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Article:

Murray, AV orcid.org/0000-0003-1641-0891 (2022) Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels, Pt. 3: Adlig leben im 14. Jahrhundert. Weshalb sie fuhren (The Prussian Journeys of the European Nobility, pt 3, Noble Life in the 14th Century. Why they went). Journal of Baltic Studies, 53 (1). pp. 137-138. ISSN 0162-9778

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2022.2024705>

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Adlig leben im 14. Jahrhundert. Weshalb sie fuhren: Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels. Teil 3 (*Vestigia Prussica - Band 002*), by Werner Paravicini, V&R unipress, 2020, 807 pp., €80.00, ISBN 978-3-8471-1128-3

Our knowledge of the many thousands of Western noblemen and gentry who aided the Teutonic Order in the conquest of Prussia and subsequently took part in the long campaigns against pagan Lithuania is largely due to the work of Werner Paravicini, particularly the two published volumes of his *Habilitationsschrift*, which dealt with the identities of the crusaders and the material conditions of their journeys and campaigning (*Die Preußenreisen des europäischen Adels*, 1-2 [Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1989–1995]). Two and half decades on, many historians have despaired of ever seeing the promised concluding third volume, which was intended to set out the numerous sources cited in the first two. They will thus be surprised and encouraged by the announcement of a further *four* volumes: two dealing with the decline of the crusades in Prussia, and two more setting out the documentary evidence. The first of these, now published, aims to establish and analyze the motivation of the crusaders in the context of late medieval noble culture.

Paravicini's starting point is the recognition that crusaders did not travel for enrichment or self-aggrandizement. For most, a journey to Prussia entailed a huge financial outlay and often indebtedness; any booty gained was meager and largely symbolic. Rather, the main objectives were the acquisition of honor and demonstration of prowess, and the aim of the book is to examine these and other motivational factors. It is organized in eight chapters, but these are mostly divided into discrete sections, whose lengths vary from a single page or less to over two dozen. Thus, the diversity of the aspects of the subject and the sheer detail of the illustrative material presented, with 640 pages of text, over 130 of bibliography and 35 tables (most of them covering several pages) give it the character of a work of reference incorporating a series of interpretative essays, rather than that of a conventional monograph.

The greater part of the book is an attempt to identify different components of the cultural world of the crusaders by surveying and evaluating the sources which served as models for their aspirations and behavior. The survey ranges over several distinct genres. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with chivalric romance from the time of Chrétien de Troyes up to his late medieval imitators, as well as many authors who offered discourses on the subject of chivalry, including Geoffroi de Charny, Christine de Pizan, and Geoffrey Chaucer, as well as numerous authors writing in German, Italian, and Castilian. Some of these, such as Guillaume de Machaut, Philippe de

Mézieres, and Peter Suchenwirt, had personal experience of Prussia, but most of the sources surveyed say little or nothing about crusading there. Nevertheless, it is evident that although the Holy Land was lost to the Mamlūks in 1291, enthusiasm for crusading continued unabated, whether in the Levant, Iberia, Africa, or Eastern Europe. Indeed, crusaders seem to have made little distinction between the different enemies of the Christian faith, and while reading it becomes clear how many nobles went on crusade on multiple occasions. More interesting material is presented in Chapter 3, which deals with armorials and other heraldic evidence, as well as the genre of *Ehrenreden* (panegyric poetry). It demonstrates the importance of heralds as professional makers and keepers of chivalric reputations, figuring as a kind of “secular priesthood”, as Paravicini characterizes them. Chapter 4 moves on to individual crusaders, discussing family traditions and networks, with reconstructed biographies of fifteen crusaders. Some of these are well known: Gadifer de la Salle, for example, went three times to Prussia, fought at Tunis, attempted the conquest of the Canary Islands, and was even immortalized in a romance by Antoine de la Sale. In other cases, such as that of the Scottish knight Sir Walter Leslie, the full extent of careers in chivalry and crusading are presented for the first time in modern scholarship.

The final three chapters (5–8) are more disparate, discussing costs and rewards, relations between the crusaders and the Teutonic Order, and various ways in which the fame and memorialization of crusaders were instrumentalized, ending with general conclusions about motivation. They include specialized sections dealing with subjects as diverse as the Teutonic Order’s procurators at the Curia, its heralds and their travels in the West, crusaders’ crests (as opposed to coats of arms) showing the heads of Moors, Saracens, or wild men, and inscriptions on the gravestones of crusaders. Overall, one gains the clear impression that while crusaders may have displayed a conventional piety, it was far outweighed by the importance of honor, valor, and comradeship. Even though these values stood in opposition to those of the Teutonic Knights, it is interesting to learn how in many respects the Order was obliged to offer a compromise with the ethos of its secular “guests,” as they were known in German. Thus, the Grand Master maintained a quite unmonastic court at Marienburg where crusaders were received and entertained with heralds, minstrels, musicians, dwarfs, fools, and even a monkey; and he regularly sent amber, exotic animals, and falcons as diplomatic gifts to rulers and magnates whose favor he wished to retain. The world view which Paravicini has identified among those who joined the *Reisen*, as the campaigns launched from Prussia were known, contrasts markedly with that of crusaders to the Holy Land in earlier centuries. Indeed, he posits

a kind of secular, chivalrous piety which had its own saints (heroes such as the Nine Worthies), exemplary vitae (*Ehrenreden*) and even a priesthood (heralds) which led an autonomous existence alongside the religious ethos of the church. While not all historians would wish to go quite so far, the mentality of the fourteenth-century aristocrats clearly represented a very different form of crusading to that proclaimed by Pope Urban II in 1096. Building on its two predecessors, this volume presents a treasury of information which offers avenues for further research on crusading, chivalry, heraldry, and the history of mentalities; it is to be hoped that the others will follow soon.

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