



**Werner Paravicini. *Verlust und Dauer. Weshalb sie nicht mehr fuhren und was an die Stelle trat: Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels. Part 4.* Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2023. 596 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8471-1656-1.**

The book under review is the fourth installment of Werner Paravicini's comprehensive study on the participation of European nobility in the campaigns against Lithuania (*Preußenreisen*) organized by the Teutonic Order. Previous volumes have detailed the preparation and execution of these arduous journeys, highlighting the immense resources involved, the various dangers faced, and the motivations behind the Western European nobility's participation. They also examined how medieval literature influenced their chivalric worldview. This volume addresses a crucial and logical question: why did the campaigns ultimately cease? Paravicini's extensive research, which began with the initial volume in 1989, is approaching its conclusion. Nevertheless, additional volumes are planned, which will include sources, maps, indexes, and other supplementary materials.

Seven chapters examine the central issue, beginning with the "culprit" – Lithuania, the destination of Western European nobility throughout the fourteenth century. The book provides a brief history of Lithuania from king Mindaugas to Jogaila, drawing primarily on the works of Lithuanian and British historians Darius Baronas and Stephen Rowell regarding the Christianization of Lithuania, as well as Rowell's comprehensive study of fourteenth-century Lithuania under Gediminas. The analysis reveals that Lithuanian rulers utilized the promise of baptism, which was not fulfilled until 1387, as a political tool to secure truces with the Order. Despite the baptism of Lithuania, the Order maintained the belief that it was a form of pseudo-baptism. Furthermore, while Samogitia (Žemaitija) remained a final pagan outpost, it served as a gateway that allowed the Order to continue its campaigns against Lithuania (pp. 28–29). This main thread reappears throughout the volume, explored from various perspectives.

In the second chapter, Paravicini examines the Order's other neighbor, Poland, and its role in the region's geopolitics. The baptism and coronation of Jogaila, along with the baptism of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (hereafter, the GDL), led to the involvement of the Polish Crown in the struggle for Lithuania. Despite this, the Order viewed the Polish-Lithuanian union as a separate entity and sought

to maintain peace with Poland (p. 29). Although Polish hostility posed challenges for the *Preußenreisen*, it is suggested that this alone cannot account for the end of the campaigns. The nobility found new avenues and perhaps even embraced the adventure of danger. Paravicini also observes that the prolonged conflict between the Teutonic Order and the GDL brought the warring sides closer together, fostering mutual respect. Yet the Order took advantage of opportunities to support various factions within the Gediminid dynasty, with notable conflicts between Kęstutis and Jogaila, and Vytautas and Jogaila/Skircgaila (p. 55). It should be noted that Lithuanian historian Rimvydas Petrauskas's research presents a different perspective. He highlights a degree of fellowship between members of the Order and Lithuanian rulers, suggesting that their interactions were not solely driven by intrigue. For instance, the relationship between Gunther von Hohenstein, commander of Brandenburg, and Kęstutis, as evidenced by Hohenstein's communication with Kęstutis regarding the treaty between Jogaila and the Order, should be understood not merely as a tactic of the Order's leadership but also as a sign of mutual respect among "friend-enemies" in chivalry.<sup>1</sup>

In the longest and most extensive chapter, the focus shifts to the struggle between the Order, Poland, and the GDL across various fronts during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As an entrenched institution in Prussia with its own territorial state, the Order either did not or could not consider alternative strategies (p. 69). Instead, it chose to ignore the changing realities and continued its campaigns against the pagans, even after the Christianization of Lithuania, relying on privileges granted by the pope and the emperor. This dependence on a crusading legacy began to falter with the 1403 papal bull, which forbade further forays into Lithuania and questioned the Order's reputation as a defender against pagans. Initially, the Order held an advantage in the propaganda war. However, after the Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg/Žalgiris in 1410, Poland and Lithuania gained the upper hand. The Order was then forced to defend itself from accusations, a task that, as Paravicini effectively highlights, involved leveraging gifts, money, and finances to shape public opinion (pp. 104, 107, 208, 212, 278–279, 355). The Order attempted to sway perceptions by accusing the GDL of pseudo-baptism and alleging that Vytautas had enlisted Tatars, Ruthenians, and Samogitians (still pagans) to support him. Furthermore, the Order sought to attract European nobility by organizing "tables of honor" (*Ehrentisch*, pp. 175, 446). Paravicini offers an analy-

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<sup>1</sup> Rimvydas Petrauskas, *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė. Politika ir visuomenė vėlyvaisiais Viduramžiais* (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2017), 237–238.

sis of the various elements of this propaganda war, including the arbitrations of the Roman kings, peace and truce treaties, and their provisions. He also examines disputes, accusations, and even the “theatrical performance” of the Samogitian delegation at the Council of Constance (1414–1418). Despite facing significant challenges at Constance, particularly financial ones, the Order managed to sustain its position. Paravicini notes that the Order could not be easily abolished, as it is unlikely that the German princes and Sigismund of Luxembourg would have permitted its dissolution, even after hearing the well-prepared *Conclusiones* of Paulus Vladimiri (pp. 269–273). Additionally, Paravicini delves into the complex relationship between the Order and Sigismund of Luxembourg, who fluctuated in his support depending on the political context, vacillating between the Order and Poland to advance his own objectives (pp. 298–299, 347). This chapter adeptly demonstrates that the debates were less about uncovering objective truths and more about how “truth” operates within different political logics.

Chapter 4 examines the transformation and adaptation of the Teutonic Order following its significant defeats and the subsequent challenges it faced. As the era of expeditions to Prussia ended and the Order’s founding mission became unfeasible, the Order needed to establish new forms of legitimacy to ensure its survival, as noted by Werner Paravicini (pp. 351–353). In addition to facing opposition from Poland-Lithuania, a loss of honor, territorial reductions, and financial distress, there were internal issues that significantly weakened the Order. These included the “foreign” nature of the Order’s brethren who, after all, were outsiders in Prussia (p. 360), and internal divisions that led to a decline in membership. Consequently, the Order was eventually compelled to seek agreements with its own subjects, increasingly involving them in state-level decision-making (p. 362). Although the *Preußenreisen* became a distant memory of past glory, the chivalric spirit endured, supported by the grand master’s court in Königsberg. There as well as in Poland and Lithuania, the courts began to integrate into the broader European chivalric culture (p. 383). However, the Order’s *raison d’être* remained in question. With no pagans left in the Baltic, the question arose as to why the Order did not shift its focus to combating “infidels” elsewhere. Paravicini considers this by highlighting attempts to address the issue, such as Sigismund’s pressure on the Order to fight the Turks in Hungary, though these efforts were unsuccessful in the long run (p. 403). Facing a legitimacy crisis, the Order ultimately did not transition to fighting on “infidel” fronts or fully renew its mission as the Order of St. John did. Instead, it solidified its identity as a territorial lord in Prussia and took pride in this role (pp. 384, 390–395, 403, 413). To remain relevant and find new mean-

ing in a changing world, the Order's new legitimacy involved several elements: acting as a shield of Christianity, serving as an establishment for German nobility, being part of the Empire, and providing for the descendants of its founders (pp. 414–417). Although the grand master resisted subordinating the Order to the Empire, the connection to the Empire was strengthened through arbitration accepted from Roman kings Wenceslaus and later Sigismund. German nobility and the Empire provided crucial support (pp. 420, 423). By the end of the fifteenth century, the Order had transformed into a distinctly “Teutonic” entity, with participation in the *Preußenreisen* coming to an end (p. 432).

In chapters 5 and 6, Werner Paravicini examines the formidable challenges confronting Europe's chivalric ideals as opportunities in Prussia dwindled. By the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, participation from English and French knights, notably after the battles of Nicopolis (1396) and Agincourt (1415), had significantly diminished. The role of German princes shifted from active engagement in the *Preußenreisen* to interventions aimed at protecting and salvaging the Order from neighboring threats (p. 447). Consequently, the Order increasingly relied on costly mercenaries, reflecting the harsh economic and strategic realities of the time. The focus of conflict also shifted from the pagan Lithuanian front to the Hussite Bohemian front (p. 471), highlighting how European nobility adapted by exploring new avenues. Paravicini explores several factors that contributed to the abandonment of Prussia: Polish hostility, the Order's reduced power and wealth, internal divisions, decreased external prestige, and a series of military defeats. However, the principal reason for the nobility's withdrawal was the absence of a pagan front (p. 497). Confronted with this reality, European nobility began to seek honor elsewhere (p. 498).

Chapter 7 serves as a culminating reflection not only on this volume but on Werner Paravicini's comprehensive study of the *Preußenreisen* and the mobility of the nobility during the Late Middle Ages. This final chapter masterfully summarizes the world and experiences of the European nobility and the fate of the Teutonic Order, offering insights as if we were viewing events through their eyes – or more precisely, through the sources they left behind for research. Paravicini meticulously surveys the preparations for distant campaigns, the treacherous journeys, personal conflicts, financial problems, the quest for honor, and the enduring legacy of these efforts, as reflected in chronicles, paintings on Königsberg's cathedral walls, *Wappengedichte*, and propaganda. These elements collectively showcase the scope of this extensive research. But everything has an end, and so did the *Preußenreisen*, fading into a memory of past glory. Without pagan Lithuania, the

European knighthood sought their legacy elsewhere, leading to a loss of interest in this phenomenon. In revisiting the question posed in the introduction of the first volume about why the *Preußenreisen* were long overlooked in academic research,<sup>2</sup> Paravicini has once again produced a comprehensive study. By employing refined research methods and incorporating an abundance of new sources, scholarly literature, and materials, he illuminates the phenomenon of the *Preußenreisen* with unprecedented clarity and depth.

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<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to Werner Paravicini, *Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels*, vol. 1, Beihefte der Francia 17/1 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1989).

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