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Faith and Politics: A Look Through the Prism of the 1330 Polish–Lithuanian–Hungarian Campaign into the Dobrzyń and Chełmno Lands¹

Wiara i polityka: spojrzenie przez pryzmat polsko-litewsko-węgierskiej wyprawy z 1330 roku na ziemie dobrzyńską i chełmińską

Abstract

This study examines the complex narrative image of pagans in pagan–Christian military alliances within medieval chronicle discourse, using the Polish–Lithuanian cooperation following the marriage of Casimir, son of Władysław Łokietek, and Anna, daughter of Gediminas, as a starting point. The analysis focuses on Wigand of Marburg’s account of the 1330 Polish–Lithuanian–Hungarian campaign in the Dobrzyń and Chełmno lands, while also tracing similar patterns in narrative descriptions of other Polish–Lithuanian joint campaigns, such as the 1326 expedition to Brandenburg, as reflected in German chronicles. The findings show that although alliances between Christians and pagans were often strategically necessary and acknowledged in narrative sources, they were typically portrayed with ambivalence and criticism. Importantly, such portrayals are

¹ The Chełmno Land is also known as Kulmerland in English-language historiography.

not limited to the Latin narrative tradition but also appear in Orthodox sources (as demonstrated through the example of Cuman participation in Rus' campaigns), reflecting a broader Christian conception of the religious Other. Even as military allies, pagans are not fully assimilated into the discursive category of the Self – that is, Christians. Instead, they continue to be framed – perhaps instinctively – as potential aggressors, requiring constant vigilance. Thus, even in moments of cooperation, the alliance with pagans such as the Lithuanians remains uneasy and conditional, marked by persistent distrust.

Keywords: pagans, Christians, Lithuanians, alliance, narrative, portrayal.

Abstrakt

Niniejsze opracowanie analizuje złożony obraz pagan w narracjach średniowiecznych kronik, dotyczących pogańsko-chrześcijańskich sojuszy wojskowych, na przykładzie polsko-litewskiej współpracy po zawarciu małżeństwa między Kazimierzem, synem Władysława Łokietka, a Anną, córką Giedymina. W centrum uwagi znajduje się relacja Wiganda z Marburga dotycząca kampanii polsko-litewsko-węgierskiej 1330 roku w ziemi dobrzyńskiej i chełmińskiej. Autorka porównuje narracje Wiganda z opisami innych wspólnych polsko-litewskich wypraw, takich jak wyprawa do Brandenburgii w 1326 roku, zawartych w kronikach niemieckich. Dochodzi do wniosku, że sojusze między chrześcijanami a paganami często były zawierane ze względów strategicznych, lecz w narracjach kronikarzy zazwyczaj przedstawiano je w sposób ambiwalentny i krytyczny. Istotne jest, że tego typu interpretacje występowały nie tylko w źródłach tradycji łacińskiej, ale również w źródłach powstałych w kręgu kultury chrześcijańskiej wschodniego obrządku (co poświadczają opisy udziału Połowców w wyprawach książąt ruskich, zawarte w russkich latopisach) i odzwierciedlają szersze chrześcijańskie postrzeganie religijnego Innego. Analizowane w pracy opisy kronikarskie pokazują, że nawet paganie-sojusznicy nie byli w pełni włączeni do kategorii „swoich”, czyli chrześcijan. Przeciwnie, byli nadal – być może instynktownie – postrzegani jako potencjalni agresorzy, wymagający nieustannej czujności. Tym samym, nawet w momentach współpracy, sojusz z paganami, takimi jak Litwini, pozostawał niepewny i warunkowy, nacechowany trwałą nieufnością.

Słowa klucze: paganie, chrześcijanie, Litwini, sojusz, narracja, przedstawienie.

During the Middle Ages, religion was not only a system of sacred practices and beliefs but also a defining marker of communal identity.

often distinguishing the Self from the Other.² In the European context, religious affiliation was a key determinant of one's legal and social standing within Christendom, where a connection to the Church – particularly the Latin Church – granted significant privileges.³ This fostered a binary opposition between the faithful and those deemed outside the religious community, shaped historical narratives, and even provided justification for the persecution of non-Christians. This division was particularly evident in medieval chronicles, especially those written by religious orders, which framed conflicts as battles between divine order and pagan chaos.⁴

One example that challenges this binary division is the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which, until its official Christianisation in 1387 by Jogaila (Jagiełło), remained on the borderline between the two symbolic worlds of the West and the East. Although Lithuanian rulers engaged in diplomacy and maintained contact with both Catholic and Orthodox powers, they remained pagan for much of the medieval period, creating the perception of the entire state as "pagan" in medieval discourse.⁵ This unique position allowed Lithuania to act as a mediator between the Latin West and the Orthodox East, rather than belonging definitively to either sphere. This intermediary status was reflected in the often contradictory portrayals of Lithuania and its rulers in medieval chronicles.

For example, in Rus' chronicles, Lithuanians frequently appeared as hostile enemies posing threat to the principalities of Rus'.⁶ Similarly, Teu-

2 Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31/1 (2001): 42.

3 Paul Rousset, "La notion de Chretiente aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Le Moyen Age* 18 (1963): 191–203; Christine Reinle, "Diversity, Differences, and Divergence: Religion as a Criterion of Difference in the Empire in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century," *Hungarian Historical Review* 13/2 (2024): 261–286.

4 More on the ideology of medieval military religious orders, see: Kaspars Klavīņš, "The Ideology of Christianity and Pagan Practice among the Teutonic Knights. The Case of the Baltic Region," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 37 (2006): 260–276; Marek Tamm, "How to Justify a Crusade? The Conquest of Livonia and New Crusade Rhetoric in the Early Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 39 (2013): 431–455; Alan V. Murray, "Heathens, Devils and Saracens: Crusader Concepts of the Pagan Enemy during the Baltic Crusades (Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries)," in *Crusading on the Edge: Ideas and Practice of Crusading in Iberia and the Baltic Region, 1100–1500*, eds. Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen, Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 204–220, etc.

5 Stephen C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire Within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32–33, 297; Darius Baranovas, Stephen C. Rowell, *The Conversion of Lithuania: From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians* (Vilnius: The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2015), 5–9.

6 "Pskovskaya Pervaya Letopis," in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL)*, vol. 5, ed. Arseniy Nasonov (Moscow: Yazyki slavianskikh kultur, 2003), 13.

tonic sources regularly portrayed Lithuanians as *hostes fidei* – enemies of the faith. For the Teutonic Knights, whose military and ideological legitimacy rested on the justification of sacred warfare, this portrayal was crucial. Casting the Lithuanians as violent destroyers of Christianity served to elevate the knights' mission as a sacred duty, reinforcing the contrast between Christian virtue and pagan savagery.⁷

However, despite general labelling and broad generalisations, the image of the pagan Lithuanians was not exclusively negative. It was shaped by various factors and could range from negative to positive – or at least neutral – depending on the specific context. This is particularly evident in chronicle accounts of Lithuanian rulers' relationships with Christian leaders, as well as in the depiction of their political alliances. Notably, such a nuanced approach can be found in both German and Rus' narrative traditions.⁸

This was particularly evident in the early 14th century, a period marked by shifting alliances, territorial disputes, and complex political rivalries – particularly involving the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Teutonic Order, which posed a serious threat to both. By that time, Lithuania and Poland had already experienced sporadic interactions, both hostile and cooperative. These ranged from mutual raids in bordering territories to temporary alliances between Lithuanian grand dukes and certain Polish princes, particularly those from Mazovia, in their internal political struggles.⁹

In 1325, however, the situation changed.¹⁰ That year saw the marriage of Władysław Łokietek's son, Casimir, to Aldona (Anna), the daughter of Grand Duke Gediminas of Lithuania. This was not only a dynastic but also a military alliance between the two neighbouring states, aimed

7 Rasa Mažeika, "Violent Victims? Surprising Aspects of the Just War Theory in the Chronicle of Peter von Dusburg," in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 136.

8 Vera Matuzova, "Mental Frontiers: Prussians as Seen by Peter von Dusburg," in *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier: 1150–1500*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 254.

9 Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, 9; Grzegorz Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności*, vol. 1: *Trudne początki* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1998), 89; Jarosław Nikodem, "Mazowsze w polityce litewskiej pierwszej połowy XIV w. (do śmierci Giedymina)," in *Dziedzictwo książąt mazowieckich: stan badań i postulaty badawcze*, eds. Janusz Grabowski, Rafał Mroczek, Przemysław Mrozowski (Warsaw: Arx Regia Ośrodek Wydawniczy Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie, 2017), 316.

10 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Miklós Halmágyi for providing valuable Hungarian sources relevant to the subject of this study.

primarily at a joint struggle against their common enemy – the Teutonic Order, though not limited to it. This alliance significantly transformed Polish–Lithuanian relations.¹¹ The first joint military campaign followed as early as the next year, 1326, when Władysław Łokietek sought Gediminas's military support for his expedition to Brandenburg. Gediminas agreed and sent 1,200 troops. The 1326 campaign was recorded in numerous sources, including Teutonic chronicles, and portrayed the alliance as one between two rulers of equal authority: "In the year of our Lord 1326, Łokietek, King of Poland, asked Gediminas, King of the Lithuanians – whose daughter his son had recently taken as wife – to send him some warriors."¹² The unification of Lithuanian and Polish forces was made possible by an agreement reached on 7 February 1326 between the King of Poland, the Teutonic Order, and the Duchy of Mazovia, which allowed the Lithuanians, acting as Łokietek's allies, to pass peacefully through Mazovian territory.¹³

11 "16 padz. 1325 Kazimirus filius Vladyslay regis uxorem recepit de Litwania. Pax fuit inter Polonię et Litwanię." "Rocznik Miechowski," in *Monumenta Poloniae Historiae*, vol. 2, ed. August Bielowski (Lwów: s.p., 1872), 884; "ut pacifice simul regna sua gubernarent," Wigand von Marburg, *Nowa kronika pruska*, eds. Stanisław Zonenberg, and Krzysztof Kwiatkowski (Toruń: TNT, 2017), 140. See also: Stanisław Zajączkowski, "Przymierze polsko-litewskie 1325 r.," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 40 (1926): 567–584; Henryk Łowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006), 25; Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 13; Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, 233; Stephen C. Rowell, "Pious Princesses or the Daughters of Belial: Pagan Lithuanian Dynastic Diplomacy 1279–1423," *Medieval Prosopography* 15/1 (1994): 3–77.

12 "Anno domini MCCCXXVI Loteko rex Polonie rogavit Gedeminum regem Lethowinorum, cuius filiam filius noviter duxerat in uxorem, ut ei aliquos armigeros de gente sua mitteret. Qui precibus jus acquiescens, MCC equites destinavit ei." Petri de Dusburg, "Chronicon terrae Prussiae," in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 1, eds. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1861), 185.

13 "... ipsorum omnibus terrigenis seu subiectis et expresse cum Troydeno, Semouitho et Wankone ducibus Mazouie inuiolabiliter volumus et promittimus obseruare tempore prenotato, sic quod Lithuanos nunc in seruicio nostro existentes inpedire non debent fratres prenotati, quoisque ad propria reuertantur nobis seruicii exhibitis et peractis." "Dokumenty Mazowieckie," in *Scriprores Rerum Polonicarum* (Kraków: nakł. Akademii Umiejętności, 1888), 307–308. See also: Petri de Dusburg, *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*, 193; Hermanni de Wartberge, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Ernst Strehlke (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1863), 62; *Vetera Monumentae Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, vol. 1, ed. Augustino Theiner (Romae: Typis Vaticanis, 1860), 217–218. The status of the Lithuanians in these campaigns – as either allies or mercenaries – has been a subject of scholarly debate. However, this issue lies beyond the scope of the present study. See more: Rowell, *Lithuania ascending*, 234; Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 139; Yanna Ryier, "Lithuanian troops in the military campaigns of Władysław Łokietek in the 20s – 30s of the 14th century," in *Mercenaries and Crusaders*, ed. Attila Bárány (Debrecen: University of Debrecen 2024), 157–172.

The campaign was relatively successful for both the Poles and the Lithuanians, demonstrating the strategic benefits of their alliance.¹⁴ The united forces crossed the Oder (Odra) River, captured lands around Frankfurt, plundered churches and monasteries along their route, and killed approximately six thousand local inhabitants.¹⁵ The Lithuanians returned from the expedition with substantial loot. Their principal loss was the death of their leader, David, castellan of Grodno, who was killed by a Polish knight on the return journey.¹⁶ As for Łokietek, the campaign enabled him to regain the castellany of Międzyrzecz.¹⁷

The 1326 campaign was the clearest manifestation of the functioning alliance between Łokietek and Gediminas. However, the acts of violence committed by Lithuanians in Mazovia during the Brandenburg raid strained Łokietek's relations with the Mazovian dukes, who had already entered into talks with the Teutonic Order by early 1326.¹⁸ Moreover, the campaign received an ambivalent response from Christian society. Many European rulers criticised the alliance between Christian Poland and pagan Lithuania, with Lithuanian paganism repeatedly invoked in their rhetoric. David's murder by a Polish warrior is presented in German chronicles as an act of vengeance for earlier crimes committed by the Lithuanians in Polish lands. According to Detmar of Lübeck, although the Pope's envoys were present with the King of Poland and protected the "heathens" from being attacked during the campaign, a Polish knight pursued the Lithuanians on their way back to their land, recognised David – "who for many years had brought great harm to the Christians" – approached him, and struck him dead. Importantly, the chronicler emphasises that although the God-fearing Christians were

14 Henryk Łowmiański, "Agresja zakonu krzyżackiego na Litwę w wiekach XII–XV," *Przegląd Historyczny* 45/2–3 (1954): 354; Rowell, *Lithuania ascending*, 234.

15 *The Chronicle of Prussia by Nicolaus von Jeroschin: A History of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, 1190–1331*, transl. Mary Fischer (London–New York: Routledge, 2016), 284–285; Petri de Dusburg, *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*, 193.

16 "Anno 1326 David Lituanus de castro Garten a Lokeccone rege Polonie adjutus Marchiam intrando vastavit; qui David a quodam Andrea Polono fuit interfectus." "Annalista Thorunensis," in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 3, eds. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen and Ernst Strehlke (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1866), 66. See also: Jan Baszkiewicz, *Polska czasów Łokietka* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1968), 146.

17 Baszkiewicz, *Polska czasów Łokietka*, 146; Tadeusz Nowak, *Władysław Łokietek – polityk i dowódca* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1978), 167; Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 139.

18 Stanisław Zakrzewski, "Wpływ sprawy ruskiej na państwo polskie w XIV w.," *Przegląd Historyczny* 23/1 (1921–1922): 95.

forced to host the enemies of God in their lands, they did so unwillingly.¹⁹ Furthermore, this act did not prevent the heathens from receiving divine punishment for their crimes – retribution still came.²⁰

Such a “narrative justification” of David’s murder introduces a broader issue: the controversial portrayal of pagan Lithuanians within the context of pagan-Christian alliances in medieval narrative discourse. In analysing the narrative strategies used by medieval chronicles to depict relationships between Christian and pagan forces, several patterns can be distinguished: the typical Christian–pagan opposition; joint Christian and pagan forces fighting against other Christians; and Christians and pagans acting as allies against other pagans – each carrying distinct interpretive implications. Given the extensive scholarly focus on the dichotomy of Christians versus pagans in medieval discourse, this study will concentrate on the latter two categories.²¹

The Polish–Lithuanian alliance of 1325 and its subsequent joint campaigns – particularly those against the Teutonic Order – offer a vivid illustration of this typology. Although the Lithuanians and their allies constituted a united army, they were not portrayed as equals in the chronicles. This highlights the complex and often ambivalent narrative image of pagans and further supports the hypothesis that the pagan–Christian contrast – and the rhetorical strategies built around it – was one of the most common devices used by medieval chroniclers to frame the events from a particular ideological perspective.

The Polish–Teutonic War of 1327–1332 – caused by unresolved territorial claims made by Władysław Łokietek, the Teutonic Order’s growing military ambitions, and the failure of both papal and imperial arbitration in the region – and Lithuania’s participation in Łokietek’s campaigns – can serve as primary evidence to support this claim.²² One of the most

19 *Der Chronik Detmar's von Lübeck*, in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 3, eds. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen and Ernst Strehlke (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1866), 66.

20 For a discussion of the significance of divine retribution in medieval chronicle discourse, see: Garry W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography. Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London–New York: Routledge, 2000); Mažeika, “Violent Victims?”, 137.

21 See, for example: Stanisław Kowalczyk, *Podstawy światopoglądu chrześcijańskiego* (Wrocław: TUM, 1986), 16–18, 26–28; Stanisław Rosik, “*Interpretatio Christiana of Old Slavic Religion as a Problem in Scholarly Reflection*,” in *idem: The Slavic Religion in the Light of 11th- and 12th-Century German Chronicles (Thietmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 10–38.

22 Łowmiański, “Agresja zakonu krzyżackiego na Litwę w wiekach XII–XV,” 354. Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 139; Zbigniew Zyglewski, “Regionalni zwycięzcy walk z zakonem krzyżackim o wolność pogranicza kujawskiego w XIV i XV w.,” in *Ludzie wolności w regionie kujawsko-pomorskim*, eds. Michał Białkowski, Zdzisław

significant flashpoints in the ongoing conflict between the Kingdom of Poland and the Teutonic Order was the Dobrzyń Land, a strategically valuable region frequently contested by both powers. In 1327, the Teutonic Knights allied with the Kingdom of Bohemia in an effort to strengthen their position in the region and diplomatically isolate Poland. The following year, they launched a campaign against pagan Lithuania which, although framed as religious warfare, also aimed to undermine Polish interests, as Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, was then an ally of Łokietek.

In early 1329, Władysław attacked Czech troops passing through the territory of the Teutonic Order. This action, seen as a violation of the borders of the Chełmno Land, was regarded by the Order as a breach of the existing temporal truce.²³ In response, Grand Master Werner von Orseln concluded a formal alliance in Toruń with John of Luxembourg, explicitly directed against Władysław Łokietek. In return, John granted the Teutonic Knights control over Gdańsk Pomerania. In March 1329, the conflict escalated as the Teutonic Order and Bohemian forces invaded Polish-controlled territories, capturing the Dobrzyń Land and temporarily occupying parts of Kujawy. These coordinated actions significantly weakened Poland's strategic position and set the stage for renewed military efforts, including the retaliatory Polish-led campaign of 1330.²⁴

In September 1330, Władysław Łokietek launched a military expedition into the contested territories of Dobrzyń and Chełmno. Its aim was to reclaim the Dobrzyń Land, lost in 1329, and to exert pressure on the Chełmno Land, a key Teutonic stronghold. The Polish king mobilised a coalition army that included not only Polish forces but also Hungarian allies under Duke Wilhelm, Lithuanian contingents led by Grand Duke Gediminas, and Ruthenian units.²⁵ This broad alliance demonstrated Łokietek's ambition to reclaim lost territories and reassert his authority in the region. The campaign began with an advance into the Dobrzyń Land, but the allied forces encountered strong Teutonic resistance. Castles and fortified towns in the region, reinforced after earlier conflicts, proved difficult to capture. Prolonged fighting and logistical difficulties

Biegański and Wojciech Polak (Toruń: Margrafsen, 2014), 26; Marian Biskup, *Wojny Polski z Zakonem Krzyżackim (1308–1521)* (Grojec: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V, 2019), 29–31.

23 Rowell, *Lithuania ascending*, 234; Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 139.

24 Baszkiewicz, *Polska czasów Łokietka*, 149; Alvydas Nikžentaitis, *Gediminas* (Vilnius: VER, 1989), 43; Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 140–142.

25 Łowmiański, "Agresja zakonu krzyżackiego na Litwę w wiekach XII–XV," 354.

further hindered Polish progress. Nevertheless, the army advanced into the Chełmno Land, devastating the region.²⁶

Gediminas's personal participation in the expedition can be seen as evidence that the Lithuanian ruler treated the campaign seriously. However, internal tensions within the coalition undermined the military operation. As reported by Wigand of Marburg, the Hungarian commanders, led by Duke Wilhelm, strongly objected to fighting alongside pagan Lithuanians. They demanded either that the Lithuanians be sent away or that they themselves be permitted to return home. According to the Teutonic chronicler, Duke Wilhelm declared: "If you truly wish to attack Christians with the pagans, then allow us to return to Hungary; but if we must go with you, then send the pagans back to their own land, and we will fight with you willingly."²⁷ Insulted by this demand and by Łokietek's failure to support the Lithuanian position, Gediminas withdrew his forces. Despite their abrupt departure, the Lithuanians nevertheless demanded and received substantial compensation for their involvement, including gold, silver, cloth, and horses.²⁸

This internal discord crippled the campaign's effectiveness. The expedition failed to achieve its primary strategic aims, although it succeeded in weakening the region. The aftermath of the campaign strained Polish–Lithuanian relations, though not irreparably. The following year, Łokietek once again invited Gediminas to participate in military action, but poor weather prevented any joint effort.²⁹ The 1330 campaign ultimately revealed both the strengths and limitations of coalition warfare, as well as the deep entanglement of military objectives with political, cultural, and religious tensions. However, the present study does not focus on the actual course of events. Instead, it examines the role attributed to Gediminas's troops – perceived as pagan – in the joint campaign, and how this role is portrayed in narrative sources.

As previously mentioned, according to Wigand of Marburg, the reluctance of the Hungarian duke to fight alongside pagan forces was the key

26 Zyglewski, „Regionalni zwycięzcy walk z zakonem krzyżackim,” 26; Biskup, *Wojny Polski z Zakonem Krzyżackim*, 29–31.

27 “Dux Wilhelmus videns, quomodo rex Lokut paganos ducere voluit contra christianos, dixit: Si tu utique vis cum paganis christianos impugnare, permitte nos transire in Ungariam; sed si debeamus tecum transire, dimitte paganos ad sua et tecum pugnabimus voluntarie.” Marburg, *Nowa kronika Pruska*, 158.

28 “Quare rex paganorum commovetur cum suis, quod gratis vocatus fuisset, et irati cogerunt regem Polonie, sibi solaria in auro, argento, panno et equis largiri, cuiilibet secundum sua merita, er sic reversi sunt in patriam.” Marburg, *Nowa kronika pruska*, 158.

29 *Ibidem*, 150.

factor that led to the campaign's failure and compelled Gediminas to withdraw from the battlefield. Moreover, Wigand emphasises the unequal status of the Lithuanian ruler within the joint forces by stripping him of his royal title, referring to him simply as "Gedemyn Lithwanie paganus" alongside the other Christian enemies of the Teutonic Order – the King of Poland and the King of Hungary ("Tres reges erant hostes ordinis, Lokut rex Polonie, Gedemyn Lithwanie paganus et rex Ungariae")³⁰ – while other records simultaneously recognise Gediminas's royal status.³¹ This inconsistency reflects a broader pattern in medieval narrative discourse, where pagan rulers were often denied equal status, even when acting in concert with Christian monarchs.

This episode also offers a valuable insight into the complex dynamics of Christian–pagan interaction during the Middle Ages and, most importantly, their representation in narrative sources. Notably, Wigand's chronicle is the only source that provides such an explanation for the events. Although internal conflict within the Polish–Hungarian–Lithuanian coalition is evident, many other sources, including other chronicles of the Teutonic Order, avoid this topic, instead presenting the campaign as a unified military effort by the three (and sometimes two) rulers. For example, Herman of Wartberge recounts that in 1330, the King of Cracow, supported by German, Hungarian, Polish, and Lithuanian troops, crossed into the Chełmno Land around the feast of St. Michael (29 September) with a large and powerful army, laying waste to everything with plunder and fire.³²

A similar narrative appears in *Die Ältere Chronik von Oliwa*, which provides a detailed tactical description of the military strategy employed by Władysław Łokietek. While it does not explicitly mention Lithuanian participation, the chronicle describes how the King of Poland, reinforced by Hungarian forces, attempted to cross the Drwęca River to invade the Chełmno Land, and how the Teutonic Order sought to pre-emptively secure the river fords to block this advance.³³ Nicolaus von Jeroschin's chronicle also omits any reference to Lithuanian troops, instead providing a more general overview: "Afterwards, in the autumn, King Łokietek

30 *Ibidem*, 156.

31 *Ibidem*, 150. See also: Dusburg, *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*, 191.

32 "Anno 1330 rex Crakow adiutus potentia Theutonicorum, Ungarorum, Polonorum et Letwinorum cum populo suo et valido exercitu circa festum Michaelis hostiliter intravit terram Culmensem omnia rapinis et flamma devastans." Wartberge, *Chronicon Livo-niae*, 57.

33 "Die Ältere Chronik von Oliwa," in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, vol. 5, eds. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1874), 610.

brought together all the horsemen he could muster from his kingdom. He also employed many mercenaries, and the King of Hungary sent him 8,000 armed men to help him. With this huge army, he entered the Kulmerland in force and besieged the fortress and city of Schönsee.”³⁴

This discrepancy suggests that not only was the actual boundary between the Christian and pagan worlds far from fixed or absolute, but its narrative representation was also highly fluid, shaped by shifting political circumstances and strategic considerations.³⁵ This observation raises a further question: was the apparent resistance of Christian rulers – such as the Hungarian military leader – to cooperating with pagan forces like those of Gediminas a sincere expression of religious conviction, or rather a rhetorical strategy employed by chroniclers to advance particular political or ideological agendas? Moreover, it is worth asking to what extent narrative depictions of such alliances between Christian and pagan rulers were common in Central and Eastern European sources, and how these pragmatic collaborations may have challenged or reshaped the dominant discursive patterns surrounding pagans in medieval historiography.

As mentioned, the joint 1330 campaign was not the first military expedition organised by the Poles and the Lithuanians. One may recall the first half of the 1240s, when the Lithuanians repeatedly supported Konrad of Mazovia in his struggle for the Cracow throne. According to Długosz, the Lithuanians sided with Mazovia in the years 1241, 1243, 1244, and 1246.³⁶ While historical scholarship expresses doubts as to whether they actually aided Konrad in all the campaigns mentioned by Długosz, it is undeniable that Konrad collaborated with the Lithuanians on at

34 *The Chronicle of Prussia by Nicolaus von Jeroschin*, 292.

35 It is crucial to emphasise that, despite its rather negative depiction, cooperation between Łokietek and Gediminas in 1326 was supported by ecclesiastical authorities, driven by strong political objectives. It was largely due to the active support of Pope John XXII – motivated by opposition to Louis – that Lithuanian troops were able to safely cross the Masovian territories and join the Polish army in their joint expedition to Brandenburg in 1326. *Vetera Monumentae Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, vol. 1, 217–218; Rowell, *Lithuania ascending*, 234.

36 *Jana Długosza Roczniki, czyli kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego*, vol. 7–8, eds. Danuta Turkowska, Maria Kowalczyk (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1973), 36, 49, 55, 67–68. See also: “Ipat'evskaya letopis,” in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL)* (S.-Peterburg: Tipografia M. A. Aleksandrova, 1908), col. 795–796, 801, 810. On the political circumstances of these campaigns, see: Bronisław Włodarski, “Polityczne plany Konrada, księcia mazowieckiego,” *Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* 76 (1971): 55–60; Agnieszka Teterycz-Puzio, “Książęta Mazowieccy wobec państwa litewskiego w XIII wieku – walka czy współpraca,” *Zapiski Historyczne* 75 (2010): 8–29; Witalij Nagirnyj, *Polityka Zagraniczna księstw ziem Halickiej i Wołyńskiej w latach 1198(1199)–1264* (Kraków: PAU, 2011), 219–222; Dariusz Dąbrowski, *Daniel Romanowicz Król Rusi (ok. 1201–1264). Biografia Polityczna* (Kraków: Avalon, 2013).

least three occasions: in 1244 during the Mazovian-Rus' expedition to the lands of Sandomierz and Lublin; in August 1245 during the Battle of Yaroslav; and in 1246, during Konrad's campaign against Duke Bolesław the Chaste of Cracow.³⁷ Additionally, Vytenis, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, supported Władysław Łokietek in the early fourteenth century in his determined struggle for the Cracow throne. However, the Lithuanians did not always side with the Polish princes; in some cases, they participated in the campaigns of the princes of Rus' against the lands of Poland.

An example of such cooperation is the joint expedition of the Ruthenians and Lithuanians into the Lublin region in 1280, organised by Traidenis and led by his brother Sirputis. The Lithuanian prince's actions were aimed at supporting the ambitions of Leo I (Lev Danylovych) of Galicia, who sought to exploit the death of Bolesław the Chaste and seize part of the territories formerly under his control. While the Ruthenians conducted military operations in the Sandomierz region, the Lithuanians entered the Lublin Land. However, the expedition failed to achieve its objectives and ended in failure.³⁸

These examples confirm the existence of pagan-Christian cooperation between the Lithuanians and their Christian neighbours, yet often oral and unstable, driven by specific political and military objectives. Moreover, such collaboration was not uniquely a Polish-Lithuanian or Ruthenian-Lithuanian phenomenon, but rather a widespread strategic practice – even among the Hungarians, whose army included Cuman contingents. As Pór Antal insightfully noted, Wigand of Marburg's reference to Gediminas's participation in the 1330 campaign was likely not intended to highlight Hungarian religious fidelity, but rather to incite hostility toward the Polish king for enlisting Gediminas' support. Wilhelm Drugeth could hardly have objected to Gediminas' paganism, especially considering that pagan Cumans were also serving in his own army and took part in the same campaign.³⁹

Reflecting this alliance, the *Annalista Thorunensis* reports that Łokietek, "King of Cracow, together with the Hungarians, Cumans, and Henry Ketteler, on the day after the feast of Saint Denis," crossed the Drwęca River near the village of Lin, devastated and burned the land

37 "Kronika Wielkopolska," in *Monumenta Poloniae Historiae. Seria Nova*, vol. 8, ed. Brygida Kürbis (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), 91.

38 Błaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, 48.

39 Pór Antal, "Magyar-lengyel érintkezés a XIV-ik században: második és befejező közlemény," *Századok* 37 (1903): 322–324.

of Chełmno with many thousands of troops, and laid siege to the castle of Lipienek.⁴⁰

Thus, medieval warfare did not always follow a clear-cut pattern of binary religious opposition. On the contrary, cooperation between Christian and pagan forces were not only possible but, at times, strategically necessary – and acknowledged in narrative sources, though often with ambivalence or distortion. Critical attitudes toward pagans were common in medieval chronicles, even when they allied with Christian rulers. Importantly, such portrayals are not limited to the Latin narrative tradition but also appear in the Orthodox context, reflecting a broader Christian conception of the religious Other and prevailing attitudes toward them.

Several vivid examples of alliances between Christian and pagan forces against a common threat – echoing Wigand's depiction of Gediminas's participation in the 1330 campaign – can be found in the history of Rus'. One particularly illustrative case is the Battle of the Kalka River in 1223, in which a coalition of Rus' principalities and the pagan Cumans joined forces against a Mongol corps led by Jebe and Subedei. Despite their initial cooperation, the alliance suffered a devastating defeat. The Cumans and the main Rus' forces were routed early in the battle, and by 31 May, the Mongols had secured a complete victory. At least nine Rus' princes, along with many boyars and warriors, were killed.

Of particular relevance to the present study is the chroniclers' interpretation of the defeat, which was blamed on the lack of coordination among the allies and, notably, on the flight of the Cumans from the battlefield.⁴¹ A contradictory portrayal of the Cumans – similar to that of the Lithuanians in Teutonic chronicles – is also evident. While earlier accounts condemn the Cumans as “the godless sons of Ishmael” and portray their downfall as divine retribution for their past violence against

40 “Eodem anno Locukko rex Cracovie cum Ungaris et Cumanis et Hinrico Kittelitz in crastino Dionisii intrarunt per vadum Drevancie circa villam, que Lyn dicitur, devastando et cremando terram Culmensem cum multis millibus, circumvallantes castrum Lypam, provinciali tamen cum multis aliis dominis existente in castro. Et interim Poloni et Ungari etc. totam terram per quatuor dies vastarunt, descendendo ultra Ossam usque in Gordin.” *Annalista Thorunensis*, 68.

41 „Тогда же Ярунь съступиша с ними, хотя битися, и побѣгоша не успѣшие ничто же Половци назадъ, и потопташа бѣжаще стани рускыхъ князь, не успѣша бо исполнитися противу имъ; и смятошаши вси, и бысть сѣча зла и лютя.” *Novgorodskaiia Pervaya letopis'* (Moskwa–Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1950), 265.

Christians,⁴² the chroniclers also record a moment of political pragmatism and unity.⁴³ Mstislav of Halych is depicted as urging the Rus' princes to support the Cumans, warning that their submission to the Mongols would only strengthen the enemy. Consequently, the Rus' leaders agreed to form a coalition with the Cumans and mobilised warriors from across their lands in a united front against the Tatars.⁴⁴ Despite this pragmatic coalition, however, the pagan Cumans are not portrayed as equal participants in the campaign, but rather as a sinful and unreliable element within the Christian forces. Moreover, the defeat of the Rus' forces is ultimately attributed to the sins of the Christians, reflecting the didactic element typical of Christian narrative.⁴⁵

By analysing the participation of pagan forces in joint pagan–Christian coalitions, as depicted in two distinct narrative traditions – specifically German and Rus' sources examined in this study – it is possible to identify two recurring patterns that reflect a broader medieval Christian worldview. First, defeats in such campaigns are often attributed to the unreliability or treacherous behaviour of pagan allies, with repeated emphasis on their inherently sinful nature. Second, both traditions highlight the concept of divine retribution – portrayed either as punishment for the sins of Christian participants or as vengeance for the past crimes committed by pagans against Christians. It is important to note that these rhetorical mechanisms extend beyond descriptions of joint pagan–Christian military efforts. Rather, they reflect a broader ideological framework through which pagans and their nature were perceived and represented in chronicle discourse. This framework was applied to specific historical events, resulting in the construction of a contradictory image: pagans are depicted as powerful and sometimes necessary allies, who, nevertheless, cannot be trusted and who deserve punishment for their transgressions.

This ambivalence was evident not only during wartime but also in the course of negotiations. Narratives often served to delegitimize treaties with pagan leaders by portraying them as unreliable and unworthy of Christian trust. Interestingly, this depiction persisted even in the case

42 “Много зла створиша ти оканнѣи Половци Рускои земли, того ради всемилости-
вныи богъ хотя погубити безбожныя сыны Измаиловы Куманы, яко да отмѣстять
кровь крестиянскую, еже и бысть надъ ними безаконными.” *Ibidem*, 265.

43 “Роускимъ кназемъ аще не поможета намъ . мы нынѣ исѣчени бѣхомъ . а вы
наоутрѣ исѣчени боудете.” “Ipat'evskaya letopis”, col. 741.

44 *Novgorodskaiia pervaya letopis'*, fol. 145.

45 “Татаром же побѣдившимъ Роускыя кназа . за прегрешение крѣтнѣское.”
Ipat'evskaya letopis', col. 745; “И тако за грѣхи наша вложи богъ недоумѣніе
в нась, и погыбѣ множество бещисла люди.” *Novgorodskaiia pervaya letopis'*, fol. 146.

of later rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such as Algirdas and Kęstutis. For example, during the conflict over Galicia-Volhynia in 1351, involving King Casimir of Poland, King Louis I of Hungary, and the Lithuanian rulers, Louis concluded a peace agreement with Kęstutis, who pledged to convert to Christianity and support Hungary militarily in exchange for a royal crown. According to the Hungarian chronicler, to demonstrate his sincerity, Kęstutis even performed a pagan ritual to seal the agreement. However, he subsequently fled the Christian camp at night, never returning to fulfil his promises.⁴⁶ Such episodes, involving pagan rituals followed by oath-breaking, reinforced the chroniclers' depiction of Lithuanians as spiritually deviant and politically dangerous, thus justifying continued Christian efforts to convert them.

This ambivalence is also evident in the *Pskovian Chronicle*'s record of events in 1341. After deliberation, the Pskovians sent envoys to Vitebsk, appealing to Algirdas with respectful deference: "Our brothers, the Novgorodians, have abandoned us and do not aid us; therefore, you, Lord, Grand Prince Algirdas, help us in this time."⁴⁷ Algirdas responded favourably, first sending his voivode, Prince Georgiy Vitovtovich, and soon arriving himself with his brother Kęstutis, a contingent of Lithuanian warriors, the men of Vitebsk, and his son Andrei. What stands out, however, is the chronicler's complex portrayal of this alliance. Although the Pskovians actively sought military cooperation with Algirdas, the chronicle simultaneously expresses deep-seated mistrust toward the Lithuanians. It records that the Pskovians crossed the river with Algirdas and Kęstutis, "simultaneously seeking to protect their homes, wives, and children from Lithuania."⁴⁸

This statement encapsulates the fundamental ambiguity in the Lithuanian image: even as military allies, they are not fully assimilated into the discursive category of the Self (i.e., Christians). Instead, they continue to be framed – perhaps instinctively – as potential aggressors requiring constant vigilance and protection. This duality defies simplistic binary classification. The Lithuanians are neither fully Other, in the sense of the demonised pagan enemy, nor entirely Self, as trusted Christian allies. The chronicle narrative suggests that even in moments of cooperation, the alliance with the Lithuanians remains uneasy and conditional, marked

⁴⁶ "Chronicon Dubnicense," in *Historiae Hungaricae Fontes Domestici*, vol. 3, ed. Mátyás, Flórián (Lipsiae, 1884), 161.

⁴⁷ "Pskovskaya Pervaya letopis," in *PSRL*, vol. 5, ed. Boris Kloss (Moskva: Yazyki slavianskoi kultury, 2003), 18.

⁴⁸ "Тако же и псковичи перебродиша с ними [Algirdas and Kestutis – YR], блюдущи своих домовъ, женъ и детей от Литвы." *Ibidem*, 19.

by persistent distrust. Thus, the Pskovian account, similarly to Wigand's description of the 1330 campaign, constructs an image of alliance that does not eliminate alterity, but rather suspends it temporarily in response to shifting political and military needs.

In conclusion, medieval Christian chronicles and narratives often depict pagans in a controversial and morally negative light. Pagans are typically portrayed as a clear opposition to Christians, frequently characterised as treacherous, deceitful, malicious, cowardly, cruel, and easily breaking oaths. As enemies of Christendom, they are often shown committing crimes in Christian lands and threatening the established order, thereby deserving divine punishment. This portrayal aligns with the broader medieval worldview, where Christianity is fundamentally opposed to paganism.

However, the narrative representation of pagans – whether as enemies or allies – was often much more complex, reflecting the complexity of medieval politics and the interplay between religious and political considerations. Therefore, these portrayals became ideologically charged constructs, often created in the interests of specific political or social groups. Despite the generally negative portrayals, the sources also attest to the existence of Christian–pagan alliances. Pagans may have supported Christian rulers in both internal disputes and external military campaigns. Significantly, in cases of such alliances, the role and contribution of the pagans are often downplayed in the narrative, while failures are typically attributed to their presumed treachery or withdrawal from the battlefield. Although these alliances were strategically advantageous, they were often contentious, provoking internal tensions and attracting criticism from other Christian powers, at least in narrative rhetoric.

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