

**TEUTONIC ORDER BANNERS CAPTURED BY POLES AT THE
1410 BATTLE OF TANNENBERG
from the *Banderia Prutenorum*
To be cut out and glued onto 30 mm figures**

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The Battle of Tannenberg, or Grunwald, took place on 15 July 1410 in the Teutonic Order's territory of Prussia not far from the villages of Tannenberg and Grünfelde. The Order's army under Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen along with levies of the Prussian landed estates and an unknown number of mercenaries plus central and western European knights fought a decisive battle against a joint force of the Kingdom of Poland under King Władysław II Jagiełło and the Grand Principality of Lithuania under Grand Prince Vytautas. The battle ended with a sounding defeat for the Order and dozens of its banners fell into Polish hands. Most of what is known about the captured banners comes from the work called the *Banderia Prutenorum*.

The *Banderia Prutenorum* manuscript, on 48 parchment sheets, 18,6 × 29,3 cm, was written by Jan Długosz (*1415; † 1480) and illustrated by Stanisław Durink. It depicts 56 Teutonic Order's army vexillae or banners of which 51 are from the Battle of Tannenberg, one from the Battle of Koronowo (German: *Polnisch Krone*, from the Schwetz Commandery or the Steward of Neumark) in the same year and the last four from the 1431 Battle of Dąbki (German: Nakel). It should be noted that not all of the Order army's banners were captured by the Poles and they are therefore could not be depicted. It is also important to mention, that only 46 of the banners were initially found in the *Banderia*. Ten were only added later, not so aesthetically done and on the reverse pages of the existing sheets, so they are referred to as the *Rectobanner*.¹ It must also be mentioned that a "commandery" (modern German: *Komturei*) was an administrative district led by a commander (*komtur*) with a "convent" (*konvent*) ideally made up of 12 Knight Brothers. The seat was normally an Order Castle. In time of war, the *komtur* led the levy from the commandery under its own unique banner.

The *Banderia*, written in Latin, cites what person carried the banner, the organization it represented and the circumstances of its capture as far as known or believed by the Poles. But the accuracy of much of this information is questioned today. In most cases, the description includes the size of the banner measured in Polish "ells", which theoretically equate to 31 inches or 78.7 centimeters, and in a few cases the color of the staff (given here with figures). The banners varied in size from that of the smallest, the Grand Master's "Running flag (1¼ ell by 1 ell, or 3'3" by 2'7") to the massive banner of the town of Kulm (3 ells by 3 ells and a ¾ ells "tail" or 7'9" by 7'9" and an 8'5" tail).



Extract from the "*Banderia Prutenorum*" showing banners of the Bishop of Pomesanien and of the Commandery and Town of Graudenz

¹https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banderia_Prutenorum



Hans Müller's MP25 the Order's "Great Banner" halted.



Hans Müller's MP29 Banner of the Commandery and Town of Engelsburg

Painted & photo by Gianpaolo Bistulfi



Wolfgang Friedrich's "Great Banner" (of the Grand Master) (left) and Banner of the Brandenburg Commandery (right)

Painted & photo by Rick Sanders

There are many 30mm flat tin figures that were specifically created or are usable for the 1410 Battle of Tannenberg, and many of them have integral banners or flags. Especially well-known among them are the figures by Hans Müller of Erfurt, but there are also castings from Wolfgang Friedrich, and the former Golberg International firm among others. It is noteworthy that Werner Kästner produced 40 figures with engraved banners of the Teutonic Order's army for Tannenberg (available from Schmalkaldener Zinnfiguren²). But in many cases, the flags are too large (like many by Kästner and Golberg) or are located on staffs that are not strong enough to prevent bending. Hans Müller only produced two Teutonic Order figures with integrated flags – the "Great Banner" and a knight with the banner of the Engelsburg Commandery, both adequately supported, but he also produced 24 Teutonic Order Army banners as separate attachable metal pieces. However, today very few collectors are ready to deal with soldering on such pieces and they can present the same "staff-bending" challenges, but there

are alternatives, including the one presented here and flags by Rolf Fuhrmann.³ But first, one should consider the *Banderia Prutenorum*.

Many descriptions of the banners are based on publications from the 19th century, above all a 1849 book by F.A. Vossberg⁴ about the *Banderia Prutenorum* with a number of errors. Some

² See <https://www.schmalkalder-zinnfiguren.de/30-mm-flachfiguren/mittelalter/tannenberg-grunwald-1410/deutscher-orden/banner-des-deutschen-orden-in-der-schlacht-bei-tannenberg-1410/> for the Kästner figures with the engraved banners.

³<http://www.rofur-flags.de>

⁴Vossberg, F. A. (ed.), *Banderia Prutenorum oder die Fahnen des Deutschen Ordens und seiner Verbündeten, welche in Schlachten und Gefechten des 15. Jahrhunderts eine Beute der Polen wurden* (Berlin, 1849). (translated title: *Banderia Prutenorum or the Flags of the Teutonic Order and its Allies that were Captured by the Poles at the Battles and Engagements of the 15th Century*).

works are simply outdated. As mentioned above, the *Banderia Prutenorum* is a 15th century manuscript with illustrations of the banners that the Poles captured at the Battle of Tannenberg and two subsequent battles. It is certainly understandable that the Poles did not correctly identify all the captured flags. With today's knowledge, we know that a number of Długosz's designations are considered inaccurate, although they persist to this day.



Figures by the former Golberg International firm
Banner of the Town of Kulm Banner of the Duke of Stettin
Painted & photo by Bernt Grimm, Borlänge, Sweden

Banner of the Meissener
Knights, painted & photo by
R. Sanders



From right to left: the banner of the Grand Commander (*Großkomtur*), of the Town of Thorn, of Koenigsberg Old Town & of the Bartenstein Stewardship
figures by Werner Kästner, painted by R. Sanders

The banners of the Order's army can be classified as representing the Order's leadership (gebitiger), bishoprics, commanderies (Komtureien) often together with towns or cities, stewardships, towns/cities, allies and various consolidated units. The leaders or dignitaries included the Grand Master, the Marshal of the Order, the Grand Commander, the Senior Treasurer and the Senior Draper among others, most of whom were killed at the battle. The Prussian bishoprics that sent their troops to the Order's Army and whose banners were captured were Pomesania, Kulm, Sambia (Samland) and Warmia (Ermland). The commanderies, as the Order's administrative districts, sent their own banners (shown below). Among the levies from



The banner of the Danzig Commandery
Figure by Werner Kästner, painted & photo by
Bernt Grimm, Borlänge, Sweden

cities and towns were Allenstein, Bartenstein, Braunsberg, Heiligenbeil, Kulm und Thorn whose flags captured by the Poles. The allies included the Dukes of Oels and Stettin as well as a levy probably from Hungary (red banner with white cross), various “guest knights” from outside the Order’s state of Prussia who fought under the St. George Banner, and mercenaries who appear to have been consolidated into units (under banners like the ones with crossed arrows or bolts).

The designations of the flags in this article reflect, as much as possible the current knowledge. For example, both the banners with the crossed arrow and crossbow bolt are assessed to have flown over consolidated units of archers and crossbowmen from various levies. The white banner with the crossed arrow and bolt, misidentified by Długosz as “banner of the Swabian knights” would not have flown over such a unit because according to the Order’s ledgers, no knights from Swabia

participated in the battle. Similarly, the banners identified in the *Banderia Prutenorum* as representing the Hessian, Swiss and Westphalian knights were also in error because again, the ledgers make no references to participants from those regions. The *Banderia Prutenorum* also identifies a very similarly patterned banner with crossed arrow and crossbow bolt in white on a red field, as coming from Commandery and Town of Mewe (now Gniew, Poland), yet its coat of arms at the time in question showed a seagull (German *Möwe*) with a fish in its beak, and also the device of the Commander and the House Commander of Mewe carried a seagull, so in all cases a “canting” arms (depicting the spoken name).

One must also mention the red flag with the white cross that Długosz designated the St. George’s Banner. This cannot be correct because the Banner of Saint George always has a red cross in a white field. Długosz himself later corrected this error in his book *Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae* (1455-1480) where he described the St. George’s banner on the Order’s side as follows “...the George’s banner bears as its symbol a red cross on a white field.” Sven Ekdahl who did the latest study on the *Banderia* suspects a possible confusion by the painter with the Polish St. Florian’s Banner – a white cross in a red field –, which is said to have flown over a Hungarian levy or the Polish mercenaries.⁵ As an alternative, it could have been the German “*Reichsbanner*” which displayed a white cross on a red cloth and even had a “tail” (*Schwenkel*). A delegation sent by Sigismund of Luxembourg under Nikolaus von Gara and Stibor z Stiboricz probably took part in the battle on the Order’s side and could have carried the imperial banner. The question cannot be answered at this time, but it is a clear fact that the St. George Banner was white with a red cross (provided in the section on banners not shown in the *Banderia*).

⁵Ekdahl, Sven, *Die “Banderia Prutenorum” des Jan Długosz Eine Quelle zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410*, [“The Banners of the Prussians” of Jan Długosz: A Source on the Battle of Tannenberg 1410] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976).

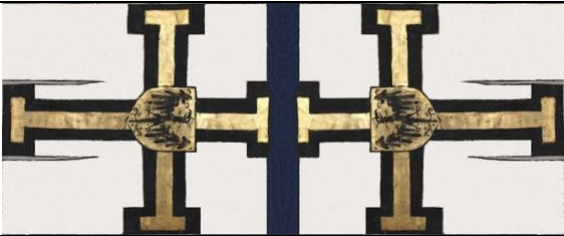

Knights who joined the Order at their own expense fought under the St. George's Banner. The mercenaries were divided among the existing banner units. Only princes with large contingents – like Duke Konrad the White of Oels or Duke Casimir of Stettin – led their troops under their own banners. An exception was the banner of the knights from Meissen (red and blue, quarterly). One such flag is also mentioned in Wigand's *Reimchronik* for the year 1391 although not described there.





As mentioned above, the *Banderia Prutenorum* only provides information on the banners and flags that were captured at the battle, but it is possible to suggest how some other banners not captured might have appeared. These attempts are based on impressions from contemporary seals from the individual commanderies, bishoprics or towns.




The banners on the following pages are taken more or less directly from the *Banderia Prutenorum*, but “mirrored” and re-sized to correspond to 30mm flats. They are intended to be cut out, folded over and glued onto a flagstaff or lance. Of course, one can also fold or bend them to look more realistic since no flag or banner would be straight and unwrinkled.

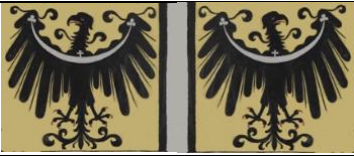
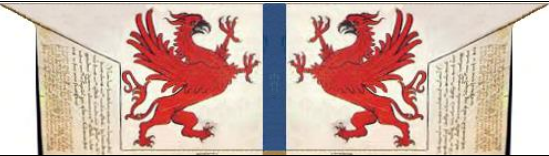
Last but not least, my thanks to Wolf Büche and Dr. Thomas Brümmer (both of Halle/Saale, Germany), Gianpaolo Bistulfi (Milan, Italy), Bernt Grimm (Borlänge, Sweden) and Manfred Levec (Sindelfingen, Germany) for their indispensable help with this article.

Dignitaries, Bishoprics and Dukes



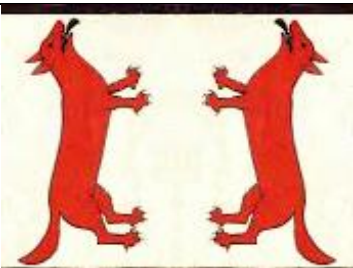
	
Grand Master's Great Banner (light yellow staff)	Marshal of the Order (with slits on the outside; black & white staff)



			
Grand Master's Running Flag (w/ slits; dark yellow staff)	Grand Commander (white staff)	Treasurer of the Order	Christburg Commandery and Senior Draper (was also commander of Christurg)

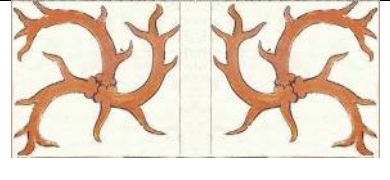
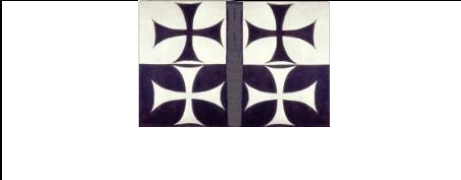

		
Bishop of Pomesania	Bishopric of Sambia	Bishop of Warmia (Ermland)

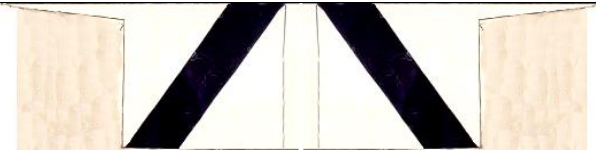

	
Duke of Oels (staff w/ equal black & white vertical lines)	Duke of Stettin

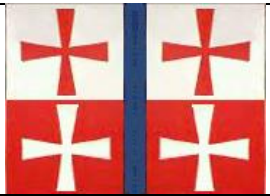
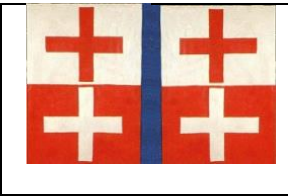
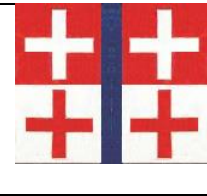
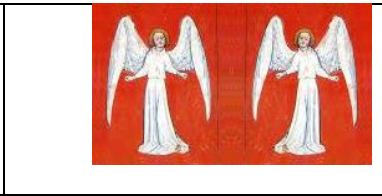
Commanderies, Cities and Towns

		
Town of Allenstein	Althaus Commandery	Balga Commandery

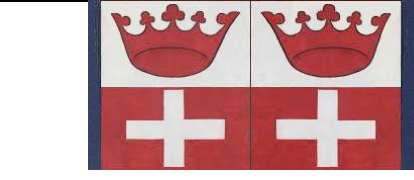

	
Bartenstein Stewardship	Brandenburg Commandery (light brown staff)

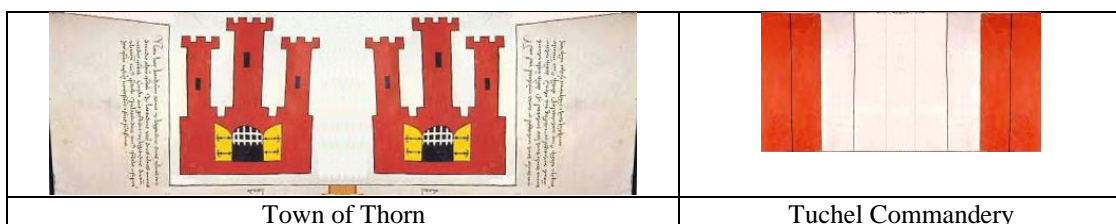
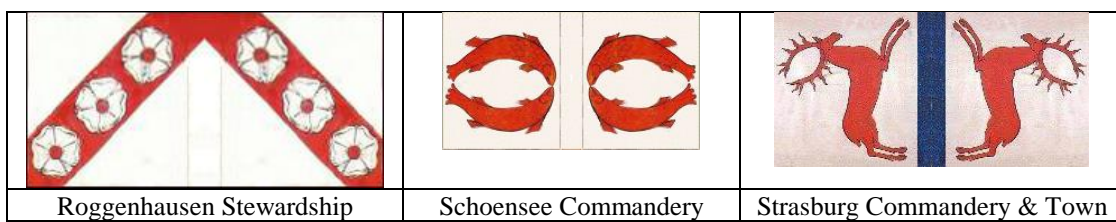
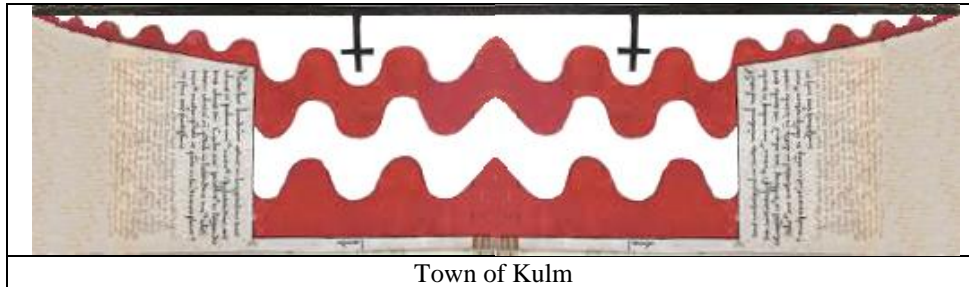
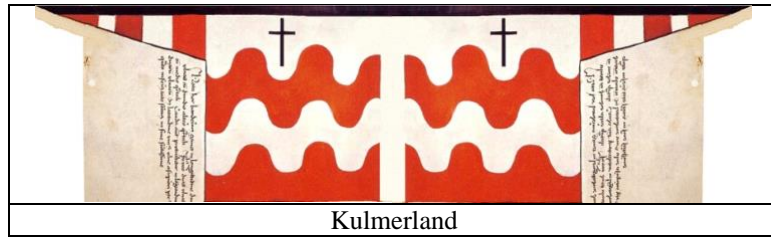
		
Brattian Stewardship	Town of Braunsburg (light brown staff)	City of Danzig (red staff)

	
Danzig Commandery	Dirschau Stewardship



			
Elbing Commandery's House Commander	Elbing Commandery and Senior Hospitaller	Town of Elbing possibly Długosz switched colors	Engelsburg Commandery (light brown staff)




		
Graudenz Commandery	Leske Stewardship	Town of Heiligenbeil

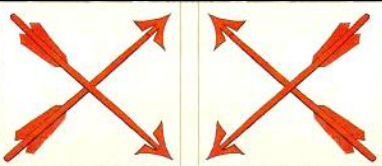
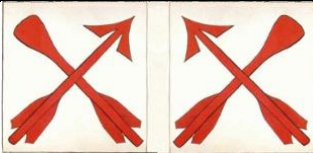
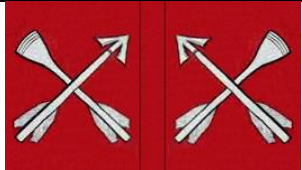
	
Koenigsberg Old Town	Koenigsberg Commandery



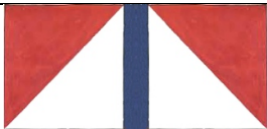

Allies and Mercenaries



	
Banner of the Meissener Knights	So-called Banner of the Hessian Knights (Thuringian)

		
St. George Banner (corrected)	Unidentified banner (not Rhenish Knights)	Unidentified banner (not of the Swiss Knights)

		
Misidentified Banner of the Westphalian Knights (an archers' banner)	Bowmen's Banner (so-called Banner of the Swabian Knights)	Archers' banner (mis-identified as Mewe)



Teutonic Order Banners Captured by Poland at the Battles of Koronowa in 1410 and Dąbki/Nakel in 1431

	
Schwetz Commandery ⁶	Teutonic Order in Livonia banner captured by Poles at Nakel in 1431

	
Ascheraden und Dünaburg Commandery 1431	Fellin Commandery 1431

⁶ The banner of the Schwetz Commandery supposedly captured at the 10 October 1410 Battle of Koronowo but Heinrich von Plauen allegedly did not participate in that battle, so it could have been the banner of the Steward (*Vogt*) of the Neumark, Michael Kuchmeister who was captured there.

Possible Tannenberg Banners incorrectly or not appearing in the Banderia (not captured)

	
Misidentified banner of Senior Hospitaller (commander of the encampment/trains)	Mewe Commandery (hypothetical, by W. Büche)

NAME	CURRENT NAME, COUNTRY (PL = Poland; RUS = Russia*)	DIMENSIONS, Metric (from Polish ells)	DIMENSIONS, Feet/Inches (from Polish ells)
Grand Master's Great Banner (<i>Hochmeister Großes Banner</i>)	Seat in Marienburg/ Malbork, PL	236cm x 177cm	7'9" x 5'10"
Senior Marshal's Banner (<i>Obersten Marschalls Banner</i>)	Seat in Koenigsberg (Kaliningrad, RUS)	256cm x 216cm	8'5" x 7'1"
Grand Master's Small Running Flag (<i>Kleine Rennfahne des Meisters</i>)	Seat in Marienburg/ Malbork, PL	98cm x 78.7cm	3'3" x 31"
Grand Commander (<i>Großkomtur</i>)	Seat in Marienburg/ Malbork, PL	236cm x 256cm	7'9" x 8'5"
Treasurer of the Order (<i>Ordenstressler</i>)	Seat in Marienburg/ Malbork, PL	177cm x 148cm	5'10" x 4'10"
Christburg Commandery (Komturei) & Senior Draper (<i>Obersten Trapier</i>)	Seat in Christburg/ Dzierzgoń, PL	206cm x 177cm	6'9" x 5'10"
Bishopric of Pomesania (<i>Bistum Pomesanien</i>)	Pogesania, PL	197cm x 177cm	6'6" x 5'10"
Bishopric of Sambia (<i>Bistum Samland</i>)	Sambiysky Poluostrov, RUS	206cm x 138cm	6'9" x 4'6"
Bishop of Warmia (Ermland) or Heilsberg Town (<i>Stadt</i>)	Lidzbark Warminski, PL	207cm x 138cm, tail 118cm	6'9" x 4'6", tail 3'10"
Duke of Oels (<i>Herzog von Oels</i>)	Oleśnica, Silesia, PL	177cm x 138cm	5'10" x 4'6"
Duke of Stettin (<i>Herzog von Stettin</i>)	Szczecin, PL	148cm x 138cm	4'10" x 4'6"
Allenstein Town (<i>Stadt</i>)	Olsztyn, PL		
Althaus Commandery (<i>Komturei</i>)	Starogrod Chemlinski, PL		
Balga Commandery	Balga or Veseloe, RUS	236cm x 118cm	7'9" x 3'10"
Bartenstein Stewardship (<i>Pflegschaft</i>)	Bartoszyce, PL	216cm x 177cm	7'1" x 5'10"
Brandenburg Commandery	Ushakovo, RUS	177cm x 177cm	5'10" x 5'10"
Brattain Stewardship (<i>Vogtei</i>)	Bratian, PL	-	-
Braunsburg, Town of	Braniewo, PL	138cm x 98cm	4'6" x 39"
Danzig City and Commandery (<i>Danzig Stadt und Komturei</i>)	Gdańsk, PL	207cm x 138cm	6'9" x 4'6"
Danzig Commandery	Gdańsk, PL	207cm x 148cm, tail 157cm	6'9" x 4'10", tail 5'2"
Dirschau Stewardship (<i>Vogtei</i>)	Tczew, PL	197cm x 157cm	6'6" x 5'2"
Elbing Commandery (Latin cross)	Elbląg, PL	226cm x 138cm	7'5" x 4'6"
Elbing Commandery	Elbląg, PL	138cm x 88cm	4'6" x 35"
Elbing Town (<i>Stadt Elbing</i>)	Elbląg, PL	236cm x 118cm	7'9" x 3'10"
*All locations in Russia (RUS) are in the Kaliningrad Oblast.			

NAME	CURRENT NAME, COUNTRY (PL = Poland; RUS = Russia*)	DIMENSIONS, Metric	DIMENSIONS, Feet/Inches
Engelsburg Commandery	Pokrzywno, PL		
Graudenz Commandery	Grudziadz, PL		
Leske Stewardship (<i>Vogtei</i>)	Vicinity of Marienburg/ Malborg, PL	246cm x 157cm	8'1" x 5'2"
Heiligenbeil, Town of	Mamonovo, RUS	157cm x 157cm	5'2" x 5'2"
Koenigsberg Old Town (<i>Altstadt Königsberg</i>)	Kaliningrad (city), RUS	157cm+ x 138cm	5'2"+ x 4'6"
Koenigsberg Commandery (<i>Komturei Königsberg</i>)	Kaliningrad (city), RUS	236cm x 88cm, tail 98cm	7'9" x 35", tail 39"
Kulmerland (Town and Commandery)	Chełmno - Starogrod Chemlminski, PL	177cm X 167cm, tail 157cm	5'10" X 5'6", tail 5'2"
Kulm Town (<i>Stadt Kulm</i>)	Chełmno - Starogrod Chemlminski, PL	236cm x 236cm, tail 256cm	7'9" x 7'9", tail 8'5"
Nessau Commandery	Nieszawa, PL		
Osterode Town and Commandery	Ostroda, PL	236cm x 207cm	7'9" x 6'9"
Ragnit Commandery	Ragneta (Russian: Neman), RUS	197cm 177cm	6'6" 5'10"
Rehden Commandery	Radzyn, PL	206cm x 138cm	6'9" x 4'6"
Roggenhausen Stewardship (<i>Vogtei</i>)	Rogozno-Zamek, PL	-	-
Schönsee Town and Commandery	Kowalewo, PL	-	-
Schwetz Commandery	Swiecie, PL		
Strasburg Town and Commandery	Brodnica, PL	138cm x 118cm	4'6" x 3'10"
Thorn, Town of	Toruń, PL	187cm x 118cm, tail 138cm	6'2" x 3'10", tail 4'6"
Tuchel Commandery	Tuchola, PL		
Meissen Knights (<i>Meissner Ritter</i>)	Meissen, Germany	197cm x 167cm	6'6" x 167cm
Thuringian Knights' banner (misidentified as Hessian Knights')	Thuringen, Germany	177cm x 167cm	5'10" x 167cm
St. George Banner (" <i>Georgsbanner</i> " flew over guest knights)	N/A		
Unidentified banner (misidentified as Rhenish Knights' banner)	N/A	216cm x 197cm	7'1" x 6'6"
Unidentified banner (misidentified as Swiss Knights' banner)	N/A	128cm x 88cm	4'2" x 35"
Archer's/crossbowman's banner (misidentified as Westphalian Knights' banner)	N/A	187cm x 157cm	6'2" x 5'2"
Archer's/crossbowman's banner (misidentified as Swabian Knights' banner)	N/A	157cm x 157cm	5'2" x 5'2"
Archer's/crossbowman's banner (misidentified as Mewe Commandery)	N/A	187cm x 138cm	6'2" x 4'6"
Captured by Poles after the 1410 Battle of Tannenberg			
Schwetz Commandery (1410 Battle of Koronowo)	Świecie, PL	216cm x 177cm	7'1" x 5'10"
Ascheraden Commandery (1431 at Dąbki/Nakel)	Aizkraukle, Latvia	216cm x 177cm, tails 78.7cm	7'1" x 5'10", tails 78.7cm
Teutonic Order in Livonia (<i>Deutsch. Orden in Livland</i> (1431 Dąbki) (pos- sibly <i>Landmeister</i>) a commandery	N/A	216cm x 216cm	7'1" x 7'1"
Fellin Commandery (in Livonia) (Dąbki in 1431)	Fellin, Latvia?	108cm x 108cm, tail 50cm	3'6.5" x 3'6.5", tail 19.5"