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Representations of Fear in Teutonic Order Chronicles of Warfare against the Lithuanians (13th to Mid-14th Centuries)

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Abstract

The article examines the representations of fear in chronicles of the Teutonic Order describing warfare against the Lithuanians from the thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century. Drawing on a close narrative analysis of selected passages from the chronicles of Peter of Dusburg, Nicolaus von Jeroschin, and Wigand of Marburg, as well as related historiographical texts, the article investigates how fear is constructed and attributed within crusading narratives. It identifies four recurring patterns: fear attributed to Lithuanians in order to emphasise Christian superiority; fear experienced by Teutonic knights in moments of military danger; fear arising from perceptions of Lithuanian strength, numerical superiority, unpredictability, and cruelty; and fear associated with uncertainty surrounding the success of the Order's sacred mission. Rather than treating these emotions as direct reflections of historical reality, the article argues that the chronicles deploy fear as a rhetorical and ideological device through which warfare and religious identity are interpreted. Representations of fear thus serve multiple narrative functions: they explain military setbacks, reinforce the moral authority of the Order, and transform suffering into evidence of spiritual merit. In doing so, the chronicles integrate emotional experience into the broader ideological framework of crusading narrative.

Keywords

Lithuania – Teutonic Order – historiography – Christians – pagans – warfare – emotions – fear

Chronicles constitute one of the principal sources for the study of medieval history, providing valuable insights into political events and social processes within particular regions. At the same time, they cannot be approached as neutral repositories of factual information. Rather, chronicles are narrative constructs that combine the recording of events with interpretation, moral evaluation, and ideological framing. Chroniclers frequently incorporated their own perspectives and institutional goals into their accounts, reflecting not only what happened but also how events were understood and judged within a given social and religious context.¹ Consequently, the study of chronicles requires careful attention to modes of narration, its emotional inflection, and the broader discursive frameworks within which these texts were produced.

This perspective is especially relevant in the case of the Teutonic Order, one of the most influential religious-military institutions in medieval Central and Eastern Europe. After establishing its monastic state in the land of Chełmno in the 1230s, the Order pursued sustained military expansion into neighbouring regions, including Prussia and Lithuania.² These campaigns, commonly referred to as a part of the Baltic Crusades, were framed not only as territorial conflicts but as a sacred mission aimed at the conversion of pagan populations. From the second half of the thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century, the consolidation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a powerful political entity resulted in prolonged military confrontation with the Order.³ This conflict is extensively documented in the chronicles of the Teutonic Order, which consistently frame it as a moral and religious struggle between Christian knights and pagan Lithuanian adversaries.⁴

Within these narratives, warfare is not simply described but interpreted through a range of rhetorical and ideological devices. Among these, the representation of emotions such as fear plays a significant, although unevenly distributed, role. They tend to appear at crucial narrative moments, particularly in descriptions of battle and related danger, defeat, and the prospect of death.⁵ Rather than treating such references as transparent reflections of lived emotional experience, this article approaches them as textual and narrative constructions that contribute to the ideological representation of the pagan Other within crusading discourse.⁶

Given the ideological orientation of Teutonic Order chronicles, fear is most often attributed to the pagan enemy, thereby reinforcing the moral and religious superiority of the Christian side.⁷ The Lithuanians are systematically constructed as the negative coun-

1 WHITE (1987), pp. 3–5; STOCK (2017), pp. 17–46.

2 In this article, “Lithuania” refers to the forming Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

3 CHRISTIANSEN (1980); URBAN (1994); ROWELL (1994), p. 11.

4 BOOKMAN (1987), pp. 449–454; NIKŽENTAITIS (1990), pp. 127–140; CHODYŃSKI (2006), p. 12.

5 MARCHANT (2014), p. 82; NIEWIŃSKI (2024), pp. 287–302.

6 For more on the role of emotions in the crusading narratives, see, for example: SPENCER (2019), pp. 3–24.

7 DINZELBACHER (1996), p. 15. The ideology of the Crusades, including the Baltic Crusade, as well the justification of warfare against pagans in medieval chronicles, have been analysed in various studies. For example, see: RUSSEL (1975); EHLERS (2017), pp. 21–44; MURRAY (2017), pp. 199–224, etc. See also: KLAVIŅŠ (2006), pp. 260–276; JENSEN (2016); URBAN–BARONAS (2024), pp. 78–87.

terpart to the disciplined and pious Christian knights, being depicted as treacherous, cruel, unreliable, and spiritually misguided.⁸ Such representations served to legitimise military campaigns and frame the conflict as both necessary and divinely sanctioned.⁹ Within this framework, the attribution of fear to Lithuanian opponents functions as a rhetorical strategy that underscores their inferiority and lack of spiritual steadfastness. Importantly, chroniclers only rarely articulate fear through explicit terminology. Instead, they often convey it indirectly through figurative language (e.g., analogies and metaphors) and descriptions of behaviour (e.g., sudden flight, chaotic movement, confusion, or loss of control). Emotional representation thus reinforces the contrast between “civilised” Christian warriors and their pagan adversaries while simultaneously justifying the Order’s mission of conquest and conversion.¹⁰ Fear, in turn, emerges not only as an element of battlefield experience but as a discursive mechanism through which violence and legitimacy are ideologically connected.

This interpretation corresponds with broader studies of medieval warfare, which demonstrate that emotions such as fear and courage often function as literary topoi shaped by chivalric and institutional expectations rather than as direct expressions of psychological reality.¹¹ In crusading contexts, these emotional patterns are further embedded within theological frameworks that connect suffering and divine favour. Emotional expression consequently becomes part of a wider system of meaning through which warfare is morally interpreted and justified.¹²

Accordingly, this article adopts a discourse-analytical approach, treating the chronicles as ideologically structured texts rather than direct reflections of lived experience, and examines how fear is represented, attributed, and instrumentalised in the portrayals of pagan Lithuanians in the chronicles of the Teutonic Order from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The analysis is based on key sources such as the *Chronica Terrae Prussiae* of Peter of Dusburg, the *Kronike von Pruzinlant* of Nicolaus von Jeroschin, and the *Chronica nova Prutenica* of Wigand of Marburg, supplemented by related texts such as the chronicle of Henry of Livonia.¹³ The article also engages with recent research on the culture of warfare within the Teutonic Order, which provides an important context for understanding how emotional responses were framed within institutional and ideological norms.¹⁴

On this basis, the study identifies three principal modes of fear in the chronicles. First, experiential fear appears as an immediate emotional response to danger and is

8 For more on the contrasting narrative patterns used to oppose pagans and Christians, see: KALJUNDI (2008), pp. 122–23; PETTS (2011), pp. 31–38.

9 MARKMAN (2015), p. 45; LYNCH (2015), pp. 19, 28.

10 Ibidem.

11 MACDONALD (2013), pp. 179–206; MASSON (2016), pp. 101–112; MCKELVIE (2022), pp. 3–24; NIEWIŃSKI (2024), pp. 287–302.

12 See more: DINZELBACHER (1996); SPENCER (2019); RÓŻYCKI (2021).

13 DUSBURG (1861); JEROSCHIN (2010); MARBURG (2017).

14 For more on the corporate military culture of the Teutonic Order and the self-identification of its members, see: KWIATKOWSKI (2016).

often accompanied by physical reactions such as trembling, panic, or attempts to flee.¹⁵ Second, strategic fear emerges from military considerations, including the perceived strength, numerical superiority, unpredictability, and cruelty attributed to Lithuanian forces. Third, eschatological fear is associated with anxiety concerning the success of the Order's sacred mission and is framed within a theological narrative of spiritual struggle and divine testing.¹⁶

A central narrative strategy through which these ideological aims are realised is the representation of experiential pagan fear in response to Christian military action. Chroniclers repeatedly construct scenes in which the arrival or advance of the Teutonic knights provokes panic, confusion, and loss of control among their adversaries. Significantly, this effect is not always achieved through explicit references to fear as an internal emotional state. Rather, it is conveyed indirectly through descriptions of behaviour that imply emotional disturbance, frequently intensified by vivid visual and aural imagery.¹⁷

One of the most common narrative techniques involves emphasising the immediate and disordered reactions of pagan groups to the arrival of Christian forces. These reactions are characterised by fragmentation, chaotic movements, and heightened noise, all of which evoke panic and disorientation:

When the pagans saw them, they were terrified by the unmistakable prospect. They ran, got their shields; some of them rushed to the horses, other leaped over the barricade, and they all assembled in one group. They troubled the air with their shouts and came out in a great multitude to meet the Christians, throwing a shower of spears upon them.¹⁸

Here, fear is constructed through a sequence of rapid and uncoordinated actions combined with intensified sensory detail. The emphasis on noise and disorder contributes to the portrayal of the pagans as emotionally unstable and lacking discipline, therefore reinforcing their inferiority in contrast to the organised and disciplined Christian forces.

A particularly illustrative example of this narrative pattern appears in the *Chronica Terrae Prussiae* of Peter of Dusburg in the account of Vytenis's campaign against Woplauken in 1311. After successfully besieging the settlement and capturing many of its inhabitants, the grand duke of Lithuania is portrayed as so confident in his superiority that he allegedly encouraged the local population to abandon Christianity, claiming that their faith had failed to protect them during the attack. The narrative changes abruptly, however, with the arrival of Heinrich von Plötzke and Teutonic reinforcements on the following day. According to the chronicler, the pagans were suddenly overwhelmed by fear: their hearts "weakened," they lost the ability to resist, and they fled in panic. Some were captured and killed, while others drowned, hanged themselves, or died of hunger in the wilderness:

15 For more on the representation of panic as a narrative strategy, see: MASSON (2016), pp. 101–112.

16 For more on the role of eschatological fear in medieval communities, see: STEVENSON (2015), pp. 274–275.

17 MARCHANT (2014), p. 82.

18 HENRY OF LIVONIA (2003), p. 111.

[...] but when they saw the brothers with their banner and the great multitude of armed men following them, fear fell upon them and their hearts weakened to such an extent that they no longer had the strength to resist; therefore, almost in the blink of an eye, having cast aside their weapons, they all turned their backs in flight.¹⁹

A similar depiction of Vytenis's retreating army, though considerably more dramatic in tone, appears in the chronicle of Nicolaus von Jeroshin. Here, the fear of pagans is intensified to the point of complete despair:

The Christians continued the slaughter and the pursuit all day and all night until they had put to death all the Lithuanians. Many of them died by drowning; some hanged themselves or died of despair.²⁰

In this passage, despair functions as the culmination of pagan fear and contributes to the emotional intensification of the narrative. Such descriptions are not merely intended to depict military defeat; rather, they transform the collapse of the Lithuanian forces into evidence of their spiritual and moral inferiority before the Christian enemy.

Indeed, despair as the ultimate manifestation of pagan fear appears repeatedly in the chronicles of the Teutonic Order and serves to heighten the emotional atmosphere of battle narratives. A particularly striking example can be found in Wigand of Marburg's account of the Teutonic campaign against Pilėnai in 1336. Wigand describes the inhabitants of the fortress attempting to escape the advancing Christian forces. However, upon seeing the large army approaching the walls, the pagans allegedly lost all hope of defending the stronghold. As a consequence, they burned their possessions and killed one another, while an old woman reportedly murdered one hundred people before taking her own life.²¹

Two crucial dimensions of this narrative should be emphasised. The first concerns the concept of despair itself which, in the medieval Christian worldview shaped by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, was understood as a vice directly opposed to the theological virtue of hope.²² Despair signified not only emotional collapse but also the rejection of divine mercy and surrender to diabolical influence. The second concerns the act of suicide, which medieval Christian thought regarded not merely as a personal tragedy but as a grave moral transgression. Suicide was understood as a violation of divine law, since life was considered a gift from God over which humans had no rightful

19 DUSBURG (1861), pp. 176–177: “sed dum viderent fratres cum suo vexillo et multitudinem copiosam armatorum sequentem, irruit super eos pavor et adeo emarcuit cor eorum, quod non habebant ultra virtutem resistendi; unde quasi in ictu oculi rejectis armis omnes terga verterunt. Extunc fratres cum suis insequentes, percusserunt eos plaga magna, sic quod rex cum paucis vix evasit, alii gladio trucidati sunt, quidam submerse, ceteri in solitudine consumpti inedia vel pre dolore se suspendentes perierunt.”

20 JEROSCHIN (2010), pp. 257–259. The entire passage: JEROSCHIN (1861), I. 23, pp. 470–487.

21 MARBURG (2017), p. 196: “Pagani // exercitum videntes perterriti sunt, desperantes de castris observacione, infinita bona in ignem proicerunt, se ipsos occiderunt, ubi, ut aint, quedam vetula pagana cum securi 100 ex eis occiderit et se ipsam post interemit.”

22 MILLER (2012), pp. 387–396; DREVER (2022), pp. 145–166.

authority. Consequently, by portraying pagans as succumbing to despair and committing suicide, chroniclers reinforce their spiritual alienation from the Christian order.²³

Importantly, such destructive behaviour is attributed both to anonymous members of the pagan population but also to their rulers. Continuing his account of the events of 1336, Wigand of Marburg reports that the Lithuanian ruler,²⁴ despite being protected by his retainers, fled to a place of refuge where, overcome by despair, he stabbed his wife and cast her body into the fire.²⁵ Furthermore, the pagans, shaken by suffering and terror, allegedly “bowed their heads, and the king killed them all.”²⁶ Within the medieval political imagination, the ruler symbolised the state itself; consequently, this depiction of a pagan king not as a courageous warrior dying honourably in battle but as a terrified fugitive murdering his own wife and subjects serves to discredit both his personal honour and the very legitimacy of pagan rulership. The chronicler thus transforms military defeat into evidence of political and moral disintegration.

As these examples demonstrate, depictions of pagan fear and despair constitute an integral component of narrative passages describing military confrontation between Christians and the pagans. Such representations were clearly employed deliberately by chroniclers in order to diminish the enemy while simultaneously emphasising the superiority of the Christian side. Yet this raises an important question: could the Teutonic knights themselves, despite acting as defenders of Christianity and participants in sacred warfare, also experience fear?

The chroniclers generally portrayed the knights of the Order as exemplary Christian warriors: pious, noble, obedient to God, merciful, courageous, and steadfast in battle.²⁷ Descriptions of warfare against the pagans consistently emphasise their bravery and fearlessness:

They were conscientious monks in their worship, vigils and kneeling in prayer, and yet they attacked the heathens with the courage of knights in the fearless battle they waged against them.²⁸

The repeated emphasis on fearlessness reflects the broader ideological need to construct an idealised image of the Teutonic knight as both warrior and servant of God.²⁹ Courage thus became not merely a martial virtue but also evidence of spiritual devotion and commitment to the Order's sacred mission. This idealisation is particularly visible

23 Compare: Matthew 27:5; Judges 7:21–22.

24 Gediminas was Grand Duke of Lithuania at the time of this campaign.

25 MARBURG (2017), pp. 196–198: “Rex tamen a suis clientibus cum schutis protectus, tandem terrore concussus, fugit in quoddam latibulum et coniugem suam transfixit et in ignem iecit. Pagani in tanta afflictione concussi inclinaverunt cervices suas, et rex omnes occidit.”

26 Ibidem, p. 198.

27 DUSBURG (1861), p. 139. See also: *Die Aeltere Chronik von Oliva* (1874), p. 710; MARBURG (2017), p. 160.

28 JEROSCHIN (2010), p. 213.

29 Ibidem, p. 232. See also: KWIATKOWSKI (2013), pp. 101–127.

in the portrayal of Meneko de Querenvorde by Peter of Dusburg, who presents the Prussian master as the embodiment of exceptional courage.”³⁰

At the same time, however, the chronicles also contain episodes in which fear is attributed to the Christian knights themselves. Although such moments occur less frequently, they are particularly significant because they reveal tensions within the idealised image of the crusader. These passages acknowledge that even warriors engaged in sacred warfare remained vulnerable to human weakness and emotional disturbance. Fear in these texts therefore functions not as an incidental detail but as a structured narrative element operating simultaneously on emotional, strategic, and theological levels.

Importantly, when fear or other “unworthy” emotions are attributed to Christian knights, chroniclers frequently explain them through external or supernatural influences, most notably the intervention of the devil. The devil is portrayed as attempting to weaken the faith of Christians by provoking sinful desires or emotional instability. Consequently, emotions such as fear are framed not simply as natural reactions but as spiritual challenges that must be resisted by true believers:

[...] In his youth, the devil had used his tricks to arouse in him the desires of the flesh, which consumed him and caused him great distress, but God’s pure warrior resisted with all his might, reining in his desires by starving himself and by other means both day and night.³¹

Such passages are important because they allow chroniclers to acknowledge the emotional vulnerability of the knights without undermining their ideological image. Fear could be admitted as part of human experience, provided that it was ultimately overcome through faith, discipline, and – importantly – divine assistance.

Nevertheless, the chronicles also contain examples in which fear appears as a direct and immediate response to the realities of warfare itself. This form of fear may be described as experiential fear: a natural human reaction to danger, uncertainty, and the prospect of death. In such cases, fear is associated with physical symptoms and behavioural responses, including trembling, confusion, panic, and attempts to flee – the ones similar to the responses of the pagans.

A vivid example appears in the account of the Teutonic siege of the Lithuanian castle of Kolainiai in 1290. According to the chronicle, the assault initially proceeded successfully, and of the 120 Lithuanian defenders led by Surminas, only twelve remained alive by nightfall. During the night, however, five hundred Christian horsemen stationed between the castle and Lithuanian territory became exhausted and anxious after prolonged waiting. When they began to retreat, the infantry mistook them for enemy forces and fled in panic toward the ships. Although the brothers attempted to restore order, they failed, and the assault had to be abandoned.³² This episode clearly demonstrates that fear among the Christian forces could directly influence the outcome of military

30 “Totus fuit magnanimus. Audebat enim aggredi rem arduam, quam alius timuit cogitare.” DUSBURG (1861), p. 151.

31 JEROSCHIN (2010), p. 213.

32 DUSBURG (1861), p. 152.

operations. Unlike the highly stylised depictions of pagan panic, the fear experienced by the Teutonic troops here is represented as confusion arising from uncertainty and misperception in the chaos of battle. The chronicler therefore acknowledges, albeit indirectly, that fear was not exclusively attributed to the pagan enemy but formed part of the broader emotional reality of medieval warfare.

Significantly, such emotions were not limited to the knights themselves. Christian civilians involved in military activity or exposed to pagan raids are likewise portrayed as experiencing terror and seeking protection from imminent danger. This reaction was not unique to the conflicts between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but appears more generally in descriptions of pagan incursions into Christian territories.³³ Thus, Henry of Livonia recounts an episode from 1205, when the Lithuanian forces entered Estonian lands and passed near one of the settlements. The inhabitants received them peacefully, and one citizen offered a Lithuanian warrior named Svelgate a honeyed drink. Yet after rejoining his companions, Svelgate allegedly remarked that the Germans had offered the “mead” with trembling hands, adding that the inhabitants had already learned of the Lithuanians’ arrival through rumour and therefore shook with fear.³⁴

In this passage, fear is represented as both physical and collective. The trembling hands of the townspeople become a visible sign of psychological distress caused not by direct confrontation but by anticipation and reputation. The chronicler thereby emphasises the terror associated with Lithuanian raids even before violence itself occurs. Consequently, fear emerges not merely as an immediate reaction to battle but as a broader social phenomenon shaped by memory and the expectation of devastation.

Given the widespread destruction and desecration of churches and monasteries during Lithuanian incursions into neighbouring Christian lands, even members of the clergy are portrayed as unable to escape such fear. Faced with the prospect of imminent attack and death, they too attempted to flee or seek refuge. Henry of Livonia describes one such episode during Christmas celebrations in Kubesele:

On Christmas Day, in the church of Kubbezele two priests, namely John Shtrik and another priest Theodoric and his servant, were conducting a service for the Livonians. When, at the end of the first mass, John was already serving the second, the parishioners, hearing that an army was coming, fled from the church, some hiding in forest shelters. Others, hurrying home, were seized on the way, and many were killed.³⁵

This scene demonstrates that fear disrupted not only military activity but also religious life itself. The interruption of the liturgy symbolically intensifies therefore the perception of the Lithuanians as a threat not merely to political order but to the Christian

33 JEZERSKI (2018), p. 266.

34 *Heinrici Chronicon Lyvonie* (1874), p. 21; *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* (2003), p. 47: “Nonne Theudonicorum, nobis medonem prebencium, trepidantium manus vidistis? Adventum quidem nostrum fama volante cognoverant et ideo timore concussi, adhuc trepidare non cessant.”

35 *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* (2003), p. 110.

community as a whole. At the same time, because of their role as participants in sacred warfare, the Teutonic knights were only rarely permitted open expressions of fear in the chronicles. Acknowledging such emotions risked undermining the idealised image of the Order as a community of fearless Christian warriors.

Nevertheless, when fear is attributed to the brothers, it frequently serves another important narrative function: emphasising the extreme difficulty of the circumstances in which they fought and, consequently, the exceptional spiritual and moral strength required to overcome those challenges.³⁶ Fear therefore becomes not simply a sign of weakness but evidence of the severity of the trials endured in the service of God.

For this reason, fear experienced by Christian warriors in the Teutonic chronicles is represented not only as a natural emotional response to danger but also as a crucial tactical element of warfare. In many cases, it emerges from military experience and strategic calculation rather than from simple cowardice or diabolical temptation. This form of fear may therefore be described as strategic fear. It could be provoked by several factors: the military reputation and numerical superiority of the enemy, the unpredictability of Lithuanian attacks, the brutality associated with pagan warfare, and the accumulated experience of previous encounters with Lithuanian forces.³⁷

Indeed, the chronicles contain numerous passages emphasising Lithuanian military strength and skill in warfare. For example, Peter of Dusburg, describing the beginning of the war against Lithuania in 1283, portrays the Lithuanians as exceptionally formidable opponents:

famously well-built, strong and daring, swift, courageous, bold, fierce and skilful at war, because they practise continuously from early childhood. Their country is large, broad and long and they have countless warriors.³⁸

In this passage, by stressing the strength and military competence of the enemy, the chronicler simultaneously magnifies the scale of the challenge faced by the Order and, consequently, the heroism required to confront it. Alongside Lithuanian courage and military skill, the sheer number of pagan warriors participating in campaigns could also generate fear among Christian forces. The prospect of confronting numerically superior armies appears repeatedly as one of the principal causes of anxiety among the brothers fighting pagans.³⁹

In his account of Vytenis' raid into Polish territory in 1292, Peter of Dusburg recounts that the Polish princes requested assistance from the Teutonic Order. Yet when Meinicke, the Prussian master, arrived with his forces and engaged the pagans, the Polish allies fled. Seeing themselves abandoned and outnumbered, the brothers likewise retreated, fearing that they lacked the strength to resist such a large army:

36 JEZIERSKI (2018), p. 274.

37 For example: MARBURG (2017), p. 315.

38 DUSBURG (1861), p. 146; *The Chronicle of Prussia by Nicolaus von Jeroschin, History of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, 1190–1331* (2010), p. 208. The latin text is in: JEROSCHIN (1861), p. 514.

39 DUSBURG (1861), p. 156. See also: *Heinrici Chronicon Lyvoniae* (1874), pp. 25–26.

When this was seen, the brothers, terrified and not having the strength to resist so great a multitude, also retreated, though not without great danger to their men, for many brothers and other faithful Christians were gravely wounded before they were able to withdraw honourably from the said battle.⁴⁰

Fear here is represented not as cowardice but as rational strategic response to unfavourable military circumstances. The retreat is justified through the language of preservation, which is used by the chronicler to preserve the honour of the brothers while acknowledging the practical realities of warfare.

Another type of strategic fear concerns anxiety over the success of the sacred mission undertaken by the Order. In such cases, fear is connected not simply with military defeat but with the possibility of failing in the fulfilment of God's will. Peter of Dusburg provides an example in his description of an expedition into the land of Medininkai in 1314. After the Teutonic forces had established camp for the night, several Lithuanians approached the tent of Brother Heinrich, killed four men, and stole two horses. The incident caused anxiety among the Christian troops. However, according to the chronicler, it was not just the night assault that frightened the brothers but the fear that they might not have successfully fulfilled their sacred mission:

But this did not terrify the brothers to such an extent that it in any way delayed the work of the Lord which they had begun. Therefore, what they had undertaken for the praise of Our Lord Jesus Christ, inflamed with zeal for the faith, they courageously accomplished, trusting firmly in the Lord.⁴¹

Here, fear functions within both moral and theological frameworks. What emphasised here is not the attack itself but the brothers' ability to overcome fear through faith and perseverance. Emotional endurance thereby becomes evidence of spiritual devotion.

Consequently, alongside depictions of fear arising during conflicts with the pagans, chroniclers consistently emphasise the brothers' courage and their capacity to overcome destructive emotions. This triumph over fear could be achieved in several ways, including personal bravery, steadfast faith, and direct divine intervention. Particularly important in this context are accounts of miracles occurring on the battlefield, which demonstrate God's favour toward the Order and provide psychological reassurance to the Christian warriors.⁴²

One notable example appears in the account of the Teutonic victory of 1348, where successful campaign is explicitly attributed to the intercession of the Virgin Mary.

40 DUSBURG (1861), p. 156: "Quo viso fratres perterriti, non habentes potenciam resistendi tante multitudini, recesserunt eciam, sed non sine magno periculo suorum, quia multi fratres et alii cristifideles fuerunt graviter vulnerati, antequam honeste possent a dicto certamine declinare."

41 Ibidem, p. 180: "Sed hoc fratres no terruit in tantum, ut opus domini inceptum aliquialiter retardaret. Unde quod ad laudem domini nostri Jesu Cristi inceperant, zelo fidei succensi, viriliter confisi in domino perfecerunt."

42 *Die Aeltere Chronik von Oliva* (1874), p. 710. For more on the role of the miraculous in the Teutonic Order narratives of warfare against the Lithuanians, see: RYIER (2023), pp. 147–168.

According to the chronicler, divine assistance manifested itself visibly during the battle, while the pagan enemy suffered heavenly punishment when the ice of the river Streva broke beneath them:

[...] the ice on a certain deep river called Streva broke beneath the pagans, and so many enemies of the Cross were submerged that the Christians crossed over their bodies with dry feet and passed across the ice without any danger, while nevertheless the ice of the same river remained intact.⁴³

The miraculous preservation of the Christian forces and the destruction of the pagans reinforce the idea that divine favour ultimately dispels fear and guarantees victory for those fighting in the service of God. Fear is therefore integrated into a larger ideological narrative in which military success becomes proof of heavenly support, while pagan defeat signifies divine judgement.

In conclusion, the chronicles of the Teutonic Order demonstrate that fear occupied a significant and multifaceted role within crusading discourse. Although fear and panic are most frequently attributed to the pagan Lithuanians in order to emphasise Christian superiority and legitimise the Order's campaigns, the sources also reveal that fear formed an inseparable part of the broader experience of medieval warfare. The representation of fear experienced by the brothers occupies therefore a particularly important narrative function within the chronicles. In contrast to pagan fear, which is associated with disorder and moral collapse, fear attributed to Christian warriors is reframed as spiritual endurance and tactical awareness. The successful overcoming of fear becomes a demonstration not only of brothers' courage but also of discipline and closeness to God. Fear therefore functions not as the opposite of bravery but as a condition through which Christian fortitude and merit can be demonstrated.

The chronicles present fear simultaneously on emotional, strategic, and theological levels. It appears in reactions to immediate danger, in anxiety caused by military uncertainty and the strength of the enemy, and in concerns regarding the fulfilment of the Order's sacred mission. Within this framework, the chronicles follow a similar narrative mechanism through which military conflict is interpreted and legitimised: fear produced by threat is often overcome through faith, with courage emerging as the visible sign of Christian devotion and victory confirming God's favour toward the Order. In this way, the chronicles transform warfare against the Lithuanians into a theological struggle in which emotional experience itself becomes part of the ideological justification of crusading violence.

43 *Die Aeltere Chronik von Oliva* (1874), p. 714: "quod glacies in quodam fluvio Strawa profundo rupta fuit sub Paganis, et submerse fuerunt tot inimici crucis, quod Christiani supra eorum cadaver sicco pede transierunt et per glaciem aliquovis cum impetus transiverunt, eiusdem tamen fluvii glacie integra permanente."

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Zobrazení strachu v kronikách Řádu německých rytířů o válkách proti Litevcům (13. až polovina 14. století)

Strach představoval významný prvek válečnictví v narativech popisujících vojenské konflikty mezi Řádem německých rytířů a pohanskými sousedy, včetně Litevců, ve 13. až polovině 14. století. Ačkoli kroniky Řádu byly formovány silným ideologickým a náboženským rámcem, který strach spojoval především s pohanskými protivníky, tento cit se neomezoval výlučně na nepřítel. Kronikáři také zachycovali, jak za určitých okolností prožívají strach členové Řádu i další křesťané. Tento článek analyzuje způsoby, jakými kronikáři Řádu německých rytířů zobrazovali strach během vojenských tažení proti Litevcům, a zkoumá narativní strategie používané k vykreslení emocionálních reakcí v rámci křížáckého diskurzu.

Studie dokládá, že strach byl zprostředkován nejen skrze explicitní emocionální slovní zásobu, ale také popisy chování (např. váhání, panika) a tělesné reakce, stejně jako smyslové obrazy zahrnující vizuální a sluchové prvky. Kronikáři často zdůrazňovali hrůzu pohanských nepřátel prostřednictvím scén chaosu a sebezničení, čímž posilovali ideologický kontrast mezi křesťany a pohany. Zároveň však vyprávění uznávala, že křesťanští rytíři, navzdory svému náboženskému poslání, zůstávali lidmi náchylnými k emocionálnímu utrpení a psychickému tlaku.

Článek identifikuje několik forem strachu, které prožívali bratři Řádu německých rytířů. První z nich lze popsat jako přirozenou lidskou reakci na děsivou realitu války. V popisech bitev se strach projevoval fyzickými příznaky, jako je třes, tělesná slabost, zmatení nebo touha uprchnout a hledat úkryt. Tyto reakce se neomezovaly pouze na samotné rytíře, ale charakterizovaly i křesťanské obyvatele vystavené litevským nájezdům. Další forma strachu pramenila ze strategických úvah a souvisela s vojenskou pověstí Litevců, početní převahou pohanských sil, nepředvídatelností nepřátelských útoků a brutalitou války. Samostatný typ strachu se týkal obav z možného neúspěchu posvátného poslání, které řád přijal, zejména v kontextu náboženských povinností bratří a ideologie křížových výprav.

Zároveň kroniky důsledně zdůrazňovaly schopnost bratří Řádu překonávat strach prostřednictvím disciplíny a boží podpory. Strach tedy fungoval nejen jako emocionální prožitek, ale také jako důležitý narativní a ideologický nástroj, který zdůrazňoval morální nadřazenost křesťanských válečníků, posvátnost křížáckého tažení a osudový charakter boje Řádu proti pohanské Litvě.



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