

Gregory Leighton. *Ideology and Holy Landscape in the Baltic Crusades*. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022. 213 pp., 14 maps, 24 figures. ISBN: 978-164-18-9454-8. eISBN: 978-180-27-0059-6.

Gregory Leighton's book is an exciting and in-depth study of the sacralisation of the area that was not part of Latin Christendom before the thirteenth century, and which became Livonia and Prussia in the process of Christianisation and the Crusades. The book covers the period from the late twelfth to the fourteenth century and is divided into five chapters that follow a thematic and chronological path. The study of the processes that took place in the geographical space that covers what is now Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Kaliningrad region allows us to see the complexity of religious, political and cultural transformation, and demonstrates the tools that were used to make this vast area a literally Christian land. It was not only the people who had to be converted, but also the landscape. This book is based on his doctoral thesis, which he defended at Cardiff University in 2019.

The main focus of the book is the Teutonic Order that was represented both in Livonia and Prussia since the first half of the thirteenth century. However, frequently the author features in his analysis also case studies from other groups involved in Christianisation, for example, in the Livonian case, the Church of Riga. Leighton uses the thirteenth and fourteenth century chronicles as his primary sources, most of them originating from the tradition of the Teutonic Order. Yet the book is not stuck in the loop of never ending historiography studies. Leighton uses the documents of the Teutonic Order, correspondence and legal charters and Leighton likewise analyses visual sources like churches, castles, murals, sculptures etc.

The first chapter features landscape imagery in the texts documenting the Baltic Crusades. Here the author sets the scene, by describing early stages of the Christian mission in Livonia, referring to the *Livonian Chronicle of Henry* (after 1227), Arnold of Lübeck's *Chronicle of Slavs* (1209) and other texts. Leighton in this chapter approaches the martyrdom as a fundamental element into a sacralization of the space and uses for it the case of the second Livonian bishop – Bertold

of Loccum and his martyr death at the place of Riga in 1198, then moving on to the texts attributed to the Teutonic Order (pp. 18–19).

The second chapter focuses on the literary themes and landscape sacralization in the written evidence of the Baltic Crusades. Leighton dwells on the Biblical notions of plantation and vineyard as textual symbols used for describing the landscapes of newly Christened territories, demonstrating the place of Biblical texts into the medieval historiography. In this chapter Leighton also demonstrates the connection between textuality and visibility using for this the example of the Golden Gate at Marienburg (today Malbork) (pp. 56–57).

Mapping of the landscape sacralization during the Baltic crusades during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries is the topic of the third chapter. This chapter once again returns back to the martyrdom as an element of the sacralisation of the landscape using the case studies of St Adalbert (Gniezno door), the aforementioned Bertold and martyrdom in the *Livonian Chronicle of Henry* in general (pp. 67–75).

The fourth chapter features relics, processions, and sacred landscape in the Baltic at the same time period. Here, Leighton eloquently shows the flow of the relics, for example the relics of the Holy Cross, to Livonia and Prussia and what importance these relics had (pp. 120–125). The fifth chapter focuses on the same time period and the space, visual culture, and landscape sacralization. In this chapter, the author provides his views on the role of commemoration and place naming the process of the sacralization of the space (pp. 142–145).

Leighton's book does not stand alone. It is part of the recent scholarly developments in the field of the Baltic crusades research and one can hear their echoes in the book. There are number of recent publications and works of earlier research that focus on the spatial, religious, cultural and political aspects of the mission that come into a dialogue with Leighton's book. Marek Tamm has written on the Cistercian and Dominican efforts during the Livonian mission and 'invention of Livonia'.¹ Aleksander Pluskowski has researched the spatial aspects of the Prussian

¹ Marek Tamm, "How to Justify a Crusade? The Conquest of Livonia and New Crusade Rhetoric in the Early Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 39, no. 4 (2013): 431–455; id., "The Livonian Crusade in Cistercian Stories of the Early Thirteenth Century," in *Crusading on the Edge: Ideas and Practice of Crusading in Iberia and the Baltic Region, 1100–1500*, ed. by Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen and Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 365–389; id., "Deprovincialising Livonia: St. Catherine's Convent of Tallinn in Thirteenth-Century Dominican Networks," in *Livland – Eine Region am Ende der Welt? Forschungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie im späten Mittelalter / Livonia – a Region at the End of the World?: Studies on the Relations between Centre and Periphery in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by

crusade through the archaeological material.² New aspects of the Teutonic Order's literature in general and also the historiography in particular have been revealed by Arno Mentzel-Reuters.³ Wojtek Jezierski has used crusading chronicles for the research of the hospitality.⁴ Linda Kaljundi has explored the culture of memory in the Crusading Chronicles.⁵ The impact of the cultural change brought by the mission has been reflected by Anti Selart's work.⁶ Kurt Villads Jensen has brought added to the field some poignant views on the ideological, military and social aspects of the crusading in the Baltic Rim.⁷ Not to mention earlier work of crusading and missions in Livonia and Prussia, for example, Werner Paravicini, Jürgen Sarnowsky and others. This book reflects the newest developments in the field, extensively referring to the newest historiography, yet the author also shows his own approaches and takes on the topic.

Anti Selart and Matthias Thumser (Köln: Böhlau, 2017), 61–90; id., “Inventing Livonia. The Name and Fame of a New Christian Colony on the Medieval Baltic Frontier,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 60 (2011): 186–209.

- ² Aleksander Pluskowski, *The Archaeology of the Prussian Crusade: Holy War and Colonisation* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- ³ *Neue Studien zur Literatur im Deutschen Orden*, ed. by Bernhart Jähnig and Arno Mentzel-Reuters, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, Beihefte 19 (Stuttgart: Hirzel, 2014); Arno Mentzel-Reuters, “Bibeldichtung und Deutscher Orden. Studien zur Judith und zu Heinrichs von Hesler Apokalypse,” *Daphnis*, 26, no. 2–3 (1997): 209–261; id., *Arma spiritualia: Bibliotheken, Bücher und Bildung im Deutschen Orden* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003); id., “Bartholomaeus Hoeneke: Ein Historiograph zwischen Überlieferung und Fiktion,” in *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalterlichen Livland*, ed. by Matthias Thumser (Berlin: LIT, 2011), 11–58; id., “Leseprogramme und individuelle Lektüre im Deutschen Orden,” in *Neue Studien zur Literatur im Deutschen Orden*, ed. by Jähnig and Mentzel-Reuters, 9–58; id., “Deutschordenshistoriographie,” in *Handbuch Chroniken des Mittelalters*, ed. by Gerhard Wolf and Norbert Ott (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 301–336.
- ⁴ Wojtek Jezierski, *Risk, Emotions, and Hospitality in the Christianization of the Baltic Rim, 1000–1300* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022).
- ⁵ Linda Kaljundi, *The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory: Studies on Historical Representation, Rituals, and Recollection of the Past* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2016).
- ⁶ *Baltic Crusades and Societal Innovation in Medieval Livonia, 1200–1350*, ed. by Anti Selart (Leiden: Brill, 2022).
- ⁷ Torben K. Nielsen, “Mission and Submission. Societal Change in the Baltic in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. by Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen and Kurt Villads Jensen (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2005), 216–231; Kurt Villads Jensen, “The Christianization of Scandinavia, Northern Germany and Livonia c. 1000–c. 1300. A Comparative Approach,” in *Das Mittelalterliche Livland und sein Historisches Erbe / Medieval Livonia and Its Historical Legacy*, ed. by Ilgvars Misāns, Andris Levāns, and Gustavs Strenga (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2022), 25–42.

One of the books strengths is, as authors himself emphasises it in the conclusion, that it features not only one of the two, Livonia or Prussia as it has been done in most of the similar research projects in the past, but both provinces together (p. 163). Aware of the differences political structures Livonia and Prussia had, Leighton has been able to portray them as spaces where similar processes took place even if some regional contexts differed. The other important feature is Leighton's attempt to broaden the methodological approach by not only using texts but also by applying qualitative GIS (Geographic Information Systems) for the analysis of the sacral spaces. In the book 14 maps allow the readers to see for themselves the results of the method's application. Though such study would be possible without the usage of the qualitative GIS, the broadening of the methodology can reveal new aspects of a quite well known topic.

Gregory Leighton demonstrates a deep knowledge of Prussian and Livonian history and Baltic, German and Polish historiographies that allows him to see the events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in a wider context. Leighton's book shows that Prussian and Livonian medieval history in recent decades has developed in a field that is no longer dominated by German, Polish or Baltic scholars and the 'outsiders' can no longer be perceived as odd strangers, who lack knowledge of historical context. This is an important study on the transformation of the landscape in Prussia and Livonia.

Gustavs Strenga (Greifswald)*

* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9175-4785>