

PRUSSIA

In 1226, Konrad I, Duke of Masovia in north-eastern Poland, appealed to the Knights to defend his borders and subdue the pagan Baltic Prussians, allowing the Teutonic Knights use of Chełmno Land (Culmerland) as a base for their campaign. This being a time of widespread crusading fervor throughout Western Europe, Hermann von Salza considered Prussia a good training ground for his knights for the wars against the Muslims in Outremer.^[11] With the Golden Bull of Rimini, Emperor Frederick II bestowed on the Order a special imperial privilege for the conquest and possession of Prussia, including Chełmno Land, with nominal papal sovereignty. In 1235 the Teutonic Knights assimilated the smaller Order of Dobrzyń, which had been established earlier by Christian, the first Bishop of Prussia.

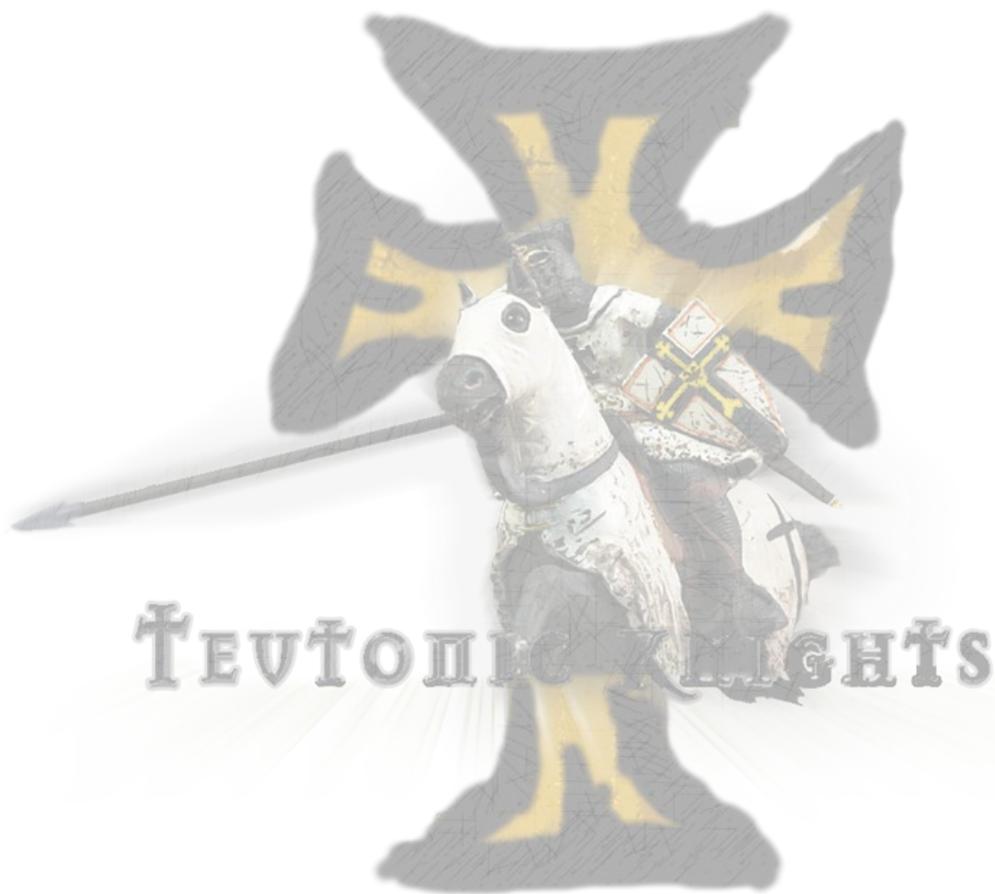
The conquest of Prussia was accomplished with much bloodshed over more than fifty years, during which native Prussians who remained unbaptised were subjugated, killed, or exiled. Fighting between the Knights and the Prussians was ferocious; chronicles of the Order state the Prussians would "roast captured brethren alive in their armour, like chestnuts, before the shrine of a local god".^[12]

The native nobility who submitted to the crusaders had many of their privileges affirmed in the Treaty of Christburg. After the Prussian uprisings of 1260–83, however, much of the Prussian nobility emigrated or were resettled, and many free Prussians lost their rights. The Prussian nobles who remained were more closely allied with the German landowners and gradually assimilated.^[13] Peasants in frontier regions, such as Samland, had more privileges than those in more populated lands, such as Pomesania.^[14] The crusading knights often accepted baptism as a form of submission by the natives.^[15] Christianity along western lines slowly spread through Prussian culture. Bishops were reluctant to have Prussian religious practices integrated into the new faith,^[16] while the ruling knights found it easier to govern the natives when they were semi-pagan and lawless.^[17] After fifty years of warfare and brutal conquest, the end result meant that most of the Prussian natives were either killed or deported.^[18]

The Order ruled Prussia under charters issued by the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor as a sovereign monastic state, comparable to the arrangement of the Knights Hospitallers in Rhodes and later in Malta.

To make up for losses from the plague and to replace the partially exterminated native population, the Order encouraged the immigration of colonists from the Holy Roman Empire (mostly Germans, Flemish, and Dutch) and from Masovia (Poles), the later Masurians. The colonists included nobles, burghers, and peasants, and the surviving Old Prussians were gradually assimilated through Germanization. The settlers founded numerous towns and cities on former Prussian settlements. The Order itself built a number of castles (Ordensburgen) from which it could defeat uprisings of Old Prussians, as well as continue its attacks on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, with which the Order was often at war during the 14th and 15th centuries. Major towns founded by the Order included Allenstein (Olsztyn), Elbing (Elbląg), Klaipėda (Memel), and Königsberg, founded in 1255 in honor of King Otakar II of Bohemia on the site of a destroyed Prussian settlement.

In 1236 the Knights of Saint Thomas, an English order, adopted the rules of the Teutonic Order. A contingent of Teutonic Knights of indeterminate number is traditionally believed to have participated at the Battle of Legnica in 1241 against the Mongols. However, recent analysis of the 15th century Annals of Jan Długosz by Labuda suggests that the German crusaders may have been added to the text (listing the Allied Army) after the chronicler Długosz had completed the work.^[19] Legnica is the furthest west the Mongol expansion would reach in Poland.



11.Seward, p. 100

12.Jump up ^ Seward, p. 104

13.Jump up ^ Christiansen, pp. 208–09

14.Jump up ^ Christiansen, pp. 210–11

15.Jump up ^ Barraclough, p. 268

16.Jump up ^ Urban, p. 106

17.Jump up ^ Christiansen, p. 211

18.Jump up ^ The German Hansa P. Dollinger, page 34, 1999 Routledge

19.Jump up ^ The Battle of Liegnitz (Legnica), 1241, AllEmpires.com. Accessed July 17, 2015.