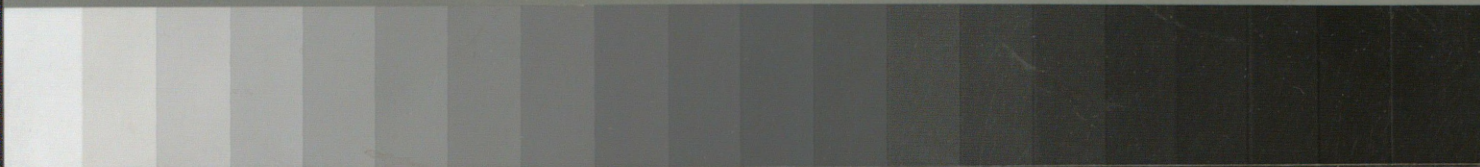


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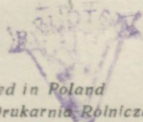
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INTRODUCTION

In the history of the now extinct ancient Prussians, who belonged together with the Lithuanians and the Latvians to the Baltic group of peoples, the climax, as is well known, is their conquest by the Teutonic Order in the half-century between 1233 and 1283. The Knights of the Cross waged war with the ostensible purpose of bringing the Gospel to the pagans, and the result of their victory was the official conversion of the Prussians, yet in reality the old faith was not extirpated but maintained itself among the indigenous population for centuries longer. In fact pagan practices were still flourishing under the rule of the Order in the fifteenth century, and were only finally abolished at the period of the Reformation. Long before the Teutonic Knights on the other hand — ever since the first missionary journey of St Wojciech (Adalbert) in 997 — attempts had been made to evangelize the Prussians by the Poles.

Accordingly in the religious history of ancient Prussia it is impossible to distinguish clearly between the pre-Teutonic and the Teutonic periods, which yet are clearly marked politically, socially and economic-

ally. The struggle with the Order led to the loss of freedom and the ruin of the old tribal organization. The victors introduced new social forms and established new economic institutions. The political structure, and even the face of the country, were changed out of recognition: certain sections were laid completely waste and relapsed into desert, while others began to flourish under the cultivation of German and Polish settlers. We propose therefore to call the epoch preceding the conquest of the Prussians by the Teutonic Order the Pagan period, notwithstanding the incomplete accuracy of the appellation. The purpose of the present work will be to present the fortunes of the Prussian people and the domestic conditions prevailing in their country before the loss of independence.

The historian of the ancient Prussians has to face the difficulty common to all researches into the Early Historic age, namely the insufficiency of written sources. The Prussians, like all other peoples of low culture in but loose contact with the civilized world, were unable to create a native system of writing. Not a single historical source, therefore, existed among them before the coming of the Teutonic Knights, and all the information we have about them is derived from strangers, whose acquaintance with the country was made casually and fleetingly, if indeed they got their knowledge at first hand at all.

The reliability of accounts drawn from such sources is questionable, and their substance also often leaves much to be desired. Some are very laconic, for example the mentions of battles with the Prussians in Scandinavian, Polish and Ruthenian chronicles; others, though very full, are neither concise nor faithful, for example the lives of St Wojciech. Others again, such as the account of Wulfstan's travels given by Alfred the Great, are little more than uncritical collections of anecdotes. Such material allows of only a very general and inaccurate reconstruction of the political relations of the Prussians with their neighbours, while their domestic conditions and the changes that went on in them cannot be pictured at all.

Of necessity therefore, we must first consult the earliest serious historian of ancient Prussia, Christopher Hartknoch (d. 1687), and afterwards have recourse to sources contemporary with the later Teutonic Knights, which frequently reflect the peculiar characteristics of the Prussians, the former territorial divisions etc. Documentary material begins with the first activities of the Teutonic Knights on the Vistula, and by the thirteenth century is already abundant, but unfortunately the information thus obtained, with a few exceptions, such as the treaty of Chrystburg in 1249, concluded between the Knights and the Prussians by the mediation of the papal legate, is too brief and dry to call up a vivid picture.

This lacuna can be filled and the past described colourfully only with the help of chroniclers and historiographers. Although, contrary to what was the case in the neighbouring Livonia, no chronicles of the Teutonic Order were written in Prussia in the thirteenth century¹ yet, thanks to one writer, Peter of Dusburg, a worthy picture was handed down to posterity of the ancient inhabitants and their manner of life. This Peter was a priest of the Cross who had a good knowledge of the country and the people, and wrote his chronicle at Königsberg, most probably in 1326. Not long afterwards it was translated into German in a free metrical version by Nicholas of Jaeroschin, and it is our chief source of information regarding the primitive state of Prussia.

Besides historical sources in the more precise meaning of the term, that is to say, writings, archaeological remains are by no means to be neglected by the student of an Early Historical epoch, for they can throw much light on the development of material culture; also, sometimes, on political organization (e.g. castellanies) and social (e.g. funeral) customs. Moreover linguistic, or more strictly speaking onom-

¹ It is doubtful whether the so-called *Exordium Ordinis Cruciferorum* is a thirteenth-century work (c. 1260); some scholars regarding it as a re-cast of Peter of Dusburg and Nicholas of Jaeroschin. The chronicle sources for the history of the ancient Prussians have been published in the splendid edition, *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, 5 vols. Leipzig, 1861-74.

astic, data facilitate the task of establishing the extent and distribution of ethnic groups. Such sources are however auxiliary, valuable only in conjunction with writings by which their results may be verified.

In making choice of one's methods of research, it is necessary to bear in mind not only the special nature of the subject, but also the character and quantity of source-material. For a study of the ancient Prussians the 'progressive' method, as we may call it, relying on sources referring to pre-Teutonic times, is, as we have already shown, insufficient, and historians have never depended exclusively upon it, though they have been inclined to put too much confidence in those sources (e.g. in Wulfstan). On the other hand, the employment of the 'retrogressive' method, the drawing of conclusions backwards, based on sources referring to the Teutonic period,² demands

² The medieval documents dealing with Prussia under the Teutonic Knights have been published in the following collections: *Codex diplomaticus Prussicus*, ed. J. Voigt, 6 vols. Königsberg, 1831-61; *Preussisches Urkundenbuch*, Politische Abteilung, I, ed. Philippi and Seraphim, Königsberg, 1882, 1909; II, ed. Hein and Maschke, ibid. 1932. Further, the diplomatic documents belonging to three dioceses of the Order have been printed (the fourth diocese, that of Chelmno, originated in Polish territory): *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte des vormaligen Bisthums Pomesanien*, ed. Cramer. Marienwerder, 1885; *Urkundenbuch des Bisthums Samland*, ed. K. P. Woelny & H. Mendthal. Leipzig, 1891-1905; *Codex diplomaticus Warmiensis*, ed. P. Woelky, J. M. Saage et al., 4 vols. Mainz, Braunsberg, Leipzig. 1860-1929.

particular caution when applied to ancient Prussia owing to the political cataclysm which overwhelmed the country, leading to the fall or swift degeneration of its original institutions. Even in the earliest Teutonic sources, the thirteenth century documents and the chronicle of Peter of Dusburg, it is often difficult to distinguish between Ancient Prussian institutional elements and those of later introduction, while the pre-Teutonic sources do not furnish us with sufficient data to remove the difficulty.

This being the case, I have attached especial value to a third method, the 'comparative', and have carried out parallel researches into the history of the Lithuanians and Latvians, peoples related to the Prussians and experiencing similar fortunes down to the thirteenth century. By the use of this method we may at least discover what tribal institutions were common to these three neighbouring peoples, whose likenesses were undoubtedly considerably greater than their differences.

CHAPTER 1

PRIMITIVE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY AND TRIBE OF THE PRUSSIAN

Prussia, along with the other east-Baltic countries, belongs to the so-called 'Russian plateau', bounded on the west by Finland, the coast of the Baltic, and the German-Polish region of folded mountains, and so is marked by no special features of geological structure. The surface of all the Baltic countries was moulded by the action of the Scandinavian glaciers. Likewise the climate of Prussia has common characteristics with that of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, both alike being dependent on the proximity of the sea; as a natural result the vegetation of these countries is similar.³

The boundaries between Prussia and her neighbouring countries may be defined hydrographically: to the north it is cut off by the Baltic, to the south by the maze of Mazurian lakes, to the west by the once marshy banks of the lower Vistula, and to the

³ For the geographical features of this region cf. St. Srokowski: (23), particularly the article on the 'Indywidualność geograficzna Prus Wschodnich' (Geographical character of East Prussia).

east by the Niemen, which likewise flows between bogs in its lower course. Water boundaries of this kind serve to isolate a people only if it forms a separate ethnic or political entity and makes use of the natural obstacles as defences against its neighbours. Such was the state of things here at the dawn of history: we find the tribe of Prussians established in this area, secure in its natural inaccessibility. Tacitus' account of the *Aestii* in the first century after Christ, which we must take as the earliest known historical mention of the territory of the Prussians, seems but recent in comparison with the centuries of human habitation indicated by the remains of material culture, which go back perhaps 10,000 years, to the age when the glaciers had but newly receded.

One of the most highly developed sciences throwing light on the state of Prussia in past ages is archaeology, thanks to which we are able to trace the gradual growth of culture from the latter days of its primitive palaeolithic nomad inhabitants, who practised nothing but hunting and fishing. The development of weapons and tools, vessels and buildings, the rise of new economic forms and changes in technique, commercial relations with other countries, and even (thanks to the graves) the evolution of certain mental conceptions, all are revealed to a greater or less extent by archaeological excavations. Nevertheless, the knowledge thus gained is of an 'anonymous' popul-

ation, inasmuch as archaeology alone throws no light on the ethnic connexions of the representatives of a given culture.

Archaeologists have endeavoured, it is true, to probe the secret of the origin of prehistoric peoples by the employment of the 'retrogressive' method, taking as their starting-point or premise the earliest written accounts of the distribution of population in Europe. It is assumed that ethnographic and cultural areas coincide, and that territorial shifts of cultures correspond to migrations of the peoples representing them; but various scholars have pointed out that these hypotheses are without foundation, and that the seat of an ethnic group or groups is not always within the area assignable to a particular culture.⁴ Consequently, the ethnographic conclusions of archaeologists, in so far as they are not expressly confirmed by written sources, ought at best to be regarded as highly problematical. Such an unproved conclusion is the one commonly repeated by scholars today, that because the culture in the territory of the Prussians shows evidence of continuity over a long period of centuries, therefore the Balts dwelt there uninterruptedly from neolithic times.

⁴ See J. Rozwadowski: 'Prajczyzna indoeuropejska' (The original home of the Indo-European race), *Eos*, vol. XVII (1911), and L. Kozłowski: 'Problem etniczny prehistorji' (The ethnic problem in prehistory), *Lud*, vol. XXI (1922).

GOTHS AND FINNS. THE RIDDLE OF THE *AESTII*

The first people whose existence on Prussian territory or, more accurately, on its western edge, is indicated by archaeology in conjunction with historical accounts, are the eastern Germans, especially the Goths, who paused on the lower Vistula at the beginning of the Christian area in the course of their migration from Scandinavia towards the Black Sea. Considering their swift movements and the wide areas through which they passed, it seems unlikely that they should have made a compact and comparatively lasting settlement anywhere on the way, as for instance in Prussia. Most probably they subjugated the local population and contented themselves with exacting tribute from them. In any case their habitations never extended far to the east of the Vistula nor across the river Pasłęka.

Who were the aborigines with whom the Goths came into contact in Prussia? The contemporary historian, Tacitus, places the people of the *Aestii* on the amber-bearing coast of the Baltic, which would be near Sambia (Samland), and gives a few details of their ethnic characteristics. The Roman merchants carried on a lively trade with the *Aestii* from whom they obtained valuable amber, yet they were evidently incapable of collecting reliable information about them. Modern scholars usually identify them with the Balts or Prussians, but without actual proof,

since the fact that we find the Prussians at Sambia in Early Historical times cannot be taken as conclusive in view of the extraordinary mobility of population in Europe in the early Middle Ages.

Meanwhile some evidence has been preserved of an earlier habitation, the Finnish, existing in Prussia before that of the Balts. Some river-names are declared by Rozwadowski (21)⁵ to be of Finnish origin — an irrefutable proof that the district was once inhabited by the Finns, who maintained themselves on the Latvian coast to the north until the period of the Teutonic Knights, and in some places have survived until the present.⁶ Was it not, then, the Finns whom the Gothic hordes attacked on the lower Vistula and the Pasłęka? Was it not some Finnish tribe which Tacitus called the *Aestii*? It is impossible to be certain. In any case it is noteworthy that philologists find a larger number of Gothic loan-words in the Finnish and Slav languages than in those of the Balts. And the name of *Aestii*, which has survived

⁵ A short bibliography appears in Part IV. References in the text are given thus: (1).

⁶ M. Vasmer's latest treatise: 'Beiträge zur historischen Völkerkunde Europas. II. Die ehemalige Ausbreitung der Westfinnen in den heutigen slavischen Ländern'. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, XVIII. Berlin, 1934, endeavours to invalidate Rozwadowski's conclusions as to the Finnish origin of certain names in Prussia. Nevertheless, the question of the possible Finnish descent of the aboriginal population of Prussia remains open.

from the days of Tacitus until our own time, may have had a topographical rather than an ethnic significance in the early Middle Ages, designating not only the Baltic Prussians (in the description of Wulfstan), but also the Finnish 'Czudy' on the Baltic.

The researches of philologists, who have studied the various place-names of Ruthenia, especially K. Buga,(5), have put it beyond doubt that the original seats of the Balts are to be sought on the Pripet and the middle Dniepr, the Sola and the Protwa. A large number of water-names in this area still keep their primitive Baltic sounds. Probably therefore the Balts, like other Indo-European peoples of our continent, reached their historic seats from the east. When their migration began, and under what conditions it was accomplished, we cannot even guess. This much only may safely be asserted: that the Prussians first opened the way for the rest of the Balts, and first reached the sea. An eleventh century Ruthenian chronicler, who was well acquainted with the geography of the eastern Europe of his time, states that the Prussians were already settled on the Baltic coast, whereas the Lithuanian and Latvian tribes, on the other hand, were still cut off from it by a strip of Finnish population.

Broadly speaking, the permanent establishment of the Baltic tribes in their historic seats took place considerably earlier, for in the ninth century, while

the Normans were founding the state of Kieff, Slavonic tribes already filled the basin of the middle and upper Dniepr, ranging as far as Lake Ilmen to the north and the district of Połock on the middle Dwina to the west. Thus the Balts must even then have been pressed out of those areas westward, to the lower Dwina and the Niemen. And since the movement of the Slavs north from their primitive seats in Polesia began some time before the seventh century, this, some five or six hundred years before the arrival of the Teutonic Order, must have been the latest date for the immigration of the Balts, and above all for the final establishment of the Prussians between the Niemen and the lower Vistula.

ORIGINS OF THE ANCIENT PRUSSIANS

Unfortunately, contemporary historical sources throw no light on the origins of the Baltic tribes. These distant and numerically weak peoples did not attract the attention of the writers of the ancient world or of the early Middle Ages. Ptolemy alone, in the second century after Christ, mentions the Galindians and the Sudinians, i.e. the Prussian tribes of Galindia and Jaćwież, or Sudovia; but the historical value of this information, as well as of Ptolemy's map, is small, since it does not enable us accurately to fix the abode of these tribes.

It is in the middle of the ninth century that the Prussians appear in history for the first time under their own name, in the form *Bruzi*, in the register known as the 'Bavarian Geographer', where however such mention as is made of them is brief and obscure. A fuller account is given somewhat later by the traveller Wulfstan, who collected a few anecdotes of doubtful value about them, from what source it would be difficult to say, but did not find out their real name, calling them Ests in accordance with the tradition deriving from Tacitus.⁷ However, the first really precise information about the territory of the Prussians, lying between the dominions of Mieszek I and the sea, is given us by Ibrahim ibn Jacob, an Arab-Jewish merchant who visited Germany in 965 or 973 and collected items of interest about Slavonic and other countries. With the document *Dagome index*, a life of St Wojciech compiled by the Polish duke Mieszek I, who died in 992, historical accounts of the Prussians become more frequent.

An interesting and unexpected contribution to the primitive history of the Prussians is made by a Kieff

⁷ Yet it is not impossible that remnants of the Finnish population still survived on the seaboard in Wulfstan's time, and that these are his Ests. Scandinavian expeditions against the Prussians and the Prussian sept of the Sambians are mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus (d. 1204) and the XIIIth century *Annales Ryenses*, but unfortunately these late accounts are not without a legendary element.

chronicle, which, under the date 1147, mentions 'the people of the Goliady', inhabiting the upper Protwa valley region to the west of Moscow. In spite of the opinion of certain scholars these were not prisoners of war taken by the Ruthenian dukes in an expedition against Prussian Galindia and settled in the heart of the country, since the term for unfree men used by the Ruthenian chroniclers of the period was *czelady* free inhabitants being designated as *ludzkie*. As the study of place-names shows that the seats of these 'Goliady' were in the area originally inhabited by the Balts, it may be concluded that the former were remnants of the Baltic population left behind for unknown reasons when the others migrated. It is uncertain whether the Ruthenian 'Goliady' and the Prussian Galindians once belonged to a common tribe, or whether there existed two septs of the same name, like the Polanians on the Warta and on the Dniepr; but this does not diminish the importance of the entry for 1147 as pointing to an eastern location for the original home of the Prussians.

CHAPTER 2

RELATIONS OF THE PRUSSIANS WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS

Before the twelfth century the Baltic peoples play no active part in the history of northern Europe, rich as it was in important events; which inaction is to be ascribed to unfavourable geographical and political conditions and not at all to mental indolence. The centre of northern European culture was to be found round the Baltic and the North Sea. A part of the Baltic peoples, the Lithuanians and the Latvians, never reached the coast at all in the period under discussion. The Prussians, although they did reach it, failed to attain a dominant position on the adjacent sea, where they were preceded by the Scandinavian Vikings, who had ever since the eighth century been expanding with extraordinary vigour both west (to Iceland and the coasts of Great Britain and the mainland), and east (to the basins of the Volga and the Dniepr).

The Scandinavians, being a maritime people and inhabiting a region in the centre of prehistoric civilization, were in every respect superior to the other dwellers along the Baltic coasts, the Finns, the Prus-

sians and the Slavs. Their wide political (or piratical) and commercial expansion, and the contacts they made with advanced civilizations: the Romance or Mediterranean, the Byzantine and the Arabic (this last through the intermediation of the Chazars of the Volga), contributed notably to increase their economic and military strength, and for several centuries they were able to maintain a decided supremacy on the Baltic and to prevent any other of the coastal peoples from actively asserting themselves. In face of the opposition of the Vikings, the Prussians were quite unable to take the initiative, and at best were only in a position to repel inroads and organize resistance against the imposition of a foreign yoke. For a long time Poland was a less dangerous neighbour than Scandinavia, but it came into closer contact with western civilization in the tenth century, before the Prussians, and was organized into a state, with military power, before they were, cutting them off from all hope of landward expansion. Thus pressed on two sides by powerful neighbours, the Prussians were not capable of asserting themselves beyond their borders.

It is a widespread opinion among historians that the Prussians did in spite of difficulties have a share in the navigation of the Baltic, since Adam of Bremen writes that merchant ships from Sambia visited the Swedish port of Birka, which was the centre of

Scandinavian trade down to about A.D. 1000. But this mention is not conclusive evidence of the Prussians having been active sailors: the ships may have belonged to Danes settled at Sambia. Still more difficult is the question of the origin of 'Prussian Street' at Novgorod, supposed to have been founded by Prussian emigrants, and mentioned in chronicles from 1215. The existence of such a colony in the castellany of Lake Ilmen seems extremely doubtful in view of the lack of clear traces of commercial intercourse between Prussia and Novgorod before the Teutonic conquest. In any case, even if the Prussians began to navigate, it must have been on a negligible scale, not only because the Balts showed no inclination to become sailors (e.g. at the time of the struggles with the Teutonic Knights they had only small boats and punts), but equally because the Scandinavians would never have allowed the Prussians actively to develop their navigation, any more than they allowed the western Slavs, and especially the Finns, who were more advanced than the Prussians in this sphere.

DANISH INROADS AND CONQUESTS

Two Scandinavian peoples extended their power over the waters of the Baltic and its coasts: the Swedes and the Danes. The former directed their efforts principally to the spacious plain of eastern Europe, penetrating to the Black Sea and the Caspian,

while the latter pushed towards the west, but at the same time advanced along the south coast of the Baltic from Jutland to the mouth of the Niemen and even further to the north-east, where they became rivals of the Swedes in Courland and Estonia. Still, this activity of the Danes in Slavonic Pomerania and the peninsula of Sambia, the position of which gave it a special attraction for the Vikings, was of small account as compared with their achievements in the west, or those of the Swedes in the territory of the Eastern Slavs. It manifested itself chiefly in the undertaking of piratical inroads, and the forcing of the coastal peoples to pay tribute: proceedings which the Scandinavian chroniclers, with obvious exaggeration, speak of as the conquest of the various countries.

In reality the population after the departure of the enemy usually ceased to pay the tribute until the next raid. So far as is known, the Prussians, and even Sambia, which was most exposed to the danger, were never subdued for any length of time, although the Scandinavian raids continued (as far as we have knowledge of them) from the ninth century until the year 1210. Their unimportant results bear witness to the stubborn resistance of the Prussians, though they were also due to the inability of the Danes, occupied as they were in the west, to throw their whole strength against the coasts of Prussia, which interested them less. For the rest, the Slavs began to take the offensive

against the Danes about the middle of the eleventh century — more precisely, after the capture of Jomsborg in 1043 — whereby the appetite of the latter for conquest was perceptibly lessened.

Numerous Scandinavian commercial and military stations arose on the coasts and along the river-valleys during the period of Viking expansion. Nor was Sambia passed over: a body of Danes is traditionally said to have settled there in the reign of Harald Blue-Tooth, who died in 986. However the new-comers intermarried with the Sambian women, became Prussianized, and lost touch with their native country. Evidence for the truth of this account, both of the rise and of the assimilation of the colony, is found in the existence of a Norman cemetery near Wiskiaut on the peninsula. On the other hand, archaeological excavations show that Prussia was in close relations, as far as material culture was concerned, not with Denmark but with Sweden. Thus Prussia was a field for the influence of both the nordic peoples: for political conquest and partial settlement by the Danes, and for trade and cultural intercourse with the Swedes.

POLONO-PRUSSIAN POLITICAL RELATIONS

The Piast monarchy did not display — at least until the Pomeranian wars of Boleslas III, Wrymouth (d. 1138) — any prolonged activity in the Prussian

sector, which lay far from its principal political centres and apart from the general direction of its political expansion. Consequently our sources show little interest in it. This does not mean, however, that the relations between Poland and Prussia were consistently peaceful. The tribal organization preserved in Prussia and the military organization of Poland both alike encouraged war and pillage, which were common, every-day phenomena, representing, indeed, a kind of economic activity.

Poland was the most highly civilized and undoubtedly also the wealthiest neighbour of the Prussians on the landward side, and for that reason must have aroused their special greed as an object for attack and pillage. The Piasts were faced with the task of keeping their restless neighbour under restraint, and they accomplished it successfully thanks to their superior numbers and organization. They even cherished the idea, apparently, of drawing Prussia within the Polish state, or at least within the Polish sphere of influence: an idea quite in keeping with the general tendency of their policy, which was to make of Poland a great power. The earliest account of an armed conflict has reference to the reign of Boleslas the Lion-Hearted, who died in 1025. Adam of Bremen and a Polish chronicler named Gallus both agree — with characteristic medieval exaggeration — in speaking of the conquest of Prussia by that monarch.

In reality there was an incursion and perhaps an isolated exaction of tribute, probably in the early years of Boleslas' reign, since St Bruno (d. 1009) in his life of St. Wojciech states that the leader of the band of Prussians who murdered the bishop of Prague (in Sambia in 997) desired to avenge the death of his brother, slain by the Poles. As Sambia lies in the heart of Prussia, the pagan must have fallen, not in some border fray, but during some more important expedition undertaken by Boleslas.

We have no reliable accounts of warlike operations between Poland and the Prussians in the eleventh century, until Duke Boleslas Wrymouth (who began to reign in 1106) proceeded energetically against them, probably at the time of his conquest of Pomerania, from which they may have attempted to divert him by inroads into Masovia. Gallus mentions two Polish expeditions: in the winters of 1107-08 and of 1110-11, but unfortunately his chronicle for 1113 is broken off, and the later course of the campaign is unknown, apart from a mention in the Polish *Rocznik Świętokrzyski Dawny* (Annals of the Benedictine monastery of Holy Cross, near Kielce) of an expedition in 1115. Equally little is known of Boleslas' struggles with Pomerania after 1113. The devastation of Galindia most probably took place in the same reign — certainly not later — and is evidence of the fierce character which the warfare had taken on.

After the death of Wrymouth in 1139 the western Prussian tribes, in spite of the division and consequent weakening of the Piast dominions, long hesitated to take a decided offensive, for which their resources were evidently insufficient. Only the Jaćwings (Sudovians), the most powerful of them, began to raid and pillage certain Polish provinces, thereby provoking retaliatory action on the part of the Polish dukes Boleslas the Curly (d. 1173) and Casimir II, the Just (d. 1194). Other tribes, led by the Pomesanians, took the offensive about the turn of the twelfth century, but unfortunately, owing to the contradictory evidence of our sources, it is difficult to define the extent and results of this Prussian expansion in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Peter of Dusburg and the Teutonic writers in general give a picture of terrible devastations in Masovia by the Prussians, yet the papal bulls declaring crusades against the pagan Prussians are silent concerning any damage done to Poland by them, as Kętrzyński (11) first pointed out. The problem awaits thorough investigation, but there seems to be no doubt that the pressure of the Prussians was strong, and that they secured, and even managed to retain, in spite of the crusades against them, a certain superiority in Masovia. Thus the district of Chełmno, a Masovian province, was conquered by them (about the beginning of the thirteenth century, the exact date being uncertain), and remained in part

under their occupation until the time of the Knights of the Cross, who established themselves in the castle of Toruń and subjugated the Prussian castellanies in the Chelmino territory.

POLISH CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND SETTLEMENT

All these quarrels and struggles which broke out from time to time between the neighbours did not prevent the maintenance of peaceful relations between them in the intervals, both economic, commercial and political, the pagans furnishing their neighbour with armed auxiliaries. Boleslas the Curly made use of Prussian bands in his war with the Emperor in 1157. In fact the Poles employed Prussians even in their domestic quarrels, as is evidenced by the circumstances of the murder of the Polish bishop Werner in 1172: the attack on him was organised by Bolesta, the castellan of Wizna, together with his brother Benesz, commanding a pagan band introduced from Prussia. In general communication between the two countries was unhindered during the periods of peace. There were even pilgrimages from Poland to the first burial-place of St. Wojciech, which was pointed out to the pilgrims by the Prussians.

Such relations, going back without doubt into the far past, brought the two countries into close cultural contact, in which the active civilizing role fell

to the Poles by virtue of their higher attainments. The initiative in evangelizing the pagans came from Boleslas the Lion-Hearted: the Polish St. Wojciech in 997 laid the foundations for future missionary attempts. It is further noteworthy that the authors of the lives of St. Wojciech say nothing of any linguistic difficulties experienced by the missionaries, which goes to show that Polish was pretty well known among the Prussians. Indeed, a whole series of phenomena evidences the powerful influence of Poland on the language and culture of Prussia. A large number of Polish terms are taken into the Prussian vocabulary: the well-known Polish scholar Brückner states that 'names of tools, metals, plants and details of husbandry abound which have been adopted from the Polish beyond the Drwęca and the Ossa' (4), and strong influence can also be detected in the vocabularies of social and ecclesiastical practice. Some of these terms were adopted before the twelfth century: e.g. Pr. *gena*, Pol. (a. 12th C.) *żena* mod. Pol. *żona*, 'wife'. From the earliest period when our sources furnish us with personal names in any considerable number, i.e. from the thirteenth century, we find among them a large proportion of Polish origin (27). Forenames with the elements *myśl* (Pomusel, Swammuzel), *mir* or *mer* (Luthymer, Waymar), *slaw* (Boguslaus, Slawote) and others similar were borne as early as the thirteenth century by Pomes-

anians and Pogesanians, as well as by the people of Sambia.

Place-names likewise very often betray Polish origin or influence (9): even in distant Sambia we meet with such names as Derne (Pol. *darń*) or Ratai in the thirteenth century. This cultural penetration by Poland was the more easy, in that its social and legal institutions, especially in the border districts, Pomerania and Masovia, preserved to a great extent archaic features inherited from the tribal period, when the social organism of Poland was not markedly different from that of Prussia. That Polish institutions and concepts were intelligible to the Prussians and felt by them to be kindred to their own appears from the treaty of Chrystburg in 1249, wherein the Prussians declared for Polish law in preference to German.

Conditions of settlement and habitation probably also had a great share in the work of drawing Poles and Prussians together. There were various causes for the settlement of Poles in Prussia; for example political refugees might seek shelter there, especially if they had family connexions with the inhabitants. We hear of the intermarriage of Ruthenians and Lithuanians from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and doubtless bonds of affinity frequently united Prussian and Polish families. Polish peasants also undoubtedly formed agricultural colonies among

the pagan Prussians. The very strong Polish linguistic influence in Pomesania and the large number of local place-names of Polish origin can scarcely be explained otherwise than as a result of Polish immigration. Warlike operations likewise brought Lechitic elements to Prussia when the pagan raiders carried off women and children into slavery. Nevertheless, it was only in the fourteenth century that Polish settlement in Prussia became really extensive, the Masovian colonists pressing into the forests of Galindia or Sudovia and making a large part of them their own.

RELATIONS WITH RUTHENIA

Only one Prussian tribe dwelt on the border of Ruthenia and maintained relations with it, namely the Jaćwings (or Sudovians), separated though they were by the great forest extending along the Narwa. Political relations between Ruthenians and Jaćwings were very similar to those between Prussians and Poles: in anticipation of pagan inroads, or from a desire of their own for plunder, first the dukes of Kieff, Vladimir the Saint (d. 1015) and Jaroslas the Wise (d. 1054), and afterwards those of Volhynia organized warlike expeditions against the Jaćwings. When the Ruthenian state was divided and the strength of its resistance correspondingly reduced, the pagans recovered their self-confidence and took

the offensive. From the end of the twelfth century their inroads became a real plague to the neighbouring Ruthenian districts, and energetic defence was only organized towards the middle of the thirteenth century by the state of Halicz and Volhynia, now united under the sceptre of Daniel Romanowicz (d. 1261). Attacked as they thus were on three sides, by the Ruthenians, by the Poles and by the Teutonic Order, the valiant Jaćwings fell, and in 1283 their country was turned into a desert. In contrast with Poland, Ruthenia had no missionary aspirations in Prussia, and her cultural influence appears to have been fugitive, since the Prussian language contains no Ruthenian loan-words (Brückner 2).

Our sources maintain complete silence about Lithuanian and Prussian relations before the thirteenth century, yet we are probably justified in thinking that they were not consistently peaceful, since there were frequent obstinate struggles between the Lithuanians and the Latvian tribes of the Semigals and the Letgals. On the other hand, Peter of Dusburg speaks of assemblies or congresses of the three Baltic peoples, held at Romowe, for the arrangement of common political action; and common warlike undertakings may equally well have been resolved upon. The Lithuanians and the Prussians, more especially the Jaćwings, did actually undertake pillaging expeditions in common more than once in the

thirteenth century. Further, there was a regular movement of settlers from Lithuania to the territories of the neighbouring Prussian tribes, which doubtless encouraged intimate political co-operation.

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CHAPTER 3

HABITATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The custom which Caesar observed among the Germans, of surrounding their tribal areas with broad strips of desert, was not peculiar to them, as he appears to have thought, but was general wherever there was a similar primitive domestic organization and where political relations were unsettled. Peoples who eagerly waged war for the sake of pillage, and engaged in raids and devastation for profit, were naturally mistrustful of their neighbours and fortified themselves behind strips of uninhabited and inaccessible terrain, great rivers, marshes and forests, thus rendering it difficult for their enemies to penetrate to the heart of the country, and at the same time facilitating defence.

A lineal political frontier is a creation of an advanced civilization, such as the Germans only attained long after Caesar, and the Balts had not attained even in the thirteenth century. Prussia was surrounded on all sides with such boundary strips, which, as we shall see, before the arrival of the Teutonic Knights tended to increase rather than

diminish in breadth; and even the Knights after their conquest did not abolish them — just the opposite in fact: they exterminated the Prussian tribes to the east and created there a new and extensive border wilderness.

Having thus shortly explained the nature of the frontiers in those times, we will proceed to a description of the territory of the Prussian people at the final period of its independent existence.⁸

The author of the oldest life of St. Wojciech, writing about 1000, mentioned Gdańsk (Danzig) as a Polish castle in an advanced position on the border of Boleslas the Lion-Hearted's dominions, i.e. on the Prussian border. The lower Vistula together with the Great Żuława and the strip of swamp along its eastern bank was evidently in the tenth century a border river, dividing Prussia from Pomerania, and so it remained in the following centuries.⁹ Peter of Dusburg speaks of it as forming the boundary between those two countries, although in his time there was already a strong colonizing movement eastward on to Prussian territory. The relations between Prus-

⁸ Maps of pagan Prussia before the Teutonic conquest have been published by Toeppen and by myself in *Studja* (15), vol. II.

⁹ See W. Semkowicz: 'Geograficzne podstawy Polski Chrobrego' (Geographical basis of the Poland of Duke Boleslas the Lion-Hearted), *Kwartalnik Historyczny* (Historical Quarterly), vol. XXXIX (1925), pp. 260—61. Lwów.

sians and Pomeranians were evidently more peaceful than those elsewhere on the Polish frontier, so that we find cases of the settlement of Prussians on the left bank of the river, and still more frequently of Pomeranians on the right. Nevertheless the fundamental character of the Vistula as a political and ethnographical boundary remained unaffected.

Near the confluence of the Ossa and the Vistula the Polish-Prussian boundary turned east; and on both sides of the Ossa was a broad belt of wilderness separating the two ethnographic areas. Southwards to the Drwęca stretched the District of Chełmno, which at the beginning of the thirteenth century was laid waste and dominated by armed Prussian bands, yet was inhabited by men of Polish stock.

Hostilities between Poles and Prussians took place in the thirteenth century on the two wings of the frontier zone, which stretched from the Vistula to the Biebrza and the Podlasian wilderness to the south of it. At one end there was fighting in the district of Chełmno, at the other, along the Biebrza, north of which dwelt the Jaćwings (or Sudovians). In the centre, on a front of 200 km. or more, there was peace, for the nature of the terrain in the Mazurian Lake District rendered hostilities on any large scale impossible. The district was, in fact, another boundary belt. Even the Teutonic Knights did not try to penetrate into the heart of Prussia from the south,

but went round to the north, waging war from the side of the sea. Polish habitation in Masovia in the thirteenth century was confined behind a line drawn from Świecie on the Drwęca to Wizna on the Narew, and if there was a tendency to push north, it met with obstacles due to the stormy political situation. Prussian habitation, on the other hand, was bounded by a line drawn from the upper Drwęca and the lake of the same name to Rastembork and the lake of Mamry. The distance between these two lines varies from twenty or thirty to a hundred kilometres, and the intervening belt is composed of wilderness with numerous scattered lakes and swamps, occupying altogether an area of ten or fifteen thousand square kilometres. The greater part of this, to the north of the Mazurian Lakes, once belonged to the Prussian tribe of the Galindians. The memory of them was still living in the days of Peter of Dusburg, who wrote a legend of their extermination by their Christian neighbours, the Poles, with the help of the Jaćwings. By the time of the Teutonic Knights, however, not a trace of habitation in their area remained, and contemporary Teutonic sources have not a word to say about any conflict between them and the Order, though numerous accounts are preserved of conflicts with the other tribes, even the smallest. It is not possible accurately to date the wasting of Galindia, but in any case it must have been in the period when

Poland still carried on a vigorous border policy, and therefore at the latest in the reign of Boleslas Wrymouth. On the other hand, the date must not be put too far back, if there was a living tradition of the events in the fourteenth century. Thus Wrymouth, the subduer of the Pomeranians and the Prussian Sasi, who were neighbours of the Galindians, may have accomplished, and perhaps did accomplish the task of devastating Galindia begun by the preceding Piasts; for it was doubtless a restless and troublesome neighbour. It was not till the fourteenth century and later that Galindia was colonized anew — this time by the Masovians.

ETHNIC CHARACTER OF THE JAĆWINGS, NADROVIANS AND SKALOVIANS

East of Galindia, and north between it and the Niemen and the sheet of water known as the Kurisches Haff, extended the areas of three tribes, whose kinship with the Prussians has been repeatedly questioned by scholars: Jaćwież (or Sudovia), Skalovia and Nadrovia. The problem of their origin is rendered difficult by the fact that they all three died out during the struggles with the Christians in the thirteenth century, leaving no written records, and their lands were inhabited in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the Lithuanians, who appear to have absorbed the few Skalovians still surviving in

the neighbourhood of Ragneta and Tylża (Tilsit). The language of the tribes can therefore only be studied in place and personal names, preserved for the most part in Teutonic records. The investigation of this material carried out by the German scholars Gerullis (9) and Trautmann (27) leads to a belief in the Prussian character of the dialects, but does not afford sufficient evidence for a final judgement.

The last word therefore lies with the historians, and our most important authority upon the ancient Prussians, Peter of Dusburg, has no hesitation in placing all their tribes within the boundaries of 'Prussia'. The objection has, it is true, been raised that by 'Prussia' he means the territory of the Teutonic Order, i.e. a certain political rather than ethnographical unit; but in our present case this objection is not convincing, inasmuch as the Sudovian wilderness in the time of Peter of Dusburg belonged to no particular political entity, but formed a neutral zone between the Teutonic Knights and Lithuania.

As for Jaćwież, pre-Teutonic sources from the second half of the tenth century onwards afford evidence enough that it was regarded as an integral part of Prussia. The *Dagome iudex* document follows Ibrahim ibn Jacob in speaking only of Prussia and of Ruthenia on the north-east confines of Poland, and makes no mention of any separate Jaćwież, or Lithuania including Jaćwież. St Bruno, who was

martyred in 1009 by the pagans there, near the Lithuanian and Russian border, is said by the contemporary Thietmar, bishop of Merseburg, to have perished in Prussia. And the Polish chronicler Master Vincent Kadłubek (d. 1223) describes the Jaćwings as Prussians. Such historical data then justify us in recognizing Jaćwież as a Prussian tribe, and this conclusion leads to the further one that Skalovia and Nadrovia, in view of their geographical location between Jaćwież (Sudovia) and the western tribes, must have been Prussian likewise.

Yet how to explain certain Lithuanian features in the dialect of those three tribes? It is unlikely that either cultural relations, rare at that epoch, or military co-operation and the arrangement of raids in common should have had such an influence in the linguistic field. Rather we may seek the explanation in Lithuanian immigration into these furthest Prussian provinces, with all the more likelihood in view of the migration which we have already noted in both directions on the Prussian-Pomeranian border.

THE RUTHENIAN AND LITHUANIAN BORDERS

On the question of the southern limit of Jaćwing habitation, historians have been led astray by their noted colleague Jan Długosz (d. 1780), who placed the Jaćwings in Podlasie, with Drohiczyn on the Bug as their chief fortress. Careful investigations have

shown the untenability of this hypothesis, for they never reached even to the Narew, their habitations beginning north of the Biebrza swamps in the vicinity of lakes Rajgrodzkie and Selment. The ancient fortress of Raj defended the approach to Sudovia until it was taken and destroyed by the Polish chivalry. Between Jaćwież and Ruthenia stretched for a hundred kilometres and more a zone of wilderness and marsh, intersected by a network of streams, and only under its shelter, to the south of the Narew, did the area of Ruthenian habitation begin, with Brześć and Drohiczyn as border strongholds.

Equally inaccessible terrain distinguished the Black Ruthenian border, where the most advanced Slavonic fortress was Wołkowysk on the Roś. Grodno was founded by the Lithuanians, doubtless not before the times of Mendog, in the wilderness separating Black Ruthenia from Lithuania, whose most advanced stronghold up the Niemen, at its confluence with the Mereczanka, was Merecz. There the Prussian-Lithuanian boundary began.

According to Peter of Dusburg, Prussia was divided from Lithuania by the Niemen. This is accurate in so far as the tide of Lithuanian habitation never crossed the river; we hear of no struggles with the Teutonic Knights, nor of any Lithuanian strongholds on the left bank. The one exception mentioned by our sources is the Lithuanian manor of Szlanów,

above Kovno on the opposite bank. At the period of the struggles with the Teutonic Order the Lithuanian bank was lined by a chain of fortresses, behind which lay a thickly populated country, whereas on the Prussian side was nothing but forest. Not till the Szeszupa was crossed did one come to a more populated area. It is true that we hear of a few exceptional Jaćwing manors, lying on the Niemen away from the general direction of tribal settlement; but we may suppose that they were composed of mingled Prussian and Lithuanian elements. Only on the lower Niemen, below its confluence with the Mitwa, did the Prussians penetrate to and actually inhabit the northern bank. This is confirmed by Peter of Dusburg, who states that the Skalovians in that district were settled on both sides of the river. Nevertheless, they cannot have advanced to any great distance north of it, as is evidenced by the position of the later political frontier between Prussia and Lithuania, from 1422 to 1919. It was determined by the Treaty of Melno, and ran through what was without doubt the ancient border wilderness lying between Skalovia and Samogitia.

EXTENT AND POPULATION

Within the above-described frontiers: that is to say, the lower Vistula, the Ossa, the Galindian wilderness, the Biebrza, the Niemen and the Baltic, lay

the territory of the Prussian people, some 42,000 sq. km. (or 16,200 sq. miles) in extent. It is natural to ask the number of the population of this district, which put up so valiant, if unorganized, a resistance to the Teutonic Order and succumbed only after a long struggle. Peter of Dusburg gives a very high estimate of the number of men the Prussians could put in the field, and of their military power generally. Sambia, only one of the tribal districts, is supposed by this chronicler to have furnished 4000 horsemen and 40,000 ordinary warriors; and his words likewise imply that the weakest of the nine tribes furnished at least half as many, and Jaćwież one and a half times as many men as Sambia. If we are to accept these figures, we must conclude that ancient Prussia had over 2 million inhabitants and was nearly as densely populated as the area is today.

It is surprising that a chronicler living in Prussia and well acquainted with the country can give figures which are in such striking contrast with the state of affairs in his own time. Fortunately statistical data compiled by the Knights in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the first quarter of the fifteenth enable us, after rather complicated calculation, to form an idea of the minimum and maximum possible numbers of the Prussian population under the rule of the Order in about 1400, as well as to estimate the number of inhabitants in the

pre-Teutonic period. It appears, though admittedly uncertain, that this last was about 170,000, with a density of about 4 persons per sq. kilometre, which would give a figure of 30,000 men for the levy in mass from the whole country, counting one man to each family. This population was not equally distributed: Sambia had about 10 persons per sq. kilometre, Sudovia perhaps a quarter as many; which means that the densest aggregation was on the coast: a phenomenon observed also in other Baltic countries in the thirteenth century, especially in Estonia, where the island of Osilia (Ösel) had the thickest population.

For comparison we may give figures — which of course are equally uncertain — for the other Baltic peoples in the thirteenth century. Latvia had about 145,000 inhabitants, with 2·5 to the sq. km.; Lithuania at least 170,000, 3 to the sq. km. This phenomenon of diminishing density of population towards the north may be observed today also: the population of Lithuania is denser than that of Latvia, but sparser than in the neighbouring Prussia.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF PRUSSIA

The primitive political and territorial or governmental units existing among the Balts of the thirteenth century were distinguished — as indeed was to be expected among peoples of their degree of domestic evolution — by a simple form of organism, with parts few, undifferentiated, and limited in function. Yet, if the political organization was but superficially developed, it presented a complicated picture none the less, embracing as it did a whole hierarchy of territorial units: some superior and of broader powers, others subordinate and of minor competence, yet all fitting into the same framework. The Prussian race was composed of a number of tribes, each of which in turn comprised several smaller territorial groups. These units, higher and lower, were similarly constituted and performed similar political tasks, but naturally differed in political and military power, as well as in the degree of their interior cohesion; and so, as the occasion demanded the application of a greater or lesser degree of force, the superior units exercised their broader powers, or the subordinate units their minor

ones, with this limiting circumstance however, that owing to their comparative lack of cohesion it was more difficult to bring the former into action.

THE TRIBES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

After the extermination of the Sasi and the Galindians, there existed in Prussia at the moment of the arrival of the Teutonic Order nine tribes,¹⁰ whose distribution, so far as it can be determined from our frequently insufficient material, was as follows. To the west, between the Ossa, Vistula and Nogat on the one hand and the upper Łyna (as far as its greatest bend to the north-east) on the other, lay two districts, Pomesania and Pogesania, separated from one another by a belt of wilderness extending from lake Družno towards the upper Pasłęka. Their names throw light on the state of the country when it was first inhabited, Pomesania being a latinised form of the Prussian * *Pamedian* equivalent to the Polish *Podlasie* '(country) on the edge of the forest', and Pogesania, or more correctly Pogusania, of the Prussian * *Pagudian*, '(country) of underwood'.

The occupation of these districts was analogous to the Polish occupation of the border district of

¹⁰ For the meanings of the tribal names, see, besides the works of Gerullis (9) and Brückner (3), A. Bielenstein: *Die Grenzen des lettischen Volksstammes* p. 149 (Sambia). St. Petersburg 1892.

Podlasie, and doubtless formed the last stage in the development of Prussian habitation advancing from the east (perhaps from Galindia). The Vistula land attracted the inhabitants of the earlier occupied areas by the richness of its forest vegetation.

To the north-east of the Pogesian territory, bounded by the waters of the Łyna and the Pregoła and the Frisches Haff lay Warmia (Ermland) and Natangia. ('Warmia' comes from the Prussian *wor-myan*, 'red'; cf. the *grody czerwienne* 'scarlet fortresses', and Red Ruthenia, the present-day east of Little-Poland (Galicia).

The peninsula on the right of the Pregoła formed the tribal area of the Sambians. The Prussian name of *Sambia* is cognate with the Lithuanian *Žmudž*, latinised as *Samogitia*, and the Latvian *Semigalia*, all three denoting low-lying regions, situated on the lower course of the Pregoła, the Niemen and the Dwina respectively.

On the right bank of the Łyna the district of Barcia extended to the Galindian wilderness and Lake Mamry. If we may connect this name with the Lithuanian *bartis*, Polish *barć*, 'nest of wild bees in a tree', it would indicate favourable conditions for the development of bee-keeping in a district bordering on the wide and open forest wilderness. According to Brückner (3), Nadrovia, situated in the basin of the Pregoła east of Sambia, similarly got its name

from a word *druwis*, which had the same meaning as *bartis*. Gerullis' conjecture that it is derived from *druwit* 'to believe', seems less probable.

In the east lay the tribal areas of Skalovia (etymology unknown), on both banks of the lower Niemen from its confluence with the Mitwa to the Kurisches Haff, and Sudovia, higher up the Niemen, on its left bank in the region traversed by the rivers Szeszupa and Black Hańcza, and extending to the upper Biebrza. This *Sudovia* is according to Brückner (l.c.) an insulting appellation, from *sudas*, 'a litter or brood', which perhaps is the reason for the currency of the second name Jaćwież, from *jetis* 'a spear' (?). It is noteworthy that Teutonic sources mention this tribe only under the name of Sudovians, and Polish and Russian sources only under the name of Jaćwież.

The areas occupied by these tribes were of very differing extent: the smallest, Sambia, embraced not much more than 2000 sq. km. (770 sq. miles); Sudovia, the largest, 15,000 or 16,000 sq. km. On the other hand the population was much more constant, the smaller tribes being distributed along the Vistula and the sea-coast in the zone of greatest density, while the larger occupied the more sparsely populated eastern section. It is probable that Jaćwież outnumbered the weakest tribe by not more than two or three to one.

In addition to the above-mentioned tribes there was also the district of Unsatrapis (called by the Ger-

mans Wohnsdorf) on the lower Łyna and the Pregola, enjoying the same degree of independence as the rest, but of much smaller extent.

LOWER-GRADE TERRITORIAL UNITS

All these tribes comprised a larger or smaller number of minor territorial units, designated in Prussian sources as *pulka*, a term generally applied to all kinds of territorial formations, whether tribal or of lower grade, and possibly related to the Polish *pole*, field, and *opole*, territorial formation. Peter of Dusburg calls these sub-divisions of tribal areas *territoria*, whereas in Lithuania the term *włość*, adopted from the Ruthenian, was established.

Lack of relevant source-material prevents us from being able to enumerate anything like all these *territoria*; the names of rather less than sixty are known, whereas there must actually have been more than twice that number in Prussia. The fullest data that have been preserved concern Sambia, which comprised fifteen, and Pogesania, which certainly had at least ten; whereas we have no information at all about those of Skalovia, and are only able to learn of thirteen even in spacious Jaćwież, although conditions there are spoken of not only by Teutonic chroniclers, but also by Polish, Russian and Lithuanian writers.

In general it is observable that the *territoria* were fewer and larger in the eastern sections than in the west, which is to be explained by the more highly developed and denser settlement of the coast and Vistula districts. This inverse ratio between the extent of a *territorium* and the density of population is similar to what we noted with regard to the tribal areas, and is a phenomenon by no means peculiar to Prussia but found also in Lithuania and Latvia. It means that the remarkable differences between Prussian *territoria* in point of size — some having 80 sq. km. (30 sq. miles), and others as much as 700 sq. km. (270 sq. miles) — were counterbalanced by the differences in density of population. The number of people on a *territorium* can be most accurately calculated for Sambia, where it was on an average about 1500, and doubtless this was approximately the usual figure for Prussia, whereas in Lithuania it would be not much more than 100, and in Latvia rather less.

RISE AND POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF TERRITORIAL UNITS

In their primitive form territorial units, at least those of a higher order, coincide more or less with ethnic or linguistic groups. The growth of a common language is presumable under primitive conditions of communication and culture if there are common bonds of organization. We do it is true meet with

territorial units composed of heterogeneous ethnic elements, but they are always exceptional and transitory phenomena, manifesting the gradual absorption of one group by another as a result of conquest or peaceful penetration. In general we may suppose that the evolution of a language took place contemporaneously with that of an organized ethnic group. Consequently the researches of philologists, throwing light upon the processes whereby new linguistic groups separate off from the older parent language, enable us to draw conclusions as to the contemporaneous loosening of the bonds of union within the parent people.

With reference to the Balts too we may suppose that the linguistic affinity of the three branches is evidence of a primitive ethnic and organic unity. The process of decomposition, however, began and was carried far before their arrival on the Baltic, if the name of the Galindians on the Protwa denoted one of the branches or one of the tribes — as obviously it did, and not the whole Baltic group. Moreover, even Ptolemy mentions the Sudinians near the Galindians. In the thirteenth century not the least trace of the original organic unity remained, but on the other hand each of the three branches manifested a feeling of solidarity in that its tribes did not engage in war-

fare among themselves, but co-operated in common undertakings.¹¹

Differentiation had gone furthest among the Prussians, who had been the first to settle in their historic location. They were composed, as we have seen, of nine, for the most part small, separate tribes, whereas among the Latvians we find four, and among the Lithuanians, the latest comers, only two, though large ones, Samogitia and Aukstot. The evolution of a considerable number of small tribes in Lithuania and Latvia was in progress: within the larger boundaries areas comprising a few *territoria*, called 'lands' (*ziemie*), developed into new organic units, which under favourable circumstances might grow into independent tribes. In Prussia only one such 'land' is observable, namely Denowe, which appears to have comprised several *territoria* in southern Jaćwież.

In order to explain to ourselves the fundamental causes of this differentiation of territorial units, we must consider the purposes which they served. The task of every unit, large or small, was the defence of its area against outside enemies, and the assurance to its members of security. A unit which embraced a wide area met with considerable difficulties — if

¹¹ From Peter of Dusburg's account of warfare between the Jaćwings and the Galindians, one must assume that the solidarity of the Prussians was weakened as between certain tribes.

only difficulties of transport — in mobilizing its forces, and was unable properly to discharge its tasks. This resulted in a loosening of its structural bonds, and the rise of smaller units devoted to the defence of their local interests. Thus the branches divided into tribes, and the larger tribes split into smaller ones adapted to the conditions of terrain and habitation. Defence chiefly centred round strongholds, of which each tribe possessed a quite considerable number. With these as nuclei, minor territorial units came into existence in their turn, within the framework of the tribe, forming what we call *territoria*. If we thus regard military activity as the chief factor in the formation of these, we at the same time come to understand why there was no great numerical difference between their populations; they might not fall below the number essential for the defence of the stronghold, nor might they become too numerous, in so far as the increase brought with it increase of area, since the security of the inhabitants depended on their nearness to the stronghold.

Students of the political system of the Balts in the tribal epoch have found some difficulty in deciding whether the institution of monarchy existed among them at that early period, or whether power was in the hands of the people or of an aristocracy, or of delegates. In the state founded by the Teutonic Order the Prussians long appear under the pompous

title of 'kings', *reges*, *koenige*, and analogous terms occur in Livonia and in Lithuania, where there was a numerous class of *kniazie*. It seems likely that they were the descendants of the dynasty which once ruled over the tribes and *territoria*, and the supposition is for the most part confirmed by writers of Lithuanian history, though they cite no serious arguments in its support save the inflated terminology just mentioned. On the other hand, they advance the theory that the existence of minor tribal chiefs was an essential step in the process of developing a native monarchic form of government for the whole people.

Yet closer investigation of Lithuanian sources and conditions fails to confirm this hypothesis. In the primitive political society neither the superior territorial units nor the *territoria* crystallized under the power of chieftains, and a monarchy, over the whole of Lithuania, was only founded by Mendog in the middle of the thirteenth century. There are likewise no traces of monarchy in Prussia or Livonia during the pagan epoch; indeed our sources speak of the existence there of 'republican' political forms. The appellations *reges*, *koengie*, have not the meaning they bear today in the west but are vocal adaptations of the Baltic titles of honour *rikijs*, *kunigas*, *kungs*, denoting in general chief or lord, but not duke or monarch.

LEADERS AND COMMANDERS

The territorial units were dominated by leaders chosen by the people and invested with military and administrative authority. Both tribes and *territoria* had such leaders, and their power, at least over the tribes, was temporary, exercised in time of war, while in peace their fundamental military functions were in abeyance. They were elected when danger threatened, and in general whenever the unit proceeded to warlike action.

When they took up arms against the Teutonic Order in 1260, the Prussians, doubtless according to ancient custom, appointed leaders, each tribe separately: the Sambians, Natangians, Warmians, Pogesanians and Barcians, and entrusted them with authority over the army. In their first insurrection, in 1242, the same tribes had taken part, with the exception of the Sambians, as yet unconquered by the Order, and with the addition of the Pomesanians; yet they had all chosen a commander-in-chief in the person of Duke Świętopelk of Pomerania. Such co-ordination of effort on the part of several tribes was due to the influence of that prince, and was doubtless a rare event in Prussia, seeing that it was not repeated at the time of the second rising, in 1260. Usually the tribes, and even the *territoria*, acted independently: a characteristic which was noted and exaggerated by Ibrahim ibn Jacob when he wrote that the Prussian

when attacked does not wait for his fellows, but swings his sword until he falls.

The leader disposed of wide authority over the armed forces, raised fortifications, called up the levy in mass, and above all proceeded to action at the head of his band of followers and of the chief men of his tribe, select bodies of whom he organized. He was the leading spirit in war, and his death might mean not merely defeat, but the end of operations; thus the tribes taking part in the insurrection of 1260 and the following years against the Order withdrew from the struggle after the loss of their leaders, having no more confidence in their own strength. It was not always that a tribe put authority in the hands of one man; sometimes the defence was organized by several, usually leaders of *territoria*. Finally be it added that the office of leader of a *territorium* might possess a certain permanence, in so far as he had to provide for the maintenance of the stronghold in peace time as well as war.

ASSEMBLIES

The sovereign organ of a territorial unit was the assembly, which had the final decision in matters of cardinal importance, such as war and peace, relations with neighbours, choice of leaders, raising of fortifications or reception of a new faith. All members of the unit who enjoyed personal freedom were en-

titled to take part in the discussions of the assembly. Assemblies met in the separate *territoria*, but there were also assemblies of tribes, and even sometimes of the whole people. In *territoria* and small tribes — such as were most of the Prussian ones — as well as in the 'lands', the common people attended the discussions in large numbers, whereas mass attendance at the assemblies of the larger tribes, occupying wide areas, was by the nature of things more difficult, so that the aristocracy was the chief, if not the only section represented. Further, even in the *territoria* there might be more exclusive meetings of men of rank in addition to the general assemblies. The representatives of the higher class discussed current affairs at their own gatherings, and afterwards came forward at the general assemblies with proposals, or with resolutions to be approved.

The political system of Prussia, as of the other Baltic peoples, had the outward appearance of democracy, but in point of fact the government was carried on by an energetic and warlike aristocracy, enjoying the complete confidence of the masses of the people, who — as appears from the proceedings of assemblies in Sambia, described in the thirteenth century Livonian Rhymed Chronicle — took no active part in the debates, but only received with thunderous shouts of applause the decisions taken by the aristocracy.

There were also permanent meeting-places for the assemblies. The Sudovian commander Skumand once conducted a captured Teutonic Knight to the place where the elders of the district gathered and debated public affairs over their mead. There was a place called Romowe in Nadrovia which was the meeting-ground for representatives of the Prussian tribes and of neighbouring peoples, and the scene of discussions and negotiations between them. At the same time it was the centre of the pagan cult, administered by a priest, among whose duties was that of summoning assemblies, no doubt at the request of one of the territorial units interested. Peter of Dusburg calls this priest *Criwe*, perhaps a sobriquet derived from the word for the crooked stick which served as a token to summon the assembly, and endows him with supreme authority over all the Balts. This idle statement, due to a misunderstanding by the chronicler of the true significance of the priest's functions, long deceived historians into believing in the existence of a theocracy among the Prussians and Lithuanians, until the researches of Mierzyński (16) elucidated the causes of the misunderstanding.

ORGANIZATION OF DEFENCE

The axis round which the activity of a territorial unit turned was the problem of defence against an external foe. Some protection against sudden attack

was given by the physical features of the country, whose primitive wildness had been as yet but little affected by the progress of habitation. Marshy primeval forests and wide inundations at certain times cut off all communication with outside; but in winter, when marshes, lakes and rivers were stiff with frost, or in summer, when the floods dried up, the border lay open, and it became essential to construct artificial defences. Abattis were raised in the border forests, but these served merely to delay the enemy; they were insufficient to stop him.

In the event of an inroad, there were two possible courses open to the inhabitants: either to hide in the recesses of the forests, or to take refuge in more or less impregnable strongholds. In the time of the Teutonic Order the former of these was preferred, since the knights from the west had an excellent knowledge of siegecraft, but were less at home in the topography of the wildernesses; but in the period just before their coming the reverse was the case: the forests afforded no safety, being passably familiar to the raiders, for which reason defence centred chiefly round the strongholds.

Gallus and Kadłubek wrongly assert that the Prussians had no fortified places, but historians and archaeologists agree that Prussia, like both Lithuania and Latvia, possessed a highly developed system of them. Peter of Dusburg, describing its military

power, states that almost every tribe possessed numerous strongholds, and the history of its struggles against the Teutonic Order fully confirms this information. Of five hundred forts of different periods noted by archaeologists in the area of Prussia, the majority undoubtedly are places of refuge dating from the period when the Knights of the Cross arrived on the Vistula. Every *territorium* possessed at least one, the military organization of the country coincided with the territorial and political structure: in Peter of Dusburg's chronicle the terms *territorium* and *castrum*, fort, are used as if synonymous. If a *territorium* had several forts, each might become the centre of a separate defensive unit, which might in time develop into an independent *territorium*.

Such a fort was usually built on a natural elevation, surrounded by water or marsh, and artificially strengthened by ditches and banks. On the top of the hill, fenced with a stockade, was the actual stronghold, while at the bottom, similarly palisaded, was an outwork designed as a temporary refuge for the population, who would only withdraw to the fortified summit on the near approach of the enemy. Neither fortress nor outwork was permanently inhabited. In time of peace the common folk lived in villages, and the knights in their manor-houses, while the forts were occupied only by garrisons, and watchmen were stationed on the borders to give warning of coming

raids. The forts were of modest dimensions, being designed to accommodate the whole population of the district, perhaps a thousand in number, or less if there were other, smaller forts in the territory, packed as closely as possible. To raise such a fort and maintain it in a proper state of defence was costly and laborious. Hence the limitation of its area was practically desirable.

THE ARMY. LEVY IN MASS. COMPANIONS

A territorial unit deciding upon war might call all its members to arms; and its chief had the same right. Avoidance of one's share in the levy in mass was punishable with death, as was opposition to the public will in general. The assemblies treated disobedience with extreme severity. The levy in mass was divided into two classes, differing greatly one from the other in equipment and in military value. The greater part was composed of the common folk, armed in primitive fashion with clubs and stones and wooden shields, and only in exceptional cases carrying pikes. The Balts did not use bows, and the 'bowmen with arrows' spoken of by Peter of Dusburg as being in the Prussian and Lithuanian army besieging Welawa must have been Ruthenians, introduced by the Lithuanians.

We have mentioned that the Prussians could dispose of an armed force amounting to about 30,000

men, but 90 per cent of it was a mere unarmed horde in comparison with the heavily armed Christian chivalry, and was quite unpractised in war. They could not face the Teutonic Knights in the open field, but preferred to wage guerilla warfare, plaguing the enemy with unexpected attacks, and lying in ambush for him in the forests and marshes. A body of knights thus fallen upon unawares in the forest might easily be destroyed by a hail of stones and blows of clubs. Daniel, Duke of Halicz (d. 1261), taught by the experience he had gained in his struggles with the Jäc-wings, said that the Christians' stronghold was the open field, but the pagans', the thick forest. In the face of the enemy the Prussians hastened to surround themselves with barricades of fallen trees.

The second class of warriors was composed of select bodies of horsemen, in whose ranks fought the representatives of the tribal aristocracy. Immensely superior as they were to the common folk in equipment and in dexterity, they could stand even against the chivalry of the west, and upon them accordingly fell the chief burden in the battles sometimes fought against the Knights in the open field. These Prussian horsemen, like the Lithuanian and Livonian, were 'light-armed', as the Prussian documents say, yet their equipment, of sword and spear, helmet and even shirt of mail, was sufficient to enable them to hold their ground against the Teutonic forces.

Unfortunately their numbers were small, and their activity was further hampered by the fact that the tribes were unable to unite and organize their forces. Yet they showed intelligence and ability in the art of war, contriving, for example, to build siege engines modelled after those of the Knights; and in spite of their lack of organization and numerical weakness they managed to make head against the Teutonic Order for a considerable time.

The masses of the common folk took part as a rule only in defence. The favourable moment for them to come into action was when the invader turned back, hampered in his movements by the booty with which he was loaded. They were not capable of taking the offensive or of raiding distant areas; this part of warlike activity was left principally to the aristocracy, who formed as it were a professional warrior class.

This class, moreover, closely connected as it was with the territorial units and forming part of their organization, developed another, extra-territorial and resting on a voluntary agreement between the members and their leader: namely the *comitatus* or body of companions. Unfortunately we know little of its growth in Prussia, partly because of the obscure terminology used by Peter of Dusburg in descri-

bing it,¹² yet we must suppose that the institution was at least as widespread here as, for example, in Livonia just before its conquest by the Knights of the Sword, for the conditions were more favourable among the Prussians, who made frequent forays into Poland. The most valiant leaders were surrounded by groups of their kinsmen and 'companions', forming compact and mobile detachments, for whom warfare was a profitable occupation and indeed their chief source of livelihood.

In its primitive, and doubtless very ancient, form, the body of companions represented a robber band, of ten or fifteen men, who raided neighbouring districts for plunder or adventure, and sometimes penetrated quite deeply into them. Such bands, called in medieval sources robbers (*latrunculi*), maintained themselves in Prussia even under the rule of the Order, which made use of them to check the inroads of the Lithuanians. The companions were independent bodies, tolerated by the territorial units by reason of the advantages their activity brought to the country, yet compelled by these units to observe the treaties of peace which they made with other countries. Nevertheless, it should be added that their plundering forays were the chief cause of the quarrels and never-ending struggles between neighbouring countries during the tribal epoch.

¹² The chronicler calls the companions *familia*; which term he also uses to denote 'family' and 'domestic servants'.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF PRUSSIA

The territorial units formed a primitive kind of state, while the units resting on bonds of blood, the family and the clan, formed a kind of social community. Since the state's sphere of activity was confined almost exclusively to external relations, the waging of war, the guarding of borders and the construction of forts, and since it did not take upon itself police functions, nor aim at securing the safety of the individual within the tribe and the manor, these latter functions had to be discharged by the community.

The basis of this was the family, consisting of parents and children, ruled by the father. Property and surname and even social position passed from father to son, succession through the mother being rare. According to Peter of Dusburg, the position of women in the Prussian family was a humble one: wives, purchased for a small sum of money, served their husbands as slaves, did not venture to sit at the same table with them, and on certain days washed the feet of the inmates of the house and their guests.

It is somewhere stated that after the death of the father the son married his wife (his own stepmother), or inherited her as part of the chattels. However, this can only have been true of one particular class of women: the prisoners of war and thralls. The general and social position of a free woman, especially if she belonged to the tribal aristocracy, was equal to that of a man; sometimes women even spoke on public affairs, for example Nameda of the family of the Montemins, from which sprang Henry, the leader of the Natangians in the second Prussian insurrection, of 1260. Relationship through the mother was valued. An uncle was heartily attached to his niece, and sometimes we hear of their managing property in common. It is true that a daughter after her marriage no longer shared in the division of the father's land, but this was probably due to the fear of her husband, a stranger's intrusion into the family estate and the clan. Still, an only daughter without brothers might, it seems, take the property after her father if he adopted her husband.

The family group by reason of its small size was unable to discharge the important functions which fell to the community as a result of the occupation of the tribes and *territoria* with external affairs, and this led families of common origin to preserve a feeling of close solidarity and to act together in matters of public interest and in defence of their mem-

bers. Thus they united to form a clan, or group of agnates, sprung from the same forefather.

Nicholas of Jaeroschin mentions a certain Sambian, Gedune by name, who rendered services to the Teutonic Knights during the conquest of Sambia; lord, that is to say head, of the Kandemin clan. No doubt the many aristocratic Prussian clans, like those of Lithuania and Latvia, had their seniors or leaders, who had risen to the headship by virtue of their authority, wealth and importance in the community, and ruled with an arbitrariness proportioned to their power. But there is no support for the view widely expressed by historians, that the institution of permanent headship existed among the Balts. There is no mention of any official leader of the clan, appointed or hereditary; and it is hard to believe that this would have been the case had such an office existed, considering the great importance of the clan in the social organism of the tribe. The affairs of a clan, like those of a territorial unit, were administered by an assembly of its members, in which the deciding vote naturally fell to such as were most influential by reason of age, deserts and wealth. These, or maybe one of these, the most eminent, were the actual leaders, but their title was clearly moral and not legal.

THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE CLAN

In spite of the compactness of the clan, and of some degree of centralization in its structure, it would

be mistaken to suppose that there was community of goods among all its members, or even among the members of a large family group within it (such as existed among the Slavs and is nowadays called a *zadruga*). We have enough information touching ancient Prussian economic conditions to justify us in asserting that communism of this kind was as unfamiliar to the Prussians as it was to the contemporary Germans. On the contrary, the individual possession of land was general among the Baltic pagans. The treaty of Chrystburg, concluded in 1249 between the Prussians and the Christians, though it goes at large into legal details, contains not the slightest mention of community of goods; but it does inform us that in pagan times sons inherited property from their father, which implies that he possessed it separately from his brothers.

The territorial lords of Prussia (i.e. the Teutonic Order and the Bishops), as soon as they had conquered each province, drew up, as early as the thirteenth century, a large number of documents for the local aristocracy: sometimes donations of new benefices (as reward for recognizing the supremacy of the Knights of the Cross, and encouragement to persistence in loyalty), but more frequently confirmations of former tenure. The Order, especially in the thirteenth century, when its power was not yet firmly established, conformed to the private and legal

customs of the Prussian chiefs, and consequently their documents enable us to form a very clear idea of the legal structure and land ownership of ancient Prussia. Title deeds were given as a rule to individuals or to close relations, such as father and sons, or brothers; more rarely to persons distantly related. However, there were frequent 'common' investitures, referring, it would appear, to divided property. The rare phenomenon of brothers managing undividedly and in common property inherited from their father was only temporary and provisional, for the usual tendency was to divide property among brothers. Clan ownership was therefore not common.

In spite of the preponderance of individual ownership, two considerations lead us to believe in the existence of an economic basis for the clan: firstly, the compactness of its settlement, of which we will speak directly, and secondly, the inheritance customs. According to the treaty of Chrystburg in 1249, property was inherited from a father by his sons, but if there were none, it did not pass to the nearest kin. What happened to it in that case the treaty does not say, but it seems reasonable to suppose that it passed to the clan group, dwelling in the same village. The alienation of land by its owner to strangers was forbidden, or at any rate required the consent of the members of the clan. Thus the separate parcels of the clan estate changed their owners from generation

to generation, but the whole remained in the hands of the same group of agnates and formed one of the material bases of its organic existence.

We know the names of some of the Prussian clans in the thirteenth century: the Gobotins and the Kirsins of Warmia, the Kandemins and the Sipayns of Sambia, and the Montemins of Natangia. These all belonged to the tribal aristocracy, but their structure was probably not very different from that of the clans of common people. We have more detailed information about the distribution of only one of them, the Kandemins. The ancestral home of this name (Condehnen) was in the Sambian territory of Medenow. Its aged head, the above-mentioned Gedune, in reward for information about the Sambian forces given to King Ottokar of Bohemia when he was starting on a crusade against them, received tokens to set up over the abodes of his kinsfolk, as a sign to the Teutonic Knights that they were not to be destroyed; but he arrived with them too late and found nothing but ashes and the corpses of 'all of his blood'.

This was the typical form of settlement, with the clan gathered into one village, which naturally belonged to it exclusively and was a separate topographic unit. Examples of it were preserved in Lithuania as late as the sixteenth century, especially in the district of Kovno, where there survived a numerous and conservative class of petty nobles. Besides the

chief settlement, colonies might be established in different places, even at a considerable distance. Such clan habitation over wide areas is a phenomenon of sixteenth century Lithuania, and in view of the strong currents of migration in the pagan (tribal) epoch would seem to have originated then. It should be emphasized, however, that the feeling of solidarity in the clan must have been weakened when it was split into such minor groups, and thus deprived of its basis of contiguous property.

THE ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC FUNCTIONS OF THE CLAN

The fact of the occupation of a separate village by the clan brought with it economic consequences. The arable land and meadows and the hives of bees scattered in the forests were owned individually by the members, while the pastures, rivers and lakes, together with the primeval forests, were the property of the whole community. Their use was regulated by the clan, which settled disputes arising out of it. In certain cases pasture-land was in common occupation by the whole clan. We may well doubt, on the other hand, whether there was co-operation in clearing the forest, which would have been complicated by individual differences of aptitude and inclination, as well as by differing economic aims and needs.

More important than the economic were the public functions of the clan. Tasks which in a devel-

oped state belong to the police and the law-courts are in a primitive community carried out by the clans. In the first place they arrange differences and settle quarrels between their members, but they also defend the latter against strangers and avenge injuries done to them. That which in a higher stage of civilization takes the form of a process at law, was represented in the tribal epoch by a feud within the clan, or by a struggle between the clans of the injured man and of the aggressor. Peter of Dusburg relates, tersely but emphatically, that in case of murder the Prussian custom permits no agreement to be come to until the murderer or his near relative has suffered death at the hands of the kinsfolk of the murdered man. In general the maxim life for life, hand for hand, was observed; yet in the case of lesser offences payment of a money compensation by the guilty party to the injured man or his clan was sometimes allowed. Such commutation of penalty is mentioned, among other references, in the charter received by Gedune in 1261, which no doubt confirmed the old legal custom.

Yet another public function was discharged by the clan: as a component part of a territorial unit it went to war in a body, forming a separate military detachment. Such clan groups were distinguishable in the Lithuanian levy in mass as late as the sixteenth century, doubtless as remnants of the former type

of organization, which prevailed in Prussia in the thirteenth century: the Sambian, Sclodo, fought in the battle of Durbeñ (1260) with his clan at his side, and the whole clan of the Gobotins united to build the fort of Portegal.

DIFFERENTIATION OF CLASSES

The whole of the free population of Prussia was comprised within these clan groups. An unattached man, outside them, had to rely on his own strength alone, and was practically defenceless in a conflict with organized opponents. Moreover, the private interests of the members of a clan demanded that they should uphold its power, influence and numerical strength, and give each other mutual support; and this led to a levelling of social, and even of economic, classes within it. Between clans, on the other hand, there might be very considerable differences, both in their numbers and in their place in the social scale. The Teutonic Knights found two quite distinct classes among the Prussians: a lower, comprising the broad masses of the common folk, and a higher, consisting of a small number of nobles. These latter had attained a high degree of culture, and the Knightly chronicler does not hesitate to speak of their distinguished birth and noble blood, even though they were pagans, while the treaty of Chrystburg in 1249 lays down that Prussians of noble

origin may be dubbed knights. Such evidence proves that the tribal aristocracy was a very definite class, dependent on birth. It was further differentiated from the mass of the agricultural population by its knightly occupation, which was the source of its wealth. This consisted chiefly of booty taken in war: gold and silver, weapons and garments, horses and thralls, while its landed property was of limited extent. The Teutonic Knights regarded these nobly-born Prussians as rich and powerful men.

How are we to explain the existence within a primitively organized society of two such markedly different classes? The hypothesis might be advanced that the higher one was composed of the descendants of a conquering race who subjugated the Prussians and settled among them, but adopted their language and became assimilated with them ethnically; and the undeniable fact of the existence of a Norse settlement in Sambia, where the aristocracy was particularly powerful, might be cited in support of it. Nevertheless, other and more valid considerations make for the rejection of a Norse origin for the Prussian ruling caste: for this latter flourished not only in the coastal region, which was exposed to Norse influence, but also in remote Jaćwież. Peter of Dusburg says of the Sudovians (obviously thinking of the knightly caste) that they took precedence of the rest of the Prussians in nobility and surpassed them in wealth and power.

Moreover, we find an identical class among the Latvians, and also in Lithuania, both in Samogitia and in Aukstot, where it is impossible to speak of the penetration of Norse elements. Accordingly, if the nobles owed their origin to conquest, it was in the far-distant past before the coming of the Norsemen, a period on which historical researches throw no light. It seems extremely probable, however, that they rose to power at home because of their warlike and predatory activity abroad, which led to a differentiation between the knightly clans and the mass of the common folk.

These latter were most numerous. They enjoyed personal freedom, which the treaty of Chrystburg guaranteed to them so long as the Prussians should remain faithful to Christianity. The peasants were not in any kind of personal dependence on the aristocracy. They bore certain burdens on behalf of the state, in the form of building and maintaining forts, serving in the levy in mass, and guarding the strongholds and the borders. Theoretically they had full political rights, took part in the assemblies, and by their resolutions decided matters concerning their territorial unit. Actually, however, they obediently followed the advice of the nobles, having no independent judgement and being incapable of organized effort. After the Teutonic conquest they were loaded with hitherto unknown burdens, and — in 1295 in

Natangia and subsequently in Sambia — took up arms against the Knights and their own aristocracy, who held with the Knights; but they could not find a competent leader from among their own ranks, so they invited one of the Prussian magnates, who betrayed them at the first opportunity. Alike in Prussia and in Livonia after the Teutonic conquest, and in Lithuania after the institution of the monarchy, this class was transformed into a rural caste of serfs.

The lowest rung of the social ladder was occupied by the unfree population. In contrast to the common folk, who must be regarded as the ethnic kernel of the Prussian people, the thralls were a preponderatingly foreign element, recruited from among prisoners of war, or sprung from their descendants. There was yet another source, if we are to believe St. Bruno, namely offenders against the territorial units, who, together with their families, were sometimes deprived of their freedom. However, such were sold abroad rather than at home. The thralls were not a numerous class. The custom prevailed in the Baltic countries down to the middle of the fourteenth century of taking only women and children prisoners of war, and killing the men, from which it would appear that no great need was felt of the labour of thralls. Women prisoners of war were very frequently sold: there was always a demand for them

in the markets of the east. The thralls worked for the nobles, cultivating their estates; or a master might arm his servants and take them with him on a plundering foray.

RURAL ECONOMY

J. Voigt (31) was the first to suppose that the rural economy of Prussia reached a high stage of development before the coming of the Teutonic Knights, and it is nowadays recognized that they were an agricultural people (e.g. O. Schlüter 22; Mortensen 17). It can indeed be proved from various data contained in documents and chronicles, that in comparison with agriculture other branches of rural economy were merely auxiliary, or of minor importance. The chase was followed with enthusiasm, but only by the magnates, for whom it was the chief occupation after foraying. There was a certain profit to be got out of it in the shape of slain beasts and valuable furs, but its chief value was as a pastime. How very small was its importance for the broad masses of the people, even when it was developed most intensively, follows from the consideration that the density of population in countries where the inhabitants are exclusively devoted to hunting does not exceed .0234 per square mile, and even in countries where the inhabitants add a primitive agriculture to hunting it does not exceed 1.82 per square

mile.¹³ In Prussia, however, there were 10·4 persons to the square mile, so that only a minute fraction of the population could maintain itself by the chase alone. Fishing, an occupation which takes up less of a peasant's time, was more widespread among the common folk, yet it was but little developed, as is evidenced by the fact that the drag-net was unknown, and only 'small implements', as the documents say, were used for catching fish. The whole population, it appears, practised bee-keeping, which enabled them to vary their food and provided them with mead, their favourite drink. Nowhere in Prussia before the coming of the Teutonic Knights do we find any traces of the development of specialized occupations, such as that of the hunter, fisher, bee-keeper or shepherd. There is no foundation for the idea of certain scholars (Hein 10) that there were in Prussia different economic zones, characterized by hunting, herding, or agriculture; the country was uniformly agricultural.

There is no doubt that the Prussians were mainly dependent upon agriculture for their existence. Auxiliary to this was the breeding of domestic animals, principally oxen and horses, which were used for work in the fields. The density of population in pastoral, steppe countries scarcely reaches 5 per

¹³ Fr. Ratzel: *Anthropogeographie*, vol. II, p. 173. Stuttgart, 1922.

square mile, and about 80 per cent of the surface of Prussia was forest. Presumably therefore the production of animals satisfied only a small proportion of the needs of the country. Documents of the Teutonic Order show it as a predominantly agricultural country, in which the estates were composed chiefly of arable, and in the second place of meadows. When the harvest failed, the people suffered famine; we know that the Jäc wings in such circumstances purchased their corn in Ruthenia. The Teutonic Knights recognized the existing economic framework, and took the agricultural unit, the ploughshare, as the basis of their system of taxation.

Agricultural technique cannot have reached a high level among the Balts, yet it was not so low as is commonly imagined. Although there was no division of the land into three fields, it being cut up into a disorderly patchwork of small plots, nevertheless a three years' system was developed, corresponding to the three crop system: rye was followed by spring-sown corn, and in the third year the ground was left fallow. For cultivation the plough was used. Sometimes the ploughshare was actually made of wood, but whether this was an exceptional thing, due to temporary lack of iron, is not known. Horses and oxen alike were yoked to the plough. The harrow was in use, and corn was reaped with both scythes and sickles. Probably the practice of manuring the

soil was unknown, since it was rare in Lithuania even in the sixteenth century. The harvests were extremely meagre, yielding no more than two-fold. The principal crops were rye and oats, after which came barley and wheat; flax must have been of importance; vegetables less so, for the Prussians, seeing the Knights eating cabbage, thought it was grass; but turnips were probably known to them, if we may judge by their wide distribution in Lithuania in the fourteenth century.

TRADE AND MARKETS

At the stage of economic evolution which the ancient Prussians had reached individual estates produced almost exclusively for their own needs and consumed almost the whole of their own production; if they bought anything from outside, it was in inconsiderable quantity. There were no separate economic zones, as we have seen; which means that the production of all the individual estates must have been uniform — all were of the same type. Consequently there were no conditions favourable to the rise of a permanent and organized system of internal exchange. Foreign trade on the other hand there was.

When the whole country was suffering from famine, corn was imported from outside. Further, indispensable objects, not manufactured at home, were obtained from foreign traders. It is well known

that the Roman Empire maintained active trade relations with this part of Europe, obtaining amber from Sambia. From the eighth century onwards Prussian trade was concentrated on the Baltic, where it was carried on at first with Scandinavia and subsequently with the Germans. Metal products and salt were the chief imports, exchanged for furs, gold and silver (partly booty taken on forays), and doubtless also wax.

There were evidently a number of fixed points for exchange along the coast of the Baltic, and it is even likely that towns such as Elbing (Elbląg), Bydgoszcz and Königsberg (Królewiec) mark the sites of former markets. St. Bruno mentions one such spot in Sambia, the district where St. Wojciech (Adalbert) was martyred, and special importance attached to Truso (south of Elbing), an ancient centre of the amber trade. Markets were likewise established on the Polish frontier, for we read that in 1221 Leszek the White, Duke of Poland, determined to fix a place for the sale of salt and iron to the pagan Prussians.

Plundering forays were undertaken for economic rather than political reasons, and may be said in some degree to have performed the functions of trade, providing the country with goods required from outside. Famine was doubtless also a contributory cause, but the strongest motive was the desire for rapid enrichment. Expeditions were made not only

against countries of higher culture and greater wealth, but also against the other Baltic peoples, who were poor. The inanimate plunder was piled on wagons or on sleighs, which the raiders took with them according to the season of the year, and the prisoners, horses and cattle were driven alongside. Such forays were the most important element making for economic and social differentiation and the growth of an aristocracy.

THE VILLAGE

A great extent of country being covered by forest and marsh, the open, cultivated land took the form of a series of enclaves, more densely distributed here, more sparsely there, according to the state of the population, each of which was a separate topographic unit, cut off from its neighbours by primeval forest, marshes and rivers, though it might approach nearer to them as habitation spread, until at length it was in direct proximity.

Such an isolated settlement was called 'the fields' (Ancient Prussian *lauks*, Lithuanian *laukas*), and the habitations within its limits formed a village: regularly, as we have seen, belonging to one clan, which might, however, occupy several distinct 'fields'. There were great differences in extent between settlements: one might have two or three, or even a single farmhouse, while another had as many as twenty. Some-

times the village was a small, compact hamlet of a few houses, round which scattered dwellings might rise at a certain distance; but in general, as in Lithuania and Latvia, the tendency was to cover the 'fields' with single, isolated farms. The treaty of Chrystburg accordingly calls the Prussian settlements hamlets (*villulae*).

The Teutonic writers have left us no description of the Prussian peasant's house, but we may be sure it was no better a dwelling than the Samogitia hut, described by Długosz and other authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was constructed of wood (logs) and straw (for the roof), and had an opening at the top admitting light, immediately under which was the hearth. The domestic animals were accommodated under the same roof, and even, according to later writers, in the same room as the human inhabitants, where also was stored their grain. Hay and straw were apparently piled in stacks. As late as the sixteenth century Samogitia peasants had to be taught to build separate cow-houses. The Prussians must have spent their lives in no less primitive surroundings.

On the other hand, we have direct information as to the extent of ground farmed by a normal peasant family of two parents and their children. It consisted of arable and meadows, and pastures with undergrowth and thickets; there were tree-hives in the

forest, and the nearest river or lake supplied fish. The one chief agricultural implement was the hook-plough, drawn by a pair of oxen or horses, and with it they seem to have cultivated something like a Chelmno hide, or 42 acres. As the extent of each farm did not vary much from the average, it was denoted by the name of the implement, a 'plough'. In addition to this amount of arable land, a farm probably had as much again of meadow, pasture and thicket.

Although Dlugosz asserts that the inhabitants of Samogitia had no other buildings but huts — neither mansions nor granaries nor stables —, this is not quite true. The dwellings of the well-to-do Balts cannot have been so primitively arranged as those of the common folk. Contemporary writers emphasize the difference, calling the residences of the former 'courts' (*curiae*) and the settlements of the peasants 'villages' (*villae*).

The 'court' was composed of several buildings: a separate living room and a stable or cow-house for the domestic animals. Peter of Dusburg mentions a stable belonging to the Sambian Dorge, in which the owner kept cattle and horses. Probably these courts also had baths, since the same historian relates that some of the Prussians (no doubt of the wealthy class) used to take a bath every day (including winter), while others (evidently common folk) never took one at all. The buildings formed a compact group, and

were maintained in a state of defence; Vincent of Kielce in his life of St Stanislas (1260-61) speaks of the court of a certain well-to-do Prussian as beautiful and well-fortified, with one narrow gateway.

The care of the owner for the defence of this mansion is understandable, since in it he frequently kept valuable possessions. Round it were his ploughlands, meadows and pastures; yet in one 'field' there might be several 'courts' or mansions, belonging to the same clan, and in that case the chess-board plan of the ground was not different from that of a peasant's holding. Nevertheless, the landed possessions of a knight considerably exceeded those of a villager, and comprised several 'ploughs', cultivated by thralls. Larger estates than this were not found among the ancient Prussians or the other Balts of that period. A further difference between the holdings of a knight and a peasant was due to the fact that the former bred horses, for use in war, on a larger scale, and therefore had a proportionately larger amount of ground devoted to this purpose.

CHAPTER 6

RELIGION

Researches into the religion of the Balts, the last pagans in Europe, may, as has been well observed, provide science with valuable data, since these beliefs, having been longer preserved, were more fully reflected in early historical narratives than those of other related peoples, such as the Slavs, Celts and Germans (with the exception of the Scandinavians), who gave up their primitive faiths in remote and obscure ages. But unfortunately investigators in this field meet with difficulties, and have even been led into false paths by writers of the sixteenth century and later, who, under the influence of the Renaissance and humanism, tried to bring the mythology of the Prussians and Lithuanians into agreement with that of the Classical Greeks and Romans, filling their accounts with fantastic fictions, though they were suppose to be based on the observation of contemporary beliefs and ceremonies.

The German writer Simon Grunau (1526) led the way in the creation of this Prussian and Lithuanian Olympus, and was the greatest falsificator among historians of the Balts. He was followed by many

others, and even an apparently serious source like the Prussian ritual of 1530 enumerates in the introduction a whole list of local Prussian gods, supposed to correspond to the various Roman deities. The fictions of these Prussian authors made their way into the histories and descriptions of Lithuania in the sixteenth century. The fullest and most interesting account of the gods of Lithuania, and more particularly of Samogitia, is that of John Łasicki, who drew in part on the (apparently objective) notes of James Łaszkowski, controller of the royal estates in Lithuania under King Sigmunt August, but added many products of the imagination of the Prussian mythologers, and probably also of his own. The Lettish mythology alone remained comparatively free from literary flights of this kind.

Modern historians reject the accounts of the above writers and others who proceeded in the same spirit, so that the problem of the primitive religion of the Balts has become extremely complicated. It is Alexander Brückner's merit that he has treated it with due critical sense. It may be added that folk-songs, which sometimes furnish rich material for the investigator, ought to be examined with the greatest caution by the historian of mythology.

The basis for any reconstruction of the primitive, thirteenth century, pagan beliefs of the Balts must be sought in pre-sixteenth century documents; yet

when consulting them one must allow for the gradual modification of the ancient faith by Christianity, which made itself felt early from different directions, Poland and Russia, Scandinavia and Germany, and began to have a powerful influence in the thirteenth century. The comparative method might be very valuable for distinguishing pagan from Christian elements, establishing the primitive religious conceptions, and throwing light upon the inner connexion between them; and further it might be worth while to trace analogies with the beliefs of primitive coloured peoples, since it is easy to remark that the religion of the Balts contains not merely Indo-European elements but also others common to the whole of humanity. The active modern researches into the beliefs and mentality of primitive peoples furnish rich and varied material for comparison. One other point, hitherto neglected, should be investigated: the social basis of religion. Although it would be risky to ascribe to social factors the importance in the genesis of religion given them by Durkheim and his school, yet there does undoubtedly exist a close connexion between the manifestations of the religious and the social nature, and studies of the relations between them would be useful to both branches of knowledge.

NATURE AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Today there can be no doubt that rationalistic theories of the origin of religion are in glaring contradiction to the mental characteristics of primitive man, who was mystically inclined, and being unable to interpret surrounding phenomena by the help of logical reasoning saw in them the activity of a mysterious, supernatural power.¹⁴ In the lowest stages of cultural development man's attention is drawn, especially in the case of hunters or fishermen, by wild animals, which rouse in him various feelings, of desire and anger, awe and admiration. He regards them as creatures equal to himself, and even endows them with mystic power. On a somewhat higher cultural level he pays equal attention to the vegetable world, yet it makes a less powerful impression on him. This mystical attitude to the surrounding world gives rise to the elements of primitive religion, which consists, essentially, of the payment of honour to living creatures, or zoolatry. The beginnings of the worship of inanimate objects, especially of the heavenly bodies and atmospheric phenomena, are probably somewhat later and due to men who practise agriculture and keep a sharp look out for weather changes.

¹⁴ For the religion of primitive peoples, see e.g. Br. Malinowski: *Wierzenia pierwotne i formy ustroju społecznego* (Primitive beliefs and forms of social organism), Cracow, 1916.

The cult of nature, embracing both animals and the heavenly bodies and atmospheric phenomena, was widespread among the Balts of the thirteenth century, as Peter of Dusburg bears witness when he relates that the Prussians did not know God, but worshipped the sun, the moon and stars, thunderbolts, birds, and also four-footed creatures and even toads. (Pope Innocent III described the religion of the Livonians in similar terms in 1199, from information given him by missionaries.) Unfortunately the chronicler gives us no further details of the cult, which was too primitive to maintain itself long by the side of Christianity. By the fifteenth century zoolatry is no more heard of among the Prussians, but among the Letts it was practised longer: the Synod of Riga in 1428 reproached them with believing in serpents, caterpillars and trees as bringing good luck. In Samogitia, according to Jerome of Prague at the beginning of the fifteenth century, worship was paid to serpents, fire and the sun. Serpents were especially revered by the population of Samogitia, who continued to worship them as gods down to the nineteenth century. Meanwhile nothing is known of a cult of these reptiles in Prussia until the settlement of its eastern district by Lithuanian peasants in the sixteenth century; not because it was unknown to the ancient Prussians, but because it quickly died out.

Equally general worship was paid to fire, which

was kept continually burning under the care of priests in sacred spots. In Prussia, according to Peter of Dusburg, an everlasting fire was tended at Romowe in Nadrovia by the legendary priest Criwe. Certain trees, such as oaks and limes, may have been honoured as deities; on the other hand the numerous sacred forests in the Baltic countries, like the sacred fields, rivers and lakes, were not objects of worship in themselves, but the scenes of religious rites and the abodes of gods and demons.

Another primitive form of religion is the worship of deceased ancestors. The primitive mind recognizes no boundary between life and death,¹⁵ and is incapable of conceiving of the passage of a living being into non-existence. According to the general belief of primitive peoples, the dead continue their life, in a form very similar to what it was on earth. The deceased calls forth feelings of grief for himself, and at the same time of fear; he does not abandon his district and home, but visits his kin and acquaintance in sleep. Such are the psychological conditions under which the cult of the dead develops.

It was evidently not unknown to the Baltic peoples. The belief in a life beyond the grave took much the same forms among them as among coloured peoples; they thought that people form the same kind of society in the other worlds as on earth, and have

¹⁵ Cf. L. Levy-Bruhl: *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, pp. 352 —. Paris, 1922.

similar needs. Accordingly, as the treaty of Chrystburg in 1249 tells us, along with the deceased they buried, or burned on the funeral pyre, his horses and thralls, male and female, together with weapons, rich clothes and such-like objects, which he would need in his future life. If the deceased belonged to the lower class, his tools were buried with him. A further consequence of these beliefs was the making of offerings to the dead, at which ceremonies they feasted to satiation, and the arranging of banquets at certain seasons of the year, especially in autumn after the harvest. Thus they gained the favour and protection of the spirits, and turned away their anger. Individual clans had their own burial places in sacred groves, and gathered there for common rites.

The people were very strongly attached to the worship of their ancestors, and as late as the fifteenth century the Catholic clergy, both in Livonia (at the Synod of 1428) and in Prussia, had to take strong measures against it. Michael, bishop of Sambia in the second quarter of the century, forbade under pain of stripes and a fine the celebration of funerals according to the pagan rites, gatherings round graves in the forests and wildernesses, the holding of feasts in such spots, the making of offerings and the calling up of demons. These prohibitions failed however, of their desired effect. The worship of common ancestors undoubtedly formed a strong moral bond holding

together the clan, which was a fundamental element in the social organism, and so the cult of the dead struck deep roots in the people and played an important part in its religious conceptions.

DEMONS AND GODS

The cult of nature and the belief in a life beyond the grave evidently formed the soil out of which grew higher kinds of faith. The spirits of dead members of the clan swarmed in the houses and villages of their descendants, in the fields and round the graves in the forests; if we are to believe Kadlubek, the Prussians thought that they might pass into the bodies of animals; the Letts are said to have believed that the soul of a man after death might be incarnate in a wolf or a bear. Such a belief in metempsychosis implies that the Balts endowed animals with souls, which after death wandered in the same way as those of human beings. Such spirits existed in large numbers in space, and losing their individual characteristics were conceived in generic groups, each of which had its separate nature and functions.

They were in the mind of the Cologne schoolman Oliver (d. 1225) when he wrote of the dryads, hamadryads, oreads, napaeae, naiads, satyrs and fauns worshipped by the Livonians, Estonians and Prussians: that is to say, various deities of the forests and the waters. Unfortunately no authentic source gives even their local names. In Lithuania they bore the

generic name of *veles*, which was undoubtedly known also in Prussia, to judge by the existence of a place called Velowe or Veluva. They associated with human beings, but also dwelt in the forests. Place and personal names would seem to afford some evidence that Prussian mythology had a place for *kauki* dwarfs protecting the house (who under Christian influence came to be called devils), *laumi*, corresponding to the Polish undines, succubae and witches. In Natangia there was a place called Laumygarbis (1339) or 'hill of the laumi'.

Among this large number of spirits there stood out certain definitely characterized supernatural beings, protecting genii, with their special 'departments' as it were, caring for the various activities of man, the objects belonging to him, or the processes bound up with his existence. A whole list of such demons in Lithuania and Latvia is mentioned by Mażwid, Łasicki, Strykowski and the Jesuit missionaries in Livonia. Special deities guarded the domestic hearth, the cattle, the horses, the bees, garden, fields, corn, plants, roads, rivers and fish. The success of each economic activity of man depended on the particular deity watching over it.

These were not clan or tribal divinities, but rather local in character, for which reason each author gives them different names. Some of them came into existence under the influence of Christianity and the

worship of saints (as Brückner shows, 3), while the origin of others goes back, without doubt, to the mists of the pagan past, connecting with zoolatry or the cult of the dead. For example, among the gods worshipped by the pagan Lithuanians (and evidently also by the Prussians) thirteenth century sources mention Żwiruna, or 'the bitch'; this was clearly, not the evening star (Venus), as Mierzyński (16) would have it, but an ordinary hunting dog, who became transformed into the patron of animals and doubtless also of the chase. We may equally easily explain the origin of the 'hare god', one of those deities to whom Mendog did not cease to make offerings even after his acceptance of Christianity; evidently he was a mighty hunter. Prussian sources down to the beginning of the fifteenth century mention the name of only one deity, Curche, which occurs in the treaty of 1249. This was an agricultural demon, who seems to have taken the form of the last sheaf of corn cut in the field, which was worshipped by the pagans. According to the convincing hypothesis of Bujak (6) the term *kurke* denoted a destructive insect, the corn weevil; during the harvest it concealed itself in the last ears, and was finally captured in the last sheaf. The pagans performed solemn rites to turn away the destructive power of the demon; if he was appeased and the harvest prospered, he took on a positive character as a creative divinity, protecting the corn,

and assuring a rich yield. It would seem that this is the character he bears in the above-mentioned document.

A reliable source of the fifteenth century, a letter of the bishop of Warmia in 1418, gives the names of two more Prussian deities, Patollu and Natrimpe, but unfortunately their significance has not yet been explained. We can however trace the genesis of Perkun, who was worshipped in Lithuania and Livonia, and doubtless also in Prussia, though there is no mention of him in documents from the last-named country. Place-names afford sufficient evidence: a lake and village of Perkune were known in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Perkun was a personification of thunder, which was worshipped alike by the Prussians, Lithuanians and Letts, and among other things he was the patron of warlike operations, the success of which was largely dependent on the weather. He it was who caused the freezing over of the Gulf of Riga during the Lithuanian expedition against Osilia in 1219. The two cults, of the atmospheric phenomena of lightning and thunder, and of the god Perkun, existed side by side, and consequently some of our sources speak of the worship of thunder by the Prussians (Peter of Dusburg), and others of the worship of Perkun (The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle), while others again identify the thunderbolt, OPr. *Percunis*, Lith. *Perkunas*, with the god.

There were many other deities in Prussia, but the medieval sources speak always of 'the gods', without specifying their names. Nevertheless, the examples above cited enable us to form an idea both of the genesis and of the character of the Prussian Olympus.

RELIGIOUS RITES

Perceiving everywhere about him the operation of mysterious, awe-inspiring supernatural forces, the pagan for practical reasons, in order to ward off ill fortune and assure himself of success on all occasions, endeavoured to dispose the demons and gods favourably to his designs. So religious rites and ceremonies accompanied every activity and were bound up with every occurrence of his life. Not only at important moments like those of birth, marriage and death, but in his usual everyday economic activities, did he feel the need for communication with the supernatural world. And further he arranged annual festivals, the Prussian *metele*, such as the harvest, or the festival of the dead in autumn. At the conclusion of peace and the declaration of war, in the course of forays and of debates in the assemblies, the will of the gods was sought, help was begged of them, and thanks were rendered to them for a favourable issue.

Every important undertaking, such as a warlike expedition, was preceded by omens. If these were unfavourable, the project was abandoned. During

funerals the priests prophesied, unriddling the fate of the deceased in the other world. It was further the custom to sacrifice animals to the gods and demons: most commonly a he-goat, ox, or sow, but occasionally a horse (which might be burned on the pyre together with the corpse). Sometimes they even sacrificed one of the prisoners they had taken in war: a knight chosen by lot, who was set, fully armed, on his horse, surrounded by a pile of wood, and burnt. Several German knights perished thus at the hands of the Prussians or Lithuanians. A third part of the spoil was dedicated to the gods, but it was not all consumed by the flames: part was eaten at a banquet, which priests and sacrificers shared.

Every religious rite connected with sacrifice included a feast (*sniike*) with entertainment and figure dances, at which great quantities of mead were drunk. At funerals weeping women were hired and a banquet given. Offerings and feasts of this kind were forbidden by Michael, bishop of Sambia, as late as 1430, but without success. In 1520, when the Danzig ships sailed into Sambian waters, the authorities allowed the Prussians to sacrifice a black bull to deter the enemy, and two barrels of beer were consumed during the ceremony.

Minor, family celebrations and festivities took place in the home; greater ones in the forests, or at the places of assembly, if the rite was connected with

some political activity. Such ceremonies, performed at the common meeting-place of the tribe or of the whole people, constituted an important moral and social element making for cohesion in the territorial unit. So far as can be ascertained, the worshippers erected neither temples nor statues, but simply housed the sacred fire in special buildings. Hence their most solemn ceremonies took place under the open sky, in the midst of the forests or in the fields.

PRIESTS

Peter of Dusburg included in his chronicle an interesting story of a Prussian priest Criwe, who resided at Romowe in Nadrovia and governed as a sort of pope the people not only of Prussia, but also of Lithuania and Latvia. This caused historians to assume that the Balts had a theocratic form of society in the tribal epoch: a theory which is still maintained by German scholars, although its incorrectness was shown long since by Mierzyński (16). The Prussian chronicler, misled by the similarity between the names Romowe and Roma, exaggerated the powers appropriate to Criwe, whose actual political role was limited to the comparatively modest function of summoning general assemblies of the Prussian tribes and inviting to them representatives of the neighbouring pagan peoples.

The name *Criwe* did not denote an office, but was rather a sobriquet. Brückner (3) even suggests

that Peter of Dusburg was in error in assigning it to the priest, and that in reality it applied to the staff, Pol. *krywula*, formed on *krzywy* 'crooked', sent round by the priest as a token summoning to the assembly. The Crive was one of a higher rank of priests, whose duties comprised, in addition to the summoning of assemblies, the tendance of the sacred fire, the taking of omens and declaring the probability or otherwise of success in expeditions, and of course the offering of sacrifice to the gods. These priests enrolled 'sacrificers' from among the tribal aristocracy. It seems probable that many of the Prussian leaders of whom we read in the chronicle of Peter of Dusburg and elsewhere performed the functions of priests. The chronicle of Halicz and Volhynia mentions a Jaćwing priest Skomand, who was also a valiant leader of a robber band. In Lithuania even the grand dukes possessed the attributes of priests.

On private and more ordinary occasions any one might offer sacrifice: the head of a family, or a priest of lower rank. The treaty of 1249 makes mention of inferior priests, *tulissones* and *ligaschones*, who composed hymns of praise in honour of the dead, celebrating their warlike deeds and various actions which were sinful from the Christian point of view; but unfortunately it does not tell us of other functions or of other kinds of pagan priests.

CONCLUSION

In the second half of the twelfth century all three of the Baltic peoples found themselves in a similar and very favourable political position. The pressure of the Norsemen was diminishing and indeed had almost ceased, and the neighbouring Slavonic monarchies were beginning to break up. After long centuries during which they had been shut in by greater powers, it seemed that at last they had the chance of playing an active part in the history of eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, the opportunities of the three peoples were not equal, owing to differences in their internal organization and in their geographical and political circumstances. The future of Latvia seemed dark, divided as it was into several tribes who had lost their feeling of political solidarity, and even forgotten their common name of Latvi or Lett. The largest of them, the Letgals, had probably been conquered by the Norsemen in the ninth or tenth century — that branch of them that founded the Ruthenian state — and were unable to free themselves from

foreign supremacy until the coming of the Germans, being subject partly to Połock and partly to Psków. The other tribes, Kuronian, Semigalian and Zelonian, were separated off from Ruthenia by the territory of the Letgals and Lithuania, and found no opportunity to develop any political activity.

Lithuania had the most favourable opportunity before it. It had not suffered from the Norse expansion, for our sources do not mention any Viking raids on the basin of the Niemen, and consequently might open an offensive against Ruthenia with unweakened powers, and develop it the more swiftly and strongly inasmuch as the chief political centres of the eastern Slavs, such as Kieff, Vladimir in Volhynia, Vladimir on the Klazma and Novgorod, were far distant.

Prussia, like Lithuania, was not weakened by internal struggles, or at least we know nothing about any, except the half-legendary warfare between the Jaćwings and Galindians. Nor was it weakened like Letgalia by Norse inroads. If nevertheless Prussian expansion at the beginning of the thirteenth century fell behind that of Lithuania in extent, it was because Poland presented a more united front than White Ruthenia and was consequently a more difficult country to penetrate.

All three Baltic peoples disposed of extremely mobile forces in the 'companies', those small but numerous detachments of warriors under a leader,

engaged by profession in raiding and plunder. In conditions favourable to expansion, such as prevailed in Lithuania and Prussia in the second half of the twelfth century, their forays became more vigorous, the 'companies' grew in size and united into more powerful confederations, discipline was tightened, and valiant leaders and organizers attained special authority. This process was destined inevitably to lead to a union of all the armed forces and the political consolidation of the people under the supremacy of a single leader: in a word, to the rise of monarchy. This must be recognized as the normal course of evolution at the end of the tribal epoch. Although of the three Baltic peoples Lithuania alone went through it to the end and established a monarchical form of government, we must suppose that at the beginning of the thirteenth century Prussia had every chance of doing the same.

The analogy is close between the development of Rutheno-Lithuanian relations and of the relations between Poland and Prussia. Not only did the pillaging activities of the two pagan countries increase almost at the same time, but they proceeded contemporaneously to occupy the neighbouring Christian territories: the Lithuanians Black Ruthenia, the Prussians the district of Chelmno. By the conquest of these Slavonic provinces the 'companies' both in Lithuania and Prussia succeeded in creating a ma-

terial basis for their existence, whence it was only one step further to extending their power over their native country, and to the founding of a monarchy. Masovia by its own strength was unable to obstruct this process. It is doubtful if the crusades could have done it, since, as the example of Livonia shows, the spasmodic expeditions of the Christians were only able actually to conquer a territory if there existed on the spot a well-organized military force to hold what the crusades won and defend it against pagan attacks after the withdrawal of the crusaders. It is doubtful whether Masovia could have sustained that role. It was sustained, however, by the Teutonic Order.

UNREALIZED POSSIBILITIES

The activity of the Teutonic Order on the Baltic is one of the links in the chain of events attributable to the great military and economic expansion of Western Europe in the Middle Ages towards the Mahomedan and pagan East. This expansion followed two chief routes: the Mediterranean, where the most active share in operations was taken by the Romance nations, and the Baltic, dominated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by German merchants and knights. German expansion on the Baltic we may say was a historical necessity, but if it had not been for the introduction of the Knights of the Cross into the

Vistula basin, the Germans would have established their chief base of operations on the Dwina, where a colony of theirs had arisen at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the chief force of their advance would have been felt by Novgorod Ruthenia and by Lithuania. As it was, the introduction of the Knights of the Cross by Conrad of Masovia led to the chief German pressure being directed against Poland. The question arises, what would have been the course of Polish and Prussian relations had the factor of the Teutonic Knights not come into play. It is always somewhat dangerous to make conjectures on what might have been: yet they may be justified in so far as they facilitate historical judgement.

In the present case our conclusions may rest on a comparatively strong basis, thanks to the analogous situation of Prussia and Lithuania. The example of the Ruthenians under Lithuanian rule is highly instructive. It is not impossible that the Prussians might have similarly conquered Masovia and founded a state composed of two ethnic elements, of which the one held the political leadership and the other the cultural. Polish influence on Prussia would have gone considerably deeper than did Ruthenian, or later Polish, influence on Lithuania. The polonization of the upper class in Prussia had already advanced a certain distance in the twelfth century: although the Prussian church was organized by the Germans.

the language of the people has preserved noticeable traces of Polish ecclesiastical influence. Again, in spite of the supremacy of the Teutonic Knights, Poles settled in large numbers in Galindia and Jaćwież. In face of these considerations then, it seems unlikely that the Prussians would have been able to preserve their national individuality but for the coming of the Teutonic Order. We may rather suppose that only the Order prevented the complete cultural and linguistic assimilation of Prussia by Poland. These conclusions allow us at the same time to pronounce an opinion on the probable fate of an immature Prussian monarchy: supported as it would have been by Polish culture and by the fundamentally Polish ethnic element, there is no likelihood that it would have been able long to maintain itself politically separate from the Polish State.

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