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The significance of the lost painting "The siege of Malbork in 1460" from Dwór Artusa in the study of the arms and armour of the close of the fifteenth century

Acta Archaeologica Lodziensia nr 47, 83-99

2001

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOST PAINTING
THE SIEGE OF MALBORK IN 1460 FROM DWÓR ARTUSA IN THE STUDY
OF THE ARMS AND ARMOUR OF THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY**

Some remarks on the research output

The tableau from Dwór Artusa (The Court of King Arthur) in Gdańsk attributed to a Lower German painter of the Rhine circle and dated to the years 1482-88 has hardly ever been mentioned in the Polish scientific literature¹. The painting's rich epic accessories show a panorama of war activities in the vicinity of Malbork in 1460. Especially two historians, Marian Biskup and Karol Górski, have dealt with the issue of the Thirteen Years' War so far². The subject of the picture was rightly identified in 1868 and it has since been historically supplemented. The painting shows various war episodes taking place at the walls of Malbork in 1460, the siege strategy which brought about

¹ The painting *The Siege of Malbork in 1460* (measuring 195 cm by 274 cm) hung over the Bench of the Malbork Brotherhood and it got lost as a result of World War II. W. K u s s i n, *Spätgotische Tafelmalerie in Danzig* (Diss), Erlangen 1936, pp. 86 seqq., 95 seqq.; Z. K r u s z e l n i c k i, *Historyzm i kult przeszłości w sztuce pomorskiej XVI-XVIII wieku (Historism and the Worship of the Past in the Pomeranian Art of the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries)*. Prace Wydziału Filologiczno-Filozoficznego Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu, vol. 29, 1984, fascicle 4, pp. 10 seqq.; for the literature on the subject also see: A. S. L a b u d a, *Malarstwo tablicowe w Gdańsku w drugiej połowie XV w. (Tableau Painting in Gdańsk in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century)*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 114-132, catalogue no. 13, pp. 203 sqq.; by the same author, *Dzieła tworzone w Gdańsku w drugiej połowie XIV i w początkach XV wieku (Works Created in Gdańsk in the Second Half of the Fourteenth and at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Centuries)*, [in:] J. D o m a s ł o w s k i and others, *Malarstwo gotyckie na Pomorzu Wschodnim (Gothic Painting in Eastern Pomerania)*, Warszawa-Poznań 1990, pp. 141-147. Some remarks on the origin of the painting can be found in my paper entitled *Mikrokosmos w malarstwie gdańskim schyłku XV wieku na przykładzie „Oblężenia Malborka” z Dworu Artusa („The Siege of Malbork” from Dwór Artusa as an Example of the Microcosm in the Gdańsk Painting of the Close of the Fifteenth Century)*, delivered at the XLV Polish SHS Session entitled *Sztuka około 1500 (Art around 1500)*, held in Gdańsk in November 1996.

² M. B i s k u p, *Trzynastoletnia wojna z Zakonem Krzyżackim 1454-1466 (The Thirteen Years' War with the Teutonic Order 1454-1466)*, Warszawa 1967, for information about the siege of Malbork, see pp. 566-570; K. G ó r s k i, *Dzieje Malborka (A History of Malbork)*, Gdańsk 1973, pp. 99-117.

the city's acceptance of the authority of the governor, a deputy to King Casimir Jagiellonian, in August that year³.

Art historians, such as Walter Mannowsky, Alfred Stange and Willi Drost, discussed the question of the painting's author before World War II and Adam S. Labuda has made some stylistic analyses as well as carried out some workshop and iconographic search lately. The former paid attention to the influence exerted by Flemish miniatures. A. Stange was of the opinion that the author of *The Siege of Malbork, The Ten Commandments* and the co-author of the *Passion of Toruń* and the *Annunciation* from St. John's Church has nothing to do with the Pomerania and even Gdańsk painting tradition. Hence, Stange's version contradicts W. Kussin's view, according to whom the author of *The Siege* worked in Gdańsk long enough to set up a painter's workshop there and paint such works as the Winterfelds diptych, *Ecce Homo*, the first two sections of the tableau *The Ten Commandments* and the altar in the Church of SS Peter and Paul's⁴.

**Malbork and the vicinity, as seen
by a painter of the close of the fifteenth century**

The tableau picture entitled *The Siege of Malbork*, which got lost as a result of World War II and is known

³ R. B e r g a u, *Vermichte Nachrichten*, „Anzeiger für Kunde der Deutschen Vorzeit”, Bd 15, 1868, nos. 3 and 5; M. B e r s o h n, *Notatka o znalezionym przez Mathiasa Bersohna w Dworze Artusa obrazie przedstawiającym oblężenie Malborka przez Kazimierza Jagiellończyka (A Note on the Painting Representing Malbork Besieged by Casimir Jagiellonian Found by Mathias Bersohn in Dwór Artusa)*, „Biblioteka Warszawska”, vol. 1, 1870; T. K r u s z y Ń s k i, *Stary Gdańsk i historia jego sztuki (Old Gdańsk and the History of its Art)*, Kraków 1912; L. K a e m e r e r, *Nordiederländische Buchkunst und ostdeutsche Tafelmalerie im 15. Jahrhundert*, „Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen”, Bd. 40, 1919, pp. 54 seqq.

⁴ W. M a n n o w s k y, *Zwei Darstellungen der Belagerung Marienburg im Artushof*, „Ostdeutsche Monatshefte”, H. 7, 1926, pp. 533 seqq.; W. D r o s t, *Danziger Malerei vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des Barock. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Strukturforchung in der Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin-Leipzig 1938, pp. 61 seqq.; A. S t a n g e, *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik*, Bd 11, München-Berlin 1961, pp. 114 seqq.; W. K u s s i n, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 seqq.

only thanks to photographic reproductions, was composed of both realistic and idealistic elements. To begin with, it should be noted that the painter depicted the events of the spring and summer of 1460 over twenty years after the Battle of Malbork, during which they had occurred. Consequently: How should one understand the picture's narrative layer today and to what extent the artist's imagination was controlled by the persons who commissioned the work?

In the central part of the picture one can see the fortifications of Malbork, which run from south to north. A high brick wall with flanking towers and gates surrounds the dense city. The tableau represents numerous housetops and the characteristic silhouettes of St. Mary's Chapel at St. Mary's Gate, the tops of the town hall with a transept spire on the roof, the tall, tent-like roof of the city court, the nave of St. John's Church with its tower, as well as the body of the castle surrounded by a double wall with tall slim flanking towers. High Castle with its church and tower and Middle Castle with fragments of the Grand Masters' Palace are clearly visible. There are also some fascinating fortifications with bulwarks, in which some banners are stuck (the banners may have belonged to the troops laying siege to the castle). A number of bigger and smaller battles are being fought between the fortifications and the city wall and it is the battles that are the subject of the painting.

In the multi-plot foreground of the painting one can see a number of supplementary accessories. The emotional character of this part of the work is devoid of the drama of the battle scenes. The picture shows some carpenters doing woodwork, some people rounding up cattle, a few shepherds, men setting off for a hunt, a meeting in a garden, some couples bathing and a cavalcade of horsemen, which is very important, from the point of view of our discussion.

Besides the two sections in the foreground and the „mid-ground” in the upper part of the picture one can see a vast panoramic view of many towns, settlements, single houses, roads, a river, a few streams, ponds, groups of trees, vast meadows, some wanderers and animals. There are also a few inscriptions in the picture. Besides, thanks to the shape of the walls and the silhouettes of the towns there is little doubt about what towns are depicted. The following villages can be identified in the depression area in the vicinity of Malbork: Kończewice, Wielkie Lichnowy („Gross Lichtenaw”) with churches, a windmill, the marshes of the Vistula River with their swans and wild geese. There are a fisherman on the river bank, a man driving a wagon along a road, a horseman and a couple of wanderers, some canals, little bridges and the road through Kościelecunki winding in the direction of Nowy Staw („Neuetich”). The road runs through the fields and a forest, which does not exist now. On the left it ends with a ford across the Vistula River and on the right it runs past a mill and a cross in the direction of Elbląg and Pogórze (Oberland). One cannot see the Vistula estuary but on the left bank of the river is a range of morainal hills (instead of the Gdańsk depression area). From south to north on the horizon there appear the church in Gorzędziej not Gniew, as many researchers have believed

so far⁵ on a hill, another hill with a windmill and a gallows near Tczew, called Wzgórze Wisielców (Hanged People's Hill), further the towns of Tczew („Dirschaw die stat”) and Elbląg („Elbingk”).

For the historians of Malbork, the important thing is that the picture shows the oldest known view of the city as well as the capital castle of the Teutonic Order and that it is an important source of information about the military accessories of the close of the fifteenth century. This is why we should ask the following question: To what extent the painting is reliable as far as the architecture of the city's buildings, the battle scenes and the other narrative scenes depicting everyday life are concerned?

A viewer watching the painting concentrates his attention on the background, the city walls and parts of the castle with the defensive system. The town and the castle seem to be connected and surrounded by one system of walls and moats but, in reality, in the south a wall and a deep moat separate the two organisms. Today one can have a similar impression if they stand between Piłsudskiego and Piastowska streets, that is, near the contemporary Szewski Młyn (the Shoemakers' Mill), from which place the painter probably made a sketch for his work⁶. The castle wall, which actually stands back from the city wall built from layers of stretchers, can be seen from south and east. In reality, the city was surrounded by walls on all sides. The walls had flanking towers on the western, southern and eastern sides and three gates: St. Mary's Gate (also called the Shipping or Sztum Gate), where the road to Sztum and Kwidzyn began, the Holy Spirit's Gate (also called the Pottery Gate), through which the road to Elbląg ran, on the eastern side and the Shoemaker's Gate, which connected the town with the western settlement and was situated near the Nogat River. The picture shows the profile of St. Mary's Gate with St. Mary's Chapel erected on its top (hence the name of the gate) with three stained-glass windows, crenellated walls and a pitched roof⁷. Farther one can see

⁵ A. S. L a b u d a, *Dziela (The Works)*, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶ It is probable that the painter was asked to sketch the architecture of Malbork in the open air. Several dozen years later a contract between the Bench of the Malbork Brotherhood in Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk and the contractor Martin Schoninck concerning the painting *The Siege of Malbork Castle* contained a clause which entitled the painter to have his traveling expenses paid (he traveled from Gdańsk to Malbork). Walter Mannowsky cites the lost document, which says among other things, „[...] dath Sloth tho Maryneborch myth der belagerunge, unde aff tho malen wecher side vom Slothe en beste gefallen werth um myne unkosten dor hin tho reysen dat Sloth tho conteriyen...”, W. M a n n o w s k y, op. cit., pp. 540 seqq. See the recent study: A. R. C h o d y Ń s k i, *Co naprawę przedstawia obraz Martina Schonincka z widokiem zamku malborskiego z 1536 r.? (What does the Painting with a View of Malbork Castle of 1536 by Martin Schoninck Really Represent?)*, [in] *Ars Longa*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 221-239.

⁷ On the plan of the Malbork fortifications of 1629 found in the monograph by Karol Górski the southern fortification line has got double walls and two gates, called the Inner Sztum Gate

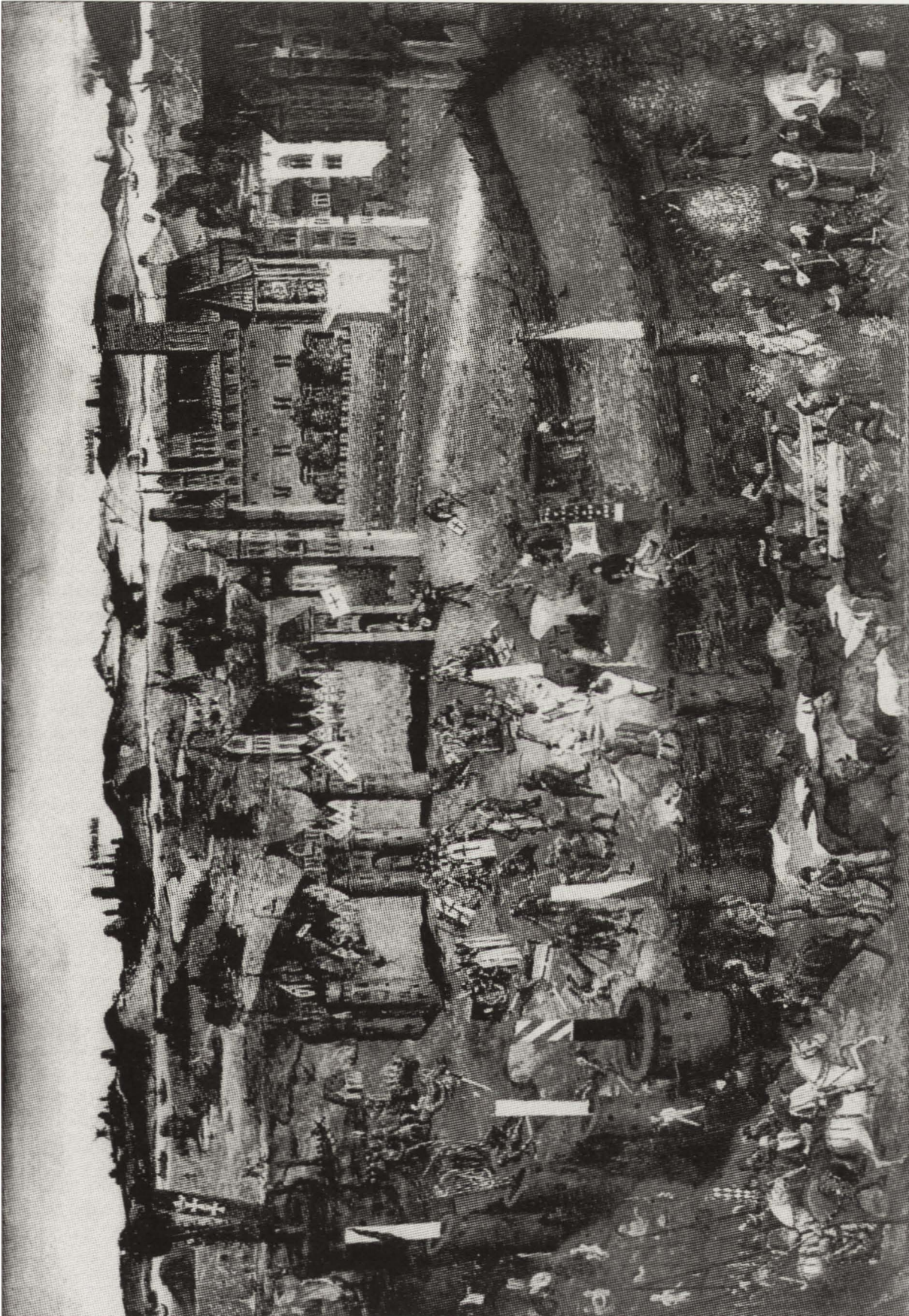


Fig. 1. An overall view of the painting *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*.

two round flanking towers with crenellated walls (the corner tower has got a helm roof). The Holy Spirit's gate has two semi-circular flanking towers joined by a roofed passage. Another gate is depicted on the north-eastern side (in reality there was a square corner flanking tower in this place).

On the well-known *Plan of the Castle and the Town Fortifications of 1629*, reproduced by Karol Górski, and *A View of the Castle from a Plan of 1629*, are two barbicans of St. Mary's and the Holy Spirit's gates. None of them can be seen in the picture⁸. In the eastern city wall line, between the south-eastern corner flanking tower and the Holy Spirit's Gate, are four square flanking towers and between this gate and the north-eastern corner flanking tower there are also three flanking towers, which are not depicted either. All modern plans of Malbork, namely Getkant's plan of 1639, plans of 1656 and 1665 and a view of Malbork from the east of 1755 from *The Malbork Song-Book* show five flanking towers south of the Holy Spirit's Gate and four such towers north of that gate⁹. The artist painted the damage done to the walls by firing from heavy guns, which can be seen in the southern flanking tower and the wall below the figure of the mayor of Malbork, Bartholomeus Blume.

The well-known elements of High Castle, namely the eastern choir of the church and the colossal figure of Mary with the Infant Jesus¹⁰, as well as the tower, are clearly visible. Further there is the body of Middle Castle with its eastern wing partly masking the Grand Masters' palace. High Castle is surrounded by three lines of defensive walls with battlements. A ditch or a moat is hidden in front of the outer wall, equipped with polygonal flanking towers¹¹. On the northern side one can see a sketch of the gate neck leading to the New Gate with a single semi-circular flanking tower.

It should be emphasized that in the picture representing Malbork the real elements outnumber the elements

being a result of the painter's interpretative perception of architecture. There are additional loopholes in the curtain battlements of the walls: Some *hackenbüsche* (hackbutt) holes or keyholes are situated in the lower parts of the city's and the castle's flanking towers and slits are to be found in their upper parts. Some older, circular forms can also be seen. Gdanisko¹², depicted between High Castle and St. John's Parish Church, is surrounded by a hourdin with circular blind windows. In my opinion the structures are outer, mobile covers, embrasure targets shaped like blocks x cm in diameter, used to close the embrasures along a vertical axis by means of the revolving blocks¹³.

In the foreground, where the above-mentioned battles are taking place, is a building surrounded by earthworks situated between two ponds fed with water by the canal of the Młynówka River. The Młynówka River flows from the south-eastern corner flanking tower towards the north-west. The river is irregular and is surrounded by marshes (a soldier lying on the ground is drinking some water from one of them). The building should be interpreted as the Middle Mill (Mittel Mühle), which was situated near the sluice connecting the Młynówka River with another canal, called Poggengraben, flowing near present-day Grunwaldzka Street. I do not think that the building could be interpreted as the Little Mill, which used to stand near the crossroads of Piastowska, Piłsudskiego and Kościuszki streets and which does not exist today. The painter of the simultaneous picture was influenced by the idea that the topography of a particular area was not necessarily the real topography of the place but was subordinate to the events depicted. The artist used foreshortened views very freely. The battles depicted in the picture took place in the vicinity of the Middle Mill so he placed the Middle Mill on the axis of the parish church, though in reality it was the Shoemakers' Mill that stood there.

The building painted almost on the bank of the Nogat River between the city wall and the bulwark called Mały Gdańsk is difficult to recognize. Is it St. George's Church? That explanation seems plausible to me. It should be noted that for ages, present-day Zapolskiej Street had been called Bulwark Street and it was probably named after the great bulwark which stood there during the siege of the Thirteen

(Inwendige Stumsche Thür) and the Outer Sztum Gate (Auswendige Stumsche Thür). The latter was lengthened and had earthworks before its mouth. There was St. Mary's Chapel on the upper floor (the chapel had been moved from the Inner Gate). The gate was subsequently destroyed by the Swedes in the 1650s K. Górski, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 128 and 135.

⁹ The plan of 1755 from *The Malbork Song-Book* (E. E d l e n, *Neu übersehens Marienburgisches gesangbuch*, 1756. The collection of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences as well as the plans mentioned above always show five flanking towers on the southern side of the Holy Spirit's Gate and four on the northern side of that gate.

¹⁰ The colossal figure of St. Mary of Malbork has lately been mentioned by Andrzej Grzybowski in his article *Geneza kolosa malborskiego (The origins of the Malbork Giant): A. Grzybowski, Między formą a znaczeniem. Studia z ikonografii architektury i rzeźby gotyckiej (Between Form and Meaning. Studies in the Iconography of Architecture and Gothic Sculpture)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 168-184.

¹¹ I attempt to interpret the architectural elements of the castle visible in the picture in the book *Zamek Malborski w obrazach i kartografii (Malbork Castle in Painting and Cartography)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 25 seqq.

¹² The original *gdanisko* of the Malbork convent was situated in the vicinity of the so-called present-day Priest Tower and the Bell-Ringer's Tower, over the moat or an arm of the millstream. I arrived at that conclusion thanks to the observation of the oblique wall and the blind window in the parapet walk in the northern wing wall of present-day High Castle, as well as the pillars under the arcade in the tower's basement. This observation was first published in my article devoted to Malbork, included in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List compiled by UNESCO („Wiedza i Życie”, no. 6 (52), 1998, pp. 43-47.

¹³ *Mały słownik terminologiczny dawnej architektury obronnej w Polsce (A Concise Glossary of Old Defensive Architecture in Poland)*, (ed. J. Bogdanowski, Z. Holcer, M. Kornecki, A. Swaryczewski). Second Edition, Kraków 1988, p. 85.

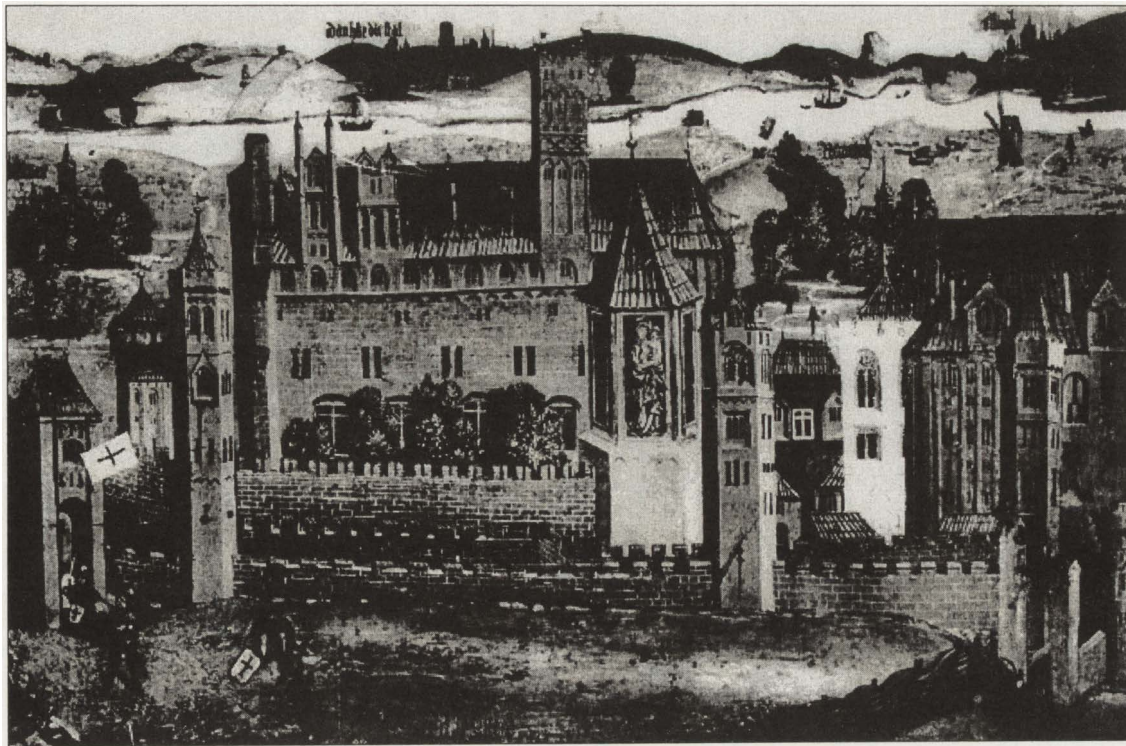


Fig. 2. A view of High Castle, a part of Middle Castle and a panorama of the Vistula River and the nearby towns. A fragment of *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*.

Years' War. If that assumption proves to be correct, the above-mentioned building might be St. George's Church.

On the left on the Nogat River the artist placed two sailing ships and a boat. These are medium-seized vessels manned by ten people and equipped with one mast and one yard each. The boats, called *sneki* or *szkuty*, were part of the coastguard fleet and served as auxiliary ships carrying provisions¹⁴. On the right side of the Mały Gdańsk Bulwark there appears a rowboat with a tall non-yard mast and a folded sail (?). The ten-man boats are sailing downstream and their sails are filled with wind. One can wonder why the rowboat's sail has been folded. On the bow there is a figure of a man holding a long oar, a pole or a rudder handle. He is either steering the boat upstream or checking the depth, which will be important if the boat is loaded. He may be pushing aside pieces of ice with a pole if the boat is sailing downstream towards the town. It is difficult to tell whether the ships and the boat are only ornamental accessories or whether the scene is an illustration depicting an event of the end of March 1460, namely the transportation of pork fat and weapons for the Teutonic knights besieged in the city¹⁵.

¹⁴ *Polska technika wojskowa do 1500 roku (Polish Technology of War to 1500)*. Collective work, ed. by A. Nadolski, Warszawa 1994, pp. 366 seqq.

¹⁵ All sorts of boat were used in the coastal operations in the Vistula estuary and river operations during the Thirteen Years' War. There were, among others, barges and boats called *sneki*, *szkuty*, and *dubasy*. Defensive bulwarks were erected on the Teutonic and Gdańsk barges during, for example, the siege of Świecie in the spring of 1461. Bulwarks were built across the Elbląg Vistula River in September 1463 M. B i s k u p, *op. cit.*, pp. 604 and 647 seqq.

For the persons who commissioned the painting the most important thing was to depict the wartime events at the foot of Malbork's city wall during which the troops of Gdańsk, commanded by the Gdańsk councilors, won fame. However, it is impossible to arrange all the scenes in chronological order. The artist's contemporaries must have expressed some doubts themselves and this is why there are sashes with their names and surnames next to the figures of three men: Bartholomeus Blume, the mayor of Malbork, who stands next to the breached city wall, Jakub Czan, the commander of the Tczew troops, who lies on a shield in front of St. Mary's Gate, and Albert von Dalen, who supervises woodwork outside the fortifications.

The historical panorama

As I have mentioned before, *The Siege of Malbork* is characterized by a simultaneous epic narrative. The battles and scenes depicted take place in the same place, that is to say, at the foot of Malbork wall, but at different times. Shown in historical detail, they are a valuable iconographic document.

The chronology of the Thirteen Years' War events at the foot of the walls of Malbork in the late months of 1459 and 1460 can be found in the eye-witness account by Johann Lindau, the secretary of the City Council of Gdańsk¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Scriptores rerum prussicarum*, (ed.) T. Hirsch, M. Töppen, E. Strehke, Bd. 4, Leipzig 1870 (farther quoted as SRP], pp. 490-637, particularly pp. 566-569.

Lindau's diary contained official *Memoriale* providing factual information about the activities of the Gdańsk troops and the Teutonic troops movements during the siege. This detailed diary, included in the so-called Ferber Book, has been recognized as an important source of information about the Thirteen Years' War¹⁷. Are the notes equally reliable as far as arms and armour researches are concerned? I shall attempt to answer this question by comparing the notes with the painting¹⁸.

The starosta (governor) Prandota Libiszowski supervised the siege works from October 1459 onwards. Bartholomeus Blume attempted to negotiate, but the talks were broken off when, in the severe winter of 1459, the Teutonic captain Augustyn Trotzeler together with 20 knights arrived in the city and became the commander of defence. The negotiations dragged on in the hope that further reinforcements might be dispatched. Finally, Blume was informed that Grand Master Ludwig Erlichshausen ordered that

¹⁷ P. G e h r k e, *Das Ebert Ferber-Buch und seine Bedeutung für die Danziger Tradition der Ordens Geschichte*, „Zeitschrift des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins” [farther quoted as ZWG], Jg 31, 1898, p. 71; J. D w o r z a c z k o w a, *Dziejopisarstwo gdańskie do połowy XVI wieku (Gdańsk Chronicle Writing to the Middle of Sixteenth Century)*, Gdańsk 1962 passim; M. B i s k u p, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ I would agree with Paul Gehrke that Landau kept an official diary of war events. He was not the only person making notes on the operations. Hans Thiergartt, who lived in the time of the Thirteen Years' War, is known to have kept a sort of diary too. Lindau describes the war events of the early spring of 1454 quite precisely. He mentions the first military operations at the walls of Malbork, where he had been sent by the City Council in Gdańsk. Thus he was able to give an eyewitness account on the war activities. As a member of the delegation of the Prussian States he participated in the peace talks in Chełmno in March 1459, which failed as a result of the Teutonic Knights' uncompromising standpoint. The fighting resumed the same month. The weather played a major role in the following military operations. The winter of 1459/60 was very severe and the Gulf of Gdańsk was covered in ice as far as Hel. In March 1460 it was possible to travel across the frozen Baltic Sea from Gdańsk to Lübeck, Rostock and Denmark, and The Sound could not be sailed through. One was able to get to Rewal and a few Swedish towns by horse or sleigh. At that time, during the absence of the Teutonic captain Augustus Trotzeler, who despite Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen's requests refused to become the commander of the Teutonic crew, mayor Bartholomeus Blume took command of the situation. It should be noted that seizing Malbork was the objective of the Prussian Towns Union and the king at the beginning of the war. It was only in 1456 that the Poles seized the castle and the city. A year later, however, Malbork, was in the Teutonic hands again and from that year onwards attempts were made to recover it. P. G e h r k e, *Der Geschichtsschreiber Bartholomaeus Wartzmann in Kreise seine Abschreiber*, ZWG, Jg 41, 1900, p. 126; J. D w o r z a c z k o w a, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 146 seqq.; H. S a m s o n o w i c z, *Gdańsk w okresie wojny trzynastoletniej (Gdańsk in the Period of the Thirteen Years' War)*, [in:] *Historia Gdańska (A History of Gdańsk)*, Volume II: 1454-1655, (ed.) E. Cieślak, Gdańsk 1982, p. 64; SRP, p. 566; K. G ó r s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 111.



Fig. 3. Battles in the foreground of Malbork. A fragment of *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*.

a large army gather in Królewiec on 29th December. It was in Królewiec that captains and captains of horse who had joined the Teutonic services arrived to be given orders. However, before the main forces were assembled, the Grand Master had decided to equip another 200 or 300 soldiers with additional arms. Pretending to be leaving Prussia, the warriors headed for Malbork¹⁹. Knights and enlisted soldiers from the nearby castles which were in Polish hands started to gather in March 1460. Fortification works, aimed at cutting off the city, began on 21st March. The Gdańsk troops commanded by Right City Mayor Jacob Falke (d. 1461)²⁰, the councilor Johann Meideburg (Meydeburgg, Meydeborch)²¹ and Jürgen German²² arrived too. Local peasants provided wagons and diggers, spades and hatchets were brought from Gdańsk and woodworkers turned up. The timber was shipped from the Sztum Forest. From March 12 Prandota Libiszowski awaited a counterattack of the Teutonic reinforcements who had been dispatched from

¹⁹ SRP, p. 566, note 2.

²⁰ J. Z d r e n k a, *Rats und Gerichtspatriziat der Rechten Stadt Danzig. Teil I: 1342-1525*, Hamburg 1993, pp. 138 and 247.

²¹ Johan Meideburg, a leading personage on the Gdańsk side during the siege of Malbork in 1460. He was first mentioned as a member of the Right Town Council in 1434. Meideburg became a councilor in 1441, but he never held office as Mayor. He died on 6th February 1468, *ibidem*, pp. 110-146 and 345; *Księga Żołdu Związku Pruskiego z okresu wojny trzynastoletniej 1454-1466 (The Pay Book of the Prussian Union of the Time of the Thirteen Years' War 1454-1466)*, (ed.) A. C z a c h a r o w s k i, Scientific Society in Toruń, Fontes 61, Toruń 1969, pp. 23 and 53.

²² SRP, p. 566.

Gniew Castle at the request of Blume. The ice on the Nogat River had started to thaw, but large pieces of ice were still floating in the water. Despite this, a ship and a boat carrying munitions and provisions for the besieged town finally arrived. On March 27th the Gdańsk troops, who were lying in ambush under the bridge, attacked the Teutonic reinforcements on the partly frozen river, which took the latter entirely by surprise. They managed to throw the supplies into the water and run away on foot. Only a few barrels of pork fat, 14 suits of armour (*harnisch*), 24 lead projectile firearms (*lotbüchsen*) were fished out of the river²³. While writing his account, Lindau referred to the armour as *harnish* (plate armour) and *panzer* (chain mail) interchangeably.

The reinforcements did not arrive and on April 3rd Blume and the Teutonic knights besieged in the city expelled 10 women, all maidens and children, elderly and poor people not to have too many mouths to feed. They were, however, forced to return to Malbork by the besieging army²⁴. The Gdańsk and Elbląg troops did not wait for the capitulation talks to resume and started to dig a sap under the southern moat in the direction of St. John's Church. The works were never finished because a spy from the castle informed the Teutonic knights about the adit. Blume's opponents felt so threatened that they engineered a plot, which turned out fatal for the mayor. As I have mentioned before, the people from Gdańsk did the engineering works, but after Libiszowski's death, on 1st May, they were supervised by the new starosta Jan Kościelecki in consultation with the governor Ścibor Bażyński²⁵.

Let us have a look at the fortifications erected around Malbork by the besieging army. The task was not easy because the winter of 1459/60 was very severe. Libiszowski's idea to blockade the town more effectively than they did in August 1458 was accepted as late as March. The works started on March 21st and ended in June. The strategic plan involved surrounding the city with ditches, palisades and reinforced bulwarks situated opposite the gates on the eastern and southern sides. *The Siege of Malbork* shows double palisades in the eastern part with additional branches running from the New Gate in the direction of the mill. The palisades ended with a low bulwark before reaching the mill. The mill was surrounded by a high palisade, which did not run around the pond and the upper part of the Młynówka River.

Ten of the bulwarks were built using baskets filled with earth and had their outer walls covered in clay. The basket structure of the bulwarks is clearly visible in the finial of the great bulwark (Mały Gdańsk). The strategic location of the Sztum Gate, that is to say, St. Mary's Gate, was of paramount importance. This why a powerful bulwark with



Fig. 4. An assault on St. Mary's Gate and the death of Jakub Czan. A fragment of *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*.

a crow's nest was erected opposite that gate. A panorama of the city and the river, as well as the vast area extending from Malbork towards Sztum, Wielbark, and eastwards, spread out from the top of the bulwark. The castle tower was another observation post, which commanded a vista of the marketplace, the town hall and farther towards St. Mary's gate. Thus the town was kept under constant surveillance.

All the bulwarks were linked by an outer palisade that protected the foreground. The historical events proved the decision to build so complex fortification right. The foot soldiers and horsemen commanded by the Grand Master who were trying to supply the town with food failed to force the palisades on 15th April. Lindau stresses the Gdańsk troops' role in resisting the attack, which started at dawn and ended in the afternoon. He mentions volleys of gunfire and repulsing the Teutonic forces towards the lake (Lake Piekarskie?) and beyond the Sztum Forest. There in the meadows, the Grand Master's forces were defeated and lost the provisions²⁶. It seems that the Teutonic attack began a few days late, because the eastern defensive line was ready on 12th April. Libiszowski was in charge of the defence (after his death the councilors of Gdańsk took command).

The system of fortifications worked. The mayor Falke and the troop commanders, namely councilor Gerd Meligdorp, councillor Kurt (Cort) von Dalen and especially

²³ SRP, p. 567.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibidem; T. Borawska, *Bażyński Ścibor*, [in:] *Słownik Biograficzny Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego (A Biographical Dictionary of Vistula Pomerania)*, ed. Stanisław Gierszewski, Vol. 1: A-F, Gdańsk, pp. 73 seqq.

²⁶ SRP, p. 569.



Fig. 5. The departure of governor Ścibor Bażyński and a retinue of Polish lancers. A fragment of *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*.

Meideburg, would be mentioned among the most outstanding men (Gerd Meligdorp was responsible for floating goods on the Vistula River near Tczew in the winter of 1458²⁷, Kurt von Dalen and 300 combatants were killed in the Battle of Pruszcz on August 28th 1460)²⁸. According to Ewald Wrige's account prepared for the Council, the woodworkers from Gdańsk made ladders and oaken shield covers²⁹. Councilor Joachim von der Becke³⁰ and George German, who did not represent the Gdańsk authorities³¹, were also mentioned among the heroes of Malbork operation. Karol Górski rightly assumed that it was Prandota Libiszowski who had the idea of a siege war. According to this researcher, the councilors took command only after the starosta's sudden death (his deputy, Kościelecki, was absent because he commanded Polish enlisted soldiers defending the monastery in Oliwa)³².

²⁷ Gerd Myligdorp, a town councilor of Gdańsk to 1469, J. Zdręka, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 138 and 247; SRP, pp. 330-570.

²⁹ M. Biskup, *op. cit.* P. 526.

³⁰ J. Zdręka, *op. cit.*, pp. 138 and 220; K. Górski, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³¹ Hermann i Henning German are mentioned among the members of the Town Council in Gdańsk. J. Zdręka, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-132; 157-176; 273.

³² K. Górski, *op. cit.*, p. 112; B. Śliwiński, *Kościelecki Jan h. Ogończyk (Kościelecki Jan, Bearing the Ogończyk Arms)*, [in:] *Słownik (A Dictionary) op. cit.*, Vol. 2: G-K, Gdańsk 1994, p. 470.

Thus the Grand Master's troops reached the besieged town on neither 25th July nor 3rd August. As I have mentioned before, a plot was engineered in town as soon as the besieged people had learnt about the sap. The supporters of the idea of surrendering to the king drew up a capitulation document on 5th August. The next day, Ścibor Bażyński and starosta Kościelecki put their conditions in writing, which means that they were both present at the castle then. This fact is of great importance from the point of view of my further interpretation of the painting.

The well-known events occurred very fast. The three-year battle ended on 6th August. The councilors of Gdańsk gathered in the town hall to try Blume, a handful of his followers and the Teutonic captain Augustyn Trotzeler and deliver their verdict. This was the end of the Malbork events of 1460 in brief.

The interpretation of the battle scenes, the cavalcade of horsemen and individual figures in the picture

In the picture one can easily distinguish the forces of the opposing sides: There are the Teutonic troops carrying white shields with a single black cross, the troops of Gdańsk equipped with red shields with two white crosses and the Polish lancers. Groups of soldiers defending the town commanded by Trotzeler are visible outside the city walls. Others are fighting with Gdańsk soldiers. The Teutonic enlisted soldiers were paid by the Grand Master and their commander was in charge of the city bodyguards as well.

The starosta was in charge of the Gdańsk forces. As I have mentioned before, they were led by the city councilors, three of whom were mayors. The most outstanding commander, Meideburg, was one of the councilors with the longest tenure³³. They directly commanded the enlisted soldiers of Gdańsk, who unlike soldiers enlisted by the Prussian states, were paid by the municipal treasury and not by the Prussian Union. We do not know how many soldiers the Gdańsk forces taking part in the fights for Malbork in 1460 consisted of. They comprised a number of bodyguards – *knechts* and townspeople, militiamen, and

³³ In 1460 the City Council of the Right City of Gdańsk comprised the mayors Reynold Nederhoff, Jacob Falke, Herman Stargart, Wilhelm Jordan; 38 city councilors: Marten Cremon, Johan Meydeborch, Dirk Oldevelt, Johan van Wolde, Andris Eler, Marquart Knake, Eynwolt Wrige, Bartholt Slechter, Tydeman Langerbeck, Cord van Dalen, Johan van Schauwen, Joachym van der Beke, Johan Pleckow, Marten Erthman, Johan Smerebarth, Bernd Pawest, Roloff Veltstede, Otto Brambeke, Herman Bodinghusen, Arnd Backer, Johan Abstesshagen, Herman Hake, Hinrik Hatekanne, Matz Hagen, Johan Kretzmer, Johan Zevenwert, Johan Borchart, Peter Massow (in order of seniority). The chief officer was Andris Eler. Johan Vere, Johan Sasse, Hinrik Swertenwolt, Johan Leeman, Johan Zenger, Johan Conrads, Matcz Schnezee, Match Colmener, Michel Kozeler, Johan Angermunde, Johan van Herferde, Herman Ilhorn were members of the City Council (in order of seniority). J. Zdręka, *op. cit.*



Fig. 6. St. George killing the dragon. A sculpture from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk, about 1485.

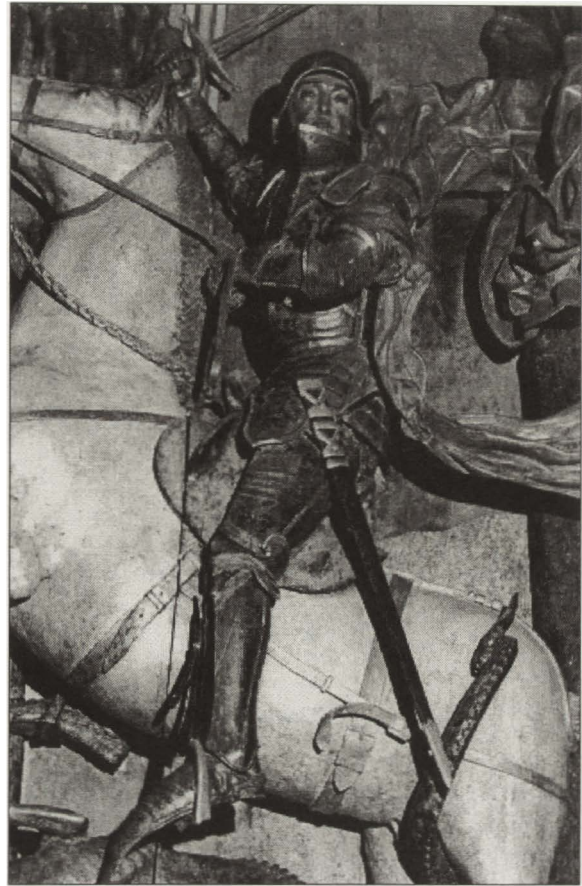


Fig. 7. St. George's armour, about 1485. A fragment of the sculpture from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk.

a few mounted warriors, among whom were some impoverished knights of Pomerania and Chełmno district³⁴. If in the summer of 1454 3000 combatants commanded by Herman Stargard set off from Gdańsk for Malbork³⁵ and the town contributed a total of 3800 men³⁶, it might be assumed that from 2000 to 2500 men took part in the siege of Malbork in 1460, which seems to be quite a large number.

The king's enlisted soldiers were also present at the castle during the fights depicted in the Gdańsk picture. The painter did not show the castle crew. He concentrated on the accessories in the town's foreground and made the castle look silent and unique. There are several battle scenes: groups of combatants armed with arbalests, single soldiers firing their firearms, men engaged in hand-to-hand combat, naked soldiers bathing and taken by surprise by the Teutonic troops who grab their swords, protect their bodies with shields and start fighting. Most of the soldiers are armed. There are wounded and killed men on both sides.

³⁴ M. Biskup, *op. cit.*, p. 717.

³⁵ H. Samsonowicz, mentions the name of Heinrich Stargard, however this name cannot be found in the Gdańsk sources of the period of the Thirteen Years' War. The commander may have been Mayor Herman. H. Samsonowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 seqq.

³⁶ M. Biskup, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

Sometimes the fighting is violent and the battlefield is a scene of bloodshed. There are some cut-off limbs scattered on the ground. A warrior kills a wounded man whose hand has already been cut off. But some soldiers are trying to avoid fighting. A man is sleeping or having a rest between the palisades, his arbalest leant against the fortifications; hidden behind a low bulwark, another is watching the fighting; a Teutonic soldier is urinating by the city wall. There are some everyday life scenes as well: an old woman is gathering herbs and putting them on a piece of cloth spread on the ground, a few couples are bathing naked in the river.

The painter made personages of high rank distinguishable from commoners and ordinary soldiers. The former wear luxurious dress, have excellent stallions, expensive horse accessories and weapons, as well as good manners. The latter are exuberant and full of vitality and look very natural. Their plain clothes are hung out on poles, their gestures are energetic and the bathing couples feel at ease too. The question is: Are the details so carefully shown in the Gdańsk picture a result of the artist's abstract epic inventiveness or do they come from the combatants' and their families' eye-witness accounts? Although this question cannot be answered, I would defend the thesis that the majority of the characteristic dramatic scenes did occur during the siege. Undoubtedly, such events as the death of

Jakub Czan, the commander of the Tczew force, and von Dalen's supervision of the woodwork were based on fact. But on the other hand, medieval painters were fond of allegorical scenes. The enclosed garden scene (*hortus conclusus*) in the bottom right-hand corner of the lost painting belongs to this category³⁷.



Fig. 8. Horsemen in Italian armour. A fragment of *The triumph of Fame* by Master Cassone Adimari from The Bryan Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, about 1449.

The arrival of the deputy to the king (as far as I am concerned the deputy is Ścibor Bażyński) is depicted in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture. A body of armed lancers accompanies the man. They are led by a captain of horse, a knight in shiny armour and a feathered hat. It is impossible to tell whether the horsemen are a body of Polish levy-in-mass warriors or a group of union enlisted soldiers serving the king. A personage dressed in a patterned cloak stands out from all the other horsemen. This is an elderly man with a gray beard. He is holding a walking-stick-like object in his hand. Is it Ścibor Bażyński, who held the office of governor, the deputy to the king in the district of Prussia at that time („Seiner gnaden landen zcu Prussen gubernatoris stathelter”)³⁸? In front of him there rides a herald on a grey horse with a tabard³⁹ over his armour and a lance in his right hand. There is another man in

³⁷ For a recent discussion of love allegory in the „enclosed garden” (*hortus conclusus*), see: H. B e c k e r, *Der mittelalterliche Burggarten*, [in:] *Die Burg – ein kulturgeschichtliche Phänomen*. Herausgegeben von H. Hofrichter. Sonderheft der Zeitschrift, „Burgen und Schlösser”, Bd. 2, 1994, Stuttgart 1994, pp. 40-54.

³⁸ SRP, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

³⁹ The tabard is a herald's garment, a sleeveless coat embroidered or appliquéd with his sovereign's armorial bearings. It was worn over the shoulders and covered the breast and back. Tabards were not sewn up under the arms or were put on from one side.

a less expensive tabard among the horsemen. He seems to look directly at the viewer. He is wearing a coat of arms charged with the pale and bends. We do not know the hue of this shield of arms, but it graphically resembles the charge in the flag flying above the corner bulwark. Three trumpeters ride behind him and announce the arrival of the official, the king's deputy. A colour-bearer in armour holding a lance with a narrow flag is standing in the background. The flag is divided into halves horizontally (*party per fess*). The upper field is lozenge. The lower field is plain and charged with a letter B (Beisen – Bażyński?). There is a lancer unit right behind those figures. On the right, in the cavalcade, a viewer can see the backs of two mounted men. One of them is a courtier in red (?) with an impressive hairstyle⁴⁰. The men in armour and the men in dress are all wearing characteristic feathered hats. On the right a knight on a black (?) horse and in shiny armour is pointing out the fortifications. He may be one of the courtiers or the commander of the Gdańsk forces because his saddle is marked with two white crosses.

Military accessories in the painting *The Siege of Malbork*

The military accessories, which have not been the subject of a detailed analysis so far, seem to be very interesting to me. The individual examples mentioned by Marian Głosek should be enumerated here⁴¹. The general appearance of the suits of armour and weapons depicted, and in a few cases the details shown in the picture, are clear enough to identify, date and name the iconographic antecedents of the painting.

Defensive Arms and Armour

Most of the soldiers fighting in the painting are wearing various sorts of helms. The soldier who is pushing a wagon with fire towards St. Mary's Gate is wearing a sallet (a basnet) covering his cheeks, half of the nape, his collarbone and chin. The helm resembles the head covering on the wooden figure of St. George from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk, ascribed to Herman Brandt (it is impossible to tell whether the figure was really made by this artist⁴²) and

⁴⁰ The only coloured reproduction was published by H. G u m b e l, *Deutsche Kultur vom Zeitalter der Mystik bis zur gegenreformation*, Potsdam 1936, fig. 1.

⁴¹ M. G ł o s e k, *Późnośredniowieczna broń obuchowa w zbiorach polskich (Late Medieval Shock Weapons in Polish Collections)*, Warszawa-Lódź 1996, pp. 46 and 54.

⁴² The representation of St. George fighting with the dragon from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk has been ascribed to Hans Brandt (after Paul Abramowski), *Zur Schnitzplastik der Spätgotik und Renaissance in Danziger Artushof*, „Ostdeutsche Monatshefte”, H. 7, 1926, pp. 542-558; a biography of Hans Brandt was published by Teresa Mroczo in *Słownik artystów polskich i w Polsce działających (A Dictionary of Polish Artists and Poland-Based Artists)*, Vol. I: A-C, Wrocław-Gdańsk 1971, pp. 225 seqq.

dated to the years 1481-87, that is, to the period when *The Siege* was painted.

After him there strides another soldier painted in profile. He is wearing a Genoa or Milan-Brescia type barbut, which has a characteristic horizontal sight with reinforced edges shaped like the Greek letter tau. A barbut was a deep, heavy helmet with thick walls, which protected the face, neck and nape of a soldier wearing it. The Milan barbut

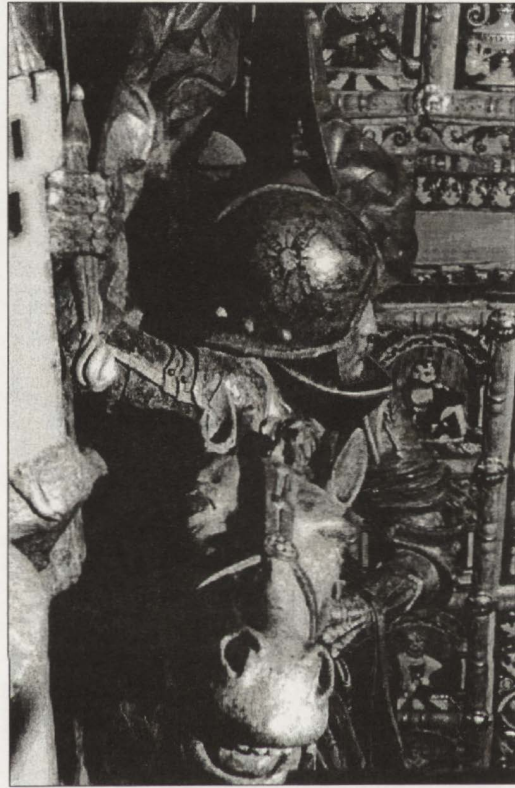


Fig. 9. St. George's helmet. A fragment of the sculpture from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk.

coming from the collection of Stephen V. Grancsay is a classic example of the barbut dating back to the years 1450-60 (the helm is now held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York). The inlay on the plate of a cabinet coming from Duke Federigo da Montefeltro of Gubbio's study and dated to the years 1480-85 is another representation of such a helm⁴³. The Teutonic soldier clad in chain mail and a cuirass who is fighting with a man in a pale doublet below the Middle Mill is wearing a sallet similar to the ones found on the figure of St. George and the collection built up in memory of Bashford Dean (now held in the Metropolitan Museum)⁴⁴. The above-mentioned types of helm and plate armour (see below) are shown in *The Triumph of Fame*, dating from around the mid-fifteenth century, representing mounted warriors in late

Gothic Italian armour⁴⁵. Italian type arms and armour, particularly helms imported from Genoa, were kept in commander Konrad von Lichtenstein's armoury (the beginning of the fifteenth century) and in the armouries of other Teutonic officials⁴⁶.

Kettle-hats were very popular with foot soldiers (a kettle-hat was called *pileo ferreo* in Latin, *eysinhut* or *isenhut* in German and *kłobuk* or *klobuczek* in Old Polish). They were used by enlisted soldiers and municipal militiamen, who usually wore them over chain mail hoods. In the fifteenth century the Teutonic Order and municipal armouries had vast arsenals of kettle-hats, which constituted 35 percent of the total number of head coverings⁴⁷. Helmets of this type were cheaper than visors but more expensive than sallets. There were kettle-hats with a reinforcing bevor (*cum barth*), blackened kettle-hats (*szwartcze*) and polished ones (*blancke, ciste*)⁴⁸. Soldiers fighting on both sides in the battle of Malbork had blackened kettle-hats.

As I have said before, Lindau mentions suits of chain mail (*panzer*), which are worn by many soldiers in the picture, and cuirasses as well as suits of plate armour (*harnish, harnsch*). Fourteen suits of armour were fished out of the Nogat River after the Teutonic stores had been thrown into the water on 27 March 1460⁴⁹. Let us try to interpret the word *harnish* found in Lindau's account. The term probably denoted complete defensive armour which consisted of the helmet, full plate armour and maybe a shield, like in the Magdeburg sentence documents (*ortelach*) of 1440-60⁵⁰. The word may have denoted partly laminated plate armour (*arma bellica*) composed of plates (a breastplate,

⁴⁵ Ibidem, Fig. 6 the representation is in *The Bryan Collection*, attached to the Historical Society of New York.

⁴⁶ A. R. Chodyski, *Zbrojownia malborska. Katalog wybranych obiektów ze zbiorów Muzeum Zamkowego w Malborku (The Malbork Armoury. A Catalogue of Selected Items from the Collection of the Castle Museum in Malbork)*, Malbork 1978, pp. 9 and 13.

⁴⁷ A. Nowakowski, *Arsenale zamków krzyżackich w Prusach w latach 1364-1431 (The Armories of Teutonic Castles in Prussia in 1364-1431)*, [in:] *Mediaevalia Archaeologica*, (ed.) A. Nadolski, Łódź 1986, p. 67; For information on the cost, production and prices of arms and armour (among others helmets), see: J. Szymczak, *Produkcja i koszty uzbrojenia rycerskiego w Polsce XIII-XV w. (The production and Cost of Knight's Arms and Armour in Poland in the Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries)*, Łódź 1989, passim.

⁴⁸ *Das Grosse Ämterbuch des Deutschen Ordens*, (ed.) W. Ziesemer, Danzig 1921, p. 232.

⁴⁹ SRP, p. 567.

⁵⁰ „Zbroja jest to harnasz, jako jest klobuczek, panczer i polplacie, szczyt, miecz” (A suit of armour consists of a harnish, as well as a kettle-hat, plates and half-plates, a shield and a sword) see: A. Nowakowski, J. Szymczak, *Rodzaje uzbrojenia ochronnego w Polsce w okresie monarchii stanowej w świetle źródeł pisanych (The Kinds of Defensive Arms and Armour in Poland in the Period of the State Monarchy in the Light of Written Sources)*, „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej”, Yearbook 3, 1985, nos. 1-2, p. 44.

⁴³ H. Nickel, S. W. Pyhrr, L. Tarasiuk, *The Art of Chivalry. European Arms and Armour from the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (exhibition catalogue), New York 1982, pp. 22 seqq., Fig. 9.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, Catalogue No. 3, pp. 25 seqq.

a backplate) with a neck-guard, pauldrons, vambraces, a laminated skirt and leg defences⁵¹. Some of the combatants depicted in *The Siege* are dressed in suits of chain mail and laminated cuirasses, whose cut lower edges cover the plate leg defences. A crossbowman whose helmet is partially masked by the flag stuck on the bulwark is standing with his



Fig. 10. A cuirass with a bevor made by the armorer Lorenz Helmschmied for Maximilian Habsburg in Augsburg about 1485.

could be an explanation for the fact that so many warriors are dressed in full armour. Armour of this type illustrates the military potential of the Gdańsk forces engaged in the Battle of Malbork. So many soldiers cannot have been dressed in similar, very expensive suits of plate armour. The painter, however, did his best to show the armour in detail.

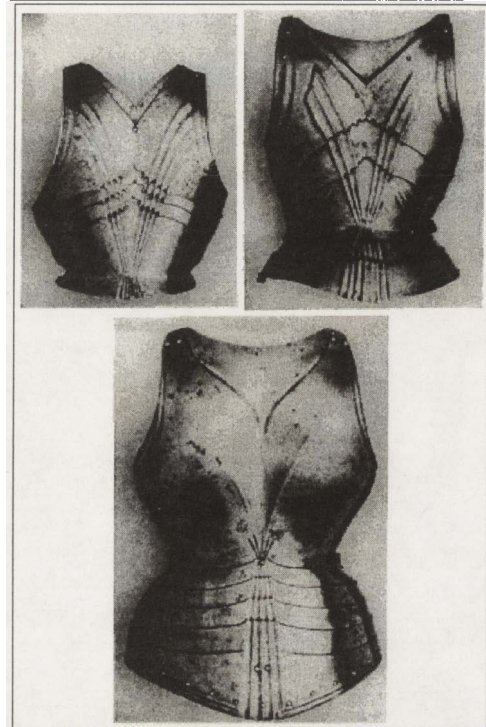


Fig. 11. Gothic Backplates, second half of the fifteenth century, in the Dean Memorial Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

back to the shielded warrior protecting him against enemy projectiles. He is drawing his arbalest. The interesting thing is that this soldier is dressed in a suit of chain mail with long sleeves and is not wearing a cuirass⁵².

Most of the soldiers are in full armour. They may be lancers who have dismounted from their horses and are fighting with swords. The presence of a large number of figures schematically depicted in similar suits of full armour may be a propaganda attempt to make a viewer realize the military potential of both sides. This interpretation

One can see the cuirasses, pauldrons, cowters, poleyns, and the back „wings” of the Italian type pauldrons (for example, in the armour of the knight at the bottom of the painting), resembling the ones in the armour on the figure of St. George by Bernt Notke found in St. Nicholas’ Church in Stockholm and dating back to 1489 as well as the defences in Richard Beauchamp’s suit of armour dating from around 1460⁵³.

In the lower part of the cuirass there was a narrow lame fixed to the breastplate or the backplate, which was called *cinctorium* in Latin, *schorze* in German, and *szorca* in Polish). A broader lame protected both the stomach and the upper parts of the thighs. Such a lame can be seen in the armour of the knight killing with a sword a wounded Teutonic soldier with a cut-off hand who is lying above the Middle Mill. Another *szorca* is clearly visible in the armour of the knight on the black (?) horse. The realistically reconstructed suit of armour from the above-mentioned figure from Dwór Artusa in Gdańsk formally resembles the cuirass with a bevor made by the armorer Lorenz Colman

⁵¹ „Armatura bellica alias harnasz” [in:] *Słownik Staropolski (An Old Polish Dictionary)*, vol. II, fascicle 5 (13), Wrocław-Warszawa 1959, p. 541; „Pro armis sive apparatus armorum videlicet poluplacze, skrzydła, mysky, schinky, plachownicze et lorica” this mention of 1458 can be found in *Acta capitulorum nec non iudiciorum ecclesiasticorum selecta*, (ed.) B. Manowski, vol. II, Kraków 1902, no. 911.

⁵² Nowakowski is of the opinion that chain mail in a reduced form survived under plate armour to the end of the fifteenth century. A. Nowakowski, *Uzbrojenie ochronne (Defensive Arms and Armour)*, [in:] *Uzbrojenie w Polsce średniowiecznej 1350-1450 (Arms and Armour in Medieval Poland 1350-1450)*, (ed.) A. Nadolski.

⁵³ Pauldrons broadening onto the scapulas in the form of wings are mentioned in the Polish source of 1458: „(...) pro armis sive (...)”, *Acta capitulorum, op. cit.*, no. 911.



Fig. 12. Archduke Sigismund Habsburg's late Gothic armour. Lorenz Helmschmied, Augsburg, about 1485. The front.



Fig. 13. Archduke Sigismund Habsburg's late Gothic armour. Lorenz Helmschmied, Augsburg, about 1485. The back.

called the Helmschmied of Augsburg and dated to 1485 and the numerous cuirasses depicted in *The Siege*, which confirms that the picture was painted in the 1480s. Moreover, parts of vambraces with cowters and multi-piece leg defences with poleyns can be found in many suits of full armour. The shiny late gothic armour of the knight riding on the black horse (?) and the armour of the captain of horse leading the lancers must have been very expensive and luxurious. The latter was a suit of fluted armour with a circular besagew and an additional reinforcing plate on the left shoulder. The horse's head is protected by a blackened full shaffron (*roskop*), which seems to be the only shaffron in the picture.

Shields

The combatants are equipped with footman's shields, which protect the whole body of a soldier. The shields are slightly convex objects shaped like diamonds positioned vertically. The shield ribs narrow towards the top and end with a so-called donkey's back, a line or form characteristic of the late gothic style. The shields have handles on the

inside. In *The Siege* the shielded warriors protect the cross-bowmen frontally or they form terraces above them, like in the case of the man drawing his arbalest.

Swords

A sword was the fundamental weapon of a medieval knight. There were two types of sword: the short single-handed sword with a cross hilt guard used by infantrymen and the hand-and-a-half sword used by horsemen fighting on foot (such a sword is visible in the scene of the duel between the man of Gdańsk (?) and the Teutonic soldier who has had his hand cut off. The painter may have used woodcuts: one of the swords resembles the sword from the scene depicted in the painting found in the chapel of Eton College⁵⁴. Another hand-and-a-half sword with a long blade, a spherical pommel, and an S-shaped guard lies next to

⁵⁴ J. Hewitt, *Ancient Armour and Weapons in Europe*, Vol. III (with a preface by Claude Blair) a reprint, Graz 1967, fig. 105, pp. 558 seqq.

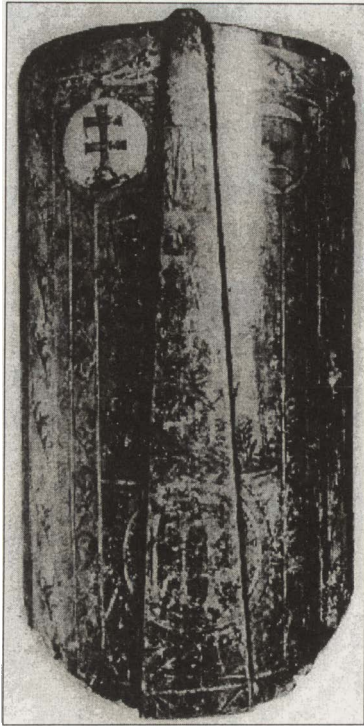


Fig. 14. A fifteenth-century shield from the collection of the Historisches Museum in Vienna.

the body of Jakub Czan, and yet another hand-and-a-half sword lies by the felled-to-the-ground knight in full armour and a sallet with a visor visible below this group. One can wonder about the shape of Jakub Czan's sword's guard (the closest analogue can be found in R.E. Oakeshott's typology, supplemented by M. Głosek (item 12)⁵⁵. There are, however, some differences as far as the direction of the curves of the guard's arms towards the blade and the pommel are concerned. The curving blades of the short sabers held by the Teutonic defenders are a rare form too. They resemble *scimitars* of the eastern type, which might have been used by Teutonic knights in the east. We should, however, examine the weapon shown in the picture in detail.

The sword was a knight's personal weapon and was not normally kept in arsenals, except for some individual cases. Offering their services, mercenaries were armed with their own swords, which, like any other weapons, were damaged or lost during boat crossings. No swords are mentioned in the document of August 15th 1456 issued in Toruń, though they are sometimes listed in the inventories of modern municipal armouries⁵⁶.

The Siege of Malbork shows swords typical of the end of the fifteenth century. These are hand-and-a-half swords with long blades and broad fortes. The points narrow evenly, the cross-shaped hilt guards are straight. The swords have pear-shaped pommels (their different varieties are marked

⁵⁵ M. G ł o s e k, *Miecze środkowoeuropejskie z X-XV w. (Central European Swords of the Tenth-Fifteenth Centuries)*, Warszawa 1984, p. 27, Fig. 4.

⁵⁶ SRP, *op. cit.*, p. 523.

T in Oakeshott's typology supplemented by Głosek)⁵⁷. As no details of the spherical or disc-pommels are shown, it is impossible to tell which type the swords belong to. The hilt guards, however, resemble number 12 of that typology⁵⁸. Głosek is of the opinion that such guards were popular in the second half of the fifteenth century, which does not necessarily mean that the swords date from that period. The researcher argues that the connection between the sword blade and the pommel and hilt guard is not so firm⁵⁹. The besieged Teutonic troops fight using both swords and sabers. One of the men shooting out of the town gate is brandishing a sabre, another sabre can be seen in the hand of a warrior who is attacking a surprised, half-naked soldier near the Middle Mill, and yet another sabre lies on the ground. The weapons have curving guard arms and bird-shaped pommel. But are those the only eastern survivals in the Teutonic army's arms and armour? The sabre visible in the right hand of St. George on Israel Meckenen's silver reliquary of around 1470 belonging to the St. George Brotherhood of Elbląg⁶⁰ is a classic example of the oriental single-edged sabre with a broad, curving pommel (*scimitar*). Fifteenth century Passion scenes masters depicted similar sabers as well as various types of shafted weapons. For example, such representations can be found in the quarters of the altar of St. Barbara at Hamburg Cathedral, in the *Crucifixion* by Konrad von Goest, in *Crowning with Thorns* from St. John's Church in Toruń (dated to 1480, lost)⁶¹, as well as in St. Barbara's altar from St. Mary's Church in Gdańsk, and in many other works. The assassin in the wall painting in the southern aisle of St. Catherine's Church in Gdańsk kills St. Stanislaw with an eastern sabre⁶². Did the author of *The Siege* deliberately use the symbolic tool of the Passion assassins and make it the weapon of the Teutonic soldiers?

Pole arms

Pole arms such as spears with broad triangular heads or axe blades with spikes are clearly visible in the group of soldiers near the Little Gdańsk and in the battle scenes

⁵⁷ M. G ł o s e k, *Miecze (Swords)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 35.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁶⁰ The reliquary (41 cm in height) is now in the collection of the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. S. B r a u n f e l d - E s c h e, *Sankt Georg*, München 1976, fig. 124. A similar sabre is visible in the armour of the Tartar invaders depicted in the triptych at Wielowieś (c. 1430), and in the painting representing the Battle of Legnica of 1241. *Tatarische sabel* were in the castle armoury at Labiawa in 1513, *Das Grosse Ämterbuch*, *op. cit.* p. 297.

⁶¹ J. D o m a s ł o w s k i, A. K a r ł o w s k a - K a m z o w a, A. S. L a b u d a, *Malarstwo gotyckie na Pomorzu Wschodnim (Gothic Painting in Eastern Pomerania)*, Warszawa-Poznań 1990, figs. 66 and 72.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 30.

taking place between the Pottery Gate and the palisade. The blades of woodworker's axes depicted in the painting resemble the ones of the Xa and XIII types of Marian Głosek's typology⁶³. The picture shows various kinds of shafted weapons.

The governor's retinue are holding about three-metres-long spears ending in narrow, short heads. The group escorting the wagon with fire are holding, among other things, a pin spear with a broad triangular head and an interesting combination of a long lance and a pole axe blade. There are two men armed with halberds among the people repulsing the Teutonic attack. As I have mentioned before, the blades of the axes are equipped with heads and spikes. Below is a classic halberd with a spike and a linear head. On the left among a shielded group with pikes (*anrigis*) is a soldier using a spiked battle club (*morgenstern*), a weapon which was very popular in the late Middle Ages. Another man has a club on his shoulder.

Projectile throwing weapons and missile weapons

The use of artillery and modern fortifications (see below) did not mean the elimination of stone throwing machines in the fights for Malbork. According to Marian Głosek, such machines were considered as very useful by theoreticians of the modern art of war⁶⁴. Besides heavy guns stone throwing machines called *bleiden* were used at Malbork. Together with artillery fire, the stones thrown from those devices caused extensive damage to the city buildings as early as mid-August 1458⁶⁵. The machines used at Malbork were probably medium-seized projectile throwing machines operated by several men.

The arbalest was another popular missile weapon. Arbalests are mentioned, among others, by Johannes Lindau, who writes about them in the above-cited treaty document of August 15th 1456 signed by King Casimir Jagiellonian and the commanders of the enlisted forces. According to the text, 648 suits of armour and 5290 arbalests, shields and kettle-hats were lost. Under the agreement, the king was obligated to pay 6 Hungarian gulden for each suit of

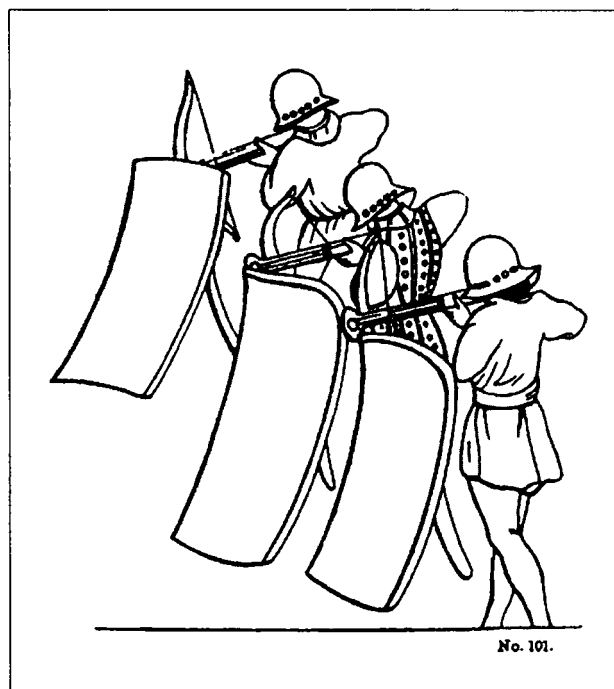


Fig. 15. French crossbowmen at Rouen from the Cotton manuscript, about 1485. The reproduction: J. Hewitt, *Ancient Armour*, vol. 3, Graz 1967, p. 101.

armour and 1 gulden for another piece of armour⁶⁶. Contemporary infantrymen used arbalests with stirrups (*stegeriffarmbrost*) and arbalests with levers (*ruckarmbrost*)⁶⁷. Combatants fighting on both sides at the city walls of Malbork use light crossbows with devices for drawing back the string. Such an arbalest is to be seen in the hands of a man standing at the top of the great bulwark, a knight on horseback carries another, a shielded warrior is drawing another weapon of this type, a man shooting out of the Pottery Gate is holding one too, a shepherd guard is armed with a crossbow, and one arbalest, whose owner is having a rest on the lawn, is leant against the palisade.

Horse-furniture

The horses in the retinue of the deputy to the king Ścibor Bażyński and those ridden by the men who greet him, for example Jan Kościelecki, are wearing leather strap hip

⁶³ M. Głosek, *Późnośredniowieczna (Late Medieval)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46 and 53 seqq.

⁶⁴ M. Głosek, *Artyleria przedogniowa (Pre-fire Artillery)*, [in:] *Uzbrojenie (Arms and Armour)*, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁶⁵ The secretary of the City Council in Gdańsk, Johannes Lindau, writes that on 16th August 1458 „Item binnen de zzeit als der konigk fur der stat Marienburgk mit seinem volcke lagk, do wart die stat aus dem heere und vom schlosse mit buchsen sere zuscossen, und etliche thorme und die meuren zwischen dem schlosse und dem heiligen geisthore wurden middergelegt und zuscossen, und gros merglicher schaden geschach in der stat von buchssen und bleiden, also wol fur ougen ist an irem gebeude (...)”, [the two words have been undelined by the author], SRP, *op. cit.*, pp. 557 seqq.

⁶⁶ „(...) panczer ist VJC und XLXIIIJ [648] und die czal der verlorren armbrost, schilde und eisern hutte ist VMIJC und XC [5290], den vir (...) vor iczlich panczer VJ [6] gulden und vor iczlich armbrost, eysenhut und schilt vor iczliches J [1] ungarisches gulden vor schaden in solchen krigen geben und bechalen sollen (...)”. SRP, *op. cit.*, p. 523.

⁶⁷ Infantry battle arbalests *stegeriffarmbrost* and *ruckarmbrost* were held in Teutonic arsenals and Prussian towns to the end of the fourteenth century *Das Marienburger Ämterbuch* (1375-1420), (ed.) W. Ziesemer, Danzig 1921, p. 143; *Das Grosse Ämterbuch*, *op. cit.* pp. 7, 11, 79.

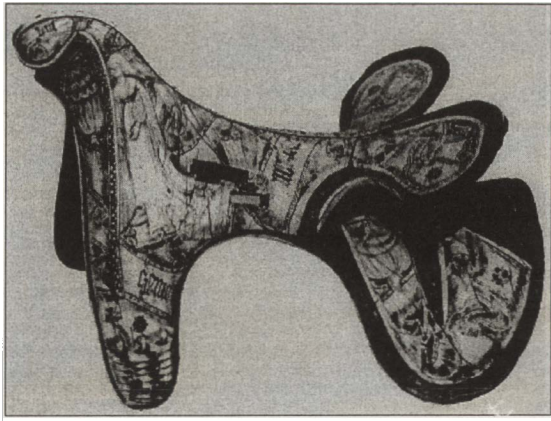


Fig. 16. A saddle covered in bone with a characteristic hind arson, Germany, about 1440 (in L'Armeria del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna).

defences and head defences ornamented with bosses and rosettes, as well as bridles and breast straps (pectorals). The herald's knight lancer saddle is covered with sheet iron and the front arson is clearly visible.

The saddle on the black (?) horse ridden by the knight turning his back to a viewer is quite different. As I have said before, the hind arson is marked with two crosses, which might suggest that the knight belonged to the St. George Brotherhood or to its branch in Gdańsk. Saddles of this type have got a heart-shaped hind arson and have been dated to the 1440s. A saddle covered in ivory plates from the collection in Bologna, an earlier saddle of King Albrecht II Habsburg, which is also ornamented with engraved bone (in the Leibrüstammer-Waffensammlung Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna⁶⁸), and the saddle of Maximilian Habsburg (who later became the Emperor Maximilian I) dating from around 1485 and coming from the Vienna collections all fall into this category⁶⁹.

I would also like to make some remarks on the stirrups and spurs depicted in the picture. The right stirrup of the herald, which is equipped with a finely shaped, high loop and a relatively broad footrest, is clearly visible. The stirrup leathers used to be drawn up, which permitted the horseman to ride with his legs bent at the knees (fourteenth and fifteenth century paintings often represent people riding on a horse in this way). The spurs have got long arms and star-shaped pricks. They are clipped on and the shoes have got fashionable medium-sized caps. Together with the other pieces of armour shown (for example, the slim-looking fluted cuirasses), they permit a researcher to date the painting to the period between 1480-1485. An exceptional and thus highly significant pen drawing representing a lancer in plate armour dates back to the same period.

⁶⁸ L. G. B o c i a, *L'Armeria del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna*, Busto Arizio 1991, Catalogue no. 214, pp. 110-112, colour figure VIII; B. T h o m a s, O. G a m b e r, *Katalog der Leibrüstammer*. I. T e i l: *Der Zeitraum von 500 bis 1530*, Wien 1976, Catalogue A 73, pp. 69 seqq, fig. 19.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, Catalogue A 343, p. 90, fig. 44.

The fire defence fortifications of Malbork

The innovative character of military technology employed in the erection of the fortifications in Malbork in the second quarter of the fifteenth century has often been stressed. The techniques used at Malbork were subsequently adopted in Poland⁷⁰. Two flanking towers with embrasures were built in the long line of eastern city walls. They ensured fire defence on the flank. The semi-circular flanking towers of the Bridge Gate and one of the New Gate's flanking towers were modernized in order to position guns. The unique character of the defensive system in Malbork, completed in 1448, consisted in covering the eastern and northern earthworks situated some distance from the outer line of castle walls in masonry. The earthworks were reinforced with seven semi-circular low bastions, which alternated with polygonal and rectangular flanking towers, which were part of the older defensive system, in order that the whole foreground could be under constant firing. Outside the earthworks with its bastions was a wide moat filled with water with a counterscarp covered in masonry.

Other fortification novelties were introduced in 1460. These were fortifications with bulwarks and fascine-basket obstacles and ditches. They were situated some distance from the city wall so that artillery fire from it could not reach them. The guns positioned at the bulwarks were to scare off the enemy attacking from the outside and facilitate attacks on the town. The siege of Malbork illustrates the innovative character of Polish fortification thought, which consisted in erecting earthen-fascine and timber bulwarks equipped with guns. The system was frequently employed during sieges of towns and castles (Gniew, Chojnice) to the end of the Thirteen Years' War⁷¹.

At the early stage of the war the castle was protected by artillery. In the years 1457-1460 St. John's Church, the town hall and buildings in the city were under fire from the castle⁷². Both large and small bombards throwing stone balls, smaller „veuglaires” („fowlers”)⁷³ and modern guns with replaceable powder chambers⁷⁴ were used during different stages of the war. The „veuglaires”, which were field guns, would be brought on wagons. On the fortifications the gun-barrels were placed on supports and wooden trestles and the firing angle was measured by means of sights in the form of a ladder. Although no large guns are visible in the picture, there should have been some at Malbork during the siege. The painting shows some firearms, namely several arquebuses firing lead balls (*lotbuchsen*). In the *memoriale* Lindau writes about 24 arquebuses taken

⁷⁰ *Polska technika (Polish Technology)*, *op.cit.* pp. 323 seqq.

⁷¹ M. B i s k u p, *op. cit.*, p. 721.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 723.

⁷³ In May 1454 the Gdańsk forces at Malbork used, among others, three „veuglaires”. *Ibidem*, p. 724.

⁷⁴ The characteristics of fire guns are discussed by M. Głosk, [in:] *Uzbrojenie (Arms and Armour)*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

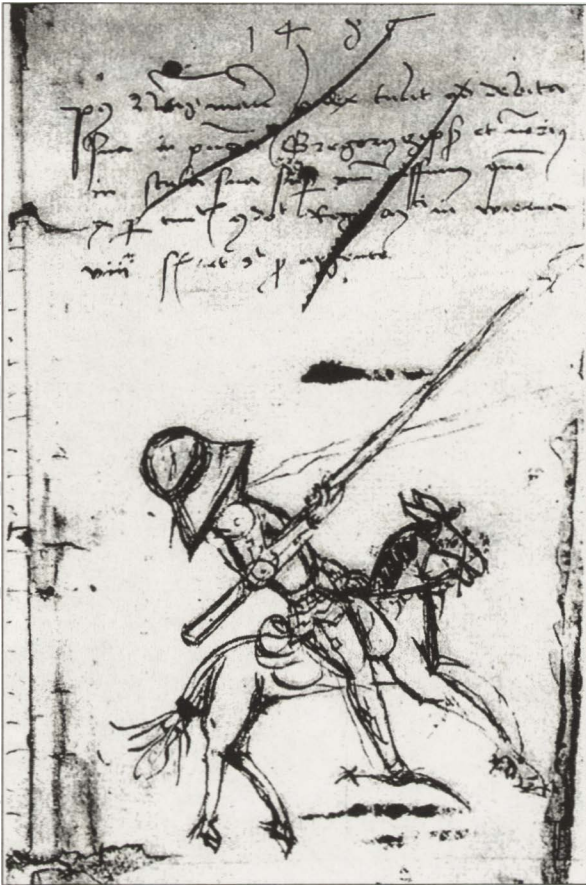


Fig. 17. A knight during a tournament, a pen drawing, 1485.
The reproduction: Kalmar Janos, *Régi Magyar fegyverek*,
Budapest 1971, p. 51, fig. 83

on 27th March 1460 and he mentions some larger artillery guns as well⁷⁵. The firearms shown in the picture (one held by the man standing at the top of Little Gdańsk and another in the hand of a man between the two palisades at the bottom of the picture) have got short polygonal barrels attached to wooden stocks, which are in line with the butts. If one has a close look at the picture, they can see a group of men shooting out from behind the bulwark called Little Gdańsk. A soldier standing at the top of the bulwark and holding a hand box assists them. The detachment is attacking St. Mary's Gate. The soldiers are wearing helmets and suits of plate armour. They are using shields and pole arms, which were very effective in the case of siege assaults. They are pushing a wagon filled with fire. Another enlisted soldier from Gdańsk is aiming his firearm at a Teutonic warrior in armour and with a sabre, who is fighting with a soldier in a kettle-hat and a doublet armed with a sword. Firearms of this type, that is to say, ones fired by means of slow match and typical of the fifteenth century, were in widespread use in both the Thirteen Years' War and the period when the painting was painted.

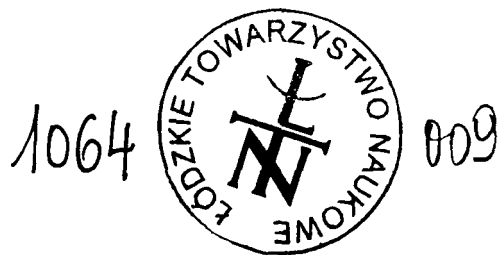
⁷⁵ „(...) XIIIJ [14] buchsen gross und klein, oder mehr” (April 1545). SRP, *op. cit.*, p. 508; „(...) buchsen und stein”, (17/18th November 1460). *Ibidem*, pp. 576 and 567.

Conclusion

No one knows what has become of the painting. *The Siege of Malbork* was last seen in 1945. One can only hope it has not been destroyed, which has been the case with many works of art from Pomerania. Today art historians and military science historians have at their disposal scarce written references as well as poor quality black and white photographs. The researchers who examined the painting before the war, for example, Paul Simson and Walter Mannowsky, did not mention the colour composition of the picture. As a result this important element remains a secret. The situation is ambiguous, because heraldry used both symbols and tinctures, which played an important part in the identification of combatants on the battlefield. Moreover, one can only guess at the hues of the flags stuck at the bulwarks. Probably the palette of colours used by the artist contained the basic colours and hues preferred by medieval heraldry⁷⁶. Unfortunately, now we can only examine the unclear silhouettes of the flags.

The military accessories depicted in the painting play a major role in arms and armour, as well as horse-furniture research. Its great variety of forms makes the Gdańsk painting a leading medieval representation of a battle in the part of Europe north of the Alps. The vast panorama of beautiful countryside against which the main scenes are depicted suggests that there is a relationship between this picture and scarce fifteenth century cartographic pictures⁷⁷. Finally and most importantly, the painting shows the oldest known panorama of Malbork, the city and the castle, which constitutes *conditio sine qua non* in all studies of gothic architecture in the former Teutonic State in Prussia.

Translated by Zuzanna Poklewska-Parra



⁷⁶ The known coloured reproduction representing the Gdańsk picture *The Siege of Malbork in 1460*, which has been mentioned before (see note 40), cannot be used as comparative material for studies of the painting.

⁷⁷ Z. K r u s z e l n i c k i, *Historyzm (Historism)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 seqq.