



Sławomir Józwiak and Adam Szweda. *Dwór wielkich mistrzów zakonu krzyżackiego w Malborku. Siedziba i świeckie otoczenie średniowiecznego władcy zakonnego* [The Court of the Grand Masters of the Teutonic Order in Marienburg. The residence and secular surroundings of a medieval monastic ruler]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2023. 375 pp. ISBN: 978-83-231-4632-2. eISBN: 978-83-231-4632-2.

Research on medieval courts in the Polish medieval studies does not have a long tradition. The first list of court officials of late medieval rulers along with a very general scheme of its functioning was compiled and discussed by Saturnin Kwiatkowski, Stanisław Kutrzeba and Kazimierz Fedorowicz, and then, after many years, it was addressed by Janusz Kurtyka. However, these issues have so far remained on the margin of other court researchers' interests. The issues concerning court culture for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were approached by the late Małgorzata Wilska in her excellent work *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV i XV w.* [The culture of medieval Poland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries] edited by Bronisław Geremek (Warszawa: Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla, 1997). This book, despite many years which have passed since its publication, has not lost its relevance. Nevertheless, it is one of the few works devoted to the court culture, which however, does not address an interesting topic of the development and influence of the female and male rulers on their courts. Urszula Borkowska's works devoted to the court ceremonies and other cultural influence to a large extent concern the sixteenth century and it is not always possible to compare these conclusions to earlier times.

In the 1980s, the courts of female and male rulers began to be studied on a larger scale and so far the courts of Władysław Jagiełło, Aleksander Jagiellończyk and lately Jan Olbacht have been discussed. The courts of Władysław Jagiełło's wives have also been studied: of Jadwiga Andegaweńska, Anna Cylejska, Elżbieta Granowska, Zofia Holszańska, the court of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk's wife – Elżbieta Rakuska, and on the margin of the research on the court of Aleksander Jagiellończyk, partly the court of his wife – Helena. Likewise, the courts of Kazimierz Wielki's wives are already known to some extent. However, there are not any elaborations of the royal court of Władysław Łokietek, Kazimierz Wielki, and

the court of Łokietek's wife – Jadwiga. They cannot be fully reconstructed due to the lack of sources. However, it should be admitted that all these works are mostly limited to a list of court officials of the mentioned rulers with the omission of the sphere of court life, community, culture and court customs.

However, the works presented above concern the issues of royal courts, not focusing on other court forms. The exception is the work by Izabela Skierska devoted to the courts of bishops, in which she shows this issue from a completely different perspective. The work by Sławomir Józwiak and Adam Szweda makes the reader even more pleased, because they decided to approach yet another court form, which was undoubtedly the court of the grand masters of the Teutonic Order. From the very beginning, the authors had to struggle with the basic problem of Polish medievalists, which is the definition of a court. To their credit, they had a look at all the definitions of this institution suggested so far, both in the Polish literature and in broadly understood foreign historiography. It should be emphasized at once that the court of the grand masters, as the authors of the reviewed work brilliantly presented, changed with time and expectations – at the beginning it was clearly a monastic court, over the years it evolved to the one inspired by princely and royal courts. It was perceived as such, and even the grand master was numerously titled like that. Therefore, finding the definition for such a complicated court form was extremely difficult, because it could not be limited to an unambiguous concept. Werner Paravicini's research, who was the first to consider the Order as a knightly and court institution, made it much easier for the authors to approach this issue, however, the definition, like in most medieval research, still has to be and is to some extent conventional. Nonetheless, the authors conducted a number of detailed analyzes of existing definitions of different court institutions, which gave them a reason to formulate their own.

The work consists of six chapters, devoted to the system of the monastic state, the residence of the grand masters in Marienburg (today Malbork), their surroundings and the court of the grand masters, secular staff, court life and guests at the court. Unfortunately, which is a major drawback of this work, it does not have an index, which at present is an essential element in these types of elaborations.

While describing the details of the court of the Teutonic Order's grand masters, the authors rightly decided to remind about the form of the political system of the Teutonic Order's state. At the same time, showing the political changes which took place in the territories of the Teutonic Order's state over the course of three centuries, the reader can understand its evolution, which influences the development and specifics of the courts of the grand masters. It is clearly visible, how

the grand master, a clergyman and a monk, evolves into a prince, a knight, along with the change in the political system and the need of the times, obviously retaining certain clerical forms, but also not emphasizing the monastic life, because such was the requirement of the times. The grand master is not a monk, spending most of his time praying, and the order, even a knightly order, is not such a congregation. The Teutonic Knights became a fully knightly and court institution, even a princely one, and the leader became as such in the eyes of the neighboring states. The changing competences of the grand master and his titles were also discussed here. In this chapter, the authors also discussed the income of the Order, obviously in relation to the grand master's court and the most important dignitaries of the Order.

The authors devoted the second chapter to the most important and the best known residence of the Order, which is the castle in Marienburg. This chapter mostly consists of a polemic with Christofer Herrmann's theses, regarding the reconstruction of the location of the chambers and other rooms in the medieval Marienburg castle. During the polemic, the authors discussed the function of particular rooms and duties of individual court officials associated with given chambers. On this occasion, it is worth paying attention to the location of the administrative office and the method of storing documents in the Order, which is significantly different from the forms known at royal courts.

The next chapter is devoted to the court of the grand masters, the officials who appeared there and functions they performed there. What may seem strange is the change that the authors made in naming one of the best known officials – *podkomorzy* (*Unterkämmerer*, under-chamberlain) – to *podkomornik*. The change of the name is neither explained nor justified anywhere. The function of the under-chamberlain is exactly the same, known for years in the terminology of both court and land officials, and there is no reason to suddenly change it. Apart from this comment, it should be emphasized that the chapter is based on reliable sources and contains all the elements that should be included there – functioning of courts, their number, as far as it can be estimated, of course, the origin of the courtiers (among whom there were even Mazovian princes), court service, etc. What is interesting is the comparison of the function of *komornik* (*Kämmerer*, chamberlain) at the court of the grand masters with an analogical official at the royal court in Poland at that time. In the former case, he performed various treasury functions, his equivalent at the royal court was *podskarbi* (treasurer), while *komornik* (chamberlain) at the courts of Silesian princes during the feudal fragmentation was the court administrator and at the royal courts in the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries functioned as the highest room attendant and in the fifteenth century, he almost disappeared from the court. An interesting person at the court of the grand masters, who was not present at the courts of Polish rulers from that time, are heralds. They appear sporadically at the courts of the Polish rulers and only on the occasion of rarely organized tournaments. They perform a very important court function there, modeled on large courts in Western Europe. However, it should be remembered that the Polish court of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was very unique, created by Kazimierz Wielki from the courts with old Piast, Hungarian, and Bohemian traditions, and slightly transformed by Władysław Jagiełło on the model of eastern courts, and had no equivalent in any country in Europe at that time. In this respect, the court of the grand masters, especially at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was much more related to the traditions and standards of western courts – French, Burgundian, or English ones.

The fourth chapter concerns servants (*Diener*) and secular surroundings of the grand masters, their functions and place of living in the castle – this chapter covers to some extent the topics of the previous chapters, the second, in which the residence of the grand masters and the functions of particular rooms were discussed in detail, and the third, in which the function of dieners was discussed in much detail. This chapter is disproportionately short compared to the other ones – it is only 10 pages long and its content could easily have been added to the previously mentioned chapters. However, the fifth chapter is extremely interesting. It describes the life and court customs at the court of the grand masters and shows that when it comes to the customs, food, feasts (although the authors discussed the grand master's cuisine very briefly, for which there was much material preserved), and hunting, it did not differ in the slightest from other European courts, even though this is probably not how we imagined a monastic court. It shows how much the Order evolved from the moment of its creation and how the function of the Order's superior became more secular. The sixth chapter, which is the last, is devoted to the guests of the grand master – who they were, how and where they were hosted in the Marienburg castle. This chapter, like the fourth one, is again exceptionally short (11 pages) and again I think that the matters concerning the location could have been presented in the second chapter, while the guests in the court life, i.e. the previous chapter. The work ends with an extensive bibliography and summaries.

To sum up, the reviewed book is an extremely valuable work. It shows a different form of the court that those previously studied at the same time presenting

the evolution which the Teutonic Order underwent from the moment of its creation. The minor shortcomings, which I have tried to present, do not diminish the importance of the reviewed book, which is an essential title in the library of every medievalist dealing with the history of the society in medieval Europe.

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