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The Hospice of the German Nobility: Changes in the Admission Policy of the Teutonic Knights in the Fifteenth Century

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published in

Mendicants, Military Orders and Regionalism in Medieval Europe
1999

document version

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citation for published version (APA)

Mol, J. A. (1999). The Hospice of the German Nobility: Changes in the Admission Policy of the Teutonic Knights in the Fifteenth Century. In J. Sarnowsky (Ed.), *Mendicants, Military Orders and Regionalism in Medieval Europe* (pp. 115-130). Ashgate Publishing Ltd..

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pletely differently to, for example, Prussia, the realm of the Teutonic Knights – and in any case, in a manner thoroughly appropriate to the specific situation in developing Silesia.²⁵

²⁵ *Ständefreiheit und Staatsgestaltung in Ostmitteleuropa. Übernationale Gemeinsamkeiten in der politischen Kultur vom 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, eds J. Bahlke, H. J. Bömelburg, N. Kersken. Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mittelalters (Leipzig, 1996); M. Starnawska, 'Crusade Orders on Polish Lands during the Middle Ages. Adaptation in a Peripheral Environment', *Religious Communities and Corporations in Central Europe, 10th to 15th centuries*. Quaestiones medi aevi novae 2 (Warszawa, 1997), pp. 121-42; cf. T. Jurek, 'Die Entwicklung eines schlesischen Regionalbewußtseins im Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 47 (1998) 21-48; *Silesiographie. Stand und Perspektiven der Schlesienforschung. Festschrift für Norbert Conrad zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds M. Weber, C. Rabe. Wissenschaftliche Schriften des Vereins für die Geschichte Schlesiens 4 (Würzburg, 1998).

The 'Hospice of the German Nobility':

Changes in the Admission Policy of the Teutonic

Knights in the Fifteenth Century

Johannes A. Mol

Introduction

The Teutonic Order has been called an aristocratic corporation in crisis for the period 1410 to 1466.¹ Crisis, decline, and decay are the words that have been used to mark the condition in which the order found itself in the fifteenth century.² And indeed this brotherhood whose task it was to protect Christendom against its enemies got into a long series of difficulties in this period, which in the long run threatened to destroy the very foundations of its existence, at least in the Baltic, where the order by then had its main area of operation. Since the Grand Duke of Lithuania had been converted in 1386 there were, formally, no heathen to be fought. From then on, the only object of the order could be to ensure that the crusading state it had founded prevailed against its mighty catholic contending neighbours Poland and Lithuania. The order had to do this on its own, without the help of the west-European nobility, which in the pre-

¹ See the subtitle, chosen by M. Burleigh, *Prussian society and the German Order. An aristocratic corporation in crisis c. 1410-1466* (Cambridge, 1984).

² J. Voigt, *Geschichte des Deutschen Ritterordens in seinen zwölf Balleien in Deutschland*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1857-1859), here vol. 1, pp. 640-41; S. Eckahl, 'Die Schlacht von Tannenberg und ihre Bedeutung in der Geschichte des Ordensstaates', *Deutsche Ostlande* 35 (1989) 63-80, at pp. 68-70; H. Bookmann, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Ostpreussen und Westpreussen* (Berlin, 1992), p. 185.

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ceding century had come to Prussia in great numbers to hunt down heathen Lithuanians. Only the Livonian branch could still serve Christendom after 1400 by continuing its struggle against the schismatic Russians. The smashing defeat at Tannenberg in 1410 and the humiliating second peace-treaty of Thorn in 1466, in which the grand master had to cede more than half of his territory and strongholds to the Polish king and to accept his overlordship for the remainder, had seriously weakened the cohesion of the order – if they did not already mark the end of its universal ambitions. Add to this the fact that the third branch of the order, which was organized in twelve bailiwicks in the German empire at the same time, had to face the consequences of an economic depression and, for some bailiwicks, increasingly had to put up with the control of territorial lords,³ and the gloomy background of my story is sketched. In this context, the question nearly automatically is to be raised what connections can be established between these developments and the changes that took place in the conditions of access to the order. Before I focus upon these changes, let us first have a look at the figures.

Figures

Many things could be said about the question of how precise our figures are and what they tell us exactly.⁴ Especially, the quota of knight-brethren in Prussia and Livonia on the eve of Tannenberg have been subject to discussion for

³ R. ten Haaf, *Deutschordensstaat und Deutschordensballen. Untersuchungen über Leistung und Sonderung der Deutschordensprovinzen in Deutschland vom 13. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert*. Göttinger Bausteine zur Geschichtswissenschaft 5 (2nd edn, Göttingen, Frankfurt, Berlin, 1954), pp. 52-59.

⁴ The numbers in the annexed tables are mainly based on F. Benninghoven, 'Zur Zahl und Standortverteilung der Brüder des Deutschen Ordens in den Ballen um 1400', *Preussenland* 26 (1988) 1-20. See also Voigt, 1, pp. 301-3, Ten Haaf, pp. 38-39, and E. Masscke, 'Die inneren Wandlungen des Deutschen Ritterordens', *Geschichte und Gegenwartspewußsein. Festschrift für Hans Rothfels zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Göttingen, 1973), pp. 247-77 [reprinted in *idem, Dominus Hospitalis Theutonicorum. Europäische Verbindungsstellen der Deutschordensgeschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1931-1963*, ed. U. Arnold, OSTGDO 10 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1970), pp. 35-59], at pp. 257-58. I have corrected some evident errors and omissions for the bailiwicks of Utrecht and Biesen. As for the date of the first visitation report from the beginning of the fifteenth century, Benninghoven gives two possibilities: either 1400 or 1409 to 1410, of which he takes the former. I have chosen the latter, because of the absence of Colmarsum under the commanderies of Utrecht (this house was transferred to Westphalia only after 1406: ARDOU, no. 2298).

many years, mainly because they have to be estimated.⁵ The figures for the bailiwicks did not get that much attention until now. They are based on visitation reports. The main problem with both groups of figures is that they are not complete: the data for the second half of the fifteenth century are missing, simply because no visitation reports have been preserved for that period. To get some grip on them we can only estimate the development on the basis of sure counts for some groups of commanderies. In doing this we have to leave Prussia and Livonia aside: Prussia because the loss of more than half of its territory in 1466 makes a comparison less useful, and Livonia because there are hardly any numbers available for this branch over the period 1450 to 1550. Our possibilities are thus limited to those bailiwicks in the German empire for which enough source-material has been preserved. As research in this field has not yet made many advances – most studies of individual bailiwicks and houses focus upon regional themes – for the beginning of the sixteenth century some figures can be produced only for the bailiwicks of Franconia, Koblenz, and Utrecht.⁶ They seem, however, to mirror tendencies reflected in many houses of other bailiwicks at the same time.

Which conclusions can be drawn from these figures? In the first place, that on the eve of Tannenberg, the order was at full strength in the German empire, compared to the foregoing decades. Secondly, it can be assessed that after Tannenberg – up to the crisis that would lead to the Thirteen Years' War – the order did not succeed in making up the losses in Prussia and Livonia. In the same period the number of knight-brethren in the bailiwicks was on the wane too, rather dramatically. This decrease, however, was largely compensated for

⁵ B. Jähning, 'Der Danziger Deutschordenskonvent in der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Danzig in acht Jahrhunderten. Beiträge zur Geschichte eines humanistischen und preussischen Mittelpunktes*, ed. B. Jähning, P. Lelkemann (Münster, 1985), pp. 151-84, at pp. 156-58; Benninghoven, p. 20; K. Militzer, 'Die Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens. Eine Einführung in die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Auswertung des Ritterbrüderkatalogs', *Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens*, eds L. Fenske, K. Militzer. Quellen und Studien zur baltischen Geschichte 12 (Cologne, 1993), pp. 11-70, at pp. 14-16; S. Neitmann, *Von der Grafschaft Mark nach Livland. Ritterbrüder aus Westfalen im livländischen Deutschen Orden*. Veröffentlichungen aus den Archiven Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Beiheft 3 (Cologne, 1993), pp. 35-37.

⁶ The sixteenth century figures in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 are respectively based on: D. J. Weiss, *Die Geschichte der Deutschordens-Ballei Franken im Mittelalter* (Neustadt a. d. Aisch, 1991), pp. 337-41; H. Limburg, *Die Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens und die Ballei Koblenz*. OSTGDO 8 (Bad Godesberg, 1969), p. 167; J. A. Mol, *De Friese huizen van de Duitse Orde. Nes, Schoten en Steenkerk en hun plaats in het middeleeuwse Friese kloosterlandschap* (Leeuwarden, 1991), pp. 204-5.

by an increase in the number of priest-brethren. As the figures for Koblenz demonstrate, the diminution in the number of knights was strongest in the four bailiwicks that were under direct control of the grand master, the so-called 'Kammerballeien' or chamber-bailiwicks: apart from Koblenz, these were Alsace-Burgundy, Austria, and Bozen. In the eight bailiwicks under the German master, of which Franconia was by far the greatest, the decrease of knight-brethren was almost totally balanced by an increase of priest-brethren.

When we then try to extend the line up to 1500 we see that the developments in the bailiwicks in the period after 1450 are varying. The chamber-bailiwicks of the grand master – represented in Table 4.2 by Koblenz – did lose both knight-brethren and priests. Between 1410 and 1500 the total strength in this bailiwick fell back to less than a third. In the main bailiwick of the German master, Franconia, on the other hand, the total number of brethren more or less remained stable. The number of knights continued to diminish but this development was nearly balanced by the growth of the priest-brethren staff. For Utrecht the tendency has yet another direction, though it has to be admitted that for this bailiwick the latest survey, in which figures are mentioned, dates only from 1539. From the source-material on individual Utrecht houses, however, it can be deduced that the decrease in figures reached its greatest momentum by the end of the fifteenth century.⁷ In the neighbouring bailiwicks of Biesen and Westphalia the number of knight-brethren also continued to fall in the same period, albeit not as sharply as in Utrecht.

Considering these tendencies, if one tries to estimate the total strength of the Teutonic Knights in all the bailiwicks in the German empire about the year 1500, one will probably have to come up with a number of not more than 170 or 180 brethren. All in all, therefore, less than half of their number in 1410.

Recruitment

How, then, can one evaluate this decrease in numbers? The Berlin archivist Friedrich Benninghoven is very clear about it: according to him the main cause is the 'wirtschaftlich-finanzielle Niedergang, der den Lebensunterhalt der Brit-

der so stark geschmälert hat, daß ihre Zahl verringert werden mußte'.⁸ If I am interpreting correctly, two premises are hidden in this judgement. First, that the established decrease was not a matter of supply, not the consequence of a lessened interest of the German nobility in membership of the order. And secondly, that the cost of living for knights was far higher than for priests – otherwise it could not be explained how in some bailiwicks the number of priest-brethren was growing. That does suggest that the decrease in knights was the deliberate result of a policy of limitation, adopted by the leaders of the order. Was this indeed the case? Before I comment upon that, it seems useful to sketch how and by whom knight-brethren were admitted to the order in the fifteenth century.⁹

In theory it was the grand master who decided on receiving new brethren, though he needed the advice of the chapter general. The statutes leave no doubt about that. The grand master could, however, delegate his authority in these matters to other officials, and so he did. But here we have to discern between his own dominions – Prussia and the chamber-bailiwicks – and those of the Livonian and German masters. The latter already controlled the recruitment for their branches by 1400 – and probably earlier.¹⁰ The German master in turn delegated his power to admit new brethren regularly to the heads of the bailiwicks, called land-commanders. Eberhard von Seinsheim for example authorized the Utrecht Land-Commander Herman van Keppel to receive 'honest men' into the brotherhood of the order in 1426.¹¹ Probably this authorization was related to one or more individual cases.

The Master of Livonia mostly held the initiative in his own hands. How he received new brethren can be gleaned from a report on a recruiting campaign that the Land-Commander of Westphalia organized for him in 1411, shortly after Tannenbergh.¹² The Livonian master himself was a Westphalian, and

⁸ Benninghoven, p. 18.

⁹ For the following, I am leaning heavily on Voigt, vol. 1, pp. 256-79 ('Die Aufnahme im Deutschen Orden'), and K. Miltizer, 'Die Aufnahme von Ritterbrüdern in den Deutschen Orden. Ausbildungsstand und Aufnahmevoraussetzungen', *Das Kriegswesen der Ritterorden im Mittelalter*, ed. Z. H. Nowak. Ordines Militares – Colloquia Torunensia Historica 6 (Torun, 1991), pp. 7-18.

¹⁰ Miltizer, 'Ritterbrüder', p. 60.

¹¹ J. J. de Geer tot Oudegein, *Archieven der Ridderlijke Duitse Orde, balie van Utrecht*, 2 vols (Utrecht, 1871), no. 348.

¹² *Ibid.*, no. 345; J. A. Mol, 'Nederlandse ridderbroeders van de Duitse Orde in Lijffland: herkomst, alkomst en carrières', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 111 (1996) 1-29, at pp. 15-16.

⁷ See for example the dates for the commanderies of Leiden, Middelburg, and Schelluinen: L. E. Loopstra, 'De Leidse commanderie van de Duitse Orde in de middeleeuwen', *Leids Jaarboekje* 1984, 33-59, at pp. 50-51; P. Aengenheyster, *Die Kommende des Deutschen Ordens von Middelburg zwischen den Jahren 1248 und 1381* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Free University, Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 24, 34; and H. Zuidervaart, *Het Duitse huis te Schelluinen* (Schelluinen, 1988), p. 30.

Westphalia by then was the most important recruiting region for the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order. In this report the land-commander who was entrusted with this task tells us how he proceeded, asking his subordinate commanders whether they knew suitable candidates among their kin. Within six weeks he assembled thirty-three men, of whom he demanded admission fees between 0 and 60 Rhenish guilders. He gave them lodgings in his houses till the last one had arrived. After that he had them accompanied to Lübeck, where they departed on a ship to Riga.

It seems as if the grand master recruited his personnel for Prussia and his chamber-bailiwicks in the same way. That is to say, his officials first of all received new brethren for Prussia. Only when brethren had proved themselves to be good administrators – after a military career – could they expect an appointment as commander in one of the chamber-bailiwicks.¹³ Thus, in the bailiwick of Koblenz, for example, practically no young knight-brethren could be found.

The grand master in Prussia recruited hardly any more brethren in Prussia itself than the Master of Livonia recruited from the nobility in Livonia. Nineteen out of twenty of all brethren for the Prussian branch were recruited in the German empire.¹⁴ They came not only from the areas that were covered by the chamber-bailiwicks but also from other parts of the empire. The recruitment could be organised in separate campaigns or by individual admissions via the land-commanders. Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen, for example, sent two of his officials to Germany in 1406 to give the habit to new brothers, sending them directly to Prussia.¹⁵ The same was done by Paul von Rusedorf in 1422 and 1428.¹⁶ Apart from such campaigns, the grand master regularly contacted individual land-commanders about receiving new brethren for his territory. The Utrecht and Biesen sources from the first half of the fifteenth century mention a few cases of land-commanders presenting the habit for Prussia.¹⁷

¹³ Miltizer, 'Aufnahme', p. 12.

¹⁴ H. Boockmann, 'Herkunftsregion und Einsatzgebiet', *RR*, pp. 7-19, at pp. 16-17.

¹⁵ Masschke, p. 260; Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, XX. Hauptabteilung, Historisches Staatsarchiv Königsberg, Ordensfoliant 3, p. 278.

¹⁶ 1422: Jähmig, pp. 161-62; 1428: Ten Haaf, p. 40. The recruitment campaign of 1422 was organized in view of the coming war with Poland. Until then, Paul von Rusedorf's predecessor, Michael Kutschmeister, had maintained a stop on admissions because the order could not feed newcomers.

¹⁷ ARDOU, no. 340 (Land-Commander Herman van Keppel, before 1444). See also Ten Haaf, p. 40; and Jähmig, pp. 161-63.

Although serious prosopographical studies are still lacking for Prussia and the bailiwicks,¹⁸ we get the impression from the names of the brethren that by 1400 there was hardly any exchange of personnel between the bailiwicks of the German master on the one side and the Prussian and Livonian branches on the other.¹⁹ Apparently their career-circuits were already separated by then. Every brother who took the habit for Prussia or Livonia left at a very young age. As we learn from a report on an incident in Utrecht in 1454, he was expected never to return to his family or bailiwick of origin.²⁰ The carnal brother of the ruling land-commander, who, after serving in Livonia, had showed up in Utrecht to live on the pocket of the bailiwick, probably frustrated in his career, was supplied with a horse, armour, and a departing bonus of 150 guilders on the express condition that he would leave immediately for Livonia, never to come back again.

On the other hand, every brother who was received for the bailiwick made his career there. He only went to the Baltic if he expressly wished to go there, like Knight-Brother Berrit Schele, who – bored with his administration tasks in a remote Utrecht commandery – applied for a transfer to Prussia or Livonia in 1431.²¹ And, of course, brethren of the bailiwick had to go to Prussia if they were called for a common expedition, as happened several times in the years after Tannenbergh with the brethren of Biesen.²² For Utrecht, such a call is

¹⁸ Only for the bailiwick of Biesen have names and data been systematically gathered, by Michel van der Eycken ('Ridders, priesters en ambtenaren van de balije Biesen', *De Balije Biesen in het Maas-Rijngedielde*, ed. U. Arnold [Gent, 1993], pp. 55-79), though for the fifteenth century his collection is far from complete. Most other bailiwicks have not been studied at all in this respect, the Prussian branch at least for the period after 1350. Apart from Jähmig no one has recently taken the trouble to gather data on the origins, descent, and careers of Prussian brothers, probably because their number is too great for one person to work on. For the Livonian branch, which was far smaller than the Prussian one, an extensive catalogue with prosopographical data on all known knight-brethren was published in 1993 by I. Fenske and K. Miltizer (*Ritterbrüder im livländischen Zweig des Deutschen Ordens*): the result of a lengthy international research project that started in 1987. As Miltizer and also Neimann have shown, these data allow us a sharp view of the personal structures of the Teutonic Order. They could tell us even more if they could be compared with the data of Prussia and the bailiwicks. So here there is still a lot of work to do. It almost goes without saying that this can only be done by a research group rather than by one person alone.

¹⁹ Boockmann, 'Herkunftsregion', p. 14; Neimann, p. 631.

²⁰ ARDOU, no. 313*.

²¹ ARDOU, no. 2198; De Geer, *Archieven*, no. 807.

²² W. Reese, 'Gesamtdutsche und territoriale Zusammenhänge in der Geschichte des Deutschritterordens der Niederlande', *Blätter zur Deutschen Landgeschichte* 83 (1936-1937) 223-72, at p. 243.

recorded for 1453, when the herald of the grand master personally turned up in the Teutonic house of Utrecht to get all hands to go to Prussia.²³ It was in fact the last time such an expedition was organized. It was also the last time personnel were sent to the Baltic from the bailiwick of Utrecht. After 1466 there is no mention of recruitment for Prussia or Livonia in the Utrecht records. By then the bailiwick seems to have been leading its own life, more or less independently of the needs of the Prussian and Livonian branches, independently too from the German master. Only when a knight-brother had to be punished, was a transfer to the Baltic considered in Utrecht.²⁴

Conditions

The conditions for entry into the Teutonic Order are not found in the original statutes. Some requirements are formulated in the *Gesetze*, the laws that were added to the statutes and early laws under Grand Master Dietrich von Altenburg (1335-1341).²⁵ Klaus Miltizer supposes that they already date from the end of the thirteenth century.²⁶ These requirements are very clear, and seem very similar to what was asked by the Templars.²⁷ Recruits of the Teutonic Order had to be young (over fourteen years old), healthy, without physical imperfections, not hindered by debts or other worldly obligations. And they had to be of knightly descent. These principles were still in force by 1400, suited as they were to the military practice of the order at that time. On its expeditions in Prussia and Livonia, in its battles and skirmishes, only healthy and hardened young men could be used. As long as knight-brothers were effectively sent into the field – and in Livonia this was the case during the whole of the fifteenth century, whilst in Prussia after Tannenberg the military undertakings were more and more put out to mercenaries – these conditions continued to remain important. The requirement of knightly birth, *rittermässig und geboren zu iven wappen*,²⁸ guaranteed that candidate brothers were familiar with, and from their early years on well trained in, the handling of horses, swords, and

armour. The grand master could, by the way, revoke this condition. As we know that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries many sons of patricians were admitted,²⁹ the condition cannot have had its decisive class-discriminating character by then.

In the fifteenth century this was to change. Both in the bailiwicks and the Baltic the importance of noble birth came to be stressed. And 'noble' in this context did not mean of high noble descent (*edelfrei*), but of knightly birth. Although high-born noblemen, counts' and dynasts' sons are known to have joined the order, from the beginning most of its brethren had been recruited among what the later Middle Ages called the lesser nobility or gentry.³⁰ In the German empire this lower nobility originated from an amalgamation of the class of the free knights and that of the *ministeriales*, that is, of men originally not free who were servants of important lords. This orientation on the class of the *ministeriales* is demonstrated by the fact that most grand masters and also most masters of Livonia and Germany had this background.

What then strikes the eye is that, in both the bailiwicks and the Baltic in the fifteenth century, a call resounds for full noble birth to be required of new brothers – at first only for the two halves (that is from both parents) and later for the four parts (grandparents). This requirement had to be met, it seems, whenever a knight-brother wanted to exert a lordship in the name of the order. When, for example, a new land-commander had to be appointed in Utrecht in 1442, the main objection that was raised against the candidate Dirk van Enghuizen was that he was noble only for the eighth part, and even that only by bastardy.³¹ Thus, complete knightly descent from both father and mother was already required at that time for the simple membership of the order. In 1440 some discontented brethren in Prussia formulated as one of their demands that every newcomer had to prove his nobility by this criterion before being admitted.³² Sons of patricians, bastards, and half nobles – however experienced and trained in administration and the use of arms they might be – were not welcome any more. About 1450, noble birth from two parts was explicitly

²⁹ Maschke, p. 258.

³⁰ M. Heilmann, 'Bemerkungen zur sozialgeschichtlichen Erforschung des Deutschen Ordens', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 80 (1961) 126-42, at pp. 128 seqq.

³¹ *Want he een achtendeel noch geen deel en hadde dat der ritterscap to behoert, dan van verre basterdie*, Geheimnes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, XX. Hauptabteilung, Historisches Staatsarchiv Königsberg, Ordensbriefarchiv (OBA), no. 8306. The complaint was uttered towards the grand master by the old Land-Commander of Westphalia, Sweder Cobbing, who came from the same region as Enghuizen.

³² Maschke, p. 274.

²³ J. J. de Geer tot Oudegein, *Excerpten uit de oude rekeningen der Ridderlijke Duitse Orde, balye van Utrecht, vóór de kerkt hervorming* (Utrecht, 1895), p. 42.

²⁴ Mol, 'Nederlandse riddersbroeders', p. 17.

²⁵ Perthach, p. 149.

²⁶ Miltizer, 'Aufnahme', p. 8.

²⁷ A. J. Forey, 'Recruitment to the military orders', *Viator* 17 (1986) 139-71, at pp. 141 seqq.

²⁸ Cf. n. 15.

established in an oath formula of the German master.³³ But by then the tendency was already heading towards a further sharpening of the criterion. In 1451, the visitors of the grand master ordered the Commander of Koblenz to admit only brethren who could demonstrate four noble parts.³⁴ This criterion was in force throughout the order by about 1500.³⁵ It must be stressed, however, that this development by no means took place only in the Teutonic Order. It can be observed in cathedral chapters, nunneries, and secular military orders as well, even at earlier dates.³⁶

Brethren of German birth: the importance of the region

What changed at the same time was that admission became restricted to what was then called the German nation. At first glance, this may seem strange because of the order's name. But that name, derived from the Hospital of the Germans in Jerusalem that was considered by the order to be its real centre, was not meant to restrict entry only to German-speaking brothers. Quite like the other military orders the Teutonic Knights fostered their universal principles and ambitions.³⁷ Although in practice most of its members came from the German empire, occasionally men from non German-speaking areas were admitted. Thus, until the end of the fourteenth century Italians, Swedes, Frisians, and even some French, Polish, and Spanish knights could be found in the ranks of the order.³⁸

³³ According to this formula, at his admission the candidate had to bring two knights of his kin (*fründe*), not older than forty, who could guarantee that he was ... *siner synne, vernunftige, getieder umm am leibe ungeberechlichen und von vater und muter adel und wappengewonss*, OBA, no. 9447; Jähning, pp. 161-62.

³⁴ H. Reimer, 'Verfall der Deutsch-Ordensballei Koblenz im 15. Jahrhundert', *Triertisches Archiv* 11 (1907) 1-42, at p. 29; Jähning, p. 162 n. 52, mentions the case of a Heinrich Graf von Schwarzbürg, who already in 1432 vouched for Candidate-Brother Hans von Hongede that he had four knightly grandparents.

³⁵ Miltzer, 'Aufnahme', p. 14.

³⁶ K. Miltzer, 'Die Einbindung des Deutschen Ordens in die süddeutsche Adelswelt', *RR*, pp. 141-60, at pp. 153-54; A. Schulte, *Der Adel und die deutsche Kirche im Mittelalter. Studien zur Sozial-, Rechts- und Kirchengeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1910), pp. 29 seqq.; E. Koch, *De kloosterpoort als sluitpoort? Adellijke vrouwen langs Maas en Rijn tussen huwelik en convent, 1200-1600*. Maaslandse monografieën 54 (Leeuwarden, Mechten, 1994), p. 65.

³⁷ U. Arnold, 'Europa und die Region - widerstreitende Kräfte in der Entwicklung des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter', *RR*, pp. 161-72, at p. 164.

³⁸ Maschke, 'Wandlungen', pp. 253-55; Miltzer, 'Aufnahme', pp. 9-10.

In the fifteenth century this situation belonged to the past. The call to forbid entry to foreign knights resounded louder and louder. When the Land-Commander of Biesen received a Walloon as knight for Prussia in 1449, the grand master wrote to him - even though this candidate was a son of the Count of Namur - that he should never do this again, and he sent the young man back to Maasricht immediately.³⁹ In the words of the grand master the order was a real German order, to which no non German-speaking brethren could be admitted.

This definitive expulsion of other nations and languages ran parallel to the growth of regional thinking in the order. Or, perhaps we should better call it regional particularism.⁴⁰ The development of this phenomenon can, among other things, be concluded from the quarrels that were fought out in both Livonia and Prussia between brethren of different regional origin in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁴¹ The assignment of desirable offices and posts in the commanderies was the main issue. Brethren high in the hierarchy, who could decide on promotions, first of all tended to favour members of their families and then fellow-countrymen, that is, men from their own regional noble circle. In this way discriminatory tendencies were established which led almost automatically to complaints by men from minority regions. In Prussia discord existed between the south-Germans (Franconians and Swabians) on the one side, and north-Germans (Rhinelanders and Westphalians) on the other. In Livonia the Westphalians contested with the Rhinelanders. In the latter case the opponents could perfectly well understand each other's dialects. Thus, not the language as such was at stake, but the difference between marriage-circles, that apparently did not interfere. In both Prussia and Livonia the complaints were most vehement at the moment when the smaller group was dominating. In both branches the larger group won, with the effect that in the end it monopolized all important offices for its members more completely than ever before.

³⁹ Voigt, vol. 1, pp. 273-74.

⁴⁰ Arnold, pp. 165 seqq.

⁴¹ Prussia: C. A. Luckeath, *Paul von Rusdorf. Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens 1422-1441*. QSIGDO 15 (Bad Godesberg, 1969), pp. 184 seqq.; Livonia: Neumann, pp. 54 seqq.

Financial conditions

As with every other religious order, the canonical rule was in force also for the Teutonic Order that no quid pro quo compensation could be required from candidate members at their entry.⁴² But that was theory, in practice this rule was easy to get around for the leaders of the military orders, by presenting the entrance fee as a free gift.⁴³ In spite of the vow of poverty, the postulant who could not produce such alms was not admitted. Unfortunately not much is known about such simoniacal practices, as they were forbidden in the twelfth century and since then carefully kept out of the records!⁴⁴

Thus, for the Teutonic Order not many data are available. We do know that a knight-brother who went to Prussia had to bring one or more horses, a saddle, armour, and a sum of money, enough to cover his travelling expenses; all before he was given the habit with the black cross.⁴⁵ We already saw that the official of the Livonian master charged his candidate brethren 60 Rhenish guilders, although only a few of them could afford to pay the sum totally, 60 guilders was exactly the sum that is mentioned in the already quoted oath-formula of the German Master Jobst von Venningen (1447-1454), as the sum new Prussian brethren had to pay for three horses, besides 25 guilders for the cost of travel.⁴⁶

It is not clear whether the knight-brethren who entered the bailiwicks and stayed there had to bring the same equipment or the equivalent in money, but I tend to think so. In the accounts of the bailiwicks an entrance fee is sometimes mentioned, of which it is not clear whether the candidate got his horses and all else for it or not. In 1457 a sum of 100 Rhenish guilders, for example, is noted for the admission of Brother Claes van Malsen as a knight.⁴⁷ That was a large

⁴² On entry-gifts to religious foundations in general see J. Lynch, *Simoniacal entry into religious life from 1000 to 1260. A social, economic and legal study* (Columbus, Ohio, 1976).

⁴³ Forey, p. 155.

⁴⁴ For Frisia, some evidence is available on the payment of entrance fees by Hospitaller and Teutonic Order's priest-brethren and sergeants: Mol, *Frisese huizen*, pp. 87, 106.

⁴⁵ In 1422 Grand Master Paul von Rusedorf wanted his officials to recruit ... *brudere, die gutin harnisch und hengeste heten*. Jähmig, p. 161; see also: *Protokolle der Kapitel und Gespräche des Deutschen Ordens im Reich (1499-1525)*, eds M. Biskup, I. Janosz-Biskupowa. QSIGDO 41 (Marburg, 1991), p. 42 (1502).

⁴⁶ N. 23 above.

⁴⁷ *Hem IC rjinsgilden van heren Claes van Malsen als hie ten oirden geclery wart*: ARDOU, no. 330.1.

amount of money, at least for a member of the gentry. It probably was the standard fee. When in 1467 the brethren of Biesen had to take measures to consolidate their finances, they established the maximum number both of knights and priests at twenty each, with the express condition that every knight-brother had to pay 130 Rhine guilders at his entry, where priest-brethren had to offer 25 guilders.⁴⁸ Considering the necessity of raising their income, it is likely that the brethren had thus raised their earlier fee.

Hospice of the German nobility

Bearing in mind the information gathered above, it is not difficult to answer the question of whether the decrease in the number of knights was a matter of supply or demand. As the interest of the nobility in securing places in the order was growing rather than decreasing, we cannot but choose the latter option. In the different bailiwicks nobles were putting pressure on the leading officials to admit their younger sons into the order. The Land-Commander of Bissen wrote to the grand master in 1449 that he had received a lot of complaints from nobles in the neighbourhood that he had admitted too many foreigners to his bailiwick.⁴⁹ What other function could the order possibly have, according to them, than to offer a refuge to the nobility of the region? *Spital und Zufucht und Aufenthalt des Adels Teutscher Nation* is what the order was by then called,⁵⁰ or even, *Spital des armen Adels Teutscher Nation*. In which case, as Manfred Hellmann made clear, *armer Adel* is not to be understood as poor, but as lower nobility, the more so because really impoverished noble families simply could not afford the high entrance fees mentioned earlier. We can assume that in most bailiwicks admission to the very limited number of places came to be reserved to a small group of top families within the gentry.

How then do we have to estimate the weight of the economic decline that Benninghoven gave as his explanation for the diminishing numbers of knights? It is beyond doubt that most bailiwicks did not flourish in the fifteenth century, although the picture for a number of them – especially Franconia – is not as

⁴⁸ J. Graunwels, *Regesterlijst der oorkonden van de landkommanderij Oudenbieten en onderhorige kommanderijen*, 4 vols (Brussels, 1966-1969), here vol. 1, no. 428.

⁴⁹ Vogt, vol. 1, p. 273.

⁵⁰ Hellmann, p. 137; Maschke, pp. 268, 272; H. H. Hofmann, *Der Staat des Deutschen meisters. Studien zur bayerischen Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte* 3 (Münch, 1964), p. 199.

gloominess as it has sometimes been sketched.⁵¹ Further research is required in this matter. It is certain that the bailiwick of Thuringia nearly continuously balanced on the verge of bankruptcy.⁵² And the sad case of Bohemia will become clear from the article of Libor Jan below.⁵³

In this decline the most important factor was not the economic depression. In fact, most bailiwicks did overcome its consequences in the first decades of the fifteenth century.⁵⁴ Neither did the help for Prussia exhaust their resources – apart from the chamber-bailiwicks. Most of their material troubles seem to have been caused by war or mismanagement.

Were the incomes of the bailiwicks in the fifteenth century really so much lower than in the fourteenth, that less people could be maintained – Prussia, of course, set aside? The strange phenomenon is, and I take Biesen and Utrecht as examples again, that in this very period of 'decline' a series of extensive and costly building activities were undertaken in some of the bailiwicks which had their share in the general burdens of the order. In Biesen, Land-Commander Iwan van Cortenbach who went three times on expedition to Prussia after Tanenberg to support the grand master with men and money, from 1420 to 1435, erected a completely new castle on the order's territory in Gemert, only to embellish thereafter the commanderies of Bernissen and Bekkevoort and the main house of the bailiwick in Maastricht.⁵⁵ In the bailiwick of Utrecht, which fell prey to internal disorder between 1440 and 1465, costing the brethren enormous sums of money,⁵⁶ Land-Commander Johan van Drongelen built a new and luxurious aisle for the convent complex in Utrecht in 1475.⁵⁷ At the time of

⁵¹ Hofmann, pp. 92 seqq.; Weiss, pp. 328-36, 392-94. The latter author states, on the basis of detailed research, that the bailiwick of Franconia experienced a 'wirtschaftliche Aufschwung' under Land-Commander Melchior von Neumek (1463-1491). It induces him to say that Voigt's thesis of the economic decline of the Teutonic Order in the fifteenth century has been falsified.

⁵² B. Sommerlad, *Der Deutsche Orden in Thüringen* (Halle, 1931), pp. 66 seqq.

⁵³ Below, pp. 233-42.

⁵⁴ K. Miltzer, 'Auswirkungen der spätmittelalterlichen Agrardepression auf die Deutschordensballenien', *Von Akkon bis Wien. Studien zur Deutschordensgeschichte vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. U. Arnold, OStGD 20 (Marburg, 1978), pp. 62-75, at p. 74.

⁵⁵ B. Aarts, 'Bouw en verbouw van het kasteel van de Duitse Orde', *Commanderij Gemert, Beeldend Verleden*, ed. T. Thelen (Gemert, 1990), pp. 43-64, at pp. 46-51; A. Otten, *De vestiging van de Duitse Orde in Gemert 1200-1500* (Gemert, 1987), p. 85.

⁵⁶ Reese, pp. 251-60.

⁵⁷ B. Klück, *De landcommanderij van de Duitse Orde te Utrecht* (Utrecht, 1995), pp. 26 seqq.

his appointment, according to the chronicle of the Utrecht bailiwick, he found nothing but empty stores; only the treasury was full, but with letters of debt, up to 3000 Rhenish guilders. How to explain these developments?

The answer, of course, is not that difficult. Both van Cortenbach and van Drongelen, bringing in their family capital, wished to impress. They wanted to show their lordly qualities and demonstrate the honour of the order according to what they thought the tradition of the order was.⁵⁸ And – even more important – they were eager to have the luxury and comfort suitable to men of their class. What becomes apparent in their buildings is the raised standard of living to which they and their fellow-brethren had become accustomed. The raising of this standard took priority over maintaining the number of knights or supporting the political ambitions of the grand master. The consequence was that the number of brethren had to be limited, and by the end of the century not more than one knight-brother was residing in most houses of the bailiwicks. Brethren who led a communal or convent life were hardly to be found by about 1500. The less prosperous houses were entrusted to priest-brethren. Then, nearly every knight in the bailiwick was landlord and administrator and had to keep up appearances as such. It has been noted quite often, but it still remains striking, that in this period, members of the Teutonic Order are no longer called *fratres* but *domini* ('Herren').⁵⁹ They had become Teutonic lords instead of Teutonic brethren.

If the foregoing may be summarized in two sentences, I would like to conclude that the fifteenth century did not end with the downfall of the Teutonic Order. From the materials collected concerning its admission policy it has become clear, however, that by then the order had undergone a metamorphosis from a universal brotherhood to a confederation of regional corporations of celtate noblemen, whose main function it was to mirror and feed the self-consciousness and class pride of their families and nobility groups.

⁵⁸ On the person of Johan van Drongelen, see Mol, *Frise huizen*, pp. 145 seqq.

⁵⁹ P. Heim, *Die Deutschordenskommande Bungen und die Anfänge der Baillei Elsass-Burgund*, OStGD 32 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1977), pp. 148-49; Arnold, p. 167.

Appendix: numbers of brethren in the Teutonic Order

Table 1 Prussia		Table 2 Livonia	
Knights		Knights	
1410	c. 700	1410	300-350
1438	c. 350	1451	c. 200

Table 3 The bailiwicks in the German empire

Knights	Priests	Sergeants	Total	Others*
1379	-	-	701	123
1383	-	-	662	123
1394	-	-	620	86
1410	362	359	57	778
1451	226	402	32	660

* Chaplains, sisters, corrodians, schoolmasters, etc.

Single bailiwicks

Table 4.1 Franconia

Knights	Priests	Total
1410	80	53
1451	*52	77
1513	41	83

* Including one sergeant.

Table 4.2 Koblenz

Knights	Priests	Total
1410	37	16
1451*	**16	23
1515	2	13

* Excluding the house of Dieren which was sold to Biesen in 1420.
** Including two sergeants.

Table 4.3 Utrecht*

Knights	Priests	Total
1410	c. 16	31
1451**	15	29
1539	8	9

* Excluding two houses in Frisia.
** Including the house of Dieren which was bought from Biesen in 1434.

The Basle Dominicans between

Town and Province

Bernhard Neidiger

Like every mendicant convent the Basle Dominicans were integrated into their province as well as the order as a whole, and these superior levels of administration determined the norms for the friars' conventual life, controlled the observance of rules and regulations and decided which of the brethren was to be transferred to another convent or admitted to the order's studies.¹ Despite the levels of control within the order there was a close relationship between mendicants and towns.² The friars had to win over the faithful to be able to fulfil their main tasks, the cure of souls and their duties in papal service. They also had to come to an arrangement with the secular and ecclesiastical authorities regarding preaching and the collection of alms. This did not only apply to the bishops in their double function as temporal and spiritual lords, to the

¹ W. A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500*, 2 vols (Staten Island, NY, 1966-1973). This paper was written for the Leeds Conference 1997 and is reproduced here without major changes. The notes are restricted to the most important references. Translation by Jürgen Sarnowsky and Jens Röhkasten, revised by Ruth Peters.

² For Basle cf. B. Neidiger, *Mendikanten zwischen Ordensideal und städtischer Realität. Untersuchung zum wirtschaftlichen Verhalten der Bettelorden in Basel*. Berliner Historische Studien 5, Ordensstudien 3 (Berlin, 1981) pp. 211-14; B. E. J. Studdeli, *Minoritenniederlassungen und mittelalterliche Stadt. Beiträge zur Bedeutung von Minoriten- und Menalikantenanlagen im öffentlichen Leben der mittelalterlichen Stadtgemeinde, insbesondere der deutschen Schweiz*. Franziskanische Forschungen 21 (Weil, 1969); see also SWB, D. Berg (ed.), *Bettelorden und Stadt. Bettelorden und städtisches Leben im Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit*. Saxonia Franciscana 1 (Weil, 1992).

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