



Thomas Krämer. *Dämonen, Prälaten und gottlose Menschen: Konflikte und ihre Beilegung im Umfeld der geistlichen Ritterorden. Vita regularis. Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter* 64. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015. 741 pp. ISBN: 978-3-643-12960-4.

Conflicts are an integral part of everyday life, both on a personal and on an institutional level. Undertaking research that analyzes the causes, directions, and ways of overcoming disputes enables us to notice the factors which determine past and present realities. Thus, conflict, a phenomenon that has accompanied the human race since the dawn of time, has become a category in the rhythm of history, the evidence being its presence in colloquial language. For instance, for the 20th century, concepts such as the “interwar period” (1918–1939) or (for the time after 1945) the “post-war era” are used. In the historiography of the Teutonic Order’s rule in Prussia, the conflicts with the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania mark the rhythm of interaction in the 14th and 15th centuries. The volume generated by the Toruń conference devoted to *Overcoming Conflicts and Establishing Peace in the Middle Ages* (27–29 May 2011)¹ shows some of the respective aspects, including the issues of defining and establishing peace or the tools and strategies for the resolution of disputes.

Thomas Krämer’s work (based on his doctoral dissertation) is not devoted to great conflicts that changed the course of history; rather, it addresses various controversies that were an inseparable element of everyday life in three select territorial units of the military orders: the Hospitaller Order’s priory of Saint-Gilles, the Templars’ province of Provence and Spain, and the Teutonic Order’s bailiwick of Franconia. This choice is not accidental: all three were well-supplied, wealthy provinces; they are well documented when it comes to the sources; and previous historiography has elaborated on them satisfactorily. The author deliberately omitted the Teutonic Order’s rule in Prussia, which also fulfilled the abovementioned conditions, rightly pointing to its institutional hegemony (particularly with regard to church administration) which means that there was no balance of power with regard to conflict resolution.

Krämer has divided his extensive monograph into three parts: an “Introduction” (*Einführung*), a section on “Subjects and Causes of Conflicts” (*Konf-*

¹ *Konfliktbewältigung und Friedensstiftung im Mittelalter*, ed. Roman Czaja, Eduard Mühle, and Andrzej Radzimiński (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2012).

liktgegenstände und -ursachen), and a section on “Methods for the Resolution of Conflicts” (*Wege der Konfliktbeilegung*); the latter two both conclude with a summary. In addition, there is an appendix which contains maps (showing both the abovementioned territorial units of the respective military orders and their secular church administration) and tables, as well as a bibliography and indexes of persons and places.

The starting point is the standard question regarding the reasons for controversies, as well as the courses and methods for overcoming them. The author tries to present the social context of the military orders’ activities during times of conflict, which very often saw everyday issues transcend the framework of the orders’ social norms in order to resolve disputes. He attempts to answer the question concerning the positive results of conflicts by drawing from, among others, Lewis Coser’s sociological concepts. Deep reflection on the definition of conflict – its character, phases, and so forth – which is synthetically outlined in the methodological part of the study is accompanied by further considerations and cited examples. Following this, Krämer outlines the ecclesiastical landscape of the parts of Europe in which the select territorial units of the Hospitallers, Templars, and Teutonic Knights were situated. He thoroughly presents not just their extent, organization, and functioning, but (based on the extant scholarship) also sketches the picture of church relations – diocesan structures (bishops, cathedral chapters, and so forth) and other monastic institutions, thereby establishing the geographical context for his analysis.

From the existing sources, the author has extracted about 473 documented conflicts (234 for the Hospitallers, 175 for the Templars, and 64 for the Teutonic Knights). The scope of the archival research, conducted in numerous archives in southern France and southern Germany, deserves critical acclaim. Undertaking such extensive archival research was necessary to construct such a broad narrative based on a comparative approach. The comparative analysis of the selected aspect (namely, conflict) in the history of the three major medieval military orders constitutes the greatest value of work under review; Krämer includes in his volume several aspects of conflict that could easily become the subject of future “*Ordines militares*” conferences.

The analysis of several hundreds of disputes has permitted Krämer to notice certain regularities and to identify four key areas in which controversies both between the orders, as well as between the orders and other church institutions, arose. One can get the impression that the military orders, originally created during extraordinary Crusading conditions, sometimes sought to adapt solutions used in the Holy Land to the territories of Europe. The first of these was the issue of exemption, namely, the special privileges for the military orders granted

by the papacy (pp. 85–159). For the members of military orders, the rights and liberties obtained during the Crusades very often constituted the starting point to further extend their ownership, frequently at the expense of already existing church authorities. The value of these special privileges for the Teutonic Knights can be shown on the basis of the Teutonic Order's politics in Prussia in the 13th century, where exemption in connection with the military argument allowed the Order to establish territorial authority and church administration freely and in accordance with its own rules. Meanwhile, when ecclesiastical institutions coexisted in the territories of southern France or Franconia, attempts to expand authority were met with opposition and provoked conflicts. The military orders' use of the special rights granted to them by the papacy frequently gave rise to conflicts with local hierarchies who did not consent to restraining their own jurisdiction in dioceses which overlapped with the military orders' territorial units. Disputed issues included the operation of the orders' churches, the right of patronage, canonical visitations, taxes, and religious censure (namely, excommunication, interdict, and so forth).

A separate part is devoted to the issue of tithes and, more specifically, the exemption of the military orders from having to pay these, which impacted the local diocesan curias (pp. 161–217). The military orders' respective privileges changed over time, namely, from having the Roman curia's full support to gradually losing some of the rights as the result of the conciliar decisions (mainly those of the Fourth Lateran Council) to local specifics. The relations between the orders and the diocesan clergy in southern France regarding tithes were different from those in the Teutonic Order's bailiwick of Franconia where disputes were less frequent. In the first case, the context of the Crusade against the Albigensians influenced a great number of controversies: the diocesan clergy was to feel not only the material losses, but also the loss of prestige: hence, the disputes concerning the military orders' privileges, paying the tithes from the orders' properties, or the refusal (or delay) to pay these provisions.

The diocesan clergy's fear of income reduction was the reason for disputes concerning the right to burial and the financial profits generated from the latter on the basis of fees for liturgical settings and bequests (pp. 221–288). In southern France, where the context was once again the Crusade against the Albigensians, regulations (which were not taken into account by the papacy) were being formulated in the heat of ferocious conflicts. In disputes concerning the division of income from burials and bequests, the diocesan clergy reached for drastic measures by accusing the military orders of providing burials to those excommunicated or under the interdict. It is difficult not to get the impression that, in this case, disputes were a rather peculiar method of conducting negotiations to determine the portion of

shares with regard to this source of income (as a rule 25 to 50% went to the diocesan clergy). A factor which impacted these types of conflicts was the presence of religious houses in the towns and cities of bishops; thus, the cathedral chapter in Montpellier was able to procure up 75% of the income from funerals. There was a different situation in the bailiwick of Franconia which was fairly peaceful at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, and the Teutonic Order's convents were not present in the towns and cities of bishops there to the same degree as were those of the Hospitallers and Templars in southern France.

Conflicts over financial issues also arose among the military orders themselves. The territorial units discussed in Krämer's work were among the richest of the three orders' entities; therefore, they were financially liable to a greater extent to support their *confrères* in Crusading regions. When it came to responding to the central religious authorities' call for payment, discipline was often insufficient or disregarded. Such a lack of response was caused by difficult economic situations, and the attempts to maximize the profits from properties resulted in disputes with other religious institutions. The military orders tried to expand their economic potential based on the abovementioned papal privileges (exemption). Their disputes with diocesan clergy often pertained to conventual sanctuaries which competed with parish churches, mostly when it came to civic surroundings. Various conflicts also occurred outside of towns or cities, both between the orders (such as disputes of the Hospitallers with the Templars) and with other institutions as well. On the one hand, there were controversies typical for rural areas (for example, pertaining to the use of meadows, waterholes for animals, and so forth.); on the other hand, there were controversies pertaining to the orders' efforts to create easy-to-manage units of administration and economic exploitation.

The last part of Krämer's work (pp. 341–602) is devoted to the means and mechanisms of solving disputes. The most important body of appeal in the case of conflicts was the papal curia which, after receiving the appeal, began its proceedings based on tools developed over the centuries. There are many elements from Canon Law without which it is impossible to comprehend the actions taken to solve these conflicts. Therefore, much attention is given to the sole appeal which is treated not just as a necessary step to undertake proper measures in the Roman curia, but also as a tool of conflict diligently used to the detriment of one's opponent. On the one hand, parties often procured papal documents beneficial for them; on the other hand, they manipulated the facts to gain better bargaining positions and to present their rivals in a bad light. After filing the appeal, a dispute was solved either at the papal court or at the petitioners' places of origin (the latter being the more common practice). In the latter case, the pope assigned representatives who were frequently recruited from the ranks of the higher secular clergy (such

as members of cathedral chapters) and the religious (such as abbots) to resolve disputes. In the 13th century, conservators played a special role in this regard; they were appointed to protect the rights and properties of beneficiaries, and had limited authority to impose church penalties. The disputes were sometimes solved with the involvement of papal legates, which was beneficial for the military orders who maintained intense contact with the Roman curia and its staff.

Parties had several options to settle the conflicts before them. Negotiations could be twofold in nature; they could proceed without mediation, however, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether there was a mediator witnessing or co-sealing the settlement of the dispute; determining the real influence of witnesses of higher rank on the course of negotiations is often impossible to define. Appointing one's own representative was a common practice; there are sources that indicate that there was an official appointed to conduct this type of negotiations. Often, to solve conflicts, intermediaries were needed who possessed certain qualifications resulting from their positions and titles. In cases where such measures did not have the desired effect, a tribunal of arbiters was used, namely a body composed of an equal number of persons (*viri honesti*, *viri discreti*, and so forth) designated by all parties to the dispute. If the abovementioned methods failed, an appeal to the papal court was made.

A short review such as this cannot adequately cover the richness of the examples that the author uses to illustrate his arguments. Although the work is devoted to conflicts and the methods of resolving them, the examples extracted from the source material paint (apart from the study's basic theses) a picture of coexistence between various religious institutions in select regions of Europe during the Middle Ages. The analysis of two such principal concepts, namely, the subjects of disputes and the methods of solving them, requires an interdisciplinary approach on a broad source base. That Krämer has undertaken this topic for the three major military orders commands respect. Thus, the work reviewed here can serve as a reference point for studying analogous aspects with regard to the Teutonic Order's authority in Prussia and Livonia. Comparing the reasons, effects, and dynamics of the conflicts in the south-east Baltic region dominated by the Teutonic Knights to the results of Krämer's research would extend our knowledge about the legal status of the Teutonic Order and the factors determining its relations with other stakeholders of territorial authority (such as bishops, chapters, towns, and cities).

*Radosław Biskup (Toruń)**

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