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Conclusion

In pre-modern societies, religion and politics intrinsically belong together. Priests are 'professionally' responsible for religion in societies. Therefore, it is evident that religious personnel is systemically involved in political processes.

A goal of the conference and its papers was to question for political influence and decision-making processes by priests (or priestly personal) in practice. The papers of the conference were about to refer to the role of priestly personal in different cultures, at different times, as well as the degrees and design of their influence. One question that has emerged is the comprehensibility of the actual political action of religious personnel, whether through instrumentalization or on their own initiative.

Beyond the general statement, that 'religion', temples and priests were important political factors in pre-modern societies, priestly political action is hard to proof in concrete.

In fact, both Egyptian cases, presented by Sabine Kubisch and Efstathia Dionysopoulou, show examples of priests brought in the core field of political action, in direct relation to and in the environment of the king. Therefore, both cases, the installation of Nebwenenef by Ramesses II and the function of Manetho for Ptolemy III, focus on the significant situation of a newly established ruler.

The case of Nebwenenef and his investiture makes clear the king's political strategy on the religious sphere. The fact that the king personally appointed this office in the course of his own inauguration shows its central political importance, even if the details of the decision-making processes, the involvement of other officials, the role of the other priestly personnel and, last but not least, the practical details of Nebwenenef's tasks remain unclear. Maybe, this question which is of great interest for today's research, had no personal relevance for the office holder at the time and were therefore not documented. Otherwise, this phenomenon could be seen as a principle of priestly practice not to make a political position verifiable.

In the same context in which Ramesses II promoted Nebwenenef to High Priest of Amun, he himself is confirmed by oracle as legitimate pharaoh. This not only shows the political relevance of the high-ranking religious personnel, but also the practical implementation. The king acts here in the role of High Priest at precisely the point where he can influence the outcome of the divine oracle. The king himself assumes this role in this particular sensitive situation in which the High Priest was able to practice his political power. Whether this is due to the fact that the office is not occupied or whether the king deliberately intended this can no longer be decided today.

Manetho as a high-ranking Egyptian priest in the religious administration of Ptolemy III is shown in "functioning as a mouthpiece of Ptolemaic propaganda". E. Dionysopoulou sophistically illustrated the way Manetho constructed the dynastic legitimization of Ptolemy III by a number of chronological, mythical, historical and

motivic synchronisms. They are used in Manetho's 'Egyptian History' to demonstrate and 'prove' the close interrelation between Greek/Macedonian and Egyptian history. Thereby, the Ptolemaic kings were incorporated into the Egyptian history and thus were made to appear as genuine pharaohs, proved by the beginning of a new 'Sothic cycle' with the reign of Ptolemy III who inaugurated a new 'Golden era'. Indeed, the literary construction of Manetho is an expression of Ptolemaic ideology and certainly could be used as an instrument of political argumentation. But first and foremost, it is a literary composition of an Egyptian priest, shaping a certain view on the Egyptian history whereby we don not know who commissioned it. It is not a proof of concrete political action by a priest.

The 'Medieval cases' of the Christian priest John Ball in the paper of Veit Groß and of the Anglo-Saxon missionary Willibrord in the paper of Michel Summer illustrate not only priests in situations of dynamic political development, but also their active participation.

Nevertheless, the foundation of the monastery of Echternach by Willibrord was launched by Pippin II and the pope Sergius II whose political and ecclesiastical ambitions complemented each other with regard to the control of Frisia. Willibrord in Echternach christianized an important conflict region between Charles Martel, the Neustrian elite and the Frisian Radbod, and thus pioneered the Pippinid expansion with the rise of the Carolingians in this region. The Pippinids had to assert themselves against other regional Christian landholders to strengthen the relation to the monastery. Obviously, Willibrord became the core figure in a Carolingian framework of regional Christian landholders besides the Pippinids across Merovingian Austrasia. But it is mainly the benefit of influential court members as Irmina of Oeren who substantially supported the monastery of Echternach by testamentary donations and thus the house of Pippin. Nevertheless, Willibrord used the regional and transregional political situation for clerical benefits. Thus, he can be seen as an instrument of ecclesiastical and royal interests using the political situation of Frisia for the success of his own monastery.

However, the case of Willibrord, although illustrating priestly action in a dynamic field of political development, does not show the self-intended political action. Comparable to the Egyptian examples, we can see central and regional political powers related to the priestly activities and using their economic, social and regional influence. But the priestly political practice itself, so to say: the direct priestly impact on political decision-making processes remain obscure.

The case of John Bull comparibly illustrates the (Christian) priests as mediators, although in a different situation. John Bull was supporting the rebels in the English rising of 1381, and thus took their side politically. Veit Groß demonstrates that this conflicted with both the political central power and the church. Thereby the priests as mouthpiece of the 'common people' became incompatible with the cleric role by the harsh criticism of the actual ecclesiastic and political conditions. John Bull's policy is characterized as priestly misbehaviour, and in consequence, he lost his power as priest. So, on the one hand, the English rising of 1381 illustrates the political activity of

(Christian) priests. On the other hand, their commitment to a clear position in an internal political conflict had directly caused the the loss of their priestly position and power. However, the English uprising stresses a fact hardly visible for antiquity: Different 'priestly' status might have been connected with different social interests and different political ambitions.

The four case studies from Egypt and northern Medieval Europe seem to elucidate some characteristic principles of priestly political activity:

1. The instrumentalization of priestly influence (and the economic, social, and political power resulted from it) by political institutions

This phenomenon explains the extraordinary career of the Hasmonean queen Alexandra in Hellenistic Judaea as shown by Etka Liebowitz. Her support of the Pharisees provided her rule with the necessary religious legitimacy. In a similar way Nenad Marković points out how the Persian Great Kings, in particular Darius I, used the position of the High Priest of Memphis as highest local authority to gain acceptance and control of Egypt as part of the Achaemenid Empire. He illustrates this political instrumentalization by the support of the traditional priestly family of Ahmose-men-(em-)ineb-hedj and by the persistence of its outstanding office. In a comparable way, Mariano Barbato showed how the pilgrimage to Rome became politically charged by the papal coronation of Charlemagne. Thus, the emperor strengthened the priestly position of the pope in Rome.

2. Priests (and temples or other religious institutions) control the regional connectivity

Placed at key positions by the religious center priests are able to build up and hold sway over local and regional networks. Comparable to the foundation of the monastery at Echternach Ahmed Mansour exemplifies the key role of the Late Antique temple of Philae in southern Egypt between the neighboring Meroites, Blemmyes and Noubades. Here the core function of the temple as a religious, economic, and political center becomes evident, with the influential position of the leading priestly families clearly expressed in the inscriptions. Their interaction with the various political institutions is reflected there only in the result, the preceding process is not documented. At the end, the political activity of the Elephantine priests was mainly focused on the economic and cultic situation of the temple. To put it in another way: The political interaction was 'only' for the benefit of the temple to guarantee its position and importance as religious center. Against this background the results of Nenad Marković's paper are ground-breaking: He clearly shows the importance of the High Priest of Memphis under Persian rule in local political affairs, certainly caused by the fact that the ruling pharaoh/Egyptian king in person of the Persian Great King constantly resided far away from Egypt.

3. The function of priests as mediators between different social groups is a result of the network control

Because of their regional networking, priests can act as a "communication tool" in political matters, also on behalf of other groups. This raises two questions: Are priests aware of their influence in political affairs? And if so, do they use it in a political self-interest that goes beyond local matters? Maurits de Leeuw paradigmatically illustrates this specific function of priests as core figure in social and political networks by the example of Daniel the Stylite. Reuven Kiperwasser clearly demonstrated this role for the rabbis of late ancient Roman Palestine. And Etka Liebowitz proved the fact for the relation of the Hasmoneans and the Pharisees, even though queen Alexandra succeeded because of the division of religious and political power affecting a strong support of the Pharisees. Mariano Barbato studied how the upcoming papacy used and controlled pilgrim networks – and in particular a writing travellers' network – to strengthen and define the own position by creating a sacral landscape between the different political groups. Such a "priestly policy" pursued firstly the goal of self-protection of religious personnel as a kind of neutral authority without a fixed political orientation. Secondly, political influence is used to maintain the role of religion in political affairs.

4. The priests can act or asked for as (political) advisors

In ancient Greece this priestly role is illustrated for the oracle sanctuaries of Dodona by Katharina Knäpper and of Delphi by Eleni Krikona, and prominently for the Brahmins in India by Harald Wiese. Knäpper and Wiese convincingly demonstrate the carefully balanced behavior of the priests being involved in political affaires by their advice. In both cases, neutral immunity is guaranteed by their explicitly non-political position, which outlasts political changes.

5. Priests can derive economic benefit for their own institution from political participation

Eleni Krikona (for Delphi), Etka Liebowitz (for the Pharisees), Nenad Marković (for Saitic and Persian Memphis), Ahmed Mansour (for the late-antique Philae temple), Maraino Barbato (for the development of the sacral landscape of the papacy at Rome), Michel Summer (for the Christian monarchy founder Willibrord) showed a priestly involvement in broader political developments with close relation to the dominant political powers mainly for the profit of its own institution – the temple or the monastery. In these cases, religious personnel become politically involved for the economic benefit of the respective institutions. In doing so, they move in the area of tension between a neutral position and political commitment.

In the papers of the volume 'genuine' priests were mostly not described as politicians in action. In rare cases, it could be observed that priests develop political initiatives of their own. In most of the cases described, they acted as 'instruments' of political agents. It is another form of instrumentalization when 'professional' politicians also

held priestly offices. One result of the conference is that religious personnel were involved in political processes inherent in the system, because in pre-modern societies it was not possible to conduct politics without religion. With secularization, both areas are separated and the role of priestly personnel changes accordingly.

The lacking evidence of priests in political practice seems to be symptomatic, because it was of no interest to the political institutions, in particular to monarchs, to document the dependency on priestly persons in their political decisions. Conversely, the priests also had no interest in documenting their political influence, as this could cause them to forfeit their independence and immunity. Even more, they could thereby make themselves vulnerable.

Religious personnel were often involved in political groups, operations and events. Thereby their 'neutrality' is essential for their role as capable, objective and mediating advisors. The 'immunity' of priests is based on their functions for advice, mediation, and transcendental confirmation (even in the sense of legitimization). Therefore, it is not surprising that all papers emphasize one basic principle: Political power of the priests is never pinpointed in its particular practice.

But this is only one aspect of a much larger theme that needs to be explored in more detail across cultures and time.