

History of the Medieval Furnishings of the Franciscan Church in Toruń during the Reformation Period*

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Abstract

The article investigates the history of the medieval interior design and furnishings of the former Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Toruń during the Reformation period. The Franciscan Friars were brought to the Old Town of Toruń in 1239; they used the conventual complex until 1557, when it was taken over by the Protestant congregation of the City of Toruń, the former Franciscan Church becoming the major Protestant church both in Toruń and the surrounding region. In 1724, the former Franciscan complex was returned to the Observant Order, who added a number of serious alterations to the church's interior (including the provision of eighteenth-century furnishings and altars with their retables, and the removal of an old rood screen, etc.). The article elucidates the way medieval interior design and furnishings—mural paintings, tomb slabs, the pulpit, the organ casing, and *matronea*—functioned in the lay area of the church when used by the Lutheran congregation. In addition, the following furnishings of the former monastic *ecclesia interioris* are discussed: the high altar and its retable, the medieval choir stalls, the rood screen, and the late medieval sculpture of the Crucified Christ. The analysis of the alterations added to the church's interior demonstrates that measures undertaken when converting the church for the needs of the Protestant congregation were of a

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pragmatic rather than iconoclastic nature. The former Catholic and Franciscan medieval furnishings of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary were neither destroyed nor removed. What is more, whenever possible, they were used in a new interior design, and were either modernised or provided with inserts for the purpose.

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Introduction

[1] Founded in 1239, the Franciscan Friary in Toruń was one of the most respected and prominent mendicant communities in the State of the Teutonic Order. In all probability, the Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Toruń was completed by the end of the 1360s, and it was extended in height in the early fifteenth century. The structure, now one of the prime examples of medieval brick-built architecture in Prussia, served the Order of Friars Minor until the mid-sixteenth century.¹ The church is now a

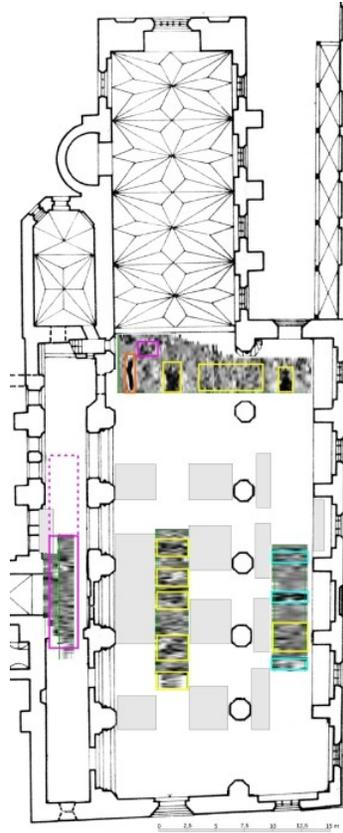
¹ The architecture of the Franciscan Church was an original creation, deriving only in part from the mendicant building tradition, and with no particular prototype as its model. The structure and spatial organisation of the church were determined by both the inherited circumstances (the form of the existing buildings and the size of the plot) and the current needs of the friary (the development of a matroneum and chapels, and the extension of the *ecclesia interioris*). This brings to mind the practices of the Friars Minor in the Province of Saxony, who sought to align their buildings with unwritten rules and local conditions. For more information on the topic, see Leonie Silberer, "Medieval Monastic Architecture of the Franciscan Order. Friaries as Evidence of Written and Unwritten Rules and Ideal Perceptions", in: *Rules and Observance. Devising Forms of Communal Life*, eds. Mirko Breitenstein, Julia Burkhardt, Stefan Burkhardt and Jens Röhrkasten, Berlin 2014, 281-294. The building was also the first hall church in the State of the Teutonic Order, and a pioneering enterprise for its scale, panache, and the interior structure system. See Teresa Mroczko, *Architektura gotycka ziemi chełmińskiej*, Warsaw 1980, 130-135, 296-307, 308-312; Teresa Mroczko and Andrzej Włodarek, "Kościół pw. Panny Marii, franciszkanów", in: *Architektura gotycka w Polsce*, ed. Teresa Mroczko and Marian Arszyński (= *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, vol. 2), vol. 2: *Katalog zabytków*, ed. Andrzej

reference point for researchers investigating the former mendicant legacy for two reasons: the artistic import of its architectural design and its current shape. The medieval structure of the church has essentially survived without any noticeable alterations and additional layers, and the interior, despite its tempestuous history and changing functions and users, still features many of its historic decorations and original furnishings (Figs. 1a-c).



1a-b Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, interior: a) looking east, b) looking west, with historic tomb slabs visible (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

Włodarek, Warsaw 1995, 243; Zbigniew Nawrocki, "Pofranciszkański kościół NMP w Toruniu, Próba rekonstrukcji faz budowy", in: *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici, Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo* 2 (1966), 47-80; Zbigniew Nawrocki, "Kościół Mariacki w Toruniu - budowa i przebudowy w świetle odkryć w ostatnim ćwierćwieczu", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez toruński oddział SHS oraz IZiK UMK, Toruń 14-16 kwietnia 2005*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczwajd, Toruń 2005, 19-53; Jerzy Domasłowski and Jarosław Jarzewicz, *Kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny w Toruniu* (= Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, *Prace popularno-naukowe*, no. 65, and *Zabytki Polski Północnej*, no. 10), Toruń 1998, 27-80; Adam Soćko, *Układy emporowe w architekturze państwa krzyżackiego*, Warsaw 2005, 309-312; Christofer Herrmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur im Preußenland. Untersuchungen zur Frage der Kunstlandschaft und -geographie*, Petersberg 2007, 756-758; Monika Jakubek-Raczkowska, Juliusz Raczkowski and Piotr Oliński, *Księga klasztorów ziemi chełmińskiej w średniowieczu*, vol. 1: *Chełmno*, Toruń 2019, 36-39.



1c Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, church plan with time-slicing data and GPR (ground penetrating radar) anomalies (location of burial vaults and tomb chambers), survey completed in December 2018

[2] The fact that medieval monuments have survived in a relatively large number in Toruń reflects the Protestant history of the town and the utilitarian approach of the Lutheran congregation to their Catholic inheritance, which is often pointed out by researchers.² The furnishings of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we know them, are probably but a fraction of what they used to be. Given the significance of Toruń's friary and its rapport with the wealthy power elite in the city,³ as well as its substantial income, the interior design and furnishings of the Church of the Assumption

² Katarzyna Cieślak, *Między Rzymem, Wittenbergą a Genewą. Sztuka Gdańska jako miasta podzielonego wyznaniowo*, Wrocław 2000; Piotr Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczajd, Toruń 2005, 275-294.

³ Piotr Oliński, *Fundacje mieszczańskie w miastach pruskich w okresie średniowiecza i na progu czasów nowożytnych (Chełmno, Toruń, Elbląg, Gdańsk, Królewiec, Braniewo)*, Toruń 2008, 509.

of the Blessed Virgin Mary must have been truly impressive in the Middle Ages. The structure must have inspired awe, which can now be partially traced through written records, the surviving works of art from the era, and the reconstruction of the church's liturgical space based on the conventual rule.⁴

[3] From its very foundation, the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary must have been fitted with a rood screen, main altarpiece, rood screen retable (or retables), side altars, and pulpit.⁵ It is worth noting that the church also boasted the first organ casing in the region (created as early as the fourteenth century).⁶ The surviving choir stalls in the chancel were fitted much later, in the late fifteenth century. Surviving moveable furnishings include: Gothic panel paintings of what we now know as the Toruń Polyptych⁷ (at the Diocesan Museum in Pelplin), two Gothic crucifixes⁸ (in the modern era, one of the crucifixes was probably transferred to the Observant Friary in Skępe), a recumbent figure of the Dead Christ in the Tomb⁹ (deposited by the

⁴ See Monika Jakubek-Raczkowska and Juliusz Raczkowski, "The Organisation of Liturgical Space and Its Furnishings at the Franciscan Friars' in Late Middle Ages Illustrated by an Example of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Church in Toruń", in: *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici, Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo*, 48 (2017), 101-132.

⁵ Jakubek-Raczkowska and Raczkowski, "The Organisation of Liturgical Space and Its Furnishing at the Franciscan Friars", *passim*.

⁶ The entry on the provision of the organ casing by a Franciscan friar can be found in the eighteenth-century Franciscan chronicle *Archivum Conventus Thorunensis ad Mariam Annunziam 1239-1792*, eighteenth c., chronicle, documents in the original and a cartulary, Diocesan Archive, Pelplin, Monastica Toruń – Franciszkanie 1, item no. Tor. Franc. 1, p. 3, ad annum 1343. Cf. Werner Renkewitz and Jan Janca, *Geschichte der Orgelbaukunst in Ost- und Westpreußen von 1333 bis 1944*, vol. 1 (= *Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler im Östlichen Mitteleuropa*, vol. 2), Würzburg 1984, 2-5.

⁷ Juliusz Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński. Studium zabytkoznawczo-konserwatorskie*, Toruń 2016.

⁸ For more information on the late Gothic crucifix, see Andrzej Woźniński, "Artystyczne i ideowe aspekty późnogotyckiego krucyfiksu w pofranciszkańskim kościele mariackim w Toruniu", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez toruński oddział SHS oraz IZiK UMK, Toruń 14-16 kwietnia 2005*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczajd, Toruń 2005, 203-221.

⁹ Monika Jakubek-Raczkowska and Juliusz Raczkowski, "Gotycka figura Chrystusa w Grobie i jej miejsce w przestrzeni liturgicznej kościoła Franciszkanów w Toruniu", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczajd, Toruń 2005, 181-202.

parish at the District Museum in Toruń), and a stone-carved baptismal font. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the church's windows were decorated with stained glass (few remains have survived),¹⁰ while the interior was decorated with opulent mural paintings, which covered at least the south aisle, north arcade and matroneum walls, chancel vaults, and cloister.¹¹ Additionally, the nave featured three fourteenth-century brass tomb slabs and over seventy stone-carved tomb slabs,¹² which were described by Johann Baumgarten in his memoranda dating to 1715–1719.¹³

[4] Little is known about the precious medieval liturgical implements. A document dated to 10 February 1456 mentions a grand silver crucifix and six chalices weighing a total of 12 marks (ca. 6 lbs).¹⁴ They were handed over to the Toruń city council and subsequently put in pledge for the purpose of military operations during the Thirteen Years' War (1454–1466). The items were to be bought back and returned to the friary, but they eventually never were. Additionally, the friary boasted a substantial library including numerous works by Saint Bonaventure, writings by Thomas Aquinas and his continuators, works by Scotists, and those by Albert the Great, Henry Suso, Denis the Carthusian, and John of Głogów.¹⁵ The Franciscans of Toruń also

¹⁰ More on the stained glass windows: Lech Kalinowski and Helena Małkiewicz, "Thorner Glasmalerei des 14. Jahrhunderts", in: *Sztuka w kręgu zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach i Inflantach*, ed. Michał Woźniak, Toruń 1995 (= *Studia Borussico-Baltica Torunensia Historiae Artium*, 2), 147-175; and more recently: Alicja Graczyk, *Zespół średniowiecznych witraży z Muzeum Okręgowego w Toruniu. Problematyka historyczno-artystyczna, zabytkoznawcza i konserwatorska*, a B.A. thesis written under the supervision of Juliusz Raczkowski, Institute of Heritage Science and Conservation, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń, Toruń 2018 (print copy deposited in Thesis Repository, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń), which emphasized the criterion of authenticity.

¹¹ The full range of medieval mural paintings in the church is yet to be described: the murals have gradually been revealed since the late nineteenth century; the latest discovery under the Early Modern organ casing was made in 2018.

¹² Zygmunt Kruszelnicki, "XIV-wieczna płyta nagrobna małżonków von Soest w Toruniu", in: *Studia Pomorskie*, ed. Michał Walicki, vol. 1, Wrocław 1957, 104-148.

¹³ Marek Farbiszewski, "Opis Torunia z początku XVIII wieku. Tzw. Memoranda Jana Baumgartena", in: *Miscellanea źródłowe do historii kultury i sztuki Torunia*, eds. Bogusław Dybaś and Marek Farbiszewski, Wrocław et al. 1989 (= *Źródła i materiały do dziejów sztuki polskiej*, vol. 22, ed. Marian Arszyński), 116-161.

¹⁴ *Urkundenbuch des Bisthums Culm*, ed. Carl Peter Woelky, 2 vols., Danzig 1885-1887, vol. 1, no. 618.

¹⁵ On the library of the Franciscan Friars in Toruń, see Wiesława Kwiatkowska, "Średniowieczna biblioteka klasztoru franciszkanów w Toruniu", in: *Folia Toruniensia* 1

used a range of sermon collections (*sermones de tempore, sermones de sanctis, sermones quadragesimales*), including those by the eminent members of the Order of Friars Minor: Bernardino of Siena, Bernardino of Bustis, Hendrik Herp, Guardian of Malines, etc.¹⁶ Sadly, all these books perished: researchers in the manuscript legacy of Prussia are yet to rediscover a single copy from the Franciscan library in Toruń.

[5] Elements of the medieval liturgical space survived in the church for a long time, despite its change of denomination in 1557. In all likelihood, the rood screen was dismantled in 1735 by the Observant Friars,¹⁷ who commissioned a new rood beam (1731) and replaced the frameworks of both the main altarpiece and all the retables in the nave. They must have removed some of the Protestant furnishings, too. In the western section of the church (where the veneration of the Passion of Christ flourished from the Middle Ages), they fitted a stage representation of the Holy Sepulchre, made of wood and covered in profuse polychrome decorations.¹⁸ The old main altarpiece was stripped away in the process of re-Catholicisation. Conventual buildings,¹⁹ used by the Protestant congregation (for the purpose of the Academic Gymnasium) and Observant Friars (serving its original function as a conventual complex), were demolished in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The surviving medieval legacy is but a fraction of what it used to be before the Reformation period, the reorganisation of the church's interior by the Observant Order, the dissolution of the Observant Order, and the subsequent change of the church's function. The aim of this analysis is to

(2000), 9-30.

¹⁶ Kwiatkowska, "Średniowieczna biblioteka klasztoru franciszkanów w Toruniu", 20-21.

¹⁷ The chronicle of Toruń's Observant Friars provides the following entry under the year 1735: "The church interior was dusted, the old choir was removed, the one facing the high altar, with pews in four descending rows, designed in the Lutheran fashion." See Kamil Kantak, "Kronika bernardynów toruńskich", in: *Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* 32 (1925), 103-134: 117.

¹⁸ Bogumiła Rouba et al., "Kaplica Grobu Pańskiego w toruńskim kościele Mariackim – wyniki badań konserwatorskich", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczwajd, Toruń 2005, 503-526.

¹⁹ See Marian Arszyński, "Klasztor franciszkanów – przyczynek do dziejów niezachowanych zabytków architektury miasta Torunia", in: *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne* 44, *Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo* 4 (1971), 65-77.

describe and assess the alterations to the medieval structure and furnishings in the Reformation period.

Reformation

[6] Lutheran innovations reached Toruń in a relatively short period of time. Already in 1525, the city was witnessing a riot called "the little revolt", which hit Catholic churches and monasteries, including the Franciscan Church. At the Franciscan Church, liturgical vestments and implements, choir stalls, and retables were damaged.²⁰ After 1525, some of the friars converted to Lutheranism, e.g. Bartłomiej Jöricz, who continued to preach at the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary after his conversion, and subsequently at the Church of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist. In their sermons, Lutheran preachers (e.g. Matthias Monsterberg) often attacked Catholic monks and their customs; they were initially counteracted by the city council in this respect.²¹ Those Franciscans who remained in the friary gave their consent for the city council (from the 1530s, Lutheran in their majority) to take the conventual complex into custody, including valuables, mainly liturgical vessels. Conventual life essentially died out: with a growing number of conversions in the city, the friary ceased to recruit novices.²² The two remaining Franciscan friars died in 1559, but the church had begun to provide Lutheran service two years before. For researchers, the year 1557 marks the beginning of the Protestant history of the church and conventual buildings.²³

²⁰ An archival source from 1525 (*Praeside Johanne Coy*) tells us: "Messe ließen sie untergehen, die kasel und andre Meßgewand zerschneiden, die Kelche zum andren Nutzen zu verschencken, Sacrament aus der kirche, samt dem rathstuhl und altare geworfen." See Albert Voigt, *Thorner Denkwürdigkeiten von 1345-1547*, Thorn 1904 (= *Mitteilungen des Copernicus-Vereins für Wissenschaft und Kunst zu Thorn*, 13), 156.

²¹ Tadeusz Glemma, "Stosunki kościelne w Toruniu w stuleciu XVI i XVII na tle dziejów kościelnych Prus Królewskich", in: *Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* 42 (1934), 32-33.

²² Glemma, "Stosunki kościelne w Toruniu w stuleciu XVI i XVII na tle dziejów kościelnych Prus Królewskich", 33.

²³ Before they died, they gave their consent to the transfer of the remaining liturgical vessels to the Town Hall, where they were stored in the attic of the tower. The transfer was completed in the presence of the church's custodians, Benedykt Koyen and Jakub Hübner. An inventory of the friary's possessions was also made at that time, see Carl Gotthelf Prätorius, *Topographisch-historisch-statistische Beschreibung der Stadt Thorn und ihres Gebietes: die Vorzeit und Gegenwart umfassend*, ed. Julius Emil Wernicke, Thorn 1832, 101; the transfer of the liturgical vessels to the town hall is also noted in: *Urkundenbuch der alten sächsischen Franziskanerprovinzen*, vol. II: *Die Kustodie Preussen*, ed. Leonhard Lemmens, Düsseldorf 1913, no. 611, 161; a

This period came to an end in 1724, when the entire complex was handed over to the Observant Order.

[7] Apparently, the first change of denomination was much kinder to the medieval legacy of the church than its eighteenth-century re-Catholicisation and nineteenth-century restoration works. Naturally, new owners added necessary alterations to the spatial organisation of the church (discussed several times by Piotr Birecki).²⁴ However, these changes had little effect on the interior's structure (the little choir and large choir overlapping with the former "church of the clergy" and "church of the laity"). Some of the paintings were most probably taken down or at least corrected in line with a new doctrine (which was not tantamount to iconoclastic practices, as Protestants in Prussia were rather sceptical about the trend).²⁵ More importantly, however, most of the alterations were added with the aim of providing new and more fashionable furnishings. As such, they were focused more on new formal trends rather than doctrinal necessities.

[8] The subsequent sections of the article present the history of the surviving medieval interior design and furnishings in the nave: mural paintings, tomb slabs in the floor, and the matroneum's balustrade, which was transformed during the installation of a new pulpit and organ casing. The medieval design of the chancel cannot be described in full detail; the final section of the article presents a hypothetical Protestant re-organisation of the chancel's interior, including the alterations added to the choir stalls and the main altarpiece.

Mural paintings

[9] A great variety of mural paintings, which remain to be the church's most spectacular decoration, were probably covered with whitewash or stucco during the Protestant period.—They have gradually been restored since the end of the nineteenth century.—There are no sources that indicate when it happened and whether it was part of a new programme or a long-term reorganisation of the interior. Both the monumental mural representations of the saints in the south aisle and the decorations of the northern section of the nave (Franciscan themes and *The Ecstasy of Saint Mary Magdalene*) were whitewashed (Fig. 2). This was very much in line with how Protestants in Prussia reorganised former Catholic interiors: mural paintings were not scrubbed off, but only covered with whitewash or stucco, as in Kwidzyn Cathedral or the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in

detailed inventory of the valuables has not survived.

²⁴ Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 275-294.

²⁵ On the same topic, see Cieślak, *Między Rzymem, Wittenbergą a Genewą*.

Gdańsk. However, it is also possible that mural paintings were finally covered in the Observant period.



2 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mural paintings with Franciscan representations, fifth vault bay from the east, north side of the nave (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

Ornaments in the buttresses in the south aisle were not discovered until the late nineteenth century, while other mural paintings were revealed during the subsequent instalments of the restoration work carried out in the twentieth²⁶ and twenty-first centuries.

[10] A case in point is the mural painting in between the buttresses in the third vault bay from the east in the south aisle, with an unknown narrative composition with an inscription.²⁷ Its central part was screened when in 1637

²⁶ Marcin Kozarzewski et al., *Kościół NMP, Toruń, malowidła ściennie w południowej nawie, koniec XIV w., Dokumentacja konserwatorska*, typescript, 1990; Ryszard Żankowski, *Dokumentacja rysunkowa malowideł ściennych w nawie południowej kościoła NMP w Toruniu*, typescript, 1990.

²⁷ The painting was discovered in the years 1988–1990. The uncovered fragments of the composition are suggestive of an elaborate multi-figure scene placed in a landscape setting. To the left, at the edge of the painting, the hind hooves of a horse can be seen, with the animal heading to the right. To the left, at the bottom, looms a walled city, undersized and pictured slightly from above, with spires and roofs, and a *chiaroscuro* representation of brick-built architecture. The whole composition was

the late Mannerist epitaph of Johann Muck von Muckendorf (an inscription epitaph) was mounted (Fig. 3).²⁸ In 1722 (before the church was taken over by the Observant Order), in the course of the restoration of the epitaph,²⁹ a late Baroque illusionist canopy was added with a purple-and-green patterned drapery, which was 'suspended' from the base of a window aperture and gathered to the sides with two festoons. It is worth noting that also the new composition failed to fully cover the old mural painting, the remains of which are still legible in its lower corners.³⁰

enclosed in an architectural frame (a thin column looming to the left at the edge of the wall) topped with an elaborate line of chiaroscuroed and rose-coloured painted canopies with groin-vaulted soffits. The canopy support can also be seen on the right edge of the wall. The background is tinted blue. The iconography of the scene is illegible. The inscription is only partially legible in the areas uncovered by the restorers: "Anno. Domini. MC[...] s(a)n(c)te andree ap(os)th(oli) christfori [...]"; it probably enunciated the altar's dedication.

²⁸ Arthur Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", in: *Mitteilungen des Copernicus-Vereins für Wissenschaft und Kunst zu Thorn* 7 (1892), 29-30; Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 288.

²⁹ Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", 29; Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 288.

³⁰ The medieval composition is now visible in more detail: it shows through in the lacunae of the drapery and the areas uncovered by the restorers.



3 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, epitaph of Johann Muck von Muckendorf with an eighteenth-century painted drapery and visible sections of a mediaeval painterly composition (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[11] In the first vault bay from the west in the south aisle, the walls of the side chapel were in turn whitewashed. In 2006, when dismantling the epitaph of the Neisser family (mounted on the existing wall painting in 1594),³¹ a medieval mural representation of two Passion scenes was discovered underneath (Fig. 4).³² Apparently, in both cases, the mural paintings were covered with whitewash or epitaphs in order to promote a new function of the shallow spaces in between the buttresses and to introduce new furnishings, which, rather than an iconoclastic programme, served the burghers and their funerary remembrance aspirations.

³¹ On the monument, see: Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", 30-32; Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 289; and Eugeniusz Gašiorowski, "Panorama Torunia z epitafium Neisserów z 1594 r.", in: *Rocznik Toruński* 27 (2000), 73-98.

³² Juliusz Raczkowski, "Najnowsze odkrycia w zakresie gotyckiego malarstwa ściennego w Prusach i ich znaczenie dla badań nad sztuką regionu", in: *Homo creator et receptor artium: księga pamiątkowa księdzu profesorowi Stanisławowi Kobięłowskiemu ofiarowana*, ed. Małgorzata Wrześniak, Warsaw 2010, 89-103: 96-98.



4 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, simultaneous mural painting *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane / Christ Carrying the Cross*, south nave wall, first vault bay from the west, ca. 1400 (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

Tomb slabs

[12] Inserted into the floor above the burial vaults, tomb slabs were a traditional way of commemorating the deceased. According to archival sources, the civic tradition of memorials in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary dates back to the second half of the fourteenth century. Members of one of the most prominent patrician families in the city, Gerhard von Allen († 1371), his wife Margaretha († 1367), and his son Conrad († 1371), were buried at the entrance to the chancel. Other known tomb slabs commemorate the town councillor Heinrich von Werle († 1373) and his wife Christina († 1373). There is also a record of the brass memorial plate of the town councillor Ludolf Wale († 1381) and his sister Margaretha († 1381). The remembrance function was accentuated by expensive monumental brasses cast in Western European foundries, most probably in Flanders;³³ they were a rare sight in the State of the Teutonic Order. These artworks are known thanks to archival descriptions of the church interior by Johann Muck von Muckendorf (1637) and by Johann Baumgarten (1715–1719).³⁴ Furthermore, according to the tomb slab inventory made in 1709, the church held still at least 70 Gothic stone-carved tomb slabs.³⁵ All the medieval and modern slabs are collected in "Epitaphia und Inscriptiones zu Thorn in der S. Marien Kirche"

³³ Kruszelnicki, "XIV-wieczna płyta nagrobna małżonków von Soest w Toruniu", 104-148.

³⁴ See Farbiszewki, "Opis Torunia z początku XVIII wieku. Tzw. Memoranda Jana Baumgartena", 128.

³⁵ The inventory is quoted in: Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", passim.

by Efraim Praetorius (1714),³⁶ a number is also mentioned in the *Thornische Chronica* by Jacob Zerneck (1727).³⁷ All of these sources were compiled by Artur Semrau, who also used the tomb slab inventory report from 1709 to provide a hypothetical visual representation of the tomb slabs and their distribution in the church in the early eighteenth century.³⁸

[13] The brasses are particularly worthy of note. Early Modern descriptions suggest that inventory inspectors were well aware of their quality material and artistic value: Johann Baumgarten wrote about their elegance and historic value, "their ancient qualities".³⁹ That said, these authors had some difficulty reading their imagery. Baumgarten, e.g., saw head cushions as haloes, lacked the requisite vocabulary for describing a girl's outfit, and he also 'dressed' Gerhard von Allen in a toga.⁴⁰ These brasses, the location of which is now indicated by their stone-carved frames, survived until the eighteenth century.⁴¹ The Wale family tomb is the only exception in this respect: in the 1709 inventory, their burial vault was already consigned to the Klosmann family.⁴²

³⁶ Ephraim Praetorius, "Epitaphia und Inscriptiones - Epitaphia und Inscriptiones zu Thorn in der S. Marien Kirche", in: *Documenta Thorunensia maximam partem Statum Ecclesiasticum concernentia. Studio magno conquisita et collecta ab Ephraim Pretorio Rev. Minist. Seniore Torunij ad 1720*, manuscript at Książnica Kopernikańska in Torun, rkp 130, 681-721.

³⁷ Jacob Heinrich Zerneck, *Thornische Chronica in welcher die Geschichte dieser Stadt von MCCXXI bis MDCCXXVI aus bewehrten Scribenten und glaubwürdigen Documentis zusammengetragen worden*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1727.

³⁸ Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn".

³⁹ Baumgarten, description of the tomb slab of the von Werle family: "sepulcrum [...] magnum, elegans, totomque orichalchencis"; cited according to Farbiszewki, "Opis Torunia z początku XVIII wieku. Tzw. Memoranda Jana Baumgartena", 129.

⁴⁰ Baumgarten, description of the tomb slabs of the von Allen family, cited according to Farbiszewki, "Opis Torunia z początku XVIII wieku", 128: "capita circumdant lumina sive limbi inde colligitur esse sanctos"; "omnes in genua povolutae manibus complicatis vestitus atque ornamenta, quibus hae personae undiquaque circumdatae sunt"; "vir in habitu togato".

⁴¹ See Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", 22-23.

⁴² Item no. 99 in the inventory, see Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", 8; cf. Marta Czyżak, "Późnogotyckie płyty nagrobne w kościele Mariackim w Toruniu", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczwajd, Toruń 2005, 223-246: 232.

[14] The medieval tradition of commissioning tomb slabs for funerary remembrance purposes was continued in the Protestant period: both new slabs and epitaphs were added during the Reformation period (see Fig. 1b), also in the chancel. The 1709 inventory mentions 159 tomb slabs altogether.⁴³ According to Arthur Semrau's count, more than 90 slabs were to be found in the church at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Only five medieval tomb slabs have survived.⁴⁵

The pulpit, the organ, and the matroneum's balustrade

[15] Other furnishings of medieval origin could also be found in the nave; at least for some time, they also served the Protestant congregation. The pulpit was the most prominent permanent furnishing in Franciscan churches, as it served the fundamental mission of the order, and also the central feature in the "Space of the Word" in the Protestant interior. There is no data on the location, material, or shape of the medieval pulpit in the Franciscan Church in Toruń. However, given the mission and duty of the order, it must have been fitted in the church from its very foundation in the fourteenth century. Importantly, the pulpit is known to have been used by the Protestant congregation as late as the seventeenth century; it was eventually dismantled on 10 July 1616. Subsequently, the nave was fitted with a new and finely carved Mannerist pulpit (Fig. 5), which has remained in the same place ever since and continues the tradition of the former Franciscan pulpit.⁴⁶

⁴³ Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", 7-9; cf. Czyżak, "Późnogotyckie płyty nagrobne w kościele Mariackim w Toruniu", 224, 231.

⁴⁴ Semrau, "Die Grabdenkmäler der Marienkirche zu Thorn", passim; Czyżak, "Późnogotyckie płyty nagrobne w kościele Mariackim w Toruniu", 224.

⁴⁵ Czyżak, "Późnogotyckie płyty nagrobne w kościele Mariackim w Toruniu", 223. See also a recent discussion of the tomb slabs in the former Franciscan Church in Toruń by Tadeusz Jurkowlaniec, *Nagrobki średniowieczne w Prusach*, Warsaw 2015, 319-329. A survey carried out as part of the "Inwentarz sztuki Torunia" project is going to provide a comprehensive list of the present number of tomb slabs or their remains in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The definitive list of burial vaults will also be provided. Preliminary findings: Jarosław Rogóż, Adam Cupa, and Solongo Gansukh, *Projekt konserwatorski wizualizacji podpowierzchniowych struktur występujących w obrębie kościoła Najświętszej Marii Panny w Toruniu*, typescript, 2018, kept in the Archive of the NPRH project "Inwentarz Sztuki Torunia", Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń.

⁴⁶ Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 281-282; for more on the pulpit, see Małgorzata Wawrzak, "Ambona z kościoła Mariackiego na tle kultury artystycznej Torunia początku XVII wieku. Próba odczytania programu artystyczno-ideowego", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy*



5 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, late Mannerist Protestant pulpit, 1605 (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[16] The second most valuable fitting of the nave was the organ, which was probably mounted in the church already before 1350. The instrument was so unique for the city dwellers of that time that its construction went down in Toruń's history: it was mentioned by all the chroniclers of Toruń and Prussia: Simon Grunau,⁴⁷ Lucas David,⁴⁸ Christoph Hartknoch,⁴⁹ Jan Leo,⁵⁰ and Kaspar Hennenberger⁵¹. In his sixteenth-century account, Lucas David said that the

współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK, ed. Katarzyna Kluczajd, Toruń 2005, 295-320.

⁴⁷ Simon Grunau, *Preussische Chronik*, 3 vols., Leipzig 1876, vol. 1, treatise XII, cap. XII, 600.

⁴⁸ Lucas David, *Preussische Chronik*, 8 vols., Königsberg 1812-1817, vol. 6, 156.

⁴⁹ Christoph Hartknoch, *Alt- und Neues Preussen: oder Preussischer Historien zwey Theile, in derer erstem von desz Landes vorjähriger Gelegenheit und Nahmen... In dem andern aber von desz Teutschen Ordens Ursprung, desselben, wie auch der nachfolgenden Herschafft... mit sonderbahren Fleisz zusammen getragen*, Frankfurt/M. and Leipzig 1684, 185.

⁵⁰ Joannes Leo, *Historia Prussiae*, Braunsberg/ Braniewo 1725; and Jan Leo, *Dzieje Prus*, translated by Julian Wojtkowski, Olsztyn 2008.

⁵¹ Kaspar Hennenberger, *Kurtze und warhafftige Beschreibung des Landes zu Preussen*, Königsberg 1584, 455.

organ attracted the crowds who flocked into the church to see the instrument and listen to its sound.⁵² From 1601 to 1609, the northern matroneum was fitted with an organ with a Mannerist case (Fig. 6).⁵³ Most probably, this new organ supplanted the old instrument, whose casing perished: its current reconstruction is purely hypothetical.⁵⁴ However, it is important to note that the Gothic organ was replaced a long time after the interior had been taken over by the Protestant congregation, who initially must have used the medieval instrument.



6 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, late Mannerist organ case, 1601-1609 (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

⁵² Renkewitz and Janca, *Geschichte der Orgelbaukunst in Ost- und Westpreußen von 1333 bis 1944*, 2-5.

⁵³ Marian Dorawa, "Organy kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu", in: *Dzieje i skarby kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu. Materiały z konferencji przygotowanej przez Toruński Oddział SHS przy współpracy Instytutu Zabytkoznawstwa i Konserwatorstwa UMK*, ed. Katarzyna Kluczwajd, Toruń 2005, 321-344; Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 282-284; Małgorzata Wawrzak, "Humanistyczne i polityczne treści dekoracji organów z kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu: wprowadzenie do problematyki", in: *Sztuka w kręgu władzy: materiały LVII Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki poświęconej pamięci profesora Szczęsnego Dettloffa (1878-1961) w 130. rocznicę urodzin*, eds. Elżbieta Pilecka and Katarzyna Kluczwajd, Warsaw 2009, 205-217.

⁵⁴ Renkewitz and Janca, *Geschichte der Orgelbaukunst in Ost- und Westpreußen von 1333 bis 1944*, 2-5; Dorawa, "Organy kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu", 321.

[17] It must be noted that the new organ casing partially cut into the continuity of the matroneum's balustrade, which is dated to the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,⁵⁵ with earlier balks, partly extant, dated back between 1353 +/-6 (the oldest) and 1400 +/-6 (the latest one).⁵⁶ Wooden segments of a pseudo-log structure with a thin oak coping hammered in between the pillars have survived in all the six vault bays in the aisle; from the nave's side, they are decorated with an array of coffers, each of which is decorated with a tracery rosette.⁵⁷ The only exception in this respect is the segment in the fourth vault bay, where the organ casing was inserted: it is devoid of ornaments from the external face of the parapet wall. The balustrade was topped with a broad and relatively high oak coping, protruding and intricately profiled from the nave's side. Similar massive copings were added (probably at the same time) to older balustrades in the second and third vault bays from the east. The modernisation was probably intended to open up the space to the faithful. Early Modern graffiti, which have survived in precisely those segments on the surface of the Gothic timber frames of the balustrades from the inner side (Fig. 7 a-b),⁵⁸ suggest that the matroneum in the Protestant period was largely accessible to the faithful.

⁵⁵ The fourth vault bay from the east is the only place where the balustrade may not be medieval. The face of the balustrade lacks tracery fields.

⁵⁶ Dated on the basis of dendrochronological analysis by Barbara Gmińska-Nowak and Professor Tomasz Ważny (2019).

⁵⁷ Visible in the coping of the balustrade from the nave in two vault bays to the west, installation apertures suggest that the frieze must have been decorated with additional wood-carved ornaments.

⁵⁸ Legible inscriptions, either scratched or carved in the wood's surface in the seventeenth century, have survived in the greatest number on the inner side of the balustrade in the third vault bay from the east; the oldest graffiti (dated 1622) was found in the balustrade in the second vault bay. The Early Modern coping in the western section of the matroneum features a relatively large number of eighteenth-century graffiti.



7 a-b Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, eighteenth-century graffiti, matroneum's balustrade, inner side (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[18] Apparently, the Flamboyant style was not disagreeable to Early Modern users of the church's interior: a section of the rosette balustrade was dismantled for pragmatic reasons, while the ornaments in the remaining segments were left virtually intact.⁵⁹ From the west side of the church, with the construction of a timber matroneum,⁶⁰ after the year 1623⁶¹ a new Early Modern-style pine balustrade was mounted (see Fig. 1b) and integrated with the older balustrade. From the inner side, it had the same size as the earlier balustrade; from the nave's side, it was also divided into segments. (Already in the Observant period, in 1724, these segments were covered with painted representations of Franciscan saints).⁶² The coping in the new balustrade created a halving joint structure with the horizontal beam of the old balustrade (Fig. 8).

⁵⁹ Gothic balustrades must have been reinforced from the inner side (they were provided with new planking).

⁶⁰ In 1626, the city council provided for a small organ to be mounted in the matroneum. Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 285.

⁶¹ Dated on the basis of dendrochronological analysis by Barbara Gmińska-Nowak and Professor Tomasz Ważny (2019).

⁶² Domasłowski and Jarzewicz, *Kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny w Toruniu*, 167.



8 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, late medieval coping, balustrade, matroneum, final vault bay in the nave (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

Chancel reorganisation

[19] The former *ecclesia interior*, which served the sole purpose of conventual liturgy in the Franciscan period, enjoyed the most prominent status in the Protestant era: as a place of congregation for the clergy and the community of the Academic Gymnasium, while the town's elite was allocated separate places in the nave, next to the pulpit (in what is called the Realm of the Word).⁶³ The chancel must have been fitted with seats; it must also have been separated from the nave with a barrier, which, according to Observant sources, was not dismantled until the eighteenth century.⁶⁴ Older medieval components were used in a new interior design. Firstly, "the old gallery opposite the altar", as mentioned in the sources, was most probably a medieval rood screen (no information is available on its form).⁶⁵

[20] Apparently, the rood screen had a timber structure of a matching width to that of the chancel, fitted with an altarpiece and two passageways to the sides. Presumably, the structure initially carried a late Gothic crucifix (one of the most precious sculptures in the region from that time and still preserved in the church), which was designed to be exposed rather low in the church.⁶⁶

⁶³ Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 281.

⁶⁴ Kantak, "Kronika bernardynów toruńskich", 117.

⁶⁵ Carried out in December 2018, GPR (ground penetrating radar) surveys failed to detect any underground structures that would indicate a brick-built rood screen (see Fig. 1c).

⁶⁶ Jakubek-Raczkowska and Raczkowski, "The Organisation of Liturgical Space and Its Furnishing at the Franciscan Friars' in Late Middle Ages Illustrated by an Example of

Most probably, the rood beam was not mounted in the chancel until the 1560s. The crucifix may have been used by the Protestant congregation for the purpose of a new interior design. This, however, is still a matter of conjecture because the surviving composition of the rood beam dates from the Observant period. In the Protestant period, the rood was double-sided; from the chancel's side, the figure of the crucified Christ carried a German inscription dated 1563; from the nave's side, a Crucifixion group faced the congregation. The second crucifix bore an inscription dated 1675, which commemorated its restoration.⁶⁷ It must be noted that the double-sided design of the rood survived the Observant period and beyond, until 1931, when the former Franciscan Gothic figure was mounted from the chancel's side, which was probably in accordance with the original tradition of the church. Similarly, in Saint James's Church in Toruń, a late Gothic figure of the Crucified Christ was preserved on the eighteenth-century rood beam; until recently, this figure, too, was mounted from the chancel's side.

[21] In the Reformation period, the medieval oak choir stalls were retained in the chancel, and they are now one of the earliest and most splendid furnishings of this type across the entire Baltic region.⁶⁸ In the Franciscan period, the choir stalls were leaning against the side walls of the chancel, and most probably also its back wall (this analogy can be drawn based on the furnishings of Saint Catherine's Church in Lübeck, and, slightly later, the Holy Trinity Church in Gdańsk). According to archival sources, the choir stall complex was extended (probably in the late sixteenth century) with pews or individual choir stalls for the rector, professors, and students of the Academic Gymnasium.⁶⁹ In this context, the eight-seat segment of the stalls, which was preserved in the southern row from the east, stands out from the entire complex (Fig. 9). The segment is a general copy of other stalls in terms of structure, composition, and its late Gothic style. However, it comes without a

the Blessed Virgin Mary's Church in Toruń", 117-118.

⁶⁷ Farbiszewki, "Opis Torunia z początku XVIII wieku", 122-123.

⁶⁸ See Maria Beek-Goehlich, *Die mittelalterlichen Kirchengestühle in Westpreußen und Danzig*, Stuttgart 1961 (= *Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Deutschen Ostens*, Reihe B, Bd. 4), 77-98; see also the building conservation analysis, together with an inventory and description of its current condition, by Anna Wiśniewska, *Problematyka historyczna i zabytkoznawcza średniowiecznych stall pofranciszkańskich z kościoła pw. Wniebowzięcia NMP w Toruniu*, an M.A. thesis written under the supervision of Juliusz Raczkowski, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń, Toruń 2018 (print copy deposited in Thesis Repository, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń).

⁶⁹ Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 278.

parapet (fitted with prayer desks), openwork canopies (these elements possibly failed to survive), and openwork partitions.



9 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, eight-seat choir stalls in the southern row of the chancel, eastern section (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[22] From detailed analysis ensues that this segment was added in order to extend the choir stalls by six additional seats. Apparently, an older structure was used for this purpose: two seats from the eastern side, which are matching in composition to the entire choir stall complex in the chancel and identical in terms of wood-carved detail. The other six seats were created by a different workshop. Only later were they integrated into the older structure: joints are visible in the coping frieze and armrests, which are connected with a wooden insert. The added structure differs in size from the rest of the complex⁷⁰ (the seats are slightly narrower).⁷¹ Most notably, however, a different technique was used to produce their ornaments and wood-carved details. Their high backs were plain,⁷² and only a line of wood-carved rosettes in the Flamboyant style was added. However, these were not carved directly

⁷⁰ The height of the seats in the Gothic section: 112 cm, high backs: 241 cm; the height of the seats in the eastern section: 114 cm, high backs: 238 cm.

⁷¹ The size of the seats in the Gothic section is 47 or 45-48 cm, armrests range from 27-29 cm; the size of the seats in the eastern section ranges from 44-45 cm, and their armrests are ca. 23 cm.

in the backs, but created in an openwork technique and added onto the planks. They show a lower level of craftsmanship than the other, finely carved choir stalls in the chancel. A rather flat oakleaf ornament in the coping frieze is Early Modern in style, while pinnacle decorations were carved in a fashion more austere than that of the fleurons and ornamental buds in the Gothic section. The consoles are devoid of an openwork tracery blind arcade and heads. The profiles of the partitions in the stalls also vary (despite a similar curvilinear composition). The partitions in the Gothic section have an analogous layout;⁷³ however, they vary in composition in the eastern segment, and their roughly carved fantastic lambrequin-spewing heads (Fig. 10-11) are Early Modern in style.⁷⁴ Most probably also Early Modern, the massive and profiled canopy of this segment stands out from the rest of the complex. It supplanted the openwork canopies of the main line of the choir stalls.

⁷² The upper part of the high backs was most probably painted with tracery motifs, which are visible in NIR photographs (Fig. 12). There are no visible remains of the possible installation of separately carved canopies, which decorate the main section of the choir stalls.

⁷³ The ornament in the Gothic section has a recurrent layout, a branch twisted outwards and finished with a trefoil fleuron, which is separated with a narrow ring and twisting into a volute. In frontal view, all axes are decorated with a single lancet-like leaf and capped with a finely carved anthropomorphous head (animal masks are a rare feature in the entire complex).

⁷⁴ With two items missing, the following heads have survived (looking from the west): a stylised wolf's head with pointed teeth, a male mask with ram's horns, a male mask with asinine ears, a bearded male mask with ursine ears.



10 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, wooden armrest with ornamental head, choir stalls in the southern row of the chancel, western section, late Gothic (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)



11 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, fantastic lambrequin-spewing head, choir stalls in the southern row of the chancel, eastern section, Early Modern (?) (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[23] To sum up, this section of the choir stalls possibly originated when a new segment of lower quality was inserted into the older sequence. This less elaborate segment was stylised to resemble the Gothic section (a similar operation was made when extending the choir stalls of Pelplin Cathedral in the Early Modern period). This possibly happened in parallel with the addition of a small Mannerist door to the Gothic structure. The imitative choir stall insert (provided most likely at the end of the sixteenth century) suggests that the users of the church held its medieval legacy in great esteem and accepted its peculiar style. Sadly, the earliest surviving graffiti, dated to 1692, came too late to establish the date of the inserted segment. The issue requires further research, involving materials science and dendrochronology. More advances on the subject could be made if the choir stalls were dismantled and their structure thoroughly analysed.

[24] The medieval composition of the choir stalls and its Early Modern extension were later altered twice. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Anna Vasa's mausoleum was erected in the northern section of the chancel, and it cut into the continuous line of the stalls. The Observant Friars in turn dismantled the parts of the choir stalls attached to it from the west (the soffits in the canopies and high backs were covered in roughly painted Rocaille ornaments, Fig. 12-13).⁷⁵ Currently, different sections of the choir stalls are dispersed around the church, and their original location is rather difficult to establish.

⁷⁵ The ornament is easy to recognise in full in the choir stalls, which were transferred to the western section of the church at that time, and in part in the choir stalls at the northern side of the chancel. It must be noted, however, that the high back ornaments are visible only in NIR photographs.



12 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, high back, choir stalls in the southern row of the chancel, eastern section. NIR photograph featuring a visible outline of traceries and Rocaille ornaments (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)



13 Toruń, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an Early Modern soffit in the canopy of the choir stalls, southern row of the chancel, eastern section, NIR photograph featuring a visible outline of Rocaille ornaments (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

[25] In the Reformation period, the following elements were added to the chancel's interior: a horologium, a baptismal font, and a singing lectern.⁷⁶ In 1603, a full collection of the heraldic shields of Toruń's patricians was installed in the chancel. Sadly, it failed to survive. Based on historical sources, Krzysztof Mikulski recently reconstructed its original sequence.⁷⁷ The shields were mounted above the choir stalls, in five rows on the north wall.

[26] The main altarpiece has its own peculiar history, which was related by the Early Modern authors mentioned above. Until lately, researchers agreed that all these accounts refer to a single Gothic structure which is now known as the Toruń Polyptych (Fig. 14), on display at the Diocesan Museum in Pelplin.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Birecki, "Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła Mariackiego w Toruniu w okresie Reformacji", 278.

⁷⁷ Krzysztof Mikulski, *Tarcze herbowe z kościoła mariackiego w Toruniu*, Warsaw 2015.

⁷⁸ The Toruń Polyptych as we know it is composed of six wooden panels, painted on both sides on a thin support (up to 0.8 cm thick) made of radially-cut pine or oak planks (of different layouts: both vertical and horizontal). Each panel is mounted on an oak frame, often inserted with pinewood (all frames were trimmed in the 1990s for the panels to be mounted in a museum display framework at the Diocesan Museum in Pelplin; the frames may have been trimmed earlier). Both the inner side of each panel and its back are divided into two segments with figurative representations painted with egg yolk tempera and with bole-gilded backgrounds; some of the panels are also silver coated. Four panels are similar in size, while the other two (composed of square segments) differ in height from the rest. All the panels were made visually uniform: their framework was painted red and decorated with pomegranate and rosette motifs with bronze stamping. During conservation work in 2013, these ornaments were covered with red strokes as an element that was both unoriginal and of poor aesthetic value. For a detailed analysis of its structure, technique, and style, see: Raczkowski, *Polyptyk Toruński*.



14 The so-called Toruń Polyptych, the alleged main altarpiece from the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Toruń. Segments of various origins, restored 2013–2014, display framework for the multi-panel composition 1989. Diocesan Museum, Pelplin (photograph © Juliusz Raczkowski)

The conventual high altar was the central furnishing of the chancel; it held holy relics, paraments (the liturgical implements of the high altar were exempt from the rule of complete poverty),⁷⁹ and illumination, as well as (most likely) an antependium and a painting or a retable. Based on the analysis of the Early Modern written records describing the former Franciscan retable (in its altered form, composed of several different panels),⁸⁰ the medieval main altarpiece in the church was probably a winged altarpiece with a wood-carved shrine. It featured figures of Franciscan saints and *The Coronation of the Virgin*, while its lower zone held philatories. The wings of the altarpiece were painted (at least on the back).⁸¹ Hypothetically speaking, two panels which are now part of the Toruń Polyptych could be linked to the

⁷⁹ Matthias Untermann and Leonie Silberer, "Architektur franziskanischer Kirchen und Klosterbauten", in: *Franziskus - Licht aus Assisi. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum und im Franziskanerkloster Paderborn*, eds. Christoph Stiegemann, Berndt Schmies and Heinz Dieter Heimann, Munich 2011, 140-147: 141. See *ibid.*, 343-352, for historic liturgical implements and vestments used at Franciscan altars (chalices, pyxes, monstrances, and paraments).

⁸⁰ See Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński*, Aneks źródłowy 1, 191-192, with the sources that describe the retable in the *ecclesia interioris*: a chronicle by Johann Muck von Muckendorf (1637); *Memoranda* by Johann Baumgarten (1715-1719); *Inwentarz kościoła NMP i budynków klasztornych, spisany przy przejmowaniu ich przez Bernardynów (7-12 XII 1724)*.

main altarpiece in the church.⁸² The altarpiece was probably commissioned around 1400, when the chancel was finally vaulted. Little is known about what had been there before.

[27] Presumably, some panel paintings which are now part of the Toruń Polyptych came from several different altarpieces of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These were mounted, most probably in the nineteenth century, on the doors of the Early Modern Holy Sepulchre composed in the western part of the north nave.⁸³ In the early twentieth century, when the so-called Toruń Polyptych was reconstructed and restored under the supervision of Bernhard Schmidt, these panels were again transferred in order to complement the retable.⁸⁴

[28] It is quite likely that the Protestant congregation preserved the late medieval wood-carved main altar (after necessary programme corrections:

⁸¹ Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński*, 45-52; see also an account focused solely on the main altarpiece: Juliusz Raczkowski, "Średniowieczne retabulum ołtarza głównego u toruńskich franciszkanów. Na marginesie prac badawczo-konserwatorskich przy tzw. poliptyku toruńskim", in: *Imagines pictae: Studia nad malarstwem gotyckim w Polsce*, eds. Marek Walczak and Wojciech Walanus, Cracow 2016 (= *Studia z Historii Sztuki Średniowiecznej Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, 4), 29-41.

⁸² These panels were painted on both sides, the inner side featuring: *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, *The Miracle of Saint Clare*, *The Stigmatisation of Saint Francis*, and *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*; the outer side featuring: *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, *The Taking of Christ*, *The Mocking of Christ*, *Crucifixion*, and *The Descent from the Cross*. The wings may have been larger with an additional row composed of the square segments of the Toruń Polyptych: one panel representing *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *The Fainting of the Virgin* on the inner side, and *Mater Misericordiae* and *Saint Louis of Toulouse* on the back; the other featuring *Christ before Pilate* and *The Flagellation of Christ* on the inner side, and *The Preaching of Saint Anthony* and a *Pietà* on the back. Content-wise, this combination is possible. However, it is not very likely due to the varying sizes of the segments and the different structure of the panels. Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński*, 21-25 and 101-116, 153 and 158.

⁸³ Karol Ferdynand Ney, "Kościół N. Maryi Panny w Toruniu", in: *Przyjaciel Ludu* 10 (1843), no. 19, 145-148; Johann Heise, *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Westpreußen*, Bd. 2: *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Kulmerlandes und der Löbau*, H. 6: *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Kreises Thorn*, Danzig 1889, 285-286.

⁸⁴ Bernhard Schmid, "Aufstellung der Bildtafeln des alten Hochaltars der Marienkirche zu Thorn", in: *Die Denkmalpflege in der Provinz Westpreußen im Jahre 1912*, Danzig 1913, 13-18; Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński*, 173-179.

figures of Franciscan saints⁸⁵ and holy relics⁸⁶ were removed); or more precisely, they simply kept it where it stood. *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the shrine was retained, which is not surprising given the fact that Lutheran congregations, indeed, often took down the representations of the Virgin, but they never did so by default. The painted Gothic panels of the Passion, which were probably mounted on the outer wings of the late medieval main altarpiece and which are now preserved as part of the Toruń Polyptych (mentioned by all the Early Modern sources discussing the main altarpiece in Protestant times), formed the shrine of the Protestant altarpiece; the emphasis on the Passion was in accordance with Protestant devotion. The decision instead not to display the outer sides of the wings encompassing the Franciscan representations (*The Stigmatisation of Saint Francis*, *The Miracle of Saint Clare*, *The Preaching of Saint Anthony*, and *Saint Louis Renouncing the Wealth*) and the representations of the Virgin (*The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, and *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*) suggested itself. Described by inventory inspectors, representations of figures in episcopal and liturgical vestments with animal symbols are most probably depictions of the Fathers of the Church and the symbols of the Four Evangelists. An iconography of this type was nothing new in Toruń (see, e.g., Saint Wolfgang's Triptych), and it was also typical of the late fifteenth century: these Late Gothic panels (most probably movable) must have been added anew to the altarpiece in the Protestant period.

Conclusions

[30.] Several conclusions can be drawn in regard of the range of the measures and alterations undertaken for the provision of a new interior design and furnishings to the former Franciscan Church in Toruń in the Reformation period: On the whole, they seem to be rather representative of the measures undertaken in other cities changing their Christian denomination in Royal Prussia. Firstly, as demonstrated by literature, they were generally made for pragmatic purposes. The former Catholic furnishings of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary were neither destroyed nor removed by its new Protestant users. What is more, whenever possible, they were used in a new interior design, and were either modernised or provided with inserts for the purpose. The choir stalls, rood screen, and main altarpiece were adjusted in content for the needs of Protestant devotion: different components were put together, and only holy

⁸⁵ In his chronicle, Johann Muck von Muckendorf writes only about inscriptions.

⁸⁶ *Inwentarz kościoła NMP i budynków klasztornych, spisany przy przejmowaniu ich przez Bernardynów (7-12 XII 1724)*, in: Raczkowski, *Poliptyk Toruński*, Aneks źródłowy 1, 191-192.

relics and motifs incompatible with the Lutheran doctrine were removed. The Protestant congregation continued the tradition of funerary remembrance in a virtually unaltered form. An extended roll of arms in the chancel may also be considered a continuation, as it engaged in a dialogue with the heraldic motifs to be found in the Gothic stained-glass windows. Some of the older items were displaced and reused, e.g. the late Gothic crucifix was probably mounted on the rood beam. The medieval choir stalls in the chancel were provided with inserts and extended, and they were regularly used by professors and students of the academic gymnasium in Toruń, founded in 1568. Mural paintings in the nave were whitewashed, which made room for new artefacts, namely epitaphs, on the walls. Finally, there were furnishings which continued to be used in the church until the community was able to replace them with new items: more splendid, more valuable, more modern, and more fashionable in style. The new Protestant owners held the surviving furnishings in some esteem as items which were both 'ancient' and beautiful, a fact that is well demonstrated in the sources from the era. Given the fact that Catholic church interiors were exposed to dynamic and far-reaching change after the Council of Trent, one could venture to say that some of the former Franciscan furnishings have survived in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary for so long because of, rather than in spite of, the alterations provided by its Lutheran congregation.

About the Author

Juliusz Raczkowski, PhD, is an academic teacher and researcher in art history and heritage science; he works as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń, Poland. His studies focus on the visual arts in the State of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, with a particular emphasis on medieval architecture and interior design (architectural sculpture, mural painting, architectural details, etc.), woodcarvings, and panel painting, most notably in the context of heritage science and historic art conservation. He has authored and co-authored five scientific monographs (including those on the Apostolic Colleges in the State of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, 2013; the Toruń Polyptych, 2016; and medieval mural paintings in burghers' houses in Toruń, 2017) and numerous articles; he has also edited eight collections of academic articles and published several reviews and polemics. The pride of place in his research (especially performed with non-invasive methods) goes to the historic conservation of Gothic art, with a particular emphasis on artistic techniques, technology, and materials science.

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