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Evaluation of the doctoral thesis of Benedikt Weigand M.A.,
„Die Deutschordensballei Elsass-Burgund im Mittelalter.
Zwischen Ritterorden, Reich und Region‘

The research on the history of the Teutonic Knights in the Middle Ages has long time focused on Prussia and the Baltic area, though since the middle of the 20th century the bailiwicks of the Order in the Empire – in which the brethren serving in Prussia were recruited – received gradually more attention. After a study on the bailiwick of Thuringia already in 1931, general studies on the German bailiwicks and the German Master followed since the 1950s, and several studies have been dedicated to single bailiwicks (Coblenz, Westfalia, Franconia, and Utrecht). Just recently (2021, 2022, and 2026), three conferences in Würzburg and Plauen have discussed the situation in the bailiwicks. For the bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy, there is the study of Peter Heim (1977) which examines the history of the house at Beuggen and deals with the bailiwick only for the earlier period until the beginning of the 14th century.

The bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy deserves special attention insofar as it was at first subjected to the German master but at the end of the 14th century became part of the chamber bailiwicks of the grand masters as pawn. In the 15th century the bailiwick is assumed to have gained a certain 'independance' by manoeuvring between the far-away grand master in Prussia and the German master and by building up a special relationship to the institutions of the Empire. This has been especially observed by general studies on the bailiwicks of the Order (Hofmann speaks of Alsace-Burgundy as 'Immediatballei'), but the claim has not been substantiated. Up to now there is no general history of the bailiwick and its relationship to the Order as a whole, to the German nobility and the Empire. Now, this problematic is taken up by the PhD dissertation of Benedikt Weigand which therefore fills an important gap in the research on the Teutonic Knights.

As becomes clear from the detailed introduction on the archival situation, on the sources and modern editions, the surviving materials are mostly concerned with single

commanderies and the Land Commander residing in Altshausen, while the bailiwick as an administrative unit rarely becomes visible. Therefore, the candidate has chosen to follow the approach of Dieter Weiß in his book on the bailiwick of Franconia in focusing both on the single commanderies as well as on the relations of the bailiwick to the Order in its entirety as well as to Emperor and Empire. This is reflected in the clear division of the study into two main parts, the first geographical part dealing with the commanderies in Alsace, Switzerland, and Southwestern Germany, and the second chronological part dedicated to the land commanders and their relationship with the Order, the Empire, and the region. These parts are linked by a short chapter on the guidance of the bailiwick and the formation of a territory of the Land Commanders in Southwestern Germany. This innovative approach aims at a combination of the history of ecclesiastical orders and of regional history as well as of a micro and a macro perspective (commanderies and land commanders).

The archival situation does not allow to follow the history of the commanderies in their entirety, and the candidate does also not intend to present a gazetteer of the commanderies of the Order. The chapters on the commanderies rather answer to a set of basic questions related to the main topic of the study concerning: the founders of the commandery; the situation of the houses in their region, town, and territory; the interventions of grand master, German master, and land commander in the commanderies; their economic role; if dominated by knights or priests of the Order; the relations to the Order in Prussia. The description always starts with a survey on the sources and ends with a summary of the basic information gathered on each commandery. The sequence of the commanderies in the three chapters intentionally does not follow the time of foundation or their rank. Nevertheless, sometimes commanderies with close relationships are treated one after the other, and it seems plausible to start with Rufach-Suntheim because its first known local commander or 'master' Gottfried organized the acquisition of properties and the foundation of commanderies of the Order in Alsace and Southwestern Germany.

Rufach was a town under the authority of the bishop of Strasbourg which may have supported the foundation. Conflicts with the town enforced an intermittent relocation to the nearby Suntheim with a church of the Order and a manor may have been not untypical, as the economic problems of the later 15th century. A similar situation developed at Mulhouse where the commandery possessed a manor at Rixheim with own jurisdiction; due to the Reformation, the commandery had to be moved from Mulhouse to Rixheim. Both examples demonstrate the importance of (different) external influence (towns, territorial lords, kings or emperors) on the situation of the commanderies. Some smaller commanderies are badly documented like Gebweiler, Andlau, or Kayersberg for which many charters – or in the case of Andlau and Kayersberg the whole archive (still documented in an inventory around 1800) – seem lost. While Gebweiler had to contribute to the finances of the bailiwick, Andlau was less involved in the activities of the land commanders. In the three houses, mainly priest brethren are documented. Kayersberg was the youngest foundation in Alsace-Burgundy, but also had the smallest incomes though the brethren even engaged in

buying annuities from citizens of the small town. Kayersberg commandery suffered strongly in consequence of the Peasants' War in 1525. Financially and politically, Strasbourg was the most important house of the Order in Alsace, though for its quite large possessions there is not much documentation. In the period around 1400, under Johannes Malkaw as its commander, the commandery of Strasbourg was most successful, when ten brethren lived there, three of them knights, but later it became partly dependant from the town. For most of the commanderies, wine production was an essential source of income.

In Switzerland, the three rather well-documented commanderies of Sumiswald, Köniz and Berne in the later territory of Berne were closely connected, partly under one commander or least acting together for problems with external authorities, and all under the protection of Berne. In Sumiswald, the Order received extensive possessions already in 1225, though the commandery was only established shortly before 1245. The city of Berne became more and more influential, intervening for the villeins of the commandery which became occupied for some time during the Reformation period. Köniz was another noble foundation, established after the transfer of a house of the Augustinian Canons to the Order supported by the Staufien dynasty. Köniz had the patronage of the parochial church of Berne which finally became a separate commandery of priest brethren. While the commandery at Köniz remained closely related to the land commanders and developed into a typical house of the Order, mostly financed from its agricultural holdings, in the 14th century, the priest commanders at Berne had considerably influence on the spiritual life of the city (especially in the time of Diebold Baselwind), accompanied by a convent of sisters and based on solid incomes from money rents. But this influence declined in the 15th century, due to conflicts with the city and the bishop of Lausanne who finally supported Berne to convert the St. Vincenz church and commandery into a collegiate church in 1485. The protests of Land Commander, Wolfgang von Klingenberg, were in vain; the Order only received a financial compensation and (temporal) guarantees for the houses at Sumiswald and Köniz.

The three other Swiss commanderies had a different standing. Hitzkirch was another noble foundation with knight brethren but also with religious obligations, for some time in the 13th century there was also a convent of sisters. It suffered from the conflicts between Habsburg and the Confederates and finally came under the influence of Luzern. Both Altishofen and Basle were closely connected to the land commanders and the commandery at Beuggen. In Altishofen, the parish church was acquired for the financial support of the land commanders and for the communication between the Swiss houses of the Order, in Basle, the land commanders founded a commandery – mainly financed by the village Fischingen – also for their financial support and for the relations to the bishop of Basle. The Order's house in Basle became especially important during the Council of Basle; it remained in close connection with the land commanders like the houses at Beuggen, Mainau, and Altshausen.

The four remaining commanderies of the bailiwick in southwestern Germany, Beuggen, Freiburg, Mainau and Altshausen, were the greatest and economically strongest houses of the Order, and all were very closely related to the land commanders. The

greatest differences concern their political. While Beuggen and Freiburg were integrated into the Austrian territory in the Breisgau (*Vorderösterreich*), Mainau and Altshausen remained immediate to the Empire; in Altshausen the Order even succeeded to built up its own territory. Beuggen was a noble foundation supported by the regional nobility, kings, and emperors. In the 14th century there was a convent of sisters (transferred from Suntheim) and a library, the commandery housed up to 14 brethren, and it held the patronage over more than a dozen parochial churches. Conflicts with Basle, the integration into the Habsburg territories, and rising discontent among the peasant population lead to a decline since the middle of the 15th century.

Both Freiburg and Mainau received large noble donations and profited especially from the 14th century family network around Land Commander Wolfram von Nellenburg (which included the families Brandis and Tettingen, in different offices and functions), while Mainau was founded with the support of the ministeriality of the Abbey of Reichenau. Freiburg acquired rights and the castle at Wasenweiler, Mainau received the lordship in Dettingen, large possessions north of Lake Constance, and held houses for its economic activities in Constance and Überlingen. Their financial potential allowed the commanderies to render large sums for the support of the bailiwick and the Order as a whole, and in the 15th century, the commanders played an important role on a regional level and also in relationship with Prussia; Mainau was partly even united with the land commandery. In Freiburg, the Order could maintain its position even through repeated conflicts with the town. Confronted with military conflicts among its neighbours and the consequences of the Peasants' War, the commanders at Mainau could not extend their territorial rights, but defended their independence from the protectors of the house of Habsburg. Altshausen had the same close relationship to the land commanders as Beuggen and Mainau, partly united with the office of land commanders while governed by vice commanders. It was the only commandery of the bailiwick which acquired and maintained higher jurisdiction and therefore held an independent territory, and it was one of the richest houses of the bailiwick though it mainly produced grain. Therefore, though only from the 16th century onwards, it became the seat of the land commanders.

The first part of the dissertation ends with a short chapter on the polycentric structures of the bailiwick. At first, Beuggen had a central role, but at least around 1400, Freiburg, Mainau, and Altshausen became equally important, mostly also housing servants of the land commander and ensuring the provision of the land commanders, together with the parish at Altshofen. The acquisition policy under Wolfgang von Klingenberg even tried to connect Mainau with Altshausen territorially.

The second main part of the study offers a survey on the history of the bailiwick and is divided into chronologically organised chapters, which for the better documented 'long' 15th century are mostly focused on the land commanders (though no prosopography for them is intended). For this period, the letter registers of the grand masters are an important source which allow more concrete insights into their relationship to grand masters and German masters. This part studies the regional policies of the land commanders, especially their relationship to Habsburg and the Swiss

confederates. The chapters therefore discuss the options for action between Order, Empire, and region, and the growing relative 'independance' of the land commanders and the bailiwick.

The first short chapter is dedicated to the well-studied origins of the bailiwick which only appears about 20 years after the first regional donations to the Order, in 1235, supported by the grand master, King Henry (VII), and Emperor Frederick II. Nevertheless, the candidate points to a relative distance between the bailiwick and the central institutions of the Order in the 13th century when even the German masters obviously only exerted a limited control. As is made clear in the following chapter on the time of Berthold von Buchegg, the office of land commanders was gradually reconfigured, since Berthold tried to secure permanent incomes for him at Basle and Altshofen after he had held Beuggen for some years (until 1311). His noble self-perception is expressed by the official use of his personal seal which was against the statutes, but was imitated by several of his successors. The period of Wolfram von Nellenburg (since 1316 Commander at Beuggen, then also at Altshausen, Land Commander 1322-1331, German Master 1331-1361) is demonstrated in the third chapter. While leaving the bailiwick partly vacant, he used his family network, especially his four nephews (Mangold, Werner, Heinrich, and Eberhard von Brandis) and the Tettingen family, to extend the Order's properties, but partly also to sustain family members, even though this caused heavy debts. The influence of this network continued into the later 14th century, even though then some of the land commanders were closely related to the bailiwick of Franconia which demonstrated the stronger relationship to the German masters.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the transfer of the bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy to the chamber of the grand masters. In 1386, the German master received a loan of 60.000 guilders to repay part of the debts of the German commanderies (of which the original document is missing). While up to now, it was assumed that the bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy was already pawned at this point, the candidate can show in a deep analysis of the sources that there was no pawnage at that point, rather that at first the German bailiwicks were obliged to support the proctor general at the Roman Curia. But the bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy still had the highest debts, so that finally Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen seems to have taken the initiative. In 1395, a land commander from Prussia was installed, and in 1396, the Grand Master reduced the debt of the German bailiwicks, but finally took Alsace-Burgundy in pawn. But the transfer to the magisterial chamber did not change much. The next land commander, Heinrich von Schletten, had rather a regional standing and focused on new acquisitions, supported by the German master rather than by the grand master.

Therefore, in the sixth and seventh chapter, the relationship between bailiwick, German masters, and grand masters receives special attention. Land commander Marquard von Königsegg, saw his duty at first in organizing military contingents in support of the Order in Prussia, but denied to pay an annual chamber rent. Only when the grand master wanted to return the bailiwick to the German master, in 1421, he accepted to pay the rent in advance. After 1423, there was no military support for Prussia, while Königsegg focused on the bailiwick and intensified his relations to the

Empire. At the Council of Basle, in about 1434, he acted as representative of the Order but rarely committed himself to the needs of the grand master. In 1436, at his own wish, Königsegg was replaced by the last land commander installed by the grand master, Ludwig von Landsee. While Landsee tried to introduce Prussian principles of administration, Königsegg who remained commander of Mainau maintained his regional noble networks, entered the noble association of St. George's Shield, and remained in close contact with the German master and the Emperor. This resulted in conflict, and Königsegg even used secular troops to prevent entry to Mainau. This was only resolved by the transfer of Landsee to the bailiwick of Bozen and by the death of Königsegg.

The eighth chapter discusses how the bailiwick successfully achieved to remain part of the grand masters' chamber. When the German Master Eberhard von Saunsheim tended to reclaim the bailiwick, in 1443, an embassy to Marienburg succeeded to arrange a loan of 30.000 guilders to the German master – 20.000 of which had to be paid by the bailiwick – for which the grand master continued to hold the bailiwick in pawn. The new land commander Burkard von Schellenberg found himself soon in different troubles: the war between Habsburg and the Swiss Confederates, the Armagnac mercenaries which destroyed many of the Order's properties in the West, and finally in Prussia the Thirteen Years' War between the Order, the Prussian estates, and Poland. The land commander sent a contingent of 100 horses to Prussia and later paid for the returning mercenaries, but the bailiwick – like the German master with whom the land commander closely cooperated – was reluctant to support the Order in Prussia financially. When the war in Prussia had ended, the position of the bailiwick towards the grand masters became stronger. It denied Count Heinrich von Tübingen who had served in Prussia the commandery of Freiburg and only conceded a provision, and when Henmann von Luternau was elected land commander, the bailiwick only sent a servant to achieve the consent of the grand master. At the same time, the land commanders sought protection from Duke Sigismund of Tirol, while the commanders integrated themselves into the regional political structures.

As is demonstrated in the eleventh chapter, the bailiwick maintained its relative independence. Wolfgang von Klingenberg strengthened the bailiwick's territorial position by acquiring additional rights and properties around Mainau and Altshausen, and he supported the commanders – who also acted quite independently – in contracts with their territorial lords. While the German masters started new efforts to bring the bailiwick back into their obedience, Klingenberg denied demands by the grand masters and participated at the foundation of the Swabian League (1488), thus strengthening his own position, his regional ties, and the relationship to the Empire. He served as imperial councillor, as mediator in conflicts of the nobility, and he paid the irregular dues to the Empire. When he died in 1517, the bailiwick immediately elected Rudolf von Fridingen. But this time, Grand Master Albrecht von Brandenburg denied his consent and tried to push through his own candidates. This led to an appeal to the Emperor and even to a papal decision in favour of the Grand Master, but in 1522, Albrecht accepted the right of the bailiwick to elect the land commanders when he received financial support for his war against Poland and a compensation for the

unlucky candidate of the Grand Master. Alsace-Burgundy was then the only bailiwick of the magisterial chamber to elect the land commanders independently. After this, Fridingen did not answer further demands of the Grand Master. Finally, the situation was completely changed when Albrecht resigned his office and became the first Duke of Prussia in 1525. At the same time, the bailiwick suffered from the consequences of the Peasant's War, but quickly recovered though some houses and properties especially in Switzerland were lost due to the Reformation. Only when the German Master Walter von Cronberg became administrator of the office of grand master in 1527, the land commander accepted his authority while retaining the immediate relationship to the Empire. The special status of the bailiwick was only overcome in the 17th century by Grand Master Maximilian. A final chapter summarizes the results: in the later Middle Ages, the bailiwick was neither a true part of the magisterial chamber nor independent, manoeuvring between Habsburg, the Swiss Confederates, imperial towns, and smaller territorial lords; and it remained an institution for the provision of younger members of the nobility.

The study is based on an immense mass of source materials, both printed and still in manuscript, which are well integrated and used in the study. This leads to interesting discoveries in the archives like several account and rent books for the commandery at Mulhouse in the Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin in Colmar which until now have received little attention (and which offer too much details to be analysed in a more general study) – only a rental of 1443 has been partly discussed by under wrong date –, or the inventories of the commanderies of Andlau and Kaysersberg. Sometimes, there are also accidental findings like a charter for Andlau which today survives in the town archive of Ulm. Like in the case of the commandery at Strasbourg or of an ego-document by the Land Commander Wolfgang von Klingenberg on the loss of the parochial church at Berne from 1485, the candidate can often introduce new materials to extend the information on the Order's houses in the region. Thus, e.g., the strategy of the bailiwick between the region, the German master, and the Order in Prussia becomes perfectly clear from *ein ratslag als von des hochmeisters wegen* (c. 1456): to remain in the chamber of the grand masters, but to send only small amounts of money to Prussia.

This leads to many important and interesting results. Already from the study of the single commanderies of the bailiwick, it becomes clear that there was a special relationship between some of them (Basle, [Altishofen], Beuggen, Freiburg, Mainau, Altsausen) and the land commanders. From this, the candidate derives that there was no fixed seat of the bailiwick until the beginning of the Early Modern period, contrary to earlier assumptions, and that it had rather a polycentric structure. The first part of the dissertation also describes many developments hitherto not or only rarely noticed: the part-time existence of sister convents or of half-sisters in Berne, Suntheim / Beuggen, Andlau, Strasbourg, and Hitzkirch; the foundation of libraries at Berne, Beuggen, and Mainau, partly related to the education of younger brethren; renewed efforts to stimulate the spiritual life within the Order; the role of the richer commanderies for the financial support for the bailiwick, resulting even in immense debts (especially in

Mulhouse, Basle, Beuggen, Freiburg, and Mainau); the 14th century family network around Land Commander Wolfram von Nellenburg; the systematic efforts to cumulate territorial rights especially in the times of Wolfram von Nellenburg, Marquart von Königsegg, and Wolfgang von Klingenberg (acquisition of lordships at Wasenweiler, Niederhausen, Dettingen, Blumenfeld and Tengen, Ringgenburg, Neuhohenfels etc.); the lack of information on chapters of the bailiwick; and more.

This continues in the second part of the study, where it is e.g. demonstrated that the bailiwick was only loosely connected to the German masters in the 13th century; that the development of chamber properties of the land commanders only started in the 14th century, with a first peak in the time of Wolfram of Nellenburg; that the bailiwick was not pawned to the grand masters before 1395/96; that the bailiwick even then remained in close contact with the German masters, though there were two land commanders appointed by the grand masters; that it kept its status as bailiwick of the grand masters through the challenges of the 15th century, even by considerable financial efforts; that the land commanders increasingly tended to maintain their noble status by using their own weapons on seals, by keeping their noble networks, by entering noble associations, and by accumulating commanderies for their own provision; that, at least until the 1450s, the bailiwick had an intensive exchange of messages and messengers with the Order in Prussia, especially in times of crisis; that it coordinated its support for Prussia with the German master; that the land commanders succeeded in maintaining their relative independence between German masters and grand masters after 1466; that the ties with the nobility and the Empire were strengthened by the membership in the Swabian League; that the bailiwick finally acquired the right for an independent election of the land commanders, while only partly supporting the Order in Prussia; that it maintained its position even through Peasants' War and fundamental structural changes in the Order.

The dissertation stands out because of its very clear structure and language and because the innovative combination of a micro- and a macro perspective (single houses vs. the bailiwick, German master, and the Order as a whole). The candidate perfectly applies the methodology of the historical sciences, especially archival studies, palaeography, and textual criticism, combining the history of religious orders with regional history, social history (history of the nobility), legal and political history. The results of this study will have a great impact on future studies on the Teutonic Order, on the region, as well as on the Empire.

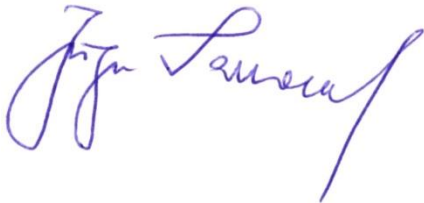
This doctoral thesis therefore fulfills in every respect the requirements of article 187 (1)-(3) of the Legal Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science, especially:

- (1) The doctoral thesis demonstrates the great theoretical knowledge of the candidate in the historical sciences and his high ability to independently conducting scientific and scholarly work.
- (2) The subject of the doctoral thesis is an original solution to the problem of the history of the bailiwick of Alsace-Burgundy between the Teutonic Order, the region, and the Empire, and it applies its results in the spheres of regional history and the

history of ecclesiastical orders.

(3) The doctoral thesis is a written work which resulted in an impressive scholarly monograph.

Hamburg, 13 August, 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jürgen Sarnowsky'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Jürgen' written in a stylized, looped manner and the last name 'Sarnowsky' following in a similar cursive style.

(Prof. a. D. Dr. Jürgen Sarnowsky)