



**Lech Łbik. *Kult błogosławionej Doroty w Prusach krzyżackich* [*The Cult of the Blessed Dorothea in the Teutonic Order's Prussia*]. Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, 2022. 183 pp., 1 tab., summary. ISBN: 978-83-66941-21-2.**

The monograph under review is a doctoral dissertation defended by Lech Łbik at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz in 2021. The work, originally entitled *The Religious, Social, and Political Life of Teutonic Order's Prussia at the Turn of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries in Light of the Miracles and Cult of the Blessed Dorothea of Montau*, was published in 2022 under the revised title given above.

The publication of this dissertation came as somewhat of a surprise to researchers dealing with the history of the medieval Pomesanian diocese, as its author, a distinguished member of Bydgoszcz's intellectual circles,<sup>1</sup> has not been associated with research into the spirituality and religiosity of the area. At the roundtables held since the mid-1990s, he appeared once, namely, at the Kwidzyn Dorothean Colloquia (*Kolokwia Dorotańskie*) in 2022, after the publication of his reviewed dissertation.<sup>2</sup> It must be acknowledged, however, that Dorothean themes appear in his output in the form of articles published in recognised scientific periodicals (*Rocznik Gdański*, *Studia Zamkowe*). Additionally, Łbik published quite a lot in the periodical *Materiały do dziejów Kultury i Sztuki Bydgoszczy i Regionu*. In the work reviewed here, he also refers to texts published, inter alia, in *Niezwany Świat* ("Unknown World"), "the oldest periodical in Poland devoted to esotericism, parapsychology, medicine, radiesthesia, astrology, UFOs, and other phenomena of Nature." It is worth adding that his monograph is dedicated to, among others, the Blessed Dorothea of Montau.

In the introduction (pp. 7–17), which briefly outlines the biography of Dorothea of Montau and the 15th-century efforts to canonise her, we do not find information to what extent the author considered the comments of the dissertation's reviewers. One of them was Waldemar Rozynekowski from the Nicolaus

<sup>1</sup> See the biographical note, <https://kpck.pl/zmarl-lech-lbik/>, accessed 10 September 2024.

<sup>2</sup> See Lech Łbik, "Więźniom na ratunek. Trzy mikrohistorie z cudów błogosławionej Doroty," in *Błogosławiona Dorota z Mątów. Średniowieczna pustelnica. Materiały z VI Symposium Dorotańskiego w Kwidzynie [25 VI 2022]*, ed. Justyna Liguz (Kwidzyn: Kwidzyńskie Centrum Kultury, 2024), 99–104.

Copernicus University (UMK) in Toruń, also listed in the publication as a publishing reviewer. His review, issued on 2 July 2021, shows that the layout of the dissertation (including the number of chapters and their titles) has remained unchanged.<sup>3</sup> However, it is evident that the author “is concerned, among other things, with answering questions about the role of the cult of saints in Prussian popular devotion, about the role of pilgrimages in this devotion, about beliefs in the supernatural origin of illnesses, about the role of saints in their treatment, and finally about assessing the significance of the figure of Dorothea of Montau and her Marienwerder (Pol. Kwidzyn) shrine in the religiosity of monastic Prussia” (p. 13).

Lech Łbik has undertaken a difficult task, as the themes of interest to him have already been successfully addressed by the earlier historiography on Teutonic Order’s Prussia in a modern, scientific manner. It seems that he was aware of this, because he uses the basic works – euphemistically speaking – in a very sparing manner, giving priority to outdated studies<sup>4</sup> or, from the point of view of the subject matter, secondary ones.<sup>5</sup> This marginalisation is particularly evident in the case of Stefan Kwiatkowski’s dissertation, published in 1990,<sup>6</sup> which addresses practically all the issues present in Łbik’s work; in his estimation, Stefan Kwiatkowski “draws on facts relating to Dorothea’s life and spirituality in full handful” and “makes partial use of the trial files.” Much “better” use was made of the aforementioned trial files by Anneliese Triller and by Lech Łbik himself – including in the pages of *Nieznany Świat*, a magazine for lovers of magic and pendulums. It is not without reason that I invoke this title for a second time: for Łbik, all works dealing with the theme of Dorothea of Montau are “Dorothean writings:” not only the reissued monograph by Stefan Kwiatkowski, but also Mario Glauert’s dissertation<sup>7</sup> devoted to the Pomesanian cathedral chapter in the Middle Ages, which the author de-

<sup>3</sup> Doctoral dissertation review, <https://www.ukw.edu.pl/download/60504>, accessed 15 August 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Paul Nieborowski, *Die selige Dorothea von Preussen. Ihr Heiligensprechungsprozess und ihre Verehrung bis in unsere Zeiten* (Breslau: Ostdeutsche Verl. Anst., 1933).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Grzegorz Ojcewicz, *Śmiertelna pobożność. Święta Dorota z Mątów – mity i rzeczywistość* (Szczytno: Wydawnictwo Gregorza Ojcewicza “GregArt,” 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Stefan Kwiatkowski, *Klimat religijny diecezji pomezkańskiej u schyłku XIV i w pierwszych dziesięcioleciach XV wieku*, Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu 84, no. 1 (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1990, 1st ed.). The second edition (2024), with an afterword by Marian Dygo, among others, was published as the 9th volume of the series “Ecclesia Clerusque Temporibus Medii Aevi.”

<sup>7</sup> Mario Glauert, *Das Domkapitel von Pomesanien 1284–1527* (Toruń: Verlag der Nikolaus-Kopernikus Universität, 2003); Polish translation: *Pomezkańska kapituła katedralna w czasach*

scribed as “a study on the cathedral church of Kwidzyn and the clergy gathered around it.”

The author devotes two of the three chapters (pp. 18–104) to a multifaceted analysis of miracles attributed to Dorothea of Montau, recorded in late medieval sources. However, Łbik does not define the phenomenon to which he devotes the greater part of his work, “leaving aside the theologians’ disputes about the nature of miracles” in favour of an anthropological view. It is also unclear how the author conceives of the title cult; the introduction only states that the author extends his observations to “the religiosity of Prussian society at the end of the times of relative affluence” (late 14th century). In a situation where the author uses his publications in periodicals devoted to parapsychology and esotericism, this is of colossal importance from the point of view of the conclusions obtained. There are no superstitions in Łbik’s work, but only “miraculous interventions”, “the action of supernatural powers,” etc.

In the first chapter (pp. 18–31), the author concentrates mainly on statistics, listing the number of *miracles* in the Nuremberg manuscript (*Miracula Dorotheae*), the edition by Remigius de Buck (*Miracula B. Dorotheae*), and the canonisation records from the years 1404–1406. A separate subchapter is devoted to the latter, but most of the space is taken up by a discussion of the text of the source edition and – on its basis – an analysis of the practice of the trial and the registry. It should be added at this point that one will look in vain in this monograph for references to unpublished sources produced in the circle of the Pomesanian higher clergy and kept in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. Similarly, the synthesis of the history of the medieval Pomesanian bishopric and the documents from the Pomesanian diplomatic code published by Hermann Cramer<sup>8</sup> are not utilised.

The second chapter, entitled “The Miracles of the Blessed Dorothea under the Historian’s Magnifying Glass” (pp. 32–104), is a presentation of miracles performed through Dorothea’s intercession and reported by witnesses in the Marienwerder trial. It is difficult to understand why the author includes, in this chapter, “a sociological and statistical analysis of pilgrims to the tomb of the Blessed Doro-

---

*średniowiecza (1284–1527)*, transl. Radosław Biskup (Pelplin: Kwidzyńskie Centrum Kultury, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Hermann Cramer, “Geschichte des vormaligen Bisthums Pomesanien,” *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für den Regierungs-Bezirk Marienwerder* 11–13 (1884); “Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte des vormaligen Bisthums Pomesanien,” ed. Hermann Cramer, *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für den Regierungs-Bezirk Marienwerder* 15–18 (1885–1887).

thea” (pp. 78–91), a subsection devoted to “naming in Teutonic Order’s Prussia on the basis of Dorothea’s sources” (pp. 91–95), and the context of relations between Poland and the Teutonic Order at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries (pp. 95–104). These are issues that should be included in the final, third chapter, which analyses various aspects of the religiosity of the population of the Pomesanian diocese and presents the significance of the figure of Dorothea of Montau and her perception by her contemporaries (pp. 105–152). Why was the “sociological-statistical analysis of pilgrims” undertaken in the second chapter not included in the second subchapter of the third chapter on pilgrimages?

Lech Łbik’s analyses, in which the miracles through Dorothea take centre stage, lack the basic contexts: (1) the context of the liturgical tradition of the cathedral church in Marienwerder, the formation of which in the 14th and first half of the 15th century can be observed in the sources. The author does not address the subject of the sacred space of the cathedral church and its impact: not only did the daily prayers of the members of the cathedral chapter (or the vicars replacing them) take place in this vibrant place, but also services resulting from the liturgical calendar as well as private services at the altars of the founders. And yet, Dorothea of Montau appeared in a specific sacred context in which an attempt was made to canonise her. The work lacks references to the Pomesanian synodal legislation, which regulated the order of the liturgical calendar; there are no references to Teutonic Order’s liturgical sources; (2) the context of the environment of the Marienwerder cathedral clergy at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, organising and promoting the cult of Dorothea after her death and in the trial activities in the years 1404–1406. A special place in this respect belongs to Johann Marienwerder, ensuring through his writings a specific influence of Dorothea on the region of Powiśle and Vistula Fens (Żuławy); (3) the broader context of ecclesiastical organisation in Prussia, considering particular traditions of religious cult. The author, while citing numerous saints important to the Order and reflecting on Dorothea as the patron saint of Prussia, does not mention, among others, St. Adalbert, whose cult was developed and strengthened in Lower Prussia during the first decades of the 15th century around the church in Tenkitten (Rus. Letnoe) in the Diocese of Samland/Sambia.

It is hard to come to a critical conclusion when the author cannot engage in a debate with the reviewer.<sup>9</sup> Yet it is also hard not to get the impression that, in the case of the dissertation reviewed here, we are dealing with a popular account

---

<sup>9</sup> Lech Łbik died on 14 September 2023.

dressed in scholarly robes, in which issues of the number, types, and morphology of miracles attributed to Dorothea occupy 75 percent of the work. This is undoubtedly an interesting strand, and there is some merit in the tabular listing of disease cases (appendix, pp. 166–167). However, this form of presentation of the results and the adopted layout of the work mean that its content far better reflects the original title of the dissertation, as mentioned above.

*Radostaw Biskup* (Toruń)\*

---

\* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4902-5404>.