



László Pószán. *Hungary and the Teutonic Order in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Andrew Gane. Arpadiana 6. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Research Network, 2021. 419 pp. ISBN 978-963-416-247-6.

The study of the Teutonic Order has experienced a considerable revival in Anglophone publications over the last several years, building on the classic works of William Urban and Eric Christiansen. Subsequent monographs have been published concerning the history of the Order in the Holy Land,¹ alongside source translations,² and investigations into the historical and archaeological record concerning its conquest and administration of the region historically known as “Prussia.”³ This is set against the significant amount of scholarship on the crusading movement in the Baltic region, particularly in Livonia.

László Pószán, preeminent historian of the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages, adds a significant contribution to this growing body of work in the English language with his study, *Hungary and the Teutonic Order in the Middle Ages*. Most historians of the Teutonic Order will be aware of its brief stay in the Kingdom of Hungary at the invitation of King Andrew II, in which it was posted as a guard against the Cumans and active in the so-called *Burzenland* (Lat. *Terra Bursa*; Rom. *Țara Bârsei*; Hung. *Barcaság*). The Order was only active in that region for 11 years, from 1211 to 1225, ultimately being expelled by the king before taking up the call of Konrad of Mazovia to defend his borders against the raids of the Prussians in 1226. As such, this episode in its history typically receives a brief overview as a part of broader studies.⁴

¹ Nicholas Morton, *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land, 1190–1291* (London: Woodbridge, 2009).

² Nicolaus von Jeroschin, *The Chronicle of Prussia: A History of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, 1190–1331*, trans. Mary Fischer (London: Routledge, 2021).

³ Aleksander Pluskowski, *The Archaeology of the Prussian Crusade. Holy War and Colonisation* (London: Routledge, 2013); *Terra Sacra 1. Environment, Colonization, and the Baltic Crusader States*, ed. Aleksander Pluskowski (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019); *Terra Sacra 2. Ecologies of Crusading, Colonization, and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic*, ed. Pluskowski (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

⁴ The standard work remains that of Harald Zimmermann, *Der Deutsche Orden im Burzenland. Eine diplomatische Untersuchung* (Köln–Weimar–Wien: Böhlau, 2000); id., *Der Deutsche*

What were the subsequent relations between the Teutonic Order and the Hungarian kings after this episode? How did they change over time? In what ways did these relationships find expression in subsequent economic ties between Hungary and Prussia? Pósan's book addresses these questions in a comprehensive fashion.

The book addresses the topic of relations between the Order and the Kingdom of Hungary in six chapters, not including the preface (pp. 7–11). Pósan clearly states the goals of the book in this preface: while all 3 of the major military orders were present in Hungary throughout its history, the Teutonic Order spent a short period of time (c. 20 years) in Hungary while receiving most of the attention from scholars. Pósan seeks to understand why this was. He also notes general trends in the relations between the Order and Hungary over the period under study. The overview of the conflict with Poland and the perception of the Order as a major political player by the kings of Hungary is an important contribution of the book and a significant key to the organization of it. Pósan points out correctly that tensions arose due to the support of specific kings for Poland, such as Charles IV Anjou, whereas relations began to thaw under the rulership of Louis I of Hungary. The preface concludes with a statement on the changes that took place in these perceptions, namely on the part of individual rulers in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Most important is the inclusion of “economic and trade relations between medieval Hungary and Prussia, as well as cultural aspects and cooperation in the technological and transport fields.” (p. 11).

Chapter 1 considers the developments of the idea of crusading and its reception in Hungary. It begins by stating the two main issues in Hungarian historiography with respect to “the lack of enthusiasm and support for the ideal of a Crusader war” (pp. 11–12). The first of these includes the negative image of crusader armies who passed through the region on the land route to Jerusalem. This was only further hampered by “diplomatic complications” created by the presence of the son of Coloman (1096–1111), Boris (1137–1180), as part of the retinue of Louis VII of France. The second concerns the occupation of Zara (Cr. Zadar) by the armies of the Fourth Crusade, which was itself subject to Hungary. The reasons for this

Orden in Siebenbürgen: eine diplomatische Untersuchung (Köln–Weimar–Wien: Böhlau, 2011). For overviews of the “Transylvanian episode” see Pluskowski, *The Archaeology of the Prussian Crusade*, 94–95. Earlier references were also made in the classic work of Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades. The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier, 1100–1525* (London: MacMillan, 1980), 79; William Urban, *The Prussian Crusade* (Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 2000, 2nd edition), 40–47. There is also the recent work of Marcus Wüst, *Studien zum Selbstverständnis des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter* (Weimar: VDG, 2013), 18, 50.

occupation were to settle Hungarian debts owed to Venice. Pósan also considers the earlier historiographical work that gave rise to this view, namely by considering the impact of Sweeney's work which did not appear to take into account the impact of the crusading idea as outlined in the work of Erdmann, Hehl, Housley, and others. This is a strong engagement with a broader field of historiographical issues and ideas that justify Pósan's claim that crusading "enjoyed a degree of popularity and mobilizing power in Hungary from the very outset." (p. 14). An interesting contribution of this chapter can be seen in the ways that Pósan he engages with the historical memory (e.g., Saint Ladislaus, p. 16) in Hungary and uses convincing examples to show how the idea of crusading was not unknown in Hungary. The chapter then moves to the rise of the military orders and the idea of *miles Christi*, the role of *ministeriales*, and motivations for people in Hungary to adopt the crusade idea (pp. 21–24). This ultimately sets the backdrop against which the Teutonic Order was invited to Hungary (i.e., need to protect southern and eastern borders of the kingdom).

Structured over 12 sections, Chapter 2 moves to the relationship between the Teutonic Order and Hungary in the Arpadian period. It the situation behind one of the most researched areas of the history of the Order and its relations with Hungary: the invitation by Andrew II to the knights to guard against the Cumans in the Burzenland. The chapter essentially examines the links between Order and Hungary in this period. It begins with an overview of the geopolitical situation in the Balkan Peninsula at the turn of the thirteenth century (pp. 27–31), proceeding to the arrival of the Order into Transylvania (pp. 31–43). It then discusses the settlement of the Order there (pp. 43–46), the first years of the Order's presence (pp. 46–50), its castles (pp. 50–53) and the inhabitants of the region (pp. 53–59). From here, Pósan addresses the so-called "dark period" of 1213–1222 (pp. 59–70), the royal charter of 1222 (pp. 70–74), the relationships between the Order and the bishops of Transylvania (pp. 74–80), the expulsion of the Order (pp. 81–89) and the subsequent attempts by the papacy to get the Order back into the region (pp. 89–102).⁵ The chapter concludes with a consideration of the relationship between the two at the end of the thirteenth century (pp. 102–108). The chapter does a good job in that it highlights the broader processes that were occurring which led to the invitation of the Order into the Burzenland. It also systematically

⁵ Laszlo Pósan, "Die Eingeladung für den Deutschen Orden nach Ungarn (1211)," in *Akkon – Venedig – Marienburg. Mobilität und Immobilität im Deutschen Orden. Vorträge der Tagung der Internationalen Historischen Kommission zur Erforschung des Deutschen Ordens in Venedig 2018*, hrsg. v. Hubert Houben (Weimar: VDG, 2021), 16–30.

examines the complex nature of this phenomenon, particular strong points being the relationship between the Order and local religious officials (i.e., the bishops of Transylvania). Pósan uses some interesting sources, especially those in Vienna (DOZA), as well as the *Hermann von Salza's Bericht über die Eroberung Preußens* (DOZA, Hs. 205, fol. 108r–118v). That he does not consult the work of experts on this source, such as Tomasz Jasiński or Jarosław Wenta, is curious, though it may be outside of the more general interests considered in the book.⁶ Most interesting in my opinion is the way that Pósan is able to consider the impact of the crusade idea on this aspect of the history of the relations between the Order and Hungary. Chapter 2 ultimately concludes that the Order had more pressing opportunities in Prussia and their expulsion should be understood with this in mind.

The Angevin Period forms the topic of Chapter 3 (pp. 109–182). Comprised of 15 sections, it marks the departure of the book into an area hardly explored (i.e., relations between Hungary and the Order in the fourteenth century). Pósan sets out the problem clearly (p. 109) and notes that relations fluctuated based on “changes in the political situation of the Central and Eastern European region. The Order’s Prussian state and the Kingdom of Hungary were separated by hundreds of kilometers making points of direct contact impossible. Relations between the two entities were thus influenced in the main by alliances formed with other states and by their own interests.” The chapter begins with the Order and Hungary until the rule of Charles I of Anjou (pp. 109–116), The Order in global politics in the 1320s (pp. 116–122), the crusade of John I the Blind (pp. 122–123) and provides a lengthy analysis of the war between Poland and the Teutonic Order (pp. 124–131). It also discusses the impact of the Congress of Visegrád in 1335 (pp. 131–134). From here, Pósan discusses the papal judgement concerning the conflict in 1339⁷, the Peace of Kalisz in 1343 (pp. 143–147), the crusade of 1345 (pp. 148–152), the subsequent developments in relations during the second half of the 1340s (pp. 152–155), and internal struggles in Lithuania from 1351–1358

⁶ Tomasz Jasiński, *Najstarsze kroniki i roczniki krzyżackie dotyczące Prus* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 1996), 18–30; Jarosław Wenta, *Studien über die Ordensgeschichte am Beispiel Preußens* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2000), 240–244; id., *Kronika Piotra z Dusburga: Szkic źródłoznawczy* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2003), 58–72.

⁷ Which has also been discussed in the work of Radosław Kotecki, “The Desecration of Holy Places according to the Witness’ Testimonies in the Polish-Teutonic Order Trials of the 14th Century,” in *Arguments and Counter-Arguments: The Political Thought of the 14th–15th Centuries during the Polish-Teutonic Order Trials and Disputes*, ed. Wiesław Sieradzan (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 69–110.

(pp. 155–161). This theme continues into his analysis of the Congress of Kraków and the Lithuanian crusade of 1356 (pp. 161–166), and the union between Hungary and Poland (pp. 166–168). The campaign of Louis I of Hungary to Lithuania in 1377 is also discussed (pp. 168–170), as are the power struggles in Lithuania (pp. 170–174). The chapter concludes with an overview of the economic relations between Hungary and Prussia in the Angevin period (pp. 174–181).

To be sure, the treatment of the period could be seen as exhaustive, however there is no other way to deal with such a complex issue. The immense complexity of the internal and international relations between the Order in Prussia, the Kingdom of Hungary, Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in addition to the role played by the Papacy in the legal disputes between the Order and Poland, highlights the need for such a book as Pósan's. He presents the information in a structured and easy to follow manner. The great strength of this chapter is that it will serve as an excellent reference tool and guide for those who are not experts in Hungarian history or who primarily specialize in the regions in which the Teutonic Order was active (i.e., Prussia or Livonia). Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the economic ties between Hungary and Prussia in the fourteenth century. The inclusion of this at the end of the chapter seems to be a bit misplaced and marked by a sort of random transition. However, the goal of the chapter is met, for we must remember that Pósan sets out in the introduction to include discussions of such relationships. The strongest element of this chapter is, in my opinion, is the role played by townspeople and citizens in the *Ordensland* and their relationships with merchants from Hungary.

After discussing the tense, and then warmer, relations between the Order and Hungary throughout the fourteenth century, Pósan's book moves into the fifteenth century and the age of Sigismund of Luxembourg. Sigismund's 50-year reign (1387–1437) saw a continuation of positive relations between the Order and Hungary. Pósan uses two periods in this period's history divided by the defeat and aftermath of the Battle of Tannenberg/Grünwald (15 July 1410). The first is when Sigismund viewed the Order as "an important political, financial, and economic partner." After the Order's defeat, Sigismund became Holy Roman Emperor in 1410 and his attitude and dealing with the Order underwent a change to reflect what Pósan calls his "plan for the reconstitution of the medieval idea of universal imperial sovereignty." (pp. 183–184). The first section of the chapter (pp. 183–184) discusses the general features of this relationship, and the next subject concerns relations between Sigismund and the Order until 1387 (pp. 184–190) when

Sigismund became King of Hungary. The third part of the chapter concerns this relationship's developments between 1387 and 1396 (pp. 190–196), in other words, the conversion of Lithuania to the Battle of Nicopolis. Part four concerns the aftermath of the defeat at Nicopolis and the outbreak of the Great War between the Order and Poland (1409–1411) (pp. 196–209), before moving on to the “Great War” and relations between Sigismund and the Order (pp. 209–23). Section six examines the fallout from this event in the Order's history, namely the First Peace of Thorn signed on 1 February 1411 and the Council of Constance (pp. 223–232). The Council of Constance, one of the most important events in the history of the conversion and conquest of the Baltic region, receives its own section (pp. 232–245), with the following section devoted to the relations between Sigismund and the Teutonic Order in the 1420s, a time which saw the rise of the Hussite movement and the subsequent involvement of Sigismund against them, in addition to problems with the Turks (pp. 245–263). The final section of the chapter considers the second “invitation” of the Order to defend the southern borders of the Kingdom in 1429 (pp. 263–77). Chapter 4 is especially important in demonstrating the continued positive relations between the Order and Hungary in the fifteenth century, in addition to demonstrating the international backdrop to these events and the ways in which they shaped the decisions of Sigismund.

Composed of three sections, the fifth chapter of the reviewed book considers relations between the Order and Hungary during the Hunyadi period. Here, Pószán's book's overall contribution to the Anglophone scholarship on this topic comes to the forefront for this topic is rarely explored outside of specialist circles. We are also able to see the pattern of relations over time: while they reached a peak with Sigismund, after his death, there were tensions again.

The first segment of the chapter considers the reigns of Albert the Magnanimous (r. 1438–1439), Vladislaus I (r. 1434–1444), and Ladislaus V (r. 1440–1457), emphasizing the perceived threat on the part of the Teutonic Order of the house of Jagiellon in the fifteenth century. This would have had considerable impacts on the relationship between the Order and Hungary if a member of this family would become the king of Hungary (p. 280). Thus, the Order was aligned with and favored the Habsburgs. Also noteworthy is the contextualization of events in Prussia within the broader framework of relationships between the two groups: these include the Prussian Federation, which formed in 1440, in addition to those occurring in Bohemia such as the Hussite conflicts with Jan Jiskra. Most interesting is the ways in which the Teutonic Order, as an institution committed to war against

the enemies of the church (i.e., *Heidenkampff*), managed to avoid engaging these conflicts. Section 2 moves on to economic relationship between the two groups in the first half of the fifteenth century. This is a bit out of place, in my opinion, for it focuses on the events after the death of Louis of Anjou in September of 1382, and seems to jump back to Chapter 3. However, it is of crucial importance to the developments that led to the Prussian Federation, even if it is presented in a somewhat dense manner. Section 3 then addresses the relationship between Matthias Corvinus and the Teutonic Order. Pószán manages to demonstrate (p. 292) that the Teutonic Order was a significant player in international politics in the 1450s that managed to ensure that the Jagiellonians were able to stay off of the Hungarian throne. According to him “the Jagiellonian dynasty was the common enemy of the Teutonic Order and Matthias, a fact that helps to explain why Matthias Corvinus and the Teutonic Order formed an alliance in the latter half of the 1470s.” This section considers the reality of the situation, too, noting the considerable military failures of the Order against Poland-Lithuania, in addition to the Prussian Federation and the conflicts between the Kingdom of Poland and the Papacy (p. 293). Pószán appears to suggest in this chapter that the Order was able to exploit political situations abroad in spite of these military and political failures at home, something that is quite important for the audience of this book who may not be a specialist either in the history of the Teutonic Order or the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. He succeeds in laying out this complex, yet fascinating, period of European history.

The final chapter of this book considers the relationship between the Teutonic Order and Hungary during the Jagiellonian Period which, as was demonstrated in Chapter 5, was an outcome not wanted by the Teutonic Order. Consequently, it examines the deterioration in the relationship. The first section (pp. 309–318) considers the general relations between the Order and Hungary from 1490 (the time of Maximilian I) to 1511, emphasizing the participation of the Order in Jan Olbracht’s campaign of 1497, in addition to the apparent view that the Order was not bound to be vassal to a secular power (p. 308), in this case, the King of Poland himself. Section two (pp. 319–331) deals with the Jagiellonian Kings of Hungary and their dealings with Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach (r. 1511–1525). Pószán neatly lays out the implications of the Grand Master of the Order who would convert the Order’s Prussian state to Protestantism in 1525 and his dealings with Hungary. However, he also points out some of the apparently contradictions in the behavior of the Order (i.e., its alliance with the Grand Prince of Moscow against Poland), which would have been quite interesting to devote more attention to. An-

other important theme is the policy of Maximilian I toward Poland and the subsequent end of military support for the Order on the part of the Empire (p. 324). It is the opinion of the author of this review that we can observe from Pószán's analysis how the Teutonic Order gradually moved into the background of political and diplomatic affairs at this time (p. 329), and only seem to have surfaced when it benefitted one of the parties involved. The final part of the chapter concerns economic relations in the latter half of the fifteenth century (pp. 331–334). In a way, this echoes the impression of the second section of Chapter 5, namely in that it feels out of place. However, the information is important for examining the apparent sharp decline in the role of the Order in trade relations between Prussia and Hungary (p. 331), namely because trade was now under the direct authority of the King of Poland, not the Order. Pószán provides a sturdy analysis of this significant shift, while concluding that in all likelihood Hungarian goods continued to exist in East Prussia (p. 334).

While the reviewed book is clearly a thorough study and encompasses a very broad topic, there are some issues with its presentation. Various spelling and grammar mistakes throughout the book distract the reader.⁸ However, this does not take away from the overall strength of the analysis presented by Pószán, even if it makes it somewhat unclear at times. More surprising is that there is also not a general “conclusion” to the book, and this leaves the reader with the impression that something is missing. Given that the book begins with an overview of the key ideas and developments linked with the crusade idea, its reception in Hungary, and its importance in the formation of the Teutonic Order, such a comprehensive study would only be strengthened by concise outline of the conclusions reached and the findings presented. This could also be applied to the lack of conclusions for each chapter, which would have made for easier reading of the book to researchers and easier to navigate to specific parts.

However, the overall contributions of the book and its appeal, in the reviewer's opinion, outweigh these problems. Pószán presents an analysis of the source base both from the Hungarian side and the side of the Teutonic Order. He also makes great use of unpublished materials kept in Berlin (esp. Ordensbriefarchiv) and Vienna (DOZA), providing an accessible presentation of the topic and complex political, diplomatic, military, and economic situations. Overall, the book is a very important contribution to the scholarship of the military orders and east central

⁸ E.g., p. 44 refers to “as noted in the foregoing” and appears to be missing a word; p. 178, which refers to *sicietas*; p. 276 which refers to “a member of the court of the imperial court,” etc.

Europe, even if there are some issues in terms of the presentation and structure. It will be especially useful for students and researchers alike who are not familiar with either the Teutonic Order or the Kingdom of Hungary, or the later history of both.

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