

Dr hab. prof. KUL Paweł Kras
Associate Professor
Centre for Medieval Studies
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
Konstantynów 1J (ICBN 2.06)
PL 20-708 Lublin
Phone: +48 698 207 035
email: palks961@gmail.com

Lublin, 14 July 2023.

Review of the doctoral thesis on
„Pious Gifts in Late Medieval Stockholm in the Context of Baltic Towns”
by Piotr Kołodziejczak MA

Introductory remarks

Piotr Kołodziejczak's doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Prof. Piotr Oliński and Prof. Kurt Villands Jensen, is an analytical study in the history of late medieval religiosity which puts the burghers of Stockholm at its center. The aim of the work is to examine the pious gifts of the Stockholm townspeople in order to reveal forms and functions of the late medieval piety. In the first sentence of his Introduction Piotr Kołodziejczak makes this purpose clear stating that “this thesis aims to analyze gifts for pious purposes made by burghers and suburban dwellers of late medieval Stockholm” (p. 9). Despite so modestly defined task, his work sheds new light on beliefs and religious practices of several generations of Stockholm townspeople, based on one of the best sources for such research, which are endowments, wills and bequests for church institutions. The research topic of the study should be considered original and ambitious at the same time. Despite the advanced and dynamically developing studies on urban religiosity in recent decades, especially in the late Middle Ages, for which we have relatively abundant written and material sources, the Stockholm community has not been systematically researched. As the author notes in the Introduction, only some church institutions operating in Stockholm have modern monographs, as exemplified by the works devoted to the Franciscans (J. Nybo Rasmussen) and the Poor Clares (Darby Torbrand). Rather oddly, Stockholm's parish church of St. Nicholas (*Storkyrkan*) has only an almost hundred-year-old study which is primarily focused on art history. In this context, the choice of the subject of Kołodziejczak's analysis should be considered justified. His thorough study on the bequests and gifts of Stockholm townspeople for the benefit of church institutions serves to fill the gap in the domain of socio-religious studies restricted not only to his Swedish city but also extending to the network of Hanseatic towns.

Work frame

As can be seen from the title itself as well as from the Introduction, which includes its detailed analysis, the study is of a comparative nature, and the area covered by such research extends to other Baltic cities. As mentioned in the Introduction, “the comparative approach is meant to identify features that were characteristic (and possibly unique) for Stockholm on the one hand, and features that were common for the urban culture and lay piety of the entire Baltic region (and possibly the whole of Latin Christendom) on the other” (p. 9). In fact, in the proposed form, we are dealing here with a work whose subject is a much broader analysis supplementing the research on the religiosity of the Hanseatic burghers in the area of the Baltic Sea. It brings not only carefully collected and thoroughly analyzed material on the pious gifts and bequests of Stockholm burghers for church institutions, but also tries – rather successfully – to interpret the source findings in a comparative way with the results of similar research for several selected Hanseatic cities. Intentionally, the author does not undertake a full-scale comparative study for all or most of the Baltic cities. Comparative material is drawn either from large Hanseatic hubs such as Lübeck or Danzig (today’s Gdańsk), or from centers of comparable size such as Reval (today’s Tallinn) or Elbing (today’s Elbląg). One may ask why Riga is missing among the compared cities. In this context, as the Introduction to the work shows, one of the goals is to capture the relationship between the center identified with Hanseatic metropolis such as Lübeck or Danzig, and the periphery, which included Stockholm. In the area of research on urban religiosity, the research area covered by Kołodziejczak’s study allows us to better understand the transfer of ideas, as well as institutions, people and forms of religious life all across the Hanseatic world.

Primary Sources

Piotr Kołodziejczak's doctoral dissertation is based on various documents and records registering pious gifts donated by the townspeople of Stockholm to ecclesiastical institutions. In a short – one might say – very short, review of primary sources (pp. 14-15), the author presents key source collections used in his work. As he argues, these sources can be divided into two main types: parchment or paper charters with a record of donated gifts, and entries in the Stockholm city books registering donations to church institutions. In the first case, we are dealing with endowments or foundations, in which the purposes and circumstances of the donation were described, along with a detailed record of its subject. In this group of documents, Kołodziejczak also included wills, of which relatively few have survived for Stockholm. The author admits that the basic tool for identifying these documents was the online database of the National Archives of Sweden, which also included digital versions of the documents. Only in the absence of a digital copy did the author research the documents of interest to him in the municipal archives of Stockholm, Lübeck and Lüneburg. This cluster of documents was his primary source of study. Of supplementary character were two series of Stockholm city books, account books, recording transactions concerning city property (*jordböcker*) and the minutes of meetings of the city council (*tänkeböcker*). The problem with using these materials is that they are preserved incomplete. The account books start from 1420, and the minutes of the city council only from 1474 and for some later years they are preserved with some gaps. As Kołodziejczak aptly notes, a serious obstacle in his research was the lack of preserved registers of the Stockholm parish. He writes about "parish account books", which in itself is quite

intriguing, because I don't really know what kind of documentation he is talking about (income books?). If the author has any information about the existence of such a book, it would be worth sharing it with the reader. In the late Middle Ages large urban parishes possessed books with excerpts of various documents similar to monastery cartularies. They also kept loose documents with records of income and real estates offered for the maintenance of the parish church (*fabrica ecclesiae*). I wonder if it is also the case of the Stockholm parish records; do we know anything about it? An important source of information on endowments for parish and monastic churches are the books of endowments (*libri beneficiorum*) kept in particular dioceses, but - as I understand it - we do not have such a source material for Stockholm.

Any study on medieval piety is usually supplemented with an examination of preserved buildings and artefacts that were the objects of pious gift-giving. In Kołodziejczak's dissertation I've not found any reference to such materials sources. That is why I wonder whether such objects exist but the author had no intention to examine them, or they are lost.

Methodology and structure of work

Describing methodology, Kołodziejczak states that his research had a two-stage character. First, he researched and analyzed the available primary sources, collecting the results in a database, attached to this dissertation in the form of a comprehensive Annex No. 1 (p. 15). The aforementioned Annex contains critically analyzed and chronologically ordered extracts from source materials concerning 242 records of pious gifts offered to various church institutions in the years 1305-1521 (pp. 160-99). The due table contains information on the date of recording the "pious gift(s)", the donor(s), the recipient institution and the nature of the gift/gifts. It should be emphasized that the author carefully analyzed the content of all the listed documents or entries in the city books, identified donors and skillfully prepared a register regarding the content of all gifts. The Annex No 1 itself perfectly confirms his analytical skills as well as high competences in the field of source studies. The only drawback of this Annex is the lack of information about the fate of the donation; here the question returns whether the gifts mentioned in the documents and records have been preserved in any form.

The dissertation has a clear and logical structure that well reflects a set of research questions Kołodziejczak implemented in his study. It consists of an Introduction, three Chapters divided into subchapters and sections, Conclusions, two Annexes and a Bibliography. The introduction offers an analysis of the topic and justifies the selected research problems, as well as discusses the state of research, the source basis and introduces the structure of the entire work. The analysis of the source material collected in Annex No. 1 was carried out in the following chapters, the first of which, devoted to the gifts, presents church institutions endowed with gifts, as well as the distribution of pious gifts among them and a chronological dynamics of the gift-offering. The essential part of this Chapters discusses the typology of pious gifts, among which six categories are distinguished for further study. The second Chapter presents a group of donors whose gifts have been preserved in documents and city records. At this point, Kołodziejczak, after identifying the donors, characterizes the entire group in terms of gender, profession and social position. Its purpose, apart from identifying the donors, is to show the motives of their votive activities, which, apart from strictly religious purposes, also had social, political and cultural functions. The closing Chapter Three, entitled "The Community", aims at

analyzing pious gifts as an important element of constructing the community identity of Stockholm burghers. It is noteworthy that each chapter ends with conclusions.

Technically, I suggest that each chapter should be isolated from the entire text with some free space between the chapter title the text. I also recommend introducing the conventional term "chapter" for the three essential parts of the study. It is a pity that the material collected in the Annexes that from integral parts of the dissertation as so poorly used in the chapters. Analyzing particular documents or city records Kołodziejczak makes references only to their editions, ignoring the Anex no 1 which collects all the data used in his analysis. As all pious gifts described in the Anex no 1 are numbered it will convenient to provide due cross-references between the text and the Anex (f.e. the first charter dated 1305 should referred to as Anex 1, no 1 etc.)

Detailed remarks

In his research on the source material from Stockholm, Piotr Kołodziejczak produced a research questionnaire that had been successfully developed in previous international studies on urban religiosity in the late Middle Ages. This set of questions is reflected in the structure of the work. Chapter One on "The Gift" is introductory and offers an overview of the collected material concerning the pious gifts for church institutions donated by the townspeople of Stockholm in the years 1305-1521. Here, the author discusses the emergence and development of various types of church institutions in Stockholm that became the subject of pious generosity of the city dwellers. Let us recall that fifteenth-century Stockholm was populated by about 4,500-5,000 inhabitants, which made it a much smaller city than Lübeck with 25,000 inhabitants or Danzig with a population of 35,000. As Kołodziejczak notes, in the fifteenth century, in terms of social structure, Stockholm looks more like Marienburg than any Baltic city. In fact, the number of church institutions within the city was rather limited and most of them were more modest than in other Hanseatic centers. This important observation should have an impact on the circumstances of the pious gift giving in late medieval Stockholm.

In the pre-Reformation period Stockholm was the busiest port and commercial center of Sweden, though it was neither the main residence of the ruler nor the seat of the bishopric. There was no cathedral in Stockholm, nor was there a church that fulfilled the functions of a royal parish. In this context, the religious cult of the city was focused on the parish church of St. Nicholas, referred to as the Town Church (*Styrkyrkan*) As the research shows, half of the gifts, including charitable funds, were donated to this church. In Kołodziejczak's analysis of the sacred topography of late medieval Stockholm there is a place for the presentation of the establishment and development of monasteries in the city and in its suburbs, both male, such as the Dominicans or Franciscans, and female, such as the Poor Clares or the Brigittines. The author also points to the functioning of the hospitals, homesteads for the poor and choirs (chapels), especially those associated with the parish church. A certain lack, although it remains unclear to what extent resulting from the shortage of source materials, is a modest analysis of religious confraternities operating both in the parish church and in monastic churches. As it is known from the research on urban religiosity, in the late Middle Ages confraternities played a key role, organizing religious life of their members and contributing to the interiorization of religious doctrine. Analyzing the provisions for religious institutions, which are of an individual nature, it is impossible not to ask about the choice of the endowed institutions, which could

have been inspired by the membership of a particular confraternity. Urban piety in the late Middle Ages had a strongly communal character, and the generosity of townspeople often resulted from these communal experiences, a particular care for the parish church, confraternity chapel or altar in front of which services were held for a given community. This problem is addressed in Kołodziejczak's study but due to the nature of the primary sources some intriguing problems concerning the organization of communal religious practices remain poorly examined.

The analysis of the sacred topography of Stockholm focuses on ecclesiastical institutions that had a stable legal status and were associated with a specific part of the urban space. Barely present in the work are informal religious communities of lay people in which their piety was manifested: brotherhoods, tertiary communities supervised by mendicants or groups of beguines. Nothing is known about these latter groups. In this context, a question can be asked whether such lay communities did not exist in Stockholm at all, or whether they are not visible in the analyzed source material. Without taking into account these often loose and informal groups, the presentation of the sacral topography of any medieval city remains incomplete. From other cities where groups of beguines and sometimes begards were active (f.e. Paris, Strasbourg, Brugge or Cologne), it is known how important the generosity of relatives or co-residents was in their material support, which was sometimes also expressed in last wills and testamentary records in city registers. One can only repeat the question posed earlier, whether anything is known about such groups in Stockholm and how they contributed to the urban piety of late medieval Stockholm. Even if nothing is known about pious gifts recorded in the collected source material the functioning of such religious lay communities might have contributed to the strategy of pious gifts-giving of Stockholm burghers.

Despite the above mentioned reservations, I admit that the presentation of the sacral topography of late medieval Stockholm is prepared correctly manner and offers a good introduction to the presentation of research findings. In addition to organizing the basic data about churches, monasteries and choirs, together with the map supporting this presentation, the author also made a successful attempt to show the importance of individual institutions in the religious lives of the burghers. So he provided basic information on the founders and benefactors of particular institutions, as well as a look at social background of their establishment and development. Thanks to this, subsequent parts of the dissertation, in which the gifts and donors are presented, can be better comprehended.

In the main part of the first chapter, which consists of three subchapters (1.2-4), Piotr Kołodziejczak presents the collected material, showing in numbers and percentage the distribution of individual pious gifts among the previously discussed church institutions, as well as characterizing the chronological dynamics of this phenomenon. The distribution of the gifts was presented in the form of collective tables and diagrams that show the preferences of the Stockholm burghers. They reveal the predominance of gifts for the *Storkyrkan*, which should not be surprising, because – as mentioned earlier – the parish church was the center of the religious life of the city, where both religious practices of various communities and individual piety were focused. The number of donations to mendicant friaries, especially Dominicans, is surprisingly modest. If so, a question should be asked about the reasons for such a proportionally and quantitatively small number of bequests for the Franciscans, Dominicans or Poor Clares. The author recognizes this problem but his answer cannot be satisfactory. From my point of view, the key question concerns the social background of both mendicant friaries

and their pastoral ministry among the Stockholm burghers. Do we know anything about their preaching and other pastoral activities, did it have any major impact on the city? Due to their nature, the two largest mendicant Orders that had their friaries in Stockholm should have been much dependent on the generosity of its inhabitants. Since they were founded within the city, there must have been a favorable climate for them among the city dwellers which provided them with the material means to erect churches, friaries with necessary infrastructure, and maintain communities of at least a dozen or so friars. From the dissertation we do not learn how the development of these friaries looked like until the Reformation which put an end to their existence. Did these friaries play a more important role in the city's pastoral ministry, did they compete with the parish church and with each other? The answers to these questions are only partially provided by the records of pious gifts analyzed by Piotr Kołodziejczak. It can be concluded that the importance of both friaries was quite limited, since the pious gift-giving for either of them looks rather meagre. A more complete answer to this question formulated in this way could be provided by an analysis of recruitment to both friaries, which might show, in particular for the fifteenth century, whether we are dealing with the development or regression of these religious communities. Comparatively to the fifteenth century, in other cities of Central Europe there is a gigantic success of the Franciscan Observance promoted by Bernardino of Siena or John of Capestrano, which not only attracted dozens candidates to newly established friaries, but also revolutionized the forms of urban piety. No Observant friary was established in Stockholm, and the existing two mendicant monasteries, as far as is known, have not undertaken reforms to readopt the original rule and strict discipline. These are, of course, issues important for understanding the changes taking place in urban religiosity, also in Stockholm, but they significantly go beyond the subject of the analyzed dissertation. The results of the research can undoubtedly be a starting point for further research in this area and I hope that my questions above will provide new area for further research.

It should be credited to Piotr Kołodziejczak that he collected the dispersed source material with great care and meticulousness, summarized the results of his research in two extensive annexes to his dissertation, and presented its summary presentation along with the analysis in individual chapters. I have no objections to the presentation and quantitative analysis of the research results presented in the second subchapter of the first chapter. However, I have doubts as to the credibility of the analyzes concerning the chronology of the donated gifts. We are dealing here with a large span of time covering more than 200 years, from 1305 to the 1520s. Statistically, taking into account that depending on the criteria, we are talking about the number of 192 gifts for this period, on average there is less than one gift per year. This number for such a long period is rather small and does not allow to reliably determine the dynamics of the pious generosity of the Stockholm burghers. As the author frequently admits throughout his dissertation, patchy and incomplete source material poses a serious research problem as it makes it hardly possible to assess the size of pious gifts of Stockholm burghers for church institutions. Some of the wills and other types of records have been lost, and other gifts were not recorded at all. Besides, for Stockholm we do not have any uniform system of entries kept either within the municipal registers or records of the church institutions which would allow us to summarize the phenomenon of generosity and at the same time assess the forms of piety of the townspeople. The sources collected by Kołodziejczak are dispersed, have been preserved in various forms, and the author himself is aware of the consequences of that. Thus, extreme caution should be exercised in statistical analysis of the material collected in this way. Discussing the temporal dynamics of the gifts' transfer of gifts Kołodziejczak aptly notes that



the increase in the number of gifts in the last decades of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth century is largely due to the surviving series of the Stockholm city books which record them (pp. 57-8).

In accordance with the initial assumptions of his dissertation, Kołodziejczak confronts the results of his research with other Hanseatic centers, primarily Lübeck and Reval, sometimes Danzig and Elbing, indicating to what extent his analyzes are consistent with or differ from the materials selected for these cities. The comparative method is perfectly justified here, but as I have stated earlier, the comparative method requires taking into account comparable data. In this case, it is important to ask about the state of preservation of particular genres of source materials from various Hanseatic cities. If the state of preservation of the sources recording donations to church institutions looks similar to the one recognized by the author for Stockholm, then such a comparative study is fully justified. However, if there are fundamental disproportions here, the use of the comparative method requires great caution.

The second subchapter is the preparation of appropriate typological analyzes discussing the category of pious gifts of the Stockholm burghers. This part is preceded by a subchapter on the "durability" of the townspeople's foundations for church institutions. Let us add that this is primarily about property records, especially real estate and rents transferred to church institutions. The topic discussed in this subchapter is important and deserves a separate analysis, the more so that, as Kołodziejczak proves, the legal situation of pious gifts of this type in Stockholm was quite specific and differed from other cities or countries. My doubts are raised only by the place of discussion of this issue. The issue of the "durability" of records is one of the fundamental problems in source studies and I would rather see its analysis in the introductory part of this chapter, before the presentation of the statistical material. The above suggestion is of an ordering nature, as the subject matter raised by the author is intriguing and important. It is worth recalling at this point that "everlasting" (*ad perpetuum*) gifts, which set a standard of medieval generosity, in Stockholm could have *a priori* temporary character due to the municipal law, which prohibited the alienation of real estate and rent obligations for the benefit of church institutions. As Kołodziejczak rightly points out, legal regulations significantly limited the possibility of depletion of municipal property, and at the same time permanent income to the city treasury, for the benefit of church institutions. In practice, therefore, the most profitable, and thus desired by the beneficiaries, records of real estate or rents on real estate were perpetual only in the discourse of records, and in fact they lasted a year and a day, and the donor's heirs, according to the City Law, had the right to recover them after that time. This important observation made by Kołodziejczak sheds new light on the specific pragmatics of pious gifts-giving to the Church, which were subordinated to the welfare of the municipal community. This is also an interesting contribution to the discussion on the pre-reform mentality of the municipal authorities who put the material well-being of *civitas* above the welfare of the Church.

In subchapter four (1.4, pp. 75-86) an systematic analysis of the various categories of pious gifts is offered. The author distinguishes six sets of gifts and analyzes them according to their meaning, from the richest gifts: foundations/co-foundations of choirs (chapels) or altars, through endowments for prebends, masses and other spiritual services, prayers for the dead and *opera pietatis*, to candles or wax for candles, and material gifts. He also discusses the cases - quite rare - of pilgrimages through deputies separately. The proposed method of presenting the research material in terms of the nature of the gift itself is correct and brings some interesting

observations. The adopted typology makes it easier for the author to carry out detailed analyzes and allows him to better characterize various types of votive activities of the Stockholm burghers. However, I see some inconsistencies here. At this point, it is worth returning to the discussion on the concept of "pious gift", which is key to the entire work. Already in the Introduction, Kołodziejczak introduces a very broad definition of "pious gifts" including all "material gifts, movable items, immovable properties, income thereof exchanged for spiritual benefits", but also "prayers, masses and other forms of intercession", in other words, all bequests and gifts that were to ensure the redemption of sins and the salvation of the soul (p. 12). In the classical sense, the term "pious gift" includes all foundations of church buildings (churches, monasteries, chapels, hospitals etc.) as well as material gifts, such as vestments, books or liturgical paraments, and monetary bequests, including movables and rents, which provided the donor with the prayer service of the Church. I have doubts whether this group should include pilgrimages carried out by deputies. A pilgrimage, just like a prayer in a church or even participating in a liturgical service, is a rite of personal devotion and usually results from a vow. Commissioning another person to perform a vowed pilgrimage, usually due to illness or old age, which involved securing funds for this purpose, is not formally a "pious gift" to a church institution. Yet, pilgrimages themselves are an important element in any study of piety, though in my opinion "endowed pilgrimages" do not meet the definition of "pious gift" introduced by the author.

I am also not convinced that ordering a mass or other service can always be classified as a "pious gift" in the same way as the endowment of a chapel or the offering of a chalice. The mass offered, for example, for the souls of the dead was closely related to the eschatological teaching of the Church and the concept of purgatory, so strongly developed in the late Middle Ages. Can funding a mass for the dead be classified as a "pious gift"? The pious intention of such an offering is clear and corresponds to the previously cited definition, but what church institution was endowed with such a gift? All in all, in this case, the recipients were the souls of the dead for whom the service was ordered. The priest from the parish or friary was an intermediary here, who was more or less generously endowed for his service. All these critical remarks serve to demonstrate how complex and fluctuant categories of pious gifts might be owing to particular context.

Without entering into a detailed discussion of the research results at this point, let me note that the introduction of these several categories of gifts, although methodologically correct, in a way seems to blur the coherence of the donors' activities. Wouldn't it be the case that some provisions concerned the same institution or place (chapel, altar) and took into account different categories of gifts? Usually, in the very act of founding a chapel or an altar, the founder secured equipment in the form of robes, books or liturgical paraments necessary to celebrate the service for the intentions s/he specified. Similarly, ordering prayers, services, and securing the candles burning on the altars was part of the foundation act. One thing is the foundation of a chapel or an altar with additional bequests necessary for the proper functioning of these foundations, and another thing is the ordering of individual prayers, e.g. anniversary masses in a parish or monastery church, or a gift of candles for the altar. For this reason, in some cases it would be better not to separate the entries into particular categories of larger and smaller gifts, but to discuss and analyze these so-called gifts in one place. It is also important that such foundations were detailed in wills and registered in municipal books. Fortunately, the author is aware of the artificiality of the adopted divisions that fragment the material he has collected. In his

concluding remarks he aptly points out the coherence of these large gifts which consisted of various entries.

The collected material shows that out of 242 gifts recorded in the available sources, only 192 meet the requirements related to the subject of the work. Kołodziejczak rejected 50 gifts, i.e. 20% of the total sum, because either they were not made by the burghers of Stockholm and its suburbs. Quantitative analyzes show that most of the registered gifts were received by the Town Church, 81 out of 192. To this number should also be added collections for special charitable funds operated by the parish temple: Choir and Homestead of the Soul and Friday and Sunday Alms, 38 in total. A much smaller number of gifts were given to the Franciscans (28) or Dominicans (18). Once again, let us remember that these are indicative figures and we do not have full insight into the records provided by the townspeople of Stockholm. However, the basic trend of the generosity of the inhabitants is clearly visible and – as Kołodziejczak notes – it is similar to that we can find in other Hanseatic cities (pp. 32-33). The example of Rafał Kubicki's research for Elbing based on municipal wills is authoritative, according to which the local parish church received 30-38% of the bequests. One could ask here about similar studies for Danzig or Riga.

The results of the study for Stockholm confirm a well-known regularity. At the center of urban piety in the late Middle Ages is the parish church with its choirs, homestead for the poor and charitable funds. Two-thirds of all pious gifts went there. Of course, a gift is unequal to a gift and one can regret that the author did not pay more attention to the material value of these gifts. It would be interesting to check whether the numerical proportions of the distribution of pious gifts also correspond to their value. Of course – as mentioned earlier – the parish church is a special place in the sacral topography of the city. It also plays a key role in the identity of the townspeople who identify with it. It serves as a municipal *memoria*, in which the most outstanding and wealthy parishioners are buried and commemorated in anniversary masses. There are also religious confraternities here, which have their own chapels, altars and a calendar of services. For a deeper analysis of this issue, it would be worth examining the activities of religious confraternities in *Styrkyrkan* and the functioning of this church as a necropolis for Stockholm patrician families. The answer to these questions is the key to identifying the reasons for generosity, especially on the part of the wealthiest urban families whose grants have been analyzed in the dissertation.

The relatively small number of donations to mendicant friaries is quite interesting, but at the same time puzzling, which seems – as mentioned earlier – to indicate a small pastoral impact and a shallow social base of these convents. From the conducted analyses, we do not know whether this state of affairs is due to the fragmentation of the preserved source material, or the fact that it primarily notes the gifts of wealthier townspeople, rarely registering the records of representatives of poorer groups. However, as Kołodziejczak notes, referring to the research of J. Nebo Rasmussen, the Franciscans throughout Sweden enjoyed quite little support from the townspeople. For all Franciscan friaries in Sweden, the townspeople's share in donations is 23%. Among the 94 records with gifts to the Franciscan friary in Stockholm, only 28 come from the townspeople. One can even be tempted to conclude that the Order operating in the city and so closely associated with urban culture, in Stockholm was an institution supported more by other social groups than city dwellers. In order to better explain this phenomenon, it would be necessary to examine the recruitment process to the Franciscan friary and its pastoral activity.

An even more modest number of gifts concerned the Poor Clares. Here, however, we are dealing with a cloistered monastery which had an elitist character and enjoyed greater support from noble families. Quoting Kubicki's research for Elbing shows that there were almost twice as many gifts for the Poor Clares from the townspeople, despite the competition from the Brigittine nuns operating in this city (pp. 36-37). This is quite an interesting observation, which may be a source of reflection on the social background of the Poor Clares and the popularity of this religious formation.

Interesting observations are brought by the quantitative analysis of pious gifts registered in the examined sources. It shows how important a source for examining the nature of the generosity of urban donors are wills, of which relatively few have survived for the burghers of Stockholm (pp. 38-42). They indicate that in their last wills benefactors offered their pious gifts to numerous religious institutions. This is not surprising in any way, although it calls into question the belief that individual entities were preferred in grants which would result from entries in municipal books. Methodologically This issue requires further research. In the highly pragmatic late medieval piety, the number of services and prayers did matter; that is, the more institutions and individuals prayed for the soul of the benefactor, the prayed was more effective. This made an impact on the distribution of pious gifts to many church institutions. Interestingly, and as the author points out, the vast majority of wills contain provisions passed on during the life of the benefactors, and less frequently after their deaths. As he explains, such charitable activity resulted from the restrictions imposed by the Stockholm City Law which protected the rights of heirs against the alienation of goods and income for the benefit of church institutions. In this group, there are quite a lot of wills from merchants from other Hanseatic cities, especially from Lübeck, which was economically and socially closely connected with Stockholm. This concerned individuals who either spent some time in Stockholm or came from this city.

The Second Chapter, which is the most complex in terms of structure, is devoted to donors. As I mentioned, a critical analysis of the source material allowed the author to identify the donors, and the results of this identification are summarized in Annex no 1. This chapter is aimed at presenting a whole group of people representing various social strata, professions and holding various assets. Kołodziejczak, using the prosopographic method, shows defined individuals in their votive activities, trying to present the circumstances of their gift-giving, their gender, social and financial determinants. He excluded 6 donations from the City Council or guilds that were separately analyzed in Chapter Three. The subject of his research is a group of 186 notes. Among the donors, men dominate, constituting 43% of the entire group, but the share of women is very high, reaching almost 32%. Over 25% of the gifts were given jointly by men and women (pp. 90-1). As Kołodziejczak notes, such a high share of women is not surprising, because according to other research on bequests for monasteries in medieval Sweden, conducted by Catharina Andersson, women constituted even more than half of the benefactors. Comparing his own results for Stockholm with the results of research on wills for other Hanseatic cities (Danzig, Lübeck, Reval, Stralsund, Elbing), Kołodziejczak argues that nowhere was the participation of women so significant, concluding that this indicates a high activity of the Stockholm women in charity for church institutions. I think it is even safe to say that in Stockholm women in the late Middle Ages enjoyed a high social status that allowed them to be so active in disposing of property for church and charity purposes. To some extent this is conformed with the author's observation that most women among benefactors were widows (p. 91). The obtained results often do not allow for unambiguous interpretation. Kołodziejczak is astonished to find that out of 11 votive bequests for the Poor Clare Monastery,

the only women's order in Stockholm, as many as 10 came from male benefactors which would clearly indicate strong support for this institution by men. Warning against such an unambiguous conclusion, he again draws attention to the uneven and fragmentary preservation of the primary sources. Interestingly, as many as 6 of the benefactors came from Lübeck. However, one can look for a different answer to the question about the presence of so many male benefactors. The answer could be sought in the recruitment of the Poor Clares from Stockholm. Perhaps there were relatives of the donors among the Poor Clares, which would make it possible to understand their tendency to make pious gifts for this particular institution.

The analysis of social origin brings more ambiguous results, because only in the case of 17 records, their donors can be identified by their profession. This constitutes only 15% of the entire group, making any attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the occupations or the social status of donors doomed to failure. Kołodziejczak, based on these fragmentary data, presents a group of 16 crafts whose representatives or their wives appear in the collected documentation. An interesting problem, although very poorly perceptible in the source material, is the functioning of religious confraternities associated with choirs in the parish church of St Nicholas. For example it is known that such a choir was owned by the shoemakers' guild, for which in 1501 the altar of St Mark, St Crispin and St Crispian was funded. With such little representative material and the lack of other sources, it is really hard to speculate why such an altar did not have the guild of Stockholm goldsmiths (p. 98). Theoretically, the author is right that goldsmiths should be more wealthy than shoemakers because of their "more profitable" profession, but this was not always the case, as the wealth of the guild depended not so much on the more or less "profitable profession", but sometimes on the number of its members and their generosity.

More measurable are the data on the share of donations made by members of the City Council and their families. They show that almost every third registered gift came from members of this elite group of Stockholm burghers. What is even more important, it was from them that the most generous gifts related to the endowment of prebends in the parish church, the Uppsala Cathedral or in the Vadstena Brigittine Abbey (pp. 100-1) came from. The author rightly draws attention to the care taken by this group of benefactors to write down their generous gifts, many of which were penned down in Lübeck. Of course, for the members of the City Council and their families, gifts to church institutions were a manifestation of their high social and financial position, which is described in more detail in the next subchapter. Chapels and their equipment were funded along with ordering votive masses mainly in the parish church in Stockholm, but not only. As Kołodziejczak's research has shown, gifts were also donated to churches in other Hanseatic cities, e.g. in Lübeck and Gdańsk, serving the external ostentation of the founders in the economic environment important to them. Sometimes the funding of prebends served to secure the material existence of clerical relatives (pp. 107-8).

As Piotr Kołodziejczak points out, various gifts given to church institutions, regardless of the form in which the records about them have been preserved, offer the good insight into beliefs and religious practices of the donors, and more broadly into the forms of urban piety of the late Middle Ages. They unambiguously testify to the donors' concern for their own salvation and that of their family members, and reflect the common fear of the Last Judgment and purgatory punishments. Gifts were a type of transaction well described in studies in the anthropology of religion and relevant to various belief systems; in exchange for material goods, the giver expected to receive spiritual goods, primarily to ensure the salvation of his own soul

or to alleviate the burden of purgatory punishments. In gifts one can also find other features of medieval religiosity described in particular sections. They point to the cult of patron saints, the Mother of God, which is closely related to the rosary prayer and hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as the specific preferences of donors in relation to certain churches or choirs. A number of these cult forms went beyond the individual expectations of donors and had a communal character. Community cult connecting a wider group of believers had morrow masses founded by individuals in the Parish Church of St Nicolas. As Kołodziejczak notices, despite the private endowment, these first masses of the day attracted numerous parishioners and were also supported by the City Council. One should agree with the author that such a community character of these services “played a considerable role in choosing this form of pious gift-giving” (p. 115).

In the third chapter entitled “The Community”, the focus is put on the “public aspect of pious gift-giving in late medieval Stockholm”. Developing some threads already raised in the previous chapter, Kołodziejczak tries to indicate how and to what extent the transfer of pious gifts involved the entire community of the Stockholm burghers. Starting from reflections on poverty in medieval theology and the place of the poor in medieval society, he draws attention to the importance of almsgiving and offerings to the poor in the distribution strategy of pious gifts. In the introduction to his analyzes, he stresses the importance of confraternities and guilds in creating and stimulating the public nature of religious worship. It is to be regretted that he limited himself to simple statements, without developing this thread. In fact, the third chapter deals with the charitable activities of the Stockholm burghers as demonstrated by the distribution of the pious gifts. In the medieval urban space of Stockholm there were hospitals and poorhouses: the Homestead of the Holy Spirit, Hospital of St George and the Homestead of the Soul, which took care of the sick and the poor. In fact, they received the largest group of gifts in proportion. At the parish church of St Nicholas, there were special funds: the Fund of the Friday Alms and the Fund of the Sunday Alms which received a similar number of votive bequests (respectively 12 and 11). Occasionally, individual donations went to hospitals and poorhouses outside of Stockholm, indicating that in their charitable choices, the city dwellers showed more care and generosity to the sick and poor in their own area. As Kołodziejczak points out, charity in late medieval Stockham took on an institutionalized character. Although the full scale of this activity cannot be estimated due to the fragmentation of the preserved records, it is easy to see from the recorded gifts a trend of endowing institutions dealing with the needs of the poor and the sick. An important role in this activity was played by representatives of the local patriciate: city councilors and wealthy representatives of craft guilds. This communal and public aspect of charitable activities distinguished Stockholm from other Baltic cities.

In the final part of this chapter, Kołodziejczak draws attention to the key importance of the City Council in the organization of the religious life of the Stockholm burghers. Admittedly, the councilors did not have their own chapel in the parish church (but there was probably one in the town hall) and they belonged to various brotherhoods, but they acted in community as an emanation of *civitas*. They cared for the prayerful remembrance of the deceased members of the Council, funded new altars in the choirs of the parish church, and also took care of the existing ones. They supported monasteries operating in the urban space with gifts. Particular concern for the good financial situation of the Town Church on the part of the City Council manifested itself in the maintenance of two lay churchwardens. As the author of the dissertation points out, care for the Church was also manifested in the registration in the city books with the

record of pious gifts donated to church institutions. In this respect, the activities of the Stockholm City Council resemble those of other authorities in Hanseatic cities.

The research findings and observations are collected in Conclusions. It is regrettable that in this closing part of the work no proposals of further research on some threads are presented. Here, too, there should be a place to pose the problem of material objects still preserved in the present-day Stockholm: churches, chapels, hospitals and elements of their interior decorations which visually testify to the piety and generosity of their late medieval donors.

Final remarks and conclusion

In conclusion, I have no doubt that the doctoral dissertation of Piotr Kołodziejczak entitled *Pious Gifts in Late Medieval Stockholm in the Context of Baltic Towns* is an original academic work that, in accordance with the methodology of historical science, poses and solves an important research problem. It brings new findings in the field of research on the religiosity of the townspeople of late medieval Stockholm, as well as, more broadly, forms of urban piety in the Hanseatic cities. In a systematic and methodologically correct manner, Kołodziejczak analyzed a collection of documents and entries in city registers regarding the pious gifts from Stockholm burghers for various church institutions operating in the city and its suburbs. His research findings are collected in two Annexes and presented in tables and graphs. The results of his research are discussed in three chapters that shed new light on the devotion of the Stockholm burghers, an busy commercial center of Sweden and a key Hanseatic city. For a better explanation of the researched phenomena in the field of socio-religious history, the author used comparative material from other Hanseatic cities, which allowed him to show in a broader perspective the features specific and common to the religiosity of Hanseatic cities but also those which made the Stockholm burghers different.

The work has a clear structure in which a up-to-date set of research questions was applied. The academic discourse of the study is correct and the line of arguments clear. The work deserves publication, but for its greater attractiveness, I propose supplementing the threads raised in it with the following issues:

1) a broader analysis of the source database, with information on unpreserved ecclesiastical books concerning both the parish church, monastery, and diocesan documentation;

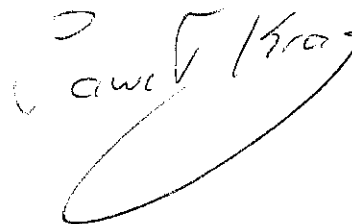
2) supplementing the study with more detailed examination of the architecture and furnishings of the Town Church (a map is not enough), especially its choirs, as well as monastery churches; it would be useful to know whether any material objects related to the pious gifts have survived: altars, paintings, sculptures, chalices, patens, ampoules, books, robes, etc. donated by the Stockholm burghers. Any additional iconographic material would be welcome;

3) introduction of a subchapter on the activities of religious confraternities both in the parish church and in mendicant churches; what is known from other sources about members, statutes and piety of such confraternities;

4) extending information about the parish church and its clergy: parish priests, vicars, altarists. Since the City Council had such a large influence on the functioning of this church, perhaps something more could be said about the recruitment of the clergy working in this parish. Is anything known about votive offerings made by sailors in the parish church which was a common practice in other port cities all around the Baltic coast?

In Piotr Kołodziejczak's doctoral dissertation it was impossible to conduct a full-scale research in the available source material, let alone to reach for a very extensive comparative material from other Hanseatic cities. In the published version, extending the already existing threads with the above-mentioned problems would give it additional advantages and allow to deepen the existing findings. The structure of the work requires rethinking, especially the division into subchapters and sections in the third chapter; some sections are very concise and deal with quite marginal issues; some titles sound confusing and deserve to be modified. Repetitions in the analysis of the same material in two places should also be avoided. I recommend introducing cross-references to the extensive Annex no 1 which collects all source material used for the study of the pious gifts offered by the Stockholm burghers to various church institutions.

Regardless of the above critical remarks and research postulates, I am strongly convinced that the dissertation of Piotr Kołodziejczak on *Pious Gifts in Late Medieval Stockholm in the Context of Baltic Towns* meets the requirements of Art. 187, Points 1-3 of the Ustawa Prawo o Szkolnictwie Wyzszym i Nauce dated 20 July 2018, Dziennik Ustaw of 2018, item 1668, and therefore I recommend granting him the degree of Doctor of Humanities. Hereby, I grant my consent to admit Piotr Kołodziejczak to further stages of the doctoral procedure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paweł Kraj". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval loop.