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Prussian Prehistory in Simon Grunau's *Preußische Chronik*

In the work referring to Simon Grunau's (born between 1455–65/70 and died after 1529/30) *Preußische Chronik*, a Black Friar of the Prussian Convent related to the orders in Elbląg and Gdańsk, I intended to prove that the beginning of his editorial work was connected to Erasmus Stella's works (born before 1460 and died 1521).¹ This work, published in March 1518,² was the first detailed Prussian prehistory published in print.³

We know that Stella—a humanist and an ardent supporter of Teutonic Knights—wrote the chronicle in the 1st decade of the 16th century inspired by

¹ See S. Zonenberg, *Kronika Szymona Grunaua*, Bydgoszcz 2009, pp. 48–49.

² *Erasmi Stellae Libonothani de Borvssiae antiqvitatibus libri dvo*, typis J. Froben, Basileae 1518, pp. 1–38 (on not numbered p. 39, the following text appears: „Basileae apud Ioannem Frobenium mense martio an. MDXVIII”); *Erasmi Stellae Libonothani de Borussiae Antiquitatibus libri duo*, hrsg. von T. Hirsch, *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* [further in the text: SRP], Bd. 4, Leipzig 1870, pp. 282–298.

³ Earlier, about 1470, the work of Frederick IIrd secretary was published and edited—Eneash Sylvius Piccolomini (born in 1405, died 1464), Pope Pius II in the years 1458–1464, in which, basing on Jordanes's *Getica* (VI century)—the latest history of Gots and Prussians was connected, creating a myth on the ancient times of Gothic (Germanic) nation on the Prussian land—*Eneae Silvii de situ et origine Pruthenorum, de Livonia eiusque ortu et situ, de bello Turcarum et Hungarorum*, typis A. Hernren, Coloniae [about 1470]; *Aeneas Sylvius Praeussen betreff ende Schrifften. De situ et origine Pruthenorum*, hrsg. von T. Hirsch, SRP, Bd. 4, Leipzig 1870, pp. 218–231; more about it the works of—T. Hirsch, *Einleitung: Aeneas Sylvius Praeussen betreff ende Schrifften*, SRP, Bd. 4, Leipzig 1870, p. 212; H. Boockmann, *Laurentius Blumenau. Fürstlicher Rat—Jurist—Humanist (ca. 1415–1484)*, Göttingen 1965, p. 108–112, 136–137, 209 et al.; N. Kersken, *Aspekte des preussischen Geschichtsdenkens im 16. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Preussische Landesgeschichte. Festschrift für Bernhart Jahnig zum 60. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von U. Arnold, M. Glauert, J. Sarnowsky, Marburg 2001, pp. 440–441; A. Mentzel-Reuters, *Von der Ordenschronik zur Landesgeschichte—Die Herausbildung der altpreussischen Landeshistoriographie im 16. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Kulturgeschichte Ostpreussens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, hrsg. von K. Garber, M. Komorowski, A. E. Walter, Tübingen 2001 (Frühe Neuzeit, Bd. 56), pp. 598 et al.

the Pomezanian Bishop Hiob von Dobeneck (1501–1521), the close coworker of the Grand Master Frederick of Saxony (1498–1510) and later the Grand Master Albrecht Hohenzollern (1511–1525), during the attempted regain of Royal Prussia (the work was dedicated to Saxon Frederick; in the years 1501–1507 the author was his doctor).⁴

The main thesis on which Erasmus Stella based his chronicle was *De Borvssiae antiquitatibus libri duo*: „*quam iusto dei iudicio Borussia ad Germanorum redierit incolatum, Quum Germaniae et pars sit, et Germanis a rerum exordio debita, inhabitata: luculentissimorum scriptorum testimonio*.”⁵ Therefore, Stella visibly did not devote all his efforts to proving the Teutonic Knights’ rights to Prussian land (by making approving comments on the Prussians using the expression “*sanctosancta militia*”), but rather to their affiliation to the Germanic nation. It was a novel element in the historiography devoted to the state. This humanist thinker collected the views of numerous ancient authorities including Ptolemeus, Plinius, Pomponius, Mela, Tacit, Strabon, Solinus, Jordanes, as the evidence that the residents of Prussia (called “Hulmigeria”) were of Germanic origin.

According to Stella, this country had been defeated by various peoples including non-Germanic Borussians (Prussians) as the last ones. The Germanic, however, remained in Prussia, mainly in the area of the Lower Vistula. “Vidvutus Alanus” became the first “shared” king for Borussians and gotisized (Germanicized) Alans. Stella claims that all these lands were subjected to the Empire. When the Borussians and Poles started their rebellion, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa entrusted the lieutenancy over the Germanic in Prussia to Conrad, Prince “Massobiorum” of the old Saxon lineage. The Prince, failing to overcome the Borussian’s attacks, turned for support to the knight brothers from the German Teutonic Order who immediately subjugated Prussians in the name of the Christian faith. The political impact of Stella’s work was very clear: the history of Prussia does not start with the moment of entering of the Teutonic Knights, but the prehistory of the country is related to the Germanic subjugated to the Empire.⁶ The history of the Country presented from this perspective was very

⁴ See: H. Freytag, *Der preussische Humanismus bis 1550*, Zeitschrift des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins, H. 47, 1904, p. 50-51; K. Forstreuter, *Vom Ordensstaat zum Fürstentum. Geistige und politische Wandlungen im Deutschordensstaate Preussen unter den Hochmeistern Friedrich und Albrecht (1498–1525)*, Kitzingen/Main 1951, p. 27.

⁵ *Erasmi Stellae Libonothani de Borvssiae antiquitatibus libri duo*, p. 8; *Erasmi Stellae Libonothani de Borussiae Antiquitatibus libri duo*, p. 285; J. Dworzaczkowa, *Kronika pruska Szymona Grunaua jako źródło historyczne*, „*Studia Źródłoznawcze*,” v. 2, 1958, p. 131.

⁶ J. Dworzaczkowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132; see also A. Mentzel-Reuters, *op. cit.*, pp. 600-601. In my opinion Stella’s work is part of his policy conducted by Sas Frederick (refusing to

dangerous for Poland and the supporting elites of Royal Prussia; it was still remembered that spreading “hostile” and “uncomfortable” geographical and historical statements could have resulted in serious problems. Ptolemy, an ancient geographer (living between 100 and 168) who recognized the Vistula as the border between the Land of Germania and Sarmatia, was an example of such a case. His opinions referred to and popularized by Eneas Sylvius’s “Piccolomini,” who was known for expressing his malevolent feelings against the Poles and favoring the Teutonic Knights in his work *De situ et origine Pruthenorum*, published most probably around 1470 in Cologne. It has been commonly known that the Ptolemy’s claim posed considerable problems for the 16th century scholars and rulers for being not in line with the political reality of the times. This view, however, could have been hardly used for political purposes as it could have justified both the claim that the Eastern Pomerania belonged to the Land of Germania and that Prussia could have belonged to Sarmatia, then identified with the Jagiellonian State.⁷ As we know it, both in Royal Prussia and in Poland there was a strong fear of Erasmus Stella’s findings related to Prussia. The fear, no doubt, related mainly to the possibility of the ownership of a manuscript, as had been earlier the case with Piccolomini who, in 1453 at the Benedictine monastery in Göttingen, discovered Jordanes’s *Getica*.

For many years ancient writers were respected as authorities for being the only source of knowledge on pre-historic times. Besides, Erasmus Stella’s *De Borussia antiquitatibus libri duo* was the first piece of work in which the history of Prussia was separated from the history of the Germanic order. This was done by Stella intentionally. Both Stella himself and his employer, the Grand Master Frederick of Saxony, as well as his principal, Pomeranian Bishop Hiob von Döben, had been fully aware that the Convent of Teutonic Knights lost their ideological grounds for existence and was declining after the process of Christianizing Prussia and Lithuania and their military defeat by Poland. According to Stella, the rights to Prussia after the Germanic Order

make an oath on the Toruń Treaty of 19.10.1466, persuaded by the emperor Maximilian Ist) which was to lead to the war. *De Borussia antiquitatibus libri duo* was intended for the Reich’s readers. When presenting the German-Imperial prehistory the motive was created to show the reason of fight for the German feudal lords and their people, namely Prussia which used to be German and imperial, and of which Western part belongs to Poland and the Eastern part is the German fief. The public opinion was also informed that such activities as /in Latin/ *De Borussia antiquitatibus libri duo* clearly indicates, that the part of the work was supposed to reach the European elites. I believe that the idea presented in the work came from its initiator, Pomeranian Bishop Hiob von Döben, Albrecht’s confidant, who in 1517 started intensive diplomatic and military preparations to the war against Poland.

⁷J. Dworzaczekowa, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

were supposed to be taken by the German nation, of which the powerful “holly” Empire was supposed to be the reflection.⁸

Szymon Grunau, after receiving a printed copy of *De Borvssiae antiquitatibus libri duo* (or its transcript⁹), decided to write the story of pre-historic Prussia and, first and foremost, to explain to Prussians their origin¹⁰, the intention which he clearly explained in the *Introduction to the Prussian Chronicle*.¹¹

Therefore, let us take a closer look at the concept of prehistoric Prussia according to Grunau. This work deals with the selected, most significant elements of his chronicle, as the Grunau’s description seems rather complicated to follow. According to Grunau, Prussia of 110, in the Roman emperor Octavian era, was called “Ulmeghain” and was inhabited by “Huhuri” tribes (most likely Huns, or Barbarians) with “Maso” as their ruler.¹² The tribes coming from the East, “Stagnans” and “Maxobei,” exterminated some part of the nation and subdued the other part. From the West arrived in “Ulmeghain” “Sargacians,” “Gelidans,” “Gillans,” “Alans,” “Vacynney” and “Carions,” but they did not stay long there.¹³ In the year 514, the Gots’ dukes “Wisboo,” “Bruteno” and “Vidowuto,” who were treated by “Cymbria’s” inhabitants—“Scandians”—as rulers, agreed in the course of negotiations to be ruled by “Maso,” as the “Scandians” treated the Huns, the Barbarians, as their major enemies were seeking protection.

On the grounds of this settlement, “Scandians,” being afraid of being defeated by Gots, left “Cymbria” and headed for “Ulmeghain.” After their

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132; A. Mentzel-Reuters, *op. cit.*, pp. 600-601. It is also worth informing that for Eneas Sylvius Piccolomini it was „*Nova Germania*”—compare. U. Arnold, *Deutschordenshistoriographie im Deutschen Reich*, [in:] *Die Rolle der Ritterorden in der mittelalterlichen Kultur*, hrsg. von Z.H. Nowak (Ordines militares. Colloquia Torunensia Historica, t. 3), Toruń 1985, p. 81. Rhetorics in which Teutonic state, Prussia and Inflants were presented as „*Nova Germania*” established by states of the German nation, was used later by Grand Master Albrecht Hohenzollern (i.g. in the speech delivered in the Reich Parliament in Trewir in 1512)—compare A. Wojtkowski, *Tezy i argumenty polskie w sporach terytorialnych z Krzyżakami*, Olsztyn 1968, p. 146.

⁹ She State Archives in Gdańsk, sign: 300, R/LI, 13, preserve the transcript from the XVIth chronicle by Erasmus Stella.

¹⁰ As it is known, he decided to present it the works on the whole Prussian history until contemporary times to lay the foundation of the history of the native country—S. Zonenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹¹ *Simon Grunau’s Preussische Chronik*, hrsg. von M. Perlbach, Bd. 1, [in:] *Die preussischen Geschichtschreiber des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1, Leipzig 1876 [later in the text: Simon Grunau], Introduction, pp. 5-9.

¹² Simon Grunau, II, I, 2—Bd. 1, pp. 55-57.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, I, 3—Bd. 1, pp. 58-59.

arrival, they conquered the local tribes and imposed their customs. The two brothers, "Bruteno" and "Vidowuto," built the castles of "Honeda," "Peilpeillo," "Nangast," "Wustoppos" and "Gallons" in "Ulmeghain."¹⁴ In 521, they decided to cease to pay their share and to be subjugated to "Masons." They further decided to choose "Bruteno" as their king, but he refused and instead recommended his brother "Vidowuto" for the king as a better candidate; "Vidowuto" was crowned and "Bruteno" became the high priest and thus the highest clerical authority. The country was named "Bruteny" after the high priest. King "Vidowuto" built "Noytto," a castle for his brother, located at the sand reef between "Crono" and "Hailibo," currently known as Nidzica. "Vidowuto" proved to be a successful ruler, well respected by his people and left twelve sons: "Lithppffo," "Saymo," "Sudo," "Naydro," "Scalawo," "Nathango," "Bartho," "Galyndo," "Warmo," "Hoggo," "Pomeso" and "Chelmo," each of them ruling on his land named after them.¹⁵ In 523, king "Vidowuto" and the high priest "Bruteno," accompanied by their people, arrived at the castle of "Honeda" where "Bruteno" passed 13 principles from their gods becoming the first laws regulating his people's lives.¹⁶ For Simon Grunau the date is a caesura for the name "Bruthens" to be referred to this nation. However, the incomers from "Cymbria" treated the "Ulmeghain" inhabitants as their servants and believed to have a higher status, which led to riots in the country.

To solve the problem, the King and the high priest made a joint decision that from then on the nobles would be selected among the fastest horse riders¹⁷. At the entry into the year 550 the historiographer noted that Duke "Maso" would arrive annually to select the cleverest children for his service among his subordinates. However, after a while, the "Scandians, arriving from "Cymbria" and later establishing their kingdom in "Ulmeghain," withdrew their obedience to "Maso." This led to a battle between "Vidowuto" and "Anthones," one of the "Maso's" dukes, won by the latter one thanks to "Roxolan's" (Russland) support. Later "Vidowuto" took refuge and "Chanwig," "Anthones's" son, arrived in Bruteny, where he subordinated himself to their gods and promised to worship them. From this moment on the inhabitants of "Bruteny" and "Masonry" enjoyed peace, although, according to Simon Grunau, since then they continued to nurse a grudge, present until now.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, II, 2—Bd. 1, pp. 60-61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, II, 3—Bd. 1, pp. 62-63.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, III, 1—Bd. 1, pp. 63-65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, III, 2—Bd. 1, pp. 65-67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II, III, 3—Bd. 1, pp. 67-68

In 573, when “Vidowuto” was 116 years old and “Bruteno” 132, the division of the country among 12 sons of “Vidowuto” took place.¹⁹ However, in the year 500, (seemingly the chronological order was lost here)²⁰ king

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, IV, 1—Bd. 1, pp. 68-77.

²⁰ In the quoted work referring to *Preussische Chronik* I considered that its structure, careless chronology, a large amount of examples and anecdotes entitles us to treat it primarily as historiographic digest which might provide interesting information to write sermons—p. Zonenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-111, 129. It is noteworthy that also in the prehistoric part of Prussia there are some parts which imply such application. For example, the Black Friar, when describing the land which his third in turn son “Sudo” received from the Prussian king Vidowuto, suddenly interrupted this “significant” information with the news that women from Sudovia are wearing blue dresses reaching just above their knees and brass jewelry or irrespectively of their age they get drunk hand in hand with men in taverns, which makes everybody happy and cheerful. During the description of the Ceremony of bestowal for „Scalawo,” the King’s fifth son, the chronicler informs that Scalovites were always miserable and unfaithful, showed interest in nothing else but sleeping. In the whole country they became the synonym of misery. Later he describes the immense size wild oxes similar to uruses, whose meat can be only eatable provided cooked with garlic; he further describes them as having sharp tongues and their favorite food being wild lilies while blossoming. The most surprising information was included in the part referring to the ninth and tenth “Vidowuto’s” son namely “Warmo” and “Hoggo.” First he presents the antifeminist in meaning law set for the whole Prussia by “Erma,” “Warmo’s” wife, who was her husband’s successor after his death. Then, as equally important fact, he provided the evidence for the loss of a woman’s virginity. The Black Friar was explaining that for the evidence of loosing virginity the blood stains sheets and robe after the sexual act should be used as the evidence of what has taken place. A girl can prove her defloration easily this way. If the signs are no present it should be assumed that a girl has cheated and she had not been a virgin. However, when describing the bestowal for „Hoggo,” he provided that one of the daughters named „Poggezana” was Vaidilute Virginie and she was treated with high respect among people. According to the Black Friar – she must have been very; and what is the most interesting fact, as he informed, in 1499 he on many occasions he saw in the Monastery in Elbląg, located at the distance of four thousand steps from her former fortress, a biretta belonging to her. It was half a yard long and as wide as a well built man’s palm when measured to inside. It was made of some kind of material which covered its whole surface as it was usually done in case of crossbows. At front it had a stone or a plate with a square shape picture, thick as a finger and today’s inch in size. It can be concluded, according to the Monk, that she had a very large head and her body must have been massive. At the end he stated that the autochtonic Prussians can say a lot about this Poggezan and her practices as Vaidilute. (Simon Grunau, II, IV, 1—Bd.1, pp. 70-75; compare also II, V, 1-2—Bd. 1, pp. 77-78). Let us devote some time to the story of a biretta. It may look at first, as in the story about the law set by Erma, that the Black Friar’s imagined stories to catch his listeners and readers interest, make the chronicle less dry. Yet, in this case Simone Grunau provided the place of this “unusual monument,” namely the monastery in Elbląg (most probably inhabited by the nuns of St. Brigitte) Therefore the inquisitive chronicle reader from Elbląg and the surrounding area could easily check the credibility of this information, and as we know the Black Friar was much concerned about the credibility of his works. compare.: Simon Grunau, *Heading*—Bd. 1, p. 1; *Introduction*, 4-5—Bd. 1, pp. 6-9. „Zagadka biretu Poggezany” in Janów Pomorski (former Truso)—located near Elbląg; it is also

“Vidowuto” and the high priest “Bruteno” gathered all their subject gentry and ordered them to choose a new ruler, as to follow the will of their Gods. The gentry, however, could not reach any agreement and as a result they had a few kings to rule their land at a time. The clergymen, on the other hand, chose “Brudono,” the high priest, as their highest authority, ruling for many years and being treated like a king. The resigning ruler “Vidowuto” and the high priest “Bruteno,” after they had blessed “Brudono” as their successor, both committed suicide by self-immolation.²¹ The next significant date in *Preussische Chronik* is the year 113 in which, as Simon Grunau puts it, Prussians and Masurs are good neighbours and friends. This status quo, according to him, continues until the moment when Mazovian Prince “Ziemomislaus” becomes the Polish ruler. He was the one who annexed Prussia and Masovia to the territory of Poland and allowed the monks from the Benedictinian order to preach Christianity among Masurs, Poles and Prussians. Although the first two nations accepted the Christian faith, the Prussians failed to do it. In their efforts to spread Christianity Benedictines managed to Christianize Pomeranians during Boleslav Chrobry's reign. He is also known for defeating Prussians and acquiring their whole country. Late, as he headed for “Rickoyott,” also known as “Romowo,” he destroyed the seat of the high priest and “Vaidlers.” He was also noted for building a castle of “Wustopolo,” nowadays called Królewiec or Radzyń, and leaving Polish courts inside. According to the Black Friar, Boleslav Chrobry had to perform a laborious work to keep the country under his reign. In order to prompt Prussians to accept Christianity he sent brother Adalbert, later slain by Prussians during his missionary attempt to Christianize Prussia. Prussia's inhabitants voluntarily paid their share until the end of Boleslav's ruling.²²

The whole Prussian prehistory described by Simon Grunau is, as mentioned earlier, much more elaborate. It is packed with complicated details, unusual

possible that this an extended settlement in Elbląg-Modrzewino—compare: A. Pawłowski, *Zespół grodzisk pruskich w Weklicach gmina Elbląg w świetle badań w latach 1982–1983*, in: Archeological research in Elbląskie Province in the years 1980–1983, editor A. Pawłowski, Malbork 1987, p. 377-408; M. Jagodziński, M. Kasprzycka, *Zarys problematyki badawczej wczesnośredniowiecznej osady rzemieślniczo-handlowej w Janowie Pomorskim (gmina Elbląg)*, „Pomorania Antiqua,” v. 14, 1990, pp. 9-48; W. Neugebauer, *Vorgeschichtliche Siedlungen in Larchwalde, Kreis Elbing*, „Elbinger Jahrbuch,” H. 12-13, 1936, pp. 101-166; M. Jagodziński, *Osadnictwo w okresie wczesnodziejowym*, in: *Historia Elbląga*, v. 1 (to 1466), edited by p. Gierszewski, A. Groth, Gdańsk 1993, pp. 31, 54-59.

²¹ Simon Grunau, II, V, 3—Bd. 1, pp. 78-79

²² *Ibid.*, II, V, 4—Bd. 1, pp. 80-81. It should be noted that the chronicle writer returned to the description of king's „Vidawuto” and the high priest “Bruteno” in the Treaty III in which he precisely described the beliefs of pagan Prussians: Simon Grunau, III, I, 1-2—Bd. 1, pp. 87-88.

names, various repetitions as well as contradictory statements, which might be confusing for the reader. The presented names of the nations vary as to their spelling, so there is no consistence in their reference.²³ This presentation of history might be read as a perplexed one and lacking its *stricte* historical value or rather should be viewed as “saga.”²⁴ On the other hand, this prehistoric sequence is given some new dimension if considered in the aspect of social-political tendencies of the times. With reference to medieval literature, when establishing a model of a nation’s (people’s) origin, at least three perspectives might be distinguished: they include biblical, ancient (mostly Roman) and autogenic (natural), related to the people’s migrations. These three perspectives might be equally referred to as the antenat or the whole nation.²⁵ With Simon Grunau’s chronicles this issue looks more complicated. The foundation of the Prussian nation is, notwithstanding the flow of various peoples, mainly related to the natural inhabitants of “Ulmeghan,” people subjected to “Maso,” characterized by ignorance in culture and education. On the other hand, the remaining inhabitants, well educated, of high culture “Scandians” who defeated “Ulmeghanaians,” imposed their lifestyle on them. “Bruteno” and “Vidowuto,” originating from simple people, built castles in “Ulmeghan” and ceased to pay their share refusing being subjects to “Maso.” Later, the “Ulmeghean’s” inhabitants, the so-called: “Ulmeghanaians” and “Scandians,” elected their the rulers: the secular “Vidowuto” and clerical “Bruteno.” The elections followed the nation’s will and the country was then named “Bruteny” after the high priest. Vidowuto ruled wisely and was popular among his people. Jointly with the high priest they set up the rules for the nation, imposing the laws on the people of “Bruteny,” thus establishing the foundation for a state system. Although the state ruled by the the two brothers, as state founders, could bring associations to the Roman state model, these two nations of “Bruteny” could hardly live in

²³ For example: „Bruteno,” „Brudeno,” „Brutteno;” „Vidowuto,” „Witowudo,” „Witoudo,” „Widowuto”; „Maxobei,” „Maxabei”; „Sargaciani,” „Sargatiani” (I have mentioned Orly some of them but there exist much more similar).

²⁴ To what extend Simon Grunau’s story is related to what we know about the prehistoric of Prussia—Among others J. Okulicz, *Pradzieje ziem pruskich od późnego paleolitu do VII w. n. e.*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Cracow—Gdansk 1973, pp. 17-495; M. Biskup, G. Labuda, *Dzieje Zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach. Gospodarka—Społeczeństwo—Państwo—Ideologia*, Gdansk 1988, pp. 5-80; Ł. Okulicz-Kozaryn, *Dzieje Prusów*, Wrocław 1997, pp. 25-309; W. Długokęcki, *Prusy w starożytności i we wczesnym średniowieczu*, in: *Państwo zakonu krzyżackiego z Prusach. Władza i społeczeństwo*, editor. M. Biskup, R. Czaja, Warszawa 2008, pp. 27-32; compare also: J. Voigt, *Handbuch der Geschichte Preussens bis zur Zeit der Reformation*, Bd. 1, Königsberg 1841, pp. 28-30; A. Mentzel-Reuters, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

²⁵ N. Kersken, *op. cit.*, p. 447 i nn.—where the detailed description is included on chick versions were adopted by various chronicle writers in their Prussian prehistory.

peace. "Scandians" showed their "superiority over "Ulmeghanaians" which lead to the riots between the two groups. Therefore, the King and the high priest took the sovereign decision to verify the new rules for nobility which enabled "Ulmeghanaians" to be accepted as nobles.

The passed laws led to a peaceful co-existence between the two nations based on a fair consensus. The new system relied on the ruling authorities represented by the members of both groups of society. Although a peaceful solution was found, it did not last long since "Scandians" decided to cease their obedience to "Maso" whom "Ulmeghanaians" paid their share. As a result, a sovereign king performed a significant and spectacular act on behalf of his nation. The war which took place, notwithstanding the early defeat, ended with an unexpected success of "Brutenians" and although the opponenets signed a peace treaty, they continued to maintain the distance. Even though "Vidowuto" had 12 sons and divided the kingdom among them, he did not establish a dynasty. Therefore the country required a new monarch to be sovereignly elected by the "Brutenian" noblety. They, however, could not reach any agreement, and as a consequence they had a number of rulers at the same time. This only enabled the Vaidilutes-clergymen to seize power and "Brutenians" started to treat their high priest as a king.

Preussische Chronik gives also explicit information that the Prussians were defeated by the Polish rulers and, although unwillingly, they had to pay their share.²⁶

It is quite easy to observe that the whole text is the parable of which the subject is not the past but the present; it is the allusion to the history of Prussia under the rule of Teutonic Knights. Presented in the text, 'Ulmeghanaians' represents the Prussian autochthons, 'Scandians'—the German settlers, 'Masos'—Mazovians (Poles), whereas seizing power clergymen, Vaidilutes, represent the Order of Teutonic Knights. Simon Grunau reflected a few tendencies in his chronicle: according to him the beginning of the Germanic nation, and consequently, its history was based on the co-existence between two different nations which became one Prussian nation under the reign of coexisting secular and clerical authorities (represented by "Bruteno" and "Vidowuto," the symbolic models of clerical and secular authorities co-existence—ideal authority type); the inhabitants of Prussia can communicate and they have been a sovereign people from pre-historic times; the Order of Teutonic Knights assumed control since the local gentry were set at variance; inhabitants of Prussia, if they had been subjects, it must have been subjected to Polish origin Mazovians.

²⁶ Compare *Ibid.*, pp. 448-452; compare: A. Mentzel-Reuters, *op. cit.*, p. 591.

Chronology, which was not observed later, plays a significant part in Grunau's prehistory. The very idea of including dates in Prussian prehistory was a novelty; they obviously established a vital chronological moment in history placing the events in a generally orderly, universal, chronological system. Thus the Black Friar was the first chronicle writer to provide information on the existence of the Prussian tribe in ancient history, on establishing the state system in the 6th century, providing names of the first founders of the state and making one of its founders, "Bruteno," the eponym of Prussia.

Accordingly, our hero pretended to build a foundation for the later works on the history of the country. What is more, he clearly showed that Prussia had had its own history long before the brothers of Teutonic Order appeared and, what is more, he "demonstrated in chronological order" that the Teutonic Knights appeared much later in its history.²⁷

Simon Grunau's concept of Prussian prehistory presented in his *Preußische Chronik* is — as one can say—more "pro-Polish" than any other chronicle related to Polish history.²⁸ Jan Długosz (1415–1480), and later Maciej of Miechów (1457–1523) wrote about the unity of the West Slavic people's first land; they related it to the dominance of Poland over Prussians dated from the times of Bolesław Chrobry. According to the Black Friar, the ancient, non-Germanic Prussians, even in the Roman times of Octavian, were subordinate to the Masovian ruler "Maso," the predecessor of the early Piasts.

The history of relations between Poland and Prussia, and later between Poland and Teutonic Knights, was presented in line with the chronicle of Maciej of Miechów (and Jan Długosz), which was additionally supplemented by his own pro-Polish commentaries.²⁹ On the other hand, the history of Prussia under the domination of the Germanic order has visibly an anti-Teutonic character and differs considerably in tone from the one of pro-Teutonic chronicles. The role and the meaning of Prussian states in establishing this statehood were strongly emphasized, and the states, not the order, are its essential part; they make the history of this country and society, not the German order, as in the pro-Teutonic works. It is worth stating that demonstrating the control of Poland over Prussia is one of the

²⁷ Compare N. Kersken, *op. cit.*, pp. 447, 452-453. Notice that the impulse given by Erasmus Stella, showing the separation of the history of Prussia from the history of Teutonic Knights was continued by Simon Grinau.

²⁸ J. Dworzaczkowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 132; M. Töppen, *Geschichte der Preussischen Historiographie von P. von Dusburg bis auf K. Schutz*, Berlin 1853, p. 158.

²⁹ J. Dworzaczkowa, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

dominant tendencies in the chronicle.³⁰ As opposed to the history of Prussia presented in earlier works, the Black Friar's version enabled to replace the Teutonic version with the new tradition of the country (province).³¹ Prussian prehistory presented in the Simon Grunau's chronicles varied from the works of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini and Erasmus Stella, based on the writings of ancient writers enjoying a lot of respect. The Black Friar based his chronicles on the works of the unknown ancient traveller Diwoinis, canon Jarosław from Płock and the Prussian bishop Christian. Their stories were unknown, as for years they had been bricked only to be found in 1517, he implied.³²

Similarly to Piccolomini, Stella also respected ancient writers and their version of Prussian history, in *Preussische Chronik* this role was played by the information provided by the three of them. In reality, these works were Simon Grunau's imagination. Prussian prehistory presented by Simon was to fulfill the hopes pinned by him, they required appropriate reliable bases for the works of Piccolomini and Stella. Therefore he invented the works of Diwonis, Jarosław and Chrystian (to be associated with the Greek Roman, Polish and German) as well as the information on the bricking off the books and their discovery in 1517.³³

³⁰ However, Szymon Grunau—before the year 1113—for the first time in the historical part *Preussische Chronik* joined the history of Prusia and stricte Poland, where he proceeded to the presentation of relations between these two countries in X–XIII century (Simon Grunau: II, V, 4–6—Bd. 1, pp. 80–83; II, VI, 1–3—Bd. 1, pp. 83–86). The Black Friar was the first chronicle writer who had the idea to prepare this kind of lecture. It contains only one date, namely the one mentioned above. The dominating tendency is the willingness to present that the rulers of Poland dating from Bolesław Chrobry times, imposed their authority over Prussians and were the first willing to Christianize them, which, however, they failed to do. According to the Black Friar, what he provided in the later part of the chronicle, certain Prussian land, namely Chelm region, Pomezania and Hockerland (i.e. Pogezania) were subjected to the Mazovian Duke Konrad after the battles which had been fought (Simon Grunau, IV, IV, 2—Bd. 1, p. 117).

³¹ Compare Wentka, *Gdańskie aspekty zaginionej kroniki dominikańskiej*, in: Dominikanie. Gdańsk—Poland—Europe, edited by D. A. Dekański, A. Gołębniak, M. Grubka, Gdańsk—Pelplin 2003, p. 548.

³² Simon Grunau, Introduction, 4—Bd. 1, p. 5; Introduction, 5—Bd. 1, p. 9; II, I, 1—Bd. 1, pp. 55–56.

³³ Compare p. Zonenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 59. In reality Grunau's prehistory was written on the grounds of the narrative of Erasmus Stella and Eneash Silvius Piccolomini, and besides the translation of St.Barbra, chronicle of Puter of Dusburg, Prussian –Teutonic peace document of February 7th, 1244; chronicle of Maciej of Miechów /possibly the narration of Hermann von Salz) —M. Perlbach, *Kommentar: Simon Grunau's Preussische Chronik*, hrsg. von M. Perlbach, Bd. 1, [in:] *Die preussischen Geschichtsschreiber des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1, Leipzig 1876, pp. 59–81; por. M. Töppen, *op. cit.*, pp. 184 i nn.; compare also J. Powierski, *Prusowie, Mazowsze i sprowadzenie Krzyżaków do Polski*, t. 1, Malbork 1996, pp. 85–87. All this

Prussian Prehistory in Simon Grunau's *Preußische Chronik*

by Sławomir Zonenberg

Abstract

Prussian prehistory presented in the Dominican Friar—Simon Grunau's chronicle is a parable the subject of which is not the past but the present; it is the parable which is the allusion to the history of Prussia under the rule of Teutonic Knights. Presented in the text non-German 'Ulmeghanaians' are the Prussian autochthons, 'Scandians' are the German settlers, 'Maso'—Mazovians (Poles), whereas seizing power clergymen—Vaidilutes are the Order of Teutonic Knights. The main tendencies which Simon Grunau included in the chronicle are the following: according to him, the beginning of nation and at the same time its history was arranging the co-existence between two different nations which became one Prussian nation during the reigns of the authorities consisting in the secular and clerical elements; inhabitants of Prussia can communicate and they have been the sovereign people from the prehistoric times; the Order of Teutonic Knights assumed control because the local gentry were set at variance; inhabitants of Prussia if they had been earlier subject to somebody, these had been only Mazovians, that is the Polish. The concept of Prussian prehistory presented by Simon Grunau is—as one can say—more 'pro-Polish' than the one which was propagated in Polish chronicles, and demonstrating the Polish control over Prussia is one of the dominant tendencies in the work. Prussian prehistory by Simon Grunau was different than the earlier ones of pro-German (pro-Teutonic Order) character, which had been written basing on the ancient writers authorities. The Black Friar presented the works by the ancient traveler Diwoinis, the canon Jarosław from Płock and the Prussian bishop Chrystian which had not been known to anybody at the time as his sources to the readers. They were the unknown because—as he implied—they had been bricked in and recently found. In fact, these works were his imagination—the presented by him prehistory required the appropriate, reliable historical bases to fulfill the pinned by him hopes, as the earlier pro-German ones had been written basing on the ancient writers authorities.

Keywords: Simon Grunau, *Preußische Chronik*, Prussian prehistory.

information was provided by the Black Friar with no compilation and, additionally, as it was said, he filled it with his own, social and political ideas.