

# A Plan of a Siege: Jelgava Castle in 1622 or Biržai Castle in Lithuania in 1625? An Analysis of Iconography from the Russian National Library in St Petersburg

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This article aims to answer which fortress and in which year is depicted in a sketch from the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg. Do we see the Lithuanian siege of Jelgava (Ger. *Mitau*, Pol. *Mitawa*) Castle in 1622 or the Swedish siege of Biržai (Pol. *Birże*) Castle in 1625? This text is inspired by my article of 2023, 'Nowe materiały dotyczące walk o Mitawę w 1622 r.' (New Materials Regarding the Battle of Jelgava in 1622). In analysing this issue, I examined other iconographic and epistolographic sources, as well as archaeological research and the literature on both events. My analysis concludes that the fortress depicted in the plan is Biržai during the Swedish siege of 1625.

**Keywords:** Jelgava (Mitau), Biržai (Birże), fortifications, Saint Petersburg

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, I published an article titled 'Nowe materiały dotyczące walk o Mitawę w 1622 r.' (New Materials Regarding the Battle of Jelgava in 1622) [27], in which I presented two new iconographic sources related to the titular battles for Jelgava (Ger. *Mitau*, Pol. *Mitawa*), the capital of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. One of them is a plan from Józef Naronowicz-Naroński's (ca. 1610–1678) manuscript work 'Optyka lubo perspektywa to jest opisanie nauk widzenia albo przezoru w obaczeniu wszelkich rzeczy wymalowania i własnej postaci wyrażenia także osobiwie architektura militaris to jest budownictwo wojenne...' [Optics or Perspective, or a Description of the Science of Seeing or Foresight in Seeing All Things, Painting, and One's Own Form, also Specifically Architecture Militaris, or Military Architecture...] from the University of Warsaw Library (*Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*) [22]. In 2023, I held the view that it depicted the meeting between King

Gustav II Adolf of Sweden (1594–1632) and the Lithuanian Field Hetman (the second-highest commander in the Lithuanian army) Krzysztof II Radziwiłł (1585–1640) near Jelgava on 10 August 1622 [27, ill. 7]. The second, hand-drawn (Fig. 1), depicts the 1622 siege of Jelgava Castle, which was led by the Lithuanian Field Hetman Krzysztof II Radziwiłł. The sketch is currently kept at the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg (Rus. *Российская национальная библиотека, Санкт-Петербург*, Rossiiskaya Natsional'naya Biblioteka, Sankt-Peterburg) [16].

In my opinion, the information regarding the first plan is unquestionable. The situation with the second one is different. I have a reason to believe that the fortress depicted in it is Biržai in Lithuania during the 1625 siege. As early as 2007, the Lithuanian scholar Deimantas Karvelis mentioned it as a plan of Biržai Castle from 1625 in a footnote in the article 'Karas ir taika Radvilų Biržų kunigaikštystėje XVI a. pabaigoje – XVII a. viduryje' (War and Peace in the Radvila's Duchy of Biržai in the Late Sixteenth–Mid-Seventeenth Century) [34, 34]. In 2015, he published this sketch in the monograph *Iš Radvilų giminės istorijos: Biržų kunigaikštystė ir jos visuomenė 1547–1655 metais* (From the History of the Radvila Family: The Duchy of Biržai and Its Society, 1547–1655), although without any detailed discussion of the source [35]. In this text, I will attempt to address this issue and answer the question: which fortress and in what year is depicted in this illustration. I believe that a re-examination of the iconography will enrich our knowledge of both the Courland and Lithuanian fortresses.

The battles for Jelgava Castle in 1622 and Biržai Castle in 1625 were part of a protracted conflict between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden that raged from 1600 to 1660. This war was necessary not only for both countries but also for Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe. A thorough examination of it is essential for understanding this crucial conflict in the continent's history.

## SOURCES AND LITERATURE

To investigate the issue of identifying the fortress in the sketch from the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg, I utilised extensive literature on the subject as well as archival and printed sources. Among these studies, my aforementioned article [27] and the works of Deimantas Karvelis [34–35], which were critically analysed, deserve special mention. I also used other works by these two authors related to the battles for Jelgava Castle in 1622 and Biržai Castle in 1625 [25–26; 33]. I supplemented these articles and books with studies on architecture [37; 39; 44], results of archaeological excavation [40; 45; 47–49], and military operations [28; 30].

It was necessary to use sources, primarily iconographic ones. Some are already available online, and others have been published in print. In the case of Jelgava, these are battle plans from 1622, kept in the Military Archives of Sweden (Krigsarkivet) [3–5] and one plan by Tobias Kraus from 1652 [21; 36]. For Biržai, I have plans from 1625 from the Krigsarkivet (three in colour and one in pencil). At first glance, they appear identical, but they differ, showing two phases of the siege: without and with a tunnel [12–15]. Good, albeit black-and-white copies of these are also available at the Vilnius Regional State Archive (Lith. *Vilniaus regioninis valstybės archyvas*, VRVA) [24, 3–7]. One of them [12] was first published by Jonas Glemža in 1969 [31, 20]. In addition, I used the plan of Biržai (the castle and the town) by Tomasz Makowski (1575–1630) from the early seventeenth century [24, 1–2].

I also used written, epistolographic sources. Notable among them is the correspondence of Krzysztof Skrobowicz, the mayor (Pol. *starosta*) of Biržai and commander of the defence of Biržai Castle from 1625, which is held at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Pol. *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie*, AGAD) [2], and the collections of letters by Prince Krzysztof Radziwiłł, the Lithuanian Field Hetman and the owner of Biržai [1; 17–18; 46].

## THE PLAN

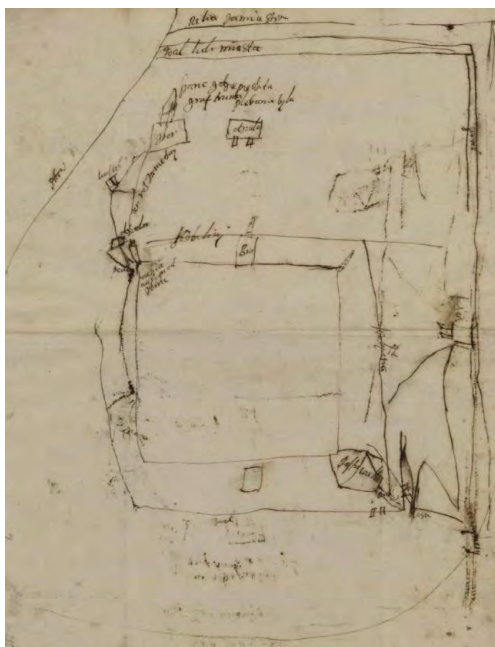
My article of 2023 provides a detailed description of the plan at the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg [27]. Therefore, I will only provide a brief description here. The document is described as 'Plan of the siege of an unidentified fortress (?) [1603–1640]' (Fig. 1). The plan is located in fund 971, collection 321/2, under the number 145. In addition, there we will find materials concerning the activities of the Lithuanian Hetman Krzysztof II Radziwiłł (1585–1640) in Livonia and in the Smolensk (Rus. *Смоленск*) region during the Polish-Muscovy War (1633–1634).

At first glance, the plan looks 'sloppy', and it is not the result of having been drawn 400 years ago: it already looked terrible when it was made. This is due to the circumstances and the technique. I noted that it was a sketch of the situation existing around the fortress and not a working version of the plan intended for printing. The author of the drawing did not sign it, nor did he provide the title, date, name of the fortress, the details of the besieger, or geographical orientation. Only selected elements on the plan have descriptions in Polish. On the reverse of the plan, there is the inscription *Oblężenie* (Polish for 'siege'). Since the handwriting of the inscription is similar to that of the plan, I can assume it was created by the same person who made the drawing and was done at the same time.

The drawing shows the main structure on a roughly square plan. A gate is marked at the top of this plan. In the top-left corner, there is a *wieżyca* (tower). In the bottom-right corner, there is a large, rhombus-like structure, which I interpreted as *Bas[z]ta Wielka* (great tower). More likely, it is *Bastio[n] Wielki* (great bastion). The anonymous author drew a larger square around the inner square, which I interpreted as the outer edge of a wall or an earthen rampart [27, 83, ill. 6]. Outside this line, on the top and right edges, are *kobiliny* (barriers made of tree trunks), or wooden barriers. In my opinion, the structure was protected by moats on three sides: left, right, and bottom [27, 83, ill. 6]. This was evidenced by the inscription *fosa* (moat) in the bottom right corner of the structure.

A curiosity on the plan is the marked *podko[py]* (underpasses, tunnels) beneath the fortifications. They can be found in two places: in the upper left corner, near *wieżyca* (tower), and in the lower right, beneath the 'great bastion'. *Działa* (cannons) are situated near the tunnels. Additional cannon batteries are located at the top and right edges of the structure. The author also marked *zbor* (a Protestant or Calvinist temple) and *aprosze* (siege approaches or siege trenches) near the fortifications themselves, in the upper-left corner. The inscriptions *kastel* ('castle') and *zamkohwy* ('castled'), which refer to siege works, are next to them.

Along the top and right edges of the drawing, I can see double lines labelled *wal* (earth rampart) that separate the besieged structure from the outside world. A line behind the earth rampart marks the river at the top, and it is written that a city was beyond it. The river flows into a pond shown in the upper-left corner of the plan. I believe the water surrounded the main structure, as the river and the line to the pond are added at the bottom of the drawing [27, 83, ill. 6].



**Fig. 1.** Plan of an unknown fortress [16]

## JELGAVA 1622

I identified the drawing of an unidentified fortress from the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg (Fig. 1) as a plan for the 1622 siege of Jelgava Castle, the seat of the duke of Courland and Semigallia, by the Lithuanians. Below, I will attempt to propose arguments for and against this thesis.

First and foremost, the building shown in the centre of the illustration deserves mention. It features a square structure with an empty courtyard and long straight walls. This, along with the word *zamkohwy* (castled), perfectly matches Jelgava Castle, as illustrated in my article. They depict a gate perpendicular to the wall [37, ill. 2]. Leaving the gate and looking to the right, one can see the rampart, the town beyond the Driksa River (Ger. *Drixa*), a tributary of the Lielupe River (Ger. *Kurländische Aa*, Pol. *Lentawa* or *Musza*) [21; 36, ill. 1]. This also aligns with the situation depicted in the drawing. Looking at seventeenth-century plans, I can see water surrounding Jelgava Castle [3-5; 21; 36, ill. 1], which is another significant argument that we see Jelgava Castle on the plan.

In the drawing, at the top and right edge, the plan's author marked a rampart around the besieging forces, which I linked to the external fortifications visible in drawings of the 1622 siege on Swedish plans from Krigsarkivet [3-5; 25, 258; 26, 123, 130] (Fig. 2). In 2023, based on a letter from the Lithuanian Field Hetman Krzysztof Radziwiłł to Sigismund III, King of Poland, dated 27 February 1622, I linked the two siege positions in the castle's corners to the battles of 1622. We can read that the besiegers managed to erect two underpasses under the ramparts [46, 158-161]. This matches what we see on the plan from Saint Petersburg.



be seen on the plan of Jelgava [37, ill. 2]. In my opinion, information about the church and the crypt was of paramount importance, as in 2023 it allowed me to identify the plan from Saint Petersburg. 'Nowhere in Livonia, except Jelgava, do we find such buildings next to the castle. Moreover, their location perfectly matches what results from our current knowledge [27, 91].' The essence of the problem is that the word *gruf* can be read as *graf*. This change, seemingly inconspicuous at first glance, forces us to look for Graf, or count. This, combined with the words *trunba* or *truna*, forces us to look for a count with a similar-sounding surname. There are many indications that this may be Count Franz Bernhard von Thurn (1592–1628), a Czech by origin, commander of the Swedish Guard Regiment (*Hovregement*), who participated in the siege of Biržai in 1625 [28, 441–443; 30, 194–196, 615; 32, 617].

Besides the word *gruf* or *graf*, other identifications linking the plan to Jelgava are controversial. The drawing shows a pond located to the left (east) of the structure. In reality, it was located to the right (west). Looking at seventeenth-century plans, I can see more water in the river to the east than in the pond [3–5; 21; 36, Fig. 1]. Furthermore, there is no written information about tunnels being dug during the siege of the capital of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia in 1622.

All these arguments cast doubt on the thesis regarding the depiction of the Lithuanian siege of Jelgava Castle in 1622 on the plan in the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg.

## BIRŽAI 1625

The above controversies require us to perform a thorough analysis of the plan for elements consistent with the siege of Biržai in 1625. The square plan of the main structure matches both Jelgava and Biržai. *Bas[z]ta Wielka* (great tower) may be identical to *Bas[z]ta Wielka* (great tower) bombarded and destroyed by the Swedes in 1625 [33, 94; 34, 68; 35, 309]. This could be one of the eight *wieżyc* (towers), two of which were located at the corners of each of the four bastions [33, 93; 50, 264]. In this case, it is more likely that we are dealing with a different structure. If I accept the variant with the name *Bastio[n] Wielki* (great bastion), the matter seems much simpler: I would be dealing with the southern bastion, called the Great. And it was to this bastion that one of the tunnels led, as indicated on the plans from Saint Petersburg and the Krigsarkivet [12–15].

Water surrounds the main structure on the Saint Petersburg map. This matches both Jelgava and Biržai. The location of the *staw* (pond) in the upper left corner perfectly matches the artificial reservoir called Širvėnos (Pol. Szirwena) in Biržai. At the bottom right of the map, I can see a *piec wapienny* (lime kiln). According to Karvelis, the Swedes built a rampart next to the Biržai brickyard in 1625 [33, 94; 34, 68; 35, 309], which further supports the depiction of the Lithuanian fortress on the map (Fig. 4).

The plan shows a church situated opposite the main gate. This perfectly matches both Jelgava and Biržai. Behind it, and probably in front of it, the planner drew infantry ramparts *szanc gdzie piechota* (rampart where infantry), conducting siege work. These are technically called siege approaches or siege trenches.

The Swedes used such siege trenches to approach the Lithuanian fortifications in Biržai in 1625. This allowed them to drain the moat first, which was no small feat. It must be remembered that on one side the fortress was protected by the Agluona River (Pol. *Elgona*) and on the other by a pond. The attackers managed to lower the groundwater level, and the well of the castle began to dry up as a result. The Swedes reached the Biržai fortifications



In a letter to Eustachy Wołłowicz dated 8 September 1625, the Grand Referendary of Lithuania (*referendarz wielki litewski*) Krzysztof II Radziwiłł gave three reasons for the fall of his fortress:

*Naprzod s[z]tak[i]et, którym wkoło Zamek w Rowach obstawiony, bo murem tylko trzecia część Zamku obwiedziona, o[b]sypał nieprz[y]jaciełll kulami, wieńcami y rozmaitymi ognistymi przyprawami a opanowawszy przekopy [fosy – M.B.], które gdyby był zapalił, ubyłaby była Zamkowi przednia a prawie ostatnia nadzieia obrony. Druga [wróg – M.B.] wody w stawie nie-mało upuścił dla osuszenia la[u]ffgrabow swych: zaczym w studniach Zamkowych o wodę poczyn-nało być przytrudniejszym. Trzecia a na[j]większa za dwóch stron słabszych [fortyfikacji – M.B.] wkopał się do wału poczyniwszy przez przekop Galerie chcąc Zamek sapować (Bo tak zowią hoc expugnationis genus [tego rodzaju podbój – M.B.]) i proch pod wał zasadził, (...)¹*

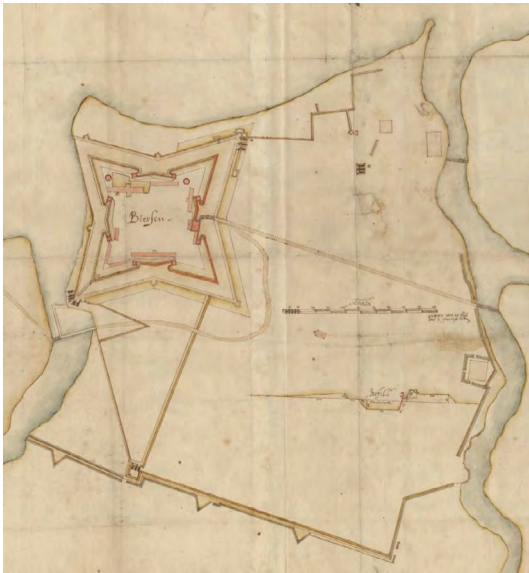
(First, the enemy pelted the palisade built around the castle in the moat with incendiary bullets and explosives, as only a third of the castle was surrounded by walls. And having captured and controlled the moats, which, if they had ignited, would have destroyed the castle's foremost and almost last hope of defence. Second, [enemy] drained a considerable amount of water from the pond to fill its siege ditches, which made it difficult to supply water to the castle wells. Third, but the most important, from the two weaker sides [of the fortifications], it dug into the rampart, making an underpass through the moats, intending to blow up the castle (for that is what this type of conquest is called), and set gunpowder under the rampart (...)) [8, 132; 11, 1; 25, 304].

In addition, the plague was brought to the Biržai fortress by the Chosen Infantry Company from Upytė (Pol. *Upita*) [11, 1; 25, 304; 29, 106]. Ultimately, the castle defended itself for only twelve days [25, 304]. During the defence, it repelled three assaults at high cost to the attackers [9, 61; 10, 67; 25, 304]. Interestingly, during the first two attacks, the Swedes pushed local peasants to the front, using them as human shields [9, 61; 25, 304]. This partially explains the low casualties among the attackers [30, 196].

The second reason for the lower water levels in the wells seems strange, given that there was a reservoir nearby. The easiest access to the reservoir was to the west of the castle. There, on the Swedish maps we can see a relatively small section of land, only a few metres wide, with a wall separating the reservoir waters from the moat. The defenders could have blown up a small section of the wall and flooded the moat with the tunnels, simultaneously raising the water level in the wells. According to information on two Swedish maps, the moat was 15 Swedish feet, or about 4.5 metres, deep [12, 15] (Fig. 6).

Written sources, both Lithuanian and Swedish, mention two tunnels [8, 132; 11, 1; 25, 304; 41, 168]. Two plans from the Krigsarkivet depict the situation before the underpasses were dug [14-15] (Fig. 5), and two others depict the next phase of fighting, with one tunnel pointing towards the southern bastion [12-13]. The tunnel leads directly to the front of the bastion, where the entrance to the gunpowder magazine was located [43, 315, 323]. The underpass for the northern bastion, which was being prepared, had not yet been marked on the drawings. This is very interesting, because on the Saint Petersburg plan, we see two tunnels. Their locations perfectly match the situation depicted in the drawings from the Krigsarkivet and described in written sources and literature on the subject. The upper left corner corresponds to the northern bastion, and *Bastio[n] Wielki* (great bastion) to the southern bastion.

1 Original spelling retained.



**Fig. 6.** Plan of the siege of Biržai in 1625, with one underpass under the southern bastion [12]

If the Saint Petersburg map proves to be a depiction of the 1625 siege of Biržai, it would be the only iconographic representation of that battle showing two tunnels under the Lithuanian fortifications. It would therefore be a sketch illustrating the final phase of the siege, just before the surrender of the fortress.

Several archaeological excavations have been conducted on the grounds of Biržai Castle. Have they revealed the existence of tunnels beneath the fortifications? During the 1961 excavations, in trench no. 60, located to the left of the gate, an underpass, 0.9–1.7 m wide and 10–13 m long, was discovered in the retaining wall of the earth rampart. Supposedly, this tunnel was a secret exit and dates back to the castle's construction. Local legend has it that two children disappeared during its use, and local authorities ordered the entrance bricked up [23, 43–45; 42, 248]. The location and circumstances of the construction of this tunnel do not match the tunnels from the siege of 1625. In 2006, archaeological excavations were conducted in the moat of the northern bastion. An area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> was explored, but no trace of a tunnel was found. This is due to the location of two excavations in the moat at the eastern side (front) of the bastion, from the side of what today is Pilies (Castle) Street [45, 195; 46, 11]. Traces of a possible excavation should be found in the moat in front of the corner of the northern bastion facing the lake.

The Saint Petersburg plan shows a tower in the top left corner of the main structure, facing the church *wieżyca na rogu od zboru* (turret on the corner facing the Protestant or Calvinist temple). It corresponds to a cavalier – a little tower, an ammunition depot, or one of the two towers in the northern bastion. These elements are visible in Makowski's drawing, and the Krigsarkivet plans [12; 14–15; 24, 1–2]. Interestingly, the latter also depicts a circular structure in the centre of the northern bastion. The authors of the Swedish plans also depicted an identical structure in the western bastion. Surprisingly, they are not in Makowski's drawing. Perhaps the authors of the Krigsarkivet plans showed the wells in this way. Archaeological research at these locations is necessary to verify this hypothesis.

The location of the word *wał* (wall) near the lower edge of the castle on the Saint Petersburg map is puzzling. The fact that it is located in front of the moat, as seen from the centre of the fortress, indicates that we are dealing with a glacis – an earth rampart in front of the moat. The main rampart is unnamed. Interestingly, the upper (north-eastern) and right (south-eastern) glacises were reinforced with barriers made of tree trunks. Why are they not visible in the other two sections? The answer lies in the drawings from the Krigsarkivet. In the western sections, we see reinforcement of the space in front of the moat, which may have involved constructing a wall to create a hidden path. In other sections, this role was played by the glacis, which was not available here due to the proximity of the water [12–15]. In a letter to Eustachy Wołłowicz dated 8 September 1625, Krzysztof II Radziwiłł mentioned a *szatkiet* (a fence, a palisade) in the moat, which surrounded the fortifications [11, 1; 25, 304]. Surprisingly, in Makowski's plan, we see a glacis with a hidden road and oval gun emplacements along the entire perimeter of the Biržai fortifications. Still, I do not know whether the author presented the actual state or a concept of expansion [24, 1–2].

Krzysztof Skrobowicz, the mayor (*starosta*) of Biržai and commander of the Biržai defence in 1625, wrote in a letter dated 24 July 1625 to Krzysztof II Radziwiłł that he was carrying out construction works aimed at increasing the fortress's defensive values: '[*ludzie – M.B.*] *mur muruią z wielką pilnością*' (people are building the wall with great diligence) [6, 50]. The structure on the glacis on the western side of Biržai Castle is a good candidate for the location of the above works, but not the only one. The Lithuanian archaeologist Stasys Pinkus was the first to notice a pink line in the eastern part of the castle fortifications in front of the east bastion, the eastern and southern curtain walls, and the eastern side of the northern bastion's front [44, 247]. The Lithuanian painter and architect Evaldas Purlys later wrote about it [45, 311] on one of the Swedish plans of Biržai from 1625 [14]. Swedish plans show that it was the inner slope of the moat and the wall of the *faussebraye*, i.e., the space between the main rampart and the moat [12–15].

Later archaeological research confirmed that only this section of the ramparts had a brick face. Until now, it was assumed that this was due to the suspension of fortification work in 1603, following the death of Krzysztof I Radziwiłł, the founder of the castle [45, 308–310; 48, 8]. Interestingly, in these places Swedish maps show a glacis with weapon sites and a hidden road. In other sections, there was no glacis. Instead, we see a wall that obscures the hidden road and weapon sites [12–15]. In Makowski's drawing made after 1610, the main rampart appears to be entirely faced in brick, whereas in reality it was not [24, 1–2].

It is quite probable that what we see in the Swedish plans is the result of modifications to the fortifications. This involved changing the outline of the glacis from an oval with rounded edges to a straight-line design with gun emplacements on triangular and rhombic plans. As Purlys believes, the main rampart was not walled along its entire length [45, 308–310]. Makowski's drawing depicted the planned state, but not the actual one [24, 1–2]. The wall existed only on the eastern section of the fortifications, which were considered most vulnerable to fire. For this reason, the glacis was additionally secured with tree-trunk obstacles, as shown on the Saint Petersburg plan [27, 75].

During the siege of Biržai in 1625, the Swedes erected numerous artillery emplacements north, east, and south of the castle. This can be seen on the plans from the Krigsarkivet and the plan from Saint Petersburg [12–15]. Their locations match perfectly. The first artillery

emplacement was located opposite the northern bastion, precisely on the Biržai glacis, i.e., in the top left corner of the main structure on the Saint Petersburg plan. The second battery was in the town, i.e., on the east side, opposite the gate. Another emplacement was set up south of the castle, i.e., to the right of the main structure on the Saint Petersburg plan. According to Karvelis, this battery was located on a hill between the church and the town. In the sketches from the Krigsarkivet, it is seen far from the castle, within the outer siege fortifications (circumvallation). Approaches lead from it towards the eastern and southern bastions. The next two positions were located opposite the southern bastion, within the glacis, from which the Radziwiłł palace within the castle grounds could be bombarded. In the case of the first battery, it is difficult to count the cannons on the Saint Petersburg plan, but the description indicates the plural. In the four remaining batteries, two cannons are clearly visible. This also corresponds to the sketches from the Krigsarkivet [12–15; 33, 94; 34, 68; 35, 309]. Krzysztof II Radziwiłł wrote about the Swedes positioning batteries on three sides, i.e., from the north, east, and south [9, 61]. In another letter, he even listed their number – six. Further reading indicates that he was referring to the cannons the Swedes managed to position near the moat [8, 132; 11, 1]. The same can be seen on the plans from Saint Petersburg and Krigsarkivet.

The rampart at the top and the right edge of the Saint Petersburg plan matches the external fortifications of the 1625 siege (contravallation) [33, 94; 34, 68; 35, 309]. We can see them more precisely in the sketches from the Krigsarkivet. The town was supposed to be in front of the earth rampart at the top of the plan, and the river in front of it. This matches the location of the then town of Biržai and the Apaščia River (Pol. *Opoczca*), flowing around the city from the east and north-east. This is clearly visible on the Makowski plan [24, 1–2]. Traces of the eastern section of the town moat from the first half of the seventeenth century were discovered during archaeological excavations at Žemaitės Street, near the intersection with Rinkos Street, in 2017 [40, 288–289]. The river is also clearly visible in the sketches from the Krigsarkivet. In the plans of the 1625 siege, we do not see the town buildings, as most were burned down by the Swedes [9, 61; 51, 163].

Despite the many similarities between the Saint Petersburg plan and the 1625 siege of Biržai, several elements call into question the thesis that it depicts the 1625 battles. First and foremost, the absence of all four bastions, which were so large that their sides (fronts) were longer than the rest of the curtain-shaped fortifications, is noteworthy. Given the name of one of them as *Bastion Wielki* (great bastion), it is difficult to explain the absence of the others. While we could attempt to identify the northern bastion in the top-left corner of the main structure on the plan, this would be unconvincing. The word ‘tower’, despite its earlier explanation, casts doubt on the depiction of the northern bastion in this context. In place of the eastern bastion, we see something resembling a bridge, shown in front of the gate, while a vast void lies to the west. Perhaps the author of the plan focused exclusively on the elements of the defensive architecture that the enemy attacked. Incidentally, all four bastions are the same size on the Swedish plans [12–15]. How then can the name *Bastion Wielki* (great bastion) be explained, given that there was neither a small nor a medium-sized bastion?

The Saint Petersburg plan shows an accurately depicted gate. It is located in front of the rampart line, perpendicular to it. Additionally, the author drew a bridge in front of the gate, also running perpendicular to the line, i.e., to the east. The gate tower on the Makowski plan and the Swedish plans, however, is set at an angle to the curtain wall, with an entrance from the north, with a wooden bridge spanning the moat, arched northward [12–15; 24, 1–2].



**Fig. 7.** Plan of an unknown fortress [16] on the contemporary OpenStreetMap map, available under the Open Database License [42]

The curved shape of the bridge was confirmed by archaeological research from 1963–1965 [44, 248; 48, 8]. However, the inaccurate depiction of the gate on the ‘sloppy’ drawn plan should not surprise us.

The problem with the Saint Petersburg drawing is the strange square-shaped structure in the south-eastern moat, which is absent from both Makowski’s drawing and the Krigsarkivet plans. Perhaps this is the Radziwiłł Palace or the tower in the centre of the south-western curtain wall, visible in Makowski’s drawing? Similar towers were located on the northern and southern curtain walls, but the author of the sketch did not depict them. Adhering to the theory that we have a main rampart, a moat, and a glacis, this indicates the location of a mysterious structure in the moat that is difficult to explain.

A comparative analysis of the Saint Petersburg plan and a contemporary OpenStreetMap map, available under the Open Database License (Fig. 7), revealed that the proportions are significantly distorted. The dimensions of the fortress are acceptable. However, everything surrounding it is placed too close to the fortress by the author of the plan (Fig. 8). The Krigsarkivet plans fared much better in this analysis, with their more well-laid-out facilities.



**Fig. 8.** Plan of the siege of Biržai in 1625 [12] on the contemporary Open-StreetMap map available under the Open Database License [42]

## AUTHORSHIP

This goes beyond the scope of this text, but in conclusion, it is necessary to address the question of the authorship of this interesting drawing. A natural candidate is Krzysztof Skrobowicz, the mayor (*starosta*) of Biržai and the commander of the fortress's defence in 1625. Analysis of his handwritten correspondence contradicts this. We see different vocabulary there, for example, in a letter to the Lithuanian Field Hetman Krzysztof II Radziwiłł from 2 August 1625, Skrobowicz wrote the words *Graff Turne* (Count Turne), *Graff Turnow* (Count Turnow) instead of *graf trun* (count trun) [7, 55–56]. He wrote the word *Zbór* (Protestant or Calvinist temple) in capital letters instead of lowercase [19, 65]. In a letter of 3 December 1626, we read the words *dzialo* (canon), *dział* (canons) with the letter *ł* instead of *l* [19, 65]. Generally, the author of the plan did not use the letter *ł*, while Skrobowicz did, as evidenced by the words *wał* (earth rampart) or *był* (was) found on the plan [2; 20, 241]. Additionally, in the letters of the mayor of Biržai we see different handwriting, for example, the letter *h* in the word *piechota* (infantry) [7, 55], the letter *w* in the word *wał* (earth rampart) [6, 50], and the letter *z* in the word *dzialo* (canon) [19, 65] are written differently. The handwriting of Krzysztof II Radziwiłł and his secretary also differed; also, both used the letter *ł* [17–18].

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## Jelgavos pilies apgulties 1622 m. ar Lietuvos Biržų pilies apgulties 1625 m. planas? Ikonografijos iš Rusijos nacionalinės bibliotekos Sankt Peterburge analizė

### *Santrauka*

Apsvarsčius įvairius argumentus dėl abiejų tvirtovių bei įvykių galima teigti, kad Sankt Peterburgo žemėlapis rodo 1625 metų Biržų apgultį. Pagrindinio objekto aplinka, kurią sudaro vanduo, miestas ir bažnyčia, tinka abiem pilims, tačiau tiksliai sutampančios artilerijos pozicijos ir tuneliai po įtvirtinimais byloja Biržų naudai. Reikšmingas ir įrašų identifikavimas: Grafo von Thurno pėstininkų pozicijos, o ne Kuršo ir Žiemgalos kunigaikščių kriptą, „Didysis bastionas“, o ne „Didysis bokštas“. Nepaisant „nerūpestingos išvaizdos“, Sankt Peterburgo planas yra labai įdomus šaltinis, padedantis geriau suprasti 1625 m. Biržų vaizdą. Tik jame matome du tunelius ir užtvartas dviejuose ruožuose. Tunelių po dviem bastionais egzistavimą dar turi patvirtinti archeologiniai tyrimai. Tad būtina platesnė Sankt Peterburgo plano analizė.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Jelgava (Mitau), Biržai (Birže), įtvirtinimai, Sankt Peterburgas