, the lack of cooperation of the book publishers is regrettable. Participants, some of whom had crossed the Atlantic Ocean, had no choice but to leave the presentation empty-handed. This episode is another reminder of the importance of cooperation between scholars and publishers. That said, I look forward to reading the published proceedings of this excellent conference.