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Social Justice in the Operation of the Medieval Crusader Knights' Orders – On the Activities of the Polish Knights' Orders[1]

The charitable activities initiated by the monastic orders were continued by the some knights' orders from the 11th century onwards, whose aim was to care for the sick and the poor. These were the hospitaller crusaders, whose roots grew out of the organization of hospitaller brotherhoods. Most of these formations reached Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary and Poland. These special legal institutions represented divine justice in the conditions of the time: they protected the weak, spread the faith, and the hospitaller crusader orders performed an additional important, 'public benefit' task by caring for the sick in an era when institutionalized state frameworks for this activity did not yet exist. The aim of the paper is to – following in the footsteps of another study previously published in Díké, like a second part of it – present the functioning of such brotherhoods and knights' orders in Poland in the 12th and 13th centuries, and to examine at what levels of activity these legal institutions can be seen to be engaged in social justice.

Keywords: *social justice, hospitaller, crusader knights' order, Poland, 12th–13th centuries*

"It is unthinkable that God would do wrong,
that the Almighty would pervert justice." [2]

1. Introduction: "fighting monks" – the crusaders

The study, which presented the activities of the crusader knights' orders operating in medieval Hungary, was published in the 2nd issue of the 7th volume of Díké.[3] The most specific institutions of the Middle Ages, the members of the knights' orders, were secular knights living according to monastic rules. The Gospel teaching clearly condemns violence, but in the case of these orders

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1 The author, who took part in the conference *"Parallels between the Judaeo-Christian and Roman Legal Roots of our Legal Culture III."* in Pécs on 3 June 2024, expresses gratitudes towards the organizers for the opportunity to publish with *Marian Małecki* in the conference proceedings.

2 Job 34:12.

3 Falus, Organized Institutions of Medieval Hungarian Healthcare: the Crusader Knights' Orders 26–41.

of the crusader orders were not monks who were given permission to wage war and shed blood, but secular warriors who lived their lives outside of war according to a monastic rule.

The charitable activities initiated by the monastic orders were continued by the some knights' orders from the 11th century onwards, whose aim was to care for the sick and the poor. These were the hospitaller crusaders orders, whose roots grew out of the organization of hospitaller brotherhoods (Lat. *confraternitas*). However, the brotherhoods developed from the lay institution of the monasteries (Lat. *fratres conversi*) into an independent form of coexistence. Most of these formations reached Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary and Poland.[4] These special legal institutions represented divine justice in the conditions of the time: they protected the weak, spread the faith, and the hospitaller crusader orders performed an additional important, *public benefit* task by caring for the sick in an era when institutionalized state frameworks for this activity did not yet exist. The aim of the present paper is to – following in the footsteps of the study previously published in Díké, like a second part of it – also present the functioning of such brotherhoods and knights' orders in Poland in the 12th and 13th centuries.

2. The ideal of chivalry

Knighthood – chivalry – was a specific way of life in the Middle Ages. A noble title and estate could be inherited, but not knighthood. A knight was made a knight if he deserved it: in battle, in the service of his lord, with his actions. Anyone who was knighted by his lord or ruler could be included in the ranks of the nobility, regardless of their origin. In the beginning, the Christian Church did not treat this heterogeneous armed social class as nobles, but uniformly referred to them as *bellatore*s, warriors, but later, with the start of the Crusades, their role became more valuable for the Church. Becoming a knight was a way of separating from the lower classes of society and an opportunity for advancement, just like Church service. The word *miles* (chevalier, Ritter, knight) soon took on the meaning of *bellatores*, and the ideal of chivalry was institutionalized. The Church worked with all its might to mobilize those who were fit for war for the success of the Crusades, and therefore it itself participated in the development of the ideal of chivalry and its value system. Thanks to this, the born nobility also accepted and recognized as its members the warrior knights who rose to their ranks from the poorer ranks. This was not difficult, especially since their value system was the same: chivalry, courage, the pursuit of fame and glory, loyalty to and respect for the ruler connected the members of the nobility acquired by birth and battle.[5]

The guiding morals that appeared in the chivalric literature that had been spread by oral tradition until then, and which embodied the chivalric value system, were later summarized by the Catalan *Raymundus Lullus* (1235–1315) in his work *"Libre del orde de cavayleria"*.[6] *Raymundus Lullus* was a polymath philosopher who was later beatified in 1857 by Pope *Pius IX* (r. 1846–1878). The author lists ten chivalric virtues: upholding the teachings of the Church and the Christian faith; defending the Church; protecting the weak and the needy; love of country; courage; selflessness;

4 Somogyi, A középkori Magyarország szegényügye 20–21.

5 Falus, Ispotályos keresztes lovagrendek az Árpád-kori Magyarországon 18–20.

6 The *"Book of the Order of Chivalry"* was written in Catalan by *Raymundus Lullus* (*Raimundo Lulio, Ramon Llull*) between 1274 and 1276 and is one of the author's earliest works. It was written in Catalan for knights who might not have a knowledge of Latin. More on this topic: Llull, The Book of the Order of Chivalry / Llibre de l'Ordre de Cavalleria.

loyalty; honesty; mercy and generosity; fight against injustice and evil.[7] The Church also supported these values by elevating the ceremony of knighthood to a liturgy. The candidate took the oath of knighthood while kneeling before the altar, while his weapons were blessed by the priest.[8]

3. Knights' orders in Poland during the 11th–13th centuries

The history of knights' orders in Poland has a centuries-long tradition, as evidenced by numerous sources and scientific literature. For the most part, research conducted in Poland has provided answers to fundamental questions on the matter, i.e. where the representatives of these orders came from, where they had their headquarters, what their political and social activities, spirituality, aims, achievements and further fates were.[9] With the first crusades to the Holy Land, Poles also appeared there. Polish historiography speaks of Polish princes: *Bolesław I the Tall* (r. 1163–1201), *Władysław II the Exile* (r. 1138–1146), *Kazimierz I Opolski* (r. 1211–1230), while the best known of the knights was *Jaksa Gryfita of Miechów* (r. 1154–1160),[10] who brought the Order of the *Holy Sepulchre* and the Order of *St. John of Jerusalem* to Poland.[11]

Most Polish princes organised Baltic crusades against the Prussians, Yotvingians and Lithuanians and supported the conquest of the Elbe Slavs by the Germans. The well-known princes of local crusades were *Konrad of I Masovia* (r. 1229–1232; 1241–1243), *Władysław Odonic*, Duke of Greater Poland (r. 1229–1234), *Leszek I the White*, Duke of Cracow (r. 1194–1227), and *Henry the Bearded*, Duke of Silesia (r. 1201–1238).[12] Until the end of the 13th century Poland was divided into districts ruled by local princes. The first representatives of the oldest knights' orders – that is, the *Templars* and the *Joannites*, soon followed by the *Teutonic Knights*, and later also other orders, including members of the Spanish Order of *Calatrava* appeared already in the time of division. It is worth noting that a local knights' order of the *Dobrzynski Brothers*[13] was also established in Poland, as was the *Stephanite* order in Hungary.[14]

It is known that in 1225 king *Andrew II* of Hungary (r. 1205–1235) removed the German knights from the land of Borsa in Transylvania, who in Poland were called – from the black cross on their coats – *Teutonic Knights*.[15] They then came to the Dobrzyń land and half a century later, undisturbed by anyone, created their own state. The *Teutonic Knights* grew in strength, especially among the Baltic peoples and later in the Kingdom of Poland. The *Teutonic Knights*

7 Hunyadi – Pósán, Krisztus katonái. A középkori lovagrendek 11.

8 Falus, Szpitalne zakony rycerskie w czasach Arpadów na Węgrzech 25–26.

9 More: Starnawska, Między Jerozolimą a Łukowem. Zakony krzyżowe na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu.

10 Małecki, Z dziejów Miechowa, jego prawa i wymiaru sprawiedliwości 21–23.

11 For a more extensive discussion of this topic, compare: Gładysz, Zapomniani krzyżowcy. Polska wobec ruchu krucjatowego w XII–XIII wieku. Polskie Towarzystwo Heraldyczne.

12 The literature on this subject of the arrival of the Teutonic Knights in Poland and the conquest of the Prussian lands is vast. Compare among others: Dorna, Bracia zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach w latach 1228–1309; Leo, Dzieje Prus; Biskup – Labuda, Dzieje zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach; Christiansen, Krucjaty Północne.

13 See: Dusburg, Chronicle of the Prussian Lands 22–23.

14 On the Stephanites and other knightly orders in Hungary: Falus, Szpitalne zakony rycerskie w czasach Arpadów na Węgrzech.

15 Dusburg, Chronicle of the Prussian Lands 18.

competed on the Baltic with another knights' orders from Germany – the *Knights of the Sword* (the *Inflants*). The latter order, wishing to take advantage of the difficult position of the Ruthenian principalities after the Mongol invasion, attacked Prince *Alexander Nevsky* (r. 1236–1263), later canonised as a saint of the Russian Orthodox Church, but was defeated in 1242 at Icy Pobojisko (Lake Pejpus – Khudzkie).[16] He was then partially united with the *Teutonic Knights*.

Polish crusaders fought at the side of Duke *Henry II the Pious* (r. 1238–1241) during the first Mongol invasion (1241). They took part in the Battle of Legnica.[17] *Jan Długosz* reports that the battle against the Mongols was started by a detachment of knight-crusaders, commanded by Duke *Bolesław Dypoldovic Szepiołka*. It involved the *Templars*, and the *Knights of St. John* as the *Teutonic Knights* were absent. The legend of *Saint Hedwig* (a Polish source from the early 14th century showed these Crusaders. In another source, a letter of the French knight-templar *"Ponces d'Aubon"* written to the French King *Louis IX the Saint* (r. 1226–1270) mentions the losses of the *Templars* in Poland: 3 brothers, 5 knights and 500 men of the order.[18]

4. A brief characteristics of knights' orders in Poland in the era
4.1. Templars

The Order of the *Knights Templar* (Lat. *Ordo Militiae Christi*) is the oldest order of knights, formed by 7 knights from Burgundy and 2 Cistercians around 1119 in Jerusalem.[19] They were called *Templars* after their headquarters in *Solomon*'s temple (Lat. *Templum*). The order developed thanks to *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, who wrote them a rule and issued a document justifying the war between Christians and pagans, *"De Laude Novae Militiae Templi"*.[20]

The Order played a remarkable role in the Holy Land and during the Reconquista in Spain.[21] It was the most elite knight's' orders in history. We do not know when it appeared in Poland for the first time. Some historians are inclined to the thesis that it arrived on the Vistula River together with Duke *Henry I of Sandomierz* (r. 1138–1166), who took part in the Crusades in Egypt (1154). When – after a year – Duke *Henry* returned to Poland he invited the *Joannites* and *Templars* to his duchy. If this was the case, they were settled near Opatów and in Drohiczyn.[22] They were supposed to secure the Polish border against the Ruthenians, also the Prussian and the Yotvingian invasions. However, this is solely a hypothesis. The first house of the Order was established around 1220–1228 in Silesia by *Henry the Bearded*. There was another commandery in Olesnica Mala and in Lietzen (today: Germany), established by *Władysław Odonic* of Greater Poland in Myślibórz, Wielka Wieś, Chwarszczany and Wałcz and by *Przemysl II* (r. 1290–1296) in Western Pomerania: Wałcz, Rurka.[23]

16 Pluta, Pejpus 1242; Nicolle, Jezioro Pejpus 1242.

17 Długosz, Roczniki czyli Kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego 22.

18 Ulanowski, O współudziale Templaryuszów w bitwie pod Lignicą 275–322; Goliński, Templariusze a bitwa pod Legnicą – próba rewizji poglądów 3–15.

19 Reguła zakonu templariuszy, compiled by Malecki. For the version of the Rule of the Order renewed in Siena by Saint John Paul II, cf. *„Rule and Other Formation Documents of the Poor Knights of Christ"*.

20 Bernard of Clairvaux, Pochwała nowego rycerstwa, opracował.

21 Barber, The New Kinghthood. A History of the Order of the Temple 13–43; Nicholson, The Knights Templar 48–121.

22 Starnawska, Między Jerozolimą a Łukowem. Zakony krzyżowe na ziemiach polskich w średniowiecz 55–68.

23 Starnawska, Między Jerozolimą a Łukowem. Zakony krzyżowe na ziemiach polskich w średniowiecz

It is not known exactly how many commandaries they had altogether – from a dozen even up to 50. It is worth noting that they were settled in the border areas, near the borders of feudal principalities, to ensure peace, there through their presence. This goal was not achieved by the progressive process of feudal disintegration in Poland.[24] In 1241, they defended Poland against the Mongols.[25]

Between 1307 and 1314 there was a trial of the order in France and in some countries including the Holy See.[26] Like in Hungary, also in Poland, the *Templars* were not persecuted and lived in peace until the natural death of individual brothers. In 1318 the surviving *Templars* concluded a treaty with the *Knights of St John* at Cremen, under which, after the death of the last brother of the Order, their possessions were to pass to the *Knights of St John*.[27] Their largest estate was Olesnica Mala in Silesia.[28] The second was the commandery at Chwarszczany, where they erected a huge chapel, perhaps intending to create a centre of greater power there or the whole of Sclavinia, and finally Rurka, near Szczecin, with its surviving monastic chapel. A great friend of the Order was *Saint Jadwiga Andechs*. The author of the *"Life of Saint Jadwiga"* reports that the saint asked the *Templars* for tools of religious mortification. The Knights gave her a belt to cover her hips, made of horsehair. *Templars* did not build castles in Poland. In their place, they established defensive strongholds of an economic nature. They felt safe in Poland, as some Poles joined the ranks of the *Templars*.[29] It is believed that during their entire existence, a maximum of 150 - 200 knights stayed on Polish soil.

55–68; Burzyński, Zakon rycerski templariuszy na ziemiach Polski piastowskiej i na Pomorzu Zachodnim 23–153.

24 Weiss, Organizacja diecezji lubuskiej w średniowieczu 209–211.

25 Małecki, Muhi nad rzeką Sajó 1241. Z dziejów obecności Mongołów w Europie vol. II. 60, 68–69, 74, 78, 82, 87.

26 On this subject: Barber, The Trial of the Templars; Nicholson, The Templar on the Trial. The Trial of the Templars in the British Isles 1308–1311; Małecki, Proces templariuszy we Francji (1307–1314).

27 Burzyński, Zakon rycerski templariuszy na ziemiach Polski piastowskiej i na Pomorzu Zachodnim 127.

28 Later owned by the Counts of York von Warthenburg, known as the organisers of the assassination attempt on *Hitler* at the Wolf's Lair, however, the research into the significance of this building is still in progress.

29 More extensively on this topic: Kołosowski, Zakony rycerskie na ziemiach pogranicza.

Picture 1: Templar chapel in Rurka from 1234.
Western Pomerania, Poland *(*photo by *Marian Małecki)*

Picture 2: Chwarszczany - the most imposing
Templar church in Poland (photo by *Marian Małecki*)

4.2. Teutonic Knights

The *Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary* of the German House, known in Poland as the *Teutonic* Order was established around 1190–1192 in Jerusalem, as a hospital confraternity for merchants from Lübeck and Bremen. Given the great political role of the *Knights of St John* and the *Knights Templar*, the *Teutonic Order* did not play a major role in the Holy Land and its main castles (*Castellum Regis and Montfort*) were no match for fortresses such as Safed, Castellum Peregrino-

rum – of the *Knights Templar* or *Belvoir* – of the *Hospitallers*, hence the *Teutonic Knights* tried their luck in Europe.[30]

They appeared in the Land of Borsa in Transylvania through King *Andrew II* (1211). Within ten years they began to build their own state structures, to which the Hungarian king reacted by expelling them, which took place in 1225.[31] This event coincided with the Teutonic Knights' propaganda campaign in Poland. Their great donor was the Silesian Duke *Henry the Bearded*, who, even before 1226, granted them certain lands in Silesia, through his wife, the Princess of *Andechs - Meran Jadwiga*, later a saint.[32] After the expulsion of the *Teutonic Knights* from Hungary, they came to Poland, where, thanks to Duke *Konrad of Mazovia*, they received the Dobrzyń and Michałow lands.[33] They came at this time – fourth.[34] Without Polish help, the *Teutonic Knights* would never have created their state.

Under the fourth master *Herman von Salza*, the *Teutonic Knights* began the systematic conquest of Prussia (today: Warmia and Masuria in Poland) and set about building the monastic state. They completed the conquest of Prussia around 1280–1290 and then led a confrontation with Poland, resulting in the occupation of Gdansk Pomerania (1309). The Polish king *Władysław Łokietek* (r. 1320–1333) defeated them at the Battle of Płowce, but this had little effect, and Poland lost Kujawy. The final war occurred in 1409. A year later they were defeated at the Battle of Grunwald (1410) and in 1525 they were secularised in Prussia. They moved to Vienna and their headquarters are still in Bohemia today. The Order was first brought to the vicinity of Toruń in 1226, where, with the help of Polish princes, they established a castle (legend has it that before the *Teutonic Knights* built their fortress they hid in the branches of old trees).[35]

The *Teutonic Knights* are said to have taken part in the Battle of Legnica (today their involvement in this battle is disputed),[36] and contributed to the economic development of Prussia by founding towns and villages under German law. However, this was at the expense of the local pagan population, who were forced to change their religion by force. There was not a single saint in this order. Blessed *Dorothea of Mątowy*, who lived in one of the Teutonic castles, did not belong to the Order.

30 More extensively on this topic: Morton, Krzyżacy w Ziemi Świętej 1190–1291.

31 Hautula, Грамоты венгерского короля Андрея II, предоставленные тевтонским рыцарям в Трансильвании: латинские тексты, переводы и комментарии 39–65; Biskup – Labuda, Dzieje zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach 112–118.

32 Zientara, Henryk Brodaty i jego czasy 400.

33 Biskup – Labuda, Dzieje zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach 118–121.

34 Detailed listing of members of the Teutonic Order in Prussia: Dorna, Bracia zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach w latach 23–94.

35 Dusburg, Chronicle of the Prussian Lands 43.

36 Labuda, O udziale Krzyżaków i o śmierci wielkiego mistrza Zakonu Krzyżackiego Poppo von Osterna w bitwie z Tatarami pod Legnicą w roku 1241 89–101.

Picture 3: Montfort - one of the first Teutonic strongholds in the Holy Land *(*photo by *Marian Małecki)*

Picture 4: Feldioara (Földvár, Marienburg) - a Teutonic castle in Transylvania, from which they were expelled in 1225 by king *Andrew II* of Hungary, and taken in by Duke *Konrad* of Masovia (photo by *Marian Małecki*)

4.3. The Dobrzyn Brethren

Fratres Milites Christi de Dobrzyn was an order that was founded entirely on Polish soil. Its founder was the Prussian bishop *Chrystian*, called *Krystyn*. Between 1216 and 1228, he set up a group of knights to fight against the pagan tribes of Prussians and Jaćwings, who from time to time invaded the Dobrzyn lands and Kujawy in northern Poland, and even Mazovia. Duke *Konrad of Masovia* (r. 1264–1275) – enfant terrible of the Polish Middle Ages – famous for his cruelty and failure to keep his word gave them a stronghold in Dobrzyń, where the *Dobrzyń brothers* arrived in 1228. The Order was approved by *Pope Gregory IX* (r. 1227–1241), but did not develop a major role, mainly because of the losses it suffered in battles with the Prussians.

Already during its formation in 1225, the Order almost ceased to exist in the two-day battle of Brodnica where only five brothers survived the pogrom. During its existence, it was never numerous as at its greatest moment it had 35 brothers and 165 armed servients. In addition to Dobrzyn, they also owned Drohiczyn: this is where their name originates from.[37] In 1235, part of the Order joined the *Teutonic Knights* and those members who lived in Drohiczyn connected the *Templars*. The ethnic composition of the Order here was Polish and German. In 1237 it was again defeated by the Ruthenian army of *Daniel Halicki* at the Battle of Drohiczyn.[38] Its remnants were incorporated into the *Teutonic Order*.

4.4. Calatrava

The Order founded in Castile, Spain in 1158 was brought to Poland by *Warcislaw*, Duke of Gdansk Pomerania (r. 1266–1270), and given the village of Tymawa near Gdansk, which took place around 1224. They were mentioned in two documents dated 1224 and 1230. They were referred in two documents in 1224 and 1230, where 4 knights were mentioned: *Florentinus, Herbert, Konrad* and *Magnus*. Their task was to provide military assistance to the Prussian bishop fighting against the Prussian tribes. In 1233 they left Poland. We do not know what prompted them to come to Poland - it is assumed that it was the persuasion of the Cistercians, with whom they were linked by the monastic rule, and who were already there in Poland.[39]

4.5. The Knight Order of the Canons Regular of the Guardians of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

The Order (Lat. *Ordo equestris Sancti Sepulcri Hierosolomytani*) was founded by *Godfrey of Bouillon*, the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (reigned: 1099–1100), around 1099.[40] The primary duties of the monks were to pray, serve pilgrims, field a military contingent during the Crusades and carry relics during battle. By the mid-12th century, they numbered canons subject to the authority of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.[41] Their headquarters were in Jerusalem and later in Akka. They were brought to Poland by *Jaksa Gryfita of Miechów*, a knight who participated

37 "Dobrzyńscy Bracia" in Encyklopedia Staropolska, ed. by Gloger 8–9.

38 Tyszkiewicz, Ziemie podlaskie w średniowieczu i nowożytności (do połowy XVII w.) 22.

39 Smoliński, Kalatrawensi w Tymawie na Pomorzu Gdańskim. Idea sprowadzenia zakonu nad Morze Bałtyckie 205–243.

40 Małecki, From Holy Land to Poland. The History of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre 18.

41 Małecki, From Holy Land to Poland. The History of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre 56.

in the battles for Egypt in the Holy Land. Returning in 1163 he brought this Order to Poland. The knights were reorganised in later times and its members were called *Miechowites* after their headquarters in Miechów (40 km north of Krakow).[42]

The emblem of the Order is a Jerusalem cross. The problem of the Order is to define its knightly character. It was defined as knightly in the 19th century, although many scholars believe that since it had to field a military contingent for the Crusade it was ipso facto a knightly order. Today, it is headed by the Primate of Poland.

Picture 5: Contemporary costume of a cavalier of the Order of the Defenders of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem *(*photo by *Marian Małecki)*

4.6. The Johannites

It is a knights' order originated in Jerusalem as a hospitaller brotherhood of pilgrims from Amalfi.[43] They came to Poland in the 12th century thanks to Prince *Henry I of Sandomierz* (r. 1138–1166) and *Jaksa Gryfita* of Miechów mentioned above. They were given Zagość in Lesser Poland, where they built a church, and later they settled in Silesia, where they had the most commandories, among others in Maków, Strzegom but also in Greater Poland. This is why the whole diocese of Poznań is still referred to as *Malta*.[44] After the suppression of the *Templars*, they took over their properties. During the Mongol invasion of Poland, they fought at the side of Prince *Henry II the Pious* (r. 1238–1241).

42 Małecki, From Holy Land to Poland. The History of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre 56.

43 The literature on the order is vast. For more on the origins of the Order in the Holy Land: King, Szpitalnicy w Ziemi Świętej; Sire, Kawalerowie Maltańscy.

44 Smoliński, Joannici w polityce książąt polskich i pomorskich od połowy XII do pierwszego ćwierćwiecza XIV wieku 25–130.

Picture 6: The collegiate church in Zagość. The original foundation of the church of the Order of St. John is connected with the foundation of Duke Henry of Sandomierz *(*photo by *Marian Małecki)*

Picture 7: Judges' table of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem from Olesnica Mala *(*photo by *Marian Malecki)*

5. Conclusion

The history of the knights' orders during the 11th–13th centuries have parallels in both Hungary and Poland. Their arrival – at a similar time – in the lands of Central Europe was no accident. The cost of maintaining the great fortresses in the Outremer desert required enormous financial resources hence the *Templars* and *Joannites* did not disdain grants in countries as peripheral to them as Poland at the time. As time passed, the monks became convinced of the prospects of their new homelands – so they brought in more monks, as well as related orders.

In the time of *Andrew II*, Polish-Hungarian relations were correct and sometimes cordial. The principles of Polish-Hungarian alliance or friendship resonated well, which the *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle* even made conditional on a papal curse. When King *Stephen I* of Hungary received the royal crown (1000), for which *Bolesław I Chrobry* of Poland had to wait a little longer (1025), the Pope stipulated that the two nations should maintain friendship between them, even under the threat of a curse. Already after the death of King *Andrew II*, both countries had to face an invasion by the Mongols. The Mongols, not unreasonably, believed that the countries would give each other mutual assistance. However, Hungary and Poland emerged from this invasion, albeit on their own strength, with a defensive hand. The Crusader knights' orders played an active role in shaping the history of both Hungary and Poland, strengthening the monarch's troops in the defense of the nation in the event of external attacks, such as the Mongol invasion. Among these organizations, the hospitaller brotherhoods stood out primarily with their public benefit patient care activities.

Concerning these knights' orders social justice appeared on two levels evidently: both in the organization and purpose of their activities. They created an opportunity for men of non-noble descent to obtain the title of nobility as a reward for their noble deeds and courage, and with their nursing activities they also served social justice when they provided free nursing care to those in need in an era when this did not yet appear at the state level.

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