



Norbert Delestowicz, *Bracia zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach (1310–1351). Studium prosopograficzne*. Kraków, Wydawnictwo Avalon, 2020, ss. 504, ISBN 978-83-7730-450-1

The book under review constitutes an extensive prosopographical study of brothers of the Teutonic Order in Prussia from 1310–1351. This second date coincides with the election of Winrich von Kniprode in 1351, a period which for a long time has been described as the beginning of the Golden Age (*Blütezeit*) of the Teutonic Order¹.

Norbert Delestowicz provides an exceptional resource for studying the individual careers of brothers in the Order in the time leading up to this period. The book is structured around three chapters, not including the introduction (pp. 11–22), and description of the work (pp. 23–24). Prosopographical research remains a rich and exciting field in the scholarship of the Military Orders. Earlier studies for the Baltic region remain the standard reference works for looking at the individual careers of crusaders, one example being the posthumous publication of Astav von Transehe-Roseneck, *Die ritterliche Livlandfahrer des 13. Jahrhunderts*, though it should be stressed that this publication primarily investigated those came to Livonia as crusaders, with some knights of the Order of the Sword Brothers as well². For the Military Orders in the Baltic, one also sees parallels between the book under review and the monumental work of Lutz Fenske and Klaus Militzer, *Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens*, and the work of Maciej Dorna (from whom the author of the book has taken his influence)³. The book under review, therefore, is among the most important works for prosopographical research in the medieval Baltic.

Delestowicz begins by situating the topic within a broader historiographical framework (p. 11), namely the work of Johannes Voigt (described as “Nestor of the scientific research of the Teutonic Order”)⁴ and his *Namen-Codex*, published in 1843, and Georg Adalbert von Mülverstadt’s studies of the officials and convent members in Marienwerder (Pol. Kwidzyn) and Danzig (Pol. Gdańsk) published at the end of the nineteenth century⁵. The overview is thorough and goes over roughly a century of

¹ This was noted already in the work of Johannes VOIGT, *Geschichte Preußens von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Untergange der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens*, Bd. 1–9, here Bd. 5, Königsberg 1832, pp. 86–87.

² Astaf von TRANSEHE-ROSENECK, Wilhelm LENZ, *Die ritterliche Livlandfahrer des 13. Jahrhunderts. Eine genealogische Untersuchung*, Würzburg 1960.

³ Lutz FENSKE, Klaus MILITZER, *Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens*, Köln 1993.

⁴ Marcus WÜST, *Studien zum Selbstverständnis des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter*, Weimar 2013, p. 1.

⁵ Johannes VOIGT, *Namen-Codex der Deutschen Ordens-Beamten. Hochmeister, Landmeister, Großgebietiger, Komthure, Vögte, Pfleger, Hochmeister-Kompane, Kreuzfahrer und Söldner-Hauptleute in Preußen*, Königsberg 1843.

prosopographical studies of the Teutonic Order. That Delestowicz also considers the state of such research in other areas of the Order's history such as Italy (p. 15) shows, in my opinion, a solid grasp of the state of scholarship and a consideration of the present study's place in a broader framework of prosopographical studies. However, as the author notes, such research with respect to the Prussian branch of the Order has been "gradual, sometimes with long breaks", noting the development from lists of officials and their offices to more detailed prosopographical inquiries concerning the origins of members and their careers (p. 16). The author states his goal clearly: using the research carried out by Maciej Dorna with respect to the officials of the Teutonic Order from 1228–1309⁶, Delestowicz aims to provide a study of the careers of members of the Order and their social origins in all the available source material of the Teutonic Order in Prussia from the years 1310–1351 (p. 17). He then provides a helpful and brief explanation as to *why* his study will investigate these dates (pp. 17–18). Not only will he carry off where Dorna's work ended but lists five reasons for choosing an end date of 1351: 1.) the election of Winrich von Kniprode following the retirement of Heinrich Dusemer sparked, as said above, a Golden Age in the Order's history; 2.) practical aspects of the timeframe for the completion of the study had to be taken into account. Therefore, incorporating such sources up to the next transitional period in the Order's history (i.e., 1410 and the Battle of Grunwald) would not be possible; 3.) there were a significantly larger number of brothers in the period under study, as opposed to the thirteenth century. Therefore, Delestowicz claims that an end date of 1351 will allow one to capture the period in which many brothers developed their careers; 4.) the published source base of materials goes up to 1371 (it is assumed, of course, that chronicle evidence, such as Wigand von Marburg's *Nova chronica Prutenica* was not meant here, but diplomatic sources); 5.) published sources for recruitment areas, such as Thuringia, have been published up until the end of the fourteenth century. This reasoning is quite sound and practical and should be commended when considering the book's goals and outcomes. Further in the introduction, the author highlights the sources that he has used to supplement his continuation of the work of Maciej Dorna, namely the so-called *Handfestensammlung Brandenburg*⁷, which was formerly kept in the Teutonic Order's archive in Königsberg and moved to Hannover in 1723 (pp. 18–19). As a result, it was unknown to Johannes Voigt, who published the nine-volume *Codex diplomaticus Prussicus*.

The author then outlines the methodology of identifying figures and presents some of the easier parts and difficult aspects of the process (e.g., where brothers only appear by their first name), in addition to the challenges presented by identifying

⁶ Maciej DORNA, *Bracia zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach w latach 1228–1309. Studium prosopograficzne* (Poznańskie Studia Historyczne), Poznań 2004, with a German translation published in 2012: Maciej DORNA, *Die Brüder des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen 1228–1309. Eine prosopographische Studie*, trans. Martin FABER, Köln–Weimar–Wien 2012.

⁷ Not Brandenburg in Germany, but the commandery of the Order in former East Prussia (today Ushakowo, in the Kaliningrad oblast). The collection is available online, as noted by Delestowicz: http://digitale-sammlungen.gwlb.de/sammlungen/sammlungsliste/werksansicht?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=313&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=1 [Accessed September 21, 2022].

brothers and their social origins in the fourteenth century in many cases (pp. 19–20). He then proceeds to list the structure of the book: an analysis of the material (Ch. 1), followed by a biographical chapter (Ch. 2), and a list of officials of the members of the Order's convents in Prussia (Ch. 3).

Chapter 1 (pp. 25–31) examines the composition of the Knights of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. Over the course of six sections, Delestowicz systematically addresses the various factions that formed the Order, beginning with knights, and moving to priest brothers and clerics, servants, half-brothers, half-sisters, and concluding with the conditions for membership in the Order and the recruitment techniques employed in the fourteenth century. Most interesting, in the opinion of the reviewer, is this final section of the chapter, which builds off of the work of Maciej Dorna. Delestowicz states that the criteria for membership were not too difficult to obtain, namely in that potential members should be men who were over the age of 14, free of debt, and not a member of any other order. However, his book adds considerably to the debate about the recruitment of *ministeriales* and nobility in the fourteenth century under the reign of Dietrich von Altenburg (1335–1341). The author convincingly demonstrates that this requirement, which has been stressed in the historiography (not only in Polish and German, but also in English), was not vigorously applied until after the period under study. This is quite important for the book, since it highlights one of the major obstacles in identifying individual knights and tracing their careers in Prussia. Another interesting observation is that the Order appears to not have recruited from crusaders who came to Prussia (and, after 1283, Lithuania). Delestowicz also points out that the favoured region for recruitment was, of course, Germany, but this was not an exclusive rule. Ultimately, the reason for joining the Order appears to have been prior familial connections in the fourteenth century.

Chapter 2 considers the careers of individual brothers of the Order in Prussia from 1310–1351. This is indeed a difficult task to complete, particularly with regard to the source evidence for tracing individuals, their origins, arrival in Prussia, etc. However, this does not hamper Delestowicz's goal, for the author managed to identify 955 brothers of the Order in the period under study. Particularly commendable about this chapter is the use of the available sources and the care with which Delestowicz managed to track the origins of 571 brothers, including those who appear to have been of Prussian origin (especially those people with names such as *Zdzisław*, *Leykot*, or *Glabune*). This of course was accomplished through the names presented in the evidence, e.g., a knight from Meißen or Saxony would often have *natus Misne* or *Saxone* in their names. However, one should also remember the debates about the names and origins of authors of chronicles in Prussia, such as Wigand von Marburg, whose origins remain murky at best⁸. Delestowicz then moves to the recruitment of priest brothers (pp. 33–34), 126 of whom he has identified. Interesting is that only two appear to have come from Germany to Prussia: Siegfried von Regenstein and Gottfried von Westphalia. Nicolaus von Jeroschin, perhaps one of the most famous priests in the Order's history due to his composition of the *Kronik von Pruzinlant*, appears to have

⁸ WIGAND VON MARBURG, *Nowa kronika Pruska*, red. Sławomir ZONENBERG, Krzysztof KWIATKOWSKI, Toruń 2017, p. 23.

been born in Poland, according to Delestowicz. The remainder of the Order's priests appear to have come from Prussia.

Ethnic and social origins form the subject of the next part of Chapter 2. Most interesting is the identification of brothers of Slavic origin, including Bohemia, Poland, and Silesia. A novel contribution of the author to this phenomenon is that in the period that the book investigates, there were brothers recruited from Prussia. Delestowicz identifies seven of these people: Albert Pruse (biography on pp. 116–117 [no. 11]), Glabune (p. 170 [no. 175]), Gobelo (p. 171 [no. 177]), Jan Pruse (pp. 229–230 [no. 361]), Jan Wernkonis (pp. 231–232 [no. 367]), Leykot (p. 266 [no. 457]), and Zancirno. Curiously, however, the biographical information for this last figure is not present in the book, though the name would indicate (in my opinion) that he came from the region around Zantir. A search of some of these names in the Ordensbriefarchiv presents some future avenues for research. For example, a Hannos Glabun appears in a document confirming the purchase of the region of Palassen on 26 July, 1404 (OBA nr. 754). "Glabun diener des Komthurs von Coblenz" also is referenced in an undated document concerning the purchase of wine (OBA nr. 28721). One wonders the extent to which it is possible to trace these names in the later documents of the Order, for the purposes of examining the relationship between the Order and Prussians in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

With respect to the Prussian recruits, the biographies of members at the end of the book provides the reader with a wealth of information, even in the event of individuals who hardly appear in the written sources. This is particularly the case with Albert Pruse (recorded as brother from 1332 and appears in the written sources until 1354), and Jan Wernkonis (whose career is verified through references from 1327 to 1351). Delestowicz also contextualizes the lack of brothers of Polish origins within the events of the early fourteenth century, namely the annexation of Gdańsk by the Order in 1308. Indeed, the challenges presented by identifying brothers of Slavic origins are pointed out correctly by Delestowicz (p. 41), namely in the shadowy careers of Gorczyślav (p. 171 [no. 178]) and Gniewomir von Schwintisch (pp. 170–171 [no. 176]). In acknowledging the challenges presented by these figures, Delestowicz demonstrates a thorough mastery of the available source material. The second chapter continues by commenting on the debate of the space of recruitment for brothers in the period 1310–1351 (pp. 42–44), with Delestowicz highlighting that there appears to have been a continuity in recruitment practices for the period of the Order's history examined by Dorna, concluding with a thorough discussion of the issues in terms of identifying brothers from the lower and higher nobility. Chapter 2 concludes with a table that includes the first and last names of brothers, their region of origin, social status, time spent in Prussia, and their category (pp. 45–68). Presented in an accessible and easy to navigate format, the amount of data in this table (separated according to provinces from whence the brothers came), this is a wonderfully useful tool to the historian.

The careers of the brothers of the Teutonic Order in Prussia in the years 1310–1351 is the subject of Chapter 3 (pp. 68–106). Divided into five sections, the chapter examines the origin and promotional opportunities (pp. 68–70), the stay of brothers in Prussia (pp. 70–80), careers of lay brothers (pp. 80–93), Teutonic Order brothers in the Prussian bishoprics (pp. 93–99), and the careers of clerics (pp. 99–106). Delesto-

wicz's analysis of these aspects is thorough and concise, with a near organization that highlights the multiple levels of a "career" in Prussia from 1310–1351. He engages with the top historiographical studies on these aspects, for example that of Radosław Biskup on the brothers of the Order in the Prussian bishoprics, Andrzej Radzimiński, and Mario Glauert. His references to the second part of the book, namely the catalogue of brothers and their presence in the written sources, is a strong aspect of this chapter in that it invites the reader to explore at their own leisure the individuals under study. In this section of the book, too, Delestowicz identified several relevant issues concerning the mobility of brothers (lay and clerical) as well as the opportunity for career promotion. It appears that the brothers who came from families with higher degrees of nobility were able to move to more illustrious positions and receive promotions, particularly lay brothers (who could be selected as Grand Master), while in some cases, priests who were active in Prussia were unable to move outside of the region to other positions. Moreover, due to the system of annual rotation of offices, a brother with a higher position could be moved to a lower one regardless of his origin, it seems.

Following this extensive analysis, Delestowicz provides the reader with a conclusion to this part of his work (pp. 107–111). The study has identified 955 brothers, with 796 lay brothers (broken down into knight, sariants, and friars) and 159 clerical brothers. The author points out, too, the ambiguity of the sources with respect to half-brothers (*halbrüder*), which do not appear by name in the period under study, though it is clear that they were present in the region. He also points out the difficulties in identifying the origins of brother who *are* named, and his acknowledgement of this should not be seen as a weak point, but rather a testament to the thoroughness of the research carried out. Ultimately, one is forced to rely on hypotheticals in some cases, due to the nature of the sources available and the personal goals of the research project. In taking this approach, Delestowicz may open himself to criticism, but it is the opinion of the reviewer that the sources available can only take the scholar so far in their research and the author of the book has clearly fully used them.

The book under review has contributed some valuable aspects to the existing historiography and debates. Perhaps most obvious concerns the identification of brothers recruited from the area of Prussia, which Delestowicz claims to have identified at least 42 (some being hypothetical identifications due to the nature of the available evidence). Given the influence of Maciej Dorna's examination of brothers from 1228–1309, Delestowicz's book has identified a valuable piece of information concerning recruitment practices of the Order as the colonisation of Prussia was underway (p. 108). The same can be said about the recruitment of Polish knight brothers, and it appears that Delestowicz has not been able to identify any (Nicolaus von Jeroschin, of course, was a priest brother). Using the example of Dobrogost, the brother of the bishop of Płock (Jan Nałęcz), who may have applied for membership but ultimately does not appear to have been a member, the author of the study states that Polish knights were not interested in joining the Order as a result of the conflict between the Teutonic Knights and the Kingdom of Poland beginning in 1308.

Moving from the conclusion of the work, the author presents an extensive catalogue of brothers (pp. 115–386), subdivided into knights (pp. 115–318), chaplains and clerics (pp. 319–359), and knights or servants (pp. 360–386). Each entry is accompa-

nied by the variations in names encountered by the author, followed by a brief description of the individual's presence in the written record. The structure of this organization is to be commended for its ease of use and invitation of the reader to check the sources cited. Following this, the book provides a list of officials of the convents of the Order in Prussia, much along the lines of Voigt's *Namen-Codex*, though it should be emphasized that Delestowicz has gone far beyond copying the work of Voigt in this presentation of officials. For each convent, the offices are subdivided and the office holders are listed alongside their dates of service, which makes for a handy tool and easy to understand presentation of officials in the Order from 1310–1351.


Norbert Delestowicz's book is a very valuable contribution to the scholarship on the Teutonic Order in Prussia and serves not just historians interested in a prosopographical approach to the medieval history of this region. In providing such a thorough examination of brothers in the Order in the period leading up to the beginning of its "Golden Age", he succeeds in highlighting the everyday life of the Order as an institution (namely in how it functioned, who was part of it, and where they came from). The book is therefore a wonderful resource for historians examining other aspects of the Order's history. Oftentimes in the chronicles and other narrative sources, brothers are rarely named (except, of course, for higher officials), and this is completely in line with the goals of the medieval chroniclers of the Order. Through consulting not only these sources (e.g., Peter von Dusburg's *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*), but also the extensive charter evidence, Delestowicz's book ultimately brings those not named in the narrative sources to life. It will serve primarily experts on the history of the Order but would also be useful for graduate students who might have topics that employ prosopography. In this latter case, it will be a useful example of how to navigate the ambiguities presented by medieval sources and the challenges of tracing individual careers. The English summary at the end, too, is clear and easy to read. While the prosopography of officials is not a field of much research in English (with the exception of the work of Jochen Burgdorf and others)⁹, an English version of this book would surely be welcomed, given the increase in interest among anglophone scholars on the Baltic crusades and the military orders. It is the final opinion of the reviewer that the author has succeeded in continuing the pioneering work of his predecessor.

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⁹ E.g., Jochen BURGTORF, *The Templars' and Hospitallers' High Dignitaries: Aspects of International Mobility*, [in]: *International Mobility in the Military Orders (Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, ed. Jochen BURGTORF, Helen J. NICHOLSON, Cardiff 2006, pp. 11–24; idem, *A Mediterranean Career in the Late Thirteenth Century: the Hospitaller Grand Commander Boniface of Calamandrana*, [in]: *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe: Festschrift for Anthony Luttrell*, ed. Karl BORCHARDT, Nikolas JASPERT, Helen J. NICHOLSON, Aldershot 2007, s. 73–85.

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