

ATHANASIOS KOUZELIS

HANSEATIC LEAGUE

HISTORY & CIVILIZATION



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Preface

It was during my first university student years that for the first time, following the curiosity of our ancient seafarer Pytheas, I visited coastal cities of the North Sea and Baltic. There, thanks to the knowledge of the European history of culture, which I had been taught, I saw important monuments, quite neglected by the historiography of culture, of about the same time that the Renaissance flourished in medieval Italy. After much searching, I then decided to write a book in which I would present the attractively unusual culture of the Hanseatic League, which emerged as the first institutionalized northern European trade association.

My old wish came true after almost three years of academic research work on the study and interpretation of medieval chronicles that refer mainly to the history and culture of the Hanseatic League in the North Sea and the Baltic.

According to these medieval chronicles, the first reference to the Hanseatic League took place in 1358, but it has been proven that it has existed since the middle of the 12th century. Throughout the 13th century, this trade League (Hansa) developed through the promotion of the Germans, who were based in Lübeck, east of Elva, opening new markets with the simultaneous establishment of cities in them. This policy was quickly followed by the main commercial cities that had come from the earlier Viking markets in the area of the North Sea and the Baltic. In 1160 a group of German merchants set up at the Baltic a trade transit station in Visby, Gotland Island, to facilitate the ware transportation among coastal towns in the area. Later in 1241, the first agreement was signed between Lübeck and Hamburg to facilitate foreign trade in the North Sea and the Baltic. By the end of the 13th century, similar agreements had been reached with a large number of cities that had decided to join the trade Union. In 1370 the Hanseatic League numbered 77 cities, which forced the then King of Denmark, Valdemar IV, to grant them free navigation between the two seas and exemption from customs

duties. This agreement led to the final formation of the Hanseatic League.

The 15th century was the golden age of the Hanseatic League. It had managed to establish trade communities in all the states of the North Sea and the Baltic. These communities lived independently, but participated in the administration of the cities in which they belonged. Through them the Hanseatic League had succeeded in imposing monopoly on Baltic trade, forcing local merchants to trade only with it.

Later, with Denmark's gradual expansion into Schleswig and Holstein, the major centres of the Hanseatic League (mainly Hamburg and Lübeck) began to be threatened, so that they could no longer impose their will on the Scandinavian kingdoms, which had allied themselves with the Treaty of Kalmar. At the same time, the Baltic states (mainly Poland and Prussia) began to be liberated by the Hanseatic League and sought to develop their trade to its detriment. In 1478, Tsar Ivan III occupied Novgorod and by 1494 abolished the League's privileges, depriving it of one of its main markets.

At the end of the 15th century, new overseas trade routes began to develop with the discovery and colonization of America, which reduced the economic importance of the Baltic and North Sea. The Thirty Years' War and the devastation it caused in the German countries was the final blow to degenerate the Hanseatic League, which in 1669 operated only in its metropolises (Lübeck, Bremen and Hamburg). However, the main reason for the decline was the lack of a strong state structure and military support, as a result of which it was gradually displaced by stronger and more centralized states, which wanted to become financially autonomous.

The history and culture of the Hanseatic League have left many testimonies and monuments in modern times, which are preserved mainly in the centres and settlements of many cities in the areas around the North Sea and the Baltic. In the pages of this book, the reader will discover interesting and peculiar elements that are traditions of earlier cultures adapted to borrowed standards from

the then advanced southern Europe. Through this influence emerged the first essentially monopoly homogeneity that determined the economic and social life of the inhabitants of the northern countries during the Middle Ages.

The transnationality imposed by the Hanseatic League's monopoly trade on the North Sea and the Baltic has not been a simple matter. Throughout its mercantile operation, there have been many military confrontations and conflicts over the distribution and control of trade centres and routes. The economic interests, mainly of regional cities and non-German regions, very often set terms and claims of commercial autonomy, despite the benefit of the institutionalized rules of a transaction of the Hanseatic League.

The imposition power of the Hanseatic merchants was mainly the accumulated money capital, the business administration and the quality evaluation and management of the exchangeable products in the markets. Based on their knowledge of these issues, countries in the neighbouring Hanseatic League have established North German terminology in economic transactions, transportation, construction and shipbuilding.

With this paper, the reader will understand the importance of the multinational trade union established in Northern Europe during the Middle Ages and its contribution to the development of the economies and culture of the countries formed in states through its operation (Sweden, Norway, Poland and the other Baltic countries). It will also understand the basic principles that inspired even the founding of our time of the multinational economic cooperation, the European Union, with the primacy of that of the Federal Republic of Germany, a historical analogy whose importance should not be overlooked by a social-economic point of view of what is happening in our time.



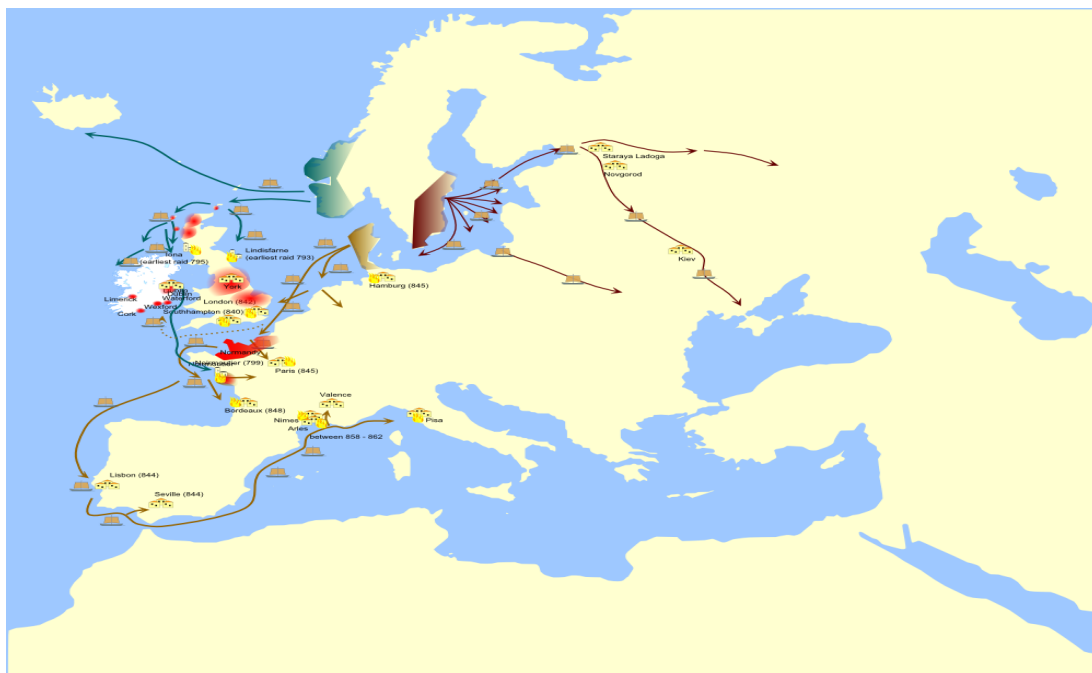
Map of the main cities of the organized monopoly trade of the Hanseatic League in the 13th century AD.



The Kronborg Castle in Helsingør, Denmark (1420 AD): the 'observatory' of merchant shipping on the Kattegat Strait.

Foundation of the Hanseatic League

From the end of the 8th to the 11th century, the peoples of western and central Europe came into close contact with the Scandinavians, when the Normans from the coastal regions of Norway and Denmark began their raids with looting and conquests in the British islands, along the entire Frankish coast and the rivers of north-eastern mainland Europe.



Map of the conquests of the Vikings from the 8th to the 11th century AD.

The Baltic, and especially its southern and southeastern coasts, have been the main targets of Scandinavian expansionism, which combined trade and export. This expansion was developed alongside the rivers of northeastern Europe through makeshift open space markets platforms (*torg*) that reached far even to the Black and the Caspian Sea. Due to their origins from coastal areas and trade contacts in their destinations, 9th-century Scandinavians became known in history as the Vikings (Vikingar = inhabitants of the bay or the coast).

The Viking campaigns were mainly commercial forms of conquest and plunder of indigenous southern and eastern peoples, who, despite their violent nature, managed to successfully organize an extensive feudal system. This included, among others, the Charlemagne of the Frankish state (Karl Magnus = the great man), Rurik, who founded the Russian state, and the Danish King Knud den store (the Great) who conquered the crown of England at the beginning of the 11th century AD.

At the same time, a network of merchant ports had developed in the North and Baltic areas with the Vikings' raids, which later formed the Hanseatic League. The coastal settlement of Hedeby, on the Schleswig-Holstein isthmus, has been the centre of trade between the North and the Baltic Seas since the early 9th century. At this point, thanks to the small rivers Eide and Treene in the west and Schlei in the east, the goods did not have to travel very far inland, and were relatively easy to be transported through the Jutland Peninsula. An imposing fortress, the unbroken wall called the Danish Work (danewerk), protected the commercial community and its port from the hinterland, mainly against Slavic invasions living on the east bank of the river Elbe.

A silver coin from 936 AD, the so-called 'Hedeby's bracteate' that was minted in the settlement, testifies to the richness of its commercial and economic activity. The fact that similar coins have been discovered near the river Odra Valley is a clear indication that Hedeby had developed extensive trade cooperation with the Baltic Slavic regions. However, during the 10th and 11th centuries, Hedeby was repeatedly looted by various conquerors, which contributed to the gradual elimination of the settlement's importance in the transit trade between the western and eastern coastal areas on either side of Jutland.

Towards the end of the 11th century, the nearby area of Schleswig took the place of Hedeby. Like Hedeby, Schleswig had also connections with the ports along the rivers Weser and Rhine and on

the east coast of England, as well as with the larger ports in the Baltic Sea. Due to this development during the 13th century, maritime trade from east to west shifted almost entirely on the route between Hamburg and Lübeck.

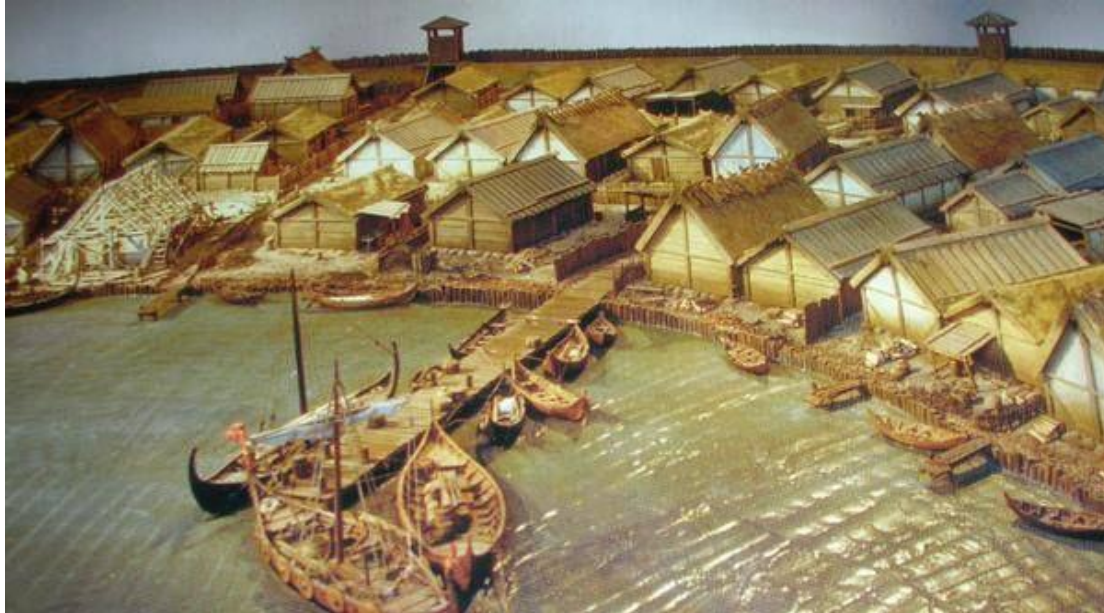


Representation of the settlement of Hedeby.

At the same time, in northern Baltic, the native Vikings developed another similar to Hedeby, a by-lake commercial settlement, which also had open sea access. The settlement was called Birka, which in ancient Scandinavian means "*the island of birches*", and was built on Lake Mälaren, about 30 km west of what is now Stockholm. Due to its secure maritime connection with the Baltic Sea and its protection by fortification from raids, it became the main centre of trade in the Swedish hinterland. It this area arrived in 829 AD. the first missionary of the indigenous Vikings to convert them to Christianity, the Benedict monk Ansgar, following in the footsteps of the German merchants of the time.

At the end of the 10th century, when Birka had apparently retreated, its commercial operation was taken over by the Sigtuna settlement, located about forty kilometres north of the shores of Lake Mälaren. In addition to commercial stations, an episcopate and a royal house with their own coinage were built in this settlement. The importance

of Sigtuna as a medieval Scandinavian trade centre in Sweden is fully confirmed by the findings in the last remaining ruins of its five old churches.



Representation of the lakeside commercial settlement of Birka.

Similar commercial settlements, which carried out exchanges of long-distance goods, also developed on the southeastern shores of the Baltic Sea, which were built mainly in the mouth of the great rivers of the region. The settlement of Truso at the eastern entrance to the Vistula, at a point near the later Hanseatic city of Elbląg (Elbing), had gained considerable value with the operation of its port on the river of the same name. Apparently this was because it was commercially connected to the north with the ports of Birka and of Visby on the island of Gotland, and to the south with the marketplace of the Carnous (lat. Carnuntum), a settlement near present-day Vienna. Its commercial importance was greatly appreciated because it developed the "amber streets" in every direction, which became known in the west by the Anglo-Saxon seafarer Wolfstan at the end of the 9th century, after a seven-day voyage to Hedeby.

On the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, similar commercial settlements and ports were created by the Western Slavs in the areas

between the Vistula and Elbe rivers. The most important of these were Gdańsk, Kołobrzeg, Wollin, Stettin (Szczecin), Kamień Pomorski, but also Rostock and Lübeck to the west. Another important commercial settlement of the Slavs was that of Reric (Rerik), which was located on the coast between Wismar and Lübeck. This settlement was completely destroyed by the Danish king Göttrik in 808 AD.

The settlements of Hedeby and Birka also functioned as "travel cities", where merchants lived only until they had completed their transactions. In the settlements that emerged later on the other side of the Baltic Sea, economic relations were more stable and permanent. At the end of the 9th century AD some of these settlements had begun to acquire urban characteristics. Certainly their economic base consisted of the long-distance trade, which, however, was supported by artisans, fishermen and farmers, who formed the most important productive forces. Although by no means have they yet been divorced, in economic or legal terms, from within, the peculiarity of these "early cities" has become increasingly distinct, thanks to their ability to promote foreign trade in conjunction with the development of local production. This process was especially encouraged by the good transport and the appearance of the secular and ecclesiastical administration at the core of the pre-existing commercial settlements.

All emerging cities were points of permanent connection to Western Europe and the shores of the North Sea via the Jutland Peninsula with the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. Trade between the West and the East in the North Seas was less threatening as a route than the one along the equally old, but much more land route, from the Near East throughout the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. The new route, which was reopened at the beginning of the 9th century, mainly by Scandinavian merchants, led from Kiev down to Byzantium, and along the Volga to the Caspian Sea and Persia.

As part of this journey, the islands of Baltic Sea gained a very important role with the expansion of trade in the region. The transfer of water from the West to the East has been a major factor in the economic growth of the centrally eroded Baltic island of Gotland during the 10th and 11th centuries. Numerous medieval Arabic silver coins of great artistic value have been found on the island, which prove that the Baltic merchants had relations with the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. Large quantities of this treasure, which were buried in times of danger, also inform us about the size of the trade. In particular, this size results from about forty thousand such Arab silver coins found in Gotland in 525 hiding places, but also from the corresponding quantities found in about 200 hiding places along the Polish coast of the Baltic.



Silver Arab coins of the 9th century AD found hidden in areas of the island of Gotland.

However, on the other side of the route, between the Elbe and the Saale tributary, which formed a natural boundary between the Germans and the Slavs during the 9th century AD, the Arab silver coins found there are rare and scattered. This huge import of coins from the Near East stopped quite a bit at the end of the 10th century, because it was replaced by two European coins originating mainly from the Germanic treasures. The fact that the Scandinavians and Poles had begun to mint their own currencies shows that the Baltic region was in a gradual transition from an

exchange economy to a money economy, mainly from the 11th century onwards.

When the Vikings put an end to their missions from Scandinavia in the late 11th century, Slavic merchants took a leading position in the Baltic trade. Their commercial settlements on the southern shores of the Baltic, such as Stettin and Gdańsk, which flourished alongside Wollin and Kołobrzeg, spread and consolidated, in particular due to the increasing influx of productive forces into them. However, the testimonies of the time show that the peaceful trade was not completely free from looting and destruction. Birka, for example, was attacked by Slavic ships in 1066, and in the early 12th century the Duke of Pomerania, Ratibor I, destroyed the city of Kungälv in Sweden.

The feudal powers that emerged in the commercial poles and the repeated, time-consuming military operations caused a general decline in the overseas trade of the Baltic at the end of the 11th century, which was saved thanks to the coastal Slavic cities due to their active economic and political ties with the island of Gotland, the Netherlands, Denmark and the country of Svea (central Sweden).

In the early 11th century, long-distance trade increased again, and the number of markets between the Rhine and the Elbe nearly quadrupled. Many artisans have come to live and work in these markets, attracted by the annual, and sometimes even weekly, opportunities offered by selling their products. Farmers in the area were also attracted to these markets, selling their surplus products by buying the tradesmen's trades in return. These market settlements originated in the open-air Viking market (torg), on the basis of which their local communities were organized. They soon acquired an economic and legal status that distinguished them from the rural environment, creating the conditions for later development in place of large commercial cities.

All of the aforementioned commercial settlements developed either on the land of a feudal lord, or on the banks of a river or its estuary, or in another area that could be favourable to their trade. They often grew up with the establishment of a secular or ecclesiastical official in them, and gradually their landscape was covered by a network of roads and routes. As a merchant and craftsmanship settlements, they secured their privileges through the establishment of rights in the market. This right was granted by secular or ecclesiastical authority in exchange for the provision of surplus profit for its own benefit. With this profit, the authorities could maintain toll stations, commercial courts and fund fortifications, or build roads and bridges.

In German territory, the inhabitants of these embryonic cities began to revolt from the middle of the 11th century onwards against the growing, and often despotic, demands of feudal power. Having gained economic power, they tried to break free from its rule. Thanks to their own productive power and the constant involvement of feudal lords in their commercial settlements, they managed to dismantle themselves by exploiting beyond any doubt the most powerful weapon: money from their wealth accumulated by trade.

Merchants and artisans became the most important para-generators for the development of cities in northern Germany. Very soon, however, the city's merchants and landowners imposed themselves as the ruling class. Seniores and Wisesten refer to documents from the Hanseatic period that were mostly merchants of great distances. They held the reins of economic and political power in their cities, and from their ranks came the nobles and the distinguished who in the 13th century formed the municipal councils. As cities developed in pursuit of their institutional independence, they were able to create their own legislation in accordance with the Latin tradition, in order to meet the demands of the citizens, especially the merchants, who had imposed on opposition to the feudal lords. To the west of Elva, this process had already been completed by the

middle of the 12th century, and from that time onwards, in the aftermath of the eastern expansion, the legislation of the cities formed along the southeastern shores of the Baltic was also affected.

A commercial recovery, produced by urban trade, first left its mark in northwestern Europe, northern France, Flanders and the area around the Meuse (Maas) and Rhine rivers. This whole area was devoted to textile and cloth production, and its trade was a great success due to its high quality. The raw materials imported for this purpose were the excellent wool from England and the French woad, or old indigo, to dye the cloth blue.

Other productive activities took place in the same area, such as brass procession and production along the Meuse and metallurgy in Liege, which, however, did not have the same commercial significance as that of textiles. With the aim of producing exportable products, the merchants of the cities in northern France, Flanders and the Rhine-Westphalia region took on greater responsibilities for the transportation and sale of these goods. Frisian merchants, who were merely intermediaries, were easily overtaken by new rival cities in north western Europe, which produced their own local products. Exquisite textile production from northern France, Flanders and Rhineland was bought almost everywhere in Europe from the 12th century onwards. It was just as popular in southern Germany as it was in the Mediterranean, where it found its main trade route via fairs of Champagne. (Campania).

In Flemish traders from 17 cities formed a 'Hansa' (Hansa means 'group' or 'association'), as an economic union for the promotion and protection of their commercial transactions. The first city to gain rapid economic growth due to the establishment of this Union was Cologne, due to the growing volume of goods being transported through its market. Getting access along the busy Rhine, commercial cities of northern France and Flanders to the west came in direct contact with the corresponding to the eastern territories of

northern Germany, mainly Westphalia and Saxony, forming a large commercial axis.



Decree of privileges for the merchants of the Hanseatic League.

This connection made Cologne one of the most important areas for economic transactions and trade in Central Europe. Despite the reactions from foreign traders, the merchants of Cologne won the right to publish their products, i.e. the right to display their products for sale in the city's market before their export. This privilege allowed them to monopolize their entire trade along the Rhine.

The French, Flemish and Rhenish textile industry was depended for their production on English wool. As early as the beginning of the 11th century, merchants, especially '*the Hominess Imperatoris*' (that is, the emperor's merchants, i.e. those on the territory of the Frankish Empire), had received relevant approval of rights for their transactions from the king of England. Traders from various neighbouring cities began to set up companies within the Hanseatic League to ensure their travel abroad. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Flemish who travelled to England organized branches of the Hanseatic trade in the towns of Bruges, Ypres and Lille, which were united in the first half of the 13th century under the leadership of

the merchants of Bruges, so that to form the "*Flemish Hansa of Bruges and those which belong to this Hansa*".

The result of this institutional alliance was to gain a monopoly on Flanders' trade with England. Around the same time, Cologne merchants formed a Hanseatic Office in London, enjoying the same rights as the English merchants since 1157. Their most important imported product, the most versatile wine from Burgundy, may have been the commodity that helped them achieve this special status by pre-empting the privilege of free selling in the English capital.

The Hanseatic Merchants of London acquired their own building, the Guildhall, where they could manage all their transactions. In 1175 they were granted a royal guarantee for the safety of persons and property, and in 1194 Richard the Lionheart granted them the right to travel freely throughout the kingdom and not to pay taxes in England. The concessions made by the English king to the Hanseatic League of Cologne yielded an attractive proposition for merchants of other German cities, who, by joining the royal guarantee, could benefit equally from the same privileges.

The development of productive professions and the development of commercial cities during the 11th and 12th centuries in North Western and Central Europe strengthened the first necessary condition for the organization and development of the Hanseatic League. The second, equally important factor, was the spread of German trade influence in the Baltic. This was accompanied by the German expansion to the east, which entered a new phase around the middle of the 12th century. To the east, many farmers have fled, especially from western and central Germany, trying to escape the feudal oppression in their homelands, as well as craftsmen and merchants in abundance, looking for better opportunities to earn a living.

In this way, the economic growth of the 12th century AD to the east involves a great occupation migration. The main interest of the German expansion aspiration, as before, was directed to the north western regions of the Slavs. These peoples have repeatedly been prevented from geographically stabilizing their position, mainly since the 11th century, due to frequent attacks by German princes from the west and the Danish kingdom from the northwest, as well as from the Polish feudal state.

The local aristocracy believed that combining their economic interests with those of foreign speculators would allow them to adopt advanced feudal systems, and each feudal lord sought the means to assert his own position. This meant that many German and Slavic rulers were willing to encourage colonization in order to stimulate the internal economic development of their regions. That is why they accepted the merchants and artisans in the already existing settlements, located in the coastal area along the Baltic, who had already begun to function as cities.



Miniature of Lübeck of the 13th century AD.

In particular, the development of the Baltic region is due to the founding of the city of Lübeck on the banks of the river Trave. In this area, near the mouth of the river, there was already an old Slavic open market from the middle of the 11th century. This trade camp was destroyed by the wars between the Germans and the Slavic

feudal lords, but was re-established in 1143 by Adolf von Schauenburg, the count who ruled the Holstein region. The area acquired a new and stronger settlement, so that in 1147 it prevented an attack by a neighbouring Obotrite prince, as well as all the intruders of the German feudal lords. The geographical location of the new 'favourite' of the Slavs city finally attracted the forefront of the Duke of Saxony, Henry the Lion (1142-1180). Taking advantage of a fire, he set up a town near Lübeck, which he named Löwenstadt after himself, to extract land and fields from its subordinates. In 1159, the former inhabitants of the settlement rebuilt Lübeck as the capital city of Holstein by Henry the Lion as their ruler.

Helmold von Bosau (1120-1177) justifies these events in the "*Chronicle of the Slavs*", stating in particular that: "*In this period, Duke Henry began to rule over the entire land of the Slavs, becoming all the time greater and more powerful. For no matter how often the Slavs resisted him, he overran them with war and they gave him whatever he demanded to save their lives and their land. But during all the campaigns which he undertook as a young man into the land of the Slavs, there was never a mention of Christianity, but only of money*".

The chronicler specifically mentions that the new city of Lübeck was granted the status of *iura civitatis honestissima*, the most honourable Charter of Civil Rights. This gave the city the opportunity to introduce a degree of bourgeois autonomy, which was encouraged by trade through the exemption of the merchants of Lower Saxony from tolls and the imposition of independent legal rules, so that every resident of Lübeck had the right to be tried according to the law of the city even in the Ducal court. Lübeck's legislation later incorporated the personal freedom of the city's inhabitants, which was usually expressed in the political slogan that "*Town air is freedom*".

According to Helmold von Bosau, Henry the Lion was looking forward to the economic development of the city and the port of Lübeck. His chronicle states that in order to achieve the goal, "*the*

Duke sent envoys to the larger settlements and kingdoms of the north, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Russia, offering them peace that might have access to free trade in his town Lübeck". This agreement would be certified by a common currency, a determination of customs duties and the city's most impressive commercial and civil liberties.



The main entrance of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck, as preserved today.

In 1163, Henry the Lion offered free, uninterrupted traffic and tax exemption to the merchants of the island of Gotland, on the condition that German merchants would enjoy the same rights in Visby, the island's capital city. As city lord, he enacted in Lübeck, at the time of its re-establishment, economic and legal privileges, which for the older cities of German territory were a matter of claims, or even legal arbitration. The port of Lübeck, located in a favourable geographical position, was the first and only German in the Baltic, which increased its economic power by rapidly strengthening the autonomy of the city: in particular, the city of Lübeck was granted further rights in 1188 by the emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190), despite the displeasure of Henry the Lion, while in 1226 it was finally declared a free city of the Holy Roman Empire.

Prior to Barbarossa's appearance, the Duke of Saxony had formed an alliance with the Danish king Valdemar I (1157-1182) in order to subdue the western Slavonic peoples between the Elbe and the Odra. After several battles, the Slavonic princes in the eastern part of the country were finally forced to accept their rule. The island of Rügen was ruled by the Danish king, while Arkona, the fortified holy site of the pagan Slavs at the northern end, was destroyed in 1168 by the Danish army. Following this event, German knights and clergy cultivated feudal relations and the Christian religion in the area, while German bourgeois and peasants chose to relocate there, protected from any threat from the Slavonic authorities.

In 1219 the Danish crusaders, led by the order of their king Valdemar II (the victor) (1170-1241), won a crucial battle with the pagans of Estonia. During the last phase of this battle, a legend states that God gave the Danes the victory, leaving a co-moving flag with a white cross to fall from the sky, over the crusading fighters.



A painting by Christian August Lorentzen depicting the Danish flag at the Battle of Lindanise on June 15, 1219 (Copenhagen State Museum of Art).

Inspired by this 'divine miracle', the Danish soldiers regained their strength and finally won the war. That is why the Danes owe the conquest of Estonia to the origin of their flag, the *Dannebrog*, which is the first known state flag in the world, and still the national symbol of their country.

The Danish victory brought the organization of Tallinn's commercial port to a capital city, whose name in the Estonian language means "*fortified Danish city*" (*Tani = Danish, Linn = city*), a legacy that is still being used even today. In 1285 Tallinn became the northernmost member of the Hanseatic League, which during the 13th century had been increasingly dependent on the Kingdom of Denmark. The commercial power of the Hanseatic League was especially strengthened when in 1346 the Danes sold Tallinn and northern Estonia to the Order of the Teutonic Knights. As a Hanseatic trading post, with a population of about 8,000, Tallinn was at that time a very good fortified city, surrounded by a strong wall with 66 defensive towers.

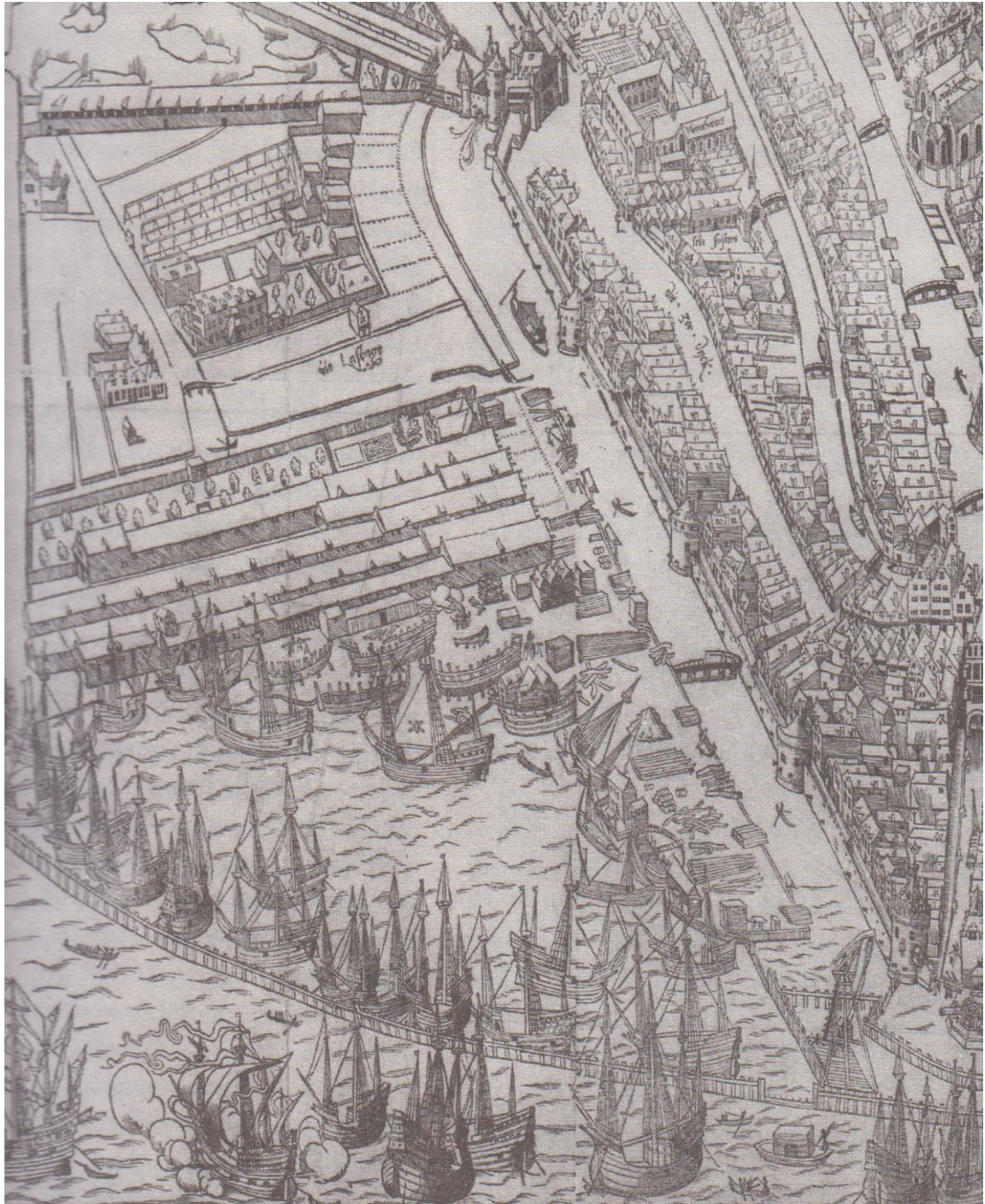
In the lands of Pomerania and Mecklenburg, a huge number of German merchants and handicraftsmen settled in existing centres of the Hanseatic League. All of them came from feudal societies and lived together or in parallel with the local Slavic population. One hundred years after the founding of Lübeck, a number of important commercial centres were established there on or near the southern coast of the Baltic, which functioned as markets, where foreign imported goods changed hands and the locals could buy the products of the craftsmen of each city.

This economic recovery was closely linked to the Hanseatic League's conquest of the city's autonomy, which was ultimately symbolized by the granting of a two-tier map. The chronicles of the time show that Rostock acquired its rights in 1218, Bismarck in 1229, Stralsund in 1234, Demmin in 1249, Greifswald in 1250, and Anklam in 1264. These rights were based on economic law and prescriptions of the Lübeck Charter. This group of cities later became known as the "*Wendish Commonwealth*", a reminder that for many years in the future meant that they had been founded on Slavic soil.

Within a century since its founding, Lübeck had become the economic and the political metropolis of the Hanseatic League. As a result, the Schleswig area in southern Denmark, which was once

the centre of trade between the North and the Baltic Sea, has suffered a significant downturn. With the founding of the new city of Hamburg in 1198-1199 on the right bank of the Elbe River, the Schleswig region lost its privileged importance to trade between the North Sea and the Baltic. Lübeck and Hamburg soon became the most important centres for trade between the two seas. At their ports, the goods were loaded by ships in wagons, which then followed the so-called Hanseatic "Overland way", which was the first major transport route to serve the total commercial activity in the medieval northern Europe.

In 1241 the two cities reached an agreement which determined the completely free movement of the common trade in all directions through their ports. By the end of the 13th century, similar agreements had been reached with a large number of cities that decided to join the Hanseatic League. In 1370 the Union numbered seventy-seven cities in total, which compelled the Danish court of Valdemar IV (1320-1375) to guarantee them free navigation between the two seas and exemption from existing customs duties. This agreement was final and led to the final formation of the Hanseatic League, until the end of its historic course.



The commercial port and shipyards of Amsterdam. Wood engraving by Cornelis Anthonisz from 1549 (Amsterdam Historical Museum).

The Hanseatic League's trade in Baltic and North Sea

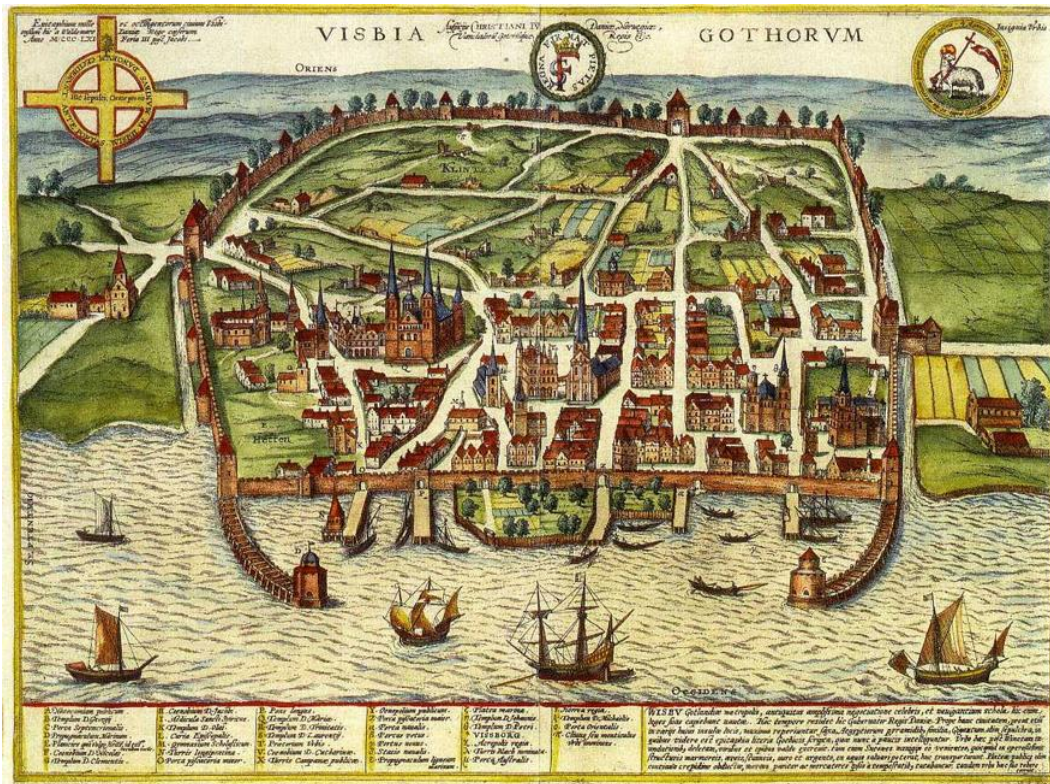
Prior to the establishment of new cities along the south-eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, trade in the region has been always seasonal and occasional. As early as the 10th century, the inhabitants of the island of Gotland had established a stable axis of trade with the Baltic eastern and western shores. This beautifully located island in the middle of the sea has made it easier for self-sufficient producers of its agricultural products - who often formed travel associations - to export to the east to Novgorod, Dvina and Smolensk, south to the mouths of the Vistula and Odra and westwards to Schleswig, where they came into contact with the trade of the North Sea.

Gotland has always been a crossroads for the Baltic states in their trade routes, especially when Visby began to emerge as a city, probably in the 11th century. Although not mentioned in the chronology until 1225, at least six of the city's churches belong to the second half of the 12th century. One of them is the German commercial church of Santa Maria Teutonicorum, the older parts of which must have been rebuilt around 1170.

The first German merchants seem to have settled there in the early 12th century with the right to erect their churches within the city walls. After 1163, the year Lübeck was founded by Henry the Lion, Scandinavian merchants from the island of Gotland acquired the right to visit the port and the market of the northern German city, on the basis of a reciprocal privilege that helped Visby to develop rapidly into a stable transit hub for Hanseatic League trade in the Baltic.

The city and the port of Visby became the springboard for the League's trade development to the east and northeast, serving merchants and settlers gathered on the southern Baltic coast. To protect each other and their financial interests, German merchants formed the *'Universitas Mercatorum Romani imperii Gotlandiam*

frequentantium', i.e. the company of German merchants of the Holy Roman Empire who visited Gotland. The name of the company came from the seal with which they adorned the contracts they drew up with the foreign merchants of the Baltic.

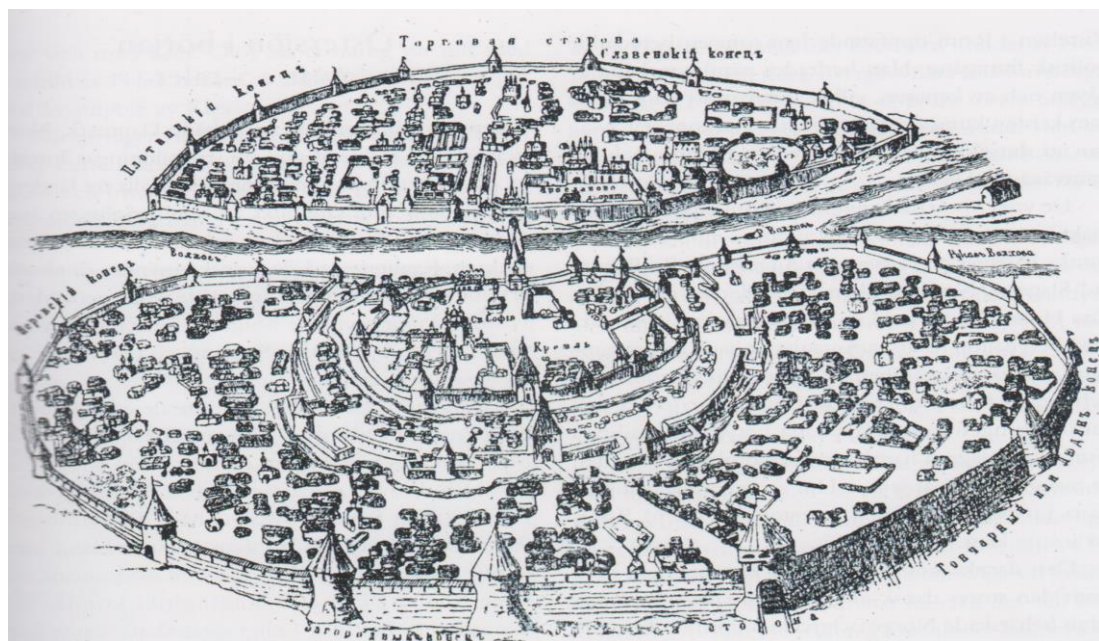


The port and town of Visby (15th century engraving).

For many Hanseatic traders, the capital of Gotland has continued to function as an important intermediate station and the base for all exports to the Baltic Sea, while a significant number of them have settled permanently in Visby and merged with the Scandinavian natives of the city until the end of the 13th century, forming a mixed community. The *'Company of Gotland'* and consequently the North German-influenced city authorities also brought merchants of the Holy Roman Empire from the Zuider Zee and the Wendish territories. Their base has always been the Church of St. Mary in Visby, which also served as a warehouse and a registry office.

Along with the merchants of Gotland their Russian competitors were also a major force in the development of exchanges in most of the Baltic. This evidence is substantiated by documents found in the

churches erected by Russian merchants in Gotland, Turku, and most likely in Sigtuna. It is known that Russian ships have been anchored in the ports of Schleswig since 1157, according to a testimony stating the date of their mooring. In Novgorod, the oldest trading centre established by the Vikings in Russian territory (Russian pronunciation of the Swedish 'Nygård' (i.e. New City), it is reported that there was a commercial company from abroad which used in the church of Holy Friday, built in 1156, for worship and business.



Prospective representation of the city of Novgorod during the 12th century.

When the German merchants, who came from Visby, gained a foothold in the Novgorod market, they tried to prevent Russian trade with the West, significantly limiting their activities by any means. For this purpose, they built in 1184 Peterhof, a commercial settlement east of the city of Volkhov, on the so-called 'commercial side'. This location was not far from a much older market, called Gothenhoff, which was used by Gotland merchants, and which hosted German merchants when they first arrived in the area. Also, there arrived the 'seafarers' (Ruotsi = i.e. Swedes), who came from the Finnish gulf, travelling along the Neva River and the Lake Ladoga, transporting their products by shallow boats to Volkhov and Novgorod.

In Peterhof, the Germans met Russian traders from whom they imported to the West products from Russia's eastern and southeastern regions. This small piece of land had a heterogeneous status, which was granted to German merchants by a contract of indefinite duration by the Prince of Novgorod. This agreement remained for about three centuries as an effective financial commitment, despite the frequent amendments made to the rights provided for. The commitments in the '*Skra*', i.e. the contract, provided for the establishment of financial management by a council consisting of an elderly trader and two to four members. The contract also listed the rights and obligations of the inhabitants of Petershof (stratified into *maschopeien* classes), which consisted of the lords of the trade cooperation, the hired craftsmen (*knappen*), the apprentices (*Kinder*), the administration of the church (of which the priest was at the same time an employee of the merchants), the judges (who usually tried serious crimes whose punishments shed a lot of blood) and the trading agents with the Russian business partners.

The area of Petershof was surrounded by a palisade and in the middle was the church of St. Peter, a stone building without a choir, and with three naves and a cellar. Its function was not purely religious, as it was also the largest warehouse of the cooperative, in which the goods were kept under strict supervision day and night, so that the Russians could not see them, let alone exempt them. Around the church there was a cemetery and a warehouse for the necessities of life, which had rooms for food and sleep, as well as a meeting room for the leaders of the cooperation. The settlement also had a courthouse, a warehouse, a brewery, a hot tub for patients, and a public toilet called the *hus*. Finally the German trading community in the Novgorod region, had such influence that Russian merchants gradually abandoned trade in the Baltic Sea, maintaining only their traditional ties to the island of Gotland.

Merchants from Lübeck and Visby began settling on the southeastern Baltic coast shortly after 1200, but the conditions of the

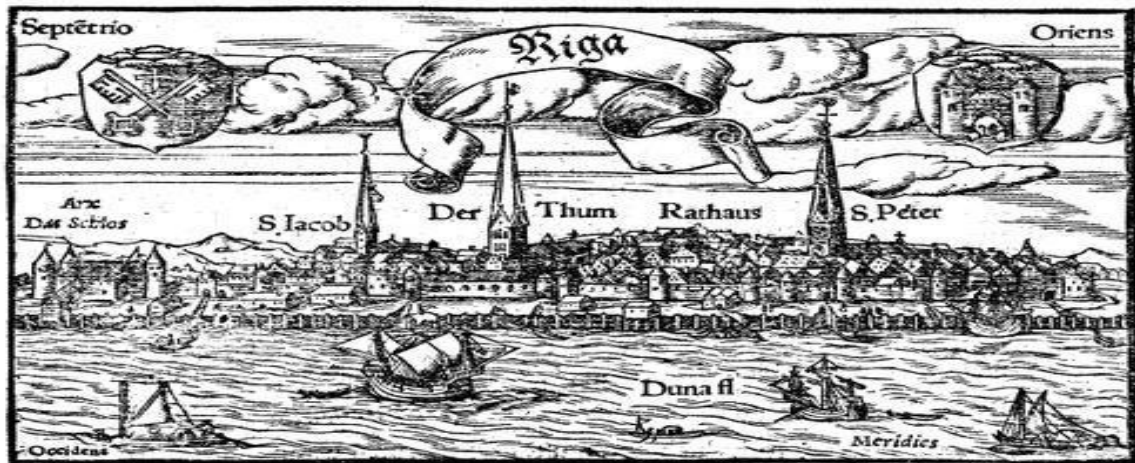
trade settlement between the markets in Vistula and Estonia were affected by the Order of the Teutonic Knights eastward expansion. The Order's war against non-Christian peoples went far beyond the desire to 'convert pagans' and also pursued socio-political goals, among which, where possible, it was to establish authoritarian regimes in the territories it conquered. The Teutonic Order was established outside the Crusades, which was used to re-establish the Holy Land, and was the 'battering ram' to serve the German pursuits in the expanding Baltic and North Sea markets.

The Orders consisted mainly of members of the lower and middle aristocracy, from areas west of the river Elbe, and their strict organizational principles allowed them to maintain their cohesion for a long time. While the "Brothers of the Sword" dominated Livonia (an area between present-day Estonia and Latvia), the Teutonic Knights subjugated areas of Prussia (north-western Poland). In 1237 the two Orders merged to form the '*Order of the Teutons*' (see also p. 174), an organization that during this period gained the support of German merchants who had begun to establish trade stations on the east coast of the Baltic Sea, providing funding and maritime transport to the Crusaders for their pursuits.

Towards the end of the 11th century, the first attempts of the Teutonic Knights to colonize the area around the mouth of the river Dvina failed. Then, in 1201, twenty-three armed Teutonic armies arrived from the island of Gotland to create a new diocese, not far from the coast, where the small river Riga flows into the Dvina.

The city that developed as part of the episcopal site established by the Teutonic Order still bears the name Riga. Due to its economic growth, it attracted many German immigrants, mainly from Lübeck and Westphalia, but also several others from Gotland. It did not take long for the German merchant community to take over the leadership of Riga, where the majority of the population consisted of native Livonians, Latvians and people of Russian descent. Riga was quickly transformed into a base for Teutonic Knights on their

further expeditions and offensive operations. However, the German merchants could not withstand a deeper penetration into the Russian hinterland, along the Dvina River, and although they reached Smolensk and Vitebsk, they did not manage to achieve a permanent settlement there, as they did in Novgorod.



The city of Riga depicted in engravings of medieval time.

Finally the force that subjugated Estonia in 1219 was the Kingdom of Denmark. However, despite the presence of Danish power, the flood of German merchants was constantly growing and in 1230 the port of Reval (now Tallinn) became the largest commercial settlement on Estonian territory, which acquired its own charter of rights, establishing the second major relocation center in the eastern Baltic. The merchants from Sweden and the island of Gotland set up their business in Tallinn around the church of St. Olaf, which was similar to that in Novgorod, while their Russian colleagues, who had settled before them in the city, acquired the right to spend the winter there, probably since 1191.

At a time when the Danes were trying to subdue all parts of the Livonian hinterland and consolidate their dominance over the islands off the coast of Estonia (which in the Danish language means 'eastern country'), the German merchants set out a significant number of cities in the region. The most important of these was Dorpat (present-day Tartu), which was an episcopal and commercial site west of Lake Peipus. In 1346 the Danish possessions

in Estonia passed into the hands of the Teutonic Order, which allowed German trade to expand its sphere of influence deep into the north-eastern Baltic region.



The Hanseatic city of Tallinn as it is today.

In the late 14th century, Lithuania's trade relations with the Hanseatic cities of the south-eastern Baltic region, and in particular with Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) and Gdańsk, became even stronger and more enduring. For Lithuania, the port of Gdańsk was a priority trade gateway for exports to the cities of the Hanseatic League. According to the chart terms of the League's office in Vitautas, the export route followed the voyage from the Nemunas River via the Kaunas Sea to the Vistula River, providing enormous advantages in the intermediate coastal markets.

In order to improve the availability of cheap goods there as well, a Hanseatic customs office of counting and pricing exports was established at the advantageous location of the waterfront on the Nemunas River. The main exported goods were wax, furs, processed leather, timber, mushrooms, pitch, and from the 15th century, wheat. The Kaunas region imported goods from the southern ports of the Baltic, such as salt, which could not be replaced, as well as iron products and felt. The Hanseatic Customs

operated until the middle of the 16th century, and this period was the most glorious and efficient for the Kaunas economy in the region.

The second campaign of the Teutonic Order turned to the Prussians. It started through Polish Mazovia and the pursue from the beginning was to create an independent territorial state in the region. Prussia was then on the verge of forming a state that had opposed foreign intervention for decades. However, because their resources and forces had been exhausted, some Prussian noble landowners accepted the demands of the Teutonic Order, ending Prussia's subjugation by the end of the 13th century. Once again, the promising independent development of a Baltic people was abruptly halted by the penetration of German trade interests in the region.

The main objectives of the Teutonic Order in this period were the conquest of new territories and the construction of a foreign trade system. As a result, the Order sent there not only the knights, but also the artisans, merchants and farmers of the North German regions of the Hanseatic League. To this end, a network of fortified bases and a series of cities were created, which, like Kulm (present-day Chełmno) and Toruń, assembled in 1233 the Charter of Kulm, known as *Kulmer Handfeste*, which was based on the Magdeburg Legal Charter. This Charter was adapted according to the political aspirations of the Order and set out the current institutional rules for the entire Prussian territory.

In 1237 the Teutonic Order built the fortress and the town of Elbląg (Elbing), through which they connected the Polish hinterland with the Baltic coast. This development was based on the medieval experience of the ancient Prussian trading city of Truso, which was founded in a neighbouring location. Immigrants from Lübeck contributed to the founding of Elbląg by granting the Legal Charter of their city for its operation. On the opposite side, Königsberg (Kaliningrad), founded in 1255, respectively, used the Charter of

Kulm. Although at that time there were already German settlements in the areas of the rest of Pomerania and Gdańsk, it seems that they flourished as Hanseatic cities much later than Elbląg.



The Teutonic Castle in Malbork, NE Poland (former Prussia).

The trade interests and economic pursuits of the Hanseatic League also extended to the Scandinavian North. The situation there was fundamentally different from that on the east coast of the Baltic Sea. Norway, Denmark and Sweden had already become Christian states and in these feudal powers had developed into a monarchy, which was willing to cooperate with the Hanseatic trade as a business partner, but still determining the extent of its influence and size of his transactions. As the cities of the region began to strengthen, these countries became particularly interested in concluding trade agreements with the metropolises of the Hanseatic League, in a variety of ways.

Norway, due to its mountainous environment, was heavily dependent on the importation of grain and cereals, which were necessary for it to feed its population. Most of the merchants who visited Norway until the beginning of the 13th century came from the shores of the North Sea and their main target was the port of Bergen. Lübeck and other Wendish cities were able to respond

effectively to Norway's growing demand for food, as the Eastern Baltic region offered more favourable conditions for agricultural development than the western, where the handicrafts were more productive and the human resources more abundant and renewable.

The most important commodity imported from Bergen by the merchants of Lübeck and the Wendish cities was fishing, mainly cod, which was caught on the northern shores of Norway and picked for export. This bargain was especially sought after during the fasting period imposed by the Christian church on the inhabitants of the cities of the Hanseatic League. The stabilization of this commercial activity was set up by theological and legal means, which were also valid as rules of exchange, as King Håkon Håkonsson states in a letter to the Lübeck Senate in 1248: "Therefore, send us next summer in the usual manner your ships with the wares we require, that is corn and malt, and let our merchants have these wares as long as the prices are high in our country. In return we shall not hold your people from buying from us whatever serves them best. But we do not desire your merchants to bring more Lübeck beer than they will drink on the journey, for our Kingdom cannot use it. "

In 1250 the Norwegian king agreed, after further negotiations, to give more freedom to the merchants of Lübeck, and in 1276 Bergen's laws enforced the right of German exporters to buy, live or rent their own markets. Because Norway was constantly dependent on cereal imports, which only the Hanseatic cities of Wendish territory were able to deliver, these cities in particular rushed to take advantage of their geographical location and win the North Sea trade competition. In 1316 they managed to have a law that stipulated that dried fish would be exported exclusively from Norway in exchange for the necessary imported goods, which were mainly wheat, flour, malt and beer.

The privileged status of German merchants is clearly illustrated by the fact that they were given the right to determine their transactions within a secluded district in Bergen, to which the Norwegian population could not access. The now-famous 'German Bridge' (*Deutsche Brücke*) in Bergen, symbolized the extensive monopoly on trade that the Hanseatic Germans had managed to achieve. In this way, the Norwegian fish market was largely integrated into the Hanseatic trade, and Bergen became the most important hub on the way to the ports of Brittany.



The commercial port of Bergen according to lithography of the time.

The Hanseatic League's merchant ships sailing to Bergen passed through the Kattegat Strait, whose shores belonged to the Kingdom of Denmark. At the time, the Scania and Halland regions, as well as Blekinge and Bornholm Island, were Danish. This meant that the King of Denmark could maintain absolute control over the increasingly important transit of goods from the Baltic to the North Sea, which was distributed on various roads. In addition, it was able to tariff in Scania (modern-day southern Sweden) all imports of merchants from the Wendish towns, and especially those from Lübeck.

As early as 1200, commercial activity in Scania was intense, as every year at the end of the summer the large herds of herring swam through the strait to reach the mouths of the adjacent rivers for their reproduction. Danish fishermen caught large amounts of herring at

the southern edge of Scania, the peninsulas of Skanör and Falsterbo, to be sold later to merchants from Hanseatic cities. The merchants salted the herring in makeshift warehouses (*fitten*), which were made for the occasion, and packed them in wooden barrels, which they took with them to resell in North Germany and Central Europe. Later, when merchants also came from the Zuider Zee, from Holland and Flanders, the herring trade expanded, contributing to the founding of the Scanian Fair.

The city of Lübeck had developed particularly close trade with Sweden since it was re-established, and the first conditions were set in 1173 and 1179. In 1251 the Swedish regent (jarl) Birger Magnusson renewed and expanded these conditions within the framework of the Hanseatic League, incorporating the corresponding one of Hamburg ten years later. As German traders were exempted from paying customs duties in Sweden, extremely favourable conditions developed for the trade of the Hanseatic League, but most of all it benefited from the fact that its merchants did not pay a commission for it, due to the offshore immunity that applied to all areas of their activity.

In Sweden, German merchants were subject to Swedish law and Swedish courts. Merchants and artisans from the southern Hanseatic cities were able to settle in Sweden, who as immigrants played a major role in the development of Swedish towns. In most cases, many of them became Swedish citizens, which contributed particularly to the political enrichment of the Vikings' descendants.

According to the Swedish chronicle '*Erikskrönikan*', from the second half of the 13th century the German penetration through Hanseatic trade into the Swedish economy and culture accelerated significantly. However, this development in the new Swedish towns, which highlighted the trade in the North Sea and the Baltic, was subject to legal control by the Swedish authorities, as was, for example, the decree of King Magnus Eriksson in 1345, which stated

that the majority of the seats on the municipal councils of the territory would be held by Swedes of native origin and gender.



Images of fishing and packing of salted herring from the book of Olaus Magnus "Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus" (1555).



Close relations between Sweden and the Hanseatic League have also led to increased mining and exports of high-quality iron and copper, which were in high demand in Europe at the time. The implementation of new inventions, such as the watermill and advanced means of digging, combined with the influx of skilled labour from German mining areas, was a boost to Swedish mining business, being helped especially with the Hanseatic merchants promotion in the northern European market.

In the 12th and first half of the 13th century, merchants from Ghent, Ypres, Saint Omer, Bruges, Damme and Aardenburg, sold Flemish produced clothes in Westphalia, Saxony, as well as in the regions east of Elbe. Their ships carried the popular goods as far as to Gotland, and sometimes even farther to Novgorod. However, from the early 13th century onwards, more and more Hanseatic merchants found their way towards the Flemish cities - first of all through Cologne, Lower Rhine and Westphalia, and then from the Baltic through Lübeck and Hamburg.

The floating route from Hamburg eventually won the commercial competition to Flanders and its most frequent destination was the city of Bruges, due to its growing textile industry. Between 1240 and 1260 the merchants of the 'Gotland Company' managed to improve their legal status in Flanders by obtaining more advantageous agreements, such as a fixed or reduced duty, or their exemption from rescue laws, which in case of a shipwreck assigned to the owner the damaged vessel, its goods and crew.

Around the middle of the 13th century, the merchants of Lübeck were the most frequent visitors to Bruges and other cities along the Swin coast, followed by the merchants of Hamburg. The Hanseatic merchants had reserved for themselves the exclusive right to transport the products of the Elbe region to Flanders. However, the trade beyond the Elbe to the east was the prerogative of the Wendish merchants who came in the second half of the 13th century first of all from Lübeck, Stralsund and Greifswald, and the merchants from the eastern Hanseatic cities of Toruń and of Elbląg (Elbing), as well as from Riga and Pärnu. Finally the city of Bruges gained its prosperity thanks to the development of its trade with all these eastern areas of the Baltic Sea. Within half a century it had become a giant transit centre connecting Flanders with Novgorod.

At a time when Hanseatic merchants were trying to break into Flanders, they also sought to gain access to England. Because some of them from Lower Rhineland and Westphalia, and especially from Cologne, were considered unfair competitors in the 13th century, Henry III granted the *Mercatores de Gutlandia* (i.e. the merchants from Gotland) in 1237 protection and tax exemption for all goods exported to England. The next step was taken in 1266 and 1267, when Hamburg and Lübeck were granted permission to set up their own Hanseatic branch similar to that of the Cologne merchants. As a result, by 1282, almost side by side, three German Hanseatic League organizations were formed in England, which later merged to form the joint German Hanseatic League in London. Because the Cologne merchants held the presidency for a long time in the Guildhall, their newly arrived colleagues from the northern German cities preferred to settle in the Steelyard.

The so-called 'Orientals', as the Baltic Hanseatic merchants were known in the markets, became more and more interested in a number of smaller ports along the east coast of England, such as Lynn, Boston, Yarmouth, Hull and Newcastle, where they set up shops and outposts. In this way, the ground was pre-arranged for Hanseatic merchants in general to intervene more vigorously in the import and export trade of England, which until then had belonged to Lombards, Frenchmen and Dutchmen.

Hanseatic trade at the time of its full development had extended its borders as far as Novgorod to the east, as far as Bergen to the north, and London and Bruges to the west. As an economic system, it had developed into an institution by the end of the 13th century, covering the entire Baltic and North Seas, and was to survive, with some modifications, for a few more centuries. Lübeck remained the main transit trade centre for as long as the land route from Trave to the mouth of the Elbe, that is, from the area of Lübeck to Hamburg, was still in use, preferably in relation to the larger, more expensive and dangerous passage through the Kattegat strait. Thanks to this facility, Russian and Livonian pastries, furs, leathers, candles, tar,

flax, timber, Prussian amber and even more so wheat from Mecklenburg and Pomerania, together with their by-products, which were flour, malt and beer, they all passed through Lübeck, the main trading line that connected with ships Novgorod with the port of Bruges.

From the west, fabrics from Flanders, metal products from Westphalia, and Spanish, French and Rhine wines and spices were transported by sea to Hamburg. Then, from Hamburg hinterland were brought wheat, flax, and sheets, as well as metals from the Harts Mountains. Swedish iron ore and copper, as well as cattle from Scania and Norway, were transported exclusively to Lübeck, from the port of which the salt was exported monopolistically to Scandinavia for conservation.

The Hanseatic system of trade, which emerged in the late 13th century in the western, eastern and northern parts of the northern European continent, served as a link and intermediate station for the exchange of goods between two different production patterns in the East and West, expanded market economy. The merchants of the Hanseatic League, having the advantage of the geographical position of their markets, became the necessary intermediaries between these regions, increasingly invoking their economic development, such as the handicrafts of Flanders and Rhineland, which had reached an advanced productivity stage, and on the other hand the eastern countries with their abundant supplies of raw materials and food.

But the most important factor in the successful and efficient transport of goods to all ports in the Hanseatic League was the construction of a new type of ship, a barrel-type ship, called a cog. The cog was larger and more stable than the previous forms of merchant ships, as it could carry two or three times more cargo (see next chapter, p. 49).

Originally designed as a conventional sailboat, its hull was built with a tooth-shaped assembly to make it deeper, significantly improving its navigability and ability to carry bulky and heavy goods, while also offering a safer passage to straits compared to the smaller ships of the time. The cog could also effectively defend itself against piracy or hostile attacks, which helped the merchants of the Hanseatic League to consolidate their hegemony position counter to their competitors in the North Sea and the Baltic.

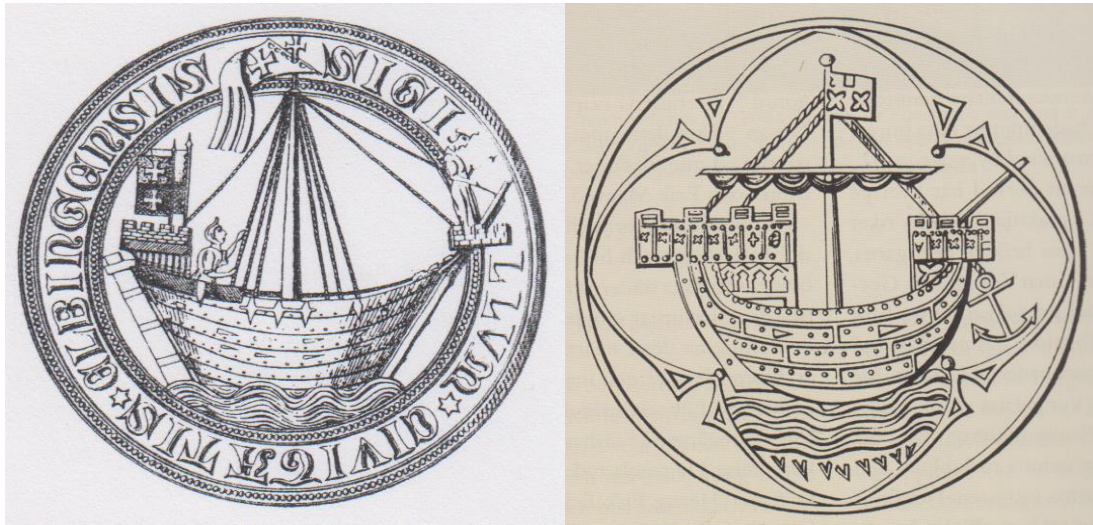


Representation of the port of Lübeck, as it was in about 1350, with commercial cog-type ships.

Hanseatic domination in the northern European seas

The Baltic and the North Sea were exclusive water carriers for the development of trade and markets of the Hanseatic League. According to the chroniclers of the time, all entrepreneurship was based on people "who is engaged in the sea and depend on the sea". Maritime activity, shipbuilding and maritime trade were the main factors in the consolidation of the Hanseatic League in the medieval economy of Northern Europe. In the context of the cooperation of all these factors, the trader gained close ties with the sailor and the shipbuilder, because only with them could he promote his goods on the new sea routes they had developed. This collaboration, organized by the League's rulers to dominate its merchant fleet at sea, is remarkably symbolized by the old 1226 seals of Lübeck city, which depicts a sailor holding a mast rope as if giving the oath of allegiance on board.

The growing demands of maritime trade in the North Sea and the Baltic were due to the search for more stable and more organized markets than the earlier Vikings had established in these areas with their relocations. In this regard, the shipbuilding innovation of the construction of another durable and more profitable transport merchant ship, the so-called 'cog', which was based on the technique of jagged connection of ships of this type, contributed in this direction. The ideal means of achieving this goal came from optimizing and maximizing the pre-existing Frisian type of merchant ship. From the 12th to the 14th century the cog was the leading boat in the waters of Northern Europe. Its importance for the development of Hanseatic Commercial Sovereignty was reflected in the large number of established ports and coastal cities, whose emblems and seals contained invariably its image as a common symbol of economic cooperation between them. Such city-emblem-stamps were issued in Lübeck (1220, 1250 and 1280), Elbląg (1242 and 1350), Gdańsk (second half of the 13th century), Stralsund (13th century) and Vismar (in 1250 and 1350).



Images of the stamps of the cities of the Hanseatic League with the emblem of a cog.

The shape of the cog depicted on the seals of the Hanseatic cities is not descriptive enough to give us a true and reliable picture of this innovative navigable and spacious merchant ship. In addition, the display was shaped in the circle of the seal and usually projected the side of the ship.

Until 1962, there was no evidence to support the cog's real form. However, that year a shipwreck was discovered during a sinking, which was buried three to four meters below the sandy riverbed of the river Weser, near Bremen. The shipwreck resembled the depicted figures of the cog in the seals of the 13th to 14th century. This discovery gave us a unique shipbuilding find that is equally significant with the Viking ships found at Oseberg and Gokstad in Oslo, or the 16th-century 'Vasa' warship found at the bottom of a channel in Stockholm.

The boat in the discovered cog is 23.5 meters long and 7.5 meters wide, and was made of boards, covered with a special polish, and traverses that pierce each side, forming a frame structure on the ship's stern, on which there was a tower. This vessel had the capacity to carry an average of over 65 loads (at least two tons of weight). Although it bore only a mast and a sail, it was a relatively

fast and nimble boat, especially after the early 13th century, when the side rudder was replaced by a stern rudder.



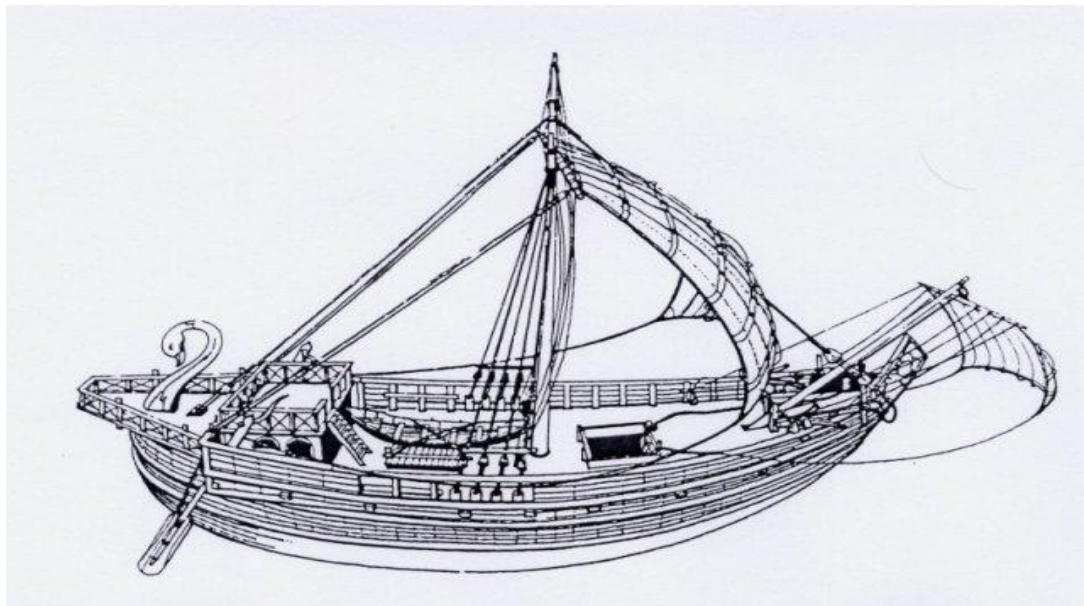
Photo of the cog found in the port of Bremen in 1962.

The cog that was lifted near Bremen looked as if it had just come out of the shipyard because no signs of damage were found on it. In fact, some parts of the boat were incomplete. In addition, the ship's carpenters had forgotten some of their tools on board, and the absence of a ballast betrayed that the ship had never sailed on a route. Probably one of the stormy tides, which is common when the small Teerhof peninsula is flooded, moved it from the construction site a little above the point where it was finally found.

The cogs are classified according to many newer shipbuilding surveys in the types of merchant ships built "from below". As a 'bottom-built' boat, it does not fit perfectly with the construction system of firstly shell and frame arrangement, as mentioned in previous researches. The original construction of the skeleton was done by a method according to which the parts of their hull and shell were joined before the frames and other internal structural supports were inserted into the hull. In this case, the frame was structured before the boards of the hull were attached, with the

result that the frames and supports were inserted after its configuration.

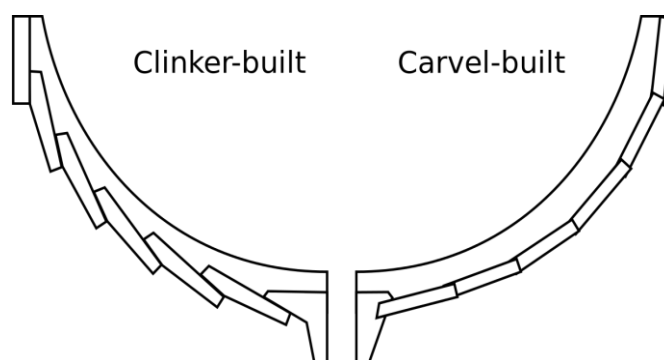
As a 'bottom-built', structure it is characterized by a lower section that is constructed in a different way from the sides of the boat. There are many examples of these types of boats in central and northern Europe, which still sail in coastal areas and rivers. The bottoms of these boats are largely flat, such as the boat in Bevaix and the counter-elements of the Celtic tradition. Unlike all forms of ships used to cross rivers and seas in northern Europe during the Middle Ages, the bottom of the cog has always been relatively flat because it has a slight curvature as shown the figure below.



Perspective illustration of a cog commercial boat.

The cog was a singular form of ships of the European medieval period that was mainly used in the northern German states in contrast to similar boats built in the Netherlands and Belgium. It first appeared around 1200 and was used until 1450, when it was replaced by hulk-type merchant ships (see page 56). However, according to archaeological research, there are many written sources that mention the construction and use of the cog in the North Sea and the Baltic with various names such as Kocho, Kuggham, Cogscult and Cogingi, as early as the ninth century, i.e. namely after the end of the Vikings' commercial relocations.

Although there is no archaeological evidence to show the existence of the knot earlier than the 13th century, it is noteworthy that the shipbuilding technique of this type of merchant ship was used in a different way by the Genoese shipowners of the time. The Hanseatic cogs generally had a relatively flat carvel, or flush-laid, planking switching to lapstrake, or clinker, planking for the high sides at the bilge. Their structural elements were made of oak wood, while in some additions pine wood was used.



Apart from the planking method, there are other special construction features in the form of the cog that have helped the ship's archaeological identification, such as the fastenings and the caulking clamps, or sintels. The fastenings were made by hooked nails, which were inserted from the outside of the hull. The protruding end on the inside of the hull was overturned and re-inserted into the plank. The clamps were a butterfly-shaped with a 'head' and a 'tail'. The head was inserted into the plank over the caulking, while the 'wings' of the clamp covered the overlap of the side clinker planking. These same clamps could also be used on the carvel bottom of the hulls.

The first to us known illustrations of the cog are only its created image since the ninth century on coins and city seals of the Hanseatic League. These early shaped figures show a single-masted ship with three rows of external nails that reveal the existence of three rows of planks above the waterline, from the prow to the stern. The ships depicted on the seals and coins have square sails and at the beginning of the period of their use were also illustrated with a

side rudder, or steering paddle, which was later replaced by a sternpost rudder.



Perspective illustration of the cog's form and the wares transportation.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the cogs appear on some city seals of the Hanseatic League with a superstructure, at the front or rear end, or in both parts of the main hull, depicted as a tower. The presence of this tower is associated with the use of the cog even for military purposes, as happened with the Norwegians in the thirteenth century. Although there are no towers in all the representations of the cog, it is observed that they became more common from the middle of the fourteenth century. This means that the tower became more necessary for merchant ships, because it has created special spaces for the captain and crew, but even for maritime health services, as revealed by the findings of the cog's wreck which was lifted near Bremen.

The construction specifications of the cog were first decoded by detailed studies of the emblems and coins of the cities of the Hanseatic League, which were later enriched by archaeological researches of such boats that had sunk and refloated after the 1960s. Dr. Paul Heincius has extensively described the image of the cog in

his book 'Das Schiff der Hansischen Frühzeit' (1956), where he identifies the ship's technical features. With the discovery of the Bremen Cog in 1962 it became possible the analysis and composition of this type of merchant ship, being an important subject of archaeological shipbuilding research.

It is worthy to note that the cog found near Bremen is an example of a ship from the period of the completed development of this type of ship. The cogs finally took the form of a double direction, which means that the prow and the stern of the ship became interchangeable. The keel (the lower part of the ship's frame) was the backbone of the hull and could consist of one or two sections, depending on the size of the boat, and was made of relatively straight boards with a slight curvature back and forth. The 'knees', that is, the curved cross-sections of the keel that were invisible on the boards, were usually made of natural forked branches of trees.

In addition, all the other frames and the boat floor were made of similar wood as the knees of the keel, which proves that all the parts of a tree were used and not only those of its trunk. As later found cogs show, the prow and stern-posts were double-layered with an internal and external suspension and appear to have been formed together at the same time. The internal suspension was necessary during laying the keel, as well as for the fastening of the planking during the early stages of the ship's construction.

The external suspensions were placed after the planking was completed. Interestingly, at least in the Bremen cog, the clamps were placed at intervals of about fifteen to twenty millimetres along the caulking. Large crossbeams were installed towards the top of the hull, that spanned the width of the hull and protruded beyond it. This is confirmed by many depictions and the number of shipwrecks found that have been completed to date. The cross beams were made of tree trunks and it seems that their height and width, although variable, were more important than their curvature.

The crossbeams did not act as traverses and did not directly supported the ship's upper deck. As evidenced by finding depictions, the cogs were single-masted and square-rigged vessels. The base, which supported the mast along the ship's interior, was the centre of gravity of the ship and its position varied depending on the size of the cog. However, the construction of the mast tends to be another mystery to modern researchers, because in many of the findings this part of the ship was not recovered - perhaps due to its complete destruction at the time of sinking.

Until the 14th century, the Hanseatic cog was the most spacious and navigable merchant ship, which could also be used as a warship if it carried the appropriate weapons and crew. Around 1400, cog began to be gradually replaced by a type of ship that had adapted to the changing commercial requirements for more compact cargoes, as those of textiles, amber and candles, transporting more bulky goods such as cereals, timber and salt. The new ship was named 'Hulk' and served as a means of transport for the faster recovery of the overseas trade during the 15th century, gradually marginalizing the presence of the cog in the ports of the Hanseatic League.

The basic idea for the construction of this new type of merchant ship was not new. The builders of the hulks kept many of the elements of the cog, especially the keel and everything that had previously proved to be practical and useful. The hulks reached a carrying capacity of 150 loads (about 300 tons), and their superstructure became more imposing with the construction of a two-storey bow or even a similar stern.

The real revolution in Hanseatic shipbuilding was due to the technique of the shallow keel, which differed from the clinker building in that the planks were set up flush, like bricks in a wall than rather than tiles in a roof, with the joints butted together. This technique made merchant ships more navigable and, consequently, more efficient. The cogs, which used to be the main carriers of coarse

joints, became even more watertight, thus avoiding many marine disasters. Their capacity was also improved, as while they were single-masted ships, with a large square sail, they were able to compete adequately with the three-masted caravels coming from the Mediterranean Sea.



Image from John of Worcester's Chronicle (1117-18) depicting a hulk.

The appearance of the caravels changed the data in the northern seas, when they were used by the Dutch sailors. However, this development did not mean the end of naval know-how in the cities of the Hanseatic League, but instead made its traders realize the need to improve their merchant ships, despite the fact that they were now threatened by the rise of the Dutch competition.

In addition to cruise ships, the Hanseatic merchant fleets included medium-tonnage vessels that were able to carry cargo in difficult seas or straits. The vessels of this scale were called *ewer* and *kraier*, while many innumerable small coastal vessels, propelled only by sail or by oar, were called *schute*, *schnigge*, and *prahme*. In addition to the above, there were also smaller boats used for traffic in ports or for unloading large ships.

Until the 13th century, the captain of a merchant ship in the Hanseatic League was responsible, as the owner, for both the crew and the goods it carried. However, when merchant ships became larger and more valuable, due to the consequent increased risk of serious loss, ownership of each ship was divided into shares, two or four in the 14th century, and eight, sixteen, thirty-two or more during the 15th century. In this way, a shipowner could own shares for different ships at the same time, or be the same merchant, or own a shipbuilding or cargo shipping company, investing in the shares of his ship.

The system of shares in the Hanseatic economy had a typical medieval form for business shipping, which created the class of shipowners. The largest influence of these was exercised by the shipowners who were also captains, because they themselves took over the crew and were responsible for the safety of the ship, while after the 15th century they also introduced diary entries for the planned route. Their economic situation gave them a similar political prestige, through which they exercised municipal functions by serving the interests, to a greater or lesser degree, of the ruling class to which they belonged.

Initially, the shipowners' cooperative organization was started by the crew. According to the *Van Schipprechte*, the Hamburg's Charter of 1497, in severe weather and sea conditions, the shipowner had to take seriously the views of the majority of sailors (*avereyn to tragende myt dem moisten deele*). In this way, the sailor, who was guiding his companions, gradually made his way to a new type of master, promoted by a strict disciplinary authority. The used phrase '*the children of the ship*' (*schipkindere*) expressed a euphemism for the abolition of the previous autocratical relationship, since the crew had now essentially acquired the right to co-decide on critical matters.

After the 15th century, sailors from the Hanseatic League began to form unions. These were similar to those of the guilds and the

fraternities of the craftsmen, who pursued municipal, ecclesiastical and social goals. The first naval union was founded in 1401 in Lübeck, and similar associations took place in Rostock, Stralsund, Hamburg, and other coastal cities in the Hanseatic state. With regard to the establishment of such associations, all those involved in the maritime transport of goods were accepted, i.e. not only sailors, but also merchant ship owners, masters and owners of cargo winches. Finally, the workers in the merchant shipping industry, as well as the artisans, from the end of the 15th century, began to form their own organizations in order to defend their economic and social interests. The most important, but also the strongest example of such a union organization was the Fraternity of St. Anne in Lübeck.

Although merchant ships were vital to shipping to and from the ports of the Hanseatic cities, we still know very little about the shipyards and craftsmen who built these boats. In some cases we can only draw some conclusions from later information, or from the findings of our time. For example, the Stralsund Treasury recorded a huge growth in the shipbuilding sector of the Hanseatic city, and it states that the ownership of the land on which the merchant ships were built increased from 9 in 1400 to 11 in 1411, and in 13 a few years later.

Obviously, in each port there was the necessary winch for loading and unloading (*lastadie*), which was usually placed on a coastal and well-fenced dock. The dock had a suitable slope for the launch of new boats, and contained all the necessary means, such as cranes, shipbuilding materials, and a channel with a suitable width for each ship. Most of the equipment in the cargo unloading area was a cooperative property, which included all the basic technical means, such as cranes and winches.

According to an old 1411 report by Wismar's Fraternity of shipbuilders, the work at the ports of the Hanseatic League was in line with the progress of merchant shipping and the available in the

North and Baltic Sea routes. Originally, the cog, with the shallow depth and curved keel containing the storerooms, had increased its content to the extent that the coastal waters of the ports allowed. The same thing happened with the later construction of the hulk. Both types of these merchant ships could sail along each coastline, and cross the open seas at closest distances from land.



The Lüneburg crane from 1346.

The captains based the cogs and the hulks navigation on memorized specific landmarks and topographic points. Initially, these data were transmitted by word of mouth, until they were recorded and printed as floating rules, which set the guidelines for each outgoing route. The *'Niederdeutsches Segelbuch'*, a 15th-century South German naval diary, contains a collection of navigation instructions that describe in detail ports, distances, depths, routes, landmarks and other similar aids. The information covering the route between England and Tallinn (former Reval) was originally recorded in Bruges about a century earlier, but was later spread throughout the

territory of the Hanseatic League, translated into the Low German dialect.



Representation of a cargo up- and unloading dock at Hanseatic port.

During the 15th century, the navigational instructions began to be supplemented with some descriptions of parts of coastlines or adjacent islands and islets. The illustrations showed the shape of the shores with exceptional accuracy and were the natural and artificial aids to navigation. There were also suggestions for observing the colours of the sea water, the birds of the nearby areas and all the species of fish encountered along the way.

The compass has been unknown, or very rare, in Hanseatic navigation for a long time. However, we know that it was first used in the English Channel at the end of the 12th century, and in Scandinavia around 1300. This means that many years passed until the merchant ships of the Hanseatic League were able to locate their position accurately, and for this reason the handwritten instructions were, without a doubt, the most important aids until the use of the compass.



Naval map of the Hanseatic era of the city of Thorunium (Toruń), built on the bank of the river Vistula.

The written navigational instructions also included seabed measurements and observations of marine basins to consistently determine the geological characteristics of the sea bottoms. Their use as '*Seebuch*', that is, as a textbook for learning the natural and artificial signs that ensured a safe travel, proves that shipping had evolved greatly for the needs of the Hanseatic League's maritime trade. Their content can even today reconstruct the real journeys that took place then in the Baltic Sea and in the passage of Denmark through the straits of Kattegat and Skagerrak, or the sea route to Rostock, Gdańsk or Livonia, but even from Tallinn to the islands of Gotland and Bornholm. These sea guides also mention the main and secondary routes, as well as the fact that in certain cases the assistance of local captains had to be sought, who could help in difficult crossings or at the entrance to difficult ports.

The organized and guided navigation of the Hanseatic League concerned not only sea routes, but also special river transports in the cities of the hinterland. In *Seebuch*, for example, are recorded navigations on the Rhine River, where goods were transported by rowing boats from Strasbourg to Cologne, to be uploaded later in cogs that would be sent to the North Sea. Recorded instructions

have also been found concerning the crossing of the river Elbe to Prague, via Magdeburg, and then to Moldova. The same was the case with the transportations towards Hamburg along the Spree, Havel and Elbe, or from Szczecin (Stettin), via Frankfurt nad Odrą (am Oder), to Wroclaw. In particular, traders from Toruń knew that only by strictly following the instructions of the river crossing could they transport their goods to the lower valleys of the Vistula, reaching the Hanseatic markets of Warsaw and Krakow.



Representation in miniature of the economic life in a port of the Hanseatic League.

Material production in the Hanseatic League

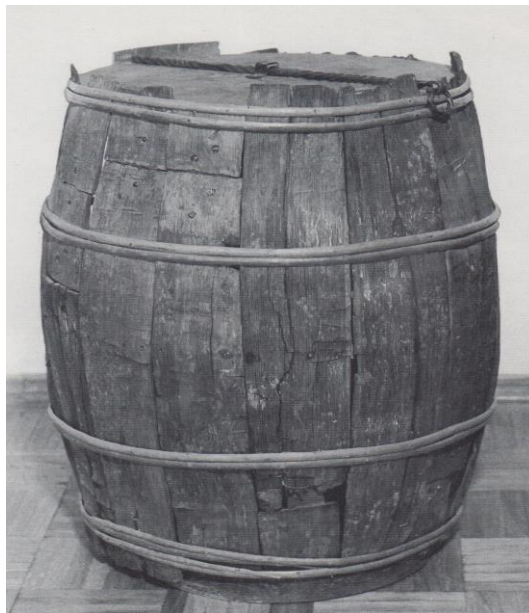
The commercial activity between the cities of the Hanseatic League is recorded in a variety of economic documents of the time, which still provide useful information for any kind of research interest. However, these sources are characterized as rather fragmentary, when it comes to more detailed descriptions of marketable goods, with the exception of the handling of certain products, such as textiles, wheat and fish. Although metallic products are mostly clearly described in terms of their function (e.g. wires and copper pots), other products, such as ceramic or glass products, are mentioned almost none.

One of the most important written sources is the records of trade stocks and accounts, as well as the wills of Hanseatic merchants, with somewhat indeterminate content in terms of their commercial activity. There are very few documents showing the country of origin of a commercial good, such as the account book of the church of Laufàs in Northern Ireland of 1559, which lists some of the 'German cutting plates' (*skerbord bysk*). That is why it is still difficult to reliably investigate from existing sources who bought goods from the Hanseatic traders and who were the recipients of these goods.

For researchers who mostly study the material excerpts from the various finds of commercial goods of the time, the written records are of little value for the interpretation of these things. Instead, they prefer to resort to archaeological methods to detect and display the goods traded by the merchants of the Hanseatic League. In any case, the systematic processing of data and the classification of material goods in the Hanseatic markets largely depends on the origin of the raw materials, their availability, their processing and the consequent lack of specific goods in the cities and the lands of the northern seas.

For example, the lack of timber was of great importance to the people of Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, the Orkney and

Shetland Islands. There was also a great need to import iron into Greenland, because it had no such resources at all. Respectively in Iceland, the production of ceramic objects would be theoretically possible, since there was clay, but no progress was made, because on the one hand the quality of the clay was poor and on the other hand there was no fuel available for firing pottery. In addition, Iceland did not have enough quartz sand, sodium carbonate or potassium carbonate to produce glass, which justified its import from the North German cities of the Hanseatic League.



Wooden cargo barrel of the Hanseatic era
(Frankfurt am Oder Museum).

In general, each commodity produced was a subject of negotiation between the cooperating cities of the Hanseatic League. However, it is not easy to estimate that all goods were produced exclusively in these cities. In some cases, such as stone building blocks or ceramic products, their origin relates to specific inland production units, which requires a more thorough scientific investigation. On the other hand, it is easier to detect the origin of the goods with the help of signs and trademarks, such as the oak barrels that bore their owner's mark (*Hausmarken*) and the Hanseatic city of origin.

It is also very rare to find a certificate of merchandise, which was accompanied by commercial documents, such as the seal of a

Hanseatic dealer found in the market in Avaldsnes, Norway. This presumption fits perfectly with the stamp of the merchant Georg Gisze, as depicted in the famous work of art by Hans Holbein the Younger. Georg Gisze, who came from Gdańsk, was portrayed in front of his office in Steelyard, the headquarters of the Hanseatic League's London-based steel trade. The table shows his seal, which consisted of a bone handle and a metal sealing matrix.



The stamp and ring of Hanseatic merchant Georg Gisze. Excerpt from the painting by Hans Holbein the Younger (1532) (State Museum of Prussian Culture in Berlin).

Georg Gisze is the most representative person of Hanseatic trader, not only because he has been artistically represented, but also because the written sources state that he was mostly engaged in the purchase and sale of fishes. He imported fish from Iceland by boat to Hamburg, which he resold in London, from where he imported fabrics back to Hamburg. The registers also report the commercial trafficking of many other products into the North Sea, including small portable weapons, copper pots, jugs or trays made of tin, hooks and other metal objects. However, it is not easy to determine with certainty whether these products were produced in northern

Germany or elsewhere, because the reports only testify to their distribution in the shops and markets of the Hanseatic League.

However, some of the goods traded in the North Sea and the Baltic were made from non-local raw materials. The findings of this category constitute a presumption of expanded trade beyond the borders of the Hanseatic League. For the most part, all ceramics and glassware were imported from southern Europe, but even from Asia, because they were unrivaled houseware items during the period 1350-1650, a flourishing period of the commercial activity in Hanseatic League cities.

In addition to the southern regions, Hanseatic merchants imported huge quantities of raw materials from more northern areas of Europe. They bought timber from the Baltic and Norway and *osmund*, a particular type of raw iron, from Sweden to sell in other European markets. Imported timber was used for many things, e.g. the construction of buildings and scaffolding, and perhaps also for the production of smaller objects, although this has not yet been proven by archaeological research. The types of imported timber cannot be reliably confirmed, as the relevant sources only mention raw quantities. However, thanks to the checked tree chronology, we are able to know the date of the felling, as well as the origin of the imported timber.

However, there are even many other versions of the origin of wood products and their contribution to the material culture of the Hanseatic League. It is believed to have been produced mainly in northern Germany, either by foreign artisans or by locals, with raw materials imported from the forests of Scandinavia and Poland. An analysis of the productive origin of such wood products took place in Stóraborg, Iceland, where it was shown that at the end of the medieval period 48% of wooden objects were made of oak, a tree that did not exist in Iceland at the time. It is clear that findings, such as some barrel-shaped planks, were parts of oak barrels and smaller tanks imported into Iceland as packaging and merchandise boxes.

Many of them bore the trademark of their owner, which clearly testifies to their place of origin from the regions of the Hanseatic League. Another finding related to the use of oak wood is found in the wreckage of shipwrecks of the time, some of which still exist today off the coast of Iceland. These wreckages, which are made of oak wood and washed away at the site of the shipwrecks, have been collected for archaeological research.

Another sought-after raw material for imports from Scandinavia was the schist of Eidsborg, Norway, which guaranteed the highest possible quality in the production of whetstones. Some kinds of whetstone were already being exported via Skien and Telemark during the Viking Age. As an established commodity, it continued to be exported to the regions of the Hanseatic League throughout its economic activity. Evidence for the continuation of this trade during the Hanseatic Age is found in the aforementioned areas of schist export. There are two shipwrecks there, the cargoes of which give us all the knowledge of the later medieval internationalization of schist exports by Hanseatic merchants. Through their investigation, the mechanisms of trade and the networks of transit through Scandinavia's inland naval routes to the North Sea are discovered, which was also the case with the respective import of timber to the northern regions of Germany.

The hull of the Bøle cog, the ship discovered on the Skien River near the town of the same name, which was the central port of the Hanseatic trade for the supply of whetstone, leads us directly to their place of origin and production. The ship, which structurally combines the tradition of the cog with the previous Scandinavian ship forms, was made of Polish wood, which was cut down in about 1380. Its cargo consisted of large quantities of light grey whetstone, originally from Eidsborg. It has been argued that the imported whetstone was not only a commodity, but was also used as a ballast for navigation.



Photo of the shipwreck found in Bøle, Skien, Norway (1959).

Another ship of the same type, the so called 'Cog of Darss', sank in the middle of the 14th century off the coast of Darss, in the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The ship was built from Polish oak, which was cut between 1298 and 1313. Its cargo consisted, among other things, of Eidsborg's whetstone, which was transported as bars of about 60 centimetres long. The bars were tied together in batches of 20 kilograms. This ore, as well as other types of cargo, show that the ship was a merchant ship of the Hanseatic League transporting products from Norway.

Studying the two shipwrecks, we draw a picture of their prospects for how the Eidsborg's whetstones were traded during the early period of the Hanseatic League. German merchants realized the importance of this commodity as a sought-after source for the production of metal cutting or sharp tools, because it could not be replaced by any other local raw material. Thus, the Hanseatic trade system organized the monopolization of this raw material in all the established local networks and factories for the production of metal products. Immediately after the whetstones were mined, the rods were formed and loaded onto river boats heading to Skien, or other

nearby ports, to be reloaded in cogs and sold to the developing handicrafts of the Hanseatic cities.

An equally important activity, in addition to the commercial transportation of raw materials, was the exploitation by Hanseatic traders of craftsmen who worked under the supervision of particular labour offices (Kontore), which had been established outside of northern Germany. Such work offices were located in Bergen, Bruges, London and Novgorod, but also in other cities connected with the Hanseatic League, such as e.g. was the Turku of Finland.



The Skrivekontoret (Office) in Bergen, Norway (Hanseatic Museum).

Artisans from the North German region were especially useful in Bergen. Among them were tailors, bakers, goldsmiths, textile makers, coopers, barbers, furriers and shoemakers, who elaborated the raw materials. All of them worked exclusively for the merchant class and not on their behalf. Shoemakers, who also worked as tanners, were the largest group of German craftsmen who maintained the shoe manufacturing monopoly in Bergen. Equally monopolistic was the group of barrel makers, because they

provided the most necessary means for transporting goods to the markets of the Hanseatic League.

The products of Bergen's shoemakers have been studied from archaeological research, which tells us that their material origin dates back to the 12th century and that their typology generally followed the fashion of northern European cities, such as the one produced in Gdańsk at the same time. Of course, this result is not surprising given that respective German artisans also worked in the Baltic cities.

The dispersion of German craftsmen undoubtedly explains why there has been a general and uniform spread of the morphology of their products in all their categories. From an aesthetic and economic point of view, there is no difference between a shoe produced in Bergen and a similar one made in Lübeck by German craftsmen. Consequently, the extensive uniformity produced by the dispersal and settlement of North German craftsmen in the cities associated with the Hanseatic League reflects the efforts of merchants to establish a single pattern in the materialist culture of the region.

Products imported from southern regions constituted an equally important category of material culture developed in the Hanseatic League. These included mainly useful ceramic and stone items which satisfied mainly the deficit production of such goods in the cities of the Baltic and the North Sea. Research shows, for example, that Cologne and Hamburg played a leading role in the trade and distribution of stone products from the Rhine region.

As the relevant written sources of the time reveal to us, the merchants of Cologne exported to Hamburg via the Rhine River the stone products produced in Siegburg between 1570 and 1599. Dietrich Dulmann, a merchant of Cologne who traded in ceramics at the city's market, was given the right to export stone products from Siegburg to Hamburg. The strong link between the producers

of Siegburg and the Hanseatic League and its final consumers is reflected in a ceramic jug bearing the logo of the Hamburg company '*Englandfahrer*', which is inscribed with the following advertising expression : 'DER * ENGELANDES * FARER * GESELSCHOP * IN * HAMBORCH *'.

During the 16th century, Siegburg faced strong competition not only from other production units in the region (e.g., Raeren, Langerwehe), but also from areas within Lower Saxony. Too many stone products from these areas have been exported to more northern countries, albeit in smaller quantities, which vary from place to place. In Iceland, the total amount of stone products dating back to the Hanseatic period is 49 (75%), compared to 16 other imported products.

Most of the stone goods came mainly from Lower Saxony, but there are also samples from the Rhineland. In addition to this commercial activity in the hinterland and in the ports of the North Sea, there is a corresponding export of local products from the riverside areas of Werra and Weser in Thuringia. The trading of these products in the field of Hanseatic commercialism has not been adequately studied, but it is clear that regular goods of such origin are being discovered during archaeological excavations in northern Germany and Scandinavia. Large quantities of goods from Thuringia have been found in Bergen, as well as a few less in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Similar quantities have also been found in the port of Bremen, where the river Weser flows, which is justified because it was the main starting point for their export.

The religious contacts, created through the extensive trade links between the North German regions and the coastal and insular Scandinavian societies of the North Sea, allow us a more reliable investigation of the transitional nature of the commodities produced in the economical frame of the Hanseatic League. In the Faroe Islands, for example, the installation of German bishops there was inextricably linked to the entry of trade and the expansionist

interests of the Hanseatic League, much earlier than the first written records of 1416. These economically powerful new interconnections also contributed to the introduction of a variety of church objects, as evidenced by the still-existing Church of St. Mary in Bergen, or the silver disc of Grund, Iceland, which was designed by a goldsmith from Lübeck

In addition to church equipment, many items of daily use associated with religious activities were exported. With the establishment of the Reformation, some objects were decorated with religious icons and symbols to support the spread of Lutheran ideas, among which ceramic items occupied a leading position. Through its peculiar decorative art, depicting saints or representations of the Bible with relief bands and graphic decorations, the Lutheran expressive language promoted its doctrine in a simpler way to neophytes, thus exploiting the material culture of the Hanseatic League. In many Baltic cities, in particular, Lutheran art used white glazed ceramics, the so-called *Bilderbäcker* (miniature sculptures), which were not only worship and religious objects, but also used for tiling the fireplaces of urban houses.

Archaeological finds suggest that the material civilization of the Hanseatic League was significantly affected by the establishment of trade and religious relations with the societies of the islands of the North Sea, Scandinavia and the Baltic. The findings demonstrate the consolidation of traditional trading options established by the Vikings earlier in cities' marketplaces in the areas mentioned. What has changed with the organization and development of the Hanseatic League has been the transformation of goods into symbols, that is, into indicators with an identity of their productive origin. The corresponding consumers have linked a guaranteed quality to the brand, as was the case, for example, with the jugs brought from Siegburg. Apparently the demand for such branded products has always been higher than the pre-mentioned quantities, because Hanseatic merchants deliberately reduced their exports in

order to raise more profits, adding surplus value through symbolizing the commodity as unique rarity.

This commercial practice also demonstrates that the material culture of the Hanseatic League was completely identical to the objects it exploited, whether they were raw materials or products of profit and surplus value. Observing the existing findings, we can distinguish a characteristic style of '*Hanseaticism*' in the marking of the commercial value and usefulness of each product or raw material. Although some of the goods produced in the central regions of the Hanseatic League had a peculiar labeling style, this also gained meaning in terms of the profitability sought after they became part of the Hanseatic Trade Expansion System. The vital destination was accompanied by the basic principles of monopoly trade and profit, which functioned as components of a material culture, resulting in the profound impact that shaped another social and institutional organization in all the cities and areas, associated with the Hanseatic League.

Scandinavian findings show that the transition from reception to acceptance of the Hanseatic League's commercial semiotics is evident. Whereas before German merchants functioned as 'missionaries' of the promotion of goods, they have now become Scandinavians, who, along with their natives, promoted the idea of the non-taxable and homogeneous commercial type as a guarantee of a higher quality and benefit. The use of methods and measurement systems in the Scandinavian markets, originating in Hamburg, shows that quantitative data were now integrated into a common ground, which promoted opportunities for the availability of goods without unnecessary duties and value conversions. With this homogeneity of material culture, Scandinavian culture gradually freed itself from the traditions of the former torg and acquired a cosmopolitan organization, despite the fact that this adaptation caused too much confusion and competition within the Hanseatic League, especially during the 14th century.



A miniature of 1460 depicting a stonework site (Austrian National Library of Vienna).

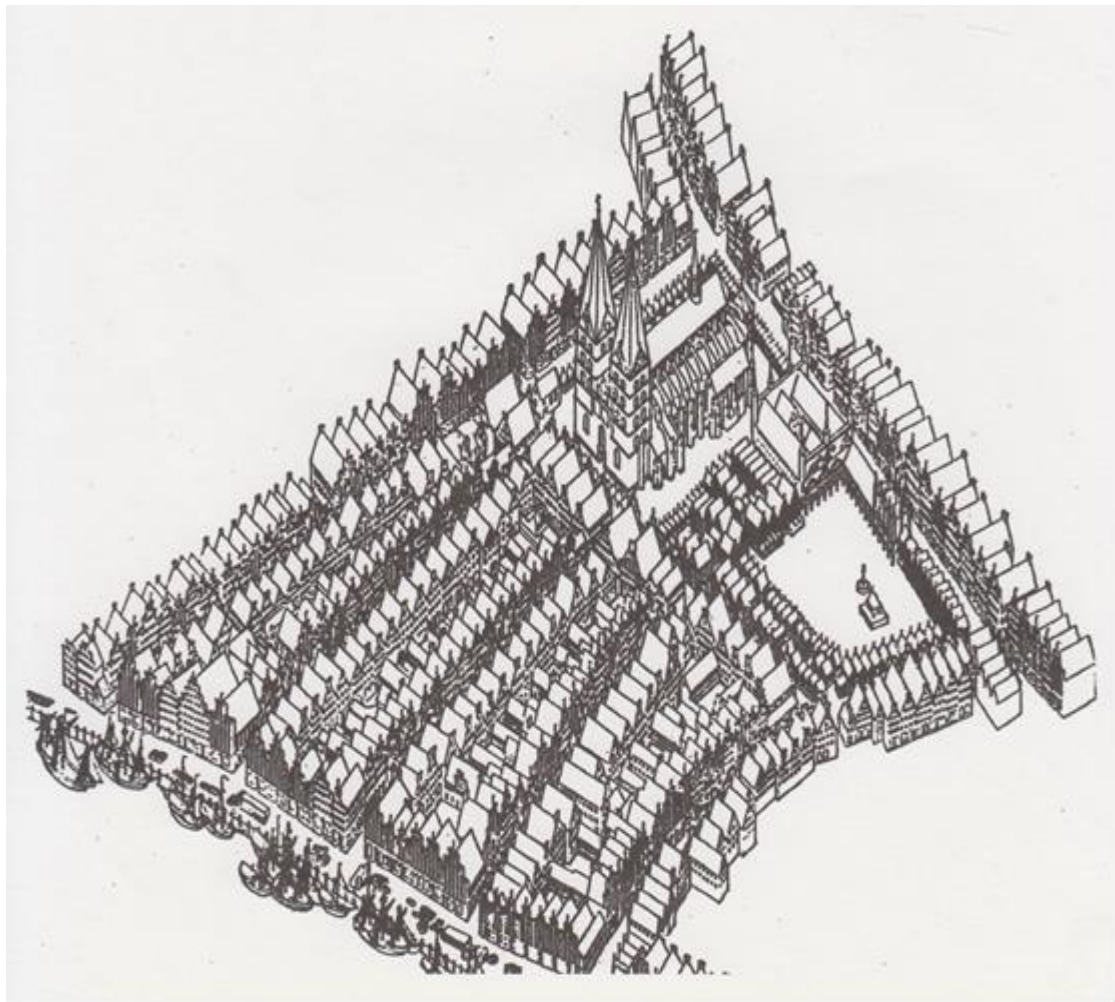
The architectural and urban planning organization in the trade centres of the Hanseatic League

Due to the booming business of Hanseatic trade in the Baltic and North Seas, the number of new markets in coastal and riverine areas increased, in places that soon served as cores for the organization of cities, which were essentially determined by the form and character of sale economy. The market place, which has been the core of urban planning, was usually a large rectangular square with origins in Scandinavian torg (the open-air Viking market), which was usually defined by two main roads that formed from homes.

The social organization in the central market area included vendors and buyers of food items of all kinds and artisans who displayed their products on market stalls. The square, except that it functioned as an open-air market, also offered the opportunity to host a variety of fairs and fetes, in which city residents enjoyed games, music, dancing and other cultural activities, inextricably linked to the ongoing trade. In this place, all kinds of entertainment were also bearers of wares promotion, through the occasional opportunities given to them by the Hanseatic merchants in order to ensure stable profits from their sales. That is why a strict regulation had been enacted for all participants, according to which violators of the regulations of the events could be insulted, or even punished with the death penalty.

Every central socioeconomic market place in the cities of the Hanseatic League was decorated according to the requirements of the applied arts of the time, because due to commercial interests it had to have an impressive and attractive artistic aesthetic expression that would arouse the cultural interest of buyers and would offer the right quality environment for the functions of the place.

At the core of the city, the city hall dominated, having usually a facade with blind windows, such as those of the municipality of Lübeck and Stralsund, which were combined with the painted and embossed façades of adjacent urban dwellings. The whole composition was overshadowed by the presence of a very tall Gothic church, which offered a monumental formality to the market square, forming together with the other urban buildings a peculiar scenography for the daily life of the Hanseatic city. The chess formed layout of the adjacent neighbourhoods is also considered as a special urban feature of the Hanseatic city, which differentiates it from the organization of non-Hanseatic earlier cities built before the 12th century.



Perspective view of the urban core of Lübeck during the Hanseatic era, including the market square, the cathedral and the port of the city.

As the cities of the Hanseatic League grew to create new building blocks and neighbourhoods, their core acquired in addition to the original old market (*Altmarkt*) and a new market (*Neumarkt*), for better service to increased commercial functions. Due to the intensification of international and local commercial transactions, further installations were required in the new and old markets, based on the items sold. This created a variety of shops, as fish and vegetable stores, grain and hay markets, timber markets, groceries and clothing shops.



Illustration of the old Braunschweig market place by the Italian painter Domenico Cullio (1834).

The location of each market square also determined the layout of the adjacent streets. The main trade routes passed directly into it, while the other roads were arranged side by side, usually intersecting at right angles. All roads had buildings on each side and a picture of the ordinary and rational design was present. Since its origin, every Hanseatic city has seemed to have sprung up through specific functional assessments, in harmony with a peculiar aesthetic style. The merchants' houses had a façade in the market square or the main shopping streets, while sometimes, as in Lübeck, they formed an independent building block with wide streets,

which led from the central square of the market to the commercial port.

The middle and lower social strata erected their houses on the narrowest and side streets, which were connected to the area of the market square, constructing building units that characterized in particular the occupation of their owners. Even today, in several former Hanseatic cities, such characteristic names of professional neighbourhood streets such as e.g. are of the *Kleinschmiedstrasse* (where the little smiths were living) or the *Böttcherstrasse* (where the coopers were living). Also in some peripheral neighbourhoods, or even outside the city walls, there are some street names from the Hanseatic era that indicate the presence of professions that caused stench, such as the *Gerberstrasse* (where slaughterhouse workers were living). The separation of this kind was a result of the relevant ban set by the city's statute law. In this way, the historic urban planning map of the Hanseatic city emerged through a clear stratification of its working citizens that also influenced the placement of their houses.



Excerpt from the papyrus of Vike Schorler depicting the commercial activity in the Rostock market place (1578-1586, City Archives).

A well-preserved archive of the city of Rostock, an elongated document - a vellum over 18 meters long and 60 centimetres wide - depicts in a very unusual way the city's streets, as well as its buildings. Its illustrations describe houses with pediments, masonry, doors, towers, churches, shops and the entire city market building environment.

The archive is a written contribution of the Hanseatic grocer Vike Schorler describing the social and economic life of Rostock, who in eight years (1578-1586) created its descriptive content with pen and ink. His simplistic and unpretentious designs, this "*True Reproduction of the Highly Praiseworthy and Widely Famed Sea and Hansa Town of Rostock*", offer an insight into the architectural organization of the Hanseatic city during the post-Middle Ages, depicting also the activities of its people on the streets, on the market-place, outside the university, and on the commercial port on the Warnow River banks.

Despite of the fact that Vike Schorler created the false impression that the entire city of Rostock consisted of stone façades - because we know that most of the inhabitants belonged to the middle and lower social class of the city, living in simple huts and cellars - this long series of fragmentary illustrations on 127 paper pages is a unique historical testimony to the urban organization and architecture of a Hanseatic city, no matter the apparent will of its creator to idealize the city's architectural morphology according to the aesthetic choices of the ruling merchant class.

According to the chroniclers of the time, the streets of the Hanseatic cities began to be paved around the end of the 15th century. Specifically, the paving covered mainly the widest market streets and squares, as well as the access to the docks of each port. The first report of a cobblestone street (*steinstrasse*) dates from the 14th century in the city of Hamburg, where its technique was applied to all main roads, the open-air market, the squares, some bridges, the

areas around the city gates, in front of public buildings and in some urban homes.

Traffic on the roads was significantly hampered by garbage and rubbish of all kinds, which eventually ended up in the city's water canals. The filth that prevailed in the open spaces created a huge problem of hygiene and aesthetic care. Obviously, it was not uncommon for Hanseatic residents to maintain animals, mainly pigs, in stables, built outdoors near a public road. From the relevant archives, we are informed of an example that the bans imposed by the Municipal Council of Bremen and the other Hanseatic cities did not bring any results. Regular street cleaning in these cities is said to have begun for the first time in the early 16th century.



The cobblestones of Tallinn's town square.

The urban houses had frontal extensions above the streets bearing arched oriels, which illuminated the interior living and work. Until well into the 15th century, there was no fixed city night lighting, which exposed the residents to many dangers. For them, it was absolutely necessary to bring a lantern during the night walking, so that they could illuminate and see any unforeseen obstacles or face unpleasant situations. This practice lasted until the public illumination of the streets, bridges and generally the rest areas in most cities of the Hanseatic League began, according to relevant studies and instructions of the authorities.

However, the people of Hanseatic times do not seem to be bothered by the garbage and the lack of night lighting in the cities. A medical doctor who stayed for a while in Lübeck, around 1450, enthusiastically describes his impressions, stating that: *'In this city they have the clearest water, the pleasantest air, the best soil, the most graceful hedgerows, the most flowering gardens, fine buildings, always clean streets .., very beautiful churches .., high towers whose golden radiance strikes the observer from afar, magnificent monasteries, rich libraries.. Merchants are zealously devoted to and are extremely prosperous. The town has an excellent constitution and is secured by protective defences of all kinds, the population is peace-loving.'*

The building art in the cities of the Hanseatic League was based mainly on the technique of brickwork, which was distinguished by two types: *Backstein* and *Haustein*. The first type was a type of bricks used to erect buildings in the coastal areas of the North Sea and the Baltic. The second type was a carved type of solid block, made of sandstone or limestone, which was used mainly in the western regions of the Hanseatic League, in Westphalia and Lower Saxony, that is, in all cities between Cologne and Magdeburg.

During the 14th and 15th centuries in particular, the usual architectural style in the region of Northern Germany was simple, due to the lack of stone building materials. This style resulted from the construction technique of urban buildings along the coast from Bremen to Riga, and from Lower Elbe via Brandenburg until Silesia. Both types of building materials used gave a distinct texture and quality to the Gothic morphology of the time in the western and eastern cities of the Hanseatic League.

Gothic brickwork predominated in the territories of the Union's eastern expansion, that is, in the coastal areas of the Baltic, because there were brick and tile factories developed due to the rich riverside resources in abundant clay soil. In contrast, the Gothic stonework of the Frankish tradition reached the western parts of the Hanseatic League through the Netherlands, providing innovative

architectural and sculptural decorations in the brickwork, with a number of surface variations that characterized it in general. The usual applications concerned, in addition to the masonry of buildings, the construction of niche frames in Romanesque or Gothic-type openings, the display of rosettes or medals, and the development of tower-shaped ramparts on gable façades.



Backstein brickwork in Helsingør's administration building.

In the northern Scandinavian regions, the corresponding architectural and urban planning organization was carried out with a less Gothic style and a wealth of decorations. Stockholm, which had replaced the importance of Birka, the main trading post of the Vikings in the Swedish hinterland, acquired with its founding as a Hanseatic port city a similar to the southern cities in the Baltic town planning. The city's Hanseatic character was created by the organization of commercial squares and streets, in which buildings and houses were built with a remarkable influence from the Gothic style architecture.



The Great Market Square of medieval Stockholm (an old 19th century photography).

The commercial core of the city was the 'big market' (*Stortorget*) in the centre of the still existing old town (*Gamla Stan*), which was built on an island of strategic importance for the transit needs of merchants in the Baltic Sea. The market square, originally smaller than the current one and much wider after a fire in the early 15th century, was surrounded by peculiar gable buildings that included the Stock Exchange and the city's cathedral.

While the Hanseatic Stockholm is likely to have expanded quickly, it remains much debated if the expansion was planned in accordance with the model of southern prototypes (e.g. such as Lübeck) and, as historical sources traditionally have rendered it, governed directly by Birger Jarl (1210–1266) and Magnus Ladulås (1240–1290), or, as some historian have argued, a somewhat desultory if not entirely unmethodical process.

Nevertheless, the medieval thoroughfares led from the large square in all four cardinal directions: Köpmangatan ("Merchant's Street") led east down to a second square by the water, Fisketorget ("Fishery Square"). Svartmangatan ("Black Man's Street", named after the Blackfriars monastery) and Skomakargatan ("Shoemaker's Street") led south to the financial centre of the city. Located where is today

Järntorget ("The Iron Square"), this marketplace was at the time not much more than two landing stages separated by an open space on the southern corner of the island. On either side of this marketplace, considerably larger than the present square, was on its eastern side Koggabron (named after cogs) and today superseded by Skeppsbron, and on its western side was Korn-hamn ("Corn Harbour") receiving the ships from Lake Mälaren, located near today's Kornhamnstorg



The Hanseatic city of Stockholm (town plan model of the City Museum).

Since the gates of each city were obviously the most exposed and weak points in all medieval fortifications, the rule was that the fewer they were, the better for the safety of their citizens. In Hanseatic Stockholm, there were probably only three or four gates in the city's fortification wall: Through the eastern wall a single gate allowed Köpmangatan (merchant's street) to pass down to the shore, while the others, all leading to Västerlånggatan (west long street), were located where today are Storkyrkobrinken (Slope of the Great Church), Kåkbrinken (Slope of the [Ramshackle] House), and Tyska Brinken (German Slope). Surrounding the Royal Palace was an open area called Sanden (The Sand), intentionally kept free for defensive reasons and including the present location of Slotts-

backen (Palace Slope), south of the palace, and Högvaktsterrassen (Terrace of the Main Guard), west of it.

Inside the city, the arterial roads were stipulated to be eight ells wide (e.g., barely five meters) to allow horse-drawn vehicles to pass, while no rules restricted the width of the cross-streets. As the city started to get overcrowded in the 14th century, new buildings were built on the shores outside the city wall, and gradually land fillings between the bridges along the shores gave room for sheds and storehouses forming the elongated blocks separated by narrow alleys which are today characteristic for the old town. Within the old city core, larger blocks were partitioned into smaller ones, which resulted in several narrow streets such as Trädgårdsgatan (Garden Street) and Kindstugatan (Box on the Ear Street, historical, corrupted).

On average, the streets of Hanseatic Stockholm were about three meters narrower than the current streets. Archaeological excavations have shown that the older roads were covered with wood, and in the case of the northern end of the Western Long Road, three layers of wood paving dating from about 1250-1300 were found. During the last part of the 14th century, the streets began to be paved with stones, and according to newer archaeological research, small layers of dirt were found above them, proving that their cleaning had been significantly improved.

Garbage and rubbish were often dumped outside the streets in alleys, through special occasional openings used for this purpose. Although archaeologists have found some medieval underground wooden pipes and some vaulted structures on the streets of Stockholm, there are relatively few traces of the city's advanced sewer system, compared to those in Visby and Bergen at the same time.

The municipal authorities' announcements of compliance were in vain, because they could not contain the habit of polluting the

surrounding waters and limiting the number of animals bred inside the city walls. Until the end of the 15th century, orders were issued to clean all watercourses and ditches twice a week, as well as to prevent the creation of swamps along the inhabited landscapes and urban roads. All the toilets were concentrated in central locations known as *'flugmöten'*, where the number of insects darkened the sky until the 19th century.

The current narrow streets of Stockholm give a vague glimpse of the appearance of the medieval city. It is preserved more than the existing gables and the protruding openings in the façades of the buildings that once served the commercial purposes. However, these alleys during the Hanseatic period were characterized by dirt, irregular paving and hand-drawn vehicles. In these traffic areas, the odours from dung, food, fishes, leather, furnaces, and seasonal spices mingled.

During the nights (and certainly during the long winters) the city was completely dark, save for exceptional fire watchers and nocturnal ramblers who used torches to find their bearings. Neither were there any street signs guiding foreigners as no streets were officially named, instead referred to as *"the thoroughfare running from the outer southern gate and up to the cross and the chapel"* or constantly renamed after the most prominent person settled in an exposed part of the alley. Indeed, historical records contain many examples of obscure references to locations in the city, close to impossible to pin down as some streets have been renamed dozens of times, often carrying the same or a similar name as other streets before physically ceasing to exist.

On the southern shore of the Baltic, the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk acquired a different town planning due to its port's prevailing functional requirements. Gdańsk did not have a 'Rynek' - a central square - like most other Hanseatic cities in Poland and Germany. However, this city also developed on the basis of the pre-existing Viking marketplace, the Długi Targ (the Long Market), which was

a wide pedestrian street that stretches from the Targ Weglowy (Coal Square) to its port's canals.



Gdańsk's Hanseatic Long Market (Długi Targ).

Architecturally, Gdańsk is similar to Copenhagen, Hamburg, and to some extent to Amsterdam. The Long Market (Długi Targ) remains almost as long as it was in the Middle Ages, where it was a centre of trade and significant economic activities, regardless of the status of Polish or German jurisdiction in the city's affairs. On the road starting at the Coal Square (Targ Weglowy), buildings were erected with architectural elements that are a mixture of late Gothic and Baroque rhythms, due to influences from Dutch architects and artists of the time. In particular, underground rooms were provided in these buildings that functioned as commercial shops and warehouses. Similar morphological buildings were built in the southern German and Dutch cities, the façade of which was slightly sloping in order to highlight its decorated surface to passers-by, as an exciting experience that stimulates the imagination and dominates their memory like a theatrical setting.

The Long Market ((Długi Targ) ended, as it does today, at the so-called Green Gate (Brama Zielona), which leads to the port's canals. The city's palace dates back to 1568 (a reconstruction), and was erected by architect Regnier from Amsterdam in Dutch style. The palace was originally designed to serve as a residence for Polish kings, but no Polish king ever stayed overnight in the palace. The construction of the present Town Hall was initiated in 1379, when the town was dominated by the Teutonic Knights. The style is Gothic, with elements from the Renaissance, which have been added later. It is an impressive building, including 5 tall storeys and a tower rising 83 meters into the air; at the very top stands a gilt statue of King Sigismund Vasa (1548-1572), who stands there taking a look across the town (The building was badly damaged during Soviet bombings in 1944, but the walls were saved and after the war the town succeeded in reconstructing the destroyed parts). Along the channel there are the authentic gates leading into the Old Town of Gdańsk. The old crane of 1444, flanked by two historical towers, is a specific construction of Hansa trade. The crane has a lifting capacity of 4 tons, thus belonging to the most powerful cranes of its epoch.



The Hanseatic dock at the port of Gdańsk as it is today.

As a Hanseatic city, Gdańsk was fortified with walls built in 1343 AD, around moats that had been formed as early as 1271 AD.

Today, only a handful of medieval fortifications along the canal and the Coal Square (Targ Weglowy), including the old towers and bastions of the city's medieval defenders, have survived.

The use of bricks, which generally characterize the morphological expression of Hanseatic architecture, was first introduced by the King of Denmark, Valdemar I, (1157-1182) when he decided to strengthen it in 1160 AD, a section of about 3,5 km of the defensive fortification (Danewerk), which protected the southern borders of his territory. This traditional source of construction from Italy and Byzantium acquired a heavier and more solid form in Denmark, a fact that is particularly well documented by the brick-built churches that replaced the pre-built wooden ones in their place (Sorø Abbey, 1162, St Berndt, 1160, Ringsted).

In these constructions decorative ornaments with large bricks were formed, as well as architraves and corbels with patterned motifs respectively. The spread of this technique of brickwork is mainly due to the reconstruction of the monasteries of the area and for this reason the brick was named in the Danish language as '*munkensten*' (i.e., monastery stone). However, the area of medieval Lombardy, in which it had already developed as a manufacturing tradition, is considered to be the most probable source of its typology in the brick art of the Hanseatic League.



The munkensten brickwork typology.

The most notable early Scandinavian example of brickwork architecture is the Vorfrue (c. 1170) in Kalundborg, with its square

tower rising slightly above the four octagonal towers, set on the arms of the Greek-cross plan. Windows are simple and decoration minimal, for the church was also intended as a fortress. The first use of brick in Skåne was at Gumlösa church (1191); it later spread through eastern Sweden and across to Finland. Many Scandinavian cathedrals and secular buildings were built partly or wholly in brick: in Denmark at Århus (begun 1190), Odense (late 13th century), Ribe (Citizens' tower, after 1283), Roskilde (begun 1175) and Ålborg (1430). In Sweden at Strängnäs (begun 1270), Uppsala (c. 1280) and Västerås (second half of the 13th century); and in Finland at Porvoo (1418) and Turku.



The Åarhus Cathedral (1190 A.D.).

In the 13th century, munkensten brickwork was widely employed at monasteries, for example, at Løgum Abbey (c. 1200), which has both round and pointed arches, and for town and village churches. In Norway, however, wood and stone were the main building materials: brick, when used at all, was combined with stone, for example, for the vaults and openings at St Olav's Priory (13th century), Oslo. The dominant style is that of the Hanseatic lands, although without the elaborative tracery sometimes found there.

Shield shapes and other prominent details were occasionally used, for example, at Oppe-Sundby (Frederikssund) and on the churchyard gatehouse at Vendel, although rich effects were sometimes achieved by simpler means, for example, at Hollola (Finland), Karise (from 1261), Ønslev, and at St Marien (1240), Sigtuna.

The main decorative architectural features include moulded corbeltables, blind lancet niches, lancet arches on brick corbels, recessed roundels, crosses and other (often whitewashed), sawtooth courses, and herringbone brickwork. Multicolour was sometimes introduced by banding with stone or the decorative placing of black bricks: diapering was unusual, although at Oppe-Sundby and, minimally, at Roskilde. St Peter's (begun 1300) at Malmö is a fully developed example of Backsteingotik.



St. Peter of Naestved (left) and the builder Torth, a representation in parchment of 1460, Royal Library of Stockholm (right).

Panelling was often restricted to gables, with lancets rising in a series and the gables terminating in crow-steps. Such gables are especially striking when crowning stark brick towers, for example,

at St Peter (1400), Naestved. Monk bond was commonly used. Interiors were sometimes plain with simple piers (square in Turku, cylindrical in Strängnäs), although moulded-brick piers are found in Odense, Roskilde, the Storkyrkan (St Nikolai; begun 1279), Stockholm, and Vitskøl Abbey (ruined).

For the construction of the relatively light vaults, specially moulded bricks were produced. They were mainly applied to the architecture of secular buildings, such as the town hall of Naestved, but also to the construction of burgher houses in the 15th century AD. Secular buildings included also those of Teutonic Orders buildings such as at Malbork, the town halls in Toruń and Gdańsk's residential houses and fortifications. There the walls were ornamented with overburnt bricks, geometrical friezes, and moulded decorations for the windows. The gables had similar decoration, with blind strip windows, fluting and pinnacles.

The main production of bricks for the reconstruction of buildings in the Hanseatic cities came from the swamps of Prussia (modern-day north-eastern Poland). Due to the rich clay soil found there, various types and sizes of brickyards were developed: private, municipal and monastic. Most of them belonged to the commercial exclusivity of the municipal authorities of the Hanseatic cities. In contrast, in the smaller cities of the Union, production was usually carried out by private companies, which also undertook all kinds of building work.

The building work has been usually seasonal and during the winter the construction sites were covered with straw roofs to protect them from rain and frost. Research on the development and dissemination of the technique of bricks in the Hanseatic region has shown that they created a peculiar architectural morphology, which characterizes almost the entire image of the cities of the Hanseatic League. Each brick was considered to be a modular unit, which is easy to combine with similar or other forms, effectively and variously constructing buildings and architectural decorations. Each building was erected with rationality and reckoning, adapting

its structural elements according to the modular organization. For this reason, the style of the compositions required a precise design and a specialized structural art, which to some extent was economically incomparable with the carving and sculpting of individual structural elements in the whole architectural composition.

In the interior of Poland there were smaller bricks (22.5-27x10-12x4-4,6cm), which were used from the middle of the 12th century and by the craftsmen of Western Europe for the construction of arches and built-in masonry. The centre of this production was Mazovia (Warsaw region) which later extended to nearby Silesia (Wroclaw region). The use of this smaller brick building spread during the 13th century and east, beyond the Vistula River, to the shores of the Baltic cities of the Hanseatic League, through large orders from religious and craft production units, such as those of the Benedictine church in Elbląg (Elbing), in 1138.



The City Hall of Sandomierz (1250 A.D.)

The Gothic bricks were traditionally produced as opus mixtum, and were first used in the Prince's chapel of Legnica (before 1240), as

well as sometimes as opus spicatum (as herringbones), as was the case with the construction of the cathedral in Kamién Pomorski (late 12th century). The size of bricks was related to Hanseatic standard units of measurement and changed from the first half of the 13th century (24-26 x 12-13 x 7,5-11 cm) to the second half (27-29 x 12-13,5 x 9,5-11 cm), later decreasing gradually. Finally, the size of bricks of Polish origin gradually improved even more, so that decorative compositions were formed with a glazed surface that had a bronze, yellow or green colour. Improved bricks easily facilitated the construction of geometric cornices under the eaves of the façades, as well as be scored to resemble stone blocks compositions, such as those that characterize the castle of the Teutonic Knights in Toruń (rebuilt late 13th century) and the decoration and portal at the Dominican church of St James (begun 1226) at Sandomierz.

The improved technique of brickwork contributed significantly to the rapid reconstruction and development of the cities of the Hanseatic League in the areas of Central and Eastern Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. In particular, the style of Gothic bond (often with the inclusion of over burnt brick) connection was used with similar decorative shapes that did not differ at all from those of the sandstone bricks of Western Europe.

The Hanseatic origin and exploitation of the burnt brick formed other types of various brick laying methods that are characterized by the widespread Gothic morphology that was widespread during the Middle Ages. However, it is characteristic that in each structural composition there was a limited use of stone elements, which strengthened the frames of the windows and doors, and also shaped the arches of the vaults and the embossed decorations. The limited use of stone as a complementary material was more widespread in the cities of southern Poland, as there was an abundance of limestone and sandstone in this area.

Based on the economic prosperity provided by trade in the Hanseatic League and the morphological standardization of the architecture of its cities, exemplary patterns of buildings were

applied, such as in the St. Marys church in Lübeck and St. Nicholas in Stralsund. However, the most exemplary secular building, which inspired the new architectural ideas in every Hanseatic city, was by its very nature the City Hall. Its position has always been in the marketplace to directly serve the purposes and affairs of both trade and management, through the operation of their supervisory authorities. Most of the town halls in the western part of the Hanseatic League were built of carved stone in imposing forms, such as the town hall of Dortmund, Rostock, Braunschweig and Münster (13th and 14th century).



Representation of the old market square in Braunschweig by the painter Domenico Quaglio (1834).

The town hall (Rathaus, rates, Rådhus) has always been the most decorated building in the Hanseatic city due to the secular and economic power of the bourgeoisie. Apart from being an administrative centre, it was also the reference point for all the activities of the residents. Too many town halls were adorned with an imposing sundial that determined the spatial-temporal order of urban activities.

In the eastern areas of the Hanseatic League, the most imposing town hall in Toruń was built in the 14th century, with a huge

rectangular superstructure accompanied by a tower-like observatory, similar to that of the town halls erected in Gdańsk, Reval (Tallinn) and Wrocław. The most characteristic cross-sectional element of the tower construction is the sundial that bore the engravings of the annual solstice.



The sundial of Gdańsk's Hanseatic Town Hall.

In the centre of the Hanseatic Territory, the municipal mansion of Lübeck, which was the architectural symbol of the commercial association and the centre of the bourgeois capital, made the most of the technique of improved burnt-brickwork in its construction. Originally, around 1220, the town hall consisted of two simple buildings standing side by side, which were later joined by transverse walls and building extensions during the 14th and 15th centuries.



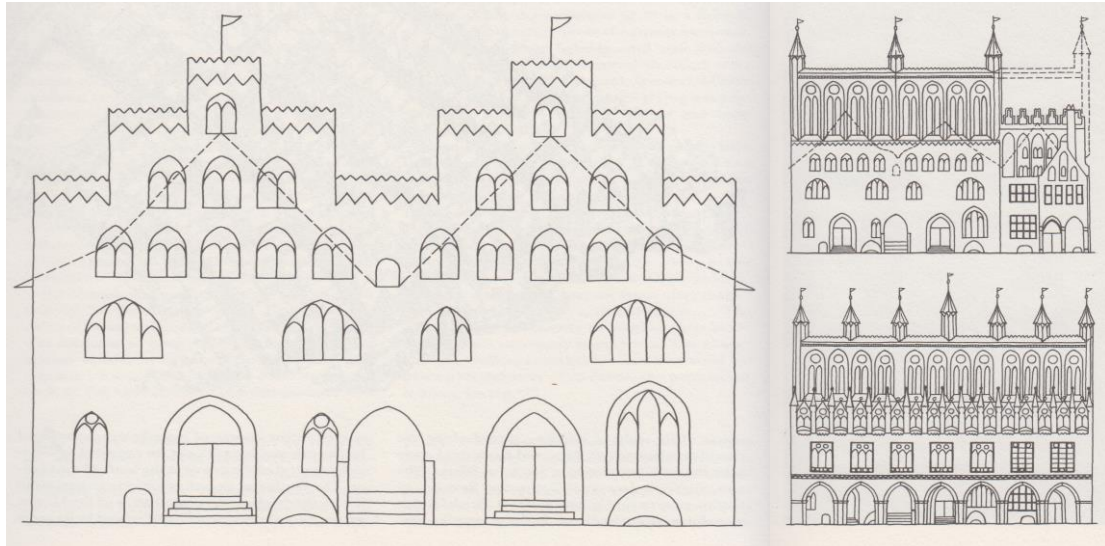
The Town Hall of Lübeck.

Finally, the two buildings acquired a blind façade with the addition of a Gothic masonry, which hid their roofs and gables. The blind façade had linear decorative motifs and rosettes. With this artificial wall, the town hall and the church of the Virgin Mary were formed into a unique architectonic ensemble, which provides visual continuity from the extra-territorial space to the end of the temple.

In the enlarged town hall it was now possible to satisfy even more civil functions than before. In addition to the council hall and the offices of the municipal authority, a reception hall was added, which was used for the sale and weighing of goods, and a cellar, which provided wine and beer to the members of city council and the citizens, according to the circumstances, especially during a pre-election period.

The reshaped appearance of the Lübeck City Hall has become a model for the architectural design of town halls in other Hanseatic cities, such as Rostock and Stralsund. However, in the mid-17th century, the City Hall of Rostock was lined with a baroque façade,

leaving its original form largely hidden. In contrast, the 14th-century decorated exterior masonry of the Stralsund City Hall is a work of art, unrivalled in its overall composition, with a peculiar Hanseatic style and aesthetic value.

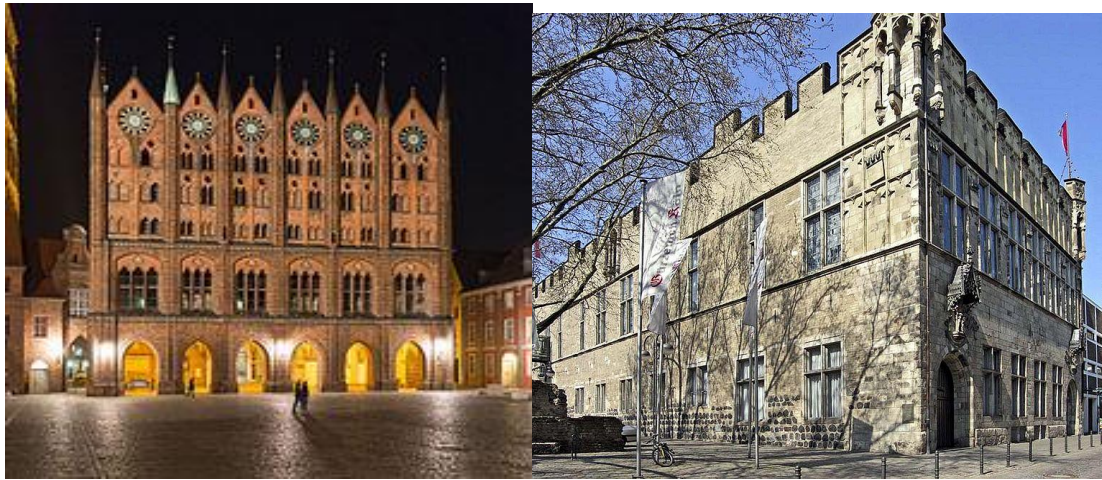


Evolution of the facade of Rostock Town Hall during the Hanseatic era (after A.F. Lorenz).

From the 14th century onwards, the authorities of the cities in the Hanseatic League built other public mansions. In Cologne, because the town hall was no longer adequate, the '*Gürzenich Banquet Hall*' was built to better serve all kinds of festive events in the city. With an internal dimensions of 55 by 22 meters, it must have been the largest assembly hall in Hanseatic Germany. In addition to the city authorities, guilds also erected own buildings, where merchants, as the highest economic agent of everyday life, could exhibit in their wares, in banquet halls, such as the social clubs of Arturhof in Gdańsk, and of Grosse Gilde in Tallinn, or the shipping company in Lübeck.

Other public buildings, for example, were the Gewandhaus in Braunschweig and the Heringhaus in Lüneburg. In many cities, even public butcher's shops, warehouses, salt depots and warehouses of many other goods were erected, which were temporary places for the safe maintenance and disposal of goods. There were also municipal warehouses, such as those built on the

banks of the Trave River in Lübeck, to ensure the supply of food to the population in case of emergency, or during a siege.



The Stralsund Town Hall (left) and the 'Gürzenich Banquet Hall' (right).

An equally interesting operation, undertaken by the municipal authorities of each Hanseatic city, was to provide water to the households of their inhabitants. This was done by constructing public wells or pumps in the squares and main streets, which yielded satisfactory and sufficient quantities to the entire population. Often the water was only suitable for consumption after a strong boil. Some pipelines also carried water to public baths, as evidenced by the name of Baderstrasse in Graveswald, or Wasserstrasse in Rostock, which had water supply along their entire length.

Ecclesiastical and fortified towers, in addition to being the epitome of surveillance for the safety of cities, were also important indicators for navigating and the easy approach of mooring merchant ships. For example, the 126-meter-high St. Peter's bell tower in Rostock was visible when there was sunshine from about 30 nautical miles away. Also equally visible were the dunes and the artificial elevations on the shores that facilitated coastal navigation. However, the entrances to the ports did not take long to acquire towering lighthouses at the beginning of the 14th century, which illuminated every type of mooring at night. This is documented by written sources stating that there was a lighthouse in the city of

Hiddensee in 1306, a high-light keeper (*Custos lucernae*) at Travemünde, at the entrance to the Lübeck's port in 1316, and a lighthouse at Warnemünde outside of Rostock around 1348. Later, barrels fastened by chains to heavy rocks were used to mark the shipping channels, in order to protect the approaching boats from any side impact, at their entrance to a port.



The southern entrance in the fortification of Tallinn (14 century A.D.)

The fortifications of each city of the Hanseatic League were public works, in the literal sense of the word, because they represented the expression of the desire of their inhabitants for independence, and at the same time, an achievement of engineering technology. Most of them were preceded by a defensive stone wall that included a ditch, a stronghold, and a fence. The oldest such fortifications surrounding the cities are considered to be those built in Soest and Bremen in the 11th century.

Today, the best-preserved fortification from the Hanseatic League era is in the town of Visby on the island of Gotland, with a total length of about three kilometers and thirty-eight observatories, as well as Tallinn's 13th-century perimeter fortification, which includes many turrets. In general, the fortifications were six to eight meters high, with walls two to three meters thick, which often

followed a complex system of alternation and enclosure, in order to effectively protect the inhabitants from any kind of enemy invasions and attacks.

The gates of fortified cities were constructed in such a way as to match the outline and shape of the walls, trenches and ramparts. The entrance tower was projected over the fortification wall, internally covering the entrance to the city, which was connected to the exterior with a movable bridge that stretched across the surrounding moat to ensure access and interruption in case external attack. Such exterior gates are still found in Neubrandenburg today, built in the 15th century and bearing many decorative elements, such as gothic patterns and rosettes, which testify to the remarkable artistic choices of their construction at the time.

In some cases there were wooden flat corridors through the walls that made it possible for anyone to walk around the inner city of Hanseatic City, such as Stralsund and Mühlhausen. In particular, special posts were built (the *Wiekhäuser*, from the word in the lower German *wiken* which means 'to seek refuge'), which were integrated semi-circular or rectangular protections of the city walls, from which the civilian troops could be defended more effectively. The connection between the gates and the defensive towers was a rule in the construction of the fortified masonry in the Hanseatic cities. For example, even the fortification of Stralsund, which was in a favourable position because it is surrounded by straits and lakes, as if it were an island, felt the need to acquire a high wall with towers, protective buildings and massive ramparts at the city's ten entrances.

The gate tower, originally constructed for purpose of defence alone, developed from the 15th century increasingly into an impressive showpiece for the community within, making some of the most beautiful specimens of contemporary brick architecture out of the Hanseatic town gates. The most common type is the tall, slender gate tower over a high-shouldered arch, its ornate forms and blind windows smothering the walls from base to crown. Examples are

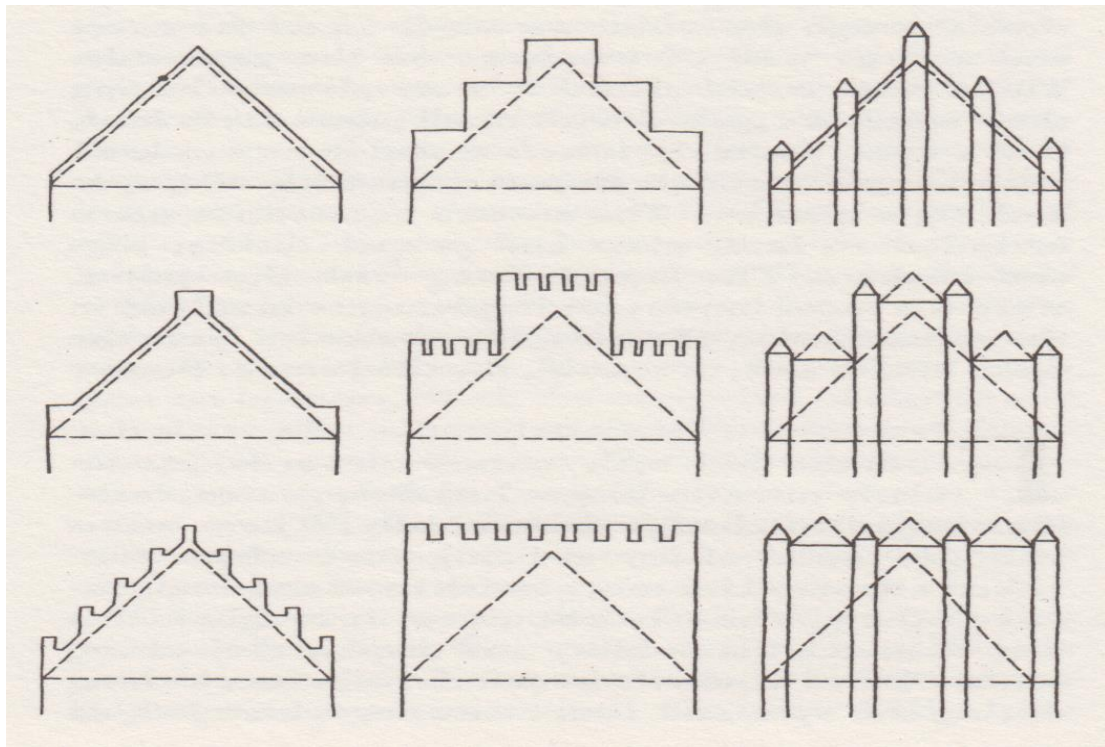
the Kröpeliner Tor in Rostock or the richly adorned High Gothic gable tower over the Stargarder Tor in Neubrandenburg. Other types of gate tower emerged from the 15th century onwards, including the double tower which we find above the massive Holstentor in Lübeck.



The central gate of the Hanseatic city of Neubrandenburg. (*Stargarder Tor*).

All types of tower-built gates and fortified towers acquired imposing forms, which were turned into a demonstration mask of the contained bourgeois economic prosperity, which constitutes an admirable architectural heritage in all the areas of the Hanseatic League.

The burghers' dwelling was the most important after the market square, the municipal mansion and the cathedral, a key unit of the urban planning organization of every Hanseatic city. Its architectural form in the Baltic region was an evolution of the Lower Saxony farmhouse, with a large entrance, a main hall covering the entire ground floor, and a high pitched roof. The first houses were single-storey and half-built of wooden elements. Later, in the 14th and 15th centuries, the wealthiest merchants began building two-story stone houses, including an attic as a storeroom for their wares.

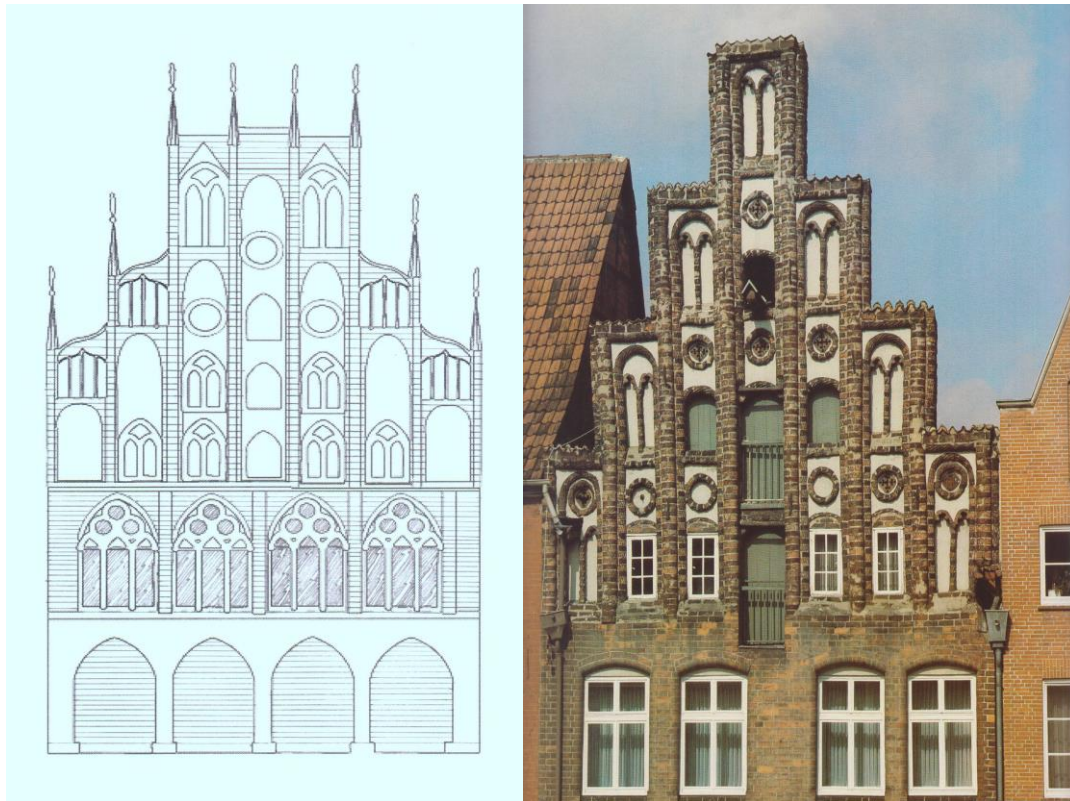


Evolution of gables on the North German burgher house, Left: triangular gable with staggered eaves and ridge and buttress pinnacles. Centre: corbie gable crowned with merlons. Right: pinnacled gable (after P. Suhr).

However, the most common form that prevailed in the Baltic cities was the narrow and gabled house. Its architectural form remained unchanged for several centuries, despite of the fact that their Gothic façade merged the later Renaissance and Baroque rhythms. As a bourgeois property, the house always inspired a need for majestic decoration, where the single triangular gable, that crowned a simple row of small window, gave way to a plethora of post-Gothic architectural decoration with corbie steps, buttresses and blind windows breaking the large surface into patterns, set with harmoniously placed façade windows.

The most widespread gable form was the corbie coping which traced the path of the roof, and this was extended in the course of time from a single hip to two or three, depending on the width of the house. There were some specifically local trends, such as the merlon gable in Rostock, which lent the crowstep outline the protective air of a battlement, or the pinnacle buttress, where the supports intersected with the triangle. An abundance of blind

windows, most culminating in a pointed arch, climbed from each storey base to the narrower base above.

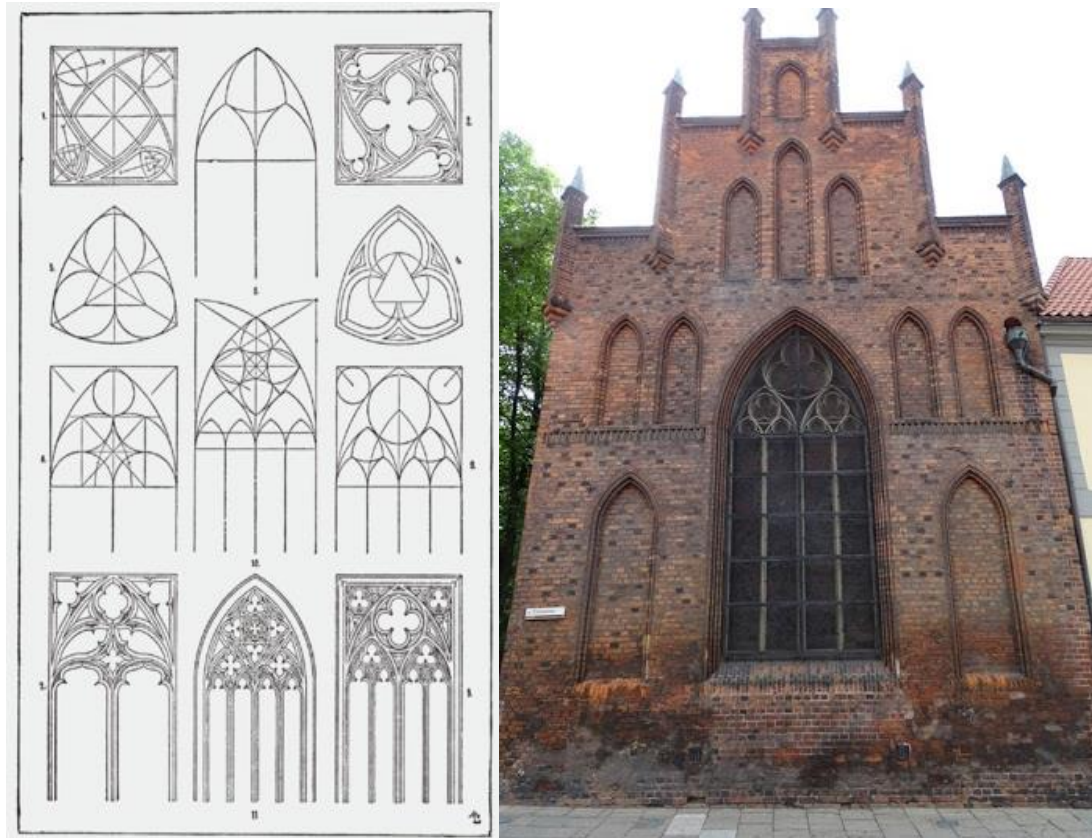


Gable house typology in Hanseatic towns.

The abundance of blind windows, most of them with pointed arches, developed gradually on each floor base, narrowing upwards. At the end of the 14th century, the façades of the gables underwent a certain modification, due to the addition of a second floor to the houses, resulting in the formation of a second row of openings which raised the position of the blind windows and the skylights a scale in the whole composition.

The independence and luxury of the façade in the burghers' houses was proportional to that of the public buildings, because it expressed the spirit of the greatness of the ruling class and its institutions in the public space. The bourgeoisie of the Hanseatic League wanted the maximum domestic operation of their social and economic activities, which were expressed outwardly by the awe caused by the imposing and imitation of the fortifications on the façades of their houses, to about the same degree as the buildings of

secular and religious power. The placement of medals and emblematic rosettes in the blind openings, combined with the tower-like ends, constituted a representative image of the owner's arrogant face for his social position in the ruling class.



Morphological types of lobed formation of the pointed upper area of the openings of the buildings during the Hanseatic era.

The elevated ground floor inside the usual burgher residence included a huge and unique room, the hall. This was a workplace, living room and kitchen, that is, all in one. The floor was made of pressed clay, or it was covered with stone. The smoke rose from the hearth to the attic and lifted through openings in the rooftops, or through chimneys carrying grills. The entrance was higher than the road so that the carriages, and especially the commercial ones, could more easily load their cargo into the hall. The goods were lifted through the pulley that was deliberately placed in a loft of the attic on the façade of the building. In one corner at the back was a spiral staircase, which led to the floor that was used for sleeping. There, the wooden floor was simply hung from the beams of the attic

supported by uprights. All the other interiors, without exception, were part of the closed-door service of the commercial activity and only the exterior decorative appearance of the building characterized it as an urban residence.



The typology of the urban Hanseatic residence in still preserved buildings: the residence in Perkaounas (left) and the house of N. Copernicus in Toruń (right).

The kitchen was later separated from the main hall, and rooms were built on either side of the entrance, one as a commercial office and the other as a living room or parlour. A series of sleeping rooms were also formed on the upper floor. Above it, the attic space was filled with lofts that were accessible through a hatch. As housing needs became more demanding, a wing was added on the side of the courtyard where the maids and servants lived, or even elderly family members who had retired from active commercial or secular life. The courtyard at the back of the house usually included a pigsty, coop or even a stable for horses or cows. If there was enough land in the yard, fruit trees, herbs and flowers were also cultivated.

Even the most luxurious homes were moderately equipped. The interior walls were whitewashed everywhere and the floors were paved with pressed clay or stone. The leather and fabric upholstery

of the interior walls was probably the only decoration that existed. Household utensils and clothes were kept in wood-carved ornate chests and cupboards. The tables, chairs and benches were made with a simple connection and brought various gothic or Saxon-style decorations. During the day the great bedstead often remained concealed behind closed cupboard doors. The housewife felt proud to have luxurious feather pillows and bedding. The interiors of the best-equipped homes were illuminated with manuals, which carried candles that cost their users expensively. The poor classes used either oil lamps or pine sticks. During the day the rooms were illuminated through the windows facing the street and the corresponding larger ones facing the inner courtyard.

Those who prosperous burghers could have windows with square or rectangular boxes, which were distributed by steel bars, while the rest poorer citizens sealed their own with simple wooden shutters, or with asphalt paper and pork membranes. Homemade utensils included glassware, jugs and cups made of glass or tin. Later, cutlery and serving dishes were added. The main interiors were heated by an open hearth and in some cases by a ceramic hearth. The poorest households used coal stove or the heat produced by the kitchen oven. In some cases, when a successful merchant was able to add a 'better room' to his household, he used it to store jewellery and expensive tableware, linen and clothes in beautifully ornate trunks and cupboards. This place had to be adjacent to the hall, where it offered a decent atmosphere for the reception of visitors and the holding of family celebrations.

At the end of the 14th and 15th centuries, the cities of the Hanseatic League could not save the burghers' houses with their Gothic façades, because they were neighbouring with the poorer houses of wood and clay that were destroyed by fires. In large parts of the city, straw roofs and wooden frames in the clay walls of the city's artisans and workers' homes posed a constant threat due to the use of hearths to make products and heat during the difficult winter months. Even in the 17th century the usual form of such dwellings

can only be recorded from the existing descriptions, because such buildings are not preserved today. City archives in the Hanseatic League mention that their shape was usually a *'Bude'*, a gable-free hut built of clay in wooden frames with cross-reinforcements that were visible on the front façade.



The residence of the 'old Swede' (Alter Schwede) in Wismar (c. 1380).

The poorest classes found shelter mainly in simple wooden huts, or in the basements of upper-class dwellings, if they belonged to their service personnel. In the year 1475, 577 houses, 1478 huts and inhabited basements were registered in the city of Wismar. Also in Rostock before the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) there were 149 large gabled houses, 1296 huts, 119 hut basements, 1029 house basements, 342 other cellars and 75 transverse houses (without

frontage on the street). The magnificent gable houses and the idealized image of the Hanseatic city described by Vike Schorler in his scroll certainly expose the characteristic atmosphere of architectural morphology and the artistic skills of the manufacturers, but it should not be overlooked that the overwhelming majority of the community lived in miserable conditions, far beyond the ruling bourgeoisie's prosperity, which relied on its commercial power through conventions and protective monopolies.

Living conditions for the urban lower classes were extremely difficult, both economically and environmentally. Those of them who had occasional jobs lived in rented huts and cellars. The huts were usually one-story dwellings with an interior, which simply had a living room, a bedroom and a small storage space. Such dwellings were usually erected on the side-streets, alleyways and passages or by the town walls. The annual rent for them covered almost the maximum part of the workers' expense account, and when the price exceeded their financial means as an alternative there were only the rented accommodation in primitive wooden huts or in the dark basements of brick-built or stone-built houses.

All available options for the poor were limited to a small room, like a cell, which often had humidity and poor lighting. However, for the hungry there were even worse conditions because the only available option was to live in the mud of shipyards, barns, stables and pig farms, which often caused diseases and epidemics. All available recorded municipal sources in Stralsund and Wismar mention that the lower classes were the vast majority in the Hanseatic cities, which was growing until the last third of the 15th century.

The 16th-century "Chronicles of Pomerania" specifically states that "many thousands of people" in the city of Stralsund were staying in cellars at the time. Given that we need to be careful in general reports, there is nothing ambiguous about them, according to city

records, which show that 224 taxpayers were taxed-registered in Rostock in 1470, 171 in Wismar, a much smaller city, in 1477, and 453 in Stralsund in 1534. In all cases it is presumed that the maids and servants were accommodated in their masters' houses, most of them presumably in interior bedrooms at the side or back of the building, just as the journeymen originally lived with their masters, who were responsible for their board.



Picture of an organ music player (excerpt from the church of the castle in Lübeck, 1410 AD).

The arts in the Hanseatic League

The arts developed in the Hanseatic League were directly linked to their institutional and economic organization. Almost all the artistic achievements of the time served the great architectural works of each city, decorating the huge cathedrals, the impressing town halls and burgher houses. For instance, the bronze casters demonstrated their art with the bronze door of St. Sophia's church in Novgorod (late 12th century) and the countless grave plates, bells and baptismal fonts in the churches of the Baltic. The quality of contemporary stone carving can be seen in such fine statues at the Clever and Foolish Maidens at the western portal of Magdeburg Cathedral and the Roland in Bremen (1404).

Woodcarving flourished, too. One of the finest examples of the church pews carved for seafaring companies dates from the 14th century and can be found in St. Nicholas of Stralsund. These four panels, fashioned for the Novgorod merchants, contain realistic scenes of Hanseatic trading and Russian fur hunters. In the 15th century illumination was used in the Hanseatic region to illustrate the earliest printed books: we have a valuable specimen in the pictorial manuscript of the Hamburg Charter with its colourful miniatures, which was produced in 1497.

It is noteworthy that the entire artistic production in the Hanseatic cities did not come from the crafts, but from the workshops of praiseworthy craftsmen, a practice that distinguished it from the other regions of the European Middle Ages. Art in the Hanseatic League was not exclusively the object of its creators because its patrons were interested in giving it a symbolic value, commensurate with the investment interest of the resources in their other social and economic activities. Although most works of art drew their theme from the Bible and religious customs, sponsorship agreements for sculptures, paintings, furniture carvings and stained glass, required the depiction of themes and people of the time, as secular and religious.

Hanseatic artists enjoyed great popularity throughout the north Europe. This meant that the masters' workshops took more and more orders from customers elsewhere and began adapting their works for export, so that the Hanseatic merchants started treating them as an important trading commodity. Here, too, there was an intricate connection between business acumen, artistic taste and religious views. When the Hansa was at its historical peak, Lübeck and Hamburg were the greatest exporters of art in Europe.

The burgher sponsors, as ardent supporters of the development of the arts, reserved the right to display their persons in artworks as such. As patrons of art also took advantage of the 15th century publishing enlightenment in which Gutenberg's typographic art contributed greatly. With their sponsorships, the Hanseatic League offered valuable copies of popular books featuring crafted miniatures, which graphically and vividly depicted mythical, religious, and historical events, as well as full-featured printed matters, such as the first paper map of Hamburg in 1497.



A miniature from the medieval book 'Liber Procuratorum' (1476).

The expansion of the Hanseatic League's dominance in northern Europe has helped to consolidate artistic creativity along with commercial creativity as a factor in cultural upgrading and enlightenment. This is because the workshops of the craftsmen-masters were receiving more and more orders from the merchant

customers of the cities connected with the Hanseatic League, which contributed to the adaptation of their works as exportable goods, like any other material good. In this way, a complex relationship was also cultivated between the business demon and the themes of artistic creativity.

Initially, the artists remained anonymous for a long time. Only when the guilds were replaced by the art workshops of the craftsmen-masters did the works begin to acquire the name of their creator, just as happened with the marking of the origin of the goods in the context of their distribution in the markets of the Hanseatic League.

One of the earliest masters was Bertram von Minden, who produced most of his work in the late half of the 14th century. Then, in 1410, we find him as an elder of the Hamburg Painter's Guild. His most notable achievement was the high altar in St. Peter's Church, Hamburg. Known as the Grabow Altar, this was one of the finest early panels painted north of the Alps. Scenes from the Life of Christ are depicted in 24 pictures on a gold background and 46 carved figures. They leave no doubt as to the artist's maritime Hamburg origins, nor his formal intentions, as a 'graphic precision in presenting material phenomena, and the gest of action'.

A few years later, there was a Master Francke, working in Hamburg. The well-preserved Thomas Altar erected by the Hanseatic traders in England (St. John's Church in 1424), betrays features of a general European style typical for the period. His later work, *'Der Schmerzensmann'* is one of the most moving emotional pictures symbolizing the eeriness of death. Various artistic influences combine with an attempt at overall realism in Stephan Lochner's *'Darstellung im Tempel'*, dated 1447, in Cologne and the big altar which Konrad von Soest made for Nieder-Wildungen. Soest sets the Nativity in a Westphalian farmhouse. He tries to achieve perspective by slanting the crosses of the two thieves at the Crucifixion in the central panel of his high altar.



The triptych altar of Konrad von Soest.

Hanseatic artistic activity reached its peak in the late 15th century with works commissioned by the Dutch School of Painting and South German artistic traditions in religious subject matter. Artist Hermann Rode created works in Lübeck, located between 1460 and 1504, which prove that he possessed the language of colours through magical and strange artistic results. The representations of the Saints in his works are undoubtedly idealized, with features that are far from the usual religious style. All figures appear to be wandering in the celestial spheres, provoking the attention of the faithful spectators for their eternal presence as the depository guardians and apostles of Divine Grace.

At the same time, the wood carvers of Lübeck were almost as prolific as the painters. Around 1490 Henning von der Heide made his Jerome of Vadstena, an expressive figure of spiritual contemplation. Benedikt Dreyer proved to be a master of composition, as we can see in the carved oak altars of the Holy Spirit Hospital in Lübeck, executed under his influence. Claus Berg also lived and worked in Lübeck. With astounding creative energy, ardent imagination and unrivalled pathos, he adorned his grandiose carved altar in the Franciscan Church at Odense, probably the biggest altar anywhere, with a myriad of figures realistically reflecting the fullness of life.

In other Hanseatic towns, the painter Hinrik Funhof of Hamburg and the wood carver Hans Brüggemann in Schleswig made a special name for themselves. Funhof's altar in St. John of Lüneburg demonstrates the artist's vision of the world as a dark shadow of

reality. Besides, his presented forms are characterized by an accurate embodiment of the Hanseatic style, i.e. with elements measured and simple, subtle, but full of lovable charm and glorious in their appearance without a lack of illusion. The contradictory dimensions of the whole composition betray a strict artistic restraint which characterizes a world that is not receptive to passions and existential anxieties.



A fragment of Claus Berg's wood carving, completed in 1521 (Franciscan Church at Odense).

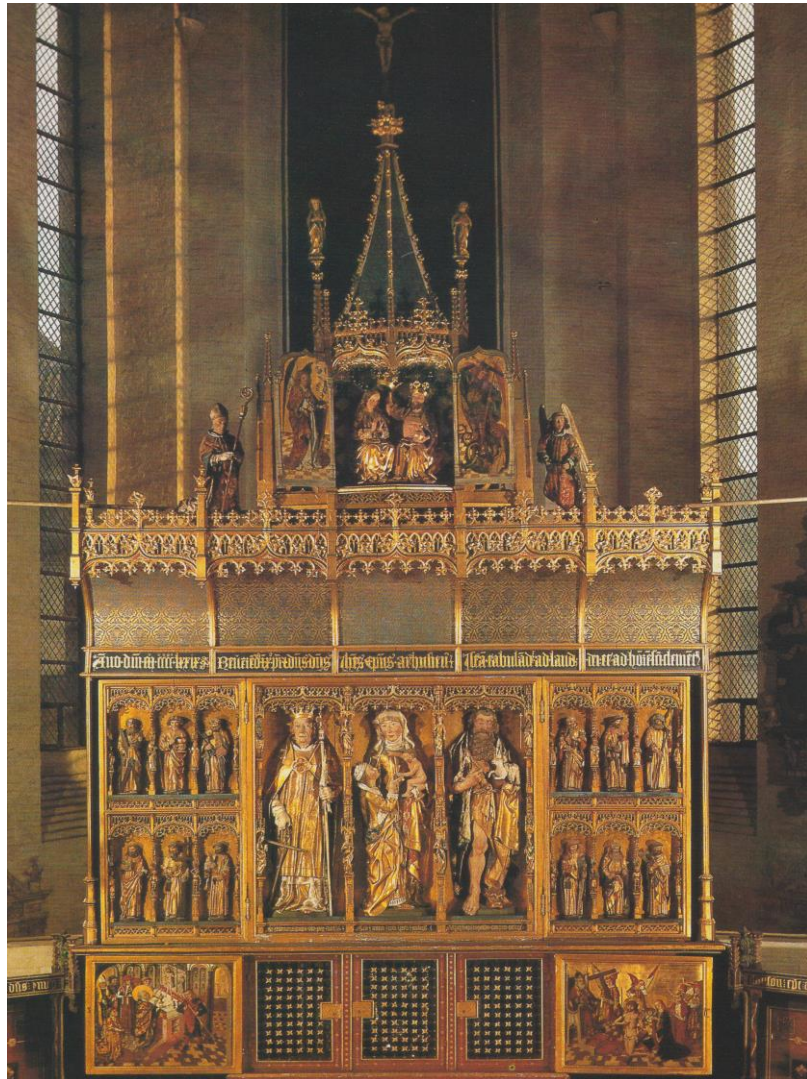
If any artist deserves the epithet 'Hanseatic', at all, it must be the sculptor Bernd Notke (c.1440-1509), who came to Lübeck from Lassahn, near Ratzeburg, and was permitted in 1467 to practice as a 'freemaster', that is, outside of the guild, for which he received a number of commissions. Without parting company with the traditional craft functionality, Notke brought his art out of the strictures of craft, thus becoming a model for the artistic creativity of the Hansa. Above all, his works represent North German society in the Hanseatic town, but in fact his art was known throughout the Baltic region. He gave artistic form to every social estate in the late

Hanseatic period – princes and Church magnates, councillors and merchants, but also men-at-arms and beggars of alms. Their status is indicated by their position within his works and their posture. He integrated the coastal lands where he was bred into his compositions. As an artist and a man of business, he could see far beyond the town walls, proved cosmopolitan in spirit and open to other artistic influences, particularly from the Netherlands.

The way he worked was new, as a master who owed no allegiance to any guild. He could see beyond the city walls, promoting a cosmopolitan spirit, open to other artistic influences, such as the Dutch School of Painting. He imposed a division of labour on the carvers, painters and other craftsmen in his workshop which led to a considerable increase in output. His customers came from various classes and walks of life. They included councillors and merchants in Lübeck, the major of Reval, theologians such the Bishop of Aarhus and secular dignitaries such as the Swedish regent Sten Sture. Notke's works, and those of his school appeared not only in the region around Lübeck, Mecklenburg, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony, but also along the south eastern shores of the Baltic, in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. His fame spread further than that of any other Hanseatic artist. On his travels to the Netherlands, Denmark, Prussia, southern Germany and Italy he was able to broaden his horizons, and he also worked for some time in Stockholm (1483-1497), where he was not only concerned with his art, but also entrusted with the post of Master of the Mint to the Swedish Kingdom.

Notke's earliest works are the Triumphal Cross in Lübeck Cathedral (1477) and the high altar of the cathedral church in Aarhus (1479). Both are a foretaste of Notke's powerful visual skills and the overall pictorial composition is impressive. These qualities culminated in 1483 in the high altar of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Reval (Tallinn). There is a certain coarseness about the human figures. The sculpture of St. George proved Bernt Notke's ability to represent hard dramatic action, capturing the tension of the struggle at the

moment of victory and recalling the permanent threat to their freedom and independence which the Hanseatic burgher had experienced at first hand. This work is one of the outstanding sculptures of the time, a peak of artistic achievement by a Hanseatic artist when the Hansa was already losing its sway.



The altar of the sanctuary in the cathedral of Aarhus (1479).

Taken as a region, Lower Germany never succeeded as a fertile bed for the arts in the sense that southern and western Germany did in the Middle Ages, largely as a result of the political and economic situation; however, a number of individual North German artists produced works which were certainly a match for the paintings and sculptures of the south. Their fame was great around the Baltic and in Scandinavia. Hanseatic art was extremely popular and coveted

in the Baltic countries for over a hundred years. Many cultural ties can be traced back to the bustling export of art in the late Hanseatic period. A number of important works are still in existence, such as Notke's St. George and Berg's altar in Odense, testifying most vividly to the mastery of numerous Hanseatic artists.

But the most representative work on the artistic culture of the Hanseatic League is the portrait of the merchant Georg Giese, who was born in Gdansk in 1497 into a patrician family that came from Cologne. Around 1530, Giese became one of the directors of the trading base of the Hanseatic League in Steelyard, London. His portrait was painted in 1532 by the German painter Hans Holbein the younger (1497-1543), who was in England at the time. Holbein had painted in 1537 the famous Whitehall mural (burnt in the great 1698 fire of Whitehall Palace) of Henry VIII, defiantly standing with legs apart, arms wide under heavily padded shoulders, facing the hostile world as much through his aggressive eyes as through his large wallet.

The portrait of Giese, now in the State Museum of Berlin, provides a wealth of information about the Hanseatic culture. Observing the depiction at first sight, we are impressed by the contrast between the luxury radiated by the Hanseatic merchant and some of the objects around him on one side and the narrowness and poverty of the office space on the other. The man is depicted standing with his back almost resting on a bare wooden partition of rough planks, reflecting the fact that Steelyard's office was a simple room with space and furniture without any particular luxury.

Moreover, on the edge of the table, in a very prominent position, we see a small blown - glass vase with two handles, which can only have come from Venice, and three carnations in it, telling the viewer that the man is engaged to be married. In fact, he married in 1535, after his return to Danzig. Carnations were laden with mythological, religious and sexual significance, which changed with their colour. Pink carnations were a symbol of desire, faithfulness and betrothal.



However, it is worth noting that in fact, Giese married in 1535, after his return to Gdansk. Where these carnations may have come from is a question that is hard to decide. The main carnation production was in the Provence in southern France and the adjacent area in northern Italy, but it is highly improbable that these perishable flowers had come all the way from there, by ship or overland. It is more probable that carnations were available in London in the 1530s, produced by private plant growers who had brought the seeds in from abroad and were able to grow carnations under glass, in their backyard so to speak. Large-scale glasshouses, needed for the mass production of carnations in our climate, did not come into being until the seventeenth century. Around 1650, the carnation was a generally available and popular flower. But it is not very probable that this was also the case a century earlier.

In addition to the Venetian glass vase, a Persian rug is also depicted on the table, which also comes from Venice. It is a fact that such oriental rugs were bought at great cost in Venice, the leading station on the medieval 'Silk Road'. Due to their aesthetic luxury, they were depicted in the 15th century in paintings, always in the context of the portraits of lords or saints. A similar example is the famous icon of the Virgin Mary with her Son and the Angel of the Flemish artist Hans Memling from 1489, where the throne of the Virgin Mary is placed on a Persian carpet. This practice continued even until the end of the 17th century, as a common feature in paintings depicting mainly lords and wealthy officials.

In 1532, the appearance of an oriental rug on a portrait of a Hansa merchant is clearly meant to signify wealth and power. Perilously close to the edge of the table (just like the small glass vase), we see a sober, non-ostentatious pewter ensemble containing coins, two quill-feathers and two red sealing-wax sticks, as well as a pair of scissors, a lone quill and a sealing stamp, though the man is also wearing what looks like a signet ring on his left index finger. The small brown cylinder on the table represents a tinderbox, used for heating the wax. Letters are stuck behind or over wooden laths to the left and to the right. We may take it that all these objects are shown, despite the limited space, to emphasise the man's busy life as a serious merchant who does his job without any unnecessary luxury despite his obvious wealth.

In his hands, the man is holding a letter he is about to open with a penknife, no doubt the knife he used to sharpen his quills. On the outside one reads the following Middle-Low-German text: "*Dem erszamen Jorgen Giszze tu Lunden in Engelant Mynem broder to handen*" (*Into the hands of my brother the honourable Jorgen Giszze in London in England*). Above his head, a notice is wax-sealed to the wooden wall specifying in Latin that this is a portrait of Georg Gysze, Hansa merchant, in the 34th year of his life in the year of the Lord 1532. On the far left, just below the shelf, we read the words, written in white paint "*Nulla sine merore voluptas – G. Gysze*" (*No joy without sorrow –*

G. Gysze), obviously Giese's personal motto. A ledger or accounts book is seen close to his left arm. Keys, a symbol of his authority, are hanging both from his belt and from a nail in the wooden wall at the very right of the painting. The ornate sphere hanging from the shelf on the right is probably a lamp. A pair of scales and what looks like a bell are hanging from the shelf on the left hand side.

The painting thus tells the story of a still relatively young, successful and wealthy businessman, stationed at the Hansa London counter and waiting to get married upon his return home. As such, it illustrates and summarises the Hansa trade at its peak during the middle of the sixteenth century.

Hanseatic art also spread to the Baltic and Scandinavia, while it did not find the same impact in southern and western Germany. In Sweden in particular pioneered Albertus Pictor's (1440-1507) artistic acumen, who had immigrated to Arboga in 1465 from the Immenhausen of Hessen. After eight years, Pictor acquired the workshop of a sick artist in Stockholm, where he edited all the frescoes of the churches around the area of Lake Mälaren. His entire painted themes includes more than thirty pictures, which brilliantly present scenes from the everyday life of the people of the time.



Excerpts from Albertus Pictor's frescoes in the church of Täby.

Knowing that Christianity as a doctrine echoed some of the Vikings' eschatological views, Albertus Pictor painted in the church of Täby the famous image of the crusading knight playing chess with the

Death, aiming for victory and exemption from the inevitable event. Some of his most notable works are the frescoes he painted in the churches of Lund, Bromma and Härkeberga. They feature religious and secular snapshots in an active and informative style, as well as meticulous copies of costumes, musical instruments, and even eyeglasses of the time, which document their clear origins from the metropolises of the Hanseatic League.

The working class of the Hanseatic League

The merchants, as the ruling social class, were not alone in organizing and accumulating wealth in the Hanseatic League. Along with them, the working class, which consisted mainly of craftsmen and artisans, played an equally important role. Thanks to the production of tools and equipment that were necessary in each city, the development of long-distance trade was effectively enhanced, which was the primary factor in the dominance of the Hanseatic League monopoly in the North and Baltic Seas. Also in the context of the flourishing entrepreneurship of trade, a model of social self-organization of workers and artisans was created, which consequently took the form of corporate union.

The first evidence of the establishment of a trade union in handicrafts comes from the heart of the Hanseatic hinterland, where the registration of a guild of saddlers and tanners in 1282 is reported. In 1270 42 crafts were organized in guilds, including the smiths, shoemakers and coopers. The process speeded up in the 14th century: in 1340 there was a guild of kettlecasters, in 1368 a guild of goldsmiths, in 1393 a guild of bakers, and so on. In Wismar, too, we have evidence that craftsmen were forming guilds in the late 13th century, including the butchers, bakers, cobblers, tanners, coppersmiths and goblet makers. As in other Hanseatic towns, the street names show that members of the same craft would live in the same street. In 1260 Wismar had a Böttchergasse (Coopers' Row), in 1273 a Weberstrasse (Weaver Street) and sometime after 1260 a Gerberstrasse (Tanner Street).

The main purpose of the craftsmen fraternities was, as elsewhere, to protect themselves from the professional competition inside and outside the city walls. With their formation, the guilds also provided a basis for perfecting skills, promoting technological progress and enabling the urban handicrafts to blossom. Thanks to a regulated training for apprentices, knowledge and skills could be

passed on to the coming generation. The guilds also adopted social objectives, such as aiding the sick and supporting widows and orphans, and religious aims of a companionable nature, such as gatherings to celebrate religious holidays, guild festivals and feasts.



Miniature illustration of guild emblems (tailors, coopers and flour makers).

The craft guilds were able to improve their economic standing by obtaining monopolies for the craftsmen of the town. One method was to impose a kind of 'closed shop' system, whereby every craftsman had to 'win the guild', that is, become a member. This guaranteed an income for the individual members and checks were kept on the quality of their wares in the interests of the customers. At the same time the guild made sure that goods of this kind were not produced anywhere else within the 'territorial precincts', the countryside which fell within the sphere of influence of their town. Each guild recorded in a statute the work and life that its members had to make, written on parchment and papyrus cylinders. Too many of these statutes have survived to the present day, kept in the guild records that still exist in the former cities of the Hanseatic League.

The common name for the guild was *Zunft*, but in the northern German cities it was called *Amt*, an expression of the 'office' conferred on them by the town council which they were exhorted to carry out for the benefit of the urban community. The council exercised a supervisory function and took care that every craft was adequately represented to meet the population's needs and to contribute to the town's continued prosperity.

Indeed, craftsmen in the Hanseatic towns were numerous and their techniques reputable. Both trade and shipping encouraged the development of barrel making, frameworks and connections, and contributed to a pressing need to increase carpentry. Care was also taken for a satisfactory presence of bakers, brewers and butchers for the needs of feeding the city's inhabitants and the merchant shipping crews.

The flourishing of entrepreneurship allowed the commercial bourgeoisie to improve their living standards and maximize comfort within the walls of the Hanseatic city. By importing gaily coloured fabrics from England and Flanders, clothes were sewn according to the aesthetic preferences of the time. The guilds also imported Russian and Livonian furs and leathers for sewing hats and coats, English tin for the production of pots, cups and kettles, and Russian candles for the lighting of temples and dwellings. However, in many cities of the Hanseatic League, and especially in their regions, handicrafts were mainly local, with items produced for the daily and more specialized needs of the inhabitants, to the same extent as the required means and objects of trade and shipping.

A statistical survey of the number and influence of the crafts informs us that in 1284 Stralsund could already boast over 60 crafts, while 77 independent trades were plied in Rostock by 1290. In the city of Gdańsk, the Danzig Tax Roll of the year 1416 reveals that there were 1,081 craftsmen in the town. Respectively in Lübeck, of which the urban production concerned the ports and other ports of

the Hanseatic League, there were about 1350 independent workers, including 116 butchers, 100 shoemakers, 100 blacksmiths and 64 bakers. Three-quarters of Lübeck's craftsmen worked directly for the sake of the local market, providing bread and other foodstuffs, clothing and equipment and machinery accessories for the needs of the city's residents and the surrounding areas. The rest of the workers were tanners, furriers, wool and linen weavers, manufacturers of slippers, gloves, hats, belts and bags, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, glassmakers, chandlers, and some other smaller specialties.



The Guild assembly hall in York (1449-1459).

The most vital professional category was that of the coopers, because without their products the merchants would not be able to develop exports and exchanges of goods by sea. Most of the goods shipped by trade ships were packaged in barrels that were the right size to carry and store fish, butter, salt or beer. That is why the Hanseatic trade was directly dependent on the production and availability of barrels, a factor for which merchants had to offer the maximum possible payment, because otherwise their profitable business would not be easy. Also with their observations from the delivery they paid special attention to the quality improvement of

the produced wooden containers and barrels. In 1499 the coopers of Wismar began to mark the exported goods, as a symbol of quality origin and assurance, faithfully following the order of their guild that: *'Also, every brother in the guild and every journeyman shall mark his work with his own stamp.'*

Despite the fact that the guilds' statutes were full of clauses on promoting equal working conditions for their members, there was a clear tendency towards social differentiation, both within the individual professions and among themselves. For example, there have been orders limiting the number of workers without exception: *'henceforth shall no goldsmith keep more servants than two labouring journeymen and also one apprentice'*. There were also rules for Sunday work, which stated that *'nor shall any master or servant work on a Sunday, under penalty of half a pound'*, or even that *'any member who performs poor quality work (wandelbar wreck) will no longer belong to the guild.'*

Inequalities within the guilds have led to internal contradictions. According to Hanseatic city chronicles, the craftsmen and the journeymen fought to reduce working hours and extend the right to a Monday holiday, which they would use to visit public baths, deal with their personal issues and organize their social gatherings. However, the workshops' masters were persuaded to grant Monday as a free day, only if their workers were numerically strong enough to make such a claim.

Unfair competition was fought by the guilds with the requirement that each master should not accept more orders in his workshop than what could be completed in the available time. However, none of such kinds of requirements managed to prevent the continuation of the social deviation and differentiation of the members of the same guild. A master could have better conditions than a colleague for the production of high quality products, and if he had more financial comfort, he could hire craftsmen for extra work, or have more points of sale. In this way, some guild members made more

money, differentiating themselves from their poorer counterparts. In the 14th century, and even more so in the 15th century, this development has been documented by the ownership of houses and land, with the resultant differences in living comforts, the size of workshops and accumulated wealth.

While most of the coastal cities of the Hanseatic League thrived above all, about long-distance trading and the exchange of goods in the Baltic and North Seas, many inland cities developed their economy through the settlement and operation of powerful factories that produced wares for export. For example, salt mines were built in Lüneburg and Halle, while in Erfurt, indigo factories became popular in the League's craft market. In Cologne, the export of textile products was equally advanced and interwoven with the exchange carried out by the coastal Hanseatic cities of northern Germany.

The production of woollen cloth for foreign sale was in full swing by 1350, and the production of coarse wool, linen and mixed fabrics for basically local consumption was also booming. As a consequence, the weavers of Cologne were quick to seize economic and political dominance. Metalworking also prospered quickly in Cologne, particularly in the 15th century. The town was known far and wide for its weaponry, wire and steel. Craftsmen working in non-ferrous metals and in iron increased their influence, while leather products, furs and beer were also important export articles.

In Braunschweig, too, cloth and metal-ware were primarily produced for export. From a decree concerning the town procession and from a constitution, both dated around 1400, we can see that other guilds, deemed worthy of election to the town council, included butchers, tanners, shoemakers, bakers, kettle-makers and smiths. Compared with their counterparts in most of the coastal towns at this time, the craft guilds inland wielded considerably more economic power, which meant that important occupations were rewarded with greater social status. After a series of social

struggles in the towns, the masters of the most influential guilds were considered eligible to stand for the council.



Engraving of 1450 depicting the patron of goldsmiths St. Eligius in his workshop with the apprentices (by master of Balaam, Amsterdam State Museum).

The masters were gradually granted the full rights of their guild. They owned a workshop and the necessary tools; the goods produced within their workshop were theirs to sell, and the profit accrued to them. The master usually had one or two journeymen working in his workshop and living in his house. These were not permitted to work on their own account. As journeymen, they belonged to the guild, but were not accorded full rights.

In general, if a journeyman wanted to earn the master's laurels, he had to undergo a solemn ceremony applying for admission to the office before the entire guild. The *'eschung'* took place during the morning meeting, maybe once, maybe twice. The applicant had to meet further conditions to test his bearing and the quality of his work. One illustration of this is provided by the *'Scroll of the buntmaker'*, later known as *'bundfutterer'*, who processed skins of all kinds, primarily those of squirrels.

The applicant would be given a trial period to run and asked to produce a piece of work to prove that he was capable of a master's skills. He also had to show that he possessed a certain minimum wealth. In many cases he was obliged to donate money for church candles, for a suit of armour to help defend the town, or for the master's food and beer, as well as a reference testifying that his work had been good and his conduct honourable. Again and again we find the demand that an aspiring master have been born in wedlock, and that he should marry *'a woman or maiden of unblemished reputation'*. In the Wendish towns, an honest birth also implicitly or explicitly entailed being born a freeman of German pedigree.

Initially, each journeyman went through a transitional phase as a working slave to his master, deepening the knowledge and skills he had acquired as an apprentice, and then after a while, he applied to become a master in his own right. Many of guild scroll indicate that a journeyman could not marry. He lived in his master's house and ate at his table. Indeed, the master was often like a guardian to the journeyman, and in one scroll we read: that is the duty of a Christian housefather, or master, to exhort his journeymen: *'to hear God's word every four days, and should one of them behave unseemly or in an unchristian manner, his master shall no longer be bound to lay him a place at the table'*.

The master had to keep an eye on the moral conduct of his journeyman and punish unseemly behaviour, such as lounging about town, causing disturbance on the streets, gambling for money and drinking excessive alcohol, by extracting fines. He was later required to write a special letter, the *'denstbreve'*, which contained the file of the work and conduct of each of his journeymen, especially once tended to spend their service in different towns of the Hanseatic League.



Pictures of craftsmen from Master Stefan's book *'Dat Schakspel'* (15th century AD).

As the guilds of various Hanseatic towns had drawn up agreements on how to treat their journeymen, it was almost not possible for them to evade the provisions. In 1494, for example, the small coopers and goblet makers of five towns – Hamburg, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock and Stralsund- took this precautionary measure: *'if a wandering journeyman comes to one of the five towns, no master shall engage him for less than six-month'*. So the journeymen had to enter service for at least six months, and they were not allowed to choose their workplace themselves. If one of them ran off or asked for more money, than the guild had specified, no master in the five towns would take him in.

The working day was long, lasting usually from daybreak to dusk. The red-brass founders of Lübeck, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar, Magdeburg, Bremen and other Hanseatic towns therefore instructed the journeymen: *'to be at their master's work at four o' clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening, except on Thursdays and Saturdays, when they shall finish work at six o'clock...and every quarter a free Monday.'*

For a journeyman, the transition from apprenticeship to the position of the craftsman was rare. If he wanted to earn his living, he was often obliged to work for wages, whereas the status of master practically became hereditary in course of time. The journeymen were organized, for they had formed fraternities, originally to enable them to meet their religious needs in common and to care for the sick and the poor, and eventually these associations assumed a socioeconomic function, stipulating working hours and wages, allocating work and signing labour contracts, but they were nevertheless powerless to stem this tide.

The masters and journeymen passed on their knowledge and skills to the guild apprentices. It was the elders who arranged for their admission to the guild as 'protected' members. The conditions for this concerned family origin and payment of levies: *"If a young man wants to learn our profession, he must have been born honest and has offered the guild half a barrel of beer."*

An apprenticeship usually lasted three years, sometimes four, as with the smiths of Wismar. A probationary period preceded the actual apprenticeship, and the new apprentice was formally entered in the guild's books in the presence of the elders. The goldsmiths of Rostock have left us a scroll in rhyme which describes the daily life of a 16th-century apprentice: *'pray mornings and evenings to the Lord God that you will see your time profitably and without pain. Then, with faithful diligence obey your master's word; follow his counsel and honest teaching: that will bring you praise and honour...When you are woken early do not lie long abed: rise nimbly and hurry to the shop.... If after one year of faithful diligence your master puts you at the workbench, then bear in mind this advice... hear this: the apprentice's law is to do all in the time set by his master and the journeyman and never to complain of their prohibitions.'*

Sometimes the arguments were as 'forceful' as in the poem on the scroll for barber's apprentices: *'And do everything with a good will, for that you will quell many an anger. If you grumble and answer back*

someone ought to sock you in the jaw. If your master and journeyman tell you something do it industriously, nimbly and fast; they will hit you far harder if you spite them and say: I know I should not do it, for it is not written in the scroll. If everything was written in the scroll there'd be no parchment or paper left.'

In other words the apprentice had to do whatever the master and journeyman wanted, both in the workshop and outside, without complaint. His actual training began – with the goldsmiths of Rostock – after the first year was over. Any misdemeanour on the part of the apprentice was severely punished. If he ran away from his master during his apprenticeship, no other master would take him in. Once he had finally completed his training, he was 'released' and could take a position as a journeyman.

Apart from producing wares for the people of the town and for the merchants' trade, the guilds had also early-born syndicate matters. The fight for shorter working hours raged above all, around the Monday off. The journeymen used this free day to visit the baths, deal with personal matters and hold meetings of their own. But the masters could only be persuaded to grant the Monday if their journeymen were numerically strong to put up a united front.

The social differentiation taking place within the craftsmen's community during the 14th and particularly 15th centuries also created a greater rift between the masters and the journeymen. Firstly, a more advanced production technology meant that any journeymen aspiring to the status of master needed to find adequate money to realize their plans, for instance by equipping a workshop of their own. Secondly, the growth in population had slowed down almost to a halt in many towns, so that there was a little rise in the need for the craftsmen's products. The guilds therefore limited the number of masters in order to guarantee 'bread' for all their members. For many a journeyman, then, the prospect of ever becoming a master looked slender, particularly since the sons and sons-in-law of the existing masters had the advantage. But any who

practiced their trade outside the guild, working in secret on their own behalf, were rooted out and subjected to severe penalties.

Illegal work of this kind was known as *'böhnbaserei'*: *'if a journeyman resorts to illegal work, he shall henceforth be considered unworthy of the guild. If a master or a journeyman has a contract or conducts business with anyone working illegally, he shall pay two guilders to the council and one guilder to the guild.'*

Of course, the merchants and craftsmen of the Hanseatic League could not have gone about their business, nor could their towns have functioned without those sections of the population who lived right beside and at the bottom of the trading activities. The composition of the other classes in the Hanseatic was highly varied, and can be broken down into three main categories:

1. All working people who did not own any means of production and who found work in the town in other people's employ, such as day labourers, sailors and maids and servants in the houses of merchants, masters and priests.
2. Those who did not work, such as paupers, the sick and the beggars usually referred to in the source material as the town poor.
3. All people of humanistic services and every kind of immaterial production as medical doctors and druggists, priests and friars, academicians and authors, poets and musicians.

Most members of these subsidiary and lower classes had no rights as burghers. They were *'inwanere'* (residents), but not *'borgere'* (burghers) of the town, and as such they could claim no political rights and could not even bear witness before the town court. Many of those in work had close connections with trade. Many were porters, some of them organized in corporations similar to the craft guilds. These were indispensable in the harbours and warehouses and while ships were being loaded and unloaded, and there was a

pressing need for them, too, in the town army and fire brigade and other services. The sources mention packers, carters, coalmen, wine and beer sellers. Estimates suggest that they numbered at least 500 in Lübeck at the end of the 14th century.

In Cologne they seem to have been numerous, for we have evidence of many auxiliary workers backing up the commercial activity in the markets, merchants' shops and harbours, hauling goods, weighing and measuring, operating cranes and shifting coals, or hiring themselves out to work on the river boats. The lower classes in the sea ports included the sailors, and there must be many of them. Given that Lübeck had a merchant fleet of about 120 ships around 1400, it is assumed that 500 to 600 sailors lived in Lübeck itself, not to mention those who came from other towns.

There were also considerable numbers of *'arbeydeslude'* (*day labourers*) in the towns, working as general handymen, quarrying, shifting earth and draining land. Another group were the domestic employees working in the homes of the upper and middle classes. An important burgher often had up to five servants, while less rich families frequently had a maid or servant or two for the chores. That means that those in service must have been as numerous, if not more so, than the heads of households among the upper and middle strata of the town population.

Besides, there were the masters who were no match for their rivals. They fell into debt, lost some of their independence and drew closer in status to the lower classes. In the 15th century, many guilds closed their doors, denying many a journeyman the opportunity to become a master of his craft and forcing him instead to take waged employment in a workshop.

Plebeian incomes doubtless varied considerably from case to case, with sailors earning rather better money than porters and day labourers, but compared with prices this income hovered about the poverty level. The Rostock Treasury accounts show:

Year	Daily wage	Work	Year	Item	Price
1427/28	2 shillings	Odd-jobbing	1423	1 bushel flour	3 shillings 8 dinars
1432	2 shillings 6 dinars	Carting sand	1433/34	1 side of bacon	20 shillings
1434/35	3 shillings	Shifting earth	1427/28	1 cubit cloth	15 shillings
			1429/30	1 pair of shoes	8 shillings

The Lübeck Treasury accounts offer us further insight into incomes and the cost of living at the time. A day labourer, for example, to go by the rates shown above, would earn 24, 30 or 36 pfennigs a day for himself and his entire family, and from this he had to meet the costs of food, shelter and heating. This, however, indicates that a number of day labourers in the towns could not afford basic subsistence for themselves and their families, even during the periods when they found work. With earnings like this, many members of the lower classes were unable to pay the 'schuss', or town tax, especially since their personal wealth was extremely small and did not extend beyond simple clothing and essential household utensils. Only in exceptional cases have they left wills for us to examine. The lower classes had to dress in a manner clearly distinguishable from the fashion among propertied burghers: *'The common man, brewer's men and others in service shall wear neither velvet nor silk, but linen and wool, without trimmings.'*

Women were required to be particularly straightforward in their dress. The servant girls of Stralsund were not permitted to wear jackets, and maids and servants in Hamburg were forbidden to attend church in pearls or golden studs, but only black braid trimmings. Nor might they wear belts adorned with buckles. Women with their own income were ranked equal to serving girls as far as clothes were concerned. The Hamburg decree on clothing lumps together: *'maids, nannies, seamstresses and other women of the common folk in service or earning their living by their own hand.'*

The Hansa towns also laid down special rules for *'dienstbuden und die gemeine meiste hupe'* (servants and the great common rabble) who had something to celebrate, notably a wedding. They were prescribed *'arme lude kost'*, or poor man's food, for: *'those who live from alms, and others without wealth, who earn their bread outside a craft by manual labour or from daily wage, belong to the common rabble, such as sailors, porters, day labourers and such like.'*

There was a limit on the number of guests members of the lower classes were allowed to invite to their festivities, and in many cases the composition of the company was specified. Stralsund decreed in 1570: *'with the exception of bride and groom, their parents, sisters and brothers, and clergy, there shall be no more than 24 people at the servant's wedding, including 6 maidens, 8 women, 10 men.'*

There were limits to the quantity of food served, and the lower classes were not permitted to draw wine. Further decrees forbade the presence of paupers, beggars and riff-raff, who would otherwise turn up to fill their stomachs. It was not rare for social status to prevent maids, servants and journeymen from marrying, especially as their masters had to supply permission for the wedding. Among some it was customary to make common-law marriages, without the blessing of the Church, as we can see from court cases, especially concerning journeymen.

Poverty in the cities of the Hanseatic League was widespread despite the economic prosperity offered by maritime and commercial activity. In addition to the physically weak and the weak, there were many who could not find work within the city limits. All of them relied on alms and lived marginalized by the bourgeoisie and the unions. The Church urged merchants and craftsmen to display philanthropy, especially with the drafting of their will in which, in addition to bequests, they had to include vital gifts for the poor, such as food and drink, clothing and footwear, or even wood for heating.

The main motive for this kind of charity was the "Salvation of the Soul" imposed by the clergy as a commission for the remission of sins, in exchange for the avoidance of "Divine punishment". Apparently, the wills of the bourgeoisie of the time also mention donations which, in addition to pity for all those who needed help, also aimed at strengthening the public position of the descendants and the backwardness of their home.



'Feeding the poor'. Excerpt from a woodcut in the book '*Goldenes Legendenbuch*' (1488, Library of Jena University)

The poor and sick among the towns' residents were offered refuge in the hospices originally set up by the Church and eventually run by the town. These could be found in all the larger Hansa communities, often bearing the name Hospital of the Holy Spirit and dating from the 13th century. As in Wismar, the financial basis for the work of the hospice in caring for a certain number of paupers was created not only by alms and bequests, but also by economic activity (involvement in town trade, the ownership of farms and mills and contributions from burghers, known as '*pröwner*', who bought themselves into the hospice venture. Special homes for the sick were soon opened, taking in lepers or people with other infectious diseases.

In 1318 the St. Jürgens House was founded in Greifswald for sick paupers. St. Jürge was held to be the patron saint of lepers. If a leper was not accepted into a hospice he was forced to beg alms by holding rods from the window of a sealed hut. If he took to the

street, he had to carry a rattle at all times, partly to warn passers-by of the danger, and partly to indicate that they should lay their donations down a little further off. Lepers sometimes wore special clothes as a mark of their illness.

There were poorhouses in the Hanseatic towns, primarily for travelling paupers from other parts. They varied enormously in character and designation. Lübeck had 14 of them in all. There were other establishments to deal with the mentally sick, whose condition was pitiful. They were held captive in cages, and there was no medical treatment available. In fact, it seems that they were not always in the best of care. Those who were taken into poorhouses and hospices were relieved of their worst suffering, but the politics of 'charity' did not alter the conditions.

There were many unable to earn their living who lounged around the streets and alleyways, besieging the churches and houses to arouse attention and pity and beg for alms. Begging became the key to survival, not only for the sick and disabled, but also for those who found no access to any occupation. Their numbers swelled to such an extent that in 1525, when all beggars of Stralsund were to be given a token equivalent to a begging licence, the council opened the largest covered premises in the town, St. Nicholas' Church, for the purpose. Decrees on begging were issued so that the increase in the number of beggars should not provide an excuse for roguery. The '*Prachervoogt*' of Lübeck, a kind of beggars' steward, had to warrant in 1527 that beggars request their alms properly and sit in the churchyard and that no beggars from elsewhere take up residence in the town.

A fair proportion of the town poor bore the stigma of dishonesty. This clung above all to work which involved dirt, uncleanness, crime and immorality, and included gravediggers, knackers, executioners, bailiffs, street sweepers and gutter cleaners, wood and field watchmen, swineherds and shepherds, but also tinkers, linen weavers, bath keepers, barbers, itinerants, musicians and millers.

In addition to the poor, migrants from the Wendish regions were disrespected, for whom access to decent work was prohibited. After all, if any of the city's natives were considered dishonest or dishonoured, their children had no right to practice a profession or art, nor could they apply to become citizens with rights. In this way, the moral principles established by the ruling class in the cities of the Hanseatic League functioned as a tool for social evaluation and discrimination, with the aim of maintaining all the economic and political benefits that ensured wealth.



A miniature of a book from 1490 depicting the status of begging in the Middle Ages.

The Hanseatic League of Faith and Knowledge

People of faith and knowledge also took part in the organization and development of the Hanseatic League. Although not directly related to commercial and labour activities, they were an important factor in trying to establish and consolidate the cultural institutions of the Hanseatic League in Northern Europe. All the clergy and the educated who lived alongside with the world of production and commerce did not form a homogeneous social group, because there were class differences between them. At the top of the social structure was the religious despotism of bishops and abbots, who, through the donations of merchants, had significant wealth, also taking advantage of all kinds of work of the monks and the lower clergy. The pastors and monks usually lived on meagre means, which were imposed on them through ascetic conduct and ecclesiastical spiritual duties. For this reason, it was not uncommon for them to deceive the upper hierarchy in order to financially improve their poor lives, which often led to severe penalties, as was the case with those who were barred from working in the guilds.

These conditions are confirmed by the Pomeranian chronicler of the time, Thomas Kantzow, who states that a mother in her attempt to help her son *'who had become a priest and had no secure income to keep himself, except that he would often say a mass and take remuneration for it'*. She had the idea of hollowing out a wood-formed crucifix, filling it with chicken's blood and hanging it up in St. Mary's Church, Stralsund, hoping that the dripping cross of blood would provide Stralsund with a miracle and her son with a better living. It led to a success. Many people came to see the miracle, and soon there were several hundred candles lit before the crucifix as the money piled up in the box. Abuses such as this, which increased during the 15th century, created fertile soil for the Reformation ideas, soon to be planted in the Hanseatic towns as everywhere else in the country.

The church premises in the cities of the Hanseatic League were not only for the sacraments and worship, but also for meetings of

municipal councils, public meetings (*burspraken*) and public proclamations of decrees and laws. In some cases, the unions used their seats in the temples to hold their own meetings. In addition, when a visit of eminent lords took place, the nave of each episcopal church became the most suitable and impressive place for receptions in the city. All the clergy had a close relationship with secular life, which was especially pronounced during religious festivals and large-scale processions, which took place primarily during the Christmas and Easter Week. However, their main secular activity was associated with the lives of the people of the city, from baptism and marriage, to their last communion and funeral.

The churches' plutocracy received and managed the burghers' countless '*pious endowments*' or '*seelgerät*'. These were gifts of buildings, land, money, valuables or jewellery, often last donations to the Church, to some ecclesiastical body, a particular priest or the local poor. Many of these gifts were made to a particular church, for the purpose of building or upkeep quite definite specifications were frequently supplied about how the money should be used, perhaps to construct a chapel or tower, to provide glass windows, bells, an organ or painting, even to buy coal for the church fireplace. If money was left to a priest, then a daily requiem was expected to be read, or a mass for the soul of the departed on certain days. The value of gifts to churches, convents and spiritual fraternities varied greatly, from the small sums which poorer burghers and residents could afford to generous offerings determined by socioeconomic status, '*spiritual anguish*', or remorse as the result of some sin.

The members of the bourgeoisie, who were not exclusively merchants or craftsmen, such as the town syndics, prothonotaries, town leaders, town physicians and other officials with important town functions, served the interests of the wealthy ruling class equally. As a rule, their duties were linked to the reciprocity of the services for which they were paid accordingly. For example, in the years 1460-1461, the syndic of Lübeck received a salary of 190 marks

more or less as a retainer fee, which was supplemented for particular services, such as embassies to other towns, drawing up agreements, and so forth. As time went on, senior town officials were required to study the law at university, not so much because their administrative duties demanded knowledge of that kind, but rather so that they were better equipped to defend town privileges against the ecclesiastical and secular lords of feudalism.

To a lesser extent, public employees, civil servants, council messengers, town servants, warders etc., contributed on the council's behalf to preserving the laws of the time, but their wages were very low. As a result, there was little difference between these people and the lower classes whence most of them came. Their sole privilege was exempt from tax, but considering their meagre earnings that was utterly justified. A low-ranking public employee would not receive more than 1 or 2 shillings a day in cash. Even if special duty was done with a little extra, and clothing and some food were provided with the work, that was the extremely low reward. The pay was just as low for the jobbers recruited to sell their labour, and often their health, as the soldiers at the town council's disposal who might be requested to risk their lives for the bourgeois class interests.

Medical care in the cities of the Hanseatic League was first and foremost a matter of the clergy, which later led to the establishment of the first hospitals by the Christian fraternities with the financial assistance of the Catholic Church. As cities grew and the clergy gradually lost the privilege of free philanthropy, bourgeois rulers took special care of the training of medical doctors in need of their health. The first such private doctors were enrolled as professionals in Stralsund from 1278 to 1287, while in Greifswald they began working from 1305, respectively.

Magister Johannes, also known as a 'physicus' and 'medicus', practiced his profession in Rostock after 1231. Due to his abilities the Town Council designated him as a medical doctor, granting

burgher rights free of charge. The bubonic plague, or Black Death, which rippled through the 14th century in several waves, also reached the Hanseatic towns, increasing the need to appoint town doctors and expand the practice of medicine. Town documents of the Hanseatic period already make a distinction between the physician and surgeon. The physician was responsible, above all, for curing internal diseases, and from the end of the 15th century was often engaged as a town doctor for a certain number of years. The surgeon, meanwhile, enjoyed less of a reputation and, like bath valets, stood several rungs down as a ladder.

The city's doctors had a special responsibility to diagnose and treat diseases or injuries to public officials and city officials. They monitored the progress of patients in hospitals and regularly informed the municipal authorities about the hygiene of citizens, the prevention and elimination of any epidemic or other fatalities. They were also responsible for the operation of pharmacies, public baths, maternity hospitals and brothels.

However, in addition to the town doctors and physicians, there were others who looked after the health of the residents, such as the bath attendants and an assortment of specialists. The baths bore the main responsibility for cleanliness and hygiene. Most baths were run by the town council, and provided facilities for ablution and massage. Bath attendants and barbers – sometimes the functions were combined in one person- would cut hair and trim beards. Surgical exercises such as bloodletting and cupping might also be performed there.

The bath attendants never enjoyed a good reputation, but in the course of the 14th and 15th centuries they achieved outright notoriety, because the baths were used more and more frequently as houses of pleasure. A man and a woman could amuse themselves here with music, food and drink, perhaps sharing a little extra money; it did not take much to turn the place to a brothel.



Image of a patient being treated.
(S. Brand's book *Narrenschiff*, 1494).

The early 'wound healers' evolved gradually into specialist surgeons, although the operations they performed, mostly in the hospitals, would seem barbaric to us today. There are accounts, also, of tooth-breakers, hernia-cutters and scrotum-cutters. Eye doctors were also available; the eye-glass which slowly gained acceptance from the 13th century onwards did manage to correct sight deficiencies, and in German was named '*brille*' because it resembled beryl, a glassy semi-precious stone, when cut.

The storekeepers of pharmaceuticals and therapies became the forerunners of medical science based solely on experience and intuition. In the warehouses - shops, which in German were called '*apotheke*' (after the Greek word meaning 'storeroom'), were processed,

maintained and sold in addition to medicines, spices, legumes, wax, potassium nitrate, paper, fabrics, by-products and clay pots. According to archives of Hanseatic cities, the first shops of this type, which were essentially like today's pharmacies, began operating in 1248 in Cologne, in 1262 in Rostock, in 1265 in Hamburg, in 1270 in Wismar and Magdeburg-and in 1284 in Lübeck.



13th century book miniature depicting a pharmacist in his workshop (Library of the Municipality of Erfurt).

The drugstores later sold spice imported from abroad, such as cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and, most important of all, pepper. They also began to store fruit and agricultural products such as rice, almonds, raisins, honey and sugar for commercial exploitation. Gradually, drug depots evolved into full-fledged medical institutions, which collaborated with each other thanks to the cooperation of pharmacists.



Visby's old 'apotheker'.

Even today we still find the 'Ratsapotheker' in many Hanseatic towns, the first, in Greifswald, dating back to 1319. The Hanseatic councils issued rules for apothecaries which defined their duties precisely. The main task was to provide the population with drugs and spices, not to sell ineffective substances, and only to dispense poisons on a doctor's prescription. In social terms the apothecaries ranked more or less with the merchants, being counted in general among the more well-to-do burghers. They assumed public office in the town. From the 16th century, they entered public employment as tenants of the council shop.

The economic development of the cities of the Hanseatic League was enhanced by the professional specialization, the extensive technological progress, the spread of writing, as well as by the increase of general education and the establishment of schools. The teaching activity came primarily from the church and its

institutions, which mainly took care of the education of the clergy. With the operation of monastic cathedral and collegiate schools, the vital need to learn the Christian doctrine and its ecclesiastical matters was emphatically served.

The church institutions ran 'internal' schools, which were only open to members of the order and aspiring secular priests, but there were also some 'external' schools, such as the cathedral schools of Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen, which could be attended by the sons of laymen. The same applied to monastic and convent schools in several towns: the Dominicans and Franciscans took in lay scholars in Stralsund (1254), Wismar and Lübeck. Soon, however, the expansion of long-distance trade, commodity production and the monetary economy called for a more practical schooling for the benefit of merchants' sons and wealthy burghers. This led to some incisive changes to the education system and a challenge to the educational monopoly which the theologians had held. The town school was born.

The clerical schools that had existed hitherto were town schools only in the sense that they were located in the towns. The burgher school, set up predominantly for lay scholars purposes, began with the town parish schools. The rights of patronage, however, were still claimed by secular or spiritual feudal magnates or clerical institutions. Much of the teaching was designed to ensure that the pupils could, for example, help to perform religious rites, but the practical content was already increasing.

Moreover, both school institutions were subsidized by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities which held them as institutions. Much of the teaching was prescribed to teach occupations, such as performing religious ceremonies, or some practical administrative and legal work. The church, as a sponsor, usually rented its premises to a schoolmaster, who in most cases was a clergyman. He was responsible for the whole establishment

and the educational operation, while at the same time he was responsible for the selection of the collaborating teachers.

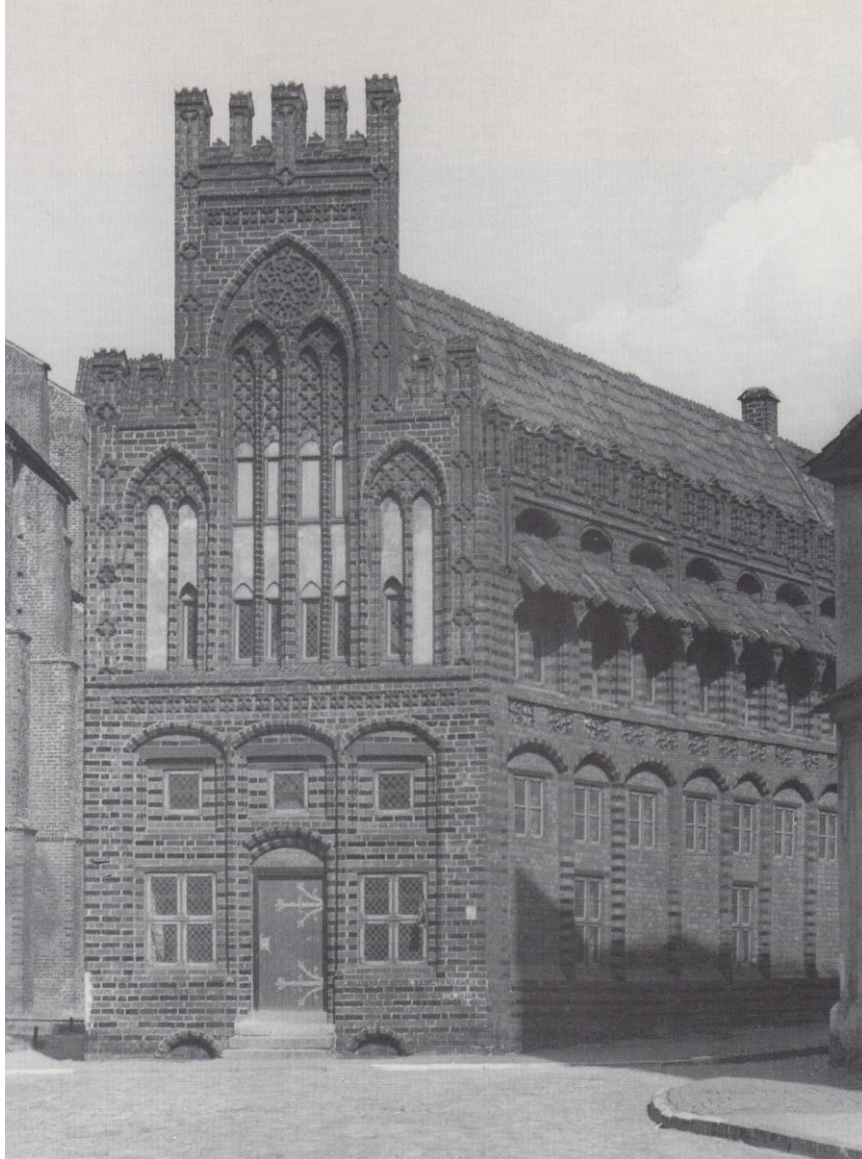


Photo of a school in the city of Wismar (late 14th century)
destroyed during World War II.

Maintenance costs were covered entirely by the school fees that students had to pay for their participation in the learning, which concerned occupations such as sextons, chaplains and vergers. Ecclesiastical records show that during the second half of the 13th century four parish schools opened in Rostock, St. Mary (1260), St. Jacob (1270), St. Nicholas (1293) and St. Peter (1345), each of them attached to one of the town's major churches.

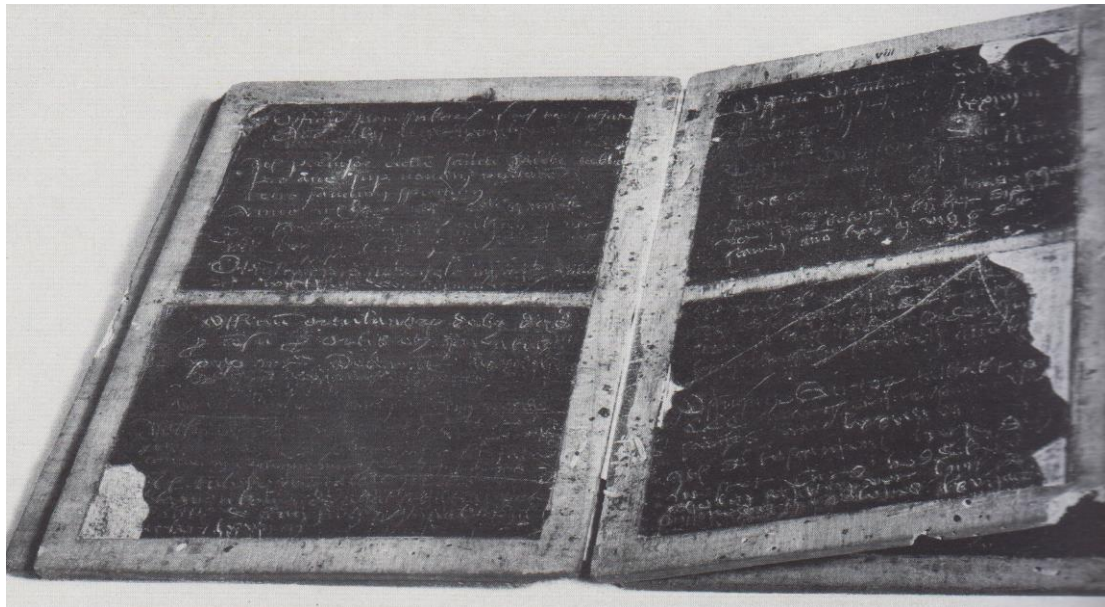
Soon the schooling which these parish schools offered was not sufficient to meet the practical needs of young burghers who were going to become merchants or town administrators and community leaders. They required knowledge and skills concerning mercantile accounting methods, commerce and numismatics, as well as in geography, law and administrative affairs. Besides, there was a rapid rise in the number of budding scholars in these fields, and demand could no longer be met by private tuition on an individual basis.

The Latin town school was a superior form which developed out of the burgher school. In general, councils assumed the supervision of these new schools, which meant that more and more of the teaching could be geared to the realities of the outside world. Some of the Latin schools were completely new foundations that resulted from independent decisions taken by the burghers, as in Lübeck (1253 and 1263), Hamburg (1281) and Stettin (Szczecin). In Lübeck and Hamburg bitter struggles were waged to open new schools and acquire at least some rights of patronage for the council. Other new schools evolved from parish schools already functioning in the towns. In Wismar, for example, the prince conferred the patronage of the two parish schools to the town council in 1331, and in Rostock the transfer took the form of a gift in 1337; at about this time the councils of Stralsund and Greifswald also obtained important rights of patronage enabling them to convert the parish schools.

By winning the rights of patronage, whether entirely or partially, Hanseatic councils succeeded in establishing a significant influence on schools in the town. They were the administrators, hiring and dismissing teachers, putting their views about the form of teaching should take and the choice of subject matter. The schoolmaster now received a salary from the council, which also dictated school fees and used these, amongst other things, to pay the teaching assistants. The process of appointing a teacher in each school was thorough, and according to Stralsund city chronicles from 1380, it required

excellent pedagogical skills and a good knowledge of the Latin language.

At that time, Latin was the language of the Church, but in many places it was also the language of officialdom and a means of international communication. The documents of each municipal council, the correspondence and the professional documents were usually written in Latin. For these reasons, the Latin language was thus taught from a practical angle to equip the scholars for their future occupations as merchants, bookkeepers, secretaries, notaries or town clerks.



A waxed board for writing texts from a Hanseatic school (Wismar City Museum).

An unexpected archaeological find in Lübeck has provided us with details about the materials used in medieval schools. It contained counters, flat sticks for hitting hands, and other small items of teaching apparatus, including the wax boards and slate pencils used here, as in Gdańsk, Toruń, Erfurt, Wismar and many other towns, for making notes, drafting letters and doing sums. Some merely contain exercises for writing numbers and letters, others are sample of business or even political texts. Some similar findings contain semantic and grammatical exercises, while others concern texts of business and municipal authorities. One of them is the text of the

Peace of Stralsund in 1370 amongst the army forces of the Hanseatic League and Denmark.

Nevertheless, the progress made with the Latin public schools was soon insufficient to meet the growing demands, especially in the teaching of the German dialect, which was spoken on the shores of the North Sea and had become the language of commerce and bureaucracy. This need created a new type of school called the '*dudesche scryffschule*', meaning '*German writing school*'. The secular orientation of these new establishments was an improved and more efficient version of the basic education that was perfectly adapted to the needs of the bourgeoisie of each Hanseatic town. In order for these schools to operate financially, private companies were set up by the bourgeoisie and groups of citizens, with particular interest in their educational expediency, so that after a harsh struggle, the German 'schools of reading and writing' prevailed against the Church's 'scholastici'.

Their special features were their independence (they were not attached to the Latin schools), accessibility (anyone who could pay the fees could attend) and privileged position (they were licensed and protected by the council). The most important subjects were reading and writing in Middle Low German and the formulation of business texts, contracts, etc., in the German language; the essentials of arithmetic were also taught using an abacus and counters, along with a basic knowledge of coins, measures and weights. Pupil numbers grew and these schools of German reading and writing soon spread. By about 1500 every major town boasted a Latin school and a German school. Lübeck had six German schools by this time, and Hamburg four.

However, urban primary schools were inaccessible to the poorest sections of the population, who did not have the ability to be educated in particular, or to be educated in German. Private schools, which operated in many cities, were considered in some way suspicious by the municipal authorities, as a result of which

secular teaching was often banned and educators were persecuted. Therefore, according to the chronicles of the time, in the schools of Lübeck, Hamburg and Rostock, the teachers conducted the lessons '*hemeliken stedten*', that is, in secret.

The period from the 13th to the 15th century can be considered more or less like the dawn of the organization and operation of the city's primary schools in the Hanseatic region. The commercial and economic activity of each city gave birth to a secular education adapted to the practical needs of everyday life. The upper secular and economic classes were the factors that played the greatest role in the establishment and development of public schools, which in particular benefited the cultivation of the culture of the Hanseatic League, as a model, for most societies of the geographically neighbouring areas of the member cities. This development has left its mark on the entire basic education system established in the 16th century in northern Europe with the function of such public schools, not only exclusively in large cities, but also in smaller provincial towns.

The sons of less well-heeled and propertyless residents seldom had the chance to attend school, even though in principle, no section of the town's population was barred access. A small number of '*scolares paupers*' were accepted thanks to private or council charity or else to the medieval Christian concept of human solidarity.

The demand for higher education rose in the wake of economic and political processes and as a result of the foundation that the town schools were laying. In this, the Hanseatic region was no exception. The need for lawyers, doctors and theologians with an academic training also grew, so that there was a certain agreement between the interests of the town councils and those of the Church and territorial princes. At first, the sons of wealthy burghers or noblemen in northern Germany were obliged to seek their university education in Leipzig (from 1409), the Hansa towns of Erfurt (from 1392) and Cologne (from 1388), or as far away as

Heidelberg (from 1386), Vienna (1365) or Prague, whose university, founded in 1348, was the oldest in the Holy Roman Empire. The situation only changed with the foundation of Rostock University in 1419 and Greifswald University in 1456. These were the oldest universities in northern Germany, indeed, in northern Europe as a whole.

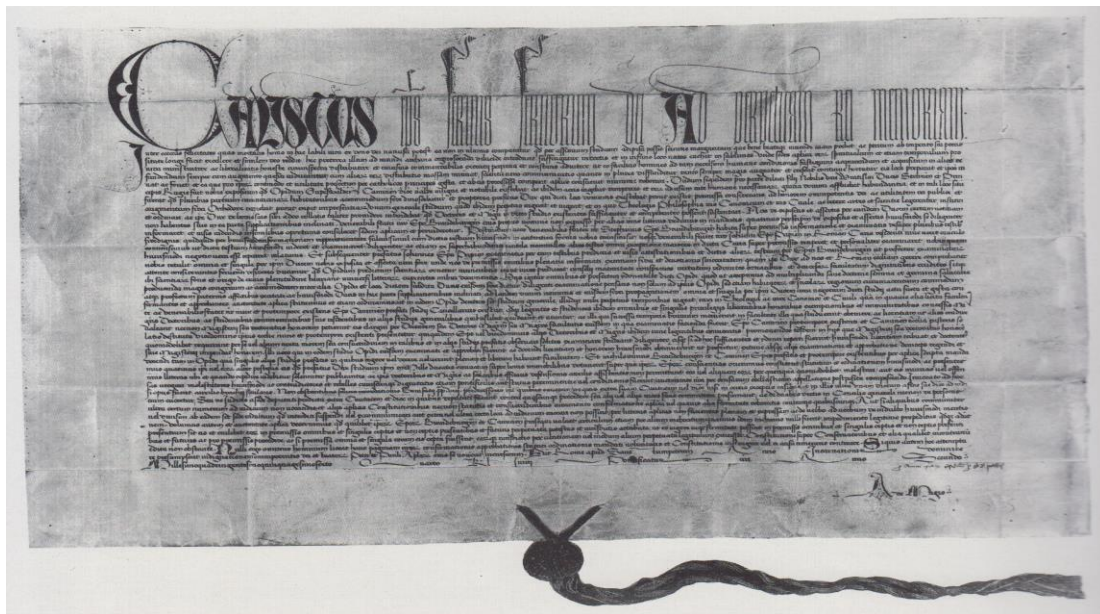


Excerpt from the work of Ambrosius Holbein which depicts the benefits of scientific education (1516, Basel, Museum of Art).

The inspiration for the universities in the Holy Roman Empire had come from western Europe and Italy, particularly from Paris. These were the models for the '*Universitas magistrorum et scholarum*', a self-governing community of professors and students, and they also set the pattern for the form and content of studies. The German universities, however, were more local in character and were integrated into the young territorial states that were now consolidating their existence – hence the German designation '*Landesuniversität*'. Nonetheless, at foundation they were granted the '*libertas docendi et discendi*' (freedom of teaching and learning) which more or less guaranteed autonomy, special social status, and universal study of international dimensions.

The foundation of Rostock and Greifswald universities was a direct consequence of the Hansa's growing influence and the prosperity of the Hanseatic towns. Had urban burgher culture not blossomed as it did, and had the League not developed the Baltic economy, the

two universities could not have become such a thriving and influential force. The University of Rostock was solemnly opened on 12 November 1419 with a ceremony at St. Mary's Church. Albrecht V and Johann IV, Dukes of Mecklenburg, and Bishop Heinrich of Schwerin had been presenting the case for this university to Pope Martin V for a whole year; the Mayor and Council of Rostock created the economic conditions and added their seal to the nobility's dispatch.



The University of Greifswald foundation act, undersigned by Pope Callistus III (1378-1458) on 29 May 1456.

The town accepted the commitment to pay 800 golden Rhenish guilders a year for the professors' salaries, and offered the town hall in the new quarter, by the Convent of the Holy Cross (on the square where the main building of the university stands today), and a building by the marketplace in the old quarter as premises. This demonstrates how anxious the town was to have the university within its walls, and the same concern is reflected in an article of the Statutes which regulates the relationship between the town and the university and confers certain rights on the council (including the appointment and dismissal of university teachers).



Excerpt from the portrait of the first Rectorship members of the University of Rostock.

The Rostock University Register, in which Hanseatic League students were listed, clearly depicts the northern European roots of their origins, from the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein to Livonia. The participation of a relatively high number of students from Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland is also noteworthy. Students from these countries even had their own hostel, the 'St. Olaf Burse', where they could stay during their studies.

At the beginning of the 16th century, there were about 1,500 students in Rostock, and about ten percent of them came from Scandinavia. The register shows that the following towns sent particularly large contingents: in Denmark, Copenhagen, Ripen, Roskilde, Ålborg, Århus, Assens, Helsingør, Sønderborg; in Sweden, Stockholm, Visby, Uppsala, Norrköping, Kalmar, Lund, Stängebro, Västerås; in Norway, Oslo, Tønsberg, Bergen and Trondheim. Other students came from the Netherlands, Flanders and Frisia. There were from Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Utrecht, Deventer, Kampen, Harderwijk and Zwolle.

The professors origin, too, evidences the Rostock university's close relationship to the Hanseatic territory in general. It was rightly named '*Beacon of the North*', as a token of deepest respect. Most of the teachers came from the Hanseatic towns themselves, and the

majority were sons of wealthy merchants and councillors. At the head of the list were the Wendish towns of Lübeck, Hamburg, Lüneburg, Wismar, Stralsund and Rostock, followed by smaller towns in Meckleburg and Pomerania, settlements in Brandenburg, and even Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Holstein, and finally the Baltic towns of Riga, Reval (Talinn), Narva, Dorpat and Pskov (Pleskau).

Johannes Gutenberg's (1400-1468) typographic invention also contributed greatly to the educational enlightenment of the 15th century, offering Hanseatic societies valuable samples of popular books such as the map of Hamburg with colour miniatures printed in 1497. However, the largest of the people of knowledge and education concerned mainly the history and material culture that developed in the Hanseatic League. The most important and scientifically reliable information about history and medieval civilization in northern Europe comes from the scholars who wrote the chronicles of the time.

At first, most of them focused on the history of their own city, and only occasionally described events from neighbouring areas. Later, their boundaries were expanded to include in their chronicles the states and kingdoms adjacent to the Hanseatic League, as well as the entire then German territory as a whole. The first Hanseatic chronicles date from the 13th century and are written in Latin by church people. Some have been written in the dialect of Lower Germany and refer mainly to feudal historiography.

The historiography of the Hanseatic League owes much to the chroniclers who recorded the most important facts and provided us with useful information about the civilization of the time. For example, from the work *'Chronica Slavorum'* by the North German chronicler Helmold von Bosau (1120-1177), who was a priest in Holstein, we know today the time and the way in which the city of Lübeck was founded. In it he states that: *'Then count Adolf (Adolf II of Holstein) came to a very large island surrounded by two rivers. The Trave*

flowed past on one side, and the Wakenitz on the other, each with a swampy and inaccessible bank. But where the ground is firm is a fairly narrow hill before the castle ramparts. This prudent man saw how suitable the site was and how excellent the harbour. He therefore began to build a town there and called it Lübeck.'

The first town burgher of Lübeck to record his town's history was Councillor Albert von Bardowiek in 1298. His brief notes were intended to aid the town administration in its work, but it is clear to the reader that, alongside the collection of documents and legal texts, history was regarded as a worthy concern in the politics of the Lübeck council. In the course of the 14th century, chronicles in many Hanseatic towns – Bremen, Hamburg, Braunschweig, Magdeburg, Cologne and above all the capital Lübeck – broke out of these local barriers.

Another valuable contribution to the history of Lübeck, and indeed the Hanseatic League, was commissioned by the council from the *'master of reading in the Order of St. Francis, who does not wish to be named for the desires with this to praise God and not himself.'* This was the *'Detmar Chronicle'* of 1385. Detmar also wrote the *'Lübian World Chronicle'*, which covered the period from 1105 to 1386. Only some passages have survived of these two works. The Detmar Chronicle, which was continued in several later stages, so that the actual authors of many chapters have been the subject of disputes, is considered to be one of the most important Hanseatic sources, especially since it places the events in Lübeck in a broader contemporary context. Detmar was particularly useful by writing the chronicles, since he relied predominantly on documents, verbal reports and experiences of his own.

At the same time, the Detmar's Chronicles are an evidence of the fact that a priest of that period was capable of expressing bourgeois consciousness and penning political history. He reveals a basic tendency to back up the rule of the town patricians. To him, the butcher uprisings quelled in Lübeck in 1384 and the burgher rioting

in Braunschweig in 1374 were shameful acts perpetrated by a community that had been possessed by the Devil. Taking part of the council, he views the rebellious craftsmen as burghers who disrupt the peace and public order of the town, who deserve the severe punishments meted out after the conspiracy had been put down: *'Some were dragged, tied to the wheel and quartered, some dragged and tied to the wheel, some dragged and beheaded and laid on the wheel, and some imprisoned outside the town walls.*

Detmar's Chronicles record most of the information about the general policy pursued by the ruling class in the Hanseatic League. In particular, Detmar devoted significant space to the conflict with Flanders when it was annexed by the Duke of Burgundy, Philip Le Hardi, in 1384, and to the discontinuance of trade relations between the Hanseatic merchants and Novgorod in 1388. He also described extensively the domestic problems and the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Denmark.

The chronicler mentions how important safe trade and the protection of trade routes were for the prosperity of the Hanseatic towns, supporting the treaty of 1389 between the lords of these routes and the town councils. He also describes the continuous fighting against pirates and all sorts of obstacles to the safe running of merchant ships in the North Sea and the Baltic, interpreting the incidents as an attack on the commercial class, which he said should be stopped altogether. Detmar also supplemented his descriptions with incidents from the regions of the German Empire, Poland, Hungary, Spain and the Ottoman Empire. His assessments of the recorded events in his chronicle present an transnationality that stemmed in particular from his role as a monk of the Roman Catholic Church.

Detmar's work was continued and completed by the Dominican monk Hermann Corner with the writing of the *Chronica Novella*. Corner wrote several editions in Latin, and his greatest work, dedicated to the period from the creation of the world until April

1438, is known as the "*Lüneburger Handschrift*." During the last years of his life he planned to rewrite in German a chronicle that would begin at the time of Charlemagne and would also end in 1438. The readers of his time were thrilled with the elegant style of his compilations, which were constantly expanded and revised, and his work made a notable impact on North German historiography.

The '*Chronicle of Bremen*' written by Gerrard Runesberch and Herbord Schene was also the work of theologians. Social links with politically influential burgher families provided them with the sense of identification with the bourgeoisie which permeates their chronicle. Not only did the council furnish them with documents, privileges and other sources, but the Major, Councillor Johann Hemeling even took a hand in amending the chronicle himself, to strengthen the political orientation that the council expected its chronicle to offer. The councilors were anxious that everyone should adhere to the '*stad book*', or town charter, to prevent Bremen from '*going to ruin*'.

Usually, burgher chronicles were drawn up as a response to social conflicts within the community, reflecting at the same time the close connection between political events and their historiography. A further example is '*Dat nuwe boich*' (*new book*) written in Cologne by the town clerk Gerlach von Hauwe during the last few years of the 14th century. It is one of the few chronicles of this period, which does not echo exclusively the views of the leading patricians, but sees events from the oppositional angle of the middle burgher classes. Hauwe described the damage which the patricians had done to the town as a result of corruption and waste of public money, not to mention embezzlement. This, according to his opinion, made them unworthy to govern. The door to town rule now stood open to the representatives of burgher opposition, and Hauwe justified this move. A certain bias in his account cannot be overlooked, but the chronicle is significant precisely because of his sympathy for the struggles and sufferings of large sections of the town's population.



Pages from Gerlach von Hauwe's chronicle (left) and Vike Schorler's scroll (right).

Hauwe's chronicle, which is the first historical work in the prose of Lower Germany, was a pioneer in opening the way for the city's middle-class burghers to gain political power. Although there is a lot of prejudice against the ruling high-class burghers in this text, the importance of the chronicler's references to the sufferings and struggles of the poor people of Cologne cannot be ignored. Hauwe consciously chose to use the dialect of Lower Germany to reach his new book to most ordinary people. At the same time, his commitment distinguished 'Dat nuwe boich' from the political poem about the Cologne weverslaicht (weavers' battle), which was composed at almost the same time. This poem poured hatred on the weavers, the major force behind the burgher opposition in Cologne, for wanting to 'grab government and power from the good people' (the patricians). After the weavers obtained their victory in 1369/70, this image of them, as despotic rulers, left its mark on subsequent chronicles.

No doubt, the most important chronicle in the history of Hanseatic League culture is Vike Schorler's 'The Rostock Chronicle'. In it, the

author contains reports of unfortunate incidents, such as fires and storms, but also happy ones, such as weddings of prominent burghers and cultural events in the city's market square. The chronicle still remains a great source of information about everyday life and the people of the time. The last pages also mention the misfortune of the city to be affected by the plague epidemic in 1624, with a series of registrations of names of citizens who died because of it.



The development of the image of Rostock city designed by Vike Schorler.

However, the most important contribution to the history of architecture by Vike Schorler is the content of the drawings with which he presented the morphology of the buildings of Rostock in combination with certain functions of the city (e.g. the commercial port and the festivities in the city market). The representations are drawn in pencil and engraving without much knowledge of perspective, but with a detailed record of the buildings facades and the commercial shop fronts (see also p. 81).

The tradition of chronicle writing also attracted interest from non-German regions of the Hanseatic League. Specifically, Albert Krantz (1448-1517), who became rector of the University of Rostock in 1482, wrote in Latin two chronicles of the Nordic countries entitled: '*Vandalia, historia vandalorum jerg origine*' (1520) and '*Chronica regnorum aquilonarium Daniae, Suaciae et Noruagiae*' (1546). The detailed and extensive content of the chronicles is based on information from earlier native Scandinavian narratives (*saga*) and archives of the royal houses of the region. Among other things, he mentions events from the period of the great migrations of the Normans, Danes, Lombards and Goths to mainland Europe during the Middle Ages, but also the genealogy of the kings of Scandinavia

with a special record of their deeds, based on in the historiography of Saxo Grammaticus (1160-1220).

But the most important contribution to Scandinavian historical knowledge, as part of the Hanseatic League's own, is the 22-volume chronicle of Olaus Magnus entitled '*Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*' (*The History of the Peoples of the Seven Stars*). Olaus Magnus was born in Skänninge, Sweden, in 1490 and died in Rome in 1557. He was a priest and became the last Catholic bishop in Uppsala due to the ecclesiastical reform that included Sweden in Protestantism. After the rise of Lutheranism in Sweden, Olaus Magnus took refuge in Poland, where the king Sigimund granted him immunity in Poznan's episcopacy. He later went to the monastery of St. Birgitta in Rome, where he spent the rest of his life writing the chronicle of the Scandinavian peoples.

'The Story of the People of the Seven Stars' is a collection of essays that the author mentions in his preface concerning Scandinavian habits and customs, manners, occupations and work, building art and flora and fauna. The chapters of the chronicle contain numerous explanatory miniatures that are unique depictions of the way and means of living of the Scandinavians during the 15th century. His narratives follow his observations from his travels in northern Scandinavia, the legends and myths he read in the Vikings' epics, and the historiography of Saxo Grammaticus. In particular, he described the scenery of the natural environment of the area, considering that it was created by ancient giants and that various strange aquatic creatures and people of the forests, with garlands on their heads, were living there.

Olaus Magnus had attended classical studies at the University of Rostock in 1513, which prompted him to write in his chronicle the position of the Hyperborean 'Thule', mentioned by Nearchos in his '*Geography*', according to the testimony of the ancient Greek admiral Pytheas, who had travelled from Marseilles to the north coasts of Britain. Olaus Magnus during his stay in Italy drew a large

map of the northern countries on nine woodcuts. This map, entitled '*Carta Maritima et Descriptio Septentrionalium Terrarum*', was completed in 1539 in Venice after 12 years of work and is the most complete of its time, despite the fact that it records a variety of demons and monsters in the seas.



Olaus Magnus depiction of Thule (up) and his nautical chart (down).



It is apparent from the Hanseatic chronicles of the 14th century, which also set the trend for future historiography, that the ruling strata amongst the town bourgeoisie were growing increasingly aware of the way in which historical writing could strengthen the bourgeois consciousness. This is the reason that the bourgeoisie commissioned chronicles and took a hand in their drafting. As memoirs, they gave rise to a bourgeois understanding of history, which imparts an own particular character in the writing, furnishing detailed information about everyday life, customs and traditions, health conditions, religious scenes and the philosophy of the town burgher. Since the Hanseatic chroniclers relied on previous approaches and sources, they attributed to their texts a distinctly bourgeois conception of the history of the time, leaving the research of the later ones to establish the objective truth.

Nevertheless, no one can deny that the chronicles of the Hanseatic League' Epoque constitute a valuable cultural history, providing us with important information about the living conditions, the notions and the beliefs of the merchant bourgeoisie of the time.

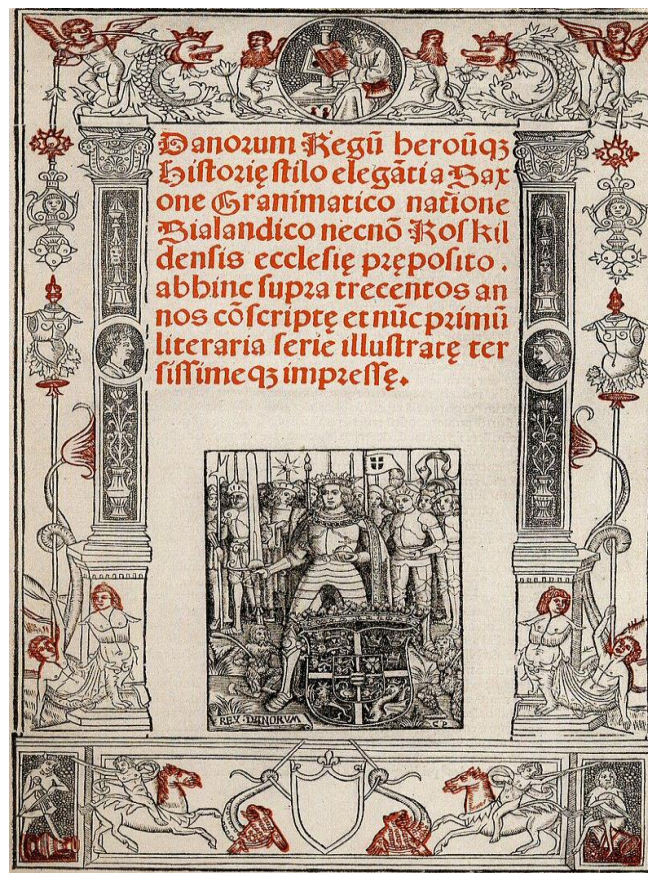
The chronicle of the wars that determined the fate of the Hanseatic League until its end

The chroniclers of the Hanseatic League described furthermore the wars conducted on behalf of its allied cities economic and cultural expansion in the North Sea and the Baltic. The study of these chronicles assures that all the military operations were carried out in the form of a 'crusade', on the basis of which neighbouring territorial areas were occupied under the pretext of 'Christianization' of the indigenous peoples. As the cities and the regions of the Hanseatic League were already Christian, their authorities sought and received the privileged blessing of the Pope of Rome, in order to conquer the 'Land of the Virgin Mary', as they called the territories of the southern and eastern coasts of the Baltic Sea.

The biggest problem for the Hanseatic League's economic pursuits had been the free shipping and duty-free trade regime in the region. All the texts relating to the expansion of the Hanseatic territory describe occasions and episodes associated with the geopolitical differences of control of trade routes and exchanges. Specifically, Saxo Grammaticus delivers to us through the chronicle '*Gesta Danorum*' a complete bulletin of the hostilities that took place between the Kingdom of Denmark and the coastal Hanseatic cities in the Baltic and North Sea, concerning the control of the trade between them. Also the chronicle '*Terrae Prussiae*' by Peter of Duisburg, completed in 1326, provides us with equally important information about the military actions of the Knights of the Teutonic Order in their attempt to annex the eastern Baltic regions to the sphere of influence of the Hanseatic League.

The chronicle of Saxo Grammaticus begins with the deeds of King Valdemar I of Denmark (1131-1182), also known as the 'Great' (in Danish: Valdemar den Store), who together with his second son and successor Valdemar II they promoted the sovereignty of their state

on all the shores of neighbouring and coterminous countries. Valdemar I was raised together with Absalon (c. 1128-1201) who became his most trusted friend and minister, serving as Bishop of Roskilde from 1158-92 and as Archbishop of Lund from 1178 to his death. Following Absalon's advice, Valdemar I firstly attempted to block the expansion of the Saxons to the north, in order to maintain control of the Kattegat strait and the navigation to and from the Baltic Sea.



Saxo Grammaticus 'Gesta Danorum'.

Under the pretext of the Christianization of the Rugians in Wendish, who inhabited the shores of the Baltic between Lübeck and Szczecin (Stettin), it was formed in 1168 AD a crusade similar to that organized by Pope Urban II to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims. The campaign also involved Pomeranian soldiers and ships from the southern Swedish province of Skåne, which then was part of the Kingdom of Denmark. The Danish crusaders besieged the city of Arkona in the Wendish, which they conquered by

destroying the temple of Svantovit with unprecedented violence. This fact is described in detail by Saxo Grammaticus as follows: *'The next day the King ordered Esbern and Sine to topple the God statue and when this proved impossible without swords and axes, they ripped open the curtains which hung in the temple, and then clearly commanded the people who were to do this [cut down the statue] to be careful so that when that heavy statue fell it did not crush anyone with its weight so that people could not say that this was a punishment inflicted upon them by an angry God. At the same time there gathered around the temple a great throng of the town's inhabitants hoping that Svantovit, in His anger and Godly might should punish those that cause such violence upon Him. When the statue was cut in twain by the feet, it toppled against the nearest wall. At that Sune, in order to pull it out [of the temple], commanded his people to destroy the wall, but reminded them that in their eagerness to destroy it, they should not forget the warning and that they should not carelessly put themselves in danger of being crushed by the falling statue/idol. The idol fell to the ground with great noise..... The inhabitants were now ordered to tie a rope around the idol of the God and to pull It outside of town but they lacked the courage to do this by reason of their old superstition [i.e., their faith] and ordered prisoners and visitors who had come to their town to earn some money, to do it in their stead for they thought to direct the wrath of [their] God onto the heads of such wretched people since they believed that the God that they so greatly worshipped would not hesitate to punish severely those who so humiliated Him..... The rest of the day was spent accepting hostages who had not been delivered the prior day. The commanders' learned men were sent to the city so as to teach the ignorant people the Christian faith and to convert it from its paganism to the true faith. When the evening approached all the cooks began to chop at the idol with their axes and they cut it into such little pieces as could be used as firewood. I believe the Rugians must have [then] felt ashamed of their ancient cult when they saw the God of their fathers and grandfathers that they were accustomed to venerate so, be humiliated by being tossed into the fire then used to cook a meal for their enemies. Thereafter, the Danes also burned down the temple and built in its place a church from the wood that had been [earlier] used to build siege engines so turning the implements of war into a house of peace and using that which was supposed to have*

destroyed the bodies of their enemies [instead] to save their souls. Further, on this day too the Rugians had to give up the treasure that had [earlier] been offered and set aside for Svantovit."



Bishop Absalon blesses the destruction of the idol of Svantovit (representation).

The conquered area remained subordinate to the Kingdom of Denmark until 1325 as the Duchy of Rügen. In 1175, Valdemar I built Vordingborg Castle as a defensive fortress and a base for future raids against the Wendish coast. From 1201 onwards, Denmark ruled the entire Baltic region. However, it should be noted that the chronicler was a child or a young man when Arkona was conquered. The biased description of his time is due to the fact that he was an employee or letter-writer of Absalon when he became Archbishop. Consequently, its chronicle is a historical account of the supremacy of the expansion of the Danish monarchy in the region, underestimating and wronging the importance of the culture of the Slavs and the other people living in the rich coastal lands of the southern Baltic.

In 1199, Albert of Buxhoeveden (later Bishop of Riga) being prompted by the relevant persuasions of the Pope of Rome and the rulers of Bremen for the violent Christianization of the peoples of

the Eastern Baltic, disembarked with 23 ships and 500 soldiers on the estuary of the Daugava River, from where he sought to subdue the lands of Livonia (which today are provinces of northern Latvia and Estonia).

Prior to this campaign, the region of Livonia was a pagan society where Hanseatic League merchants met with Russian Novgorod merchants for trade exchanges. Livonia was a very promising location in terms of its natural resources, and Arnold of Lübeck wrote in the '*Chronica Slavorum*' (*Chronicle of the Slavs*) that the land there was "*fertile in fields, with many meadows, irrigated by rivers*" and "*also with dense forests and a sea containing rich catches.*"

Livonia was a cultural unit of Scandinavian and Russian traditions influenced by Hanseatic trade. The natives mingled with the Germans, the Danes, the Swedes and the Russians, but also with the Wendish merchants of Lübeck. The trade in the country concerned the purchase and sale of silver and amber products, furs, wax, honey, dried fruits and smoked fish.

According to the "*Chronicle of Livonia*", written during the period of the conquest of the country by Bishop Albert, the inhabitants converted by applying the Christian Law, which was determined by political and economic benefits for the conquerors. The chronicler, Henricus de Lettis, as an eyewitness, informs us that "*there were a considerable number of German merchants in the Crusaders' army*" and that "*they sold [their products] at a higher profit there than anywhere else.*" Ultimately, Livonia, because was rich in material resources and a significant trading hub for many nations and peoples of the Eastern Baltics, gaining economic and political control over them, provided enormous benefits to the Hanseatic League, which was sealed by with the enthronement of Albert on the episcopal throne of Riga and the later organization of the '*Livonian Brothers of the Sword*', for the military control of the new location.

The interest in new conquests under the pretext of the extermination of pagans also mobilized the rivals of the Hanseatic League in the Baltic Sea. In particular, as early as about 1150, the Swedish king and the bishop of Uppsala organized repeated campaigns against the peoples of Finland, which maintained pagan cults and customs. The *'Erikskrönikan'* (*Erik's Chronicle*), written about 1320-35 by an unknown author, describes the many campaigns of Erik XI of Sweden from 1250 to 1319 in Finland, against the natives. Despite of the fact that the people of Tavastia in eastern Finland had already embraced Christian Orthodoxy, the Swedes subjugated them in order to trade the conquered region's leather products commercially.

At the time of the defeat of the Crusaders, with the final defeat of Jerusalem by the Muslims in 1187, some merchants from Lübeck and Bremen conceived the idea of establishing a fraternity of monk volunteers based on the model of the Knights Templar, which would undertake to act for the Christianization of the peoples living in the Baltic and east of the river Odra (Oder). During the command of the Grand Master Hermann von Salza (1209-1239), this foundation shifted its goal from being a proselytizing fraternity to a voluntary military organization, called the *'Knights of the Teutonic Order'*.

In 1206, the Teutonic Order captured the fortress of Turaida in Livonia, on the right bank of the river Gauja, which was a focal point of the ancient trade route to north western Russia. In order to gain control of the trade, the German crusaders besieged and occupied Satesele Hill near Sigulda in 1212. The Livonians, who had been a tax subordinated to the East Slavic Principality of Polotsk, had initially considered the Teutonic Order as a useful ally. When they realized the military yoke imposed on them, they rebelled against the Knights and their baptized in Christianity leader, but were disappointed. Their ruler remained an ally of the Teutonic Order until his death at the Battle of St. Matthew's Day in 1217. The Teutonic Knights then recruited the Christianized warriors of

Livonia to reinforce their next military campaigns against the neighbouring Latvians and Selonians (1208–1209), the Estonians (1208–1227), the Samogitians and the Curonians (1219–1290).

Chronicler Peter von Duisburg, who was a member of the Teutonic Order, informs us of all the organization's attainments in the missions it undertook in the areas of north eastern Poland. In particular, he states that in 1226, the Duke of Mazovia, Conrad I, addressed the Teutonic Knights in order to strengthen him to defend his borders and subdue the pagans of Prussia in his Duchy. Accepting the invitation, the Teutonic Knights settled in Chełmno in 1230, where they set up their base for military action against the Prussians. Having the support of the Pope and the German Emperor, they conquered the area after long battles, forcing the natives to convert to Christianity. The conquest of Prussia was completed with much bloodshed, during which the native Prussians who remained free were subdued, killed, or exiled. The struggle between the Knights and the Prussians was so fierce that the Order's chronicles state that the Prussians would "*burn them alive with their armour, in front of the sanctuary of their own god.*"

Valdemar II (1170-1241), the '*victorious*' (*Sejr*), as successor king of Denmark from 1202 until his death in 1241, sought to strengthen the sovereignty of his state in the trade of the North Sea. At the beginning of his reign he faced the threat of Holstein's Count to conquest the South Jutland, a key geographical area in the peninsula's transit trade. In 1203 Valdemar II invaded with his army Holstein and conquered the Hanseatic capital Lübeck, which added to Denmark-controlled territory. In 1203 Valdemar invaded and conquered Lübeck and Holstein, adding them to the territories controlled by Denmark. In 1204 he attempted to influence the outcome of the Norwegian succession by leading a Danish fleet and army to Viken in Norway in support of Erling Steinvegg, the pretender to the Norwegian throne. This resulted in the second Bagler War, which lasted until 1208. The question of the Norwegian

succession was temporarily settled and the Norwegian king owed allegiance to the king of Denmark.

In 1216, Danish troops destroyed the Hanseatic city of Stade and conquered Hamburg. Two years later, Valdemar II and Gerard I allied to expel Henry V and Otto IV from the Archdiocese of North Germany. In return, the German emperor Frederick II recognized Denmark's dominance in Schleswig and Holstein, as well as in all Wendish territories and Pomerania.

In 1219, the Danish army launched a new crusade with the Teutonic Knights to Christianize the peoples of the Eastern Baltic. The army was blessed by Pope Honorius III and headed for the region of Estonia with a fleet of about 1,500 ships. When the army disembarked in Estonia, near modern-day Tallinn, the Estonian leaders came to terms with the Danes and agreed to recognize the Danish king as their ruler. Some of them agreed to be baptized Christians, which seemed to be a good sign. Three days later, on June 15, 1219, while the Danes were watching a liturgy, thousands of Estonians invaded the camp of the crusading invaders from all sides. Fortunately for the Danes, Vitslav of Rügen, who took part in the campaign, gathered his men in a second camp and attacked the Estonians from behind. This was followed by the Battle of Lyndanisse, (today Tallinn), where the chronicle states that Bishop Sunen prayed for a good omen, which appeared from heaven in the form of a red cloth with a white cross. Then a voice was heard saying, *"When this sail goes up, you will win!"* With this celestial emblem, the Danes came out ahead and won the battle. At the end of the day, thousands of Estonians lay dead on the field, and Estonia was added to the Danish realm. (see also page 27).

In 1226, the Hanseatic city of Lübeck, which had gained great economic power from the transit trade between the Baltic and the North Sea, shook its subordinate relationship with the Kingdom of Denmark by casting the Danish tax collectors of the city. At the same time, the princes of northern Germany revolted against the

territorial demands of the Danish king. According to the *Sächsische Weltchronik* (*Chronicle of Saxony*), a story written in various regional forms of German prose between 1229 and 1277, the opponents met near Bornhöved, where the Danes were defeated. Valdemar had to give up his supremacy in the Baltic region and had to withdraw over the river Eider.

The battle of Bornhöved lasted a very long time and was fierce on both sides. All the fighters sank into the blood and the battlefield became a vast slaughterhouse of people and horses. At the most critical moment, the troops of a Saxon group following Valdemar passed to the enemy and the Danes were forced to surrender. Following the confusion, the Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg and the Bishop of Ribe were arrested. However, the King of Denmark, who escaped from the battlefield, immediately dismantled this disaster, forming a new army, with which he was able to keep his enemy under control.



The Battle of Bornhöved as depicted in the *Sächsische Weltchronik*.

As a result of the Battle of Bornhöved, Denmark's borders with the Holy Roman Empire shifted north of the Elbe River to the Eider River, which flows to the southern border of the Schleswig duchy. The county of Holstein and the city of Lübeck again became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Because the battle took place on Maria Magdalene's day, they promised to build a monastery for her sake.

This monastery was built in 1229 on the original site of the Danish castle that had been destroyed after the battle.

In 1223, King Valdemar and his eldest son, prince Valdemar, were abducted by Count Heinrich I (der Schwarze) of Schwerin, while hunting on the island of Lyø near Funen. Count Heinrich demanded that Denmark surrender the land conquered in Holstein 20 years ago and become a vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor. Danish envoys refused these terms and Denmark declared war. While Valdemar sat in prison, most of the German territories tore themselves away from Denmark. Danish armies were dispatched to hold them in line. The war ended in defeat of the Danish troops under the command of Albert II of Orlamünde at Mölln in 1225. To secure his release Valdemar had to acknowledge the breakaway territories in Germany, pay 44,000 silver marks, and sign a promise not to seek revenge on Count Heinrich.

From then on, King Valdemar II focused his efforts on domestic affairs. One of the changes he introduced was the feudal system, which gave power to landlords with the commitment that they would lend him a service in return. This increased the power of the noble landowners (højadelen) combined with the power of smaller nobles (lavadelen), who controlled most of Denmark's arable land. With this change, the free peasants lost the traditional rights and privileges they had had since the Viking Age, turning them into bondmen.

In the following decades, the interest of the Teutonic Crusaders was focused on the subjugation of peoples who had already been baptized Christians. Under the pretext that the Orthodox Russians were "heretics", the papal legate to the Baltic, Guglielmo from Modena, urged the Germans and the Scandinavian crusaders to campaign against them in 1240. The main target of the campaign was the city of Novgorod, which was an important trading post and partner of the Hanseatic League in the Russian hinterland. Novgorod also had water connections with all the commercial

centres of the Baltic, Byzantium and Central Asia. According to the "Chronicle of Novgorod" written after 1016 by an unknown author, soldiers and ships from all over Scandinavia took part in the campaign. The Crusaders tried to take advantage of the difficult situation in which the Russians had found themselves after the invasion and looting of the Golden Horde. In the autumn of 1240, they occupied the western part of the territory of Novgorod, which contained the cities of Pskov, Izborsk and Kaporje. When they approached the capital of Novgorod, the defenders recalled the twenty-year-old Duke Alexander Jaroslavlich (1221-1263) from exile. In 1241, Jaroslavich recaptured Pskov and Kaporje.



The battle at Lake Peipus as depicted in a miniature of the 16th c.

In the early spring of 1242, the Teutonic Knights defeated a small force of Novgorodians, about 20 kilometres south of Fort Dorpat (modern-day Tartu). Driven by Prince-Bishop Herman of Dorpat, the Teutonic Knights, along with the Scandinavians, met on April 5 with Alexander Jaroslavich's army in the narrow strip of land that separates the northern and southern parts of the lake Peipus. Duke Alexander, wanting to fight on the ground of his choice, retreated to drag the arrogant invaders into the frozen lake by the cold winter.

The Crusades numbered five hundred to six thousand highly trained and equipped cavalry (most probably Estonians) and two to three thousand infantry and auxiliaries. In contrast, Novgorod's forces included the select guards of Duke Alexander and his brother, the Novgorod militia, and a detachment of Turkish-Mongol allies, a total of about five thousand men. According to Russian chronicles of the time, after hours of fierce fighting, Jaroslavich ordered the left and right ends of his archers to enter the battle. The Teutonic Knights, exhausted by the fighting and unable to move skillfully with their horses on the ice, began to retreat disorderly.

A little later, the image of the newly arrived Russian cavalry made them lose the last elements of cohesion. When they tried to regroup on the edge of the lake, the thin layer of ice collapsed due to the weight of their armour and many drowned. In addition to the Teutonic Knights, many 'Svei' (Swedes) were killed in this battle, while the rest managed to escape on their ships and return to their homeland. Thanks to this victory, which came after the devastating looting of the Mongols three years ago in Russia, Alexander Jaroslavich was named "*Nievsky*" in honour of his country's defence against the crusaders of the North Sea and the Baltic.

In the following decades the Order of the Teutonic Knights suffered a devastating defeat at the Battle of Durbe against the Samogitians, which inspired many uprisings throughout Prussia and Livonia. When the Teutonic Knights won the crucial battle by besieging Königsberg from 1262 to 1265, their crusade had reached a turning point. The chronicle of the Teutonic Order states in particular that during the period 1343-1345 it suppressed a great Estonian uprising and that in 1346 it finally bought the Duchy of Estonia from Denmark.

In 1348, the Teutonic Order won a major victory over the Lithuanians in the Battle of Strėva, weakening them severely, while in 1370 they prevailed decisively, occupying Lithuania in the Battle

of Rudau. The war between the Teutonic Order and the Lithuanians was particularly fierce. It was common practice for Lithuanians to attack their enemies, and according to the Order's chronicler, "*they used to tie captured Knights to their horses and having both of them burned alive, while sometimes a stake would be driven into their bodies, or the Knight would be flayed.*" This constant warfare had a great influence on the political situation in the region and was a source of constant rivalry of the Lithuanians and the Poles against the Germans, to such an extent that it influenced the mentality of the time for cultural cooperation already established by the Hanseatic League.

A dispute over the succession to the Duchy of Pomerelia (eastern Pomerania) involved the Teutonic Order in further conflict in the early 14th century. The Margraves of Brandenburg had claims to the duchy that they acted upon after the death of King Wenceslaus of Poland in 1306. Duke Władysław I the Elbow-high of Poland also claimed the duchy, based on inheritance from Przemysław II, but he was opposed by some Pomeranians nobles. They requested help from Brandenburg, which subsequently occupied all of Pomerelia except for the citadel of (Danzig) in 1308. Because Władysław was unable to come to the defence of Gdańsk, the Teutonic Knights, then led by Hochmeister Siegfried von Feuchtwangen, were called to expel the Brandenburgers.

The Teutonic Order, under the Prussian Landmeister Heinrich von Plötzke, evicted the Brandenburgers from Gdańsk in September 1308, but then refused to yield the town to the Poles, and according to some sources massacred the town's inhabitants. Although the exact extent of the violence is unknown, and widely recognized by historians, it remains an unsolvable mystery. The estimates range from 60 rebellious leaders, reported by dignitaries of the region and Knight chroniclers, to 10,000 civilians, a number cited in a papal bull (of dubious provenance) that was used in a legal process installed to punish the Order for the event. The legal dispute went on for a time, but the Order was eventually absolved of the charges. In the Treaty of Soldin, the Teutonic Order purchased Brandenburg's

supposed claim to the castles of Gdańsk, Świecie (Schwetz), and Tczew (Dirschau) and their hinterlands from the margraves for 10,000 marks on 13 September 1309.

The conquest of Gdańsk marked a new phase in the history of the Teutonic Knights. The persecution and abolition of the powerful Knights Templar, which began in 1307, worried the Teutonic Knights, but control of Pomerelia allowed them to move their headquarters in 1309 to Malbork (Marienburg) on the Nogat River, outside the reach of secular powers. The position of Prussian Landmeister was merged with that of the Grand Master. The Pope began investigating misconduct by the Teutonic Knights, but no charges were found to have substance. Along with the campaigns against the Lithuanians, the Teutonic Order faced a vengeful Poland and legal threats from the Papacy. The Treaty of Kalisz of 1343 ended open war between the Teutonic Knights and Poland. The Knights relinquished Kuyavia and Dobrzyń Land to Poland, but retained Culmerland and Pomerelia with the city of Gdańsk.



Illustration of Kronborg Castle in Helsingør, Denmark. The castle controlled the crossing at the Kattegat strait.

At the same time, Valdemar Atterdag (the epithet meaning "Return of the Day") succeeded his father, Valdemar II, to the throne of Denmark. In 1340, his kingdom was in a state of weakness. Most of the country was in the hands of Holstein feudal lords, who had secured great privileges for their counties. The coastal regions of

Skåne, Halland and Blekinge in the Kattegat strait were sold to the Kingdom of Sweden. This obstructed the naval control of the Hanseatic cities, which provided significant revenue to Denmark. That is why in 1341, Valdemar Atterdag decided to restore the territorial sovereignty of his kingdom in the region by fighting against the Swedes.

In this war, Denmark found support from all the most important coastal cities of the Hanseatic League, namely Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Greifswald and Stralsund, which wanted its duty-free use on their behalf. On the other hand, the Swedes were supported by the dukes of Holstein, who exploited the hinterland and the navigable passage of the river Eider in southern Denmark. Valdemar Atterdag attacked Holstein's duchy and the castle of Kalundborg, where the mother of the Swedish king Magnus Eriksson lived. Although the Danes have had some success in their military operations, the conflict has ended in a peace treaty in Sweden's favour. According to it, the King of Denmark was forced, among other things, to accept the sale of the southern provinces of Sweden, which previously belonged to Denmark, as parts of Swedish territory. In return, he took the castle of Copenhagen.

Around 1346, Valdemar Atterdag launched a new crusade against Lithuania. Detmar, a Franciscan chronicler, wrote that the King of Denmark first agreed with the municipal authority of Lübeck city and then with the ruler of Saxony Erich, to set up an expeditionary force on the pretext of Christianization of the Lithuanians. The campaign was unsuccessful and Valdemar went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem without the permission of the Pope, where he succeeded in becoming a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre. After his return to Denmark in 1346, he recaptured the castle of Vordingborg, which was the stronghold of the Duke of Holstein. By the end of the year, Valdemar had expelled the Germans from his country, re-establishing the economic privileges of the transit tariffs and tolls that increased the state's cash reserves. With significantly increased economic resources, Denmark was now able in 1355 to pay for a

better army and extend its dominance to its eastern islands and the province of Skåne in southern Sweden.

Despite of the fact that Valdemar Atterdag had regained territorial and economic sovereignty over the entire Danish peninsula and the northern shores of the Kattegat Strait, he was unable to reduce the growing power of the Hanseatic League, which had already become the largest commercial manager in the area. Even before the full-blown conflict with Swedish King Magnus over the province of Skåne, Valdemar decided to attack the Hanseatic town of Gotland, Visby, which was the main transit port of the League in the Baltic Sea. In 1361, the Danish army invaded Gotland, slaughtering the rural population outside the walls of Visby. Valdemar fought the Gotlanders and defeated them in front of the city, killing 1800 men. The city surrendered, and Valdemar tore down part of the wall to make his entry. Once in possession, he set up three huge beer barrels and informed the city fathers that if the barrels weren't filled with silver and gold within three days, he would turn his men loose to pillage the town. To Valdemar's surprise the barrels were filled before nightfall on the first day passed. The churches were stripped of their valuables and the riches were loaded on Danish ships and carried home to Vordingborg, Valdemar's residence. Valdemar added "King of Gotland" to his title list. But his action against Visby, a member of the Hanseatic League, would have consequences later.

The conquest of Visby, the most important port of the Hanseatic League in the Baltic Sea, had serious consequences for the control of the region. In 1362, the Hanseatic Fleet under the command of the Mayor of Lübeck, Johann Wittenborg, besieged Helsingborg without success. The Hanseatic League, in co-operation with Sweden and Norway, has demanded the return of territory from earlier conquests of Valdemar Atterdag. Due to a rejection of the claim, the Hanseatic League sent a fleet and troops to destroy the coasts of Denmark. The allied army managed to plunder Copenhagen and the province of Skåne in southern Sweden. At the same time, the Danish fleet attacked the Hanseatic League fleet,

trying to force it to move away from the sea zone of the Kattegat strait. Finally, the Kingdom of Denmark regained control of the sea traffic from the Hanseatic League fleet, forcing Lübeck 's burghers to blame Mayor Johann Wittenborg for their defeat and execute him in the town square.

The leadership of the Hanseatic League was forced in 1365 to abide by the terms of the Treaty of Vordingborg, according to which it lost many of the privileges it held as the sole carrier of goods in the North Sea and the Baltic. But because the Treaty's unfavourable terms harmed the economic interests and aspirations of the Hanseatic bourgeoisie, their leaderships colluded by organizing the Cologne Confederation in alliance with the Swedish kingdom. In 1367 they formed a huge fleet with which they defeated the Danes, forcing them to sign the Treaty of Stralsund in 1370, which was much more favourable to the interests of the Hanseatic League.

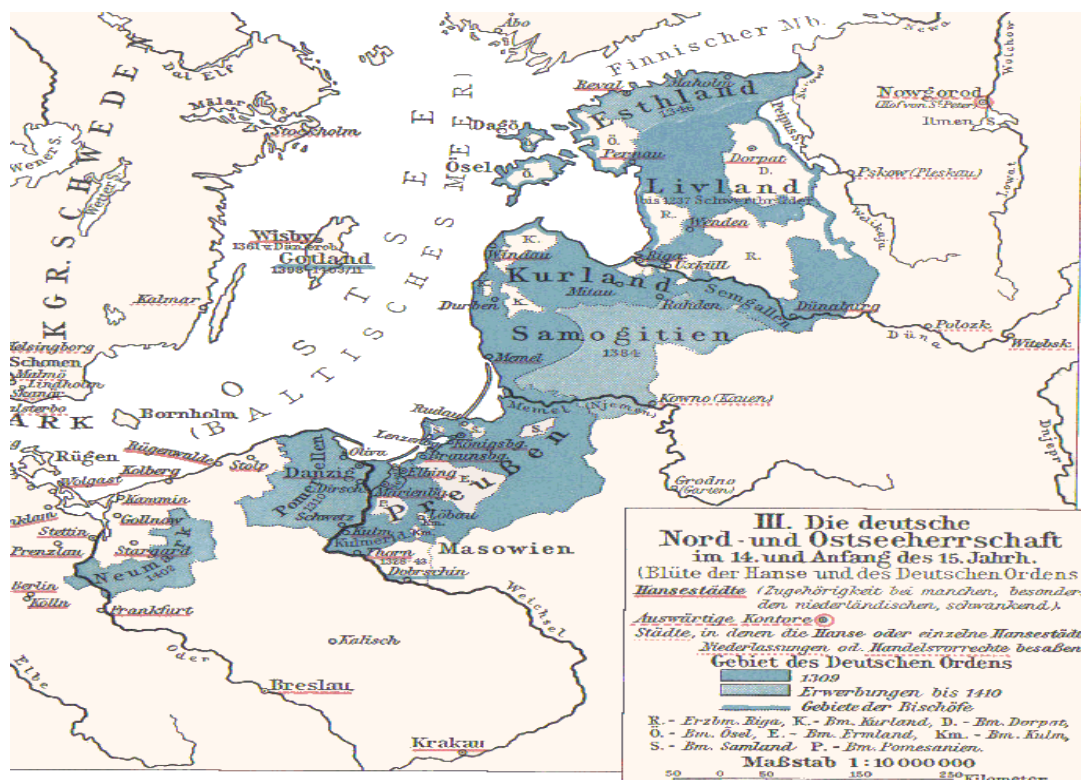


The Treaty of Stralsund (Municipal archive of the city).

The terms of the treaty were specifically defined by the mayors of Lübeck and Stralsund, who demanded the liberation of Visby from the Danes, and the conduct of free trade throughout the Baltic region with a monopoly right to exploit the fishery and of its coastal natural resources. As a clause to secure the new privileges, the Hanseatic League got the right of the liberum veto in the election of a king to the throne of Denmark, which meant the full

subordination and dependence of the country from the leadership of Lübeck and Stralsund.

At 1407, the Teutonic Order reached its greatest territorial extent and included the lands of Prussia, Pomerelia, Samogitia, Courland, Livonia, Estonia, Gotland, Dagö, Ösel, and the Neumark, pawned by Brandenburg in 1402.



Map of the possessions of the Teutonic Order and the cities of the Hanseatic League in the eastern Baltic.

In May 1409 an uprising in Teutonic-held Samogitia started. Lithuania supported it and the knights threatened to invade. Poland announced its support for the Lithuanian cause and threatened to invade Prussia in return. As Prussian troops evacuated Samogitia, Teutonic Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen declared war on the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on 6 August 1409.

The Teutonic Knights hoped to defeat Poland and Lithuania separately, and began by invading Greater Poland and Kuyavia,

catching the Poles by surprise. The Knights burned the castle at Dobrin (Dobrzyń nad Wisłą), captured Bobrowniki after a 14-day siege, conquered Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) and sacked several towns. The Poles organized counterattacks and recaptured Bydgoszcz. The Samogitians attacked Memel (Klaipėda). Until then, neither side was ready for a full-scale war.

Bohemian King Wenceslaus (Ventseslav) agreed to mediate in the dispute between the Teutons and the alliance of Poles and Lithuanians. A truce was signed on 8 October 1409 and was set to expire on 24 June 1410. Both sides used this time to prepare for war, gathering troops and engaging in diplomatic maneuvering. Both sides sent letters and envoys accusing each other of various wrongdoings and threats to Christendom. Wenceslaus, who received a gift of 60,000 florins from the knights, declared that Samogitia rightfully belonged to the knights and only Dobrzyń Land should be returned to Poland. The knights also paid 300,000 ducats to Sigismund of Hungary, who had ambitions regarding the Principality of Moldavia, for mutual military assistance. Sigismund attempted to break the Polish–Lithuanian alliance by offering Vytautas a king's crown; Vytautas' acceptance would have violated the terms of the Ostrów Agreement and created Polish-Lithuanian discord. At the same time, Vytautas managed to obtain a truce from the Livonian Order.

In December 1409 Władysław II Jagiełło and Vytautas finally agreed on a common strategy: their armies would unite into a single massive force and march together towards Malbork (Marienburg), the capital of the Teutonic Knights. The Knights, who took a defensive position, did not expect a joint attack and were preparing for a dual invasion—by the Poles along the Vistula River towards Gdańsk (Danzig) and the Lithuanians along the Neman River towards Ragnit (Neman). To counter this perceived threat, Ulrich von Jungingen concentrated his forces in Schwetz (Świecie), a central location from where troops could respond to an invasion from any direction rather quickly. Sizable garrisons were left in the

eastern castles of Ragnit, Rhein (Ryn) near Lötzen (Giżycko) and Memel (Klaipėda). To keep their plans secret and mislead the knights, Władysław II Jagiełło and Vytautas organized several raids into bordering territories, thus forcing the Teutonic Knights to confine themselves to their headquarters.



Pages from the 'Cronica konfliktus Wladislai regis Poloniae cum Cruciferis anno Christi'.

According to the chronicle 'Cronica conflictus Wladislai regis Poloniae cum Cruciferis anno Christi 1410' written by an eyewitness, whose name is still the subject of research in the historiography of the time, a combined Polish-Lithuanian army led by Vitautas and Jogaila decisively defeated the army of the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Grundwald in 1410. In this battle most of the Teutonic Knights' leadership was killed or captured. The Polish-Lithuanian army then began to besiege Malbork (Marienburg), the seat of the Order, but was unable to do so due to the strong resistance of Magistrate Heinrich von Pauen.

When the first peace treaty was signed in Torun in 1411, the Teutonic Order was able to effectively retain most of its territory, although the Knights' reputation as armed warriors suffered irreparable damage. The Teutons ceded the area of Dobrzyń and Samogitia to the Polish-Lithuanian alliance, but would not regain

their former strength, and the economic burden of war reparations caused internal conflicts and problems in the territories they conquered. The battle of Grunwald shifted the balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe and marked the rise of the Polish-Lithuanian union as the main political and military power in the region. As forceful as the Polish-Lithuanian victory was, Jagiello and Vytautas failed eventually to expulse totally the Order from the territory of Prussia.



Depiction of the Battle of Grunwald by the Polish painter Jan Matejko (1838-1893) (National Museum of Warsaw).

Despite their victory, the Poles and Lithuanians were unable to turn the situation around in their favour by gaining economic, legal and diplomatic benefits. However, the Peace of Toruń (Thorn) imposed heavy war reparations on the Knights, from which they never recovered. They had to pay compensation in silver, equal to ten times the then annual salary of the King of England, in four annual doses.

To cover these payments, the Teutonic Knights borrowed heavily, confiscated gold and silver from churches and increased taxes. Two major Prussian cities, Gdańsk (Danzig) and Toruń (Thorn), revolted against the tax increases. The defeat at Grunwald left the Teutonic Knights with fewer forces to defend their remaining territories.

Since Samogitia became officially christened, as both Poland and Lithuania were for a long time, the Knights had difficulties recruiting new volunteer crusaders. The Grand Masters then needed to rely on mercenary troops, which proved an expensive drain on their already depleted budget. The internal conflicts, economic decline, and tax increases led to unrest and the foundation of the Prussian Confederation, or Alliance against Lordship, in 1441.

In 1454, the Prussian Confederation, founded on the initiative of the nobles and bourgeoisie of western Prussia, revolted against the Order of the Teutonic Knights, beginning a thirteen-year war. Most of Prussia was destroyed in the war, during which the Teutonic Order was forced to return the city of Neumark to Brandenburg in 1455. By the second peace treaty of Toruń (1466), the defeated Order recognized the Polish crown's rights over western Prussia (subsequently Royal Prussia) while retaining Teutonic the Eastern Prussia, but under Polish sovereignty. Because Malbork (Marienburg) Castle was handed over to mercenaries in lieu of their pay, the Order moved its base to Königsberg in Sambia.

After the Polish-Teutonic War (1519–1521), the Order was completely expelled from Prussia. Although it had lost control of all of its Prussian territory, the Teutonic Order maintained its dominance within the Holy Roman Empire and Livonia, although the latter gained a relative autonomy. After the final defeat of Prussia in 1525, the Teutonic Knights were isolated in their lands within the Holy Roman Empire. In the same year, the Grand Master of the Order Albrecht embraced Protestantism and acquired a secular attire as Duke of Prussia, assuring the Polish king of his obedience to his crown. After this event, the efforts of the reorganization of the Teutonic Knights in the previous regime were fruitless and their merging actions with the Order of the Knights of St. John failed. At the end, the organization was further weakened when the Livonian Magister embraced Protestantism in 1561, accepting the secular position of Duke of Courland and Semigallia, which were then under Polish occupation.

The wars in the Baltic and North Seas have contributed to the gradual weakening of the economic and political power of the Hanseatic League. The revival of tariffs by the Kingdom of Denmark and the suppression of the Hanseatic Monopoly, especially in the Baltic, by competing neighbouring countries created preconditions for a slow but steady decline. In particular, the union of Poland and Lithuania in 1386 significantly damaged the trade interests of the Hanseatic League in the eastern hinterland. Later, in 1397, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, united under the rule of Queen Margarita I of Denmark, ousted the political rule of the Hanseatic League, forcing it to abandon its castles and tolls in the Danish state. Also before the end of the 15th century, Russia opposed the Baltic Hanseatic Monopoly: in 1478 Ivan III, the great prince of Moscow, after capturing Novgorod, expelled the Hanseatic merchants who remained there and in 1494 abolished their office (kontor) in the city.

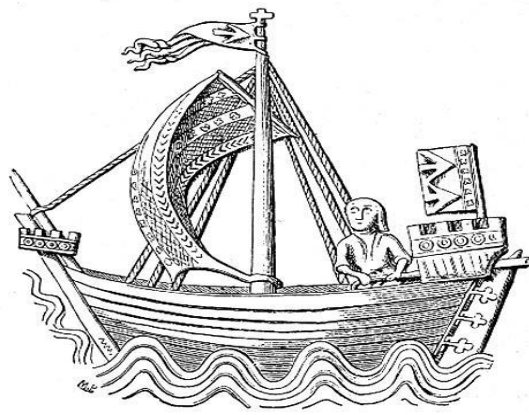
During the 14th century the economies of England and the Netherlands developed rapidly and their commercial naval power expanded greatly, while in the 15th century the development of textiles and breweries made them much more independent than Hanseatic importers. The British and Dutch merchants, who had learned and benefited greatly from the Hanseatic League, increased their trade and craftsmanship, expelling the Germans not only from domestic markets, but also from transport to the North Sea and the Baltic.

In the beginning, the Dutch were more successful than the British in this regard. At the same time, fishing herring in the North Sea was completely halted in the Skåne area because fishing there had declined dramatically in the first quarter of the 15th century. The new western rivals, backed by the Danes and some other eastern cities of the Hanseatic League, invaded the Baltic and in the middle of the 16th century were the main carriers of its products to the west. Until the first decade of the 17th century, Dutch ships completely dominated the trade of the North Sea and the Baltic.

These serious and decisive external developments put enormous pressure on the Hanseatic League and shattered the unity of its purpose. The trade corridor through the peninsula between the Baltic and North Sea, controlled by Lübeck and Hamburg, was largely replaced during the 14th century by direct service of Dutch and British ships through the Kattegat Strait, which made possible the easier and cheaper transportation of bulky goods. As a result, the metropolises of the Hanseatic League lost their significance and their wealth diminished considerably. At the same time, some South German citizens were not very unhappy with the new developments. A team based in Cologne developed close and lucrative relations with the Netherlands and England. Another group, centred on Gdańsk, was able to take advantage of the competitive conditions offered by the Dutch masters, ignoring Lübeck's monopoly regime, in order to increase their profits by exporting the Baltic products.

Following these historic developments, cooperation between the cities of the Hanseatic League became increasingly difficult. Membership was reduced and effective joint action became rarer. Isolation, characterized by a gathering of local merchants, replaced the broader visions of older Hanseatic municipal councils and the bourgeoisie. The strengthening of imperial power in Germany finally led to the detachment of many cities from the League - mainly Berlin and others of the Duchy of Brandenburg - which withdrew at the end of the 15th century. Before the end of the 16th century, the Hanseatic League was already dying. The new standards of European trade that developed after the era of great explorations and discoveries, had now judged its final end.

The chronicles state that the last Diet of the Hanseatic League was held in Lübeck in 1669.



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