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Architects and constructors in service of The Teutonic Knights' authorities around Prussia and the Neumark in the first half of 15th century (till 1454)

Abstract. This article discusses the issues of builders operating in the Teutonic State of Prussia in the late Middle Ages. The subject of these considerations pertains to representatives of the broadly understood construction industry operating in the first half of the 15th century in the Teutonic State of Prussia and in the Teutonic New March, employed by the Order primarily in the construction, extension, or reconstruction works of castles, churches, and cities.

Keywords: architects, builders, construction, Middle Ages, history, Neumark, Prussia, Teutonic Order, history, archaeology.

The question concerning builders working in the Teutonic state in Prussia in the late Middle Ages has already gained the interest of researchers. German art historian Bernhard Schmid, for instance, wrote a detailed article on the subject in 1939, rightly remarking that in the contemporaneous accounts, they were most often referred to *mauer* or *meister*, and less frequently as *mauermeister* or *baumeister*. Unfortunately, he did not seek to explain the origins of the very names appearing in the medieval sources of the Teutonic State. Due to this fact, his narration has become more disputed and imprecise over time. It is not clear as to why the group of builders would also include "master carpenters" (*zimmermeister*), while the specialists defined in the sources as *Werkmeister* were in his opinion mill builders, claiming wrongly that this term was not applied to masons and builders in the Teutonic State. It is most incomprehensible why B. Schmid placed in this category Malbork bell founder from the turn of the 15th century Peter von Stein (Schmid 1939/1940, pp. 1, 8–9, 24–27; for more information on the question of bell founder

Peter von Stein – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2019, pp. 404–408). Overall, the theses of this German scholar are not to be accepted nearly on the whole, the basic problem being his familiarity with but a fraction of the written sources from the era that pertained to this subject. Subsequent studies failed to bring any better results, either. In his book from 1995, Marian Arszyński divided construction experts operating in the Teutonic State into two categories: "architects" and "construction craftsmen". Unable to define the first group, he classified into it those who met the criteria in his own opinion, while all the others were put into the other category (Arszyński 1995, pp. 154–160). In his later work, representatives of that profession in the Teutonic State were divided into the groups of builders and masons (Arszyński 2016). He remarked, however, that some Prussian sources reveal the definition of *werkmeister*. In Western Europe, that would be a German counterpart for the Latin name *magister operis* referring to a builder specialist, yet, as he claimed himself, in Prussia, that was the name for builders of mills, water dams, and sawmills (Arszyński 2016, pp. 197–200). Regretfully, M. Arszyński's knowledge of sources was not any better than B. Schmid's. Meanwhile, the medieval written sources from the territory of the Teutonic State never mention the definition of an "architect", although different experts in the art of building were referred to using many different names (in the 15th century in German alone, that would be, *meister, muwer*, *muwermeister*, *bawmeister*, and *werkmeister* (cf. the text). Marian Arszyński does not seek to explain if those varied names referred to different skills and specializations of particular builders, or whether they were absolutely accidental.

Based on two references concerning the years 1395 and 1397 that were parts of an accounting book of Malbork (Marienburg) castle missing today (informing of a master Johan in association with the purchase of Gotland stone and probably some paint), and by supposed architectural analogies to some selected architectural structures, German art historian Christofer Herrmann claimed that between 1375 and 1406, Livonia and Prussia were the areas that genius builder and architect "master John" from Czechia operated in. In the scholar's opinion, Johan was the author of the castle in Arensburg, Livonia, the grand masters' "palace" and a townhall in Malbork, as well as the castles in Sztum (Stuhm) and Bytów (Bütow). Moreover, based on the doubtful data mentioned above, he established the date of birth of that eminent builder as the year 1350 (Herrmann 2023, pp. 61–77). Nonetheless, analyses of written sources (the majority of which are not known to Herrmann) allow us to claim solely that master Johan was staying in Malbork between 1395 and 1397, and that he may have been participating in some stages of the construction works to the "second palace" of grand masters (Fig. 1). All the other facts concerning that person given by the German art historian were a figment of his imagination backed by no evidence (Christofer Herrmann's suggestions criticized – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2025, pp. 138–155).

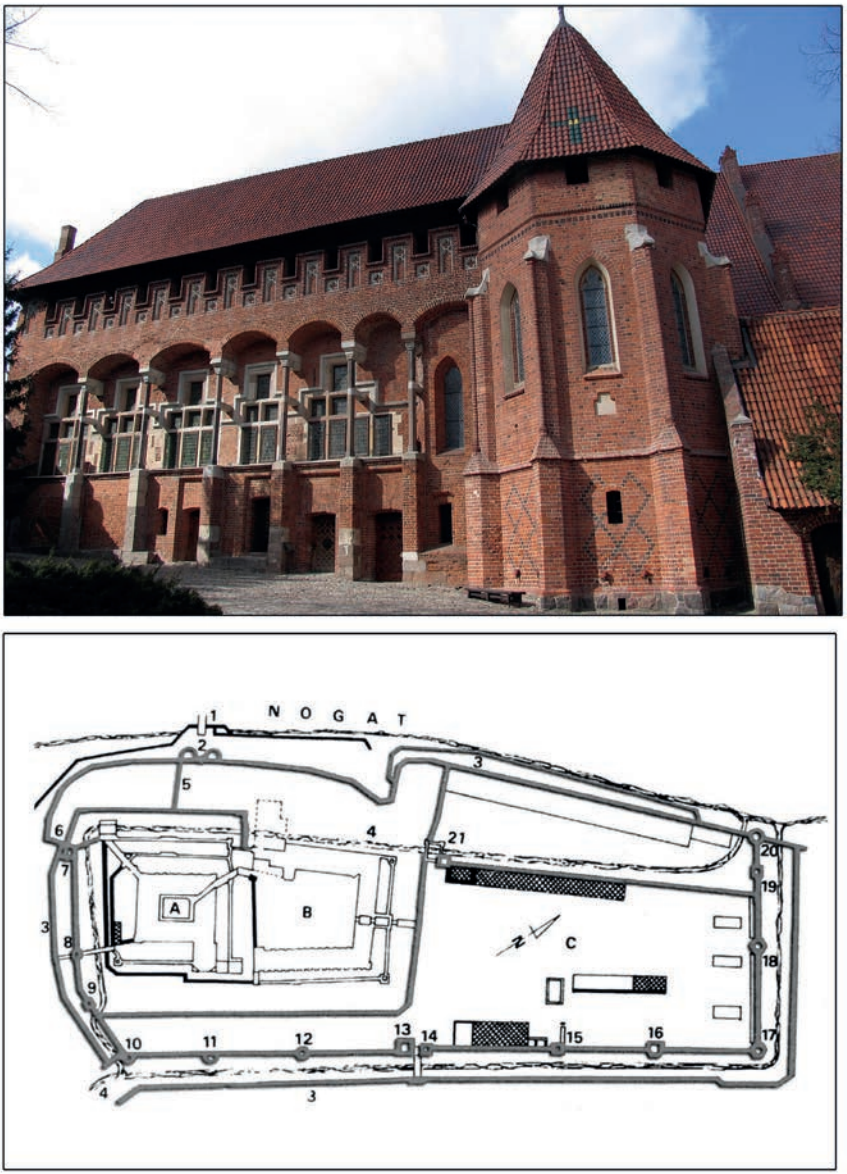


Fig. 1. Malbork Castle. Palace of the Grand Masters. Malbork Castle complex plan. A – upper castle (high), B – middle castle, C – bottom castle (lower), 1 – bridge across the Nogat River, 2 – Bridge gate, 3 – external wall of lower castle, 4 – moat, 5 – Saint Nicolas Gate, 6 – Shoemakers' Gate, 7– tower, 8 – wicket gate, 9 – unnamed tower, 10 – To the City Tower, 11 – unnamed tower, 12 – Over the Bakery Tower, 13–14–Woodcarvers' Gate with Treasurers and Officials' Towers, 15 – Gunpowder Tower, 16 – Three-wall Tower, 17 – Szarysz Tower, 18 – Clock Tower, 19 – Kęs Tower, 20 – Buttermilk Tower, 21 – St. Lawrence Tower (after Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2012)

Hence, as presented in the brief review above, the problem of builders working in the Teutonic State in the late Middle Ages requires new analyses based on the preserved source material. With due account of the vast number of scientific sources, the authors of this paper have limited their research to the first half of the 15th century, and exclusively to "architects", building masters, and masons employed and paid by the Order.

Starting with the beginning of the 15th century, let us chronologically examine the contents of a contract concluded on the 1st December, 1403 (for 500 marks) between Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen and Georges Bescheiden, named in all the accessible sources a *muwerer*. The latter was tasked with adjusting the vaults (with redecorating or flattening, if necessary) and the walls (with plastering) in the four wings of a castle that had just been erected in Ragnit[1] (Fig. 2) (GStAPK, XX, OBA, no. 725; M. Tr. 1896, p. 275; Clasen-Sandt 1931, pp. 196–209, 217–221; Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2009, pp. 339–368). Moreover, his job was to make new, more comfortably situated window and door openings, to remove an undefined wall in a bedroom space[2], and to create a big new window in a "surrounding wall" (*rinckmuwer*). The contract further specified that if any failures and mistakes were identified in the already-existing vaults, it was necessary to repair them, and if they required demolition and building anew, the Order was obliged to pay the contractor extra money. Furthermore, the document contained a passage that is difficult to interpret, claiming that Bescheiden agreed to make *tabernacula* and *entpfange* to all the vaults (*Glossarium* 1846, p. 478; Arszyński 2005, p. 135)[3]. The contract also specified less significant details concerning financing the employees, and obligatory rules for overseeing the handling of tools and materials (GStAPK, XX, OBA, no. 725; M. Tr. 1896, p. 275; Clasen-Sandt 1931, pp. 200–201).

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[1] *Zum irsten sal her uns vier huser zu Ragnith an gewelwen und an muwer ganz und gar bereyten* […]. The building was being erected between 1397–1409 (the high castle: 1397–1407; outer bailey: 1407–1409).

[2] *Ouch sal her die want im slafhuse ofheben* […].

[3] *Ouch sal her tabernacula und entpfange machen zu allen gewelben wo die synt* […]. Käthe Clasen-Sandt translates the first word as "consoles" (supporters), while the other as "upper cornices of a pillar to support a vault" (Clasen-Sandt 1931, p. 203). Marian Arszyński wrote about the "resistance" base and "vault roots", but it is not clear if he meant the analysed words, since he did not use the original text to quote (Arszyński 1995, pp. 165, 224). In popular source edition, the author explained those definitions as "decorative supports" and "vault bases" (Arszyński 2005, p. 135). It is difficult to state if the interpretations presented by those two scholars are accurate. Upon analysing all possible Latin meanings of the word *tabernaculum*, it is difficult to find (except for its classical meaning – "a locked cabinet for the Eucharist") anything more than a 'tent', a "canopy", a "stretcher" or a "root". Therefore, it is very difficult to identify the proper meaning of the word in the analysed source text. Assuming that the words refer to "vaults", it is likely that the word *tabernaculum* defines vaulted arches and that the term *entpfange* refers to vault supports. The noun *tabernaculum* could have also meant a convex, carved element on a ceiling (a keystone?), frequently richly decorated, resembling a small cabinet or a miniature altar.

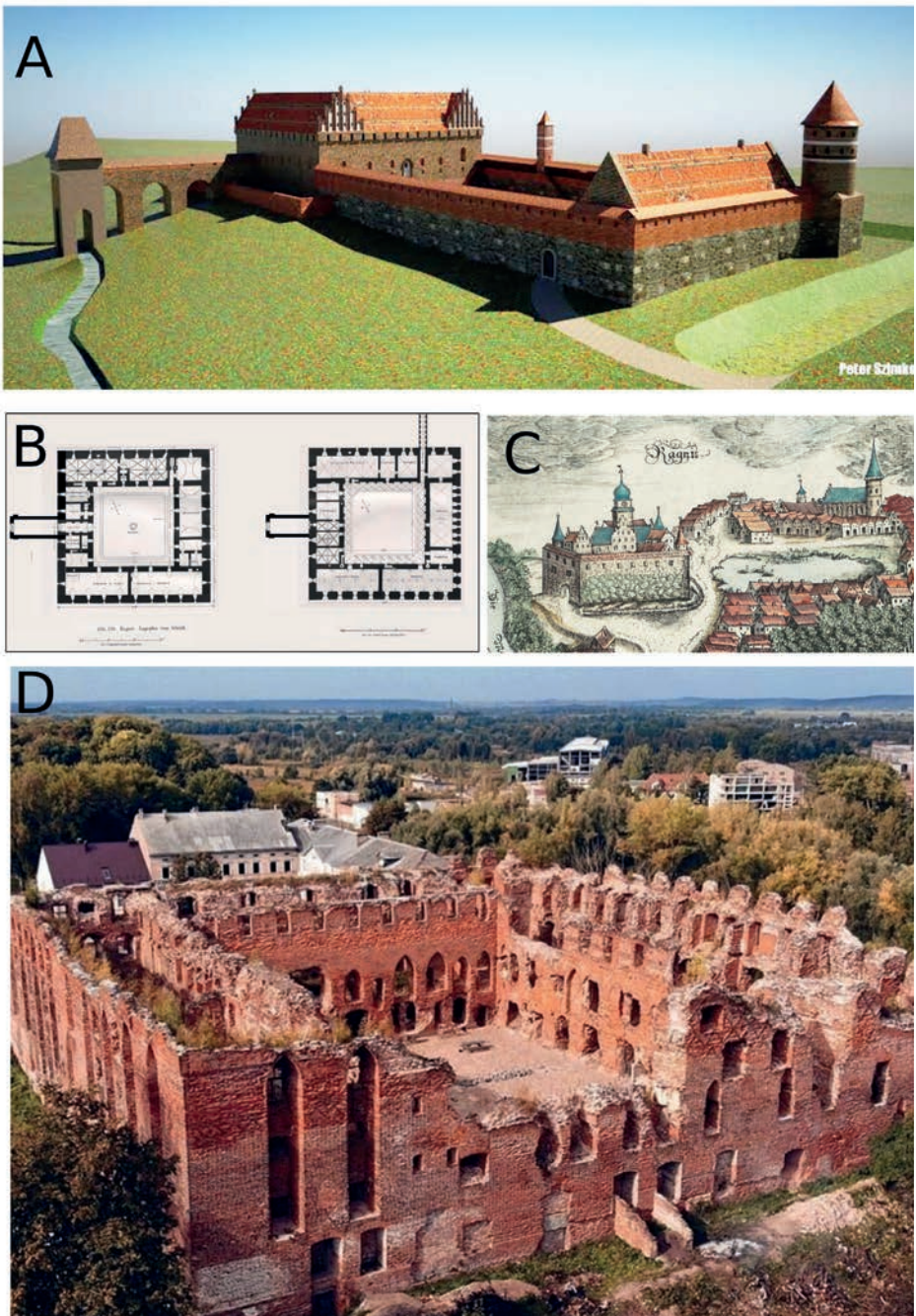


Fig. 2. Ragnit Castle. A – 3D reconstruction (developed by P. Szimke, https://www.facebook.com/BurgRagnit/photos_by), B – castle projection (after Steinbrecht 1920), C – Ragnit in the 17th century print, D – aerial castle view (after Hartknoch 1684, https://www.facebook.com/BurgRagnit/)

Except for tax registers, Bescheiden appears also in letters from the era, e.g., the Komtur of Ragnit's letter to the Grand Master written certainly on the 19th of February, 1405 (for more information on the dating of the letter – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2009, p. 356). First, the Teutonic official reported to his superior the sums paid to specific employees, including a mason (*muwerer*) named Georges (Bescheiden) and his crew before their departure. The castle official considered it highly significant that the construction works to the missing vaults in chambers were performed in favourable weather conditions; likely, he meant the first-floor chambers of the high castle, a job that in his opinion was part of Georges' contractual duties. However, the builder stated that he had exceeded the costs and left. In light of this, the commander asked the Grand Master to deploy to Ragnit a specialized *werkmeister* who would finish the work that had not been completed by Bescheiden for financial reasons (GStAPK, OBA, no. 28171). In light of these records, the question arises, was the latter only a qualified mason, or more than that? And who was the suggested *werkmeister*, the expert in building castle vaults?[4]

In December 1406, Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen signed a contract with a 'mason' (*muwerer*) named Hans Bollen of Gdańsk (Danzig) and his crew to have walls in the castles in Ragnit and Tilsit built; however, the document fails to identify the specific works that this contract pertained to. In the case of the former, that would primarily refer to the structures of the outer bailey and the defensive walls planned in that location (M. Tr. 1896, pp. 415–416; Schmid 1939/1940, pp. 11–12, 48–49; Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2009, pp. 361–362; 2011, pp. 205–208, 215–223). A nearly identical contract (referring only to works in Ragnit, and not in Tilsit) was signed by new Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen and Hans Bollen on the 26th of January, 1408. After the 19th of April, 1408, the total sum paid by the Ragnit commander to the master from Gdańsk or his and his crew amounted to 334 marks and 27 deniers (M. Tr. 1896, p. 457). Another interesting bit of information is included in a letter from the Ragnit Castle commander to his Grand Master dated to the 16th of February, 1407 (source dating studies – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011, pp. 205–208). In the course of a discussion with Hans Bollen, called a *muwerer*, he had instructed him on the issues regarding the "location" and the "shape" (form) of a wall (walls, more specifically), and provided a drawing of that *gestalt* as an attachment (missing) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 28170). It is likely that this pertains to a sketch made by the Ragnit investor that the contractor (Hans Bollen) was presented with, which outlines of circumferential defensive walls of the outer bailey that he was tasked

[4] How did the noun *werkmeister* make its way into the German language spoken in the Teutonic State in the 15th century? Possibly, it was a literal translation of the Latin phrase, *magister operis* (French: *maître de l'oeuvre*). In Western Europe, starting from the 11th century, that was the common name for a builder (including an "architect") in the classical sense. One should bear in mind that the understanding of the definition was likely different depending on time and place. In narrative sources, the Latin nouns *fabricator* and *artifex* are common (Duda *et al.* 2020, pp. 28–55).

with completing, along with some measurements and additional information (more details on the subject – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011, pp. 202–208). Was Hans Bollen an ordinary mason, then? In all the documents that refer to him, this very term is applied[5].

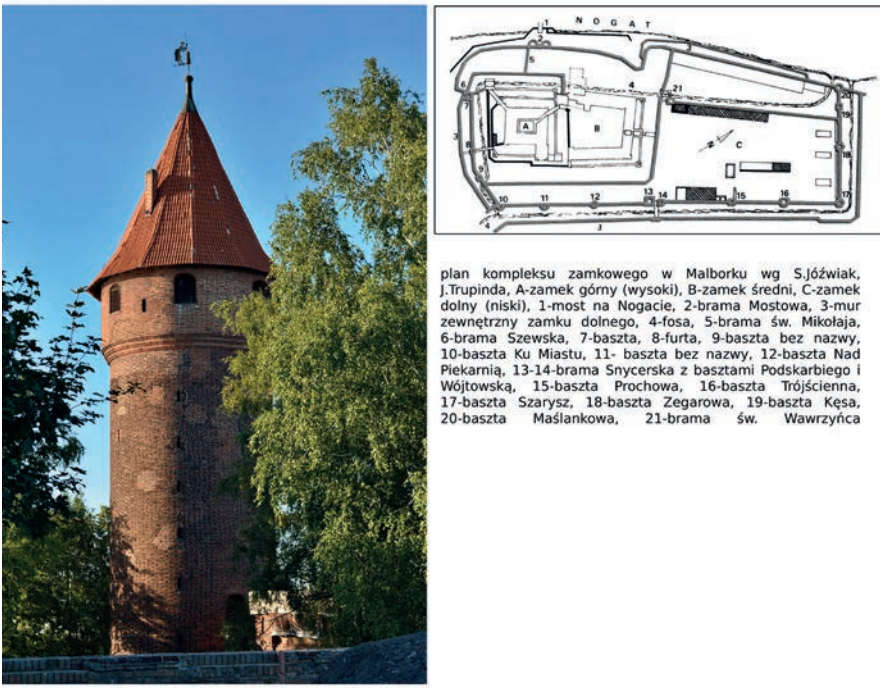
The 1410–1420 expense records by the Malbork Castle vice-commander are a rich source of information on construction works and builders, first and foremost, in the context of the main castle. Numerous builders mentioned there represent various professions difficult to define. Let us focus on one specific case, namely, that of Niclos Kint, who was active at as many as 13 building sites in 1412–1418 (Fig. 3), specifically, Buttermilk Tower, Quadrangular Tower, a "pharmacy", a house of a horse marshal, a porch of the Church of Saint Anne, Sparrow Tower, an undefined mill, a tower in an infirmary garden, a *gemach* and Dietrich (Legendorf) tower, the Church of the Holy Ghost, a falconer's house, a "casting house", and stoves in the high castle (these buildings and facilities are discussed in more detail – cf. Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2019, pp. 194–468; for some of them, it was not possible to identify their location). Niclos Kint was mentioned always solely as a "mason" (*muwrer*) (MAH 1911, pp. 48–49, 61, 72, 104, 129, 140, 176, 251, 275, 306). Does that in fact mean that he was merely a mason or, perhaps, was he a master builder and even an architect? It is impossible to answer that question unequivocally. It refers also to all other "masons" listed in that source (either referred to by their names or anonymous), 20 people in total.

As follows from a letter of Grand Master Michael Küchmeister to Bishop of Włocławek John Kropidło dated probably to the 15th of April, 1418[6], the Church official asked the Grand Master to be sent two "masons" (*die muwerer*). Unfortunately, the text does not specify the structure in question or its location, probably somewhere in Kuyavia, because the Master turned in his letter to the Komtur of Toruń (Thorn) and the local Council, requesting one of their workers to be deployed to the bishop[7], while the other was to be appointed from Master's own *werglewte* and

[5] Apart from the "drawings-sketches" mentioned here (*gestalt*), until recently, we have not been able to find any unambiguous evidence from Prussia that would support the use of design drawings, although it is known that these forms of solutions were implemented at that time in Western Europe. Therefore, we cannot deny that late medieval Prussian builders did not produce drawings of building layouts, façades or architectural details (Harvey 1972, pp. 110–113; Wasik 2018a, pp. 33–60; Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011, pp. 202–208.

[6] The copy of the letter was included in the register from the Grand Masters' office, but it was lost during the last war. In 1933, it was copied and published with some errors by B. Schmid (1933, pp. 1–3). Luckily, the copy of a complete register (including the quoted source) was made in the 1870s by German scholar Theodor Hirsch (Abschriften, pp. 25–26). Owing to it, today, we can compare both editions B. Schmid's and T. Hirsch's copy. The letter itself is not dated, but the other one bears the date of the 15th of April, 1418, and hence, the suggestion that they could have been written at the same time.

[7] Bernhard Schmid misinterpreted the letter passage, claiming that the Grand Master sent the first builder from Sobowidz (Sobbowitz) (Schmid 1933, p. 1); whereas the source clearly informs that at



plan kompleksu zamkowego w Malborku wg S.Jóźwiak, J.Trupinda, A-zamek górny (wysoki), B-zamek średni, C-zamek dolny (niski), 1-most na Nogacie, 2-brama Mostowa, 3-mur zewnętrzny zamku dolnego, 4-fosa, 5-brama św. Mikołaja, 6-brama Szewska, 7-baszta, 8-furta, 9-baszta bez nazwy, 10-baszta Ku Miastu, 11- baszta bez nazwy, 12-baszta Nad Piekarnią, 13-14-brama Snycerska z basztami Podskarbiego i Wójtowską, 15-baszta Prochowa, 16-baszta Trójścienna, 17-baszta Szarysz, 18-baszta Zegarowa, 19-baszta Kęsa, 20-baszta Maślankowa, 21-brama św. Wawrzyńca

Fig. 3. Malbork Castle. The Buttermilk Tower (after Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2012)

sent off to John Kropidło (Abschriften, pp. 25–26; Schmid 1933, pp. 2–3). Does the name *muwerer* mean a common builder, or a master, or even an "architect"?

Another significant letter, probably penned on the 16th of June, 1418 (hypothetic dating of this source (Schmid 1929, pp. 23–25) by a treasurer to Master Michael Küchmeister who was staying away from Malbork at a time, delivers builder Nicolaus Fellenstein's suggestion to be accepted by the Master. It referred to an undefined tower being erected within the castle walls[8] built up to three *gemachs*, while the fourth would serve as a shooting gallery[9]. That way, the structure would have reached the desired height (GStAPK, OBA, no. 28320)[10]. Was Nicolaus

that time, the Grand Master was staying there and that he wrote a letter to the Komtur of Toruń and the Council from that location.

[8] Bernhard Schmid specifies its location, be it right or wrong, as on the line of the most eastward defensive walls of the bailey (Schmid 1933, pp. 23–25). He did not deliver, however, any convincing evidence that would conclusively confirm the location of the tower.

[9] The name may have meant one of the three storeys of a tower that was being erected. The noun *gemach* in the sources from the Teutonic State in Prussia in the 14th century (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2024, pp. 111–146).

[10] *Vellenstein hat uns gefraget, wie hog uwer gnade den torm wellen haben an der muwern und hat uns*

Fellenstein of Gdańsk, in sources always defined as a "mason" (*muwerer*), active in numerous building sites around the Order state in Prussia in the first two decades of 15th century (information concerning him – cf. Schmid 2020, pp. 533–537; the article translation from 1936) a common mason or rather a building master or, perhaps, an "architect"? It is difficult to answer that question, but the contents of the letter from June 1418 rather suggest that he was not only a common worker, but also the "designer" of the tower in question, and probably a supervisor of the building crew.

Another letter written in Riga on the 27th of February, 1419 by the Livonian Master to the Grand Master informs us about a request to have a master mason named Johan deployed until the 26th of March, if not engaged in any works for the superior at that time. The Livonian Master explained his request in detail – he had already had all the necessary material (stone, lime) collected. Originally, the Master had invited a specialist from the Reich, but the latter was unable to come due to illness. The problem was serious because they required an expert seasoned in erecting structures on foundations in a waterlogged terrain that could easily cause a building to collapse, and such specialists were inaccessible in the state. Further specifics regarding this issue were to be given by the Komtur of Gniezno and the Komtur of Radzyń (Rheden) travelling from Livonia to Prussia. If unable to deploy master Johan for some reasons, the Grand Master would have had to find another expert from Gdańsk or elsewhere. Any specialist capable of working in the local tricky terrain was highly desirable. The Livonia Master was anxious that his ambitious plan was likely to fail (GStAPK, OBA, no. 2922)[11]. The source does not specify what kind of a structure was planned, but the person of the investor would indicate rather a kind of a brick castle. The text presents some interesting information on the problems that laying foundations in difficult ground entailed, which

vorgeleget, das in gutduchte, das man den torm dreyer gemach hoch [schi]ckete und donest dy were, alzo das die were das virde gemach wurde; so meynt her, das der torm hoch genug wurde. Bernhard Schmid misinterpreted the verb as a word "machete" in the destroyed part of the text (Schmid 1928, p. 75; 1939/1940, p. 49). In original text it is *schickete*.

[11] *Als wir euwer gnade vor gebeten haben umbe euwir gnaden murmeister, meister Johanne, das euwer gnade uns den wolden senden; so bidden wir noch demuticlichen, so verre euwer gnade desselbigen murmeisters zu desser zeit nicht en bedurfte, das ir en uns wellen kegen dessen midfasten zu komende senden. Wir hatten uns einen us Dutsche land bestallt zu komende und der ist krang gewurden, also das der uf die zeit nicht komen en kan. Nu haben wir steins und kalkes und alles dinges, des man zu dem murwerke bedarf, genug liggende, und en haben niemand, der sich uf das grundwerg zu legende vorstee, wente man das uf dem wasser muss uffuren, und darzu so ist is doselbest brükelig, das wir darzu hir im lande niemande gehaben en konnen, die sich uf sulch grundwerg vorstee, als de ersamen von der Mewa und von Reden cumpthure euwer genade desses alles wol berichten werden. Konde euwer genade aber meister Johannis nicht emperen, so bitten wir euwer genade demuticlichen, das ir uns wellet behulplich sein, und senden uns einen von Dantzke adir anders wo her, dar brücher sein, die sich grundwerchs uff brüchern ufzufuren vorsteen, uf den nehesten midfasten hir zu wesende bi uns zu Rige, uf das unser vorsass und arbeid umb gebrech willen murmeister nicht zu rugge gehe, wente wir steens und kalkes und alles dinges dorzu genug haben* […] (Liv. Ub., 1867, no. 2300; Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011, pp. 226–227).

required highly skilled and rare specialists. Therefore, we can suppose that by the name "master mason", the Livonian Master understood an eminent construction expert, a real architect. These findings can be an interesting contribution to the study on various building techniques in the Teutonic State that required specific skills, e.g., building in wetlands. In that case, the builder had to be acquainted with techniques known in medieval Europe using grid foundations or/and arcade point foundations, suitable for unstable ground. In this light, a discovery made in 2012 during excavation works in Kostrzyn (Küstrin) Castle seems interesting (see below) (Fig. 4); during the exploration of the southern castle corner, relics of a corner tower called *Weißkopf* were excavated. Its upper section was built with gothic brick, while the foundations were made using huge stones mortared with lime. According to archaeologists, the tower and the unearthed wall fragments came from the same period and formed a set of elements surrounding a medieval castle using erratic stones, with gaps filled with roof tiles, floor tiles, and crushed bricks, all bonded with lime mortar. The excavated fragment of the medieval foundation that was 2.5 m tall, was set on stilt and wooden beams. There is no doubt that using a grid had to stabilize the foundation in a wetland, as evidenced by groundwater quickly appearing on the level of the wooden constructions in the course of digging down (Socha 2012, p. 150). The foundation dated at first from the Teutonic period was made of reused material, like bricks, roof and floor tiles. If it had been built in Teutonic period, it can be a perfect example of intense construction works conducted in Kostrzyn in the half of 15th century, what also results from studying the preserved written sources from the time (see below). Examples of implementing wooden grid or point foundations are known from many other objects, e.g. castles of Malbork, Ostróda (Osterode) or 15th–16th century household complex of the Cannon Regular monastery in Trzemeszno. The wall of the western wing of the so-called Medium Castle in Malbork is also set on a carefully prepared grid. Along the western wall, on both sides of the planned base, there are two rows of oak beams joined with oblong beams with sides measuring about 50 cm. That way, a kind of frame was created, inside which there were several thousands of short beams of coniferous trees, stuck additionally to secure the loose ground. That wooden grid served as a base for big erratic stones of the footing (Mierzwiński 1994, p. 125). The arcade foundation in Unisław (Wenzlau) is also worth mentioning (Fig. 5) (Kąsinowski 1970, pp. 62–64; Wiewióra 1996; Wasik 2020; 2018a, p. 47; Michalak 2024, p. 45)[12].

[12] A careful analysis of Unisław foundation indicated that first, a solid trench was made within which some point trenches were added at the socles. Similar technical solutions were evidences by the 1960s excavations in Golub (Gollub) castle bailey (Nowiński 1972, pp. 145–146; Wasik 2020). Point foundations, possibly of a footbridge situated along a moat of the Teutonic castle, were also unearthed in Gdańsk (Wiloch-Kozłowska 2006; Kasprzak 2020, p. 25; more on Gdańsk castle – cf. Jarzęcka-Stąporek, Kocińska 2013, p. 543). There is an interesting theory concerning a different technique of strengthening foundations on a wetland. Scholars reconstructing the defensive system of Świdwin (Schivelbein) Castle claimed that the building walls were set on a stone footing 2.5 m thick, and that the area below the

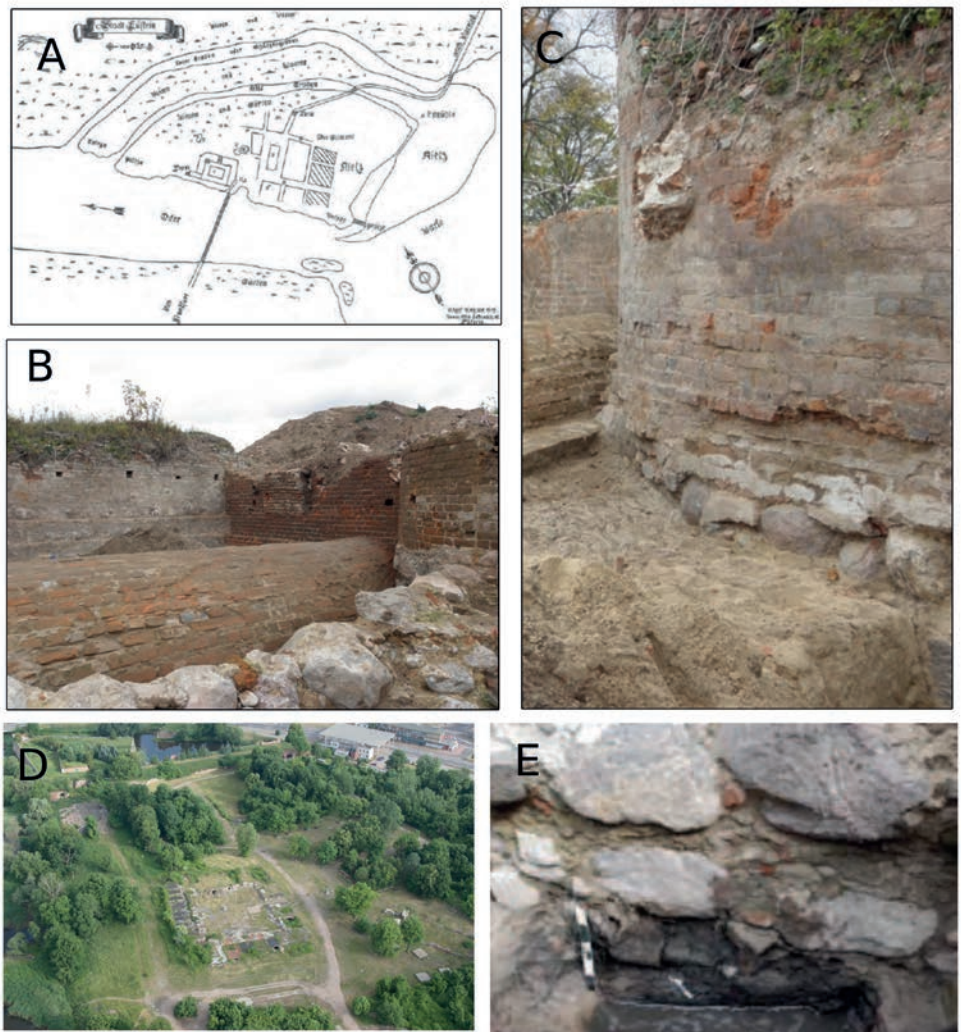


Fig. 4. Kostrzyn Castle. A – castle and city location after C. Fredrich (1913, p. 83, Fig. 4), B – Teutonic castle reconstruction (after Radacki 2005/2006), C – castle tower foundation view (after Socha 2012), D – castle location, E – fragment of medieval foundation set on wooden grid (after Socha 2012)



Fig. 5. Unisław Castle. A – castle and baileys location, B – fragment of arcade foundation and C – reconstruction of foundation erecting (after Wasik 2018b)

Studying the problem, we can also find some interesting information in a letter from the 2nd of September, 1437 written by the Grand Marshal and commander of Königsberg to Grand Master Paul von Rusdorf. The letter concerns some construction works arranged by the Komtur of Klaipeda (Memel) (in his local castle ?)[13].

castle, in order to protect the foundation from humidity, was 'insulated with a layer of black bog soil, up to 4 m thick' (Janocha, Lachowicz 1990, p. 179). See also test results obtained for the grid under the foundation of the western wall in Malbork (Pawłowski 1991).

[13] Archaeological surveys of Klaipeda Castle have been carried out systematically since 1968 (e.g., Zabiela 2009; 2018a, pp. 276–286; 2018b, pp. 112–121; 2019, pp. 8–9; Zabiela *et al.* 2017, pp. 183–193; Ubis 2018, pp. 164–176. The architecture of the building – cf. Torbus 2024, pp. 194–205). Based on the research results, the design of the castle in the 15th century was reconstructed. It was a quadrangular structure with two towers from the West and a transverse wing reaching out of the northern line of the circumferential wall (Torbus 2024, p. 201). The castle must have still existed at the end of the 14th century, whereas the subsequent stages of the construction works (the question is which ones) are reported in the sources from the first decades of the 15th century (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2024, pp. 105–106, 140–142, 227–228, 262–263, 316; Torbus 2024, pp. 202–203).

The Marshal had already sent there 10 carts loaded with beams and planks (*delen*). He and the Brandenburg commander had also arranged *bauda*[14] in their districts consisting of 300 people and 60 carts that should have reached Klaipeda "14 days before Michael", that is, in mid-September 1437. The problem was that none of the Teutonic officials in "all the country" (*im ganttzen hynderlande*) was able to find any master builder (*werckmeister*). They had been looking everywhere, yet they had failed. Therefore, the Grand Marshal turned to the Grand Master for help in finding any. Had he, too, failed, all the *bauda* arranged and sent to Klaipeda would have been in vain, generating an exorbitant loss (GStAPK, OBA, no. 7365). It seems that in this case, a "foreman" would mean a building specialist, an architect.

Sources on the subject in question (letters in particular) from the territory of the Neumark, neglected by scholars until recently, are a real gold mine of information. One should bear in mind that in 1402, the area became part of the Teutonic State (for more on the political history of the Teutonic Neumark (Heidenreich 1932). For different reasons, starting from the 1430s to the year 1453, the Teutonic authorities ordered and financed the construction of at least 5 castles in the Neumark area, as evidenced in the preserved sources.

The subject is discussed in a letter to the Grand Master from the 6th of August, 1444, written by Teutonic Świdwin official Walther von Kirskorf. The first part provides an answer to the Master's request in writing to have the necessary material and tools secured that year and the year that followed (1445) to start building a castle in Drezdenko (Driesen)[15]. The official explains that it was impossible not only due to his illness and lack of indispensable financial means, but also because at that time, his seat in Świdwin Castle was being redecorated intensely[16] (Fig. 6). The Teutonic official considered that building to be a priority. He also hoped that the Master would agree to that. Meanwhile, a mill was being erected in Świdwin, which was to be surrounded by a wall (replacing fence of beams still existing at that time) [17]. The same referred to any grange (*acker hoff*), located in the vicinity of the

[14] "Bauda" (*baude*) was in the Teutonic state a form of *szarwerk*, statute unpaid labour obligatory for subjects chosen for auxiliary works at construction sites (digging foundations, moats, carrying building material etc.) (Lohmeyer 1911, pp. 57–67; Arszyński 2016, pp. 159, 230).

[15] Results of the non-invasive and archaeological exploration of the settlement and the castle in Drezdenko – cf. Podruczny 2010; Marcinkowski, Pupel 2013; Mackiewicz *et al*. 2021.

[16] Results of the archaeological and architectural research of Świdwin castle – cf. Lachowicz 1964, p. 261; Rogosz 1967, pp. 368–370; Nawrolski, Rogosz 1969, pp. 188–200, Figs. 1–4; Radacki 1976, pp. 53–64; 2005/2006, pp. 5–47; Kajzer *et al*. 2012, pp. 490–493.

[17] According to source evidence, Świdwin Castle was erected at the turn of the 14th century, at the Reda River ford, a strategic location important for trade (Janocha, Lachowicz 1990. p. 178). Building works were started by Mecklenburg duke, with a wall and a moat made first, followed by construction of a stone castle in the southwestern part of the settlement close to the ford. Stone-brick walls 12 m tall were built there, surrounding the castle yard. The trapezoid stronghold with rounded corners was set in *cruda radice*, as evidenced by archaeological research. The residential wing was located to the North, opposite the entry gate, protected by a quadrangular tower, adjacent to the external walls (Janocha,

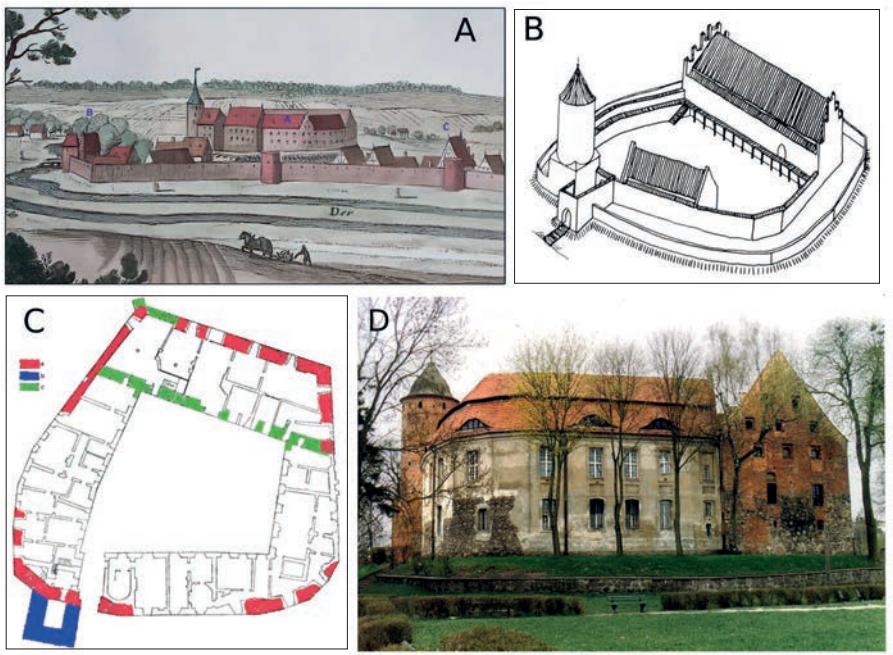


Fig. 6. Świdwin Castle. A – castle view from 1652 (after Merian 1652), B – castle reconstruction (after Radacki 1976), C – castle ground floor plan with chronological layers (after Radacki 1976), D – castle present view (after https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle_Swidwin.jpg)

castle. Stables located there were to be roofed with wood planks. The official went on to inform that the building of a bridge in Choszczno (Arnswalde), scheduled as a common investment with the Neumark Teutonic Order local government official, was impossible at that time due to the lack of a suitable expert (*werkmeyster*). They had no carpenter that would perform works at the stronghold in Kostrzyn, either. The official also planned to have his mill, bakery, brewery, and kitchen roofed. Therefore, he asked the Grand Master to deploy to him a reliable "expert artisan" (*meyster*) for these works (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8520)[18]. Who were these *werkmeyster* and *meyster*? Possibly master carpenters.

Lachowicz 1990, pp. 179–180). Taken over by the Teutonic Knights, the castle was redecorated, the old residential house was dismantled and replaced by a two-storey building with a cellar, a household space on the ground floor, and representative chambers, apartments for visitors and a chapel on the first floor. The quadrangular gate tower was also modified and redecorated in 1412–1413, with a cylindrical structure with gun ports adjusted for using firearm added on higher storeys (Janocha, Lachowicz 1990, p. 181). Its substantial rearrangement was performed by the Teutonic Knights in the 1440s (see further).

[18] For unspecified reasons, Adolph F. Riedel published only first 12 verses of the total 23 verses of that source – cf. CDB 1859, no. 83, p. 338). The letter to the Grand Master over one month earlier (dated the 1st of July, 1444) from the Świdwin official refers to the same question, requesting the Master to

Due to its location on the distributary of the Warta and the Oder, Kostrzyn Castle has played an exceptional role. Before 1410, the Order erected there a fortified keep, later expanded in the 1440s (Schmid 1938, p. 63; Radacki 2005/2006, pp. 19–21). What poses a problem in this regard is that all the researchers who have investigated that castle know numerous correspondence between grand masters and the Neumark officials that pertains to construction works performed there (until 1453) exclusively from registers published in 1895 by Erich Joachim and Paul van Niessen (*Repertorium* 1895, pp. 151–242; Radacki 2005/2006, pp. 19–21). For this reason, their conclusions are grossly ill-informed, as they are based solely on fragmentary sources[19].

In the letter sent on the 5th of October, 1444 from Gorzów (Landsberg), Neumark Teutonic Order local government official Georg von Egloffstein informed Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen about financial and technical problems that erecting Kostrzyn Castle had caused[20], obtained from the local headman (*howptman*) responsible for administering the building and the district on behalf of the Teutonic Order. First and foremost, he informed that there were no funds that would cover further works. The castellan indebted himself for 20–30 "kops" (*groshes*?)[21], but without Grand Master's immediate financial support, the works would be discontinued and the workers would leave the site. The scheduled works at that time were presented as follows: the external curtain and parcham walls were planned to be strengthened (*bolwerk*), while the old castle had to be dismantled (*das alde hus*), and the wooden beams obtained that way (*die planken*) would support (strengthen?) the moat. A tower (*berghfrede*) was planned to be erected on a drawbridge (probably at the entry gate)[22]. All the works had to be completed before winter, depending, however, on financial means. After consulting the administrator, the local government official informed that keeping two castles in Kostrzyn in winter would be very difficult. "Master Jacob" (crossed out "Niclos") advised that a tower be erected on the drawbridge (*bergfrede*) as fast as possible. If the Superior, on the other hand, decided to have the works discontinued at both castles for the winter

deploy a *werkmeyster*, because he wishes to erect in his castle that summer "a mill, a kitchen, a bakery, and a brewery" (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8499).

[19] The authors of the article will investigate the issue of the Teutonic castles in the Neumark in light of the preserved written sources in a separate published study.

[20] The first measurement inventory in Kostrzyn castle was performed in 1957. The archaeological-architectural exploration started in the 1960s, and the results of these works have shown frequent rearrangements of the structure – cf. Tomaszewski 1959; Hołowińska 1980; Socha 2012, pp. 147–156; Kajzer *et al*. 2012, p. 230.

[21] Measurement unit (*sexagena*).

[22] There is no doubt that all the "towers" of that type (*berghfrede*) in the Teutonic castles of the Neumark in the first half of 15th century were made of wood, which had its analogy in the Prussian area of the Teutonic State at the end of the 14th century and first half of the 15th century (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2024, pp. 226–228).

season, the old one should be surrounded by a stockade of shorter beams until the other castle is built at the desired height. Then (before winter or after?), the old castle (dismantled?) would deliver bigger (base) beams that could serve for building and strengthening the fortifications (*bolwerk*) on the walls (external curtain or parcham?) of the new castle[23]. All those changes depended, in the local government official's opinion, on Grand Master's decision (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8562). The question is, who is the "master" Jacob' mentioned in the source? If he was the builder of the wooden *berghfrede* on the castle bridge, he must have been a master carpenter, and not a builder-architect.

Unfortunately, we have no idea what the castle in Kostrzyn looked like in the mid-15th century. Historians point to numerous inaccuracies in the attempts to recreate the plan of that structure. Supposedly, the octagonal southern tower (with circular socle) can be regarded as a structure from the Teutonic period. There is no certainty as to the location of the residential wing. According to some scholars (G. Voss), the medieval castle relics are the walls of the ground floor wing from the southwest, i.e. from the Oder River, while others (B. Schmid) claim that they could be located in the wall of the northwestern wing (Radacki 2005/2006, p. 20). Because the castle burnt down in 1945, and the other well-preserved walls were blown up in 1968, it is difficult today to verify these hypotheses without precise archaeological research[24]. Not that long ago, Zbigniew Radacki tried to make a reconstruction of that stronghold in the Teutonic period (Radacki 2005/2006, pp. 20–21), but given the fragmentary nature of his knowledge of the written sources, which exist and are available, his suggestions should be treated with great caution.

The specialists employed at the building site of Kostrzyn Castle seem to have changed very often. The letter sent from Gorzów on the 7th of July, 1444 by the local government official of the Neumark Teutonic Order Georges von Egloffstein to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen informs that the official sent "master mason" Hans with the letter (*meister Hanse, der muremeister*), ordered to relate the state of the building works and the condition of Kostrzyn Castle at that time (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8502). Was master mason Hans an ordinary mason, or rather an "architect" of the Grand Master, known from the sources from the second half of the 1440s?[25]

A letter of the local government official of the Neumark Teutonic Order to the Grand Master from the 25th of July, 1445, delivers interesting information – he and an anonymous mason (*murer*) set out to Drezdenko to inspect the condition of that

[23] *Ouch wenn euwer gnade das alde hus nicht gar wolde lossen nedderbrechen, so satzede man gleiche wol kortze planken dar umbe so, das man es gleiche wol dissen wynter so lange, biß das andere slos offqwem, wol behelde; unde die obersten plancken dar von neme unnd eyn bolwerc mede off die slosmure machde.*

[24] Cf. footnote 19.

[25] Cf. further in the paper.

castle at that time. The specialist was tasked with conducting a careful examination of the building and reporting his findings in person to the Grand Master (he probably went to Malbork after that inspection). Apparently, he must have shared his opinion with the official, as the latter reported that observation to the Master in his letter. The official claimed that so far, no other specialist had inspected the site as meticulously as that "mason"; he hoped that under his supervision, the redecoration works would go smoothly and the value of the building would rise, because at that time, the stronghold was in a very poor condition and making the improvements that very year was impossible. The "mason" advised which fragments of the walls required temporary support (likely, wooden planks) to prevent their collapse during winter. Nonetheless, there was a section near the gate that was decrepit and had to be demolished instantly (that year?) and build anew. Therefore, the official requested the Master to send some money – 100 marks, which could cover the costs of the necessary repairs (replacing the wall section). If anything was left of that sum, it would have been used for financing an oak palisade to enclose the castle with. If the decrepit part of the wall had collapsed though, the access to the stronghold would have been obstructed for some time due to that temporary measure. Either way, without Master's financial support, the official would not be able to commence any works because not only did he have no financial means of his own, but also had no source to borrow from. As a side note, the author also informed that the Teutonic castellan of Kostrzyn Castle had run out of funds to finance the building of the local stronghold with while being 30 kops (*groshes*?) in debt[26]. For these reasons, the works had to be suspended. An interesting piece of information can be found at the end of the letter. The official suggested that had the Master reached an agreement on the subject of the construction works (probably of Drezdenko stronghold) with the abovementioned "mason", the dismantling and rebuilding of the wall should be paid per rod (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8831; CDB, 1859, no. 84, pp. 338–339)[27]. Who was the *murer* mentioned in the letter? Merely a skilled mason, or a master mason, or maybe an "architect"?

The story continues in another letter of the same Neumark official to the Grand Master from the 30th of August, 1445. An anonymous "mason" (*murer*), probably the same as in the former letter, presented his own expertise, claiming Drezdenko Castle in its present form could have endured until the period of scarcity, i.e., spring

[26] Cf. footnote 21.

[27] *Ouch ap ewer gnade mit dissem murer umbe das gebuwte eyns worde, so vordinge ewer gnade mit im nach ruten czale abe czubrechen unde wedder czu muren* […]. It is not easy at all to estimate the length of the unit "rod" (*virga*, *rute*) obligatory in the New March (?) at that time. In nearly every case, it was fifteenfold (sixteenfold in northeastern territories of the Reich) of a foot, but it varied much in every instance (Roman foot – 29.57 cm, Rhine– 28.8 cm, Paris – 31.38 cm, Chełmno/Kulm – 31.39 cm). Assuming the smallest length of a foot (Rhine), a rod length would amount to 432 cm. Although in the case of Chełmno foot (31.39 cm), it would be over 470 cm (Witthöft 1979, pp. 430, 542; Szymański 1989, p. 246; 2012, pp. 161–163). The question remains, what rod was used in the Neumark in the 15th century?

the following year. The most serious problem concerned the wall section located at the drawbridge. It should have been dismantled and built anew before the approaching winter season due to the threat of a collapse, which would cause damage to the bridge structure, among others. The official suggested that 100 Prussian marks should be sent by the Master to cover the repairs, as the official did not have any financial means for that purpose and no source to borrow from. He had an idea, though, how to preserve the castle's defensive values in case the wall section collapsed. He planned to build a kind of a stockade (*blokczun*) by having wooden beams driven into the ground below the moat around the stronghold, which would prevent any easy access to the castle (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8886)[28]. The question is, who was the expert named in the source as *der murer*, who was able to evaluate technical conditions of the Drezdenko Castle wall, and advised that the damaged parts of the walls should be pulled down and rebuilt? Was he but a common "mason" or rather a master of his trade, a skilled expert, or an "architect"?

The history of Drezdenko stronghold is long and complex. The town and the "castle", sold in 1408 by Ulrich von der Osten to the Teutonic Knights, belonged to West Pomeranian Duchy between 1252–1265, and in 1317, Brandenburg margrave Waldemar donated the "castle" and the town to knights Henry and Burchard von der Osten. The stronghold of unspecified shape was erected in the location of the Slavic stronghold on the Noteć River sandbank. It might have been a residential tower in *la motte* style, which burnt down about 1410 (Radacki, p. 24). The massive brick castle analysed in the cited sources was not built by the Order until ca. 1445.

There are some fragments of income and expenses records preserved in the sources, made probably at the request of the Neumark official, possibly in 1445. The documents include also information concerning a contract with an anonymous "mason" (*murer*) involving building works in Drezdenko Castle. He was supposed to dismantle two quarters of the structure down to the foundations, while the third was to be redecorated completely, starting from the foundations, while the "second" (i.e., the fourth), was to be rebuilt in brick. His duty was also to make any necessary repairs to a tower and some unspecified structure in front of the "fortification", for the salary of 210 kops (*groshes*?) for all the labour[29]. There is also a comment at the end of that document claiming that the same *murer* of the Order demands the same sum of money, as it was agreed before (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9019, p. 4)[30].

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[28] *Ouch so wolde ich eynen blokczun mit dem obirgem gelde umbe das sloß uff dem graben czyhen lossen; ap eyn stucke an dem muren neddervele, das man so balde zcumm slosse nicht kunde kamen.*

[29] Cf. footnote 21.

[30] *Item so hat man dem murer das sloß zcu Drißen vordinget: czwe feruteil in die grunt zcu brechen unnd das dritte feruteil zcu richten unnd eyne gute newe grunt do under zcu brengen unnd die anderen 2 feruteil wedder uff zcu muren unnd den torm zcu bessern wor das behuff ist unnd vor de hameide. Dar vor sol man im geben czwe hundert schogk unnd 10 schogk. Item ouch begeret der selbige murer unsers ordens so vorne man im den geben wil.*

Again, we do not know if the mentioned *murer* was just a regular worker or a construction master and an architect. It was a huge investment and it is obvious that he could not have worked on his own, but he was supervising a building crew of many. Moreover, the contract provides an insight into the design of Drezdenko Castle. It might have been envisioned as a quadrangular and four-winged regular structure, but two wings were to be dismantled. Which of the wings (fourth?) had an adjacent tower?

The inspection of the building performed in 1503 by a committee of four comprising the Brandenburg Margrave officials draws a picture of the castle, likewise. The length of the central house (*wonhwss)* was estimated at 15 rafters (15 *gebint*). The building was adjacent to one of the walls of a probably quadrangular curtain wall surrounding the whole stronghold complex. That main house consisted of two heated halls (2 *stuben*), three chambers (3 *kammern*), a chapel (1 *kapella*), and a kitchen (1 *kuchen*). It is not known if a bakery listed further (*backhwss*) was located in that central house, or rather in its vicinity. The kitchen abutted a tower (*ein torm*) with two storeys (*mit zweien gewelben*). Next, the authors informed about a gate, probably serving as the main entryway, though they remarked that it was erected on the old walls *(uff der alten muren*) later, i.e., in the mid-15th century. It also concerned four drawbridges (*zogbrucken*). The stronghold was enclosed with a partly damaged oak wood stockade and surrounded by a moat. There was another palisade (at some part of the structure?) of beams driven into the bottom of the moat. In front of the castle (*vor sloss*) – not defined where exactly – there was a stable. There was also a brickyard with one furnace (*item ein zygel schun mit einem ofen*), its detailed location unspecified. The authors also listed a number of less significant spaces and facilities probably created in the post-Teutonic times (CDB, no. 104, pp. 352–353).

The appendix of a letter from the 23rd of April, 1446, written by Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen to the Neumark official Georg von Egloffstein specifies that a Teutonic official together with Tczew (Dirschau) official Hans von Dobeneck (the question is why he participated in that business) communicated with master mason Hanuß (*mouwer*) regarding his participation in the construction works at Drezdenko Castle that year. The building material (lime, stones, bricks) and the necessary tools and instruments, as a condition for commencing the works, had to be collected before the winter season. Unfortunately, as the Grand Master learned, the indispensable equipment and construction material had not been delivered. With due account of this failure, the Grand Master advised the Neumark official to inform the "master" (this time written "Hanse"), that Drezdenko works would not start that year and to suggest that the mason get another job (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, pp. 64–65). Who was master Hanuß/Hanse mentioned in the source? A common 'mason' worker or a construction expert, an architect of those times, and was he the same master by the name of "Hans"

who appears in the Teutonic written sources from the second half of the 1440s (see further)?

The situation turned out to be very dynamic, because the letter dated 4th of May, 1446, penned by the Grand Master informed the Kostrzyn Castle administrator that the messenger Nicholas ("Niclose") was also scheduled to start construction works at that castle. He was also bringing 100 marks for workers' wages for their weekly shifts. All the expenses had to be carefully registered and Nicolas's duty was to report the costs and the works completed upon his return to "us" (the Grand Master of Malbork?). The Teutonic administrator in Kostrzyn was supposed to cooperate with Nicolas and ensure good conditions and high quality of the construction works performed in line with instructions (unpreserved) attached to the letter. All expenses had to be written down in detail. Financing Nicolas was of no concern to the administrator, as his accommodation and salary in Kostrzyn were to be covered by the Grand Master (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, p. 82).

The source does not give any specifics concerning Nicolas's profession, but undoubtedly, he was a building master of some sort or a highly qualified mason who used to work for the Grand Master in Malbork and was financed by him. He might have been identical with Nicolas (the question is – which one?) known from later sources (see below).

Another letter of the 6th of April, 1447, sent to the Teutonic administrator of Drezdenko Castle (probably Dietrich von Kaltenborn) by Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen informed that the messenger, Hans Veterchenen[31], would bring 100 marks for building works at the castle there, and that more funds were on the way. As to the demanded masons (*mewrere*), six of them were said to arrive soon (about the 23rd of April). They do not agree, however, to be hired, but demand to be paid a daily wage. Therefore, it would be the administrator's concern to provide accommodation covered with his own money. He was also obliged to collect the construction material (bricks, stones, lime) and the necessary tools, and all the other equipment, so that they could start immediately without unnecessary delay. The Order superior undertook also to hire and deploy a brickmaker (he will arrive there about mid-April), and he hoped that the administrator would ensure a proper workplace for him (a brickyard?) and that the production would start immediately. The Grand Master demanded detailed information on the present state of the preparations, the collected material and any lack of it to address it. He promised as well that the labourers would be deployed to Drezdenko along with draft horses (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, pp. 418–419). The question is, if he meant six ordinary labourers or was there a master, a superior among them?

A letter from the 10th of May, 1448, addressed to the Kostrzyn Castle administrator (*howptman*) laid out the Grand Master's answer to a written message. As

[31] Unknown by the name, it appears also in a letter from the 11th of August, 1452; see further.

the administrator reported, all the money received from the Order superior for the fortress construction project had been spent before the contracted builders (*muwrer*) even arrived. Therefore, he had to stop the investment. The Grand Master expressed his categorical objection and advised him to acquire a loan wherever possible, so that the masonry and construction works could continue. At the same time, he promised that around Saint Martin's Day (the 11th of November), new sums of census collected across the Teutonic State in Prussia were to be sent to the central treasury in Malbork, and that he would be able to allocate more funds to pay the loan back. By that time, the administrator's duty was to do his best to ensure that the construction works not be halted, and that masonry works be completed by summer (a part or the entire complex?) (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, pp. 976–977). And again, it is difficult to conclude if by *muwrer,* he meant "masons" or other specialists.

Some detailed bills of the Teutonic officials from the Neumark from the years 1442–1448 have been luckily preserved until today. The interpretation of the listed items causes difficulties, since they consist of 12 separate parts, carelessly dated. It is not even known where the seat of the Neumark official was before 1444, and the information included in those bills does not explain that. From 1444 on, the officials' seat was located in a newly erected castle in Gorzów[32].

These sources deliver much information about the builders. Possibly in 1442, an anonymous building master (*muremestere*) covered a barn with tiles (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1442–1448, k. 39a). Next year (1443?), the *muremester* likely received some financial means for taking a letter of undetermined provenance to Choszczno (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1442–1448, k. 51). The notes from 1443–1444 inform about a master mason (*muermeisterz*) named Jacoff. Is he the same person as the master Jacob quoted in the letters from 1444? (for more information about him – cf. GStAPK, OBA, no. 8562). The first information concerns paying him 6 marks (it is not specified for what work). A subsequent record reports that he and his servants (*mit sinen knechten*) went to the forest several times (what for?), for which he obtained a total sum of several marks (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1443–1444, k. 5, 28). Another mason (*muerer*) was reported in the accounts from 1444–1445. When he set out for Kostrzyn, he got 5 shillings from the official (undoubtedly for works at that castle building site) (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1444–1445, k. 7v). In 1446, a payment for a certain mason was registered (*murer*). The man worked building a stove (probably an official seat, i.e. Gorzów Castle) (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1446, k. 31v). The bills from 1446–1447 speak about 2 bushels of rye given to a *werkmeistere*, but we do not know what his specialization was and where he was employed (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1446–1447, k. 26). More information on "masons" and "master masons"

[32] The object (both its history and spatial arrangement) has been practically unknown to the researchers until recently (Radacki 2005/2006, p. 27). The analysed correspondence between Teutonic officials provides an opportunity to explore it.

was provided in the records from 1448. An anonymous *muremestere* worked (at what specifically?) for some longer time in a hop field (*hoppe garden*), for which he received his salary (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1448 II, k. 10–10v). In the same year (1448), the official spent 14 *groshes* for a barrel of beer for an undefined crew of masons (*muerere*) working at Kostrzyn Castle. There were two other payments reported for an anonymous master mason (*muremestere*), but what his duty was remains unknown (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1448 II k. 5, 13). Another mason (*murer*) was paid for some work in *Hermenstorp*, probably Chomętowo, 6 km southwest of Dobiegniewo (Woldenburg) (Fig. 7) (GStAPK, OF, no. 200a/1448 II, k. 10v)[33]. As we can see, the information is interesting, but the interpretation is very limited.



Fig. 7. Chomętowo. Ruins of Teutonic grange (photo Ł. Rolbiecki)

[33] In Chomętowo, there was a grange of the Neumark Teutonic officials. Until recently, a brick one-floor structure defined by researchers as a granary has preserved. It is dated from the 2nd half of 14th century or the 1st half of 15th century (Brzustowicz 1998, pp. 35–42). On the other hand, it could have been a residential building/mansion within Teutonic grange area. Researchers have not had access to quoted records from 1448 till now, which informed that a builder had been sent by the Neumark official to conduct undefined works, possibly at the object preserved till today. We can accept Grzegorz J. Brzustowicz's opinion who claimed that it is the only Teutonic castle in the Neumark preserved to a large extent in its original state (Brzustowicz 1998, pp. 41–42). In 2006, architectural-archaeological works were performed in the building, as a result of which its original form and functions were recreated. It is impossible, however, to define the exact chronology of particular building stages (Radacki 1976, pp. 11, 131; Guerquin 1984, p. 126; Kołosowski 2009, pp. 391–395; lately – Knyżewski 2020, p. 220; Poliński 2024, pp. 54–55). Archaeological-architectural studies indicated that it had been a two-storey-structure,

Questions that add to the intrigue were included in a letter from the 1st of March, 1447 to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen from Malbork treasurer Leonard von Persberg. *Meister Hans der meuwerer* turned to the latter requesting written information from the Order Superior if two masons (*muwerer*) had been in fact deployed to the Neumark to inspect the structures their future work would pertain to. Their positive decision for that year was dependent on whether personal inspection was possible by Easter at the latest (in 1447, Easter was on the 9th of April). The mason also complained that they had not been properly paid for their completed work yet, and they concluded that if the agreement on future work and payment with the Grand Master was not arrived at, they would find another employer, which they were not fond of, though. Therefore, the Treasurer asked for a quick reply and a decision as to whether they should really be sent for inspection to the Neumark. They intended to set off as quickly as possible, before the Master returned to Malbork – he was staying in Szczytno (Ortelsburg) at that time[34] – assess the scope of works and the conditions on site, to then return quickly and inform the Master about their decision and involvement in labor (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9294).

It is interesting who *meister Hans der meuwerer* was and if the two masons negotiating the contract at one of the Teutonic castles in the Neumark were part of his crew. Is it the same person who appears in the Toruń City Council's letter to the Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen from the 9th of August, 1446. The Master requested his work master (*werkmeister*) Hans to be sent back; at a time, the latter was employed at a construction site tasked with rebuilding a significant section of a bell tower of the Toruń Parish Church of Saint John (Fig. 8). General works had been "completed" and partly "commissioned", with the exception of a technically demanding task that could have been done by nobody but him, and hence, his swift departure would have been highly detrimental to the church. The authors of the letter emphasised that two "masters" had been already working on this issue to no avail, and so, they left[35]. This was the rationale behind the Councillors' warm

sized – 9 x 15 m, its gable wall turned to a lake shore, façade to the grange yard (Radacki 2005/2006, p. 29). The grange, due to its location on the peninsula was the most important Order farm in the Neumark. In 1403, official Baldwin Stal bought from Jacob von Papstein *dy kemnade und den hoff hermenstorp*. According to Z. Radacki, this specific definition of the property in Chomętowo appeared as early as in the enfeoffment of Margrave Ludwig the Roman for Betkin von der Osten in 1350. Zbigniew Radacki concluded that original manor erection started some decades before from the initiative of Henning and Ludke von Kremzow (Radacki 1976, p. 28).

[34] What unequivocally results from the address on the letter. *Itinerarium* of the Grand Master confirms that he was present in Szczytno, at least on the 4th of March of that year (Neitmann 1990, p. 119). The German scholar did not use the source quoted here, though.

[35] […] *also gnediger lieber herre! Hat der gedochte meister Hans etczlich gebewde zcum glocktorme baß pfarkirchen zugelegt zumachen und enteiles gebunden und also zugelegt ist, das is nymande sunder her alleyne kan volbrengen und wenne das gehyndert wurde, zo besorge wir, das groß schade unser kirchen dorus entstehn moge. Och so haben wir das czweer durch andere meister losen machen und ist nye togelichen geendet*.



Fig. 8. Toruń. Tower of the Church of Saint John (photo N. Chylińska)

request to let them keep the master for some time. Had that been impossible, they would have sent the specialist with great regret, but they were hoping that the Master have him deployed to Toruń without delay (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9159).

We can suppose that Hans the *werkmeister* was not a common mason, although he had not been the author of the design of the new tower at the Church of Saint John. The first construction had collapsed (1406) and the new one was being erected from the foundations for a long time (starting 1407) (for more information about the dispute concerning this problem – cf. Jóźwiak, Wiewióra 2024, p. 143). Therefore, it must have been designed by someone else. As follows from the mentioned letter, in Toruń Councilors' opinion, *werkmeister* Hans employed by the Grand Master was the only person who could successfully tackle the technical problems in the crucial moment when the tower was being redecorated (at some height, probably). Two previous specialists had failed. We can conclude that *werkmeister* Hans was a highly qualified expert seasoned in the art of masonry, a true "architect" of the era.

The two persons mentioned above seem to be discussed (although it is not evident) in a long letter of Grand Marshall and Königsberg commander Kilian von Exdorf to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen from the 11th of August, 1445. In general, the problem referred to various works at Klaipeda Castle (Fig. 9). In the beginning, the author informed that according to the local commander and the Grand Master, he had deployed there five carpenters (*funff czymmermans*), who were building a lock. The Marshall assigned "master Nicolas" (*meister Niclos*) as the sixth member to join the crew. They were meant to stay there until their work was finished. The Brandenburg commander was also supposed to provide the building site with five other carpenters, the problem being that some of them left early, with the Klaipeda commander's careless consent. The Marshall also ordered to have two other carpenters sent there, who arrived to Königsberg on the 6th of August and joined master Hans, the Grand Master's *werkmeister*. In the meantime, the Grand Marshall arrived in Klaipeda and when he was leaving on the 8th of August, they still had not come. Nonetheless, he hoped that 'master Hans' would complete his job without any delay. Following the Grand Master's orders, the Grand Marshall left in Klaipeda 15 marks for the sawyer (*bretsneyder*) who had been working there for "master Hans". The official ordered also various ironware (nails etc.) necessary for "master Hans" to be made and left money to defray the expenses. The Grand Master asked the Marshall to find, equip and send to Klaipeda two shinglers (*schindelstosser*), which turned out to be a difficult task. He admitted having seen a man who was capable of covering side roofs with oak shingle when he was staying there. He also specialised in siding roofs using spruce planks, following the Livonian method[36]. This refers to a classic plank that was 10 feet long (in Chełmno, one

[36] Wooden planks were used at various construction stages. One should bear in mind that particularly in winter, parts of structures that had not been completed were temporarily covered with

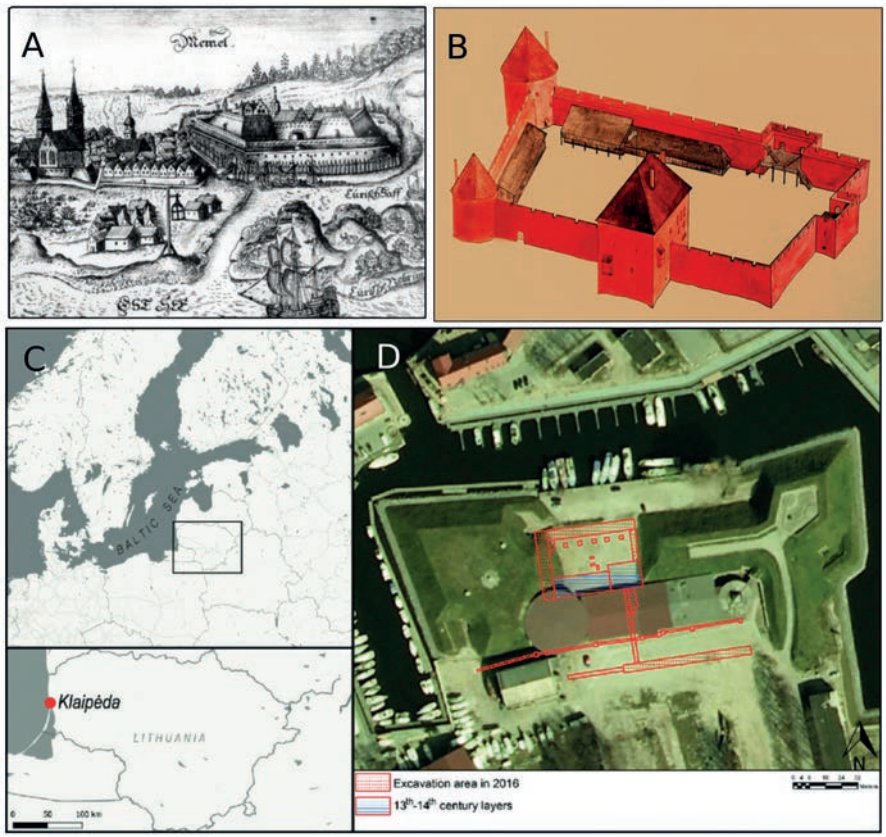


Fig. 9. Klaipeda Castle. A – the view from the 17th century (after https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zamek_w_Kłajpedzie), B – castle reconstruction (after Šliogeris 1994), C – castle location (after Ehrlich *et al.* 2020)

foot would be equal to ca. 314 cm; cf. footnote 25). Two are grouted together while the third comes onto the joint of the two already fixed. This "shingle" demands 20 marks for roofing the entire horse mill (*roßmole*). The raw material (planks) will be delivered by himself; nails, however, must be provided. The Grand Marshall

sawnwood roofs, as e.g., the castle in Ragnit (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011, pp. 208–209). Owing to analyses of written sources, it has been established that Klaipeda Castle was being erected in stages; the first to be completed was the southern wing holding the most crucial rooms, such as the chapel and the refectory. The sources contain information about glazing windows and constructing truss in the southern wing, while masonry works were still in progress in other parts. Sources from the beginning of the 15th century inform that uncompleted buildings were temporarily roofed with planks, and next, vaults and roof trusses were built (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2011; Wasik 2018a, pp. 50–51).

wanted to know what the Master would decide – to have the object covered with oak shingles or, as the master suggested, sprout planks? Surprisingly, his superior decided to have the horse mill covered for winter with reed. It was necessary, because "master Hans" planned to make a water trough for horses inside (*treenge*). The Grand Marshall asked for the Grand Master's permission, because people who cut reed and could be employed (they also specialised in covering walls with clay) would stay in Klaipeda only for one week longer. On the other hand, "master Hans, the *werkmeister* of Your Grace" was not able to concentrate on making a "wheel device" (*radewerg*) and "other harnesses" (*andere geschirre*), because he was tasked with making the "water trough" (*trenge*) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8859).

The contents of this source are somewhat surprising. Except for the "horse mill" (its walls may have been of brick), all other works mentioned in the letter entailed using timber. Moreover, the opening sentences of this letter inform that "master Nicolas" was an expert carpenter. And what about the Grand Master's work master Hans? Is it possible that the eminent "architect" of the Order Superior was occupied with building a water trough (using what kind of material?) in the local horse mill at Klaipeda Castle? Is it the same person as the one mentioned in the letters from the 9th of August, 1446 and the 1st of March, 1447, or was the "master architect" of that epoch a Jack of all trades? It is impossible to provide a satisfying answer to this question.

Similar problems were discussed in a letter of Ragnit commander Gerlach Mertz to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen from the 18th of July, 1445. In the opening, the official informed the Master that the construction of the fourth wing of his castle was nearing completion, although still lacking the roof at that time[37]. The entire complex was created with significant delay, because at least one *bauda* failed, as a result of which there was not enough timber for making jambs (*stender*) for the roof truss, and old beams (*sperre*) that the commander owned turned out to be too short for that purpose. The official did not have construction laths (*latten*) at his disposal, either. Using his own horses, he had to bring threescores (180 pieces) of construction timber (*tzymmer*) and finance the necessary works "in the yard" (or possibly in the residence building (?); *in meyne hoffe*) himself, to have the building (*deses gebuwde*) completed. For this purpose, he used the construction timber stored in Ragnit, originally intended for erecting "the horse mill" (*roßmolen*). He also remarked some problems with a dam (*tamme*) in Tilsit and suggested that the *bauda* should start work there as quickly as possible, when the water level was low and the days were long. If the *bauda* were organized, the commander asked the Grand Master to send him also a foreman (*wergmeister*), skilled in building on

[37] […] *euwir erwirdige genode geruche tzu wissen, das das eyne firtel tzu Ragnith hoffe ich tzu gote wol gereyt sal inkortz werden ane das dach*. In reality, it must have been a kind of wing redecoration works, as the regular quadrangular high castle body in Ragnit had already been completed at the turn of 1407 (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2009, pp. 361–364).

a dam crown/river spur (*uff die houbte*), equipped with proper tools (e.g., ropes), capable of building necessary machines on the site, such as frames (supports) for pile drivers, etc. On the other hand, it would not be advisable if the *bauda* had arrived earlier than the *wergmeister*. If the search for a competent foreman failed, the Komtur would be grateful for the man in service of the Grand Master to be deployed (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8823).

The question arises, what field did the *wergmeister* specialise in? He was not mentioned as an expert necessary for the carpentry-building works conducted in the course of erecting the fourth wing of Ragnit Castle and other structures located there, yet he was considered absolutely indispensable for the works on the dam in Tilsit. What crafts and techniques were represented in this case by the *wergmeister*?

The records of Malbork Castle commander Kaspar Zöllner made at the end of 1448 (registering the expenses for maintaining the seat convent) include waged paid to the builders who performed unspecified works, mainly within that castle premises[38]. The sum of over 311 marks for the master mason and his crew (the number of labourers unknown), as well as "stonemason helpers" (*steinknechte*) was paid to master (*meister*) Simon. Another part of the record specifies a trimestr salary of 7.5 marks for a mason (*mewer*) named George ("Jorge") (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9764, k. 1, 2v). It can be concluded that he was paid his wage regularly in Malbork Castle. Were Simon and George unqualified masons or builder masters/architects? Furthermore, that would mean that they were not the only specialists working at the castle. Another interesting insight follows from a letter written by Malbork Treasurer Leonard von Parsberg to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen on the 6th of September, 1448. The Teutonic official wrote on a separate sheet of paper (unpreserved) attached to the letter a piece of information received from master Silwester specifying a number of roof tiles and bricks necessary for erecting a cowshed and other masonry structures (probably within the bailey). The same appendix (probably by master Silwester himself) presents the "shape/form" (*gestalt*) of any wall and a gate (in drawing?)[39]. Next, the Treasurer informed that the brickyard in Tczew had just sent to Malbork two boats carrying 7,000 bricks and that the barges would also bring 9,000 roof tiles. Another load of bricks was also expected from the brickyard in Nowe (Neuenburg)[40]. Earlier, the Grand Master had contracted in Elbląg (Elbing) brickyard undefined by the author a number of

[38] In recent years, the archaeological research conducted in the space of the medium castle and the baileys in Malbork has intensified (Wasik 2025, pp. 155–185 – *ibidem*, all the collected earlier literature on the subject).

[39] Cf. footnote 5.

[40] Brickyards and brick production in the Teutonic state – cf. Arszyński 2016, pp. 33–105; Wasik 2017, pp. 37–58; Wiewióra *et al*. 2024, pp. 282–305.

bricks for 13 scots[41] for 1,000 items, although the Treasurer expected some logistical issues with the delivery. In turn, the Komtur of Bałga (Balge) expressed his request to have master Nicolas (*meister Niclus*) deployed to him, but at that time, it was impossible. Although the gate that he had erected recently (probably within one of the baileys of Malbork Castle) would be completed that day, but he would be busy supervising erecting some embankments in the moat (*waelle im graben*), and his presence was absolutely necessary. He would be permitted to travel to Bałga as soon as the works had been finished, if the Grand Master allowed. At present, Malbork was waiting for a parish priest of the Church of Saint Catherine (from Gdańsk?), who urgently needed master Silwester (probably for some building works), which was impossible at that time, likewise. Some intense works were being conducted regarding a tower and building foundations (not specified), and – in the Treasurer's words, "the masons would not let the brickyard stop" (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9652)[42]. The letter informs that despite purchasing bricks from other sources, there was at least one local brickyard within the castle area working at full speed (for more on this subject – cf. Jóźwiak, Wiewióra 2024, pp.125–129).

Who were these masters – Silwester and Nicolas? Common masons or building masters/architects?

The last one may also appear in Malbork Treasurer's letter to the Grand Master from the 12th of July, 1448. The letter concerns intense building works within the space of the second bailey of Malbork Castle (foundations, walls), although the letter does not precise what buildings were being constructed. The only point of reference is *steinhoffe* mentioned twice, and the object was located in central-eastern part of the second bailey (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2019, pp. 441–443). This written source does not speak of builders at all, mentioning only the fact that some wall was planned to be erected close to "master Nicolas tower" (*meister Niclassen thorm*) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9589). Was that the same Nicolas as above in the Treasurer's letter from the 6th of September, 1448? It cannot be excluded, though, that the tower was named after the builder from the second decade of the 15th century, Nicolas Fellenstein[43]. Taking into account the location of works in progress mentioned by the Treasurer in the letter from the 12th of July, 1448, we could identify it as the so-called Gunpowder Tower in Eastern wall of central part of second bailey in Malbork Castle (Fig. 10) (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2019, p. 67).

No analogies can be found elsewhere to compare the information included in the Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen's letter to the official of the Neumark Georg von Egloffstein. The last one informed the Order Master that "our building

[41] 1 scot = 30 pennies (Kahnt 2005, p. 434).

[42] *Sust gnediger herre homeister arbittet man faste alummb, sowol am thorme als an der grundtmauwer, das die mauwerer czigelschawen nicht dorffen fryeren*.

[43] Cf. footnote 10.



Fig. 10. Malbork Castle. Outer bailey (fortified settlement). Gunpowder Tower (after https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Malbork_Baszta_Maslankowa_%281%29.jpg)

master Hans Kunstmeister", staying in Frankfurt an der Oder (the source does not precise his origin) intends to put on a habit in the Teutonic Order. In these circumstances the Grand Master commended the official to summon him for educating and encouraging talk. If he still was willing to join the Order, he should patiently wait and at that time the official was obliged to inform the Superior about his opinion on the candidate and his real desire. If nothing changed, the official had to come to Malbork with the candidate to arrive on "Saint Michael's Day" (the 29th of September), probably for the ceremony (GStAPK, OF, no. 17, p. 10)[44]. It is not known, what the earlier contacts of Hans Kunstmeister with the Order had been, but as the official wrote about him "our building master", it can be supposed that he had been employed earlier at building sites of castles in Kostrzyn, Gorzów or Drezdenko, and it is doubtful that he was an ordinary mason-worker. Rather a building specialist, i.e. "architect" of that period. It is not known, if he really joined the Order and what his further fate was.

The project from about 1450, including the answers of the Grand Master to social, economic and political demands of the Neumark inhabitants written by an anonymous parish priest of Myśliborz (Soldin) church has been preserved until this day. This comprehensive source contains an interesting passage saying that the Order did not have any supervisor that would oversee the construction of Gorzów Castle, which worried the Neumark official (the question is, why could not he do it himself?). He recommended that the forestry administrator (*Waldmeister*), Świdwin official, be deployed there as a Baumeister (*buwemeister*) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 10499, sp 2)[45]. What was the Teutonic Baumeister possibly tasked with at the building site in Gorzów? Likely, he was fulfilling the duties of a construction site supervisor. In the 14th century and in the beginning of the 15th century, the role of supervisors in particular convents in Prussia was played by Teutonic friars, who were overseeing the construction or extension of particular castles[46]. A similar role

[44] *Als ir uns schreibet von meister Hans Kunstmeister unsirn buwmeister, wie der sey czu Franckford an der Oder etc. So vornemen wir wie her begere und wol geneiget were sich czugeben und cleiden czu lassen in unsirn orden und darumb beuelen wir euch, das ir en czu euch vorbottet mit em redet und em als von euch selbst saget hette, her lust und gunge czu unsirn Orden; ir getruwet es em an uns wol czudirwerben, ffulet ir denne, das her darczu ist geneiget. So saget em, das hers in eyner gedolt eyn kurczes lasse ansteen. Ir wellet em davon eyn besteen thun czuwissen und schreibet uns seyne antwort unverczogen und fertiget euch selbist also, das ir uff santt Michel nehstkomende alhie im lande gewislich bey uns seit und euch keyns dorane vorhindern lasset*.

[45] *Item von des slosses wegen Landsberg wo men id dar nuth holden schol ummb dat gebuwte, wente de voith in grotem twinele dorann sitczet und hofft gedacht up den waldmeister to Schivelbyn vor eynen buwemeister ken Landsberg*. The Świdwin forestry administrator from that time is unknown.

[46] In Latin, they were referred to as *magister lapidum* or *magister laterum*, while in German – *steinmeister*, *czygelmeyster* or *muwermeister*. The friar in service was responsible for one particular building task. His duty was to manage the specialists and the work force (paying them, feeding and providing sleeping location, managing their work, purchasing limestone, lime, building timber, ropes for scaffolding, tools, bricks and nails and arranging transport. "Mason superiors" had special workshop-store-dwelling space

in the Bratian (Brattian) convent (Chełmno Land) was played by friar-knight (or friar helper – *sariant*) Friedrich Konch (Fig. 11). It is evident from a letter of the local cellar administrator (*kellermeister zcum Bratian*) to Grand Master Konrad von Erlichshausen, dated the 28th of November, 1448. It turned out that the *bawmeister* of Bratian (was not one any longer) had borrowed some time before 28 marks and two scots[47] from the burghers of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. The burghers just appeared at the official's seat, informing him that the former official (in 1447?) had agreed with the Grand Master that as a deposit of that sum, their census would have been reduced, but that solution did not satisfy the burghers (GStAPK, OBA, no. 9728). The question is what particular works were under the supervision of *bawmeister*

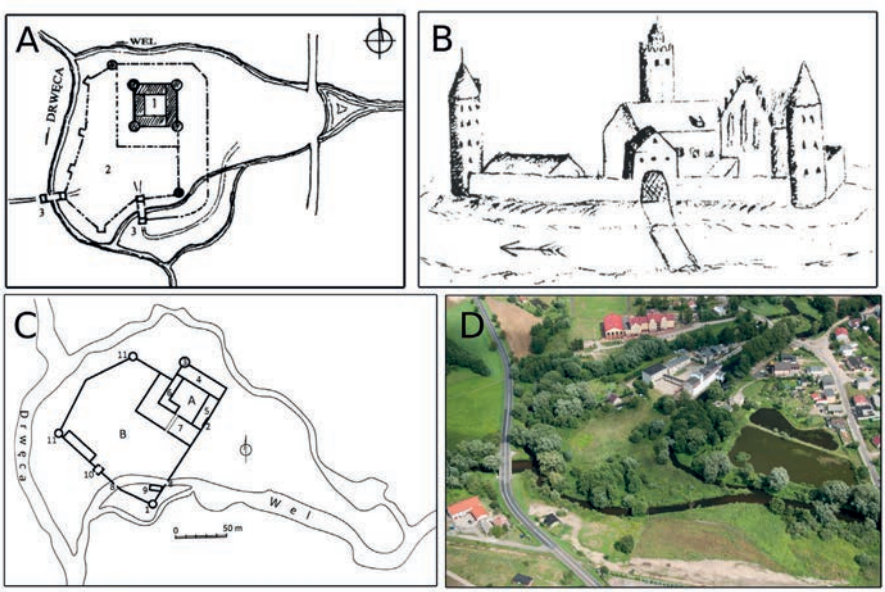


Fig. 11. Bratian Castle. A – castle plan after J. Heise (1895): 1 – high castle, 2 – outer bailey, 3 – bailey gates; B – castle view from the 19th century from southwest after M. Toeppen (1875); C – castle plan after Wasik: A – high castle, B – bailey, 1 – tower relics, 3 – main tower, 4 – high house, 5 – basement building with upper floors in framework construction, 6 – household framework structures, kitchen, brewery, bakery, 7 – moat, 8 – locks in the bailey wall, 9 – castle mill, 10 – gate building leading to the bailey, 11 – cyllindrical towers (after https://medievalheritage.eu/pl/strona-glowna/zabytki/polska/bratian-zamek/); D – aerial view (after https://www.zamki.pl/?idzamku=bratian&dzial=galeria#&gid=null&pid=11)

on their disposal in baileys, in the direct vicinity of a building site (*steynhof*), where brickyards and lime furnaces could also be located. Having completed the task, the function of "mason superior" finished and friars were directed to new duties (Jóźwiak, Trupinda 2015, pp. 239–268).

47 Cf. footnote 41.

Bratian[48]. Malbork cellar administrator's record from July 1448 reports the works in progress there (without any details) and 200 marks were spent[49].

Interesting information appears in the Grand Master's Konrad von Erlichshausen letter to the official Walther von Kirskorf in Świdwin from 3rd June 1447. The Order Superior thanked him and Bałga commander for 100 marks donated for Gorzów Castle building. He asked them, however, to keep the money till winter, as he intended to nominate a Baumeister there (*bawmeister*), and they would direct those means to him. His (Master's) duty would be to care for building material (stones, lime) and erecting a brickyard there. He would also have some time for collecting extra funds (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, p. 512). It is almost certain that *bawmeister* in the letter meant any friar-knight or Teutonic sariant, whose duty was to manage Gorzów Castle building on behalf of the Order.

When on the 27th of May, 1443, Teutonic deputies the Grand Komtur and the commander of Elbląg set off to Frankfurt an der Oder for a meeting with a Brandenburg margrave (planned for the 16th of June), they got precise instruction concerning political issues for negotiations, but not only. There was also a fragment on a new castle started in Kostrzyn (in Teutonic Neumark). The deputies were to control initial works stage and estimate the needs (bricks, stones, lime, tools and equipment), and simultaneously deliver necessary financial means to a local Baumeister (*bawmeister*) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 8266). It means that there was any Teutonic official managing started works. We do not know where he was staying in Kostrzyn, as Teutonic convent had not existed there yet.

The above remarks are confirmed by a letter of Master Konrad von Erlichshausen to anonymous Teutonic manager in Kostrzyn from the 4th of January, 1447. The official had reported to his Superior having exceeded the castle building budget of 38.5 marks and 8 scots[50], sending also written documentation. In answer to that letter the Grand Master informed that he was sending him the money by "Kaldenborn", Baumeister (*buwemeister*) in Drezdenko, and the next part of money for Kostrzyn Castle building would be delivered by Teutonic officials in Prussia about the Lent (that year Ash Wednesday was on 22nd Febr.). Having received the money, he should start works early spring of that year (GStAPK, OF, no. 16, pp. 1165–1166). "Kaldenborn" mentioned in that source must have been Dietrich von Kaltenborn, who was an administrator/burgrave of Drezdenko Castle between 1444–1455 (Heckmann 2020, p. 397), but only that source informs that he was in office of Baumeister in the beginning of 1447. It is certain, however, that he was

[48] Archaeological studies on Bratian Castle – cf. Grążawski 2010, pp. 301–316; 2015, pp. 367–372; Grążawski, Grążawska 2013, pp. 571–578; Poliński 2024, pp. 46–76.

[49] *Brathean. Item so haben usgegeben zum hawße Brathean zu bauwen alles, das es gekost hat, 200 gutte mark (*Neitmann 1990, p. 146).

[50] Cf. footnote 41.

a member of The Teutonic Order. In the years 1442–1444, he was a companion of the New March official (Heckmann 2020, p. 397).

News concerning building procedures are included in a letter of the Teutonic Kostrzyn Castle castellan to the grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen from the 1st of April, 1452. Unfortunately, the report was formed in such unclear way that it is not evident which part refers to Kostrzyn building and which Drezdenko. Order seems to be as follows: Kostrzyn – Drezdenko – Kostrzyn but it is only supposed. First the manager asks the Master for money (over 100 marks) and cart horses necessary to continue works in Kostrzyn. He complains long on notorious financial shortage, but he hopes that with the Superior's support he will continue works until the 11th of November. Next, he reports about his voyage to Drezdenko with an anonymous foreman (*wergmeister*) recommended to him by the Neumark official and who is at present employed in Kostrzyn. In Drezdenko they met The Neumark official on the 27th of March, and the official ordered the foreman a wide range of construction works in the castle in Drezdenko. He had to dismantle some wall up to the height of two rods[51], remove the debris and build supports to that wall (*bolwerg*) reaching the original height. He was also supposed to erect the main castle building (*eyn hawß*) with two chimneys – one for the kitchen and the other for the bakery and brewery. As the author remarked the building was designed for 24 baulks of length which could room *gute gemache, kamern und solre*. Next technical details were discussed concerning new method of foundation constructing in that particular case. Special solutions were to be implemented. Next the author suggested that if with the Master's consent, dismantling some unspecified wall parts, it would be done and built again so that the central house suited the other structures standing there already (*gemach*). In this letter fragment one has an impression that the author skips suddenly to the building site in Kostrzyn. Some roofed embankment (*bolwerg*) was to be erected behind the central house (*hinder dem hawse*), and the Master should not worry, it would be of defensive character and strong enough. There should not be any doubts that some undefined section of newly built wall could collapse soon, because it is so skilfully constructed to last at least 30 years or longer. The *wergmeister* (the same as above?) declared to roof the main house (of Kostrzyn castle?) with oak shingles. Teutonic party declared to pay him 60 kops (*groshes*?)[52] for that task, what – according to the author – was a reasonable price, because all works are done by the foreman himself, and cover all additional costs (paying his helpers?), he should only be equipped with prefabricated units, i.e. oak timber. The *wergmeister* decided that on the 16th of April, he would

[51] Taking into account even the smallest rod size (cf. footnote 25), it would give 8 m 64 cm. Information from the text would indicate any external defensive wall. If the wall had to be partly damaged to that height and built up with the *bolwerg*, it means that both originally and after the alterations, the wall was exceptionally tall. This prompts one to reconsider the actual length of the rod in the Neumark.

[52] Cf. footnote 21.

send away a group of his journeymen (*gesellen*) (to Drezdenko?), while the rest would still be working in Kostrzyn. Teutonic administrator praises further great professionalism of his foreman. There is no other master in the entire the country (in the Neumark?) that would match his skills, and there is no other who would take up so difficult and risky building endeavours. The very structure required such a personality who stands out with his craftsmanship, preparation for challenges and involvement. Kostrzyn administrator will relate all these things personally when they meet. At the end of his letter, he asks once again to send him money and horses, and adds that carpenters were working at the site every day, so with the work pace he expected one part of the castle (undefined) would have been completed "with walls and buildings" by the end of the year. The project could stop, however, if he did not receive the money and horses (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11131).

Who was that anonymous foreman spoken about (probably it is all the time the same person)? He must have been acquainted with all building stages: starting with design, erecting foundations (using latest techniques), walls, rooms up to roof constructions. If needed, he could also dismantle some parts and redecorate them. Kostrzyn manager praised him for involvement in complicated and dangerous jobs, like – probably erecting constructions in difficult damp surface. He worked with his crew of journeymen (*gesellen*). He was surprisingly skilled in roofing buildings with shingles as well. He may have managed only the work done by his men. Taking all this into account, he could not have been an ordinary labourer, but professional builder, called today an architect.

Fascinating information can be found in a letter of Teutonic official of the Neumark Christoph von Eglingen (?) written on the 11th of July, 1452 from Choszczno to the Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen. The official reported that following the Master's orders he went with a master (*meyster*) Mathias "mason specialist" (*murmeyster*), working currently in Kostrzyn, to Drezdenko, to make observations on current condition of that stronghold walls. When they reached the place, master Mathias having inspected the object decided that one wall (which one?) needed dismantling in summer to avoid bigger disaster. There was the danger the wall would fall down onto a parcham and the debris would fill and block the moat, as a result of which the moat would be difficult to clear of deposited water and mud. According to master Mathias the crew had to find time to deal with the problem. By that time his and his crew's works (*mit seynen gesellen*) in Kostrzyn castle were coming to an end, so if the Grand Master wished that, they could start demolishing the wall in Drezdenko. The official asked for Master's decision and instructions concerning bringing timber to Drezdenko in the meantime (*haltcz*), as well as the carpenters (*czymmeleuthe*) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11312). The appendix written in another handwriting is worth an interest. The Grand Master ordered the official to go to Kostrzyn and using the absence of local Teutonic administrator inspected the building site (probably the castle). But due to internal turbulences (conflict between

representatives of two Neumark knight families) he was forced to go to Choszczno, so instead he sent his companion to Kostrzyn instead. The Grand Master will have all the necessary information on building stages (*das gebuwde*) from oral report of a *Veterchen*[53], who had visited the site and had seen everything (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11312; CDB, 1859 18, no. 86, p. 340 – wrong date, and appendix not attached). It is surprising that master Maciej, who had been working there, was not questioned about Kostrzyn Castle works advancement. Was he not trustworthy?

The history of Drezdenko Castle history resurfaces in a fragment of another letter written by the Neumark official on the 21st of August, 1452, from Choszczno to the Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen. The official reminded that he had already filed a report regarding the condition of the wall (which one in particular?) in Drezdenko Castle. He had just visited the castle and inspected it together with master Mathias, who was working at a construction site in Kostrzyn Castle at that time; he had just been there for a site inspection (is he referring to the one in July or the other one, from a later date?) and concluded it with a decision to take one of the wall down immediately, because had it collapsed, much damage in the moat and the parcham of Drezdenko Castle would have been caused[54]. The official urged for money necessary for the repairs (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11365). Who was that master Mathias mentioned here? A common mason or building master/architect?

In the long letter of the official Christoph von Eglingen to the Grand Master from the 11th of September, 1452, the problem of demolishing the wall in Drezdenko castle appears again. As the official informed, the Grand Master had sent from his own initiative an *erbar knechte* (defined in another letter part a "diener"), who was ordered to do the job. Was it any builder working for the Grand Master described in the letter in such a veiled form? As the official continued, the burgrave (*der borgrave*) of Drezdenko Castle would cover costs of that specialist's work, while Eglingen's task would be to supervise smooth process (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11431).

The undertaking was not finalized hastily, though. It was referred again in a letter to the Grand Master sent on the 25th of March, 1453 from Gorzów by the Neumark official Christoph von Eglingen. Kostrzyn Castle administrator on behalf of the Grand Master obliged the Neumark official to engage personally in the problem of Drezdenko walls repairs. The official contracted a "reliable building master" (*bawmeyster*[55]) for 80 marks who was to dismantle two wall fragments: "the back one" (*ruckmuren*) and "at parcham" (*am parchem*)[56] and replace them

[53] He is described – cf. footnote 28.

[54] *Ouch ich euwern gnoden vormals von der muren zcu Dreßen geschreyben habe unde ich mit meyster Mattis zcu Costryn aldo gewest bin. Der gentczlich meynet und sin rad ist, das man sye bricht ye ee ye bessir, off das sye am graben unde parcham nicht merglichen schaden thut* […].

[55] Exceptional usage of the noun *bawmeyster*. It could not have been a member of the Teutonic Order, as they were not paid for their work.

[56] The record concerning parcham seems to be deleted in the source.

with new constructions. The employee assured that he would erect solid walls not requiring any repairs for the following 60 years. Details concerning the contract would be presented personally by Kostrzyn administrator, when he came to the Grand Master (to Malbork?) (GStAPK, OBA, no. 11890; CDB, 1859, no. 87, p. 341). The same question arises – was that anonymous *bawmeyster* appearing in the source a common mason or highly specialized in brick building architect? He did not have to design any projects only to dismantle and redecorate two wall fragments (curtain?) in Drezdenko stronghold.

The year 1453 finishes numerous source records concerning construction works in the area of Teutonic Neumark and builders engaged in completing them. Their continuation was stopped by the Thirteen Years' War outbreak (1454), and next year (1455) the Order sold the territory to Brandenburg margraves.

To sum up the analyses, it should be stated that in the first half of the 15th century, in the sources of the Teutonic State in Prussia and the Neumark, representatives of a broad construction sector employed by the Order at construction sites – tasked with building new complexes, expanding and redecorating them – were referred to in five different ways: *meister* (*meyster*), *muwerer* (*muwrer*, *murer*, *mouwer*, *mewer*), *muwermeister* (*murmeister*, *muremeister*, *muremester*), *werkmeister* (*werckmeister*, *wergmeister*), and *bawmeister* (*buwemeister*). Unfortunately, these terms were not precise enough and can be understood as denoting both common masons and expert architects. Only the name *werkmeister* denoted, as a rule, a professional building specialist working with his own crew, but not only; as it turned out, "carpenter masters" were referred to using the same term in historic sources from the area in question. The name *bawmeister* was reserved for mason/builder superiors exclusively, members of the Teutonic Order supervising the processes of erecting, redecorating or extending particular structures from the investor's party. Only in single instances we are able to say something more about the builders themselves, as most often, they remain anonymous. Those more familiar to us either came from big cities (particularly Gdańsk) or from abroad, predominantly, from Reich.

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