



Paweł Grochowski. *Chrystian: biskup Prus 1216–1245 i misja pruska jego czasów*. Górna Grupa: Wydawnictwo Verbinum, 2018. 500 pp., 34 photographs, 22 drawings. ISBN: 978-83-7192-552-8.

In his introduction, Grochowski explains that there “has not [...] been any major monographic work yet” regarding the first bishop of Prussia. Thus, the reviewed book is an attempt to fill this gap (p. 5). The author approached not only Christian’s activities but also their context, which is the Prussian mission that was undertaken in his times also by other subjects. In other words, some topics could have been abandoned without any harm to the book. The author has supplemented the meagre collection of written sources from Christian’s time in connection with his activity with records composed after his death (some until the modern period); moreover, he has reached for archeological materials, and even works of art, which he has connected with the book’s subject. Additionally, the book includes a large collection of texts regarding the Prussian mission in general in the second quarter of the 13th century, as well as an abundance of secondary works.

Grochowski informs the reader that he has “[...] tried to present source texts quotations in Polish, provided such translations have been published”, whereas he prepared his own translations with parallel “original texts” (p. 13). In practice, some quotations are provided in different Polish interpretations, and the other in the original form. This may confuse the reader and does not facilitate the critical perception of the book. The author’s statement that, due to the meagre source bank, he had to formulate numerous hypotheses, and even “stacked hypotheses” (!) draws attention for he wanted to present “Christian’s activities as the possibly fullest vision” (p. 7).

The content of the book, beside the above-mentioned introduction, is composed of twenty-one chapters, as well as a conclusion and summaries in English and German. It also includes a list of abbreviations, a bibliography, a list of illustrations, a personal index, a list of contents, and a list of photographs and drawings. The chapters were above all arranged in a chronological order, which sometimes was taken to the extreme: namely, several chapters are in the form of annals. The fragmentation of the content has gone too far.

When it comes to the subject matter, the author first discussed Christian’s origins and early years. Based on the information provided by Simon Grunau, a Prussian chronicler from the sixteenth century, which states that Christian was born in Freienwalde (identified as today Chociwel (Germ. Freienwalde) near Stargard) and that he was a monk in the Cistercian monastery in Kołbacz (Germ.

Kolbatz), Grochowski created a genealogical combination which is not entirely believable. In Grunau's chronicle there is also information that Christian was an abbot in the Cistercian monastery in Oliwa (an affiliate of the monastery in Kolbatz). Christian's presence in the monastery is confirmed in the medieval sources, however, they do not mention him as an abbot. Grochowski does not reject the version provided by Grunau, he only states that there is a lack of "irrefutable evidence for Christian being the abbot" (p. 46). Simon Grunau's chronicle was used by Grochowski as an important source for medieval history, he mentioned it over twenty times. However, he ignored the recent source study of the chronicle written by Sławomir Zonenberg (2009). A Dominican friar, Simon Grunau's chronicle praised the mission conducted in Prussia by his confreres and generally by monasteries, and this is why he treated bishop Christian with similar respect. In order to authenticate the idea that bishop Christian was a man of God, the chronicler provided as many biographical details as possible, even if fictional, but not entirely fantastic.

As it is known, the beginnings of the Cistercian mission in Prussia occurred in the first decade of the thirteenth century and were connected with the monastery in Łekno in Greater Poland. Christian joined the missionary work from the monastery in Oliwa. However, after several years, Łekno was completely eliminated from the Prussian mission. The context of this matter consists, firstly, of the controversies surrounding the Prussian bishop's title, which was supposedly usurped by Gottfried, an abbot of Łekno monastery; the second issue was the death of Philip (around 1212), a missionary from Łekno who was Christian's collaborator, at the hands of the Prussians. Christian took possession of the part of the Łekno Cistercians' goods, which they were granted by Bogumił, Archbishop of Gniezno, to finance the Prussian mission. Soon after, Christian became the bishop of Prussia, and insisted that he was the first to be granted this title. One may suppose that certain church milieus wanted to end the Prussian mission conducted by the monks from Łekno and that Christian played the key role in the completion of this attempt. Grochowski did not take into consideration such a possibility. Perhaps the probable worship of Philip was perceived as a competition to the worship of saint Wojciech, the first missionary-martyr in Prussia whose relics were located in the Gniezno cathedral 60 km from Łekno.

According to Grochowski, Christian was appointed the bishop of Prussia by pope Innocent III at the turn of 1215/1216, after the end of the Fourth Council of the Lateran. This speculation is doubtful, because there is no reliable information about Christian's presence in Rome at that time. Instead, the ordination was performed (perhaps in the early autumn of 1215) by the Archbishop of Gniezno, Henryk Kietlicz. According to Grochowski, Christian did not consider himself to be a suffragan of Henryk. If that was the case, it would badly testify about Christian's pragmatism (the author himself emphasizes that in 1215 Henryk Kietlicz was "at the peak of his power [...], supported by the authority of Innocent III" – p. 92).

When it comes to the first years of Christian's episcopal ministry, the controversial letter of pope Honorius III from 1218 confirms granting the bishop the village *Cecouiz* by Władysław Odonic, the duke of Greater Poland. The date of granting the village was 1212, which was written in the letter. However, the duke's document lacks the date and, what is more, Christian was described there as an "abbot and bishop". According to the author, granting was firstly intended for the abovementioned abbot Gottfried (who died before 1212). This hypothesis is not convincing: rather it should be assumed that the writer in the papal chancery mistakenly provided the date MCCXII instead of MCCXVII. We mentioned above that it is probable that the cessation of the mission conducted by the monastery in Łekno began around 1212. Granting of *Cecouiz* in 1217 was a response to the papal letters from 1216/1217 calling for material support of the mission. As for the title 'abbot' referring to Christian, it could indicate his supremacy over the Cistercian institutions in the territories of the mission (such as priorate, cellae – mentioned by Grochowski). Christian's titles referred to those used by abbot Gottfried.

The letter of Honorius III from the spring of 1218, in which he granted Christian the privilege of appointing 2–3 bishops and building cathedral churches as the number of the faithful in Prussia increased, requires attention here. According to the author, it was about auxiliary bishops, but the content of the letter does not indicate that. This privilege opened the prospect of gaining the title of 'archbishop' to Christian, however it was not used by him. This could have been a result of the meager effects of his missionary activity, or it could have sprung out of the desire to concentrate episcopal privileges in the whole of Prussia within his own hands.

According to Grochowski, until around 1220, Christian counted on the support of Denmark, after this date he was associated with the Polish hinterland. Such a view results from the author's belief that the Christian came from Western Pomerania and he joined the monastery in Kołbacz, which was a Danish convent (just like in Oliwa). In any case, the ruler of Eastern Pomerania, Mściwoj I, was supposed to give Christian the Zantyr castle (earliest in 1216). According to the author, it was a castellan castle and was to be granted along with the "associated areas", i.e. – as one can assume – with a castellany. Here Christian was supposed to "proceed with building of a cathedral church and the village near the castle became a bishop town" (p. 72). Christian also received some titles from Konrad, the duke of Mazovia, which were confirmed by pope Honorius III in May 1219. However, the grants given by Konrad in the Culmerland are mainly reported in his document "from *Lonyz*" dated 1222. Grochowski claims that Christian had independent territorial authority there, but this statement is not confirmed by any analysis of sources. According to the author, Konrad then focused on the protection of Prussian neophytes against the attacks of their pagan countrymen. For this purpose,

the crusades to Prussia were undertaken and, moreover, permanent outposts were established on the border with Prussia. At the beginning, this “active defense” of the mission was carried out by the forces of all Polish principalities (1223–1225), then by Konrad’s forces (1225–1227), and finally by the forces of military orders.

According to the author, duke Konrad placed the Teutonic Knights in the Culmerland in order for them to serve Bishop Christian and protect the Prussian mission. The duke decided for such steps when he started the fight to inherit after his brother, Leszek Biały, who was murdered in 1227. Nevertheless, the task of the Teutonic Knights was not to protect the Culmerland against the Prussian invasions. Papal documents do not mention such invasions, which according to Grochowski are the only reliable sources regarding the matter. The author did not question why popes were supposed to be interested in the invasions of the Prussians into Mazovia. Christian was supposed to oppose bringing in the Teutonic Knights, but he was approached by Konrad with additional titles. According to Grochowski, Konrad passed the Teutonic Knights the Culmerland to their absolute possession. Insofar as the first document by Konrad to the Teutonic Knights (from *Beze*) from 1228 was marked by the duke’s intention to act like this (p. 32), it was put into practice in the “final donation document” (from c. 1235). However, the author did not conduct a comprehensive analysis of Konrad’s bestowal of the Culmerland to the Teutonic Knights. What is more, Konrad was supposed to resign from any gains in Prussia, as evidenced by his letter which was mentioned in one of papal writings, but otherwise unknown.

On the other hand, the author focused on the granting of the stronghold in Dobrzyń (Germ. Dobrin) by Konrad, along with the whole adjacent territory (identified, as it seems, as a castellany) to the Prussian Knights of Dobrzyń (*fratres milicie Christi de Prussia*). According to Grochowski, Dobrzyń was granted under the same conditions as the Culmerland for the Teutonic Knights (after all, there is no analysis of the Dobrzyń bestowal). The author claims that the Knights of Dobrzyń was Christian’s own order. Dobrzyń was supposed to be bestowed out of the bishop’s initiative. It seems that Christian meant for the two orders to serve as a “counterweight for each other” and rivals (p. 156) when it comes to the service for the bishop, as one may assume.

According to Grochowski, Christian’s bishopric was supposed to pose a fundament for the Prussian Land – Christians, free people, co-ruling their land with a bishop. The author read all of this from the complaint of the bishop against the Teutonic Knights from 1240 and the peace treaty from Christburg (Pol. Dzierzgoń) from 1249 (however, there is no proper analysis of these texts). On the other hand, the author admits that Christian granted both military orders (and then only the Teutonic Knights) two-thirds of Prussia; anyway, in this territory they had to exer-

cise secular authority. According to Grochowski, the Teutonic Knights started to build their authority in Prussia based on violence towards neophytes when Christian remained in Prussian captivity between 1233 and 1239. They found support from the popes and the emperor as well as in the Dominican Order. As stated by Grochowski, the papal legate, Dominican William of Modena, was even bribed by the Order.

Grochowski devoted much attention to the division of Prussia into dioceses, which was started in 1243. The order given to Christian by pope Innocent IV to choose one diocese was supposed to be the reason for the outbreak of Prussian uprising against the Teutonic Knights (however, it is not the Teutonic Knights who forced Christian to choose one diocese!) The neophytes were supposed to see the only protector of their freedom in the bishop. According to the author, the uprising started in 1244. He believes that Christian agreed to the uprising and collaborated with Prussians. Grochowski claims that the pope consequently decided to appoint Christian as the first archbishop of Prussia and even give him the title. Nevertheless, the sources do not support such speculations.

According to the author, Christian's main seat was located in the Culmerland (presumably after he lost Zantyr castle). In the 1220s, in Grudziądz (Germ. Graudenz), Christian was supposed to found a town under Magdeburg law (second after the town in Zantyr) whose patrimony was to have as much as 70 km². This is the same as the patrimony of the Teutonic town of Chelmno (Germ. Culm)! In Grudziądz, Christian started building a cathedral (second after the cathedral in Zantyr?), and he also built a castle and even founded a mint. Moreover, Christian was to found a Cistercian convent (the second was supposed to be in Zantyr; whereas in Gardeja (Germ. Garnsee) there was to be a Cistercian monastery). In the Culmerland, Christian was to own five estates in which there was either a church or a castle. The author established all of this despite the lack of a sufficient source basis.

Grochowski claims that Christian stood out thanks to a "modern" approach towards the management of the bishopric. He was supposedly the first to establish his sovereign territorial authority and determine its role as an economic base of the Prussian mission. Christian was to be a pioneer when it comes to the use of Gothic architecture, founding towns under German law and changing predial tithing to grain tithing. Bishop Christian was presented by Piotr Grochowski as an apostle of Prussia, a great man, and even with some features of holiness. Unfortunately, the price for such a conceptualization was the author's mostly voluntary approach to historical sources.

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