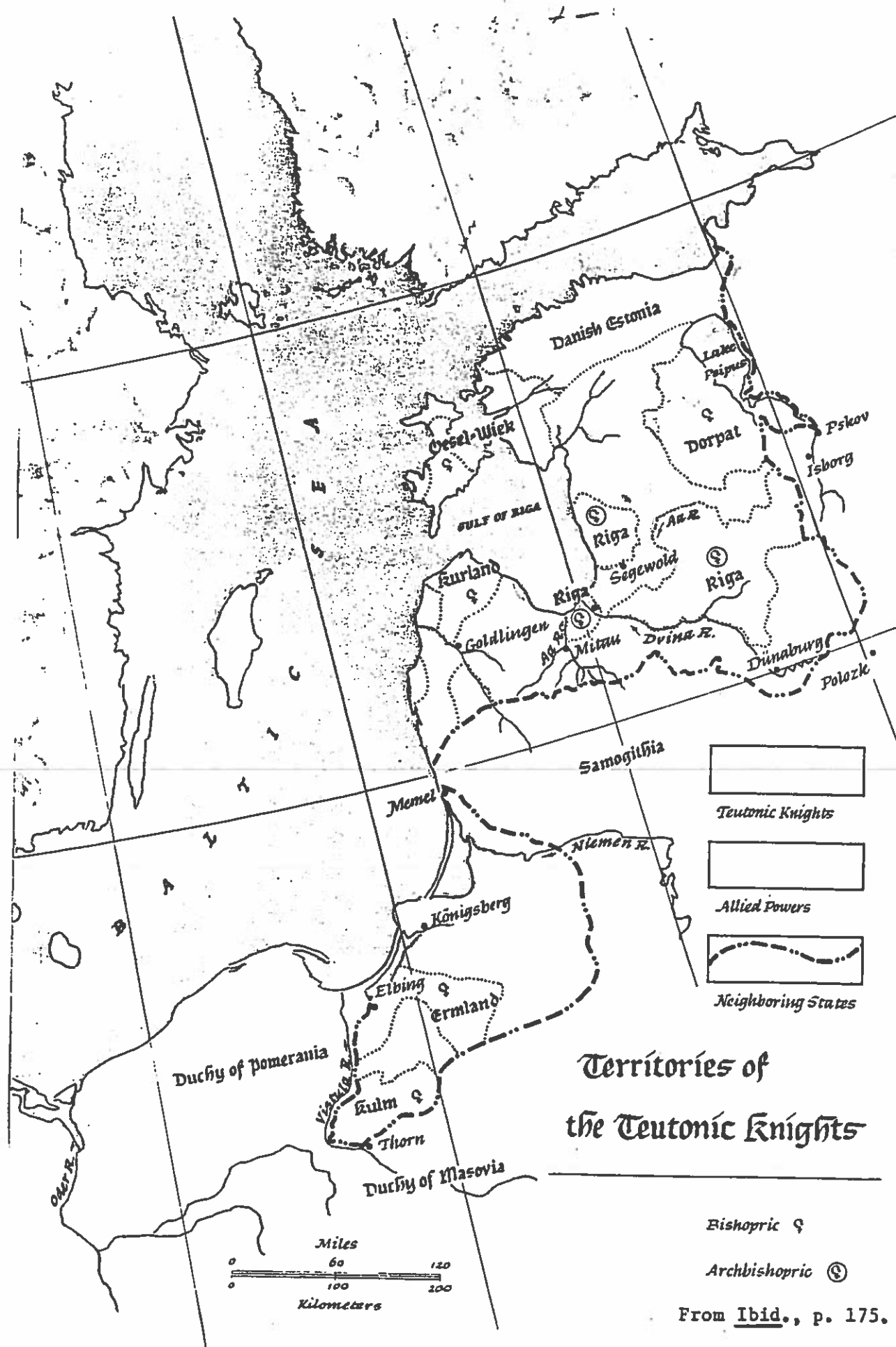Helmut Nickel. "Chivalry, Orders of."
Dictionary of the Middle Ages, vol. 3
(1983), p. 306.

The third of the great orders was the Teutonic Knights. It too began with a pilgrims' hospital in Jerusalem, St. Mary's of the Germans, and later (1190) with a field hospital at the siege of Acre, to which shipmasters from Lübeck donated sails to be used as tents for the wounded and sick. The hospital staff adopted the rules of the Hopsitalers and their head, Hermann Walpott (1199), became the first master of this new order, which—as its name indicated—consisted of Germans (the Templars were mostly French and the Hospitalers predominantly Italian). The Teutonic Knights wore the colors of the Hospitalers reversed: white cloaks with black crosses, black crosses on their white shields and banners. Though never very numerous, the Teutonic Knights soon acquired such a reputation that in 1211 King Andrew II of Hungary asked their help; and in 1225/1226 Duke Conrad of Masovia invited their grand master, Hermann von Salza, to conquer the last remaining heathen tribes in Europe, the Prussians and the Lithuanians.

Conversion to Christianity was considered an indispensable part of the process of becoming civilized, and the Teutonic Knights went to the task with cross, sword, and a work force of settlers from Germany and Holland. Thanks to their iron discipline, organization, and devotion to duty, the wilderness of Prussia was changed into a thriving and wealthy state that was independent under the direct suzerainty of the pope, though the grand master also held the rank of a prince of the empire. Marienburg, the order's headquarters since 1309, is the largest castle in Europe.

The territory of the order extended along the Baltic coast and therefore blocked landlocked Poland's access to the sea. In 1410 the Poles and Lithuanians, with Russian and Tatar allies, defeated the order at Tannenberg, and in 1466 the order was forced to acknowledge the king of Poland as feudal overlord. The last grand master was Margrave Albrecht of Brandenburg (1511–1525), who with most of his knights accepted the Reformation and became Protestant, turning the order's territory into a secular dukedom with himself as the duke of Prussia. In the Catholic parts of Germany and in Austria the order continued its charitable work, though its fighting days were over.
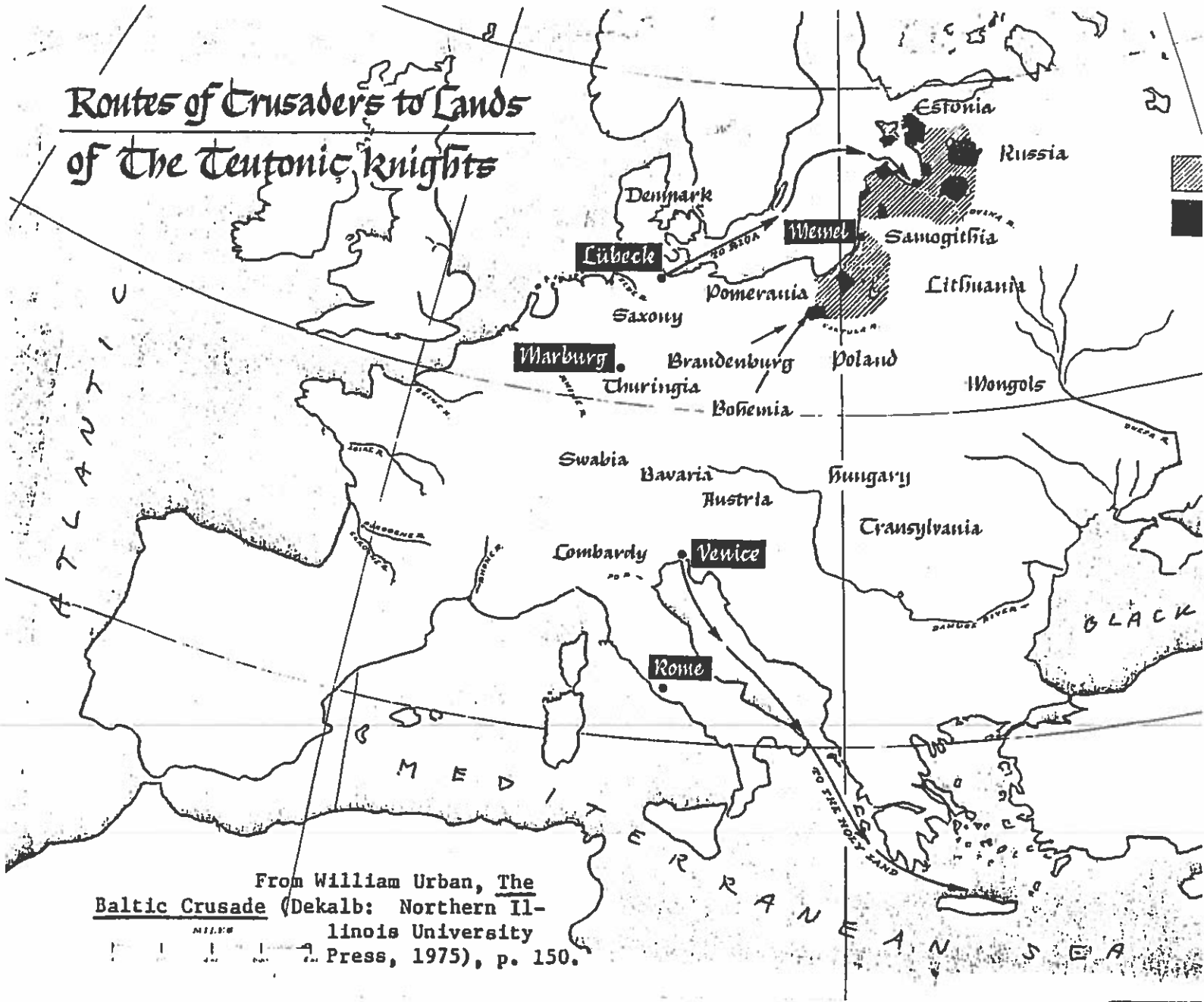
Danish Estonia

Lake Peipus

Oesel-Wiek

GULF OF RIGA

Dorpat

Pskov

Isborg

Kurland

Riga

Aa R.

Segewold

Riga

Goldlingen

Aa R.

Riga

Mitau

Drina R.

Dünaburg

Polozk

Samogithia

Memel

Niemen R.

Königsberg

Elbing

Ermland

Duchy of Pomerania

Vistula R.

Kulm

Thorn

Duchy of Masovia

Oder R.

BALTIC SEA

Teutonic Knights

Allied Powers

Neighboring States

Territories of
the Teutonic Knights

Miles
0   60   120
0   100   200
Kilometers

Bishopric ♀

Archbishopric Ⓠ

From Ibid., p. 175.

Routes of Crusaders to Lands
of The Teutonic Knights

ATLANTIC

Estonia

Russia

Denmark

Meinel

Samogithia

Lübeck

Lithuania

Pomerania

Saxony

Marburg

Brandenburg

Poland

Mongols

Thuringia

Bohemia

Swabia

Bavaria

Hungary

Austria

Transylvania

Lombardy

Venice

BLACK

Rome

DANUBE RIVER

TO THE HOLY LAND

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

From William Urban, The
Baltic Crusade (Dekalb: Northern Il-
linois University
Press, 1975), p. 150.

MILES