



Environment, Colonization, and the Baltic Crusader States. Terra Sacra I, and Ecologies of Crusading, Colonization, and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic. Terra Sacra II. Edited by Aleksander Pluskowski. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2019. 547 and 245 pp. ISBS: 9782503551333 and 9782503551326.

The volumes under review constitute a two-volume part of the “Environmental Histories of the North Atlantic World” (EHNAW) series that investigates the medieval and modern history of North European environment, published in 2019.¹ Volume One of the series, *Landscape and History on the Medieval Irish Frontier*, was published in 2016. The subsequent two volumes under review include *Environment, Colonization, and the Baltic Crusader States* and *Ecologies of Crusading, Colonization, and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic*, both of which focus on the eastern Baltic frontier of medieval Europe and together make up the “Terra Sacra I and II” miniseries. The publisher has also released the fourth volume of the EHNAW series, entitled *Experiencing Famine in Fourteenth-Century Britain*. The books published in the EHNAW series seek to trace how the changing and transformed natural environment affected social life and, conversely, how man and society affected the environment.

The editor who undertook the task of preparing the volumes on Prussia and Livonia has experience in researching these areas of Europe: in 2012 he published *The archaeology of the Prussian Crusade: holy war and colonisation*. The results of the recently published two-volume study were obtained mainly through research conducted with the support of a European Research Council grant.² The “Terra Sacra” project was joined in by a group of specialists representing mainly archaeology, but also botany, geology, veterinary medicine and history. This interdisciplinary research, stretching over many years and involving many specialists, has made it possible to produce two volumes that will certainly make a significant contribution to disseminating and applying the current body of

¹ The series at the publisher’s website: *Environmental Histories of the North Atlantic World (EHNAW)*, Brepols, last modified 21 April 2021, accessed: 12 June 2021, <http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=EHNAW>.

² The Ecology of Crusading: The Environmental Impact of Conquest, Colonisation and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic, CORDIS: EU research results, last modified: 26 May 2017, accessed 12 June 2021, <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/263735>.

archaeological knowledge to the study of medieval and early modern Prussia and Livonia.

The articles collected in the first volume can be described as macro-analyses of the different types of archaeological material collected for Prussia and Livonia. The substantive content of the volume begins with "Introduction", in which the editor outlines the factual framework of the collected analyses, presents an extensive historical and geographical background of the northern crusades, and also refers to the most important discussions conducted by researchers of the history of the Teutonic Order (the nature of the Order's state, the role of the crusading ethos in the activities of the Order, and historiographical approaches to the problem of the Order's expansion). The research questions, indicated in "Introduction" and addressed by the authors, raise the problem of the influence of historical processes on the state of the natural environment, as well as the types and intensity of environmental and cultural transformations from the early Middle Ages to modern times. The second of the introductory chapters ("Methodology and Interpretative Framework") presents the research methodology, categories of sources and a brief discussion of their usefulness in the context of the volume's subject matter. It also discusses key concepts and the scale of analysis undertaken in the study. Especially the latter is highly valuable for those less thoroughly acquainted with the state of archaeological research on the regions of Prussia and Livonia, as it collects information on the most important archaeological investigations carried out within the last few decades. The authors of this chapter have included an informative map showing all sites from which material for the analyses in the following parts of the volume was collected. In the third chapter, "Chronology", the authors place the processes referred to in three Braudelian categories of time. They also discuss the plausibility and effects of applying dating methods to the source material at their disposal. The analytical sections of the first volume include studies on the historical and archaeological background of Livonian areas, palynological, zooarchaeological, geoarchaeological and archaeobotanical data from Livonia, the reorganisation of the settlement landscape, and an assessment of the impact of the crusades on the environment in Livonia. Articles dealing with the same issues have been prepared analogically for Prussia, and the volume ends with an article comparing the collected data on Prussia and Livonia.

The structure of the articles on Livonian and Prussian sites and backgrounds (4 and 10) is very similar and comprises diligently drawn summaries and maps that skilfully introduce the subject to readers outside the circle of scholars of the Prussian-Livonian region. Both articles discuss the range of data that could be gleaned from both written sources and archaeological investigations of strictly defined sites and present the history of archaeological discoveries in each one.

The selection of sites under study is meticulous and represents different parts of both regions; in fact, only regions where archaeological research has not yet been carried out are not directly involved. Also noteworthy are brief (but very useful) identifications of the status of each site and region in the broader context of the settlement landscape over time, noting which ones have transitioned in terms of the role they played (e.g., transforming from borderland to heartland).

The chapters analysing the results of palynological studies for Prussia and Livonia (5 and 11) carefully refer to the research capabilities of each site, their parameters, and present detailed diagrams of the pollen levels of each site. There may be some interpretive inconvenience at the diagrams with only sampling depth axis instead of a chronological axis, although this surely results from the understandable specificity of the applied methodology. Some discussions of such diagrams indicate that they present much shorter chronological periods (e.g., early fourteenth century for Wenden (Cēsis) and Marienburg (Malbork)), and as such they should be treated as a complement to the broader analysis of surrounding areas. The conclusions of both articles fit well with the state of research emerging from analyses of written and cartographic sources, actively contributing to the discussions of historians.

Articles dealing with the topic of obtaining food through hunting, farming, and cultivation in Livonia and Prussia (6 and 12) also explore the hypothesis that the crusade and colonisation may have resulted in a shifting pattern of exploitation of animals and crop use. However, the conclusions are far from preconceived. Both articles use broader chronological ranges, going back to the eighth century in individual cases. Much space is devoted to the exposition of tables and charts summarizing the very rich research material, providing the reader with a useful tool for examining diet trends over the centuries, including game, fish, fowl, livestock, and various crops. Researchers note the differences between northern and southern Livonia and eastern and western Prussia in particular, which persisted even after the conquest and Christianization of the regions. An analysis of the size and age of the butchered animals whose remains were examined brings interesting observations, indicating a different use of the animal material in the post-crusade period. In the case of northern Livonia, there was little difference between the animal husbandry sites in the early and late Middle Ages, mainly due to the livestock being left in the care of the indigenous population. By contrast, the patterns of wildlife exploitation in southern Livonia and the technology of animal slaughter changed, whereas fur production increased. The conclusions from the more numerous Prussian material are quite different. The authors note a greater proportion of farming and tillage in the Teutonic Order's period compared to the Prussian (pre-Christian) period, with local livestock and grain species retained, but

also supplemented by newly imported cattle species. As in Livonia, fur harvesting intensified in Prussia during the Teutonic Order's period. Both chapters also look at the issue of animal use in a religious context, particularly horses.

Two chapters – 7 and 14 – within volume 1, both entitled “Settlement Life...” are based on geoarchaeological and archaeobotanical material from Livonia and Prussia. The themes of the raw data at use are very similar (geochemical samples, number samples of particular vegetables, grains, other plants, trees), but tabular and graphical display of Prussian material in this regard was included in a preceding article on “Exploiting Plants” (13), which has no equivalent in the Livonian section. The article from the Livonian section presents an analysis of three selected sites, the city of Riga, the stronghold at Wenden (Cēsis) and castle in Karkus (Karksi) in terms of “co-existence between indigenous communities and the incoming colonists within the newly planned town, alongside the nature of the pre-crusade stronghold occupation.” (p. 175). Using analyses of chemical material collected from excavations at Riga and on a hill and in a lake at the stronghold of Wenden, the authors discuss the patterns of use of both sites. Their research confirms that colonization in Livonia was largely focused on cities, juxtaposed with much less interest of newcomers in rural areas. With regard to the construction of castles, the Order of the Brothers of the Sword showed an eagerness to coexist peacefully with the crews of established strongholds rather than to destroy them.

The Prussian articles are more geographically diversified, as the research material comes from a larger number of sites. The authors of chapter 13 aimed to verify if there were any changes in lifestyle and nutrition in the Prussian and Teutonic Order's period and how the grain trade developed. Predictably, material extracted from urban areas along the Vistula River and Baltic Sea, as well as Galindia, indicates a greater variety of imported fruit species consumed there than in rural areas. The findings also confirm that during the Teutonic period there was an active effort to optimize grain production for export to Western Europe and Scandinavia, with large port cities playing a major role in this process. Based on the palynological, zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical material presented in the previous three chapters, the authors of chapter 14 demonstrated changes in the use of selected sites.

The next two chapters, 8 and 15, focus on the issue of landscape reorganization in Livonia and Prussia. The research task in both texts was formulated identically – the authors aimed to analyse the transformations occurring in the organization of space and the attribution of a symbolic value to landscape by comparing the pre- and post-crusade periods. In the article “Reorganizing the Livonian Landscape”, the authors touched upon the social and political organization of the Livonian regions before Christianization, illustrating their argument with informative

maps. They then discussed settlement patterns and power relations after 1200, noting the changing conditions of land ownership (feudalization), which led to the formation of tangible territorial boundaries at various levels. They emphasized the role of ecclesiastical administration and cities in the process of change and addressed the modification of transportation routes and location of centres of power. The anticipated similar analysis of the process of reorganization of the Prussian landscape is less clearly emphasized: chapter 15 describes the manner in which the Prussian peoples were socially and politically organized, summarizes the state of research on the attempts of the Piast dynasty's subjects to settle in the Kulmerland, discusses the legal dimension of establishing major urban centres and castles in Teutonic Order's state, and proceeds to describe the administrative and parochial network developing from the fourteenth century. The further part of the chapter focuses on how particular centres of the Order's state were supplied with victuals and other materials. What is somewhat lacking in this text is a more direct cross-reference between the parts of the text and an in-depth analysis of how the Teutonic Knights reorganized the space they inhabited, i.e. how they approached the Prussian forms of settlement and political organization, which places acquired symbolic or communication meanings in the new system and those which lost them, what way of conceptualizing of space was dominant before and after, etc. The implicit changes are summarized very briefly: "At the level of individual settlements and their associated territories, it appears that where the indigenous settlement pattern remained intact, it was appropriated and accentuated with colonization." (p. 452) This is, after all, a conclusion that needs to be nuanced based on a more thorough analysis of differentiated examples.³

Three remaining chapters, 9, 16 and 17, provide summaries of the content gathered in the previous chapters. The first two of these chapters provide well-structured analyses of the impact that the presence of the Teutonic Order in

³ For example, on a differentiated approach of the Teutonic Order towards the former settlement pattern and centres in Kulmerland, see i.a. Anna Maleszka and Roman Czaja, "The urban networks of Anglo-Norman Meath and the Teutonic Order's Kulmerland: a comparative analysis", *Urban History* (2021): 1–18; Wojciech Chudziak, *Zasiedlenie strefy chełmińsko-dobrzyńskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu (VII–XI wiek)* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1996), 191–8; id., "Wczesnośredniowieczny szlak komunikacyjny z Kujaw do Prus – studium archeologiczne", in *Wczesnośredniowieczny szlak lądowy z Kujaw do Prus (XI wiek)*. *Studia i materiały*, ed. Wojciech Chudziak (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1997), 9–31; on Teutonic Order's attitude to the Pomeranian towns, see Henryk Samsonowicz, "Tło gospodarcze wydarzeń 1308 roku na Pomorzu Gdańskim", *Przegląd Historyczny* 56, no. 2 (1965): 202–19, here 214–15; on settlement in Elbląg Upland, see Eugen Gustav Kerstan, *Geschichte des Landkreises Elbing* (Elbing: Verlag der Elbinger Altertums-gesellschaft, 1925), 354.

Prussia and Livonia exerted on the environment and, as such, are a part of a broader discourse on the impact of medieval crusades and colonization on affected regions. Thematically, the chapters are, in a sense, a continuation of the discussions contained in the previous chapters focused on the reorganization of space. In chapters 9 and 16, the author chose the case study approach to illustrate the processes of transformation of the natural environment by the subsequent societies and economies, the changing attitude to the natural conditions, and the general role which a given area fulfilled in a political and economic system. This choice made it possible to analyse a variety of processes, *i.e.*, how the initially marginal areas became networked, and how the opposite phenomena occurred. Chapter 17 seeks to compare the findings in 9 and 16, addressing the questions raised in the introductory chapters of the volume. Such an effort to conclude the research presented earlier, highlight key findings between sections of the book and revising paradigms perpetuated in studies of the Baltic region. This is invaluable in this type of multi-author publication.

“Terra Sacra II”, the second volume of the miniseries, collects the papers presented at the conference in Riga and Cēsis in 2014. It comprises “Introduction” and 17 study papers, grouped into six sections: “Building in the Conquered Territories” (chapters 2–4), “Sustaining the Teutonic Order’s Houses” (5–8), “Life in the Multicultural Towns of the Eastern Baltic” (9 and 10), “Transforming the Physical Landscape” (11 and 12), “Transforming the Spiritual Landscape” (13–16) and “The Baltic *Ordensland* in its Regional Context” (17 and 18). The volume begins with an introduction from Aleksander Pluskowski, outlining its subject matter and commenting on the themes of the individual sections. This provides the necessary background information for readers outside the circle of scholars who deal specifically with Prussian and Livonian studies. In any reissues of the series, it will be worthwhile to make a minor correction to map no. 1.3 in “Introduction”, where the Vistula Lagoon has been marked with an incorrect colour, suggesting that it was a strip of the land belonging to the Prussian chapters (p. 3).

Chapter 2 is a report on excavations carried out in 2012–2013 on the grounds of the Museum of Archaeology and History in Elbląg, located on the site of the former Teutonic Castle. In conclusion, the author raised the need for further excavations on the site. Chapter 3 is a well-structured analysis of timber use during the medieval period in what is now Latvia. The article is accompanied by a forestation map detailing different types of forest. The author notes the prominent role of growing cities in the increasing demand for timber during the period under study. The fourth chapter, containing numerous photographs, presents the types of building materials – mainly different types of bricks – used in Prussia and Livonia to build castles. The authors presented building techniques

used in the territory of the Teutonic Order, in addition to pointing out that not only the availability of a given resource in the region, but also aesthetic preferences played a role in the choice of building material for the construction of castles. This can be observed especially in the territory of Livonia.

The articles grouped in “Sustaining the Teutonic Order’s Houses” section can be seen as case studies complementary to the content in Volume One reconstructing the dynamics in animal husbandry, arable farming, and the food supply of societies of Prussia and Livonia. In chapter 5, the authors attempt to analyse the changes in animal use, meat preference and meat quality in Karkus (Karksi) and Fellin (Viljandi) over several centuries from the Middle Ages up to the early modern period. The acquisition of the raw research material is facilitated by a very intelligible table 5.2. Chapter 6 is devoted to victualing at the Livonian castles of Windau (Ventspils), Karkus and Fellin. The author, having discussed the scope of usefulness of a wide range of sources for the topic, indicated that it is the visitation reports that make it possible to collate the supply of various types of foodstuffs to the castles in the mid-fifteenth century. Prussia is also represented in this section in chapter 7, where archaeologists analysed the chemical content of animal remains found in Kulmerland in order to determine with what livestock were fed before and after the crusade. The authors of the eighth chapter, devoted to three cities in the northern part of the Teutonic Order’s state, namely Danzig (Gdańsk), Elbing (Elbląg), and Marienburg (Malbork), dealt with a similar subject, but focused on the diet of the inhabitant of these cities. This analysis covered only the Teutonic period, and the authors noted differences in the diets of the inhabitants of individual towns and castle crews.

The two chapters in “Transforming the Physical Landscape” section are complementary to each other and to chapter 5 in Volume One. Devoted to the analysis of painstakingly acquired palynological material from many of the Livonian water reservoirs, these studies provide broad insights into the structure of the vegetation cover over many centuries. As in chapter 5, the authors of chapters 11 and 12 also note, *inter alia*, that agricultural cultivation was already taking place in the study areas before the crusade (Late Iron Age), and that intensification of cultivation after the crusade occurred locally and was linked to major centres.

The next section, “Transforming the Spiritual Landscape”, opens with the article (13) on the symbolic transformation of the landscape in southern Estonia. The author discusses the position of the area in relation to the whole region, the research possibilities of reconstructing the state of the settlement and the administrative and parish structures. Following this thorough contextualization, the author moves on to the substance of the text: a discussion of sacred places in southern Estonia before and after the Christianization. Chapter 14, representing

the Prussian region in this section, discusses the past significance of Prussian places hidden in place names, the attempts made by the Catholic Church to erase the places of collective memory of the Prussians from the symbolic landscape, and later gives an example of the use of Prussian toponyms in archaeological research. Chapter 15 is devoted to giving Christian meanings to Lithuanian landscape and to the evolution of sacred and symbolic places there.

The next chapter in this section (16) is distinguished by the structure of the narrative, whose introduction deals with the issue on how to write history. It seems to extrapolate the experiences of creators of the historiography of medieval Livonia – in which, as the author himself points out, there were two main trends, the national and the structural – to the whole of Europe and to a whole generation of contemporary medievalists. The text's main argument against contemporary (as contemporary medieval studies are defined those from the 1990s) historians is their alleged tendency for a superficial understanding of Europeanness and Europeanization, framing everything in terms of a conflict and clash between civilizations and using total categories, such as “the end of history.” It has been rightly noted that conquest and colonization do not imply any direct transplantation of structures, whether social, legal, or political; it is difficult to imagine that such criticism should be directed at the studies included in this particular series, particularly given its topic. Indeed, as many of the examples cited in this chapter indicate, the researchers point rather to an intermingling of different formulas of social life and aspects of culture, whether in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem or in Teutonic Order's Livonia. Considering that the text does not refer to actual contemporary methodologies (such as the “cultural turn”), one could ask why the antidote to the presumed nationalist interpretation of the history of Livonia or other areas should be the Marxist approach, which is equally simplistic when juxtaposed with nuanced historical events and processes, and, incidentally, essentially dialectic.

The intent of the last section, “The Baltic *Ordensland* in its Regional Context”, is to provide a modest *Ausblick* on regions in the vicinity of the Prussian and Livonian areas. Chapter 17 concerns Novgorod and presents the results of research conducted there on the ways in which farmed and wild animals were exploited. Emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to primary sources, the author of this chapter juxtaposes the diet and animal husbandry of Novgorod with those of Livonia, highlighting both similarities and differences. The volume's multi-authored final text investigates the problem of Baltic cod fishing, the development of which was vividly connected with the growth of the state of the Teutonic Order and the needs of castles and towns. Thematically, this paper fits better with the section of “Sustaining the Teutonic Order's Houses” but probably

was included in this section because of the need to evenly distribute the volume content between sections. Following the idea of thematic coherence of sections, however, one might propose moving the article on Lithuanian symbolic landscape to the last section instead.

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