

Turku, 20 June 2023

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The review of Piotr Kołodziejczak's doctoral thesis *Pious Gifts in Late Medieval Stockholm in the Context of Baltic Towns*

The thesis written by Piotr Kołodziejczak consists of 220 pages, the appendices and the bibliography included. As its title tells, it deals with late medieval history and more precisely one specific sociocultural form of behaviour: giving gifts to religious and charitable institutions. The study focuses on Stockholm, the biggest and the most important town in Sweden, in the Late Middle Ages, but the analysis has a clearly comparative dimension as Kołodziejczak contrasts his findings with research literature dealing with other towns and other countries as well. That is how Stockholm is analysed in the context of Baltic towns as the title tells. The time frame for the study is relatively long, roughly speaking two centuries preceding the Reformation. Thus, the thesis analyses medieval Catholic religiosity and medieval mentalities. Kołodziejczak contextualises his study also by references to *memoria*, i.e. medieval religious commemoration practices regarding the deceased.

Giving gifts for religious or charitable purposes in medieval Stockholm has been dealt with or at least touched upon in several earlier studies, but Kołodziejczak is the first one who has written a monograph about the topic. Compared with earlier researchers, Kołodziejczak has utilised a more holistic and a more thorough approach. The thesis has a comprehensive and solid empirical basis because Kołodziejczak has collected information from several archives and several source publications. Also regarding the secondary literary, the bibliography is extensive and versatile.

The structure of the thesis is simple and clear, which makes it easy for the reader to follow the author's analysis: between a concise introduction and an equally concise conclusion chapter, the author has put three main chapters entitled 'The Gift', 'The Donor', and 'The Community'. Thus, the thesis discusses what was given, by whom, and how all this was affected by the relationship between the donor and the local community.

From his sources, Kołodziejczak has been able to identify 192 endowments which form the core data for the analysis. In most known cases, the gift was given during the donor's lifetime. A typical endowment made by a Stockholmer was given to just one recipient – gifts for several institutions did occur, but they were rare. Money, movables and immovables were transferred or at least promised as gifts, likewise annual rental income from numerous houses and other real estates. Kołodziejczak quite rightfully assumes that gifts consisting of money and movables, especially lesser sums and cheaper goods, are most likely underrepresented among the source material. Servants and simple labourers seem to have given their gifts undocumented. Most known donors seem to have been burghers or their family members. Although most known benefactors were men, women participated in the majority of the endowment acts. Besides that, more than 30 per cent of the endowments were made by women acting on their own behalf.

The Swedish Town Law contained restrictions concerning the transfer of real estates. Like the legislation followed in the countryside, it emphasised the rights of the kinsmen and kinswomen. The town council, which acted as the highest administrative and judicial organ in Stockholm, maintained this policy and protected also the interests of the fellow burghers. The judicial practices

made sought to prevent that too much urban property would have fallen into clerical hands. But despite their restrictive role, also the members of the town council and their families gave regularly gifts for religious and charitable purposes. In fact, the gifts given by them equalled almost one third of all known pious gifts. Kołodziejczak analyses also the council as a collective body of commemoration.

The custom of giving pious gifts culminated during the 1480's; after that the statistics composed by Kołodziejczak show a stagnating trend towards the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Reformation era. The thesis discusses also the benefactors' motives: did they act out of real religiosity or filantropic charity or did they felt a need to promote their social status? Here, Kołodziejczak gives several overlapping and plausible explanations which are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The thesis is furnished with several figures and statistical presentations which visualise the author's findings. The two appendices cast light upon those who made pious gifts in Stockholm or who lived outside Stockholm but commemorated its religious institutions. Especially Appendix 1 is very extensive. To prepare it has most likely been time-consuming as the author has searched through several original sources, source publications, source databases and works of research literature. Appendix 2, which focuses on non-Stockholmers' endowments, is understandably shorter and more tentative. But it, too, is very helpful as both appendices give the reader a deeper insight into the sources the thesis is based on and also on the people whose actions the author is analysing.

Above, I have tried to summarise the main contents of the thesis written by Piotr Kołodziejczak. The topic is highly relevant as it can be linked to the growing interest in pre-modern lived religion. All in all, the thesis is a very interesting read for those who are interested in religiosity and everyday culture in medieval contexts. The thesis deals with themes which I, too, have studied earlier. Also therefore I welcome this work which completes and elaborates my and other earlier researchers' interpretations.

Although I find Piotr Kołodziejczak's work pertinent and well-written and the argumentation clear and convincing, I have differing opinions regarding certain details and interpretations. I begin my criticism with the title of the thesis.

Although the title is in principle clear, I find the end part 'in the Context of Baltic Towns' slightly odd what comes to the structure and likewise a bit ambiguous regarding the contents. Perhaps 'in the Baltic Context' or 'Compared with Baltic Traditions' or 'Compared with Towns in the Baltic Sea Region' would have been a more explicit formulation or the author could have replaced the phrase 'in the Context of Baltic Towns' with a subtitle, for example 'Baltic Comparisons'. But the word 'Baltic' has two partly different meanings: it can refer to the Baltic Sea and all the areas surrounding it, but it can also have a narrower referent, roughly speaking the area which today's Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania consist of. It is indeed used in this latter meaning at least occasionally in Swedish research. Luckily, Kołodziejczak explains already in the introduction that he is referring to in a wider context, so there is no real danger of confusion. I am still wondering if the term 'Hanseatic' would have been a more proper choice, although it can occasionally have also Atlantic connotations as well.

Regarding the contents of the thesis, I think that the analysis would have profited from a slightly wider contextualisation. Kołodziejczak begins his analysis by giving the reader a description of the sacred topography of late medieval Stockholm, i.e. the religious institutions which where recipients or potential recipients for burghers' and other people's gifts (Chapter 1.1). But pious endowments have existed also elsewhere, even outside medieval Christianity and far away from the Baltic Sea – we meet similar customs for example in the premodern Islamic world. As far as I know, the earliest evidence on these kinds of practices and ideas of eternal commemoration comes from the pharaonic Egypt. Thus, I would gladly have read a chapter, placed between the introduction and the first chapter, on universal patterns linked to pious gifts.

The author's aim to be very precise is revealed already in the first sentence of the thesis (p. 9): here, it is told that the aim of the thesis is 'to analyse gifts for pious purposes made by burghers

and suburban dwellers of late medieval Stockholm' (my italics). Consequently, we meet this conceptual pair in several places in the thesis. But I am not sure if it is necessary. Most studies dealing with medieval Stockholm do not bring out the population of the suburbs as a category of their own. Regarding the jurisdiction and communal responsibilities in the late Middle Ages, there were no known differences between the status of the inhabitants in the urban core area and the status of those who lived in the suburbs: in 1288, King Magnus Birgersson had guaranteed those who settled down on Norrmalm, i.e. the northern suburb, the same rights as were held by those who lived in the proper town (or who were burghers there, depending on how the word *ciues* in the King's proclamation should be understood). The island of Åsön, where Södermalm or the southern suburb was situated, was declared under the judicial authority of the town council at least by the Town Law, issued in the middle of the fourteenth century, and by the first preserved privileges issued for the town of Stockholm in 1436. The preserved municipal taxation lists show that also some of those town dwellers who lived outside the main island were registered as tax payers like those who lived on the main island. The minutes of the town council from the fifteenth century prove in turn in several occasions that the decisions issued by the council were supposed to be followed also in Norrmalm and in Södermalm. This judicial equality does not contradict the author's claim that all the burghers lived on the main island (p. 12) – this was indeed very probable, also regarding the fact that Norrmalm and Södermalm were the most vulnerable areas during the periods of warfare and sieges. 'Retired' burghers could choose to move to the island of Helgeandsholmen where the Homestead of the Holy Spirit was located. But as far as I understand the analysis has not given any information on suburban dwellers as a specific subcategory among the benefactors. Thus, I am wondering if it would have been sufficient to speak merely of town dwellers or Stockholmers or inhabitants of Stockholm? Of course, it is not wrong to be precise.

Regarding the above mentioned suburbs and other toponyms in the local urban space, a map of late medieval Stockholm would have been informative for a reader who is not familiar with the local topography. One map is presented on page 25, but it depicts local churches and other religious institutions without mentioning any toponyms. Moreover, the clarifications have been given only in Swedish, as the map is copied from a piece of Swedish research literature. A reader who does not understand Scandinavian languages may find this kind of a map uninformative.

Another not so reader-friendly trait are the occasional terms and phrases in Latin or in Swedish which have not been translated. After all, the author has decided to write in English, apparently in order to make his results accessible for a wide international academic readership. Of course, I understood the phrases and terms which had not been translated, but I am not sure if all readers do. Luckily, there are not too much of them in the text. But the quotation in older Swedish on p. 77 seems to contain certain minor errors (e.g. *bållandes* instead of *hållandes*). They seem to have occurred automatically when the quotation was copy-pasted from the digitalised source publication mentioned in the footnote.

The explanation given to the Figure 3 on p. 56 is ambiguous because the phrase 'Map of places where the inhabitants of Stockholm made pious endowments' can be understood so that it depicts locations where Stockholmers were at the time they made their gifts. This interpretation is strengthened by the legend according to which we should see each '[p]lace where an endowment was made'. But the main part of the endowments was made in Stockholm and the map depicts actually the *recipients* in their respective places.

Table 1, which lists the share of individual institutions of all gifts (p. 33), would have been clearer, if the institutions had been listed in an order which would reflect the sizes of their shares. For example, now the Franciscan convent is placed on the fourth row, although it was the secondmost favoured recipient. – Similar criticism can be presented towards Table 7 on p. 131.

It is indeed interesting to read that the Dominican convent which was situated in the main island and thus among the urban population received clearly less gifts than the Franciscan convent which possessed an island of its own next to the main island (p. 33–37). Here, the author could have

mentioned the fact that Franciscans were welcomed earlier to Stockholm by the King. The Dominicans, on the contrary, were prevented by the royal bailiff to settle down in Stockholm during the early phases of the town's history. It took approximately five decades before the Swedish Crown allowed the Dominicans to carry out their plans. Perhaps this constellation influenced sentiments also afterwards, but I am merely guessing. Members of local families were recruited into both convents, but there may have existed also anticlerical sentiments. As the author mentions (p. 30), both convents were dissolved quite soon during the Reformation, already in the late 1520's. The minutes of the town council contains a report for a meeting with the last Dominicans in 1528: they had decided to leave because the town dwellers were unwilling to support them.

The analysis contains a lot of individual endowment cases which include a lot of personnames and other details. Sometimes this makes the text relatively hard to read and sometimes there occur repetition as the author utilises one and same case for several purposes, but fortunately the author emphasises the elementary traits and summarises nicely his findings, so there is no risk of drowning under all the information.

I disagree a bit with Kołodziejczak regarding his interpretation that the lesser amount of charitable institutions among the gift recipients reflects a mentality, according to which poor relief was of secondary importance for Stockholmers (p. 133). After all, the charitable institutions had economies of their own and the town council elected each year burghers to act as supervisors for their activities. At least as a collective, the burghers took care of the poor and the weak. But of course, this is merely a matter of interpretation.

When discussing the weakness of the local craft guilds and religious fraternities and the relatively harmonious circumstances among the burgher community in Stockholm (p. 136), the author could have pointed out the significance of the burgher representatives – an assembly which occasionally discussed important matters with the town council. Surely, this institution had a stabilising effect and gave the town administration a certain degree of transparency.

The thesis could have discussed more that tension which apparently existed between the legislation and the burghers' aims: the law and the policy maintained by the council sought to prevent that ecclesiastical institutions owned and controlled too much estates and revenues from estates in the urban area, but there seem to have been individuals who were willing to be generous, even among the leading burgher families. But the Town Law had not come entirely from above: instead, it was based on existing practices, Hanseatic and general European influences as well as the aspirations of the burghers themselves. The same holds true for the privileges that the kings and other leaders of the realm gave to Stockholm: they, too, were partly answers to what burghers had asked for. Therefore, this dichotomy could have been emphasised even more: apparently, burghers as a collective were more anxious to restrict the ecclesiastical material prosperity than burghers as individuals.

Above, I have presented occasionally also certain criticism, some differing interpretations and ideas for further discussion. But despite such remarks, my overall impression of the thesis is highly positive. I consider it as an academic work which meets the requirements and criteria met in the Article 187(1)–(3) of the Legal Act of 20 July 2018 (Law on Higher Education and Science): Piotr Kołodziejczak's thesis leaves no doubt of his general theoretical knowledge in the history discipline and his ability of conducting independent scholarly work. The thesis presents a relevant research problem, contextualises it with the existing state of research and gives an original and scholarly plausible solution it. The work written by Piotr Kołodziejczak meets undoubtedly the standards of a doctoral dissertation.

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