

The seats of medium and lower-ranking Teutonic officials in today's Poland. Archaeological study

Teutonic architecture is usually seen through the prism of monumental buildings such as castle in Malbork. Researchers have focused mostly on the castles that once were the seats of commanders. However, over the last several years a need to intensify the research on smaller defence objects has been continuously postulated.

The amount of this kind of "smaller" architectural objects in the entire monastic state can be estimated in hundreds. On the territory of today's Poland we can point to about seventeen castles and mansions, which were the headquarters of officials, with the exception of commanders, serving, in general, the administrative function.

In literature one can still find erroneous opinions concerning the architecture of smaller residential objects of the Teutonic Order. This applies to forms as well as the period in which many of the castles and manors were erected.

As for the shape of the castles, we can speak about objects: from strongholds in the form of a four-winged castle and monumental castles with three wings to a significant amount of fortresses with a single wing.

The literature is dominated by the conviction that the largest seats of officials were the voigts' castles (as for example castle in Sztum), next the procurators' castles (many castles; for example objects in: Pisz, Szestno, Elk, Giżycko), and that the smallest ones were the bailiffs' castles (for example: Bezlawki). Typically the seats of voigts were the largest, but there were individual procurators' castles that were even larger, such as, for example, the building in Węgorzewo. There were also voigts' headquarters that never evolved into brick forms as the one in Dąbrówno. The best-preserved bailiff's castle is the one in Bezlawki. It should be noted that the procurator's castle in Szestno was almost twice smaller from it.

If we look at castles built in the first half of the fourteenth century, we can see that castles with long main houses (over 40 m) like the objects in Pasłęk and Przewmark were mainly erected at that time. In the second half of the fourteenth century we can note a remarkably long house in Węgorzewo and some big castles in Pomerania.

There are not many identified fortresses from the second quarter of the fourteenth century, but it seems that we can expect among them many objects, which can be considered to be built of wood and earth. Tomasz Torbus wrote that the castles with two brick houses, which were built from the 1340s, should be an important aspect of future research on the headquarters of village mayors and procurators. The first stronghold, which was founded as a two-winged castle, was probably the one in Olsztynek. The example of the Działdowo castle presented by Torbus never had only two wings in the period of the Middle Ages.

In the case of castles with a single brick house, current research confirms that strongholds of this type occurred sporadically in the first half and spread in the second half of the fourteenth century. However, explanation that this model of the castle perfectly proved itself as an object whose courtyard could accommodate mercenary troops seems quite unconvincing (considering the fact that a significant part of this type of objects was small).

The Culmland is the cradle of Teutonic architecture and mostly had conventual castles. We do not know much about the strongholds of lower importance in this area. From those archaeologically investigated, the stronghold in Pień, and several manors of rather undefined function should be noted (for example Słoszewy, Słupski Młyn).

The seats of lower Teutonic officials in Prussia were built progressively. Intense construction time took place in the second and fourth quarter of the fourteenth century. This was caused by the building of wooden objects in the second quarter of the century, which in next few years were massively destroyed by the Lithuanians. In the last years of the fourteenth century they were being rebuilt from brick and stone.

We should divide Prussia into the east and west parts and the part of the Vistula Lagoon.

Initially, brick strongholds were builded mainly in the west part of Prussia and at the Vistula Lagoon. The first manors and castles in eastern Prussia began to form in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. They were probably mostly wooden buildings.

The area of Pomerania has many examples of Teutonic architecture. Despite the fact that it was seized by the Teutonic Order in 1308, the construction of territorial administration did not start everywhere at the same time.

The many of seats from the area of Pomerania, specially from the second half of the fourteenth century, belonged to the large and regular objects. But there were also other complexes. For example castles in Kiszewa and Osiek. They both belong to a type of irregular strongholds, but differ greatly in terms of scale as well as the genesis of their form.

It is worth noticing that to this day at the whole territory of the former Teutonic State the surviving castles are mostly more monumental ones. This does not allow us, however, to conclude that most of the seats of officials were brick castles.

The functions of these complexes evolved over time. The Teutonic state was expanding and changing. Over time, settlements appeared at its borders. Places, which for many years had been exposed to attacks, at some point became safer.

In my work, I have raised the problem of both forms and functions of the seats of Teutonic Knights.

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