

Beata Możejko

Late medieval Gdansk as a connecting link between regions: Western European, Hanseatic and Central European contacts

In the late medieval period Gdańsk played a key role as an intermediary in contacts between Central Europe – the Kingdom of Poland – the towns of the Hanseatic League and, finally, Western Europe. This role was enacted during the rule of the Polish king Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (Casimir IV Jagiellon), whose thirteen year reign (1454–1466) was taken up by war with the Teutonic Order. The Second Treaty of Toruń (Thorn), which ended this war, gave Kazimierz Jagiellończyk control of Royal Prussia, and with it – authority over Gdańsk. The privileges which Gdańsk was granted by this monarch clearly stated that the city had the right to independence in maritime policy, and so, effectively, in foreign policy.

Poland's royal diplomatic service, with its chancellors and secretaries, was concentrating on other aims and different courses for foreign policy than Gdańsk. Under the reign of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, having won the war against the Teutonic Order, the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary remained an important target (a good account of this issue is given in the literature by Krzysztof Baczkowski). Naturally, Poland also placed importance on relations with the Pope in Rome and with the King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III. Gdańsk's Western European relations became quite a challenge for the royal chancery. Nevertheless the sources which I have examined permit me to risk suggesting that Gdańsk tried to get King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk involved in relations with the Hanseatic realm, Western Europe, England, France and the Duchy of Burgundy.