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[REVIEW]: RAFAŁ KUBICKI, *PRUSY KRZYŻACKIE. GOSPODARKA I KULTURA NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH*, WYDAWNICTWO UNIwersYTETU GDAŃSKIEGO, GDAŃSK 2024, PP. 294.

The latest monograph by Rafał Kubicki, a medievalist from Gdańsk, is devoted – generally speaking – to rural areas in the State of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. In this synthetic approach, the author draws on a rich tradition of research into the development of settlements, rural society, production relations and the organisation of agriculture, breeding, cultivation and many other aspects of the territory in question. It is worth adding that this is not his first research expedition to the Prussian countryside under the rule of the Teutonic Order: his habilitation published in 2012 was devoted to milling in the Teutonic State from the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century.¹ Similar topics are examined also by Kubicki's students; for example in 2022, at the University of Gdańsk Grzegorz Woliński submitted his doctoral thesis entitled "Commandery of Tuchola (1330–1454). Space – economy – society."

The author presents his findings in two basic sections, which reflect two domains addressed in the subtitle: 'economy' and 'culture.' Under the former, he analyses a number of problems related to the organisation of agriculture and agricultural production, models of production in various forms of rural holdings (peasant farm, knight's estate, Teutonic manor, rural town estates, etc.); he deliberately omits issues related to forestry and fishing. The second range of issues in the proposed construction is

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¹ Rafał Kubicki, *Młynarstwo w państwie zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach w XIII–XV wieku (do 1454 r.)* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2012).

the “environment and cultural patterns in rural areas, including the residential and living conditions of marriage (family) functioning, customs and rituals, as well as activities and pastimes” (p. 9) of rural inhabitants. Such an approach to the work may surprise, since the methods and organisation of agricultural production fall under the notion of agrarian culture, and the whole of the issues discussed may be treated as a broadly understood medieval rural culture. With the help of these notions, the author separated the material (productive, infrastructural, monetary, etc.) side of life in the countryside from the more abstract one, connected with religiosity, customs and various forms of social life. However, these two spheres intermingle, and this is evident in the proposed narrative.

The first part, entitled “Economy in rural areas” (pp. 15–147), occupies the bulk of the dissertation and is devoted to two main issues: agriculture and production. This gives the author a pretext for outlining the organisational and legal framework, also used later in the thesis. The author thus draws a social panorama of the rural population and discusses its various categories according to their legal status (Chełmno law, Polish law), economic status (size of endowments), as well as social and ethnic status (knights, free Prussians, *schultheis*, innkeepers or millers, etc.). The basic concept in this part of the work is the “farm in a village under the Chełmno law”: taking the two-lan (33.6 ha) farm as a model, Kubicki – making use of earlier findings in relation to Gdańsk Pomerania (Peter Kriedte), the Christburg commandery (Heide Wunder) or the Königsberg commandery (Grischa Vercamer) – shows in tabular form the averaged fiscal burdens in dynamic terms. He then discusses the successive types of Prussian villages: homestead, knight, bishop, chapter, monastery, town or Teutonic manor. The Order influenced the functioning of the rural economy by its territorial officials (commander, advocate, procurator), who, among other things, controlled the collection of rents and services. Its basis was grain cultivation, supplemented by animal breeding.

In this part of the work the reader may notice numerous maps produced by Kubicki. The skill and effort put into their preparation need to be appreciated, yet three comments must be made. The first concerns the map entitled “Administrative division of Teutonic Prussia in 1400” and the territories marked in green, defined on the map as the bishoprics of Pomesania, Chełmno, Ermland and Sambia. In this

case, we are not dealing with dioceses, with their areas three times larger, but with “land lordships of bishoprics and chapters,” where the representatives of these institutions had full spiritual, as well as secular authority. The use of this term in the legend would have made the map comprehensible and would not have distorted the picture of ecclesiastical administration in the Teutonic State. It is significant that the same mistake was made by Michael Burleigh in 1984 on his map.² Using the term ‘East Prussia’ (Ostpreussen) in the title of a map showing soil types in the area of Upper and Lower Prussia colonised before 1400 is an anachronism. The term ‘East Prussia’ is used to describe the province of the Kingdom of Prussia, created after the first partition of Poland in 1772. Some of the maps are simply unreadable due to an overabundance of inserted information (e.g. the map showing the settlement network of the Czluchów and Tuchola commanderies in the first half of the fifteenth century on p. 119).

In the second part “Cultural environments and models in rural areas” (pp. 151–216), the author presents the everyday life of the rural population in medieval Prussia. He analyses living and housing conditions, the organisation of village and rural space and rural architecture. He then looks at family relations (mainly marital) using, among other things, synodal legislation and land ordinances. Rural communities existed according to the rhythm of the seasons, farm work and the timing of payments to the landlord. A second factor regulating the passage of time was the liturgical calendar, setting the rhythm of festivals and events on both individual and group level. Ecclesiastical legislation shows the presence of rites and customs from pre-Christian times, which the clergy tried to combat with synodal legislation. The place of community experience in the village was primarily the parish church, but also the inn, whose influence sometimes also challenged the church authorities. The above issues are analysed by Rafał Kubicki with reference to two groups in rural communities: peasants (pp. 151–186) and knights and nobles (pp. 186–202). A subsection devoted to the rural population’s attitude to death, differentiated by ethnicity and religiosity, can be regarded as the aftermath of the author’s earlier research interests. The issues of wills, funerals and burials raised in this

² Michael Burleigh, *Prussian Society and the German Order. An Aristocratic Corporation in Crisis c. 1410–1466* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11.

part of the monograph, are an evidence of how little source material is available to a historian dealing with these issues in his research on a medieval village in the Teutonic State.

In the historiography of the Teutonic State the issue of economy and rural society has appeared mainly in the context of the development of settlement in the Prussian areas up to the middle of the fifteenth century. The problem-solving approach proposed by Rafał Kubicki, which takes into account cultural and social phenomena visible in the source material, not only summarises previous results, but also opens up new research opportunities.