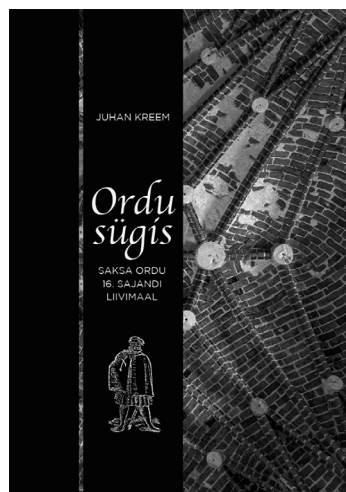


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Juhan Kreem. *Ordu sügis. Saksa ordu 16. sajandi Liivimaal*. Tallinn: Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, 2022. 584 lk. (Tallinna Linnaarhiivi toimetised 17) [*The Autumn of the Order. The Teutonic Order in 16<sup>th</sup> century Livonia*. Tallinn: Tallinn City Archives, 2022. 584 pp. (Proceedings of Tallinn City Archives 17)] ISBN 9789949735273



Juhana Krēma monogrāfija “Ordeņa rudens” detalizēti aplūko Vācu ordeņa vēsturi Livonijā 16. gadsimtā. Ieinteresēts lasītājs šajā grāmatā atradīs daudz jaunas informācijas par dažādām tēmām – no ordeņa iekšējās struktūras, tā varas īstenošanas un saimniecības līdz detalizētai diskusijai par diplomātiju, politiku un karu. Aplūkoto norišu hronoloģija aptver laiku no 1525. līdz 1562. gadam un ietver padziļinātu pētījumu par reformāciju Livonijā un Krievzemes–Livonijas 1558.–1562. gada karu no ordeņa skatu punkta. Atšķirībā no tradicionālās Igaunijas un Latvijas vēstures periodizācijas, saskaņā ar kuru Krievzemes–Livonijas karš tiek uzskatīts par viduslaiku beigu robežu, Juhans Krēms konsekventi uzlūko 16. gadsimtu kā agros jaunus laikus, pretstatot to iepriekšējam – “viduslaiku” periodam. Tas ir apliecinājums autora eiropiskajai pieejai vēstures rakstīšanā. Grāmata nav nacionālās vēstures izklāsts, bet gan pētījums par militāru reliģisku ordeni vienā konkrētā Eiropas reģionā.

The title *Ordu sügis* (Autumn of the Order) is a wordplay on the *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (Autumn of the Middle Ages, 1919) by renowned Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1872–1945). Whereas Huizinga’s book was centred on the stagnation, decline, and ultimate downfall of “medieval culture”

before the advent of the Renaissance, Juhan Kreem argues against the decline of the Teutonic Order in 16<sup>th</sup> century Livonia. The poetic title of Kreem's book refers rather to the dominant views on the decline of the Order common in Early Modern Chronicle writing as well as in modern scholarship, and thus also to the expectations of his readers. As a military religious order ruling a territory as a territorial lord (*Landesherr*), the Teutonic Order faced largely the same challenges as all Catholic clerical institutions wielding similar kinds of lordships in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe: the Reformation, secularisation of church institutions, and the increased interest of princely families towards securing clerical positions holding lordship. According to Kreem, the Teutonic Knights in Livonia adapted to these changes brought by the advent of the Early Modern Period. The collapse of the Teutonic Order in Livonia between 1558 and 1562 was thus the result of external political factors, not of any kind of internal decline of the Order.

The book itself lies somewhere between a handbook and a problem-centred treatise. It is predominantly based on the author's own research of unpublished archival sources. Even though Kreem modestly says that he is writing the history of the Teutonic Knights from the perspective of the Town of Tallinn, this is not at all true. In addition to the archives of Estonia and Latvia, Kreem has extensively worked with archival sources in Sweden, Germany, and Austria. The National Archives of Sweden are of special importance as they hold the remnants of the archive of the Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia which mostly consists of letters and documents from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The introduction reads more like that of a popular-scientific book. It really introduces the reader to the history of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia prior to the events described in the book but does not delve on such topics as research methodology and source criticism. Historical sources used in the study are described shortly and precisely on circa five pages. The historiographical overview seems very short (one and a half pages) on the first glance, but is actually largely integrated into the introductory overview on the history of the Order. The key research problems and questions are elegantly placed within the same introductory narrative.

Contentwise, the *Autumn of the Order* is divided into two sections, one focusing on the internal functions of the Teutonic Order, and the other on the history of events. The first part covers three large topics: the Teutonic Order as a corporation, the household of the Order, and the economy of the Knights. The history of events consists of two subsections, titled "The Age of the Reformation" and "The Final Battle", and covers the period 1525–1562, i.e. from the secularisation of the Teutonic Order in Prussia until the secularisation of the Order in Livonia in the aftermath of the Russian–Livonian War (1558–1562). Both sections are

written as a discussion on how the leadership of the Teutonic Order in Livonia faced two specific – a religious and a military – challenges to its existence. At the same time, they also offer a compelling chronologically structured narrative of the historical events of 16<sup>th</sup> century Livonia from the perspective of the Teutonic Order.

When discussing the Teutonic Order as a religious military corporation, Juhan Kreem is sceptical on the notion of a considerable shrinking of the number of knight-brothers in Livonia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century prevalent in previous scholarships. He sees their number as more-or-less stable: 195 according to the visitation protocol of 1451 and about 150–175 in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Knight brothers were largely recruited from among the lower nobility of Westphalia and entered the Order usually at a young age. The minimum age for admittance was 14. Members of the higher nobility, especially those from princely dynasties, were at times declined entry into the Order. Members of local Livonian noble families were sometimes admitted to the Order as knight-brothers, but faced a glass-ceiling barring them from rising to important offices. Personal career within the ranks of the Order was largely dependent on personal and family connections, which favoured certain prominent Westphalian families, such as Fürstenberg, Galen, or Recke. Nevertheless, Juhan Kreem argues that the Teutonic Knights in Livonia were not *Landfremd*<sup>1</sup>, because members of the same Westphalian families also settled in Livonia as liegemen and became part of the local nobility through marriages into local noble families.

Regarding priest-brothers, Kreem notes the same tendencies in Livonia as in the Teutonic Order convents in Prussia and in the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire. The number of priest-brothers was declining already in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continued to decline in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, clerics serving in the chancery or as learned advisors and diplomats of the Knights in Livonia were gradually replaced by learned laymen during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

When discussing the mentality of the Teutonic Knights, Kreem emphasises the continuance of traditional knightly monastic religiosity of the religious military orders. Even in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the brothers were still expected to perform religious ceremonies and prayers. The continuing existence of the Order's crusading traditions is somewhat vague. Even though the *Schonne*

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1 The term *Landfremd* is used to describe how the nobility and burghers of Prussia perceived the Teutonic Knights as foreigners, because the Teutonic Knights and the German-speaking upper social strata in Prussia came from different parts of Germany and did not have personal or family relations with each other.

*historie* – a pamphlet written probably by Christian Bomhower for the propagation of the papal crusading indulgence in support of the Teutonic Order in Livonia of 1507, which was preached in north-west Germany – employs the narrative of Livonia as a Bulwark of Christendom, it is surprisingly lacking in crusading and religious elements. Nevertheless, the remembrance of past battles with the “enemies of the faith” in the Holy Land and in Livonia was still alive in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, along with the idea that the Sword Brothers, and not the bishops, had been the ones who first subjugated Livonia to Christian rule.

Regarding the perceived status of a knight-brother, Kreem notes a clear dividing line between the *Gebietiger* – commanders and bailiffs of the castles of the Knights along with the holders of certain other higher offices – and ordinary knight-brothers. The latter seem to have been on par with those lower officials in the service of the Knights who were not actually members of the Order. It may come as a surprise to some readers that not all offices in the castles and convents of the Knights were manned by brothers of the Order. Some minor officials, such as Fishmaster Mathias Pawell of the castle of Jelgava, were laymen in the service of the Knights. The status of ordinary knight-brothers appears so low compared to that of the *Gebietiger*, that it is not always possible to determine if a certain individual was a member of the Teutonic Order, or just a person in the service of the Knights.

The second chapter of section one is devoted to the additional personnel in service of the Knights: advisors and chancery staff, courtiers and servants, women, musicians, doctors, mercenaries, cannoneers and cannon-makers, artisans, and the so-called *Halbtafler*.<sup>2</sup> Detailed information for most of these people is only available in 16<sup>th</sup> century sources. Kreem does not delve much on the question to what degree at least some of the groups mentioned here were present in the castles of the Order in earlier centuries. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to imagine running a castle without any servants and artisans, or organising a feast without any musicians. The feasts given by the Teutonic Knights to crusaders mentioned in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle (ca 1290–1300) would suggest that the Knights employed cooks and musicians already in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, even though such personnel are not directly mentioned in the sources.

When discussing advisors and the chancery, Kreem draws a line between the Middle Ages, when the advisors were the *Gebietiger* and the chancery was manned by priest-brothers, and the Early Modern Period, i.e. the 16<sup>th</sup> century,

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2 The *Halbtafler* were usually elderly persons who had formerly been in the service of the Knights and had been given a room or a dwelling along with a small pension for their retirement.

when the Knights began to employ the services of clerics and laymen from outside their own ranks. Such a clear distinction between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is certainly incorrect regarding legal scholars in the service of the Order, as the examples of Paul Einwalt<sup>3</sup> and Johann Meiloff<sup>4</sup> demonstrate. Nevertheless, a definitive switch from clerics to laymen in learned personnel in the service of the Order seems to have come about after the beginning of the Reformation in Livonia. Advisors without university education were partly immigrants from Germany, partly men from the noble families in Livonia, but members of the most important Livonian noble families cannot be seen among the advisors. Here again a glass ceiling barring influential local families from reaching important positions comes to fore.

Women make their appearance in the convents of the Knights in Livonia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although occasional visits of the female relatives of the *Gebietiger* are mentioned already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Women served as housekeepers (*Mayersche*) in the castles of the Order, but several officials and servants of the Knights also had wives and families. Furthermore, several *Gebietiger* had concubines and even children. Even though such relations were tolerated in the Reformation era, the Knights in Livonia did not allow their members to marry and thus have legitimate children who would start to claim their father's inheritance.

Young men from both Livonian as well as Westphalian and German noble families sometimes served the Master and the *Gebietiger* as courtiers. Male relatives of the *Gebietiger*, but also other noblemen from Westphalia sometimes came for extended visits and entered the service of the Knights. Such servant courtiers were occasionally given important diplomatic missions and were thus a group distinct from ordinary servants. Furthermore, several kinds of artisans lived or were employed in the castles of the Order, such as smiths, armorers, tailors, or brewers. The castles of the Order thus housed a large variety of different kinds of people, including mercenaries and cannoneers.

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3 Paul Einwalt served the Master of the Teutonic Knights as a secretary and a jurist in the 1440s and the 1450s before advancing to the position of Bishop of Curonia (1458–1473). Even though a cleric, he never became a priest of the Teutonic Order. See Boockmann, Hartmut (1972). *Die Rechtsstudenten des Deutschen Ordens. Studium, Studienförderung und gelehrter Beruf im späteren Mittelalter. Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70. Geburtstag am 19. September 1971*. Vol. 2. Göttingen, pp. 313–375, here pp. 356–357.

4 Johann Meiloff was a layman who served the Livonian Master as a legal scholar in 1470–1474. See Bolte, Henrike (2006). *Der Greifswalder Jurist Johann Meiloff und seine livländische Urkundensammlung. Eine Gelehrtenkarriere am Ausgang des Mittelalters. Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, 52, pp. 227–262.

Everyday life in the castle was overseen by the *Hauskomtur*, an office staffed by knight-brothers of the Order, who managed the funds of the castle, but was also responsible for keeping the discipline of all the various people inhabiting the castle. Since the majority of written sources on everyday life record different kind of offences, Kreem's overview on actual events regarding the inhabitants of the castle gives the impression that many of the brothers and servants of the Order were quite unruly and troublesome. The knights and their servants also ventured outside the castle and partook in festivities and weddings in adjacent towns and settlements. For example, during a wedding feast in the town of Narva in February 1555, men from the castle of Narva got into a fight with the guardsmen of the town, which resulted in the death of one man from the castle.

The third chapter of section one offers for the very first time in historiography a detailed study of the economy the Teutonic Knights in Livonia. The main sources of income were grain, fishing, forestry, cattle, and capital. The latter in the sense that the Knights, usually the Master or an individual *Gebietiger*, occasionally a convent loaned out large sums of money on interest. The debtors were usually burghers and noblemen. The size of these loans was usually several thousand Rigan marks, but Master Heinrich von Galen (1551–1557) once received 28,592 marks in repayment of a loan he had given to town-councillor Jasper Bertholt of Reval. The income from agriculture, fishing, and forestry came partly from the taxes and dues paid by dependant peasants and partly from the production of the Order's own manors. Cattle breeding, especially the breeding of horses was largely done by the manors and convents of the Order itself. The main source of revenue for the Knights came from the sale of grain. The Order was able to muster large sums of money when needed. Such as the 44,103 Rigan marks paid by Master Galen to coadjutor Wilhelm von Fürstenberg as compensation for the expenses of the campaign against the Archbishopric of Riga in the summer of 1556. Nevertheless, the income of the Knights was undoubtedly insufficient to finance a long-term full-scale war in defence of Livonia against the invasion of Ivan IV of Moscow (1533–1583).

Resource management of the Teutonic Order in 16<sup>th</sup> century Livonia was not centralised. Each *Gebietiger* managed the resources of their own castle and administrative territory on their own. When a *Gebietiger* moved from one castle to the other, he took the money, food stock, and other movable goods with him. Thus, when a new *Gebietiger* arrived at a castle, he found the stores of the castle empty. Because many *Gebietiger* took loans, the new office holder was at times also confronted with demands to pay the debts of his deceased predecessor. Kreem also notes certain instances of the *Gebietiger* transferring funds to Westphalia but argues that such singular cases do not form a dominant



pattern. Thus, one cannot speak of a kind of “colonial” exploitation of Livonia by knight-brothers of Westphalian origin. Such decentralised resource management is a clear sign of decline in comparison with the centralised administration of the Order’s resources known from medieval Prussia. According to Kreem, resources were probably centrally managed also by the Knights in Livonia prior to the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, even though such a topic has not been studied for the earlier period.

Taken together, the research results of the first section of the book offer an abundant reservoir of new information regarding the internal functioning of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, which will hopefully serve as a starting point for new research on the same topics regarding earlier centuries. A central point of interest would be the presumable centralised management of the Order’s resources in the earlier centuries. Is this assumption truly correct, and if yes when exactly did such decentralisation begin?

A detailed overview of the history of events in *Autumn of the Order* would go beyond the limits of a review. I will limit myself with summarising Kreem’s key points regarding the Order’s reactions to the Reformation and the Moscowian invasion of 1558. The secularisation of the Order’s territory in Prussia by Grand Master Albrecht (1510–1525) resulted in a substantial increase of autonomy for the Knights in Livonia. Even though Wolter von Plettenberg’s (1494–1535) aspiration to secure the seat of the Grand Master for Livonia failed and the administration of the office of Grand Master was given over to the Master of the Order in Germany, the Teutonic Order in Livonia became largely independent of the central authorities of the Order after 1525. The possibility of a secularisation of the Knights in Livonia paradoxically led to a tolerant attitude towards the Reformation among the members of the Order in Livonia. Preserving the structure of the corporation, its internal organisation and property were more important than religious views. Gradually this “Catholic” religious military order became an ardent supporter of Lutheranism – a process which Kreem describes as the beginning of a transition from a medieval religious military order into an early modern religious corporation of noblemen.

The Order was ill-prepared to face the Moscow’s invasion, but not because of any kind of internal decline after the “glorious days” of Master Wolter von Plettenberg. According to Kreem, the Knights in Livonia were simply unable to withstand a full-scale invasion by an Early Modern monarchy. Internal struggles for power within the Order increased already as a result of the political pressure exerted by Sigismund II of Poland and Lithuania (1548–1572) during the Coadjutor’s Feud of 1556, and became even more pronounced after 1558. The Master and the *Gebietiger* were unable to decide which foreign monarch to

call for aid, resulting in simultaneous negotiations with the rulers of Poland and Lithuania, Denmark, and Sweden, not to mention attempts of securing aid from the Holy Roman Empire.

The secularisation of the remnants of the Teutonic Order in Livonia in 1562 was, according to Kreem, a direct result of territorial losses. To put it bluntly, the Order continued to exist as long as there were enough *Gebietiger* to withstand any possible attempts by a Master to secularise the Order. When enough *Gebietiger* had lost their castles, income and thus their actual position of power, then the last Master of the Order, Gotthard Kettler (1559–1562) was finally in a position to carry out a secularisation. But even then, some *Gebietiger* continued to oppose Kettler. The commander of Dobeles, Mathias von der Recke, refused to subject himself to Duke Gotthard Kettler of Courland and Semigallia (1562–1587) in 1562. Instead, Mathias became a direct vassal of the King of Poland. The Vogt of Maasilinn (Soneburg) on Osilia refused to accept the secularisation of the Order, did not acknowledge the authority of Duke Gotthard, and finally decided to enter the service of the King of Denmark along with the territory under his rule.

In conclusion, *Autumn of the Order* delivers a detailed history of the Teutonic Order in Livonia during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. An interested reader will find a lot of new information on various topics ranging from the internal structuring of the Order, the functioning of its lordship and economy, to detailed discussions on diplomacy, politics, and the history of events in general. Kreem also delivers an in-depth treatment of the events of the Russian–Livonian war of 1558–1562. In contrast to the traditional periodisation of history in Estonia and Latvia, which sees the Russian–Livonian war as the end of the Middle Ages, Kreem consistently writes about the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the Early Modern Period, contrasting it with the earlier “medieval” period. This is a clear indication of his European approach to history writing. Kreem does not write the national history of Estonia or Latvia, nor of the “Germans” in Livonia, but a history of a military religious order in one particular European region.

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