

Sven Ekdahl*

Commentary on the review of my 2019 Grunwald book by Professor Marian Głosek

Citation: Ekdahl S. 2021. *Commentary on the review of my 2019 Grunwald book by Professor Marian Głosek*. “Acta Militaria Mediaevalia” XVII, 222–228. DOI: 10.48280/AMMXVII.2021.017.

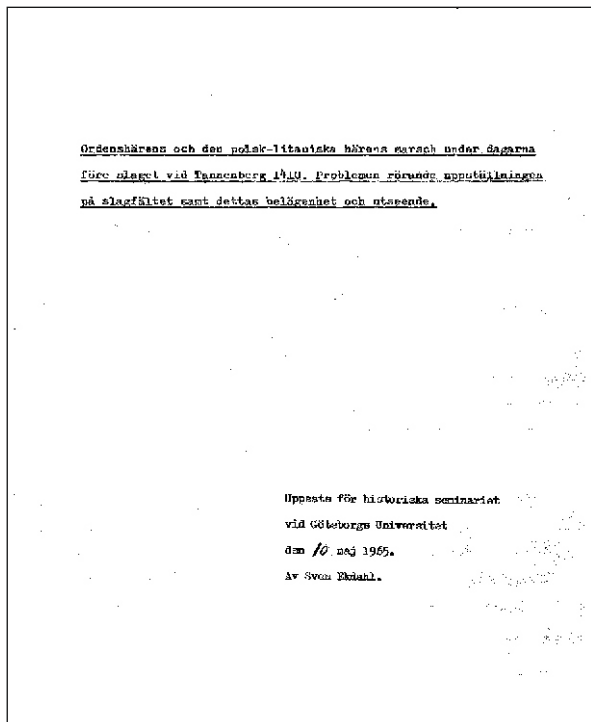


Fig. 1. Title page of author’s unpublished seminar paper devoted to the Battle of Grunwald. *Private archive of the author.*

Ryc. 1. Strona tytułowa niepublikowanej pracy seminaryjnej autora poświęconej bitwie pod Grunwaldem. *Archiwum prywatne autora.*

Professor Marian Głosek’s article is an unusual review of a scientific book,¹ because it is obviously primarily about defending and preserving old and outdated research positions. This leads to an accumulation of negative viewpoints, while positive points of view are almost completely absent. Despite friendly words at the beginning, efforts to discredit me as a scientist and as a person are particularly striking. According to an old medieval custom, I must defend myself against this “honorary scolding” (in German: “Ehrenschele”) if I want to avoid the danger of “self-indictment” (in

German: “Selbstbezeugung”). For this procedure, see the explanations in my 1982 German book about the Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald) 1410, which was translated into Polish in 2010 (Ekdahl 1982, 125; 2010, 129). It is advisable to read my 2019 Grunwald book for comparison with the review.²

Below I will list the key points in the review that I think deserve comment or correction.

Personal details: Ekdahl

I was not born in “Samland”, but in the southern Swedish province of Småland, north of Skåne (Scania). “Samland” is the German name for a region in the former East Prussia, today in the Russian Kaliningrad oblast. The mention of my statement for the Lithuanian position in the German-Lithuanian so-called archival question could lead to the wrong assumption that I was therefore awarded an honorary doctorate from the Vilnius University in 2004. That honour was primarily based on my research on the participation of the Lithuanian army in the battle of 1410. These research results were also recognised by Poland in 2020, when a Lithuanian memorial stone was erected at Grunwald in the presence of the presidents and prime ministers of both countries. For more information about me see Wikipedia and my homepage (www.ekdahl.de). I am a member of the Danish archaeological society Harja. In addition to Prof. Głosek’s remarks, it can be mentioned, among other things, that I became Foreign Member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in 2005 and was honoured with the Polish Grunwald Medal in 2014. The Jagiellonian University Silver Medal Plus Ratio Quam Vis will be presented to me at a ceremony in Kraków in February 2022.

Personal details: Głosek

The many years of good relations between the well-known archaeologist and me were expressed in 2011 when I was invited to his 70th birthday celebration in Łódź and contributed to the extensive book in his honour (Ławrynowicz et al. (eds.) 2011). Among Głosek’s well-known research are his studies of medieval swords and various graves of victims of German and Soviet

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¹ Bibliographical information in the review by M. Głosek in the present volume of “Acta Militaria Mediaevalia”. My book was published as Vol. XXX of the “Studies of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania” series (Ekdahl 2019).

² The book can be ordered from the librarian Ms Nijolė Urbienė in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, Vilnius, for EUR 35 (n.urbiene@valdovurumai.lt).

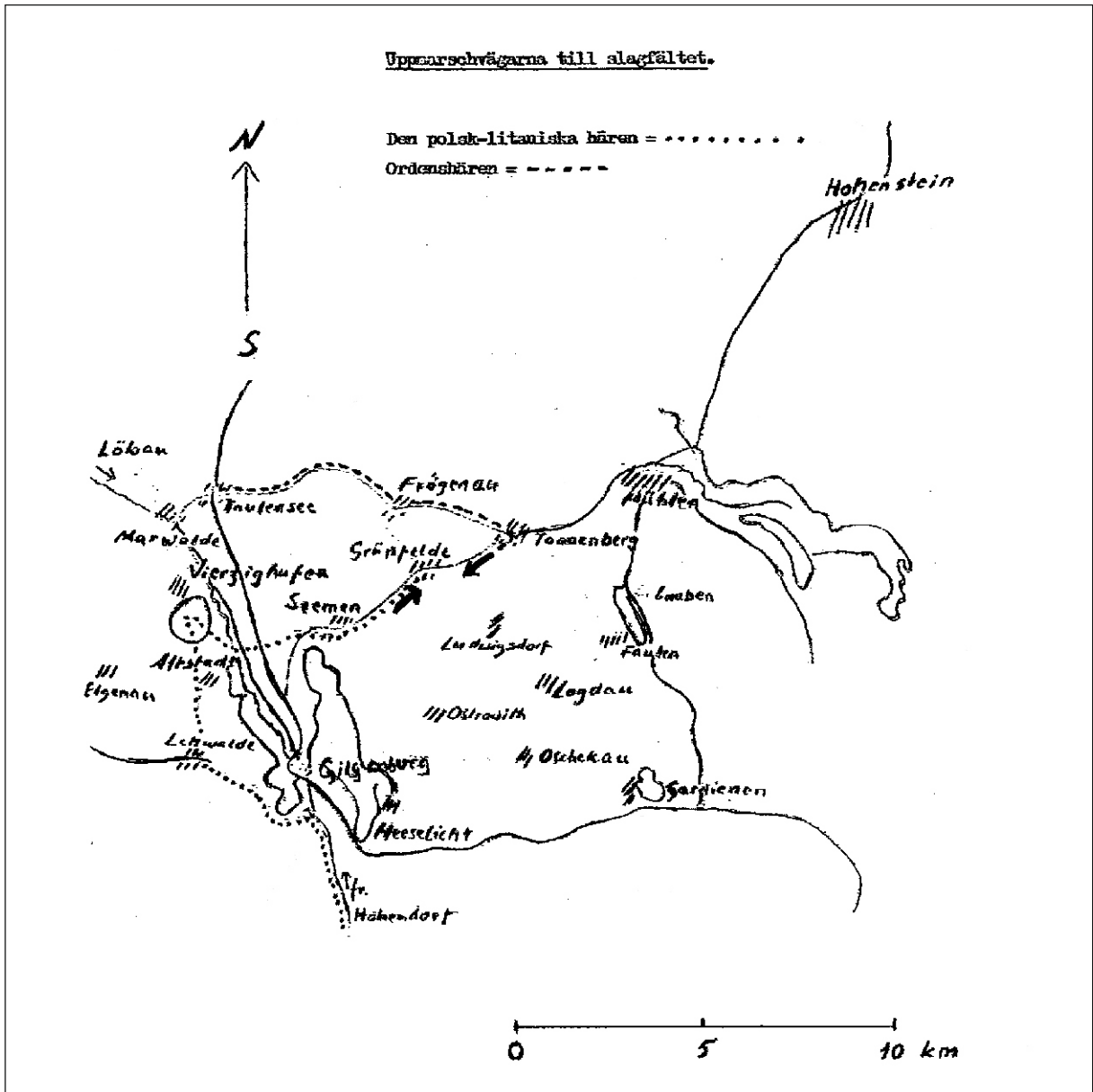


Fig. 2. Location of the battlefield in the author’s unpublished seminar paper devoted to the Battle of Grunwald. *Private archive of the author.*

Ryc. 2. Lokalizacja pola bitwy w niepublikowanej pracy seminaryjnej autora poświęconej bitwie pod Grunwaldem. *Archiwum prywatne autora.*

terror during World War II, including Katyń. There is a lot of information about this on-line. In addition, there is his participation in archaeological research on the Grunwald Battlefield of 1410, which he reports on in his review. The investigations were carried out together with his academic teacher Prof. Andrzej Nadolski and colleagues Prof. Andrzej Nowakowski and his son Dr Piotr A. Nowakowski, among others. As Głosek rightly points out, I am not an archaeologist; on the other hand, it can be said with equal justification that he and the aforementioned researchers are not historians, although they like to participate or have participated in discussions about the value of written historical sources (A. Nadolski died in 1993 and A. Nowakowski in 2017). A historian can take note of and accept the results of archaeological investigations, but apparently some

archaeologists occasionally find it difficult to analyse and evaluate written sources according to recognised source-critical standards.

Annalista Thorunensis and Jan Długosz – two disputed sources. The march of the Polish and Lithuanian armies to the battlefield

In the discussion about Grunwald, the question of the whereabouts of the Polish and Lithuanian armies with their auxiliary troops during the night before the battle plays a central role. According to the description by the German historian Johannes Voigt in his “History of Prussia” (Vol. VII, 1836), which has been authoritative for many generations of historians and accepted not only by Polish historians and archaeologists, the armies camped “south” of Great Damerau Lake (Jeziro

Dąbrowa Wielka) and moved from there to the battlefield early in the morning of 15 July. Voigt refers to the “Annales” chronicle by Jan Długosz, where, as a matter of fact, there is no support for such a claim. However, this did not prevent posterity from referring to Długosz as evidence, claiming that he was the source for this thesis. The march of the Polish and Lithuanian armies was shaped accordingly, albeit with some deviations. According to A. Nadolski and his comrades-in-arms, including M. Głosek, the march led through several villages and a watercourse south of Lake Lauben (Jeziro Lubień) to the future battlefield in what Nadolski called the “Valley of the Great Stream” (Dolina Wielkiego Strumienia) northwest of the said lake. The troops were lined up there with the front to the north-west. According to A. Nadolski, the battle took place in this alleged valley.³ Interestingly, this thesis, which originally was supported by Głosek, is changed in the review in that the terrain there is no longer described as a battlefield, but only as a deployment area for the Polish and Lithuanian troops: *It should be remembered, however, that the area examined in 2014 is the way for troops to reach the battlefield, not the area of struggle.*⁴ The reason for this new sight is the many archaeological finds of militaria further northwest, where I already in 1965 located the battlefield in an unpublished seminar paper at the University of Gothenburg (based on an analysis of the written sources) (Figs. 1-2).

In the review, I am pilloried for allegedly accusing Długosz for unreliability and lying. Instead of him, I refer to the contemporary account of the chronicler Annalista Thorunensis, according to which the camp of the Polish king was on the Vierzighufen (Wierzbica) Field during the night before the battle. Głosek rejects this source, criticising the brevity of the description. While the description of the battle in the “Annales” is long and detailed, the Annalista is content with a brief account of the battle and is therefore far less credible, according to Głosek. As a historian, I cannot, with the best will in the world, agree with such an argument when assessing the two sources.

Głosek admits that the mention of Vierzighufen (Wierzbica) has remained unknown or very little known among Polish historians. Elsewhere he writes that A. Nadolski was well acquainted with the Annalist’s work and regarded it as a source of the procurator of the Teutonic Order at the Council of Constance.

As for Długosz, one should look at him through the eyes of that time.⁵ Despite his outstanding importance, it is necessary to look at his chronicle critically. A new example of this is his description of the confiscation of the Polish grain shipment for starving Lithuania by Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen in Ragnit (Polish: Ragneta) in June 1409. For some reason, Długosz places the confiscation in 1408 and claims that twenty grain

ships were involved while they in fact were only two. He added a zero to increase the impact of his narrative (Ekdahl 2020a, 406).

I will not go into detail here about the discussion of the deployment routes and refer to the text and the maps in my reviewed book (Ekdahl 2019, 12-23) as well as important contributions by Krzysztof Kwiatkowski from Thorn/Toruń (Kwiatkowski 2015) and Marek A. Janicki from Warsaw (Janicki 2019). In his fundamental study of the “Cronica conflictus”, Janicki also deals with the problem of the armies’ marching routes. Prof. Głosek also seems to have overlooked an article by the archaeologist Igor Urban from the University of Gdańsk in the latest issue of the museum’s journal, “Nowe Studia Grunwaldzkie” (Urban 2019-2020). It does not support my thesis about the march route of the Polish and Lithuanian armies from the fields of Vierzighufen (Wierzbica) to the village of Seemen (Samin), but it agrees with my description of the march from there to Grunwald, the location of the battlefield and the lining up of the troops with the front to the north-east: *Map 8. Road to the battlefield of the Polish-Lithuanian (red) and the Teutonic (black) troops according to the most probable concept of Sven Ekdahl* (ibid. 135). It would have been interesting to know what the reviewer thinks of Urban’s remarks.

The late publication of my march-on theses

In the review, serious allegations are made against me because my theses were not fully published until 2009. This decision of mine had a valid reason. It was already clear to me in 1965 that without additional evidence I would not have the opportunity to assert my views, because I would be pushed away immediately by overpowering Polish colleagues! I therefore refrained from an early publication and even avoided accepting a kind invitation from Prof. Nadolski to his summer house in the Tatra region in 1985 (our correspondence on this matter can be found in Ekdahl 2013, 27). I did not want my research results to be made public by others. In 1990 Nadolski published the first edition of his book on Grunwald problematics (Nadolski 1990), in which he took stand against another thesis that I had “gifted” to him in a letter. Interestingly, it is I. Urban’s thesis mentioned above. Only in 2009, six years after Nadolski’s death, did I put my views, supported by more than 40 maps, up for discussion in a Polish scientific journal, but even that was not enough: they were hardly noticed (Ekdahl 2009). The turning point to my advantage only came with the archaeological investigations from 2014 onwards, which confirmed my research. I can understand that Prof. Głosek dislikes my acting, but it was necessary in order not to be eliminated immediately. His review of my book fully confirms the sense and necessity of my decision at the time. However, I had

³ Nadolski refers to a valley mentioned in the “Cronica conflictus” and then in Długosz’s “Annales”, but which is in a completely different place, namely west of the road from Grunwald to Łodwigowo. In contrast, Nadolski’s “Valley of the Great Stream” is flat terrain (cf. Ekdahl 2019, 84-85, note 85).

⁴ In Polish: *Należy jednak pamiętać, że badany w 2014 r. teren to droga dojść wojsk na pole bitwy, a nie teren zmagania.*

⁵ See the remarks in the book from 1982 mentioned in note 4 about the Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald (Ekdahl 1982, 260-273; 2010, 246-257).



Fig. 3. The letter from the Richard III Society. *Private archive of the author.*

Ryc. 3. List od Stowarzyszenia króla Ryszarda III. *Archiwum prywatne autora.*

to wait exactly half a century for archeology to show an opportunity on the horizon.

The archaeological search project of the Grunwald Museum in 2014

In my book there is a rather detailed description on how the project came about and how it began (Ekdahl 2019, 12-23). Prof. Głosek does not mention that the “funding” was only secured through the cooperation agreement with the Danish archaeological society Harja.

Members of the Harja detector group contributed significantly to the success of the project during the five years 2014-2018 on a voluntary private basis and free of charge, but we are now all violently attacked by the reviewer and even accused of dishonesty. He accuses us of bad intentions. I would like to point out that in 2020 Glenn Abramsson, the renowned and honorable leader of the Harja group, received the Dannebrog Order from the Danish Queen Margarethe for his services to archaeological research.⁶

⁶ See Per Nielsen’s foreword in the Danish Archaeological Society Harja’s Journal “Fynboer & Arkæologi” (No. 2, 2020, p. 4-5), with a photo of Abramsson with the Dannebrog Order. In the same number of the journal there is my article (Ekdahl 2020b), translated from Swedish to Danish by Per Nielsen. My book from 2019 is announced by G. Abramsson (2020, 19).

A few points in the review may now be taken up and discussed. I will only deal with the most important ones, because many smaller detailed questions have to be skipped for reasons of space.

F. L. von Schroetter's original map from 1796-1802 (Ekdahl 2019, 60-61, Fig. 15).⁷ My finds made in 2016

This important map, previously disregarded by Grunwald research, which marks the battlefield of 1410 by two crossed sabres, is mentioned by Głosek in a very peculiar context. It is completely incomprehensible to me how he can claim that the militaria finds I made there with my metal detector in 2016, including an unusual horseshoe (Ekdahl 2019, 136-139), had been discovered around 1800 (!?). According to him, this is the reason why they were not listed in the museum's inventory. His polemic against me in this regard is reminiscent of Don Quixote's fight against windmills.

It is also difficult to understand why the three round stones I found elsewhere on the battlefield are used as an argument against me in this context. It must be allowed to formulate hypotheses, even if they later turn out to be wrong. The reviewer is a master at that.

The reviewer's comments on the archaeological results

During the surveys in 2014 in the area of the "Valley of the Great Stream", described by A. Nadolski (et alii) as the main battlefield of 1410, only a few (about 10) militaria artefacts were found, as also confirmed by the excavation management. The basis for this view has thus been removed. To compensate for this "negative" result, M. Głosek repeatedly points out that the total number of finds in that area was around 200, without considering that it is not the number of finds that matters, but their importance. However, as mentioned above, the most interesting is the fact that he no longer describes the fields of the "Valley of the Great Stream" as a battlefield, but merely as a deployment area for the Polish and Lithuanian troops. In this respect he is now forced to turn away from his teacher and model A. Nadolski.

Seventeenth highly interesting and still unexplored anomalies near the road between Grunwald and Łodwigowo were discovered in 2016 by the Lithuanian search team under Aleksandras Matonis. These are only briefly mentioned in the review. It seems more important that a skeleton of a woman was found elsewhere in 1981 and, according to an elderly resident from Łodwigowo, there was a cholera cemetery from before the First World War. One gets the impression that this is intended to cautiously question the value of the anomalies which were discovered by Matonis' team.

It would have been interesting if the reviewer had briefly mentioned the important finds of weapons between Grunwald and Łodwigowo, which were made after the publication of my book, although they support

my theses. Among them are two well-preserved medieval battle axes.

One can unreservedly agree with the remark that a negative result of field research is also a positive result. This applies not only to archaeology, but also to historiography. The emphasis on the quote from Massimo Pallottino that I used already in the 1982 Tannenberg book is also very welcome.

I am pleased that my comparison with the archaeological search for the battlefield of Bosworth in England (1485) is also mentioned in the review, albeit briefly. My research is appreciated there, as indicated in a letter of thanks from the Richard III Society (Fig. 3).

I will not go into more detail here about M. Głosek's theses on the march and formation of armies and the location of the battlefield, although they are presented at the end of his discussion and give rise to many critical questions. Only one important difference in interpretation should be pointed out. The "Cronica conflictus" and then the "Annales" by Jan Długosz mention a hill on which the Polish king's field chapel was located during the battle (see Janicki 2014). Długosz also claims that this hill was *facing Lake Lauben* [Jezioro Lubień], i. e., it pointed in the direction of that lake (*lacum Luben spectantem*). This makes a significant difference between me and the reviewer in locating the hill, for he concludes from Długosz's statement: *Lake Luben lies to the east of the fields of Grunwald, which clearly determines the arrival of Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian troops on the battlefield*. On the other hand, I locate the hill in question much farther north-west. According to Głosek's interpretation, the hill with the Polish field chapel is over 10 km away from the battlefield, which poses many difficult-to-solve explanation problems. The "Cronica conflictus" gives the distance between the hill and the Teutonic Order's army before the battle as only about 4 km, because a messenger informed the king: *Hostes tui in medio miliari a te stant in magna potentia congregati: te exspectant* (Cronica... 1911, 21-22; see Ekdahl 2009, 50-53).

The march of the Polish and Lithuanian armies has been covered in detail in my 2009 paper cited above. As also mentioned above, there is now important recent research on the "Cronica conflictus" by M. A. Janicki (2019).⁸

It is as great pity that the reviewer does not provide his own outline of the armies' movements on a map, because it is not always easy to understand his views on them from the text.

Criticism against Ekdahl and Harja

The late publication of my research on the deployment of armies and the location of the battlefield is not the only harsh criticism levelled at me in the review. Głosek criticises with much moral indignation that after the start of the archaeological surveys in 2014 I published articles about the results and gave lectures and interviews. Neither I nor other members of Harja

⁷ The relevant section of von Schroetter's map has now also been reproduced in the above-mentioned contribution by I. Urban (2019-2020, 149, Fig. 17).

⁸ M. A. Janicki recently identified the copyist of the "Cronica conflictus" in the 16th century and its unknown fragmentary records. He is preparing a new edition of this source.

were entitled to do this, he says, only the Grunwald Museum. According to him, only the museum, as the initiator and recipient of the excavation permit from the provincial conservator, has the copyright of information. This is said to be the real reason why I have been excluded from further cooperation with the museum since 2016.

There are harsh and personally hurtful words in the review. Not only have I violated copyright law, but I have had “bad intentions” and committed “betrayal of trust”. Harja is put in a “bad light” by passing on information about the surveys and their results to me, this is “a bad attitude”. And: *S. Ekdahl also returns to his person as persona non grata – S. Ekdahl wraca również do swojej osoby jako persona non grata.*

When I wrote my book, I was already aware of similar accusations and brought some counterarguments.⁹ A statement of the well-known archaeologist and former head of the Grunwald Museum, Romuald Odoj, may be quoted here. In an email to me of 10 September 2017, he wrote:

Dear Sven! I have re-read the letter from the Museum published in the September issue of “Mówią Wieki”

(cf. Ekdahl 2019, 257-258, Appendix 19) *numerous times. I do not understand the reproaches made by Sirs N. and D. No one can deny you the right of publishing the results of researching the Grunwald battlefield!!! [...] The Museum did not contribute any funds towards this research! So why does it want to be the “only seller” of the interpretation and publicising the results? [...] I see the entire “letter” and the direct “letter” to you¹⁰ as the argumentation of “meek people”.*¹¹

Two weeks earlier he commented my exclusion from further cooperation with the museum with the following words: *Dear Sven! The letter addressed to you is, in short, an INSULT!*¹²

I want to leave it at these examples and leave the assessment of the problems to others. Finally, only the famous question “What would have happened if?” should be asked. What would have happened in terms of research if I had not remained stable and free? And how would the search results have turned out without the highly qualified help of the Danish Archaeological Society Harja? Would the research on the famous Battle of Grunwald have taken decisive steps forward?

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⁹ See my letters to the Grunwald Museum of 30 June 2017 and of September 2017 (“Mówią Wieki”, 2017, nr 9, 71). These and further sources are published in my book (Ekdahl 2019, 252-253 – Appendix 17, 257-259 – Appendix 19, 260-261 – Appendix 20, 262 – Appendix 21).

¹⁰ Email from Szymon Drej and P. A. Nowakowski to S. Ekdahl dated 24 August 2017 (Ekdahl 2019, 262 – Appendix 21).

¹¹ Commentary with the quoted email from R. Odoj to S. Ekdahl dated 10 September 2017 (Ekdahl 2019, 259 – Appendix 19).

¹² Commentary with the quoted email from R. Odoj to S. Ekdahl dated 29 August 2017 (Ekdahl 2019, 262 – Appendix 21).

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