



Sebastian Kubon. *Die Außenpolitik des Deutschen Ordens unter Hochmeister Konrad von Jungingen (1393–1407)* [*The Teutonic Order's Foreign Policy under Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen (1393–1407)*]. *Nova Mediaevalia. Quellen und Studien zum europäischen Mittelalter* 15. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016. 367 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8471-0537-4.

The series “Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens” contains a number of monographs concerning the Teutonic Order’s grand masters. However, these monographs, in fact, amount to studies of the political history of the Teutonic Order and its Prussian state during the reigns of particular grand masters. Sebastian Kubon, on the other hand, rejects this formula, and instead focuses on the foreign policy of the Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen. He is well prepared for this task as he has worked on this topic for a number of years and has published in this area (a list of his publications can be found on p. 349). The volume under review here consists of a list of abbreviations, a short foreword, an extensive introduction, three chapters on the different territories of which the Order took control during the reign of Konrad von Jungingen (Samogitia, Neumark, other smaller acquisitions, and Gotland), a conclusion, a list of sources, a bibliography, and an index.

The introductory parts of Kubon’s work are particularly important, as they outline the framework and goals of the publication in a precise and clear manner. In order to describe them here, it is useful to take a look at a quote from Wilhelm Nöbel which Kubon includes in the conclusion of his publication (p. 325): “Das Ziel der Erwerbung Samaitens zur Schaffung einer festen Landverbindung zwischen Preußen und Livland galt als wichtigste Richtschnur der territorialen Erweiterungspolitik Konrads von Jungingen. Der Erwerb der Neumark sollte den freien Weg zum Reich garantieren, die Gotlandunternehmen waren auf die Sicherung des Seeweges zur Ermöglichung einer intensiveren Seepolitik ausgerichtet.” Such views, very popular in the literature on the subject, have been the basis of polemics about the foreign policy of the Teutonic Order’s state at the time of Konrad von Jungingen. In Poland such claims have recently been made in Marek Radoch’s book on the Order’s military activities in Samogitia. Radoch tried to defend the view that the Teutonic Order was trying to become a Baltic superpower – reigning over all of the area between the Gulf of Finland and up to the Oder river.

In the extensive “Introduction” (“Einleitung”) Kubon justifies his choice of subject. He refers to the highly positive image of Jungingen’s reign which historiography tends to present as they heyday of the Order’s growth in Prussia. Kubon points out that it is a common view found in the literature that the Order’s territorial expansion, which was at its highest at this time, was a direct result of the grand master’s conscious policy and geostrategic thinking. However, at the same time, Konrad is usually considered as a peaceful leader, in contrast to his younger brother, and successor to the title of grand master, namely Ulrich von Jungingen. In discussing the literature in this area, Kubon does acknowledge that other views have been held from time to time, for example by Rimvydas Petrauskas and Arno Mentzel-Reuters (pp. 13–15); however, he points out that these issues have not yet been thoroughly discussed. There is also no monograph focusing on Konrad von Jungingen, and some parts of the “Geschichte Preussens” by Johannes Voigt (pp. 16–17) are treated as the basic source and study of the life of this grand master. Based on these observations, Kubon identifies the following problem: the Teutonic Order’s successes during Konrad’s rule and its failures during Ulrich’s reign are usually explained in light of the contrasting personalities of the two brother knights. Kubon refers to the opinion of Kurt Forstreuter who claimed that the responsibility for the failures during the Order’s war with Poland and Lithuania in the years 1409–1411 rests solely on the shoulders of Konrad von Jungingen because of the excessive territorial expansion during his rule (pp. 18–19). Kubon considers this to be a significant problem, though he avoids providing an explicit definition of the Order’s ‘Blütezeit’ in light of the fact that neither the grand master nor the Order’s foreign policy around 1400 have been the subject of scholarly monographs thus far (pp. 21–22).

In the next section of the “Introduction,” Kubon expresses the aim of the volume more precisely. He tries to identify the grand master’s status within the Order’s structure, as this has significant implications for establishing to what extent the Order’s foreign policy and Konrad von Jungingen’s foreign policy can be treated as synonymous with each other (p. 23). Noting that there is a lack of unequivocal sources or specialized studies in this particular area, Kubon argues that the term “*Außenpolitik*” (foreign policy) in the title of his study probably reflects the recognizable practice (p. 24). Connected to this problem is the issue of formulating a chronological framework for the book: Kubon limits his study to the period during which Konrad von Jungingen acted as the Order’s grand master (30.11.1393 – 30.3.1407). He points out in a footnote that, after the death of a grand master, all important political issues were put on hold until the election of his successor (p. 24, n. 49). Further in the text, Kubon formulates two questions that are fundamental to his work: first of all, what goals and motivations lay behind various ter-

ritorial acquisitions, and secondly, whether it is possible to identify specific concepts of action which were part of a greater whole (p. 37). Of course, if the answer to the second question is affirmative, then this means that we accept the possibility of more enduring concepts, which extended beyond the chronological framework of the rule of one grand master. Thus, while it is impossible to argue on a basic level with the above statement, it seems that in some cases more long-term political plans were fulfilled.

After the theoretical discussion of how foreign policy should be understood in the Middle Ages, Kubon turns to the issue of the territories which were acquired by the Order during Konrad von Jungingen's rule. He begins this part of the study with Samogitia which, understandably, receives the most of his attention (pp. 53–192). Kubon asks whether Samogitia was acquired purposefully through diplomatic means. He presents an overview of the Order's relations with Poland and Lithuania, the significance of Jagiello's baptism and his crowning as King of Poland, as well as the rivalry between Jagiello and his cousin Vytautas (pp. 53–57). The sub-chapter focusing on Samogitia is titled "Erisapfel" (apple of discord), following Kurt Forstreuter. Here, Kubon carefully assembles and analyzes the available source material and is well versed in the literature on the subject. He discusses all the issues connected to the 1398 Treaty of Salynas and the 1404 Treaty of Raciąg (today: Raciązek) as they had a significant impact on the problem of Samogitia. The question of who had the initiative and who was only reacting, rather than acting, (p. 60) is particularly important for Kubon. This approach to the issue, as well as his ignoring of other potential options, may come as a surprise, particularly because both sides were both acting and reacting to the actions of their partners, in accordance with the knowledge and understanding they possessed.

Kubon analyzes the sources concerning the path which led to the Treaty of Salynas in detail. He meticulously studies the Order's registers as well as letters which were addressed to the grand master. His way of citing these sources is highly compelling: he first presents the manuscript basis and then its printed version (if it exists). This approach allows him to capture the specificity and particularity of the material. In the analysis of the processes which led to the Treaty of Salynas and its provisions, Kubon sees an active role of the Grand Prince Vytautas and the Livonian Land Master Wennemar von Bruggenei. According to Kubon, these two were actively realizing their political interests, while he claims that Konrad von Jungingen had only a passive role in this. A piece of *sui generis* evidence for the lack of Konrad's interest in acquiring Samogitia is, according to Kubon, the fact that the name of the region is completely omitted in the text of the treaty, which instead only describes the extent of the territories which the Lithuanian prince handed over to the Order in Prussia. While Kubon's suggestion that the previous interpre-

tations of this situation are not convincing seems correct, his own interpretation also seems difficult to accept.

The next section of the text includes a detailed analysis of the events in Samogitia and those connected to this region. Kubon is right to emphasize the deciding role of Vytautas in the strengthening of the Order's power over that region in 1399–1400. When describing the first Samogitian uprising, he suggests that the Order presented itself as the legal and –according to medieval accounts, good – regional lord during its military and diplomatic activities undertaken as a response to the uprising, and this should not be understood through any geostrategic justifications. As a result of this, in his analysis of the time between the Treaty of Salynas and the Treaty of Raciąż (Raciążek), Kubon claims that there is no indication that the grand master pursued an intentional policy with regards to Samogitia: “[d]ass der Orden [...] hinsichtlich Samaiten eine zielgerichtete territoriale Expansionspolitik zum Machtausbau betrieben habe” (p. 144).

Next, Kubon presents the processes that led to the Treaty of Raciąż in a lot of detail. It is worth saying that, once again, his knowledge of the source material and the realities of the policies pursued by Prussia, Lithuania, and Poland is impressive. Kubon discusses the provisions of the Treaty of Raciąż, and he is right to emphasize the significance of the fact that, according to this treaty, the Order was obliged not to accept any of Władysław Jagiełło's rebel family members in Prussia (which is alluded to the treaty between the Teutonic Order and Švitrigaila in 1402) as well as the renewal of the Treaty of Kalisz (1343) between Poland and the Order. However, he also admits that the detailed regulation limiting the time within which Samogitia was to return under the Order's rule to a year, as well as the participation of Vytautas in the subordination of this country to the Brethren, suggest the significance attached to the acquisition of Samogitia by the grand master (pp. 169–170). Kubon concludes his analysis of the Treaty of Raciąż with the statement that: “Von zielgerichteter Außenpolitik durch Konrad von Jungingen kann also im Vorwege des Friedens von Raczanz keine Rede sein” (pp. 171–172).

When discussing the later period, Kubon also suggests that the grand master was involved in the Order's actions to recover Samogitia only to a limited extent. He sees Vytautas as being particularly active in this regard, having presented this region to the Order “on a platter.” He argues that it was the “voigt” of Samogitia, Michael Kūchmeister, who, unlike his suzerain, played an active role in subjecting Samogitia to the Order's rule (p. 185). This interpretation, juxtaposing the grand master's policy and that of the voigt (who, after all owed his position to the grand master himself), does not seem convincing.

In order to strengthen his thesis that, overall, the Order was only engaged in the acquisition of Samogitia to a limited extent, Kubon points out that in 1406

only parts of the province actually recognized the Order's suzerainty. The evidence for this is supposedly the letter of the commander of Ragneta which informs the grand master of the Samogitians' attack on this castle. The letter does not specify the year, but Kubon claims that a dating of this letter to 4 June 1406 is probable (p. 186, n. 658). In the case of this source, the author provides only its archival signature (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, XX. HA, Ordensbriefarchiv, No. 863) and follows the editors of the registers of the Teutonic Order's letters (*Regesta historico-diplomatica Ordinis S. Mariae Theutonicorum 1198–1525*, p. I, vol. 1, hrsg. Erich Joachim, Walther Hubatsch, Göttingen 1948, No. 863) which is unlike his procedure in the case of other sources. However, this source has also been edited (*Codex epistolaris Vitoldi, magni ducis Lithuaniae 1376–1430*, ed. Antoni Prochaska, Kraków 1882, No. 401), and its editor connects the letter to the year 1409, suggesting that it should be dated to the 31 May 1409, which is the beginning of the second Samogitian uprising. Newer literature tends to refer to the letter of Ragneta's commander when discussing the events of 1409.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the issue of dating this source is not clear (it is symptomatic that Richard Krumbholtz, who presents the most detailed account of the Samogitian-Teutonic Order relations, accepts it), but Kubon's treatment of it seems too arbitrary. It is worth remembering, as the author surely knows, that in 1406 the Teutonic Order sent an armed contingent to help Vytautas in his expedition against the Muscovite Rus. The contingent sent by the Order was composed in large part of Samogitians, which would have been impossible if the territory had been in a state of unrest. In the conclusion of the "Samogitian" chapter, we find the claim that this issue was only used by the Grand Prince Vytautas as part of his eastern policy, while Grand Master Konrad von Junginen was, for the most part, simply reacting to the former's actions – his own goals are impossible to assess (pp. 191–192).

The volume's third chapter is dedicated to the issue of the province of Neumark, as well as other, smaller territorial acquisitions (pp. 193–256). Kubon describes the notion of "surrounding," popular in German and Polish literature on the subject. Many German scholars have argued that when Sigismund of Luxembourg pawned Neumark off to the Teutonic Order, the Order accepted because this would protect it from being "surrounded" by the kingdom of Poland. The Polish king was, after all, very interested in the territory of Neumark. Polish researchers on the other hand, tend to argue that it was the Teutonic Order that wanted to "surround" the Kingdom of Poland from the western side. Scholars from

<sup>1</sup> Sławomir Józwiak, "Wywiad i kontrwywiad krzyżacki na Litwie i na Mazowszu w okresie wielkiej wojny (1409–1411)," *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* 3/241 (2003): 252; Sławomir Józwiak, Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, Adam Szweda, Sobiesław Szybkowski, *Wojna Polski i Litwy z zakonem krzyżackim w latach 1409–1411* (Malbork: Muzeum Zamkowe, 2010), 107.

both countries tend to assume that the Order planned to use Neumark to create a “land-bridge” or “corridor” to Western Europe (pp. 193–194). Kubon addresses these assumptions by presenting questions about the actual aims of the Order during Konrad von Jungingen’s reign. He argues that the ‘micro-political process’ which predated the acquisition of this territory by the Teutonic Order should be reconsidered. Kubon succeeds in achieving this aim, and he claims in the conclusion that the Grand Master was not interested in dispersing the Order’s forces in a situation when it was in a continued conflict with Lithuania and he believed the Order would not be capable of properly defending its new acquisition. However, “Konrad konnte sich allerdings nicht gegen die [von Sigismund of Luxemburg – A. Sz.] oktroyierte Expansion wehren, glaubte er die Neumark doch auch nicht dem König von Polen überlassen zu können” (pp. 209–210). In the following parts of the chapter, Kubon analyzes the Order’s rule in Neumark through the perspective of various properties which were the subject of legal disputes either internally (Tankow; today: Danków) or externally (with the kingdom of Poland, particularly Santok (Germ.: Zantoch) and Drezdenko (Germ. Driesen). He again argues that Konrad was mostly reactive, mainly relied on previously obtained privileges, and was Lord of a region where he ruled only as a pledgee and where the position of the Order was weak (pp. 214–248).

The final part of the third chapter focuses on the smaller territorial acquisitions of other lordships on the eastern frontier of the Mark of Brandenburg by the Teutonic Order’s state. Kubon approaches the issue by asking whether this was a consolidation by means of a systematic pawning of regions (p. 248). The territories acquired were Dobrzyń Land (controlled by the order as a pawn in the years 1392–1405), as well as territories in Mazowia: Wizna Land (1382–1402) and Zawkrze Land (1384–1399, 1407–1411). As Dobrzyń Land was acquired before Jungingen’s rule, Kubon is not interested in the process of its acquisition. As to the issue of the return of Dobrzyń Land to Poland in exchange for the money for which it was pawned off, Kubon claims that it indicates that Konrad did not focus on political strength and expansion, but mostly cared about keeping true to the legal arrangements of the pawn treaties (p. 250). He views the Order’s Mazovian acquisitions in the same light.

The ample fourth chapter focuses on the acquisition of Gotland. As in the case of the previous acquisitions, Kubon interprets the acquisition of Gotland by the Order in 1398, as well as the struggle to maintain it during the complex political realities up until 1408 when, following Konrad’s death it was transferred to the king of Denmark, as a reaction to current needs rather than the realization of a long-term, conscious policy. This is demonstrated, for example, by the correspondence between Konrad and the Danish queen Margaret in which Konrad claimed that it

was the “necessity” of having to fight pirates that had forced him to take control of Gotland; later on, preserving Gotland simply served the purpose of maintaining legal realities and taking care of a part of the Teutonic Order’s state (p. 321).

In the summary, Kubon once again emphasizes Konrad’s reactivity when it comes to acquiring new territories and argues that there is no evidence of him realizing a long-term policy. He concludes his inquiry with a quote from “The Death of Wallenstein” by Friedrich Schiller: “Jetzt werden sie, was planlos ist geschehn, Weitsehend, planvoll mir zusammenknüpfen” (p. 333).

Kubon’s attempt to test the existing scholarly consensus, which understands the Teutonic Order’s activities during Konrad von Juningen’s reign as the result of a geostrategic way of thinking and a conscious policy of expansion, is very convincing. The discussion of Neumark demonstrates his theory particularly well. However, the author seems to take his argument a little too far – in his discussion of Samogitia, for example, he seems to allow himself to stretch the interpretation of sources in order to prove that the Teutonic Order was not interested in building a lasting presence there. However, a lot of modern research does indicate that the Teutonic Order’s rule in Samogitia had strong social support and that the Order was not doomed to simply react to the political initiatives of Grand Duke Vytautas.<sup>2</sup> The very strict chronological framework which Kubon adopts is problematic, and this comes to the fore in a number of situations. For example, Kubon points out the fact that the name “Samogitia” is not used in the Treaty of Salynas, but it should perhaps also be pointed out that Ulrich von Jungingen’s rejection letter of 1409, which contains the statement that it was not necessary to announce war to King Władysław Jagiełło because the king had taken a whole country from the Order without announcing this intention, the name of the country is also not specified, even though it is very clear that the grand master was referring to Samogitia.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of wider chronological perspective is also problematic in the case of Dobrzyń Land. The Order ruled in this region for over a decade, which led to the forming of connections between many of Dobrzyń Land’s elites and the Teutonic Order. Kubon himself admits that the reason why this pawn was returned to Poland was connected to the issue of Samogitia. After the outbreak of yet another war, the Order started to take control of Dobrzyń Land. The privileges granted to the local knightly class by the grand master and the actions undertaken during the

<sup>2</sup> For example a work by Vytenis Almonaitis, *Žemaitijos politinė padėtis 1380–1410 metais* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 1998), with which Kubon is familiar but of which he does not make use for linguistic reasons.

<sup>3</sup> Zenon Hubert Nowak, “Akt rozpoczynający „Wielką wojnę”. List wypowiedni wielkiego mistrza Ulryka von Jungingen z 6 sierpnia 1409 roku,” *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* 1/131 (1976): 79–85 (Source edition: 84).

peace process with Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia (1409–1410) show that the grand master did consider consolidating his rule over this territory.<sup>4</sup> Kubon does admit that Konrad, being a good medieval ruler and regional lord, did not wish to give up the rights to Samogitia which the Order had acquired through the Treaty of Salynas (p. 172). He also refers to the explicitly stated view in the 1404 letter of the voigt of Neumark, Balwin Stal, to Bogusław VIII, duke of Pomerania: *der orden begert keyns herren landt, adir nymande das syne czu nemen, adir czu vorwaldigen; sunder hat der orden icht, das meynt her ouch czu behalden* (p. 172, n. 601, and again p. 247). Kubon rightly interprets this to be a good representation of the Order's political attitude at the time. However, he does not draw the correct conclusions from these statements. The Order was carefully observing its surroundings and made use of the opportunities that appeared, which should not be interpreted to mean that it was only passively responding to the actions of other rulers. The end of the 14th century was a time when the Order was eager to make use of pawning regions which was the result of its favorable financial situation and the needs of its partners. Another example of this is the border forest Babsk (Babusch) which was pawned to the Teutonic Order by the Polish noble Sędziwój z Szubina in 1380. It was then bought back in 1389 and then pawned to the Order again in 1397. In the 1404 Treaty of Raciąż (Raciążek), there is mention of re-buying it by the Polish side.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that Kubon was so focused on his argument and on demonstrating what sort of political attitudes the Order did not have that he went a bit too far in his claim that, during the rule of Konrad von Jungingen, the Order was governed by blind chance. It does not seem to me that the Teutonic Order, at the turn of the 14th century, deserves such a harsh assessment. There is no doubt that the book is of great merit, well written, and based on a good knowledge of the sources and of the literature on the topic (though the Polish and Lithuanian literature could be used more extensively). Kubon's book can perhaps be considered controversial in certain aspects, and it will prompt discussion. But that is an important role of academic historical writing.

*Adam Szweda (Toruń)\**

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\* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0138-9575>

<sup>4</sup> Sobiesław Szybkowski, "Elita ziemi dobrzyńskiej na przełomie XIV i XV wieku. Między zakonem krzyżackim a Królestwem Polskim," *Średniowiecze Polskie i Powszechne* 7 (2011): 87–119; Markian Pelech, "Zu den politischen Zielen des deutschen Ordens beim Schiedsspruch des Königs Wenzel von Böhmen 1410," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 38 (1989): 177–187.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Szweda, "Las Babsk w stosunkach polsko-krzyżackich w XIV i XV w.," *Gdańskie Studia z Dziejów Średniowiecza* 9 (2003): 413–417.