The article studies the dynamics of the construction of a Christian image in fourteenth-century Gdańsk, as manifested in architecture, urban space, and artwork. This study demonstrates that the city’s Christian image was not only formed by the Teutonic Knights, a Christian military order that governed Gdańsk during this time, but by many social groups representing all strata of the city’s residents, sometimes supported by external powers, in the process of negotiating social and urban statuses. Consequently, the city’s architecture, urban space, and artwork were not only an expression of religious beliefs or of a particular artistic style, but also a manifestation of social, economic, and political identities.

Key words: Christianization, Gdańsk, Teutonic Knights, medieval art, medieval architecture, medieval saints, medieval city.

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Fourteenth-century Gdańsk was an important Hanseatic-trading center located in the ethnically and religiously diverse Prussia of the Teutonic Order. Enhanced by its location in the middle of the Baltic commerce routes, the city traded a variety of goods, including grain, amber, and wood, to all parts of the European continent. Because of the trading activities, Gdańsk’s population dramatically increased from 7,000 in the thirteenth century to 14,000 by the end of the fourteenth century. Mainly of Polish backgrounds in the thirteenth century, with a small number of Prussians and Germanic people, by the fourteenth century the city’s residents were predominantly of German origins, representing different Germanic cultures, while Polish and Prussian population groups constituted a minority of Gdańsk’s cultural and language makeup.

The remarkable demographic growth fostered the complete rebuilding of Gdańsk under the Kulm Law. In this process of urban transformation, the thirteenth-century city –

*This paper expands one of the chapters of my dissertation: PAC, Teresa: Churches at the Edge: A Comparative Study of Christianization Processes along the Baltic Sea in the Middle Age: Gdańsk and Novgorod. State University of Binghamton 2005, pp. 118–154.

I would like to thank Catherine Kempf, Buss Kato, and Paul Gato for reading and editing drafts of this paper.


As in any medieval city, the number is highly estimated at each time, but the double demographic growth is indisputable. PAC, T.: Churches, p. 139.
comprised of the princely stronghold, the fishing station, the trading-craft area around the Dominican church of Saint Nicholas and the parish church of Saint Catherine, and the Cistercian Abbey located near the city – developed into a set of urban enclaves: the Knights’ castle (on the site of the princely castle); the fishing station; the Old Town around the church of Saint Catherine; the Main Town incorporating the Dominicans; the suburbs; and the gardens.4 Evolving from the existing small trading stations, the Main Town became a center of civic and trading activities, separated by a brick wall from the other components of the city.5 As is often the case during a colonization process, the Old Town received much less attention, but a lack of the city wall suggests that it was open for further expansion. Moreover, the fishing station was shifted to Osiek (Hackelwerk), near the Knights’ castle, to provide them with fish. The increased trading activities were manifested by the construction of 130 granaries, a shipyard, and an English trading colony.6 At the same time, a significant number of ecclesiastical public architecture made of brick arose against the wooden fabric of residential houses to serve both the old and new residents of the city.7

Built mostly in the second half of the fourteenth-century, Gdańsk churches were a few times larger than the residential buildings, and thereby visually projected the city’s Christian image, which has had a significant, as well as unfortunate effect modern conceptions of medieval Gdańsk.8 Since this urban makeover took place under the rule of the Teutonic Order, most scholarship presents the Knights as a major, if not progressive, force in Gdańsk’s urban transformation, within a framework of unexamined assumptions of the city’s Christian character.9 Through their emphasis on style, modern art historians assert, whether consciously or not, the “Christian” identity of the city, privileging architecture and artwork in the interpretation of medieval Gdańsk. In contrast, I emphasize the range of functions and meanings that architecture, urban space, and artworks may have had, which can be reconstructed through a holistic study of Gdańsk society in which architecture, urban space, and artwork were assigned value and significance.

This paper goes beyond the idea of the preeminence of a homogenous elite and a Christian framework, but does not deny that the Knights did indeed enforce Christianity as the only acceptable form of identity in Gdańsk and therefore set parameters for the city’s Christian character.10 As in any study of the ruling power, the study focuses on the com-

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4 Ibid., pp. 139–140.
5 PLUSKOWSKI, A.: The Archaeology, p. 221.
6 Ibid., pp. 225–226.
plexity of the situation and the importance of alternate centers of authority with social actors concerned with the implementation of particular programs, often with their own agendas in mind. Closer analysis of the urban actors in Gdańsk indeed reveals the decentralized power structure and the complexity of social relations involved in the city’s formation. Because Gdańsk’s residents were associated with Christianity, one way or another, in order to understand this complexity it is important to examine the city’s ecclesiastical institutions, their physical manifestations, and “beliefs”. The study, therefore, deconstructs the notion of the Teutonic Order as a major force in the city’s development by focusing both on practice and ideology, inevitably funneled through diverse ecclesiastical institutions and their architecture, and on the socioeconomic and psychological factors which may have conditioned the adherence of particular social groups to Christianity. In addition, a hypothesis about how and why noninstitutional residents contributed to the Christian character of the urban space is made, in order to present the development of Gdańsk in its entirety.

The Teutonic Order originated as a hospital-fraternity in Acre, Palestine, during the First Crusade (1095–1099), but quickly aspired for dominance in the world. Confirmed by Pope Innocent III in 1199 as a military order, the Knights fought for various rulers in Europe. In 1230, the Knights received the Chelmno land from the Polish king, Conrad of Mazowia, in return for their military support against the heathens of Prussia. After the Order conquered pagan Prussia at the end of the thirteenth century, and Polish Christian Gdańsk in 1308, the Knights divided Prussia into territorial units/provinces called komturei and Gdańsk became the major city in the Gdańsk komtur of Teutonic Prussia. Each komtur served as a seat for one convent that consisted of at least 12 to 15 knights, 150 of the Knights’ retainers, under the administrative body consisting of a commander (Landkomtur), and his administrative assistants, including priests and, at times, a chronicler. All commanders were subject to the national commander (Landmeister) and all national commanders responded to the Grand Master who, since 1309, resided at Malbork castle in Prussia. The centralized institutional structure of the Order certainly rationalized the Knights’ sense of cohesiveness in the new territory. Foreign to the area, however, the Order had to construct a common tradition to provide a sense of the Knights’ shared identity and purpose in Prussia, including Gdańsk, because no social group can persist for a long

time without a structure of authority that justifies the group’s sense of cohesiveness and exclusiveness.  

15 Fully aware of the Knights’ foreign status in Prussia, the Order exercised its identity through mnemonic devices such as communal symbols, space(s), and architecture, as well as by retrospective affirmation and/or prospective goal settings.

The Order’s title, The German Hospital of Saint Mary in Jerusalem [domus hospitalis Theutonicorum sancte Marie in Jerusalem], certainly forged the Order’s historical continuity by affirming its existence in a retrospective manner. The title implied the Knights’ association with Saint Mary and common origins in Jerusalem, although the Order was never stationed in the holy city. This link was essential because the members of the Order in Gdańsk were of diverse European, and more specifically, Germanic backgrounds. This connection of the Order’s origins with a key figure and place in Christian history enhanced the Knights’ prestige at any time in any Christian society. In addition, this association linked the Knights’ crusades in the Middle East with the crusades along the Baltic, and any other crusade they conducted.

Furthermore, a common German language, uniformed clothing, communal living, and other symbols served the Order to perpetuate the Knights’ cohesiveness.  

16 The Knights perceived themselves as brothers and wore white mantles marked with the sign of a black cross, while their retainers wore gray mantles marked with the sign of half of the cross. The cross, therefore, signified their service in the name of Christ and implied that, as Christ died for the right cause, so the Knights served (and died for) the right purpose. This message and similar clothing separated the Order from the residents of Gdańsk and/or any other society and projected its mission to the people. This exclusiveness was reinforced by communal living in a castle where they dined, celebrated Christian mass, and worked. While the fourteenth-century castle in Gdańsk is not extant, surviving examples of castles of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and the Statutes of the Knights have allowed scholars to draw some general conclusions about the Order’s castle architecture.  

According to this research, a moat and a curtain wall shielded each castle from the surroundings, while two wards strengthened the defensiveness of the castle interior. Each castle included a church


or an altar, a hospital or infirmary, a refectory, a room for the head of the convent, a penalty room for the brothers, dormitories, and other administrative rooms and the interior walls flaunted paintings of Christian religious themes. Thus, as in other monastic houses, the consistency of living quarters and Christian paintings secured the Knights’ group identity and loyalty and further advocated their Christian identity and spiritual and political exclusiveness. In fact, the fourteenth-century Teutonic Order claimed the highest Christian power, by appropriating symbols of the territorial state Church, including the swords of spiritual war, *Gladius Spiritualis*, and physical war, *Gladius Materialis*. Thus, by defining themselves as major defenders of the Christian faith, the Order acted within a paradigm of a dual-world of “Us, Christian Knights” versus “Others,” and projected its providential role for the future.

The Knights’ self-definition in connection with the Christian idea of the providential history of mankind is brilliantly illustrated in the two late fourteenth-century copies of *Apokalypse*, after the non-extant manuscript, produced by Heinrich von Hesler in the first part of the fourteenth century in Gdańsk (University Library in Thorn, nr. 64 and 44, artist unknown). The two copies include extended scriptural passages relevant to the holy wars of the chosen people and, therefore, relate to the claim of the universal mission of “the Church,” as evoked in the vision of Saint John and asserted in the statutes of the Order. The pictorial plot of the two copies of the *Apokalypse* narrates the destruction of the Antichrist and the establishment of the Heavenly Jerusalem, making conspicuous use of the Biblical story of Gog and Magog. In the *Bible*, Gog ruled the dwellers of Magog, which was a territorial threat to the Hebrew people. At first perceived as a threatening outsider, Gog and the Magog people became neutralized by and contained within Israel. Given that the Jews are the chosen people in the Old Testament, the reference to Gog and Magog signifies the Other that was justly conquered within the framework of the providential history of the Jewish people.

Likewise, in the visual narrative of the text of each copy of the *Apokalypse* manuscript, Gog and Magog signify the Other who is justly conquered by the Christian Knights. Gog is represented as a crowned Antichrist, defeated by the Teutonic Order and a German emperor whose banner is carried by a Teutonic Knight. While the scene is an obvious ideological rationalization of the conquest by the Teutonic Order allied with the emperor, the following scene implies the success of this conquest depicting Gog as the Antichrist and his people accepting the Christian faith. In addition, the closing scene, depicting the coronation of the Virgin Mary and the image of Jerusalem, symbolizes the Church and therefore constitutes a visual link between the title of the Order, the Church militants, and the Christian realm. Although appropriated from existing sources, the program of the commentaries clearly facilitated the historical condition of the Knights along the Baltic.
Significantly, the depiction of Gog and the Magog people in pointed hats, pileum crornutum, which was characteristic of the portrayal of Jews and unacceptable Others in medieval manuscripts, designates the “Other” vaguely enough to justify any warfare of the Knights. If so, in the two copies of Apokalypse the pointed hat could refer to the legal exclusion of Jews and Pagans from Prussia because Grand Komtur Siegfried von Feuchtwangen (d. 1311) forbade Jews and sorcerers from settling in the lands of the Order. Such a policy was certainly not unique to Gdańsk. In fact, the exclusion of Jews and sorcerers from Prussia was in accordance with the policies of the pope and other political entities at that time in Europe. The representation of the Other as Jews is also symbolic in nature as it signifies Pagan Lithuania, Catholic Poland, Orthodox Russia, and any other political entity competing with the Knights in the Baltic crusades.

Most likely, the wider strata of Gdańsk society was unfamiliar with these documents, but indubitably the Knights had knowledge of these manuscript, judging from extant medieval inventories listing copies of the Apokalypse in the convents of the Teutonic Order in Malbork, Gdańsk, Elblag, Ostróda, and Człuchów. Written in German and read communally at the table, the manuscripts served the Knights to authenticate their territorial claims. At the same time, the Gog and Magog story affirmed the Knights’ claims in the eyes of other European powers because the Order displayed copies of the Apokalypse to eminent visitors, including kings, from other parts of Europe. Considering the Knights’ political ties, their appropriation of the Biblical story of Gog and Magog to justify their crusades was entirely intelligible, since it facilitated similar ideological purposes across Europe, and even further afield. It was not enough, however, for the Order and its allies to be aware of the Knights’ claims of themselves as exemplary champions of “Christianity” and for Prussia, including Gdańsk, as a Christian realm because the society itself had to engage in the Knights’ propaganda to make their claims valid.

Indeed, already before the Teutonic Order took over the city, the existing Christian institutions and members of the elite in and near Gdańsk supported the Knights’ establishment in the area. The Order bought land in Pomerania from well-to-do members.

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of Gdańsk’s society before 1308.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, three Gdańsk Pomeranian knights collaborated with the Teutonic Order before and after 1308.\textsuperscript{28} Moreover, the Dominicans (belonging to the Polish province with the mother-house in Krakow) joined forces with crusading powers, especially with the Knights.\textsuperscript{29} At some point, the Cistercians, including those in Gdańsk, led the Baltic crusades and the colonization of Prussia.\textsuperscript{30} Also, the Bishop of Wloclawek (the Polish kingdom), who oversaw the diocese of Gdańsk, held land near the city and participated in this colonization.\textsuperscript{31} Finally, advocating the crusades and pushing toward the eastern parts of Europe, the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century popes promoted the crusades in general and the Knights’ expansion in particular. For example, Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227–1241) did not support the concept of an episcopal state in Prussia as his predecessor (Pope Innocent) had, but instead advocated the idea of a monastic state subordinated to the Apostolic See, being aware that in an episcopal state he would have to deal with independent bishops who might contest his decisions. The idea of a monastic state is already implicit in his documents written in 1230 and between 1232 and 1236.\textsuperscript{32} In the documents from 1230, Pope Gregory asked the Christians in the area of Magdeburg, Bremen, Poland, Pomerania, Mähren, Sorabien, Holstein, and Gotland to support Conrad of Masowia and the Teutonic Knights in their crusades against “Pagan” Prussia. In the other two documents, Pope Gregory IX ordered the Dominicans (and the Bishop of Wroclaw) to support the Teutonic Knights in their “Christianization” of Prussia; the pope consecrated three Dominicans as bishops in the conquered Prussian territories. Evidently, the crusades along the Baltic were well orchestrated by different political entities, but the Teutonic Order succeeded in this contest and continued the Christianization and colonization of Prussia.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that conquest itself and the imposition of Christian values do not make any society Christian. In this colonization and Christianization, Christianized and “Christianizers” haggled about their levels of interactions. For example, members of Gdańsk’s government elevated their social position by joining the Teutonic Order.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, those who were willing to study at European universities served in the administrative body of the Knights, while merchants who joined the Order served as its retainers. Other inhabitants solidified if not advanced Christianity in the city


\textsuperscript{30} SIMSON, Paul: Geschichte der Stadt Danzig bis 1625. Aalen 1967, nr. 88.

\textsuperscript{31} ECHT, S.: Die Geschichte, p. 13.


by appropriating old, or building, new churches. For example, the thirteenth-century parish church of Saint Catherine served the fourteenth-century residents of the Old Town, outside of which the newcomers built the church of The Body of Christ (1390). In the Main Town, the Dominicans rebuilt their complex (1340–1380), after selling some land to the city.\textsuperscript{34} The inhabitants of the Main Town built the parish churches of Saint Mary (1343–1502) and Saint John (1370–1410); the latter replaced the St. John chapel, which existed between 1344 and 1349. Also in the Main Town, St. Mary’s chapel (1379) was built and Saint Gertrud Church (1385) stood by the gate leading to the Long Street. In the Long Gardens, Saint Barbara’s chapel built in 1387 was transformed into a church in 1390. In the Old Suburbs, construction of churches dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul (c.1393) and Saint Bridget (1390) took place. In addition, St. Catherine had its filia, the Church of St. Bartolomeo (before 1402), in the Young Town. Due to a disagreement about ecclesiastical influences between the parish churches, the komtur of Gdańsk intervened in 1363, entrusting the parish priests of Saints Catherine and Mary with areas of influence outside and within the city walls of the Main Town, respectively.

Situated in distinct urban parts, and some built more than a century apart, Gdańsk’s churches shared architectural features and thereby implied social cohesiveness within the Christian framework. Each church was made of brick, had pointed arch windows and little external decoration. Similar austerity characterized the churches’ interiors laid out in the hall plan. Different scholars claim that the formal similarities of Gdańsk’s churches were specific to the Knights, the Hanseatic cities, or the Baltic area in general.\textsuperscript{35} Within the framework of political reality, though, these formal similarities had a much more powerful meaning. As in the case of the institutional symbolism, red brick, pointed arches, and crosses were powerful silent features, which projected Christian and concealed the Pagan realm of the city.

While it is clear that it was not the Knights who built these churches, but rather workers and professional builders who lived in Gdańsk, the Order appointed the clergy and kept a close eye on Christian observance in the city, using different construction projects as key sites of enforcement of their religious and political claims. In each church disparate social group experienced the same acts of mass celebration. Therefore, the insistent repetition of the rituals of the liturgy secured social cohesiveness within the framework of symbolically constructed Christian reality.\textsuperscript{36} Aware of the importance of the liturgy, the Grand Masters introduced at least nine celebrations to the liturgical calendar of the Order. For example, Siegfried von Feuchtwangen (1303–1311) introduced two holy days: the Holy Cross, and Saint Philip and Saint Jacob. Werner von Orseln (1324–1330) added Saint Ann’s celebration. The statutes of Luder von Braunschweig (1331–1335) added Saint Barbara’s Day. Dietrich von Altenburg (1335–1345) introduced the celebration of \textit{Conceptionis Mariae}. Winrich von Kniprode (1352–1382) ordered the celebrations of the \textit{Ascensio Domini} and \textit{Corpus Christi}, the latter with a procession, and the \textit{Presentationis

\textsuperscript{34} SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 84.


\textsuperscript{36} ZERUBAVEL, E.: Time Maps, p. 45.
As I will discuss below, the liturgical calendar in Prussia, including Gdańsk, had important local connections.

The obvious dedication of Gdańsk’s churches to the saints of the Order certainly demonstrates the success of the Grand Masters’ propaganda, and a connection of these saints to a set of beliefs in Prussia. As Patrick Geary argues based on the work of economic historians, relics and therefore saints can be understood as commodities circulating within a transactional culture. In the process of social negotiation, therefore, saints underwent cultural transition from an ordinary saint to a venerated saint; the transition had to be done through rituals such as the discovery and authentication of the saint’s remains. Even the Virgin Mary, who had been known in Gdańsk as a key figure in Christianity and was venerated by both the Dominicans and the Cistercians, was continually celebrated not only to remain valid within the Christian framework, but also as a central saint to the Order and its providential history. Prohibiting building higher churches than Saint Mary’s Church, the Knights visually reaffirmed Saint Mary’s central place within the Order’s propaganda. The popularity of the sculpture depicting the Virgin with the Child, known as the Cupboard Madonna, further supports this thesis. Made in the land of the Teutonic Knights in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, these sculptures projected the Knights’ doctrine through artistic language. Based on the extant sculptures, the figure of the Virgin opens to form a triptych. While open, the central part holds a sculpture of the Holy Trinity, the Father holding the Crucified Son with an image of the dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit. The wings depict images of Teutonic knights. Thus, these sculptures depict the union of three iconographical contents: Mary with Child; the Throne of Grace and the Virgin; and the Protective Mantle. Centering on the Virgin rather than Christ, these sculptures reinforced the doctrine of the Teutonic Order as a champion of Christian providential history. These cupboard Madonnas could also represent a donor who was not a member of the Order. If so, other elite made the same claim. Unfortunately, the scant evidence does not allow us to draw a greater conclusion.

Scholarship has demonstrated and the dedication of the pilgrimage site near Gdańsk (at Biskupia Gorka [Bishop’ Hill]) to the Virgin further underlines the importance of the Virgin in the institutional program of the Order. It is not clear why the pilgrimage site existed on the bishop’s property rather than in the city itself where a wellspring dedicated to the Virgin Mary already existed near the altar of Saint Magdalene in the Old Town. It could be that the bishop attempted to shift the focus of the city to the area under his control, considering that pilgrimage places were, and are, powerful economic resources. Certainly, the fact that the bishop granted a forty-day indulgence to those who prayed in the chapel of the Virgin Mary speaks of his independence in the area and his particular

38 PAC, T.: Churches, p. 66.
interest in the cult of the Virgin. But the pilgrims and the craftsmen who made pilgrimage tokens with the image of the Virgin also took an active part in the formation of the site as well as the sculptures. It looks as if the Knights, the bishop, and the craftsmen collaborated when doing so was profitable for them, and the bishop seems to have won this propaganda campaign for the Knights.

Considering that the extensive evidence reveals the most active pilgrimage activities in Gdańsk, Elblag, and Gniew, the major cities of Teutonic Prussia, this collaboration had a much more powerful outcome as it perpetuated, or even redirected, people’s search for remedies concerning different aspects of society’s life from whatever belief they had under the matrix of Christianity. This shift was marked by engraving previously Pagan amulets, such as small bells, with Latin inscriptions. These pilgrimage tokens still could be used in healing and magical practices, but the Christian subjects or Latin inscriptions on them evidently redirected the healing power and magic of these amulets from a Pagan toward a Christian framework. It can be said, therefore, that the Teutonic Knights, the bishop, the craftsmen, and their supporters took over and created a monopoly for magic and miracles in association with the Virgin Mary and other saints, and thereby gained power over different aspects of the pilgrims’ lives.

Likewise, popular through Europe, Saint Barbara was also invested with local significance. According to Dusburg’s chronicle of the Order, the head of Saint Barbara was held in the town of Sartowitz (Sartowice) located near Gdańsk on the Wisla River (near Gdańsk), an officially Christian city of Polish Prince Sventopelk, conquered in 1242 by the Knights. The legend says that not receiving expected care from the Polish prince, she assisted the Knights’ conquest of Prussia and found glorification among them. By including in the saint’s vita the hagiographic formula about the conquest of the city Heliopolis by Christians, the author made her relevant to the Knights’ conquest so she could serve both to encourage and to validate death for defending the Knights’ rule in any city from both Christians and Pagans at any time.

Moreover, the Knights’ increasing military activities along the Baltic fostered the active veneration of Saint George in Prussia, celebrated as a fighting saint since the First Crusade in Europe in general and among the Knights in particular. Indeed, the thirteenth-century lections of the saint gave way to semiduplex, duplex or totum duplex in the

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44 SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 34.
fourteenth-century calendar of the Order. In addition, this importance of Saint George was marked by the depiction of Saint George and a Dragon in the Church of Saint Mary, in Gdańsk.

Remarkably, the population of the city not only solidified the Knights’ program by joining the Order, building churches dedicated to its saints, and celebrating its liturgical calendar, but also by appropriating the Christian institutional form of identity. Men promoted the Order's claims by forming various organizations in the mode of ecclesiastical institutions dedicated to the saints of the Order. For example, in the Main Town, the successful clergy and laypeople organized the confraternity of the Virgin Mary in 1374.\(^{50}\) Also in the Main Town, notaries formed the confraternity of Saint Dorota in 1369 while other clergymen, merchants, and craftsmen created a third confraternity, with an unknown dedication.\(^{51}\) In addition, an affluent family built a chapel to Saint Barbara in 1387 in Saint Mary’s Church.\(^{52}\) Likewise, the Old Town’s wealthier element engaged in its city council also organized a confraternity, though data for its membership and activities are lacking.\(^{53}\) Similar, members of different professions created fifteen guilds in the Main and around five in the Old Town. In the latter, one guild was dedicated to Saint George.\(^{54}\) Because the members of the confraternities and guilds called each other brother, as the Teutonic Knights did, they also adopted the existing “religious” language for their civic activities. These groups celebrated universal Christian, the Knights’, and their own Christian holidays, and a few times a year, organized a mandatory exclusive dinner, in order to display their status.

Moreover, the above examined institutions secured places for their members in hospitals, expanding their areas of influence. At least six hospitals existed in fourteenth-century Gdańsk.\(^{55}\) In the Main Town, the chapel of the Holy Ghost (1333) was transformed into a hospital after 1357.\(^{56}\) In addition, Saint Gertrud hospital (built before 1343) for the pilgrims and the poor marked the outside entry gate to the Main Town, while two hospitals for lepers, the Saint George fraternity’s hospital (1355) and Holy Leichman, existed in the Main Town.\(^{57}\) Saint George hospital had a place for the poor (Eldenhof), which developed into St. Elizabeth Hospital in 1394 under the Teutonic Knights’ patronage.\(^{58}\) Likewise, under the patronage of the city council of the Main Town, Saint Barbara’s chapel in Long Gardens evolved into a hospital in 1387. Three hospitals also came into being in the

\(^{50}\) Czarńiński, Ireneusz: Bractwa w wielkich miastach państwa krzyżackiego w średniowieczu. Toruń 1993, p. 39.


\(^{52}\) Czarńiński, I.: Bractwa, pp. 39–45.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 44.


\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 53; Pr.UB, IV, nr. 243, 244; Simson, P. (ed.): Geschichte, nr. 74, 89, 96, 103.


\(^{58}\) Simson, P.: Geschichte, nr. 111; Probst, Ch.: Der Deutsche Orden, pp. 55–56.
Young Town: St. Agnes for travelers, St. Jacob, and St. Roch for the lepers. The organization, patronage, and the location of these hospitals clearly illustrate that these hospitals did not only serve the poor and the sick, as the term hospital indicates today. First, the existing hospitals were too small in size and number to serve almost 20,000 inhabitants. Second, the medieval hospital charged high examination fees and took care of the sick as long as they needed little catering. Third, the hospitals separated the sick especially lepers, from the major urban areas. Fourth, because the hospitals were a form of ecclesiastical institution, their members had to be Christians, as was explicitly required in Gdańsk, and therefore each hospital had a chapel or an altar. Located at the margins of the urban space and serving the privileged or those who physically were considered a threat to the society, hospitals were forms of exclusion and segregation.

New institutions and building types clearly demonstrated a male-dominance in the city’s economic, social, political, and religious lives. Closer examination of the characteristics of the women Saints Elizabeth, Bridget, Dorota, Magdalene, Gertrude, and Agnes, indicates that the Knights and the new elite were concerned with subjugating women within the Order’s domain. Before they became saints, these women were devoted Christians of aristocratic status, many linked through family ties with the Teutonic Order. For example, Queen Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1239), with Saint Mary and Saint George, was a patron saint of the Order; she committed her life to devotion and charity. Agnes and Bridget of Sweden (c. 1302–1373), to whom Grand Komtur Winrich von Kniprode was connected through family ties, also devoted their lives to celibacy and did charitable work. Dorota (d. circa 300) was persecuted as a Christian, and suffered death from the lawyer Theophilus for refusing to marry a pagan and worship idols. It is indubitable that the Knights and the institutions led by men propagated the importance of women’s charity, devotional life, and chastity.

The qualities of women saints were of interest to the Knights and ecclesiastics because of the changing sociopolitical and economic conditions in the city. As in many places of medieval Europe at that time, a growing number of lay people, mainly men, increased the economic profit of the new Christian institutions, diminishing their donations to monastic establishments and churches. In addition, women were more often becoming owners of resources and in general outlived men, or governed households during their husbands’ absence, whether because of trade or war. It was, therefore, expedient to ecclesiastics to encourage powerful women to do charitable work or to convince their husbands to donate to the Church. Thus, the promotion of powerful female saints known for their charity was of interest to the Knights, who were financially impoverished by the wars with Lithuania, the most intensive between the 1360s and the 1380s, and for the Dominicans and the Cistercians, both relying on donations at that time. The chastity and pious life of these women, on the other hand, would keep them within the ecclesiastical sphere of influence, which was of interest to men in general.

While women’s charity in fourteenth-century Gdańsk is still hypothetical, the fact that their chastity and devotion were at stake for the male ruling elite is unquestionable. In 1387, a wealthy member of the Main Town founded in the Old Town, by the Church of

59 PROBST, Ch.: Der Deutsche Orden, pp. 18–19.
Saint Catherine, a house for Beguines (a lay-religious community, not extant) under the patronage of the Dominican Order. Nearby, a house for penitent women existed. In 1396, some penitent women transformed this house, under the patronage of the Knights and the bishop, into a convent of Saint Bridget. While the Dominicans and the church of Saint Catherine were certainly associated with the economically dynamic elements of the population of the Main and Old Towns, respectively, their peripheral locations brought them into spatial contiguity with marginal groups. Despite the established institutions, because of the estimated demographic growth from 7,000 to 14,000 residents, especially during the second half of the fourteenth century, many people lived in poverty. In addition, Gdańsk’s famine in the 1360s and 1390s, although not as bad as in Western Europe, might have affected the poor far more seriously than the institutional members because the poor had no social and/or financial backups. Facing adversity, many women at risk did seek economic respite through prostitution or, as Beguines, through organized religious communities.

Clearly, the patronage of the houses for women was not a simple act of charity, as stated in the documents. As is the case of other institutions in Gdańsk, these houses must also have benefited donors, whether the Dominicans, the parish clergy, the Knights, or the new elite. It was a widespread practice in Europe that the recipients prayed for donors and such prayers were of significant social, as well as spiritual, importance. The prayers not only perpetuated the donor’s history but also underlined his/her social importance and, therefore, justified his/her social exclusiveness within the Christian community. Thus, the Church advocated charitable work. For example, the bishop of the Polish province granted indulgences for those who were involved in “regulating” poverty along the city walls in the Old Town around the church of Saint Catherine. In fact, widespread belief in medieval Europe thought such charitable support of poor women prevented prostitution by bringing “stability” to the lives of women lacking a stable network of kinship or social relations or integrated women into the local community through marriage. In either case, charity was a method of controlling vulnerable women’s sexual, social, economic, political, and intellectual lives through the imposition of male authority. Research has shown that the ecclesiastics and especially the Dominicans forcefully applied to the reform of “prostitutes” and “sinners” of a notorious kind the idea that carnal uncleanness could be purged through mortification of the flesh in penance.

More importantly, the Life of Dorota, a locally made saint, demonstrates that the ecclesiastics succeeded in their propaganda among well-to-do women. She was married to an affluent merchant of the city, had nine children, and was known in the city for her pious life and the pilgrimages she made. Drawn by her devotion, Dorota gave up her wealth

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61 SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 110.
63 SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 108.
and committed herself to carnal purity, as was characteristic for women in convents. In 1395, she gained permission from the bishop and the Teutonic Knights to enclose herself within a brick wall in the Marienwender (Kwidzyn) cathedral. Until her death in 1396, she only had contact with her confessor, a Dominican theologian, Nikolaus von Hohenstein; through him, she gave some advice and consolation to her visitors. Clearly, Dorota was the epitome of a pious laywoman, obedient to her father, to her husband, and to ecclesiastical authority, especially to the Dominican who was her confessor. Because of these qualities, already during her process of canonization (1394–1405, but finalized in the twentieth century), she was venerated as the guardian of Prussia and upheld as an example of a successful woman’s charity, piety, chastity, and subservience to male authority throughout Prussia. 66 Though Gdańsk’s Dorota lived a “holy life,” with its emphasis on the castigation of the body that had known sexual contact (albeit within marriage), it had relevance to the campaign to reform prostitutes and promote carnal discipline among women in the city. The fact that Dorota’s confessor was a Dominican and theologian and that the Dominicans were in charge of the house for women clearly argues for independence on the part of the Dominicans in controlling women’s status in Gdańsk.

It is essential to note that the women who lived at or were otherwise associated with the house of poor women or conducted lives similar to Dorota’s were perhaps more than merely passive elements in an unequal power relationship. Like prostitutes in medieval Avignon or medieval Prague, the women in Gdańsk’s convents used ecclesiastical institutions to assert their own identities within a male-oriented world. 67 Yet, some were more successful than others. For example, the Saint Bridget convent expanded its power by buying properties in the Old Town and therefore was in competition with the church of Saint Catherine, the Teutonic Knights, and those penitent women (associated with the chapel dedicated to Saint Magdalene) who did not join the order. 68 Similar to members of confraternities, guilds, or hospitals, these women and Dorota herself appropriated and even perpetuated the established cultural constructs set by the Teutonic Order and contributed to the urban topography of Gdańsk. Whether women were better off in the convent/shelter or married than they were as prostitutes, is not at stake in this study. The important fact is that, by appropriating Christian institutional forms of identity, these women supported the ruling system, which forced them to comply by not giving opportunities for other forms of social and/or economic advancement.

The above discussion covered the institutional involvement in the construction of the Christian images of the city, that is around 1032 persons who were members of guilds and a couple of hundred of those who joined monasteries or fraternities, leaving the question of how the majority of people participated in the city life outside of institutions. Indulgences certainly were an obvious link between the city’s institutions and non-institutionalized people, not only making the latter part of the system but also involving outside powers in the city’s life. For example, the Archbishop of Nicaea and Pope Urban VI

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66 Dorota’s canonization begun in 1407.
granted indulgences to those who visited a particular church or chapel on particular holidays included in the calendar of the Teutonic Order.\(^69\) Similarly, the bishop of the Prussian province granted the confraternity of Saint Mary the right to sell forty-day indulgences in 1369.\(^70\) The members of the confraternity also received indulgences from the bishop of the Polish province and in 1382 from Pope Urban VI.\(^71\) In 1386, the Apostolic See granted the same confraternity the possibility of selling indulgences. The same year, Pope Urban VI also granted 100-day indulgences to those who visited the chapel of the notaries (Saint Dorota) in Saint Mary’s Church or added to its construction.\(^72\) Clearly, the obtaining of indulgences in Gdańsk was not only, if at all, an expression of religious feeling, but rather an act of support in the clergy’s struggle for souls, sociopolitical prestige, workforce, and therefore for control over the citizens.\(^73\)

Despite all the involvement in the Christianization process, the evidence is conclusive that the people did not follow the imposed framework blindly. First, the church of Saint Mary was not finished until the fifteenth century, although indulgences were granted for those who worked on its construction. Second, the journeymen could not afford the fees for guilds, so the conflict between the two groups grew. The Teutonic Knights supported the latter, threatening with death or exile the journeymen for forming associations or going on strike.\(^74\) Third, the two uprisings in the city, in the 1360s and 1390s, make obvious that residents were not passive receivers of the social and economic state of affairs. At the same time, the rebuilt Gdańsk clearly shows the involvement of a large number of the population in the workforce. Indeed, the majority of people worked for and fulfilled feudal duties to the Knights. People were obligated to build city walls and castles, and had to be ready for warfare; tavern owners, mill owners, and peasants supplied food and military carts. If not involved in prostitution, women of nonelitist background most likely did service work such as laundry and sewing. It seems clear that mostly noninstitutional residents built the city.

It is difficult to assess to what extent, if at all, these groups were concerned with the Christian framework of Gdańsk because of the lack of the voices of these people in the written evidence of the period. If the written text is not a privileged key to the inquiry, the social and economic conditions in the city indicate people’s reception of Christianity. First, the city was rebuilt in the second part of the fourteenth century, as a result of the enormous population growth during a short period of time. Second, because of these fast changes, many people faced poverty, as discussed above. Third, there is no evidence that the Knights or the governing bodies were interested in solving social problems through

\(^{69}\) Natalis Christi, domini Circumcisionis, Epifhanie, Parasceves, Pasche, Penthecostes, Trinitatis et corporis Christi, invencionis et exaltationis sancta crucis, in singulis festivitabus sancta Marie, nativitatis et decolationis sancti Johannis Baptiste, beatorum Petri et Pauli ceterorumque apostolorum et evangelistarum, in festo omnium sanctorum et in commemoracione animarum et in dicte ecclesie dedicacione, sanctorumque Stephani, Laurencii, Gregorgii, Stanislay martirum, Nicolay, Martini, Gregorii confessorum beatorum, Katherine, Margarethe, Barbare virginum sanctarum et sancta Maria Magdalene cum Elisabeth... SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 83, 104.

\(^{70}\) Państwowa Akademia Naukow (PAN), Ms. Mar. O0.2 Bl. 18b: Letter of Pope Boniface IX; CZARCIŃSKI, I.: Bractwa, pp. 39, 42; Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsk, 300 D/70, 11; 26 1 1369.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.

\(^{72}\) SIMSON, P.: Geschichte, nr. 104.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 43; For example, the Saint Mary and Saint Dorota confraternities competed for finances, finally regulated in 1406.

regulation of the city’s economy, but as in the case of journeymen, helped the major institutions keep their exclusiveness. The city, therefore, fit the criteria of an anomic society in which Christianity compensated for urban disorder and the loss of traditional bonds among townsfolk, whether due to political changes and/or migration.\(^{75}\) If so, people in general conformed to Christianity because it did provide them a form of identity, however illusionary, within the new urban setting. It is also imperative to remember that by providing a means of economic advancement only for some members of the city and, to different degrees, Christianity also was a source of social division and inequality.

There certainly was a paradox in fourteenth-century Gdańsk, because the city was a playground for different social actors under the control of the Teutonic Knights, who \textit{a priori} did not seem to allow it. While the Order set the Christian framework for the city, the primary agents in constructing the city and its Christian character were not the Knights, but different social groups, which put the Knights’ ideas into action. Consequently, the city’s ecclesiastical architecture, urban space, and artwork cannot be seen only in religious terms, or as created by the Knights in a particular style, but rather as physical reminders of the negotiation of social, economic, and spatial identities. Unfortunately, the result of this process was an irreversible destruction of the cultural heritage of Pagan Prussia. Since the Christianization process is not unique to the Middle Ages, as it continues within the globalization process, it is important to recognize the cultural damage this process brings to the Christianized societies.

\textit{Zusammenfassung}

\textit{Christianisierung von Danzig des 14. Jahrhunderts}

\textit{Teresa Pac}
