



Amtsbücher des Deutschen Ordens um 1450. Pflegeamt zu Seehesten und Vogtei zu Leipe [Office books of the Teutonic Order around 1450. Pflegeamt in Seehesten and Vogtei in Leipe]. Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Cordula A. Franzke und Jürgen Sarnowsky. Beihefte zum Preußischen Urkundenbuch 3. Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2015. 406 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8471-0358-5.

Numerous written records (tax ledgers, treasury records, debt records, copies of location documents, etc.) survive from the Teutonic Order's Prussia in the late Middle Ages. The records were compiled both by the central authorities (Marienburg; today: Malbork), Königsberg (Kaliningrad), and by regional administrative centers. According to the Teutonic Order's documents from the second half of the 13th century, the upper echelon of the Order's dignitaries managing major commanderies was required to compile and maintain ledgers (originally compiled as simple written records). However, material from this period, as well as from the first half of the 14th century, survives only in a fragmented state. The solidification of the administration in the Teutonic Order's state in Prussia, as well as the growth of literacy (especially in German), were factors which led to the compilation of such documentation not only on the level of the central administration (grand master, grand commander, treasurer) but also on the level of regional administration (commanders) and lower level administration (such as village mayors and magistrates). The information included in ledgers is essential for the understanding of the economy of the Order's state (income, expenses, debts, farming, production and rents), as well as its social relations and the functioning of the administration. This information also allows us to study the phenomena of economic prosperity and downturn.

The two ledgers published by Franzke and Sarnowsky, *Amtsbücher des Deutschen Ordens um 1450. Pflegeamt zu Seehesten und Vogtei zu Leipe*, can serve precisely this purpose. Both volumes are kept in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin (XX. Hauptabteilung, Ordensfolianten, nos. 186, 186a). In the introduction, the two editors provide some (perhaps overly general) commentary on the particular character of the administrative units which can be established on the basis of the sources published by them. In the case of Seehesten (Szeszno), they point out the important role of its grain economy, while in the case of Leipe (Lipienek) they emphasize the highly interesting information regarding secular staff hired by the Order's officials (p. 11).

The editors also analyze the careers of a number of the Teutonic Order's administrators who worked in these administrative units (pp. 11–12). They provide some discussion of other sources from the mid-15th century (particularly correspondence between officials of Seehesten and Leipe and the grand masters, thanks to which the information provided by the ledgers can be viewed in a wider historical context (pp. 12–14). Six such letters, dating from 1449–1454, are published in the volume's appendix (pp. 351–358).

The introduction also provides information regarding the fates of both ledgers between the 15th and 20th centuries. Specific issues concerning the edition itself are also mentioned, as it is available not only as a hard copy but also online (pp. 14–16).¹

In the introduction's second part, the editors include a detailed description and analysis of the exterior of both ledgers (pp. 17–27). Their layout is described in a clear way in two tables which present the entries on the succeeding pages chronologically. The editors discuss the languages used (Mittelostoberdeutsch, Latin), the handwriting, watermarks, ink, dimensions, and the ledgers' states of preservation. Finally, issues concerning the publishing of this material are considered (pp. 29–31). In the final part of this edition, extensive and thorough indexes are included, namely an index of persons, an index of subjects (which, in turn, is divided into two sections "Berufe, Ämter und Personen ohne Namenbezeichnung" and "Handelswaren und Worterregister"), and an index of places (pp. 359–406).

The edition is not devoid of certain inconsistencies and factual mistakes, perhaps due to the complexity and magnitude of the sources. This can be observed in the description of the Leipe administrative unit and its role in the Teutonic Order's regional administrative structure in 15th-century Kulmerland. Initially, the editors claim that it was a separate sub-unit within the Schönsee commandery (Kowalewo) (p. 11); later, however, they state that Georg von Egloffstein was both the "voigt" of Leipe and the commander of Schönsee. According to their analysis, the material supposedly suggests that no other Teutonic Order's commander of that convent is known, while a *hovemeister*, Mattis Gasse, is mentioned in Leipe, as is a certain brother, Heincze von Seckendorff (p. 12). According to the table it is not known to which convent (Leipe or Schönsee) brother Heincze von Seckendorff belonged, nor what office he held (p. 24). These conclusions should be revised, as they have been arrived at on the basis of older, and partly outdated analyses. The editors could have easily corrected these issues on the basis of the information found in the sources they publish. In reality, by this point in time, the function of the commander of Schönsee had ceased to exist, while the "voigt" of Leipe and his convent resided at Schönsee castle and managed what

¹ Accessed 5 February 2018, <http://www.vr-elibrary.de/doi/book/10.14220/9783737003582>

used to be the administrative units of Leipe and Schönsee, and which had been merged into one two decades earlier. It should thus not come as a surprise that, in the mid-15th century, the castle of Leipe was managed by a secular *hovemeister* who was a subordinate of the “voigt,” given that all the Teutonic Order’s brothers had, at this time, moved to Schönsee castle. It is explicitly stated in the letter of 22 April 1452, which the editors include in the appendix (7.4, p. 354), that Heincze von Seckendorff resided at Schönsee castle and was the companion of the “voigt” of Leipe. Heincze von Seckendorff was probably also the author of the letter of 21 June 1453 (7.5, pp. 355–357). The anonymous *kellermeyster* (pp. 298, 323) mentioned in the ledger was most likely also a Teutonic Order’s brother and member of the Schönsee convent. This suggests that, contrary to what the editors claim, the two published ledgers did not concern two separate offices of equal administrative standing, as there is a significant difference between the “voigt” of a major territory, which had once consisted of two administrative units and who answered directly to the grand master, and the lower-ranking official (procurator) of Seehesten who answered to the commander of Balga.

The editors could have also paid some more attention to describing the content of both books, as they contain unique information which is nowhere to be found in other late-medieval sources from the Teutonic Order’s Prussia. One such example are the completely unique mentions of the rooms and objects located at Schönsee castle and forecastle (p. 299), or the lists of names (compiled in 1451 and 1453, during the collection of rents) which indicate all the male adults living in the town of Schönsee. In a number of cases, the lists also provide information concerning the occupation of the townsfolk (pp. 311–315, 323–324, 333–337). In the case of the Seehesten ledger, particular attention should be given to the sole description of the borders between various regions of the Balga and Elbing (Elbląg) commanderies and the diocese of Ermland, as well as their chronology, beginning in the first half of the 14th century (pp. 42–44, 124–126). These are just three minor examples, but there is much more fascinating, and often completely unparalleled information of this type to be found in these ledgers.

It is important to note however that the few necessary corrections and expansions noted in this review do not lessen the significance and high quality of this publication. Thanks to the work of the editors, economic sources from the Teutonic Order’s Prussia in the 15th century are now much more accessible, and this will surely lead to a new stimulus for research in this area.

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