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KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE OF THE TOWER IN SIEDLEĆCIN, SILESIA

Abstract:

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The paper deals with the oldest murals depicting the tragic story of Sir Lancelot, known to date. They are preserved in the great hall of the ducal tower in Siedlećcin, Silesia. The most plausible theory states that the founder of the tower and the murals was originally duke Henry I of Jawor. Scholars suggested that the murals, painted most probably by a Swiss artist working for the duke, should be dated to 1338-1346. On the stylistic and costumological grounds their dating however, could be earlier than the proposed period of time. Investigation of the arms and armour detail represented in the murals suggests that they were painted in the 2nd or the 3rd decade of the 14th c. The whole program of the paintings had a moralizing character and their message is the approval of loyalty towards the sovereign.

Key words: arms, armour, Siedlećcin, Lancelot, tower, murals

Introduction

Feasting was one of the most important activities of noblemen in the Middle Ages. It's social, ritual and symbolic role could hardly be underestimated. A feast sealed alliances and friendship (see Müller 2006, 38). From the very beginning of the medieval period, if one joined the table with other warriors it meant that from now on, no hostilities should occur within the group. Not to eat or drink and scratch at the common table, as Emperor Henry III (German King Henry IV) probably did during the reconciliation feast, organized by the pope at Canossa (Althoff 2011, 127), was regarded as extremely offensive. The idea of the Round Table introduced to the Arthurian legends by the Norman poet Wace (Boulton 2000, 22)¹, equalizing the warriors in their rights and confirming their social relations with each other inspired European monarchs to create their own fraternal societies of their supporters. As far as we know, the first to do so was King Charles I of Hungary, who in creating *The Fraternal Society of Knighthood of St. George* in 1325/26 was most probably inspired by the image of Arthur and the Round Table (*ibidem*, 34). The clever enterprise of

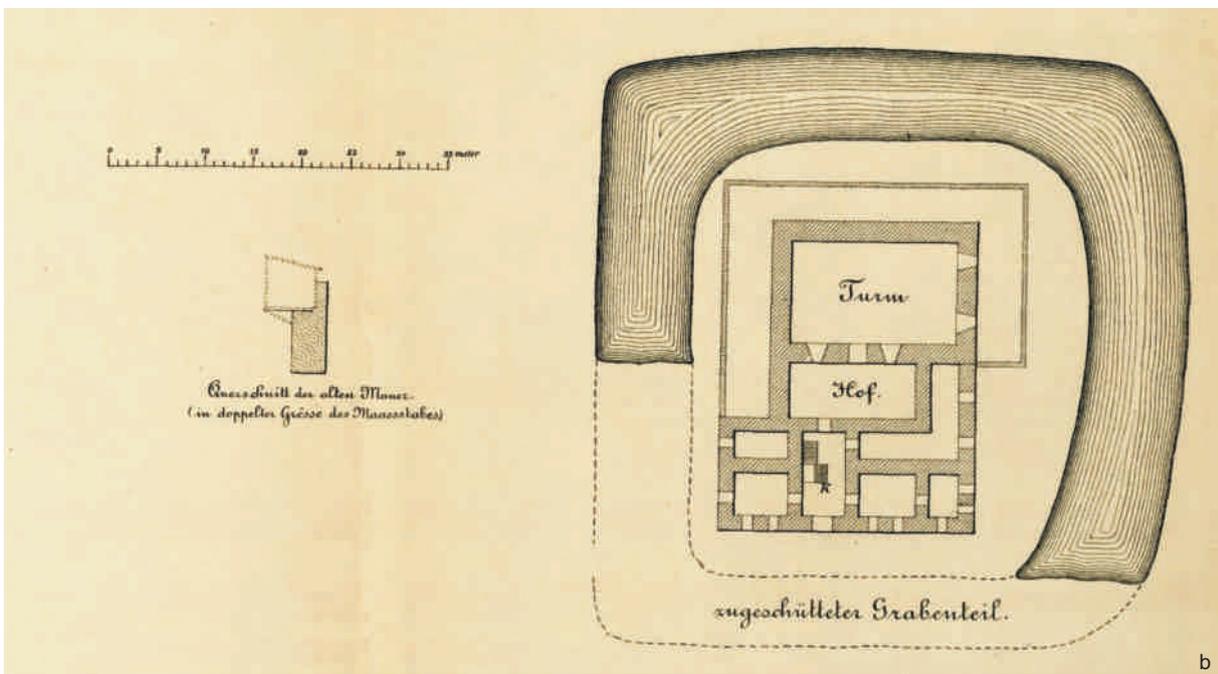
the monarch gained him reliable supporters in the time of baronial rebellions raging across the war torn Kingdom of Hungary. The idea was groundbreaking, and soon other monarchs created their own exclusive societies of the knights of the crown. Arthurian legends became something more than a chivalric fancy and gained political significance.

Silesian dukes of the Polish Royal Piast dynasty had high aspirations, which sometimes exceeded their wealth. The influence of knightly culture on the 14th c. Polish royal court came from France via Hungary and sometimes also via Silesia. Many foreign guests visited Silesia on their way of the court of King Casimir the Great of Poland (Jurek 1996, 88-89). Perhaps, in those circumstances, it was not a mere coincidence that the hall of the ducal tower-house in Siedlećcin had been decorated with scenes from the legend of Sir Lancelot of the Lake. Whether they were only a manifestation of fashion for the Arthurian romance among representatives of high nobility it is hard to ascertain beyond any doubt. The possibility that the murals were deliberately placed in a hall where an exclusive fraternity of ducal supporters held its meetings, as conjectural as it may at first

¹ Wace was a translator and popularizer of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. He describes the invention in the *Roman de Brut* (Boulton 2000, 22).



a



b

Fig. 1. The 14th c. ducal tower in Siedlęcín, Jelenia Góra county: a – view from the North-West, from the Bóbr river (after *Nocuń 2012*); b – the oldest known plan (simplified) of Siedlęcín tower (after *Klose 1888, Taf. I*). Right – Tower (Turm) with surroundings, including remains of the enclosure wall and the moat; Left – cross-section of the medieval enclosure wall with a parapet walk (dismantled in 1840s) (scale at the cross-section is doubled).

Ryc. 1. XIV-wieczna wieża księżęca w Siedlęcinie, pow. jeleniogórski: a – widok z północnego zachodu, od strony rzeki Bóbr (wg *Nocuń 2012*); b – najstarszy znany plan (uproszczony) siedlęcinińskiej wieży (wg *Klose 1888, Taf. I*). Po prawej – wieża wraz z otoczeniem i pozostałościami murów obwodowych i fosy; po lewej – przekrój przejścia przez średniowieczny mur z chodnikiem (rozebrany w l. 40. XIX w.) (skala przekroju została podwojona).

seem, needs considering and further discussion. Inspirations from the royal Hungarian court would be possible in this case. On the other hand, Arthurian iconography appears in least expected contexts such as the decoration of churches and monasteries. Written accounts confirm that such adornment of holy places, that „tended to levity and curiosity” was not a result of a thought through program corresponding with the architecture, and strengthening it’s symbolic effect, but a result of free will of the artists (Loomis 1938, 35, 45). It is interesting to note that the oldest representations of Arthurian legends in art come from the ecclesiastical environment.

1. “My home is my castle – my castle is my home” – tower house in Siedlęcín a residence or a fortress?

1.1 Origins of the tower

The tower (Fig. 1:a), which is the subject of this article, was built in a village of Siedlęcín (Jelenia Góra county, Lower Silesia), that is recognized as medieval Waldhufendorf (a “forest village”) (Bernard 1931, 101). For the first time Siedlęcín was mentioned about 1305². Interestingly it was not founded in a very typical way for this type of Ostsiedlung’s³ rural settlements. The axis of the village is not the Bóbr (Bober) river, as it should be expected – for the village was arranged along a road that was crossing the Bóbr valley – just next to the ford (if not already a bridge) the ducal tower was built. The Bóbr river can be perceived as the axis of the Duchy of Jawor, what places here the obvious course of the trade road (Eysymontt 2009, 326). Although it is not shown by Nowakowa (1951) as one of the important trade routes of the 14th c. Silesia, the Bóbr valley should be seen the only road from the Jelenia Góra Valley (the largest intramontane basin of the Sudetes,

surrounded by numerous mountain ranges) where the crossing of the mountain passes was not necessary⁴. The route alongside the Bóbr river was leading from Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) to another important ducal administrative seat (and another district town / Weichbildstadt) – Lwówek Śląski (Löwenberg)⁵.

The tower house was constructed in the lowest part of the village – the parochial church of St. Nicolas, that was probably also constructed in early 14th c., rises above the tower. In any case we can not say that the tower was built on the spot of the natural defense.

1.2 The founders of the tower and its owners in 14th c.

The construction of the tower, according to the dendrochronological survey, was started in 1313 or 1314⁶. Results of this study therefore suggest that the construction was initiated by Henry I, Duke of Jawor (Jauer) soon after he became an independent ruler of his domain (1312). If so, Henry I – son of Bolko I the Strict, by his wife Beatrice of Brandenburg, was about 20 years old when the rise of the tower begun⁷. It seems reasonable to believe that it was during his youth when Henry I could have experienced the greatest fascination with the chivalry and not only a tower in the hunting area was built then, but also the interior decoration of the Great Hall was founded.

In 1316, Elisabeth Richeza, a former queen consort of Poland and Bohemia, against the will of king John of Bohemia (of the Luxembourgs), made the espousals of her daughter – Princess Agnes of Bohemia, with Henry I, what made him a potential candidate to the Bohemian crown⁸. It took three years until Henry I formally got married with Wenceslaus II’s daughter (and extra five years to receive a Papal dispensation). Duchess Agnes passed away in 1336 and the last ten years of his life

² See CDS, XIV, 137 – in *Liber Foundationis Episcopatus Vratislaviensis* a village *Rudgersdorf* is mentioned in district of Jelenia Góra (*Hyršberc*).

³ It is connected mostly with the introduction and further implementation of German law and huge reorganization of the region (Piskorski 1999). The building investments of that time were strongly based on economic potential – the effect of the colonization and its results, as much more advanced agriculture, location of new towns and villages under so called German law (inhabited mostly by German or Fleming newcomers) as well as exploitation of new discovered resources like gold-bearing sands and soils in the Sudety Mountains by Kaczawa (Katzbach) and Bóbr (Bober) rivers (see Zientara 1997).

⁴ South of Siedlęcín and north of the Weichbildstadt – Jelenia Góra remains of a small medieval castle (*Zameczysko*, known also as *Raubschloss* or *Sechsstättenburg*) are still seen. According to Legut-Pintal (forthcoming), this castle was situated on the route leading north from Jelenia Góra, starting at *Burghor* (*Brama Zamkowa*).

⁵ Unique 14thc. tombstone of a married couple originally from the Franciscan monastery (now in the Lwówek’s town hall) is identified as the tombstone of Henry I (†1346) and his wife Agnes of Bohemia (†1336) (Kaczmarek, Witkowski 1988).

⁶ Dendrochronological research of original ceilings of the tower house in Siedlęcín was conducted by Marek Krąpiec and Elżbieta Szychowska-Krąpiec and its results were published by Chorowska (2003, 122) and later by Nocuń (2009, 171) and Boguszewicz (2010, 175).

⁷ The year of birth of Henry I is not known exactly. According to Jasiński (1975, 24) he was born between 1292 and 1296 so in 1313 he was between 17 and 21 years old.

⁸ Ducal couple is seen as commissioners of the medieval mural paintings of the Arthurian topic in the Great Hall on the 2nd floor.



Fig. 2. The story of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, Siedlęcín murals, Southern wall, early 14th c.: a – the Castle of Camelot, Queen Guinevere with her court; b – Maleagant's abduction of Guinevere; c – Lionel riding a horse, Lancelot sleeping under the apple tree, Lionel falling asleep on guard; d – Lancelot fighting with Tarquyn. *Photo by P. Nocuń.*

Ryc. 2. Historia Sir Lancelota z Jeziora, Siedlęcín – freski, południowa ściana, początek XIV w.: a – Zamek Camelot, królowa Ginewra ze swoim dworem; b – porwanie Ginewry przez Maleaganta; c – Lionel jadący konno, Lancelot śpiący pod jabłonią, Lionel zasypiający na straży; d – Lancelot walczący z Tarkwiniuszem. *Fot. P. Nocuń.*



Fig. 3. The story of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, Siedlęcin murals, Southern wall, early 14th c.: upper register: Lancelot rescuing Guinevere; the two lovers holding their left hands; lower register: a knight (probably Kay) asking Lancelot's forgiveness. *Photo by P. Nocui.*

Ryc. 3. Historia Sir Lancelota z Jeziora, Siedlęcin – freski, południowa ściana, początek XIV w.: górny rząd: Lancelot ratujący Ginewrę; kochankowie trzymający się za lewe ręce; dolny rząd: rycerz (prawdopodobnie Kay) proszący Lancelota o wybaczenie. *Fot. P. Nocui.*

Henry I spent as a widower (Jasiński 1975, 24). If Witkowski (2002) is right the paintings were to be founded by Henry I short before his death. In 1346 Siedlęcin became the property of Henry I's heir –

Bolko II, who two years later got married with Agnes of Austria (from the Habsburgs). Eventually after Duke's death in 1368 the tower house in Siedlęcin was sold to Jenchin von Redern⁹. The

⁹ Probably identical with a nobleman – Jan von Redern, active on the ducal court of Świdnica from 1367, son of another Jenchin, who between 1334 and 1337 was present on the court of Henry I – the founder of the tower in Siedlęcin (see Jurek 1988, 273).



Fig. 4. The story of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, Siedlęcín murals, Southern wall, early 14th c.: Lancelot fighting with Sagramour; Lancelot healing Urry de Hongre. *Photo by L. Marek.*

Ryc. 4. Historia Sir Lancelota z Jeziora, Siedlęcín – freski, południowa ściana, początek XIV w.: Lancelot walczący z Sagramurem; Lancelot uzdrawiający Urry’ego de Hongre. *Fot. L. Marek.*

village and the residence was the property of this noble family until at least 1409 (when the prefect of the Duchy of Świdnica certifies that in his presence Heinze von Redern on behalf of himself and his brother Tristram sells annual rent from the property in Siedlęcín to Hans von Nimptsch) (Probst 1942, 8).

1.3. Historical and archeological records

The Siedlęcín castle, surrounded by a moat and undoubtedly also enclosure wall (remains of a wall of a thickness of 120-140 cm were discovered during the archaeological excavations), was a keep,

or rather a tower house, of a relatively imposing sort. According to Klose (1888, 598-603) the enclosure wall surrounding the tower was 12 feet high and had the parapet walk¹⁰ (Fig. 1:b). Today the moat is preserved only in the north and in the east of the tower but its existence in the full circuit around the tower is proved archaeologically.

As we can expect, the keep had to combine the functions of housing, ceremony (feasts), and defence, identified in a vertical disposition – analogous to those found in other castles in Europe (see Jost 2002): the lower storeys were designed for storage (proved also by the discovery of

¹⁰ The last parts of the wall were to be dismantled in 1840s.

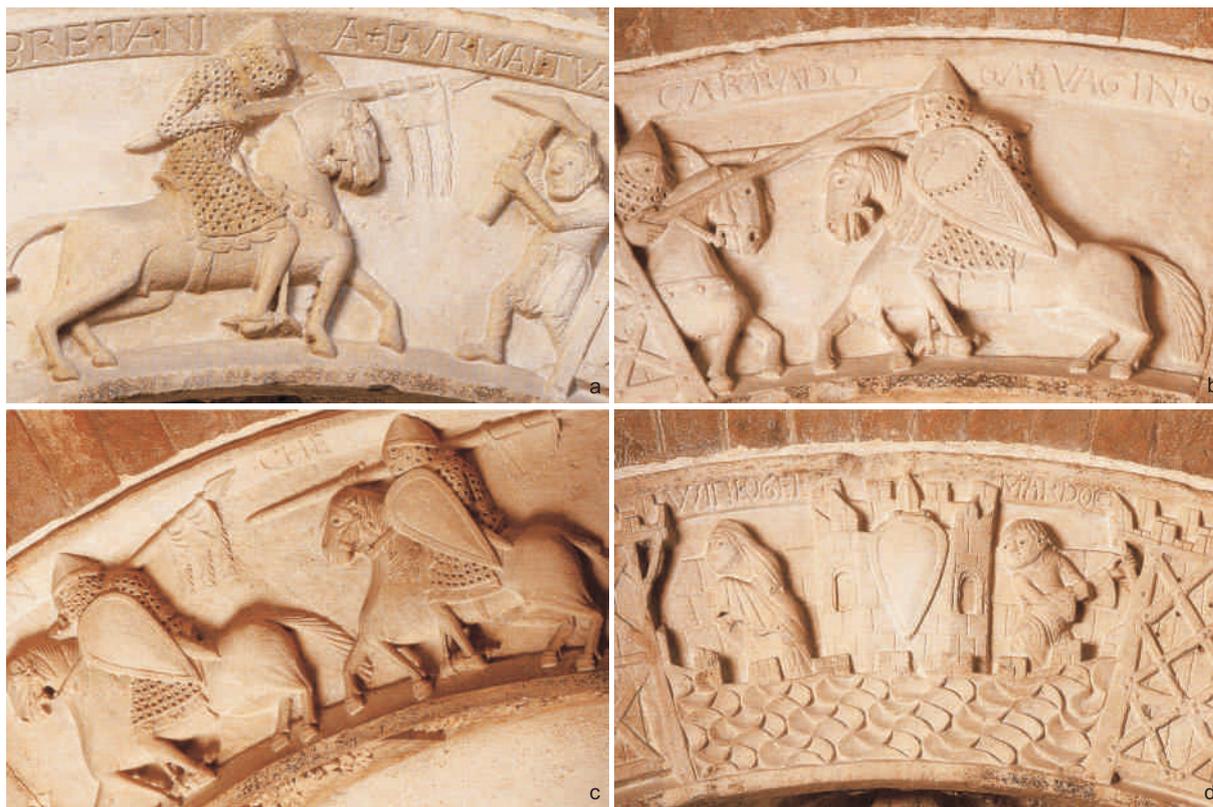


Fig. 5. Porta della Pescheria. Modena Cathedral, ca 1100, arms and armour in scenes showing: a – Artus de Bretania; b – Galvano; c – Galvariun and Che; d – Winlogee (after <http://keespopinga.blogspot.com/p/artu-in-italia.html>).

Ryc. 5. Portal Porta della Pescheria. Katedra w Modenie, ok. 1100 r., uzbrojenie w scenach ukazujących: a – Artusa z Bretanii; b – Galvano; c – Galvariun i Che; d – Winlogee (wg <http://keespopinga.blogspot.com/p/artu-in-italia.html>).

remains of a ramp to transport barrels); the upper floors consisted of living quarters and also fulfilled the ceremonial functions for the dukes; the topmost floor served defensive purposes – although it was rebuilt in late 16th c., the line of original crenellations can be still seen.

The tower house in Siedlęcín is one of the best-preserved examples of such buildings in central-eastern Europe – it avoided more serious reconstruction works in modern times. It's quite impressive rectangular building (15 x 20,2 m). The excavations in the cellars succeeded with discovery of a structure that was identified as a vaulted ramp (built in 14th c.)¹¹. This is quite unique in Silesian towers. Analogical structures can be found in the 14th c. town houses of Świdnica (Schweidnitz), which was the biggest centre of the beer production in medieval Silesia (see Chorowska, Lasota, Małachowicz 1997, 156). Architectural research of Silesian towers proved that the cellars in Siedlęcín were built at the same

time as the tower was (in other dwelling towers cellars were added later – in late 14th or 15th c., if added at all) (Chorowska 2003, 114). During the excavations in the cellar also the ceramic vent was found. So it is possible that there was a hypocaust heating system with a stove built in the cellars as well (excavations in the central area of the cellars was not possible because of the staircase built in not earlier than in 18th c.)¹². The cellars were used as a storage and presumably the hypocaustic furnace was also constructed there. The entrance was from the level above (the ground floor), where the main entrance was situated. Stairs could have been built next to the ramp, discovered during the excavations.

On the ground floor there is the first entrance to the tower through the ogival portal (two bars to block the door from the inside are the most probably original¹³). According to the architectural and archaeological research around the tower there was originally not a very high mound (removed in

¹¹ We would like to thank Prof. Małgorzata Chorowska for helping us to define the ramp.

¹² The issue of the hypocaustic heating in Poland was inter alia discussed by Buško (1995) and Bis (2003).

¹³ The bars need further dendrochronological research.

modern era, when the building in front of the tower was expanded) – the level of the entrance to the tower, which is today about 1,5 m higher than surface of the inner yard (more than 2 m higher than excavated paved surface), was probably same as the top of the mound. In this case we can not say that after entering the enclosed area access to the entrance was very difficult.

During the archaeological excavations inside the tower the remains of already mentioned vaulted ramp were found left (west) from the entrance. The research showed that there was originally a different division of the storey than today and the rooms (undoubtedly three) were separated by walls. During the excavations the relics of one of such partition (originally probably of framed construction) were discovered – trace of the wall was also visible on the north wall of the tower¹⁴. In the central chamber there were originally stairs leading up to the 1st floor (original localization can be defined through marks on ceiling beams). The dendrochronological survey of these beams resulted with the year 1313. The ground floor had probably some economic functions – including the use for transportation of the goods (using the ramp to the cellar).

The 1st floor of the tower consists of two chambers separated by late 16th c. (*ibidem*, 124) wooden wall. In the first room (where originally there were stairs from the ground level and up to the second level) survived the privy and a fireplace with a chimney (according to the architectural research the chimney seems to be built at the same time as the tower, the fireplace and the privy were implemented in late 16th c.). In the 2nd chamber there is the second entrance to the tower. Its present form is the result of the 18th or 19th c. construction works but probably originally there was a medieval entrance here (such situation is very typical for the tower houses in the region – f.e. in Stara Łomnica (Alt Lomnitz). The archival photo shows that in the corner of eastern room was a 17th c. stove (made of tiles) that was transferred in 1912 to the palace in Cieplice (Warmbrunn). It is almost sure that it wasn't the first stove constructed in the tower – during the excavations some 15th c. tiles were found

(including the one with presentation of Phyllis riding Aristotle – a symbol of women tempting the men with their sexual attractiveness in order to triumph over them¹⁵). The dendrochronological survey of the beams from the ceiling of this level resulted with the year 1314. This level could have been used for dwelling by the servants or maybe even courtiers and probably the entrance to the defensive walkway along the wall surrounding the tower house was situated here. On the eastern wall there is a fragment of 15th c. painting of the Virgin Mary with Infant¹⁶. We could perceive it as a premise of a localization of the late medieval oratory here (from late 16th – early 17th c., after the fire, the space was heated and used as warm chamber).

For sure the most impressive level of the tower is the 2nd floor with the former hall. The Great Hall in Siedlęcín tower was designed for ceremonial purposes: it was higher and it had a very rich interior decoration. Architectural research shows that the storey containing the hall was originally divided into three spaces, some of the interior division walls having been demolished not earlier than in late 17th or in 18th c. when the tower was being used as a granary¹⁷.

In 1880s medieval paintings were discovered in the Great Hall of the Siedlęcín tower (Klose 1888). It seems that, originally, the commission had envisaged having paintings on all four walls of the hall, but only those on the south wall were completed. On the west and north walls sketches or rough drafts, probably intended to serve as a base for further works, are still visible¹⁸. The east wall was destroyed probably in 17th or 18th c., so it can no longer be proved that it contained paintings, or even sketches.

The completed polychrome paintings on the south wall of the Great Hall occupy over 30 square meters; they were all made using *al secco* technique. Research carried out by J. Witkowski in the 1990s resulted in the first monograph describing the paintings (Witkowski 2002; see also Nocuń 2004). He recovered not only their real – Arthurian meaning (some scenes were changed because of improper restoration) but also the reasons of the

¹⁴ Remains of division walls of frame construction can still be seen in a 14th c. tower in Sędziszowa (Złotoryja county). It is probable that the tower was built by Lupold de Uchtericz – a vassal of Henry I (discussion about origins of the tower can be found in Chorowska, Dudziak, Jaworski, Kwaśniewski 2010, 183-184).

¹⁵ Recently this motif as the decoration of tiles was briefly studied by Dąbrowska (2010). It is more probable that medieval stove tile was situated in “warm chamber” on the 2nd floor.

¹⁶ The painting was discovered in 2007 and was dated by J. Witkowski.

¹⁷ Thanks to the archival photography, showing the dismantling of the tile stove on the 1st floor in 1910s, we can date the stove to the 1st half of 17th c. – so the tower must have been still used for dwelling when the stove was constructed.

¹⁸ The paintings were never finished, Witkowski (2002, 61) puts a hypothesis that the reason of that was the death of Henry I in 1346 – the work was suspended and later (after 1368, when Siedlęcín was sold to the Rederns), the new owners of the tower, the noble family, hoped to continue the work.

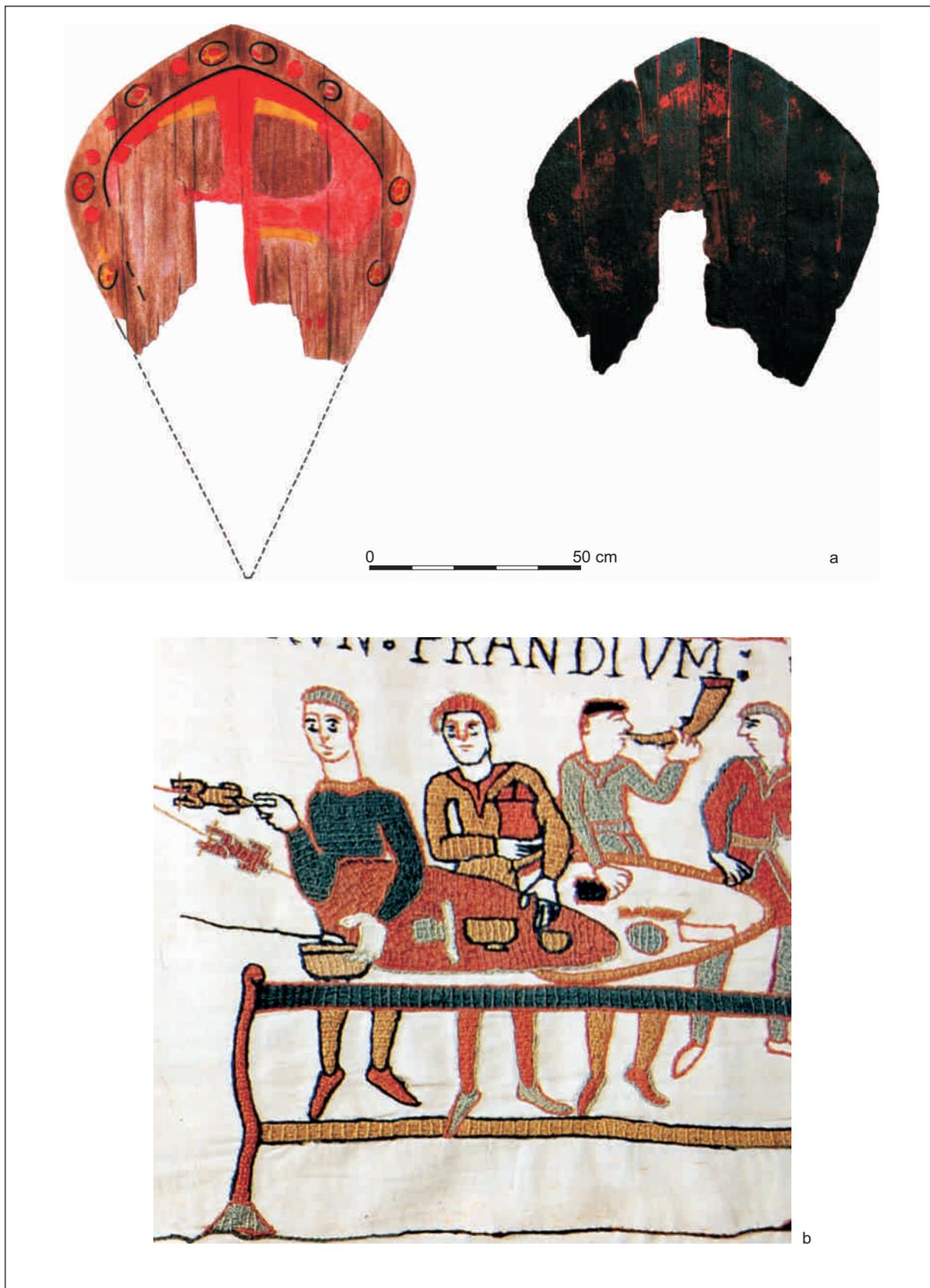


Fig. 6. Kite-shaped shields: a – Szczecin, Poland, late 12th c. (after *Głosek, Uciechowska-Gawron 2011*); b – as an improvised table, Bayeux Tapestry, late 11th c. (after *Wilson 2004, 47*).

Ryc. 6. Tarcze o migdałowym kształcie: a – Szczecin, Polska, schyłek XII w. (wg *Głosek, Uciechowska-Gawron 2011*); b – jako zaimprovizowany stół, Tkanina z Bayeux, późny XI w. (wg *Wilson 2004, 47*).

misinterpretations¹⁹. Author suggested that the artist probably came from the north-east of Switzerland, since the murals, according to him, show the influence of the Swiss Waltensburg Master ('Waltensburger Meister') – this hypothesis probably resulted in indicating the chronology of the paintings as late 1340s, which may be about two decades later than they were made.

The paintings in Siedlęcín are exceptional: their topic is principally profane, something very rare in that period in Silesia (Karłowska-Kamzowa 2004, 71-72). The main subject of the murals is the romantic story of one of the most famous legendary knights of the Middle Ages; they are now recognised as one of only two medieval mural series in the world that show the legend of Sir Lancelot of the Lake. Unfortunately, neither the wall paintings from Siedlęcín nor those from Frugarolo Castle in Italy²⁰ are widely known²¹.

The important space on this floor was also a "warm chamber". It is called so because it's almost sure that it was originally panelled with wood and heated (the most probably by a tile stove). We can find an analogy in a keep of Niesytno Castle in Płonina (Nimmersath), where impressions of the panelling beams can be still seen (Chorowska 2003, 128-129). The warm chamber in Siedlęcín had also access to a privy and in the garderobe next to it, there can be found both a privy and a piscina. The dendrochronological survey of the beams from the ceiling of the 2nd floor resulted with the year 1314²². The original stairs leading from the 1st floor were entering to the Great Hall next to not preserved entrance to the private warm chamber. There are no traces giving the information about the localization of the stairs to the floor above.

There is not too much we can say about the 3rd floor. It was used as a ducal private area, although we don't have here any privies. It is now just one big and high space, but in 14th c., when it was built, for sure it was divided to more spaces. The dendrochronological survey of the beams from the ceiling of the 3rd floor resulted with the year 1314 (the same as the 2nd floor).

The uppermost floor (the 4th floor) had defensive functions. It was a crenellations here

(former blanks are very easy to identify from the inside) and a parapet walk (probably till the 1570s, when there was a fire in the tower). After that the storey was rebuilt to a present form (with no crenellation) and the new – bigger roof was constructed (dendrochronologically dated to 1575).

Summarizing, we can say that not only because of not usual localization (built not on the top of the hill, but by the Bóbr river in the lowest part of the village) but also because of easy access to the inside from the inner yard, comfortable heated chambers and a very richly decorated interior of the Great Hall, we should see the Siedlęcín tower more as a late medieval "villa" than a fortress.

1.4. Arthurian legend on the walls of Silesian medieval ducal residence

The mural paintings on the south wall of the great hall in Siedlęcín, which are painted on two registers, show two of Lancelot's many adventures (Figs. 2-4). These two stories are like a clasp that is opening and closing the glorious days of Lancelot as the Knight of the Round Table. The lower register presents the story as follows: Lionel riding a horse, Lancelot sleeping under the apple tree, Lionel falling asleep on guard (Fig. 2:c), Lancelot fighting with Tarquyn (Fig. 2:d) and a knight (maybe Kay) asking Lancelot's forgiveness (Fig. 3). Between the last and one before the last scene there is a bay window, which interrupts the story. It may be the presence of the window and the lack of available space that explain the omission of a major part of the story of Lancelot and Lionel.

The upper register shows the tragic story of Lancelot's love for Queen Guinevere. Some scenes can be clearly identified as: The Castle of Camelot, Queen Guinevere with her court (Fig. 2:a), Maleagant's abduction of Guinevere (Fig. 2:b) and Lancelot rescuing Guinevere. This story resulted with the fall of Guinevere, Lancelot and eventually the whole Arthur's kingdom.

The mistakes made during the 1936 restoration were especially evident here²³. The knights escorting the queen and her courtiers have been changed into monks, their green dresses having been painted

¹⁹ The restoration works of the paintings took place in 2006 and 2007 and were financed by the owner of the tower – The Chudow Castle Fund with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland and the Self-government of Lower Silesia.

²⁰ The frescos of Frugarolo were transferred from the walls of the castle and are now on display in Alessandria near Torino. The paintings are the subject of a monographic work (Castelnuovo [ed.] 1999).

²¹ The paintings from Siedlęcín are not mentioned in the corpus devoted also to the pictorial manifestation of Arthurian culture in German-speaking part of medieval Europe, edited by Jackson and Ranawake (2000).

²² A year later than ceiling above the ground floor, the same year as ceiling above the 1st floor.

²³ Overcoatings were removed during the restoration in 2006.



Fig. 7. Shields of Manesse type, early 14th c.: a-c – Siedlęcin murals (photo by L. Marek); d – *Codex Manesse*, sygn. Cpg 848, University Library, Heidelberg, p. 82v (after <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>).

Ryc. 7. Tarcze typu Manesse, wczesny XIV w.: a-c – Siedlęcin – freski (fot. L. Marek); d – *Codex Manesse*, sygn. Cpg848, Biblioteka Uniwersytetu w Heidelbergu, p. 82v (wg <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>).

over as brown habits. Lancelot and Guinevere with their left hands joined (a motif which could be interpreted as a symbol of inappropriate and improper love) have been repainted into the duke

with a Cistercian abbot. Here it was seen clearly how that faulty restoration, changing the meaning of certain scenes, had prompted a misinterpretation – scene with Guinevere and her court became



Fig. 8. Extant, 14th c. knightly shields: a – belonging to the Herren von Welfenberg, Manesse form, Museum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Philipps-Universität Marburg (after *Kohlmorgen 2002*); b – one of the two specimens excavated at Boringholm, National Museum Copenhagen (photo by *L. Marek*).

Ryc. 8. Zachowane XIV-wieczne tarcze rycerskie: a – należąca do Panów von Welfenberg, typ Manesse, Museum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Philipps-Universität w Marburgu (wg *Kohlmorgen 2002*); b – jeden z dwóch okazów odnalezionych w Boringholm, Muzeum Narodowe w Kopenhadze (fot. *L. Marek*).

the visit of the monks to the court, whereas meeting of Guinevere and Lancelot became the duke's presentation of the deed of foundation of the monastery to the abbot.

On the west wall, there survive outline sketches showing: Lancelot fighting with Sagramour(?), Three knights riding horses (Yvain, Gauvain, Hector?) and Lancelot curing Urry de Hongre (Fig. 4). Finally, on the north wall, are surviving fragments of preliminary drafts showing knights riding horses (Fig. 9:b). This scene, it seems, was to have shown one of Lancelot's battles. Parts of these drafts were damaged by construction of the privy in the northern wall – added later (probably after the fire in the end of 16th c.).

Of course we cannot be certain that all the scenes have been accurately identified. The most important factor is however to have made an indisputable the primary topic of the murals identified as Lancelot of the Lake and his story.

2. Arms and armour in Arthurian iconography

Arthurian iconography remains one of the most valuable sources of information for the students of medieval arms and armour. Slightly underestimated and nearly contemporary to the

Bayeux Tapestry is the sculpted decoration of the *Porta della Pescheria* in the Modena Cathedral (Fig. 5). Created about 1100 it is also the oldest evidence for the knowledge of Arthurian legends, pre-dating the written version in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1136-1138). The pictorial history represented on the Modena archivolt was most probably inspired by Breton crusaders who stayed in Italy for 4 months in 1096/97 on their journey to the Holy Land (Loomis 1938, 34). There is plenty of evidence for the introduction of Arthurian ideas in the Italian Peninsula by the Normans. Among them is the famous sword embedded in a rock at the monastery of Monte Siepi near Chiusdino in Tuscany. According to the legend, once it belonged to a 12th c. local saint: *Galgano*, who after a profound mystical experience decided to convert himself from a knight into a hermit and change his sword into a cross (Scalini 2007, 52).

2.1. Shields

Returning to the archivolt, one can find interesting details of armament meticulously sculpted there by the artist. The knights armed with lances are wearing long sleeved mail tunics, mail coifs, nasal helmets and kite shaped shields (Fig. 5), very similar to the ones depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry.



Fig. 9. Paintings allegedly made in the latter half of the 14th c., Siedlęcin Tower, Northern wall and window bay: a – von Redern coat of arms with a shield of *petit écu* type (?); b – a knight with the alleged von Redern crest on his great helm; c – von Zedlitz coat of arms. Photo by L. Marek.

Ryc. 9. Malowidła wykonane prawdopodobnie w 2. połowie XIV w., wieża w Siedlęcinie, północna ściana i wykusz: a – herb von Redern z tarczą w typie *petit écu* (?); b – rycerz z wyobrażeniem klejnotu von Rodern (?) na helmie wielkim; c – herb von Zedlitz. Fot. L. Marek.

Shield and helmet deserve special attention as they were the most important pieces of defensive armament in the middle ages, both in practical, as well as in their symbolic meaning. Kite-shaped shields depicted on the archivolt (Fig. 5:b-d), erroneously called often “Norman” originated most probably in the Carolingian period from Byzantine armament (Nicolle 1982, 15). The oldest iconography of the so called Norman shields comes from Catalan illuminated manuscripts dated to the 10th-11th c. (Nickel 1958, fig. 8). The introduction of such pieces of defensive armament was a milestone in the development of the well known triangular knightly shield, depicted also on the Siedlęcin

murals. It is interesting to note that in the 11th c., a kite shaped shield was most probably left flat without curvature, so characteristic for the later period. That is the main reason why it could have been used as an improvised field table by the Norman warriors (Fig. 6:b), as depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry (Kohlmorgen 2002, 28-29, fig. 19). The scene is interesting in the context of the mentioned Norman Round Table tradition. It represents the sense of brotherhood among the participants of the meal, and highlights the “equalizing” character of the common table/shield during a military campaign. As far as we can recall, the only extant example of a relatively well

preserved flat, kite-shaped shield from the 12th c. comes from Poland (see Głosek, Uciechowska-Gawron 2011). It has some of its original, red, yellow and black paint still remaining (Fig. 6:a). On the outer surface of the shield there was originally a red cross painted. The specimen, made of alder was discarded as a damaged piece of equipment and used to fill a log chamber in the rampart of the early medieval stronghold in Szczecin Podzamcze. The wooden box construction of the rampart was dendrochronologically dated to 1170-1197, and most probably had been raised after one of the Danish sieges of the Szczecin stronghold, confirmed by 12th c. written accounts (*ibidem*, 274).

In the period of Norman Conquest there was still no established heraldry. The emblems placed on shields represented on the Bayeux Tapestry and the Modena archivolt (Fig. 5:b) couldn't be treated as heraldic charges yet. More probably they represent apotropaic symbols, talismans or lucky charms, as it was a well established tradition to adorn shields with such emblems since remote antiquity (Nickel 1958, 6). Heraldry became a necessity in the 12th c., when amour, and especially the closed helm developed. The latter concealed the whole face of the combatant making him anonymous, which was unacceptable for the highly individualistic occidental medieval culture. Moreover it influenced the shape of the shield, as its convex upper edge hampered observation from the narrow visor in the great helm (*ibidem*, 73). Therefore soon after the appearance of the developed great helm the shield's upper edge became flat (*ibidem*). Allegedly, the oldest representation of a heraldic shield the effigy of Geoffrey Plantagenet († 1151) ordered by his wife circa 1160 (Pastoureau 2006, 241-242). However, the precise chronology of this effigy is constantly a matter for discussion in the literature (*ibidem*). The earliest example of a transitional form is the 12th/13th c. shield from Seedorf monastery in Switzerland (Schneider 1951, 116-118), which combines features of an old kite-shaped shield and later triangular knightly shields²⁴ The latter were the ones, which appear in the Arthurian scenes from the Siedlecin murals. They could be relatively precisely dated to the 1st half of the 14th c., due to their characteristic form, with slightly convex side edges, narrowing towards the so called head of the shield. Such pieces of defensive armament appear in three scenes from the Lancelot cycle on the Siedlecin murals (Witkowski 2002, 65-66, figs. VI-VII, IX),

namely: the scene where Lancelot falls asleep under an apple tree (Fig. 7:a); the scene where Lancelot fights the fearsome knight Tarquyn (Fig. 7:b), and finally, the unfinished scene where the hero encounters Sagramour (Fig. 7:c). Analogies to the Siedlecin examples one can find among the miniatures of the famous *Codex Manesse* illuminated mainly in the 1st quarter of the 14th c. (Fig. 7:d). Students of arms usually call this kind of shield the Manesse form (Nickel 1958, 47), dated to circa 1300-1350 (Kohlmorgen 2002, 44-45).

There are three extant medieval examples of such shields, which prove that the form was not merely conventional for the artistic representations of the time but actually used by the combatants. *Manesse*-type shields were recorded in the largest collection of 16 specimens of 13th-14th c. date, once kept in St. Elisabeth's church in Marburg (Nickel 1958, 27). Two of them could be identified as belonging to German noble families, namely to the *Herren von Welfenberg* (Fig. 8:a), and the *Shenken von Schweinsberg* (Kohlmorgen 2002, 44, 90-98). The other one charged with a lion rampant argent against a field of gules couldn't be ascribed to a particular owner (*ibidem*, 97). Most of the extant examples of the triangular, knightly shields are made entirely of linden- or alder wood planks, which were vertically arranged and glued together. The outer surface of the shield was often covered with parchment or linen and elaborately decorated in gesso technique, using sometimes the so called *Engobage* (relief), as one can observe in the case of the mentioned Welfenberg shield (*ibidem*, 91). Exclusively we find 14th c. shields among archaeological records. Two unique specimens with wooden stripes obliquely set into the body of the shield, running through all of the vertically arranged willow planks were found during archaeological excavations at castle Boringholm, Denmark (Boje, Andersen 2005, 152). They belong to the so called Spanish type (Fig. 8:b), which appeared circa 1240 for the first time, and increased in its popularity thereafter (Kohlmorgen 2002, 43). The finds from Boringholm could be dated according to dendrochronological samples taken from the site to circa 1368-1400 (Roesedahl, Kock 2005, 356). We cannot be certain however, whether they were ever used in battle, tournaments or merely played a heraldic role (*ibidem*, 152).

Shields in coats of arms painted in the Northern window bay, in the Tower of Siedlecin represent a slightly different form from the

²⁴ In older literature the shield of Arnold von Brienz from Seedorf in Switzerland was treated as the 12th c. so called Norman shield converted at the turn of 12/13th c. into a more modern, triangular shaped defense. This theory has been recently questioned (see Kohlmorgen 2002, 49-51).



Fig. 10. The coat of arms of Sir Lancelot of the Lake: a – Lancelot crossing the swordbridge, guarded by phantom lions, to free Guinevre from the hands of Meliagant, Pierpont Morgan Library, sygn. FR805 (after <http://www.stanford.edu>); b – Lancelot beheading Meliagant, the Rochefoucauld Grail manuscript, ca 1315-1323 (after <http://elopedelart.canalblog.com>); c – Lancelot and Elaine, Siedlęcín murals, early 14th c. (photo by L. Marek).

Ryc. 10. Herb Sir Lancelota z Jeziora: a – Lancelot przekraczający most z miecza, strzeżony przez widma lwów, by uwolnić Ginewrę z rąk Melaganta, Biblioteka Pierpont Morgan, sygn. FR805 (wg <http://www.stanford.edu>); b – Lancelot ścinający głowę Melagantowi, manuskrypt Rochefoucauld Grail, ok. 1315-1323 (wg: <http://elopedelart.canalblog.com>); c – Lancelot i Elaine, Siedlęcín – freski, wczesny XIV w. (fot. L. Marek).

mentioned Manesse type (Fig. 9:a,c). They could be a transitional form to the so called *petit écu*, which also developed in the 1st half of the 14th c. (Kohlmorgen 2002, 44). There was a tendency in the evolution of shields towards examples of smaller dimensions, which was caused by the

development in armour. Shields in the niche are interpreted as belonging to the owners of the tower, painted when it became a knightly property of the von Redern family in the latter half of the 14th c. (Witkowski 2002, 55-56). One of the coats of arms is ascribed to the lords von Redern (Fig. 9a),



Fig. 11. Elements of armour in Arthurian iconography and in reality, ca 1380-1400: a – Lancelot conquering the Dolorous Guard, tower of Frugarolo, Italy (after *Venturoli 1999*); b – Hochenschau armour, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich, inv. No. W195; c – houndskull bascinet, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, inv. No. A12 (b-c – photo by *L. Marek*).

Ryc. 11. Elementy zbroi – rzeczywiste i w arturiańskiej ikonografii, ok. 1380-1400 r.: a – Lancelot zdobywający Strażnicę Boleści, wieża w Frugarolo, Włochy (wg *Venturoli 1999*); b – kirys kryty z Hochenschau, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum w Monachium, nr inw. W195; c – przyłbica typu psi pysk, Kunsthistorisches Museum w Wiedniu, nr inw. A12 (b-c – fot. *L. Marek*).

the other to the knights von Zedlitz (*ibidem*, 56). The latter was painted by a very clumsy artist, who had problems with keeping the shield's symmetry (Fig. 9:b). That is one of the reasons that we should

be cautious in drawing far fetched hypothesis from the form of these escutcheons. The other is the highly conventionalized, and traditional way of representing coats of arms during the middle ages,



which makes precise dating of such works of art especially troublesome. Although the hypothesis (*ibidem*), that the von Rederns made an attempt to finish the paintings after they became the lords of the tower seems perfectly reasonable, a possibility that the coats of arms were painted in the ducal hall from the beginning, and represent the most trusted courtiers of the duke, should be also considered. It is interesting to note that Jenchin von Redern, the later lord of Siedlęcin, was son of Jenchin – a courtier of duke Henry I in 1334-1337 (Jurek 1998, 273), the alleged founder of the tower and it's murals (Witkowski 2002, 34).

Shields in the medieval period were probably one of the most highly regarded piece of defensive armament, as it was treated as a representation of the owner himself. If someone dared to offend a shield, he offended also it's owner (Kohlmorgen 2002, 11). Such offence was severely punished in the late medieval period, as we know from paragraphs of the German law (*ibidem*). This special attention of medieval people to the shield originated in remote antiquity. According to Tacitus, a boy couldn't turn into a man unless he received a spear and a shield in recognition of his martial, hunting skills, and exploits on the path to become a warrior (see Menghin 1983, 14). In the Germanic tribes a king who didn't have dynastic rights to the throne was chosen by free men on a special gathering – a ting. The candidate was elevated on the shield, and had to be accepted by all of the participants of the ceremony (Althoff 2011, 35). It is interesting to note that such an event was recorded for the last time in the 12th c. (*ibidem*). A red shield or pennon, exposed by a marching unit, or placed on the mast of a war vessel or on castle walls, could be regarded as a signal to attack, declaration of war, and willingness to give battle to the death, a sort of judicial combat between two armies (see Wiesiołowski 1995, 128-129, Rogers



Fig. 12. Crested great helmets in early 14th c. iconography: a – Lancelot drawing his sword on Tarquyn, Siedlęcin murals; b – Lancelot's helm, Siedlęcin murals (a-b – photo by L. Marek); c – helm of Henry IV Probus, the duke of Wrocław, Codex Manesse, p. 11v (after <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>).

Ryc. 12. Helmy wielkie z klejnotami w ikonografii wczesnego XIV w.: a – Lancelot wyciągający miecz na Tarkwiniusza, Siedlęcin – freski; b – helm Lancelota, Siedlęcin – fot. L. Marek); c – helm Henryka IV Probusa, księcia wrocławskiego, Codex Manesse, p. 11v (wg <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>).



Fig. 13. Crested great helmets, ca 1350: a – belonging to the family von Prankh, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, inv. No. B74; b – belonging to Edward “the Black Prince”, placed above his tomb in the Canterbury cathedral, in 1376; c – method of fastening the crest to the great helm, detail from the specimen belonging to the family von Prankh. *Photo by L. Marek.*

Ryc. 13. Hełmy wielkie z klejnotami, ok. 1350 r.: a – należący do rodziny von Prankh, Kunsthistorisches Museum w Wiedniu, nr inw. B74; b – należący do Edwarda „Czarnego Księcia”, umiejscowiony powyżej jego grobowca w katedrze w Canterbury, w 1376 r.; c – metoda łączenia klejnotu z hełmem – detal z egzemplarza należącego do rodziny von Prankh. *Fot. L. Marek.*

2000, 254; Kohlmorgen 2002, 11). In the medieval romances we can observe many reminiscences of ancient war – rituals which survived hundreds of years and were still practiced in the world of medieval chivalry. Even some adventures of the

Knights of the Round Table were copied from ancient or early medieval legends. A good example is the story of Gawain and the Perilous castle, which evidently was inspired by certain parts of the legend of the Irish hero Cuhulainn (Loomis



Fig. 14. Knightly belts of fabric tied around the waist, 13th – early 14th c.: a – beginning of the knightly quest for adventure, Siedlęcin murals; b – Lancelot healing Urry de Hongre, Siedlęcin murals (a-b – photo by L. Marek); c – the Trzebnica Psalterium, University Library Wrocław, sygn. IF 440 (after Marek 2008).

Ryc. 14. Pasy rycerskie z materiału opasującego talię, XIII – początek XIV w.: a – początek rycerskiej wyprawy, Siedlęcin – freski; b – Lancelot leczący Urry’ego de Hongre, Siedlęcin – freski (a-b – fot. L. Marek); c – Psalterz Trzebnicki, sygn. IF 440, Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego (wg Marek 2008).

1938, 71). Some heraldic charges of the Arthurian knights were old Roman barbarised apotropaic symbols – such as the wild boar (*ibidem*, 49).

2.2. Arthurian heraldry on shields and other heraldic devices

In the 13th-14th c. occidental heraldry was already an extremely complicated branch of

knowledge. There still remained a great deal of inconsistency and confusion in the heraldic rules. The same applied to fantastic, Arthurian heraldry, where one can observe different charges ascribed to the same hero. Tristan, f. e. is usually depicted with a shield charged with a lion rampant, as on the Chertsey tiles from circa 1270 in a scene where he is wounded with a poisonous sword by

Morhout, or the scene where he kills his adversary (*ibidem*, 47, figs. 43-44). On the other hand, in the Runkelstein murals from circa 1400, Tristan has a shield blazoned with a wild boar, which had been assigned to him already by Gottfried of Strassburg, a German poet of the 11th/12th c. in his courtly romance *Tristan* (*ibidem*, 49). On the famous Ceiling from the Palazzo Chiaramonte in Palermo, dated to the last quarter of the 14th c., Tristan has a shield blazoned similar to the indicated by *Tavola Ritonda* – the 14th c. Italian book of Arthurian Romances. The arms of the hero according to this book were: a field azure with bend argent, with a border of gold on each side of the bend (*ibidem*, 62). Charges from shields in the 13th-14th c., were usually repeated in heraldic crests on helms and shaffrons worn by the knightly chargers (Pyhrr, La Rocca, Breiding 2005, 10). This was however not a firm rule as we can observe on one of the Wienhausen embroideries from circa 1350 where Tristram wears the peculiar crest of a Saracen's head on his helm (Loomis 1938, 53). The listed inconsistencies originated from the artist's background as well as his free will in depicting Arthurian heroes. Sometimes it resulted from the confusion of different stories, as in the case of the early 14th c. ivory casket, originally kept in the South Kensington Museum (*ibidem*, 71). Lancelot depicted on one of its panels bears a shield with the infixed lion's claw, which belongs to Gawain. The latter in one of his exploits managed to cut off the claws of an attacking lion, which the beast had fixed in his shield (*ibidem*, 72). In some works of art Gawain bears a shield of gules with a double eagle d'or, which is most probably a combination of the arms of the Holy Roman Empire, and the arms of Judas Maccabaeus (Nickel 1993, 3).

Iwain, similarly to Gawain, gained his charge, as a result of his most famous adventures. He is often seen with a lion shield, since he had helped the lion in the fight with a dragon, thus winning the beast's gratitude and loyal service (Loomis 1938, 77-78). Sometimes he is represented with an eagle shield, which he had taken from his fallen adversary Ascalon – the defender of the magical spring in the forest of *Broceliande* (*ibidem*, 78).

Nevertheless, general rules of Arthurian heraldry seem to exist in iconography, despite all of the listed inconsistencies. Galahad is usually identified by the argent, cross gules (Loomis 1938, 111, 118; Nickel 1993, 4); Wigalois – called in German the *Ritter mit dem Rade* – by the wagon's wheel charge as on the *Runkelstein* murals (Loomis 1938, 80). King Arthur's arms are three golden crowns against azure background (Nickel 1993, 9).

Eventually, the bendy of six, gules and argent on the shield (Fig. 10:a) usually distinguish Lancelot (Pastoureau 1983, 82; Nickel 1993, 3). In the Lancelot-Grail cycle (the so called Vulgate Lancelot), written in the 13th c. we find the story about the origin of the hero's arms. Early in his knightly career, Lancelot faced the Dolorous Guard (Nickel 1993, 4). The castle was garrisoned by elite warriors under the command of the Copper knight. After a few skirmishes, the nightfall soon brought temporary armistice to the fighting parties. In the nearby town, in a place where the hero decided to sleep he found three magical shields: one with a single bend of gules against a silver background, another had two bends and the last: three bends. The heraldic charges on the shields, as explained to Lancelot by fairy Sareda – a servant of the Lady of the Lake, represented respectively the strength of one, two and three men, which could be gained from them by the wielder (see Wiesiowski 1995, 129). With the help of the magic shields Lancelot was able to conquer the Dolorous Guard. Consequently he changed it into his home named Joyous Guard. The story is well depicted in the frescoes from the Tower of Frugarolo in Italy (Fig. 11:a), dated by art historians to circa 1393-1400 (Rossetti Brezzi 1999, 59-60, fig. 3, pl. III). Unfortunately the paintings had to be taken from their original location and moved to the museum, due to conservation requirements. Lancelot is bearing his argent-gules shield in most of these representations; the differences in the shield tinctures being only caused by age and the state of preservation of the frescoes (Venturoli 1999, 89). The investigation of arms and armour detail undertaken by P. Venturoli (*ibidem*) confirms the dating of the paintings to the last quarter of the 14th c. Among a great variety of head pieces (Fig. 11:a) we find opened bascinets with camails fastened to the helmet by a system of loops – the so called *verveilles* (see Fig. 17:c), kettle hats, visored great helms and hound-skull bascinets (see Fig. 11:c) (*ibidem*, 99). Still represented among the combatants are hour glass gauntlets, and globulous breastplates with textile coverings, similar to the famous *Hochenshau* armour, from circa 1380 (Fig. 11:b). Apart from the Siedlęcín paintings, the frescoes are the only murals in the world to depict the story of Sir Lancelot of the Lake. They represent however a very different world of arms and armour, than the Silesian cycle, which predates them by circa 6-8 decades.

It is interesting to note, that on the Siedlęcín murals the arms of Lancelot are most prominent in one scene on the far left, interpreted by art historians as a *Memento Mori* (Witkowski 2002,



Fig. 15. Mail sleeves extended to form mufflers, early 14th c.: a – knights observing the duel between Sagramour and Lancelot, Siedlęcín murals; b – duke Henry IV Probus of Wrocław, Codex Manesse, University Library in Heidelberg, sygn. Cpg848, p. 11v (after <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>); c – grave effigy of duke Bolko I the Strict of Jawor, Cisterian monastery in Krzeszów, Silesia; d – another part of the scene of the duel between Sagramour and Lancelot, Siedlęcín murals (a, c-d – *photo by L. Marek*).

Ryc. 15. Rękawy kolczugi z mitynkami, początek XIV w.: a – rycerze obserwujący pojedynek pomiędzy Sagramurem a Lancelotem, Siedlęcín – freski; b – książę wrocławski Henryk IV Probus, Codex Manesse, sygn. Cpg848, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Heidelbergu, p. 11v (wg <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>); c – przedstawienie nagrobne księcia jaworskiego Bolka I Surowego, klasztor cystersów w Krzeszowie, Śląsk; d – inna część sceny pojedynku pomiędzy Sagramurem a Lancelotem, Siedlęcín – freski (a, c-d – *foto. L. Marek*).



Fig. 16. Lancelot armed with a mail hauberk, mail chaucés extended to form sabatons, and a separate mail coif, Siedlęcin murals. Photo by L. Marek.

Ryc. 16. Lancelot w kolczudze z długimi rękawami, kolcze nogawice wydłużone tak, aby formowały trzewiki, oddzielny kaptur kolczy, Siedlęcin – freski. Fot. L. Marek.

70-71). Probably the scene was inspired by the popular, French 13th c. legend of the *Three Living and the Three Dead* (Binski 1996, 135). There are two pairs of lovers depicted in the Siedlęcin scene, and underneath them, disgusting cadavers in the state of decomposition. All of the effigies are surrounded by scrolls with moralizing sentences written in high German. J. Witkowski (2002, 70) interpreted the scene as showing Lancelot and maiden Elaine, the latter making a gesture of submission, and Guinevere with Lancelot making the same gesture towards the Queen. The former pair is particularly interesting due to the fact that the hero is wearing his heraldic tunic with the

bendy of gules and argent (Fig. 10:c) known also from other contemporary representations (Fig. 10:b). Other knights, and Lancelot himself in the rest of the scenes wear tunics, which are more conventional and fashionable for the courtly costume of the time, decorated in parallel red/white stripes. Such courtly dress could be often seen in the mentioned *Codex Manesse*, but probably had an older tradition, as a striped red-yellow courtly dress is already mentioned by Jean Joinville (2002, 121) – the participant of the 7th Crusade. The tunic seems to be more a civilian courtly dress, however we know examples of long sleeved surcoats worn over armour (Blair 1958, 28).

The bendy of gules and argent was not the only arms ascribed to Lancelot. The hero is also seen with a silver shield with two crowned lions azure (Wiesiołowski 1995, 129).

Moreover, Arthurian knights used to have two different shields – a shield for peace and a shield for war (see Nickel 1995, 14) – a custom well documented also by historical records referring to medieval reality. This makes the interpretation of Arthurian heraldry even more complicated. F.e., there were originally two such pieces of defensive armament hanged over the tomb of the Black Prince in the Canterbury cathedral, the shield for peace with the prince's personal badge (three Ostrich feathers), and the shield for war – with a family coat of arms (arms of England and France). The latter is the only one preserved (see Oakeshott 1988).

The shield of Lancelot in the Siedlęcin murals (Fig. 7:a) most probably repeats the strange dog crest on his great helm. Unfortunately, only in one instance, the shield charge is hardly visible, because of the poor state of preservation of the paintings. Perhaps it could be interpreted as the knight's personal badge. This becomes even more probable, when we realize that in the Arthurian cycle, a knight on his quest for adventures is often armed with a shield for peace (Nickel 1995, 14).

One of the most important pieces of military equipment in the Siedlęcin paintings are great helms (Fig. 12). The head defence appeared for the first time in the last quarter of the 12th c. (Blair 1958, 30). At this time it was already provided with a heraldic crest, which usually mirrored the charge on the shield. An early representation of a heraldic crest we can observe on the seal of king Richard I of England, which was cut circa 1195, and used about 1198 (Southwick 2006, 7). The most complete list of extant 13th-14th c. examples of great helms, and a discussion on their origins one can find in the most recent work by Žákovský, Hošek, Cisár (2012, 98-116). There is no reason

for quoting all of the existing specimens which are contemporary with the Siedlęcin depictions (1st half of the 14th c.). The latter are schematic to such an extent (Fig. 12:a-b) that the investigation of their construction seems impossible and thus irrelevant for the dating of arms and armour represented in the murals. Even if we investigate original great helmets it is difficult to determine their age, only on the basis of shape and construction. Similar forms were used in a time span of at least a hundred years (*ibidem*, 100). Moreover the Siedlęcin helmets are often covered with mantling which obscures their form (Fig. 12:b). They are almost identical to the representations from *Codex Manesse*, including the textile detail. This becomes obvious when we compare the headpiece from the scene where Lancelot falls asleep in Siedlęcin (Fig. 12:b) with the representation of duke Henry IV Probus of Wrocław from the mentioned manuscript (Fig. 12:c).

After about 1350 great helmets were more often used in tournaments than in battle. All in all it wasn't the best design of a helmet with its poor air circulation, narrowed vision range and extensive weight. Relative safety provided by the great helm couldn't counterweight its deficiencies.

The most interesting problem for our discussion here is the role of the crested helm as a heraldic device. The helm itself was often painted in heraldic tinctures as evidenced by 13th c. miniatures (von Suttner 1878, 11, fig. 11). A handful of original, medieval crests remain in European collections (Thomas, Gamber 1976, 38). Usually they were made of hardened leather coated with gesso. Written sources confirm that baleen was also a suitable material for making such emblems (Moffat, Spriggs, O'Connor 2008, 209). The double horn-shaped specimen from circa 1350, belonging most probably to Albert von Prankh (Fig. 13:a,c), represented on his seal in an identical helm, is kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Thomas, Gamber 1976, 38). A slightly different crest from circa 1350-1375, could be related to the Austrian knight Ulrich IV von Matsch. Made in the same technique as the aforementioned example it is now kept in the armoury of the castle of Churburg in Tyrol (Scalini 1996, 190). Almost contemporary to the latter is the famous lion-crested helm of the Black Prince (Fig. 13:b) in Canterbury Cathedral (Southwick 2006, 31). Once it was believed to be a funeral helmet, manufactured exclusively for the ceremony. However, when the specimen was taken from the church for

conservation, a close examination revealed battle related dents and cut marks suggesting that it was actually used by the Black Prince during his lifetime (Oakeshott 1988, 21; Southwick 2006, 28). The lion *statant guardant* was made of moulded leather, canvas and decorated with gesso on linen and gilded (Southwick 2006, 67).

There is yet another crest in the European collections related to the royal family. It is the dragon emblem of the house of Aragon, kept in the Armeria Real in Madrid. Dated to 1400-1450 it was used in a procession during the so called *feast of the Standart*. The latter was celebrated in Palma de Mallorca in commemoration of recovering the city from the Muslims in the 13th c. by James I the Conqueror (del Campo 2000, 31)²⁵. This probably closes the list of crests mounted on medieval great helmets. There are obviously other such emblems made of metal such as these kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Thomas, Gamber 1976, 60-61) and the Bargello Museum in Florence (Blair, Boccia 1982, 10). They belong however to different helmets and are mainly dated to the 15th c. when the great helm became exclusively a heraldic device.

In their heyday (13th – early 14th c.) crested great helmets were highly regarded in the same way as the shields. They symbolized a clan of warriors, a noble family, and in this sense gained their totemic meaning (Pastoureau 2006, 263). In contemporary art we can easily find scenes where a wife or a beloved lady hands a crested helm to a knight kneeling before her. Such scenes come from the Luttrell Psalter (Pyhrr, La Rocca, Breiding 2005, 10) and the *Codex Manesse* (see Fig. 7:d). In our opinion they depict customs which could be traced back to the early medieval period or even to antiquity. Among the Germanic tribes women were keepers of the most precious family weapons. They were the ones who, exclusively had a key to the family treasure chest, where the most prized weapons had been kept for centuries. In old Norse literature usually a hero receives his first, precious sword from his mother or valkyrie (see Davidson 1989, 21). A woman decided in this way who is worthy of a prestigious weapon and who will be successful in defending the honour of the family. Giving a crested helm by a lady to her champion before tournament or battle, probably had its origin in the aforementioned customs. In the 15th c. chronicle on the wars in Castile, Don Alvaro de Luna mentions, that young gentlemen going into battle had jewels from their ladies pinned to their

²⁵ In Arthurian iconography king Arthur himself is depicted with a dragon crest, and his battle cry is Penndragon teste de Dragon (Nickel 1993, 7).



Fig. 17. Medieval helmet-types: a – skull-cap, Chamoson, Kt. Wallis Switzerland, 12th c. (after *Schneider 1967*); b – bascinet with camail, ca 1360, Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, inv. No. W 3971; c – skull-cap and shallow, early 14th c. bascinet in the scene where Lancelot is healing Urry, Siedlęcin murals (b-c – *photo by L. Marek*).

Ryc. 17. Typy hełmów średniowiecznych: a – łebka, Chamoson, Kt. Wallis, Szwajcaria, XII w. (wg *Schneider 1967*); b – przyłbica z czepcem kolczym, ok. 1360 r., Deutsches Historisches Museum w Berlinie, nr inw. W 3971; c – łebka z czepcem kolczym, przyłbica z wczesnego XIV w. w scenie, w której Lancelot uzdrawia Urry'ego, Siedlęcin – freski (b-c – *fol. L. Marek*).

helmet-crests (Calvert 1907, 51). This source shows clearly that personal badges were worn, not only by knights “armed for love” (see Nickel 1995) – in tournaments, but also in a more serious encounter when “armed for war”.

As mentioned, in the Siedlęcin murals Lancelot is distinguished three times by a peculiar helmet-crest resembling a dog (Figs. 7:c; 12:a-b). We weren't able to find a single example in medieval Arthurian iconography of a similarly adorned helmet, which could be related to this hero. Other

characters of the Arthurian legends are rarely seen with such emblems. In the Neapolitan manuscript *Meliadus* dated to 1352 king Mark is bearing the crest of a black dog on his helmet (Loomis 1938, 115). Black dog heads also decorate his green surcoat (*ibidem*). The dog crest on the Siedlęcin murals probably should not be treated as a heraldic device but rather a personal badge, or a talisman similar to boar crests, known from helmets from the migration and early medieval periods. In the high middle ages a dog was often regarded as



Fig. 18. Swords with octagonal pommels: a, c – type XIIIa, II,1, Museum in Nysa, Poland, 13th/14th c.; b – Urry's sword, Siedlęcin murals. Photo by L. Marek.

Ryc. 18. Miecze z oktagonalnymi głowicami: a, c – typ XIIIa, II, 1, Muzeum w Nysie, Polska, przełom XIII i XIV w.; b – miecz Urry'ego, Siedlęcin – freski. Fot. L. Marek.

a symbol of fidelity which, as we know from the legend, is incongruous with the actions of Lancelot who betrayed his overlord. It could be however a personal badge of loyalty towards his beloved lady, as suggested earlier in the discussion. According to medieval iconography, the dark side of the dog's nature was uncontrollable lust, and in this sense it was regarded as a symbol of animal-like sexuality (see Neu-Kock 1993, 22).

However, such an interpretation of Lancelot's crest despite the moralizing character of the Siedlęcin murals, seems highly unlikely. There is yet another possible explanation for the existence of the emblem on the hero's helm. H. E. Davidson in her paper on the making of young men into warriors in the early middle ages described a very often practice of giving dog or wolf names to the youths (Davidson 1989, 14). This custom could be observed in



Fig. 19. Ungirded swords with sword belts, early 14th c.: a – grave effigy of duke Przemko I of Ścinawa and Żagań, Cisterian monastery in Lubiąż, Silesia; b – one of the courtiers of Guinevere, Siedlęcín murals. *Photo by L. Marek.*

Ryc. 19. Odpasane miecze z pasami mieczowymi, wczesny XIV w.: a – nagrobne przedstawienie księcia ścinawskiego i żagańskiego Przemysława I, klasztor Cystersów w Lubiążu, Śląsk; b – jeden z dworzan Ginewry, Siedlęcín – freski. *Fot. L. Marek.*

the Germanic and Celtic tradition, but seems to be a general Indo-European trend. According to the old Norse and Celtic literature many heroes began their warrior's career by spending time in

the forest far from civilization and overcoming a wolf, hound, wild boar or bear. Their names and sometimes their inhuman strength derived from those beasts, as we learn from the Scandinavian

berserkr tradition present in the Sagas (*ibidem*, 15). The Irish hero CúChulainn (Hound of Culann) earned his name by killing a fearsome hound (*ibidem*, 14). Many similar customs survived well into the high Middle Ages. A wild boar, the old Roman warrior's talisman (see Thordeman 1943, 222), adorning the early medieval helmets, as the specimens found in Sutton Hoo or in Benty Grange (Tweddle 1992, 1016, 1094)²⁶, reappears on the shield of Tristan in medieval literature and the works of art. In the *Historia Regnum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1999, 184) as well as the later Thomas Mallory's (1897, 131, 136, 142, 183, 208) *Le Mort d'Arthur* knights are very often compared to wild boars, which probably couldn't be merely a rhetorical fancy, but rather a reminiscence of the mentioned tradition. The Siedlecin cycle begins from the scene where Lancelot after being knighted by Arthur decides to prove he is worthy of such a favour and starts his chivalric adventure. The latter is a form of knightly initiation ritual in which a dog – or wolf – warrior, known from the early medieval period could be symbolized by the hero's crest.

Of course a possibility remains that the dog crest was only a random fantasy of the artist.

Whatever the proper interpretation of the emblem may be, the surviving of motifs characteristic for the antique and early medieval heroic tradition into the high middle ages via knightly romances, and their iconography deserve further investigation.

3. Datable elements of arms and armour in the Siedlecin murals

When armed for battle, knights in the Siedlecin murals usually wear loosely fitted sleeveless surcoats over mail, girded with textile belts (Fig. 14:a-b). The latter were simply tied around the waist. They are often seen with an elaborately tied knot in the place of the usual buckle (Fig. 14:b). This method of girding remained popular until the beginning of the 14th c. (Fingerlin 1971, 219). Textile belts must have had a strong symbolic, rather than practical significance, as they were sometimes worn directly over armour (Fig. 14:c). In the middle ages, to gird one self was to be ready for adventure or for combat, as mentioned many times in the Bible (Hartshorne 1891, 320). This seems particularly significant for the discussion. Moreover, a girdle was often a metaphor of gladness, faithfulness, strength and revelation (*ibidem*, 320).

In the first scene of the Siedlecin Murals, Lionel and his companions (probably Hector de Marris and Lancelot – obscured by later repainting) decide to prove they are worthy of the title of the Knights of the Round Table, and start their quest for chivalric adventures. He is girded in this characteristic way (Fig. 14:a).

Apart from the textile belts tied around the waist, pieces of equipment that could be still used in the early 14th c., but not later are long sleeved hauberks depicted in the murals (Fig. 15). These long sleeves were extended to form mittens (the so called mufflers). These are recognizable in the unfinished scene of the Siedlecin murals depicting the duel between Lancelot and Sagramour (Fig. 15:a,d). Such mufflers, popular from the late 12th c. to circa 1320, had a leather or textile covering of the palm of a hand. This in turn was provided with a slit, so that the hand could be easily disengaged from the muffler (Fig. 15:a-b) when needed (Blair 1958, 29). Mufflers are present on the early 14th c. grave effigies of dukes Henry IV Probus of Wrocław and Bolko I the Strict of Jawor (Fig. 15:c). The problem with the analysis of armour depicted in the murals lies in the fact that it is usually covered with a surcoat. The state of preservation of the paintings and schematic character of medieval linear art makes precise observations even more difficult.

Combatants represented in the frescoes are wearing mail coifs (Fig. 16). This is nothing unusual for the 1st half of the 14th c. Such head protections were still extensively used in the latter half of the century, as proved by examples recorded in the mass graves from the battle of Wisby fought in 1361 (see Thordeman 2001). The mail coif, after circa 1270, is more often seen as a piece separate from the hauberk (Blair 1958, 37). Siedlecin representations are no exception from this rule. This becomes especially obvious in the case of the reconciliation scene of seneschal Key and Lancelot (Fig. 16). Other details of armour which deserve attention are the mail chaucers extended to form sabatons (Fig. 16). Until circa 1340 plate or brigandine system sabatons were rare in the German speaking areas (Blair 1958, 43). This could be another argument for the early 14th c. date of the armour from the murals.

Headpieces represented in the paintings are not very useful in precise dating. In the unfinished scene where Lancelot cures Urry of Hongre, the former is wearing the so called skull-cap or

²⁶ The meaning of these talismans on helmets and even their precise position which we know from original early medieval specimens is precisely described in *Beowulf* (Tweddle 1992, 1016). More extensively on the symbolic meaning of wolf, bear and boar motives on medieval military equipment see L. Marek *European Medieval Arms and Armour as Ars Emblematica* (forthcoming).

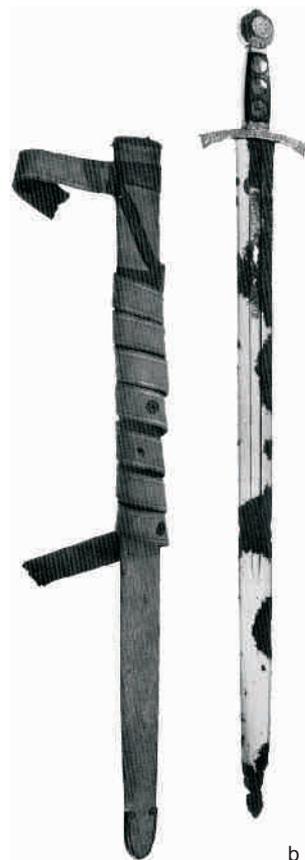


Fig. 20. Ungirded swords with swordbelts 13th – early 14th c.: a – in the scene where Lionel falls asleep on watch, Siedlęcín murals (photo by L. Marek); b – sword of Sancho IV of Castile from the cathedral of Toledo, Spain (after Oakeshott 1991); c – grave effigy of Henry IV Probus of Wrocław (photo by L. Marek).

Ryc. 20. Odpasane miecze z pasami mieczowymi, XIII – wczesny XIV w.: a – w scenie, gdzie Lionel zapada w sen podczas straży, Siedlęcín – freski (fot. L. Marek); b – miecz Sancho IV Kastylijskiego z katedry w Toledo, Hiszpania (wg Oakeshott 1991); c – przedstawienie nagrobne księcia wrocławskiego Henryka IV Probusa (fot. L. Marek).



Fig. 21. Maces, 13th/14th c.: a, d – the weapon of Urry de Hongre, Siedlęcin murals; b-c – type IV, excavated at Wrocław-Kielbaśnicza St. Photo by L. Marek.

Ryc. 21. Buławy, XIII/XIV w.: a, d – broń Urry'ego de Hongre, Siedlęcin – freski; b-c – typ IV, odkryta przy ul. Kielbaśniczej we Wrocławiu. Fot. L. Marek.

cerveillere (Fig. 17:b). Such type of helmet was sometimes worn under a mail coif or later, mainly in the 14th c. under a great helm as an additional defence (Michalak, Glinianowicz 2013, 6-7)²⁷. The earliest skull-caps known to date were found in Switzerland. Specimens from Chamoson, Kt. Wallis (Fig. 17:a) and Niederrealta, Kt. Graubünden come from the 12th c. (Schneider 1967). It is believed that they could be products of North Italian

armourer's workshops (*ibidem*, 86), which seems most likely. Unfortunately for the precise dating, the skullcap remained an extremely popular helmet even beyond the middle ages (Michalak, Glinianowicz 2013, 6-7)²⁸. However, in the period from the beginning of the 14th to the 1st half of the 15th c. this type of head piece decreased in its popularity (*ibidem*, 4). Other Swiss finds, the alleged *cerveillere* from Freudenu Castle, Kt. Aargau (Krauskopf 2005, 53, fig. 28.3)²⁹ and the specimen from Innerjuvalta, Kt. Graubünden, converted by a village smith into a kettle hat by adding a crudely forged brim in the 15th c. (Schneider 1986, 28, 32) could be dated to the latter half of the 13th c. or circa 1300.

If we take into consideration the temporary decrease in popularity of such helmets in the said period, we could assume that the skull cap of Lancelot from Siedlęcin fits well into the early, 14th c. chronology of the paintings. Moreover, we find several counterparts of the Siedlęcin example in the miniatures of the *Codex Manesse*.

In the same scene of healing by Lancelot, we can observe an early, shallow type of bascinet (Fig. 17:b) on the head of Urry of Hongre. After circa 1330 such head pieces started to become taller (Fig. 17:c), extended to a neck and ear guards (Blair 1958, 67). It is worth to note, that the name bascinet which is frequently applied to the conical helmet derived from the name of the skull cap (Bruhn Hoffmeyer 1955, 74) which could confirm their common origin.

The swords represented in Siedlęcin are difficult to classify to a well defined type. Probably the intention of the artist in the depiction of Urry was to provide his sword with an octagonal pommel of II type (Fig. 18:a-c), which was in use according to the older literature from the end of the 13th – to the beginning of the 15th c.s (Głosek 1984, 160; Oakeshott 2002, 103). In our opinion this statement remains valid, despite a hypothesis on their 11th/12th c. origin, based on finds from the Finno-Ugric territories (Oakeshott 1991, 94; 2002, 146). The latter theory doesn't consider the specific character of the finds from this region which could be discovered in a context resembling a set of early medieval artifacts, although deposited, f. e. in the 13th c. (see Leppäaho 1964; Kazakevičius 1996, 140-141). The long attachment of Finno-Ugric and Baltic peoples to traditional culture, paganism and the cremation burial rites which remained deep into the late medieval period could cause the confusion

²⁷ The authors would like to thank Arkadiusz Michalak for making this paper available to us, even before publishing.

²⁸ There the reader will find the state of art on skull caps, an updated list of extant examples and the most recent discussion on the subject.

²⁹ The poor state of preservation raises several doubts, whether it actually belongs to this type.

in dating. A late medieval pommel of octagonal type found in such a context seems rather a Western European influence introduced by the Northern Crusaders and mingled with other, more traditional pieces of equipment in a set of grave goods. Extended to the 11th c. or not, the dating of octagonal pommels brings nothing significant to the discussion on the chronology of the Siedlęcín paintings. Far more useful are representations of sheeted swords in the scene showing one of Guinevere's courtiers (Fig. 19:b), the scene where Lionel on watch, leaning over his sword falls asleep (Fig. 20:a), and where Lancelot draws his weapon on Tarquyn. The method of girding the sword, with a specific arrangement of scabbard straps and sword-belt is characteristic for swords from the 13th – early 14th c. (Fig. 19:a). It is not only evidenced by extant examples, such as the famous swords of Infante Fernando de la Cerda (†1270) and Sancho IV king of Castile (†1295) recovered from their tombs at the Convent Santa Maria la Real de las Huelgas, near Burgos and the Toledo cathedral (Fig. 20:b) respectively (Oakeshott 1991, 70, 72-73), but also numerous iconographic sources. Among them the grave slabs of Silesian dukes from the Piast family deserve special attention (Fig. 20:c). Those, that show a similar arrangement of scabbard straps and rapping the sheet with a sword-belt are dated to the 1st quarter of the 14th c., and again resemble the miniatures of the *Codex Manesse*. Comparing the very seldom archaeological records it is interesting to note that the sword from the tomb of Can Grande de la Scala of Verona (†1329) is equipped with a very different suspension system, more modern as compared to the former examples and characteristic for the rest of the 14th c. (*ibidem*, 71).

There is one more interesting detail in the offensive armament from the 13th/14th c. presented in the Siedlęcín murals. In the aforementioned scene where Lancelot is healing Urry de Hongre, the latter is leaning over a mace provided with a long shaft (Fig. 21:a).

The mace head has several spikes, which are even in length (Fig. 21:d). Such complicated forms of medieval maces were usually cast of copper alloy (Кирпичников 1966, 53). Hollow casts were sometimes filled with molten lead to make them heavier (Michalak 2005, 194). Examples made exclusively of lead were also considered extremely dangerous, as confirmed by numerous municipal documents, prohibiting the carrying of such arms

on the streets of mediaeval towns (Gelli 1968, 232). The example depicted in the analyzed paintings generally resembles Old Rus medieval maces of type IV according to A. N Kirpičnikov (1966, 52), which are dated by him on the territory of Russia to the 12th-13th c. (*ibidem*, 53-54). In Lower Silesia such maces must have been a common type. There are at least 3 examples in a group of 4 mace-heads found in the region to date³⁰. Unfortunately, most of them are chance finds, such as the examples from the vicinity of Wrocław (type IVA) and from Bielawa (type IVB) (Smoleń 2010, 482). Another specimen comes from Wrocław, Kiełbaśnicza St. (Fig. 21:b-c), and could be precisely dated by the archaeological context to the turn of the 13th/14th c. (Kamiński 2000, 168). The distribution of mace finds of type IV from this country, shows a concentration of them in Central and Southern Poland (Michalak 2007, 130). We know specimens of a similar form from Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic, Southern Germany and Scandinavia (*ibidem*, 142, 148).

Even more resemblance to the weapon of Urry we can find in specimens kept at the National Museum of Budapest (Kalmar 1971, 21, fig. 6)³¹. Unlike the type IV maces they are devoid of the plain, pronounced socket, just as the specimen depicted in the Siedlęcín murals.

The investigated weapon wasn't however an invention of central or occidental Europe. Maces were already known in the 2nd c. among Romans and became popular on the territory of the Roman Empire in the 5th c. via contacts with the Nomadic peoples of central Asia (D'Amato 2011, 8). The oldest medieval maces from 10th/11th c. were recorded on the territory of the Khazar State. Afterwards they became extremely popular in Old Rus (Michalak 2007, 128) and Hungary. In the latter case, the fashion of arming oneself with a mace was most probably a consequence of contacts with the Kumans (Kovács 1971, 181). In our opinion a hypothesis, that trade and cultural relations of Silesia with the Kingdom of Hungary (directly or via Bohemia) is the most plausible explanation for the popularity of maces in this part of Poland. Especially noteworthy is the fact that a Hungarian knight – Urry de Hongre is the only one distinguished in the Siedlęcín murals by such a weapon. It seems that it was an intention of the artist to accentuate the knight's foreign descent, which should have been immediately recognizable for the medieval viewer.

³⁰ The remaining specimen, found near Brzezina Łąka, Wrocław distr., could be classified to type III (Marek, Miazga 2012).

³¹ We are grateful to Arkadiusz Michalak MA, for the information on these specimens.

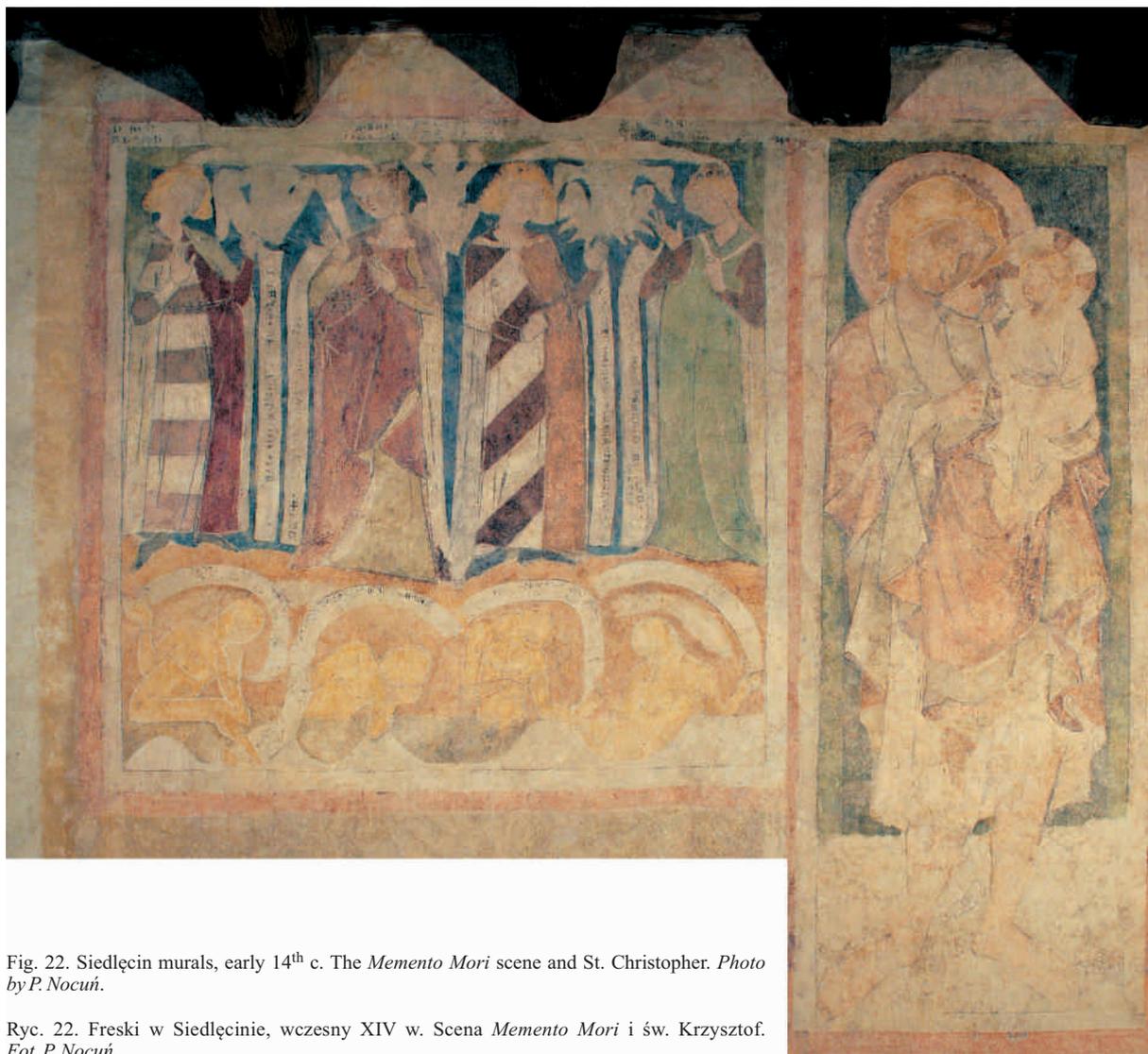


Fig. 22. Siedlęcin murals, early 14th c. The *Memento Mori* scene and St. Christopher. Photo by P. Nocuń.

Ryc. 22. Freski w Siedlęcinie, wczesny XIV w. Scena *Memento Mori* i św. Krzysztof. Fot. P. Nocuń.

4. Why Lancelot? Conclusions

The most intriguing question when analysing Lancelot paintings in the ducal tower of Siedlęcin, recognized and properly interpreted for the first time by J. Witkowski (2002) concerns the purpose of such a ducal investment and who was the mastermind of this project. The most plausible theory states that the founder of the tower and the murals was originally duke Henry I of Jawor. It could be confirmed by dendrochronological samples taken from medieval ceiling beams still preserved at the site and dated to 1313 and 1314. This in turn remains in accordance with the period of Henry's rule over the duchy of Jawor where the tower was located. J. Witkowski (*ibidem*, 49) suggested that the murals, painted most probably by a Swiss artist working for the duke, should be dated to 1338-1346. Apart from the investigation of documents suggesting the time when a possibility to hire foreign artists by the duke occurred, such

chronology, close to the time when Henry I died (1346) could explain the unfinished parts of the paintings. On the other hand, as we learn from Witkowski's work (*ibidem*) the author seemed troubled by the fact, that on the stylistic and costumological grounds their dating could be slightly earlier than the proposed period of time. He explains that it could have been an intention of the artist to represent outdated costume and armour to show a reality of the bygone world. This however seems unlikely, since the time discrepancy is only about 2 or 3 decades at most. Investigation of the arms and armour detail represented in the murals suggest that they were painted in the 2nd or the 3rd decade of the 14th c. Alleged later additions, such as the crudely represented battle scenes on the Northern wall and the coats of arms of von Redern and Zedlitz in the window niche could have been made after the tower was sold by duchess Agnes, widow of duke



Fig. 23. The grave effigy of duke Henry I of Jawor and his wife: a – general view; b – detail showing the duke's bassilard dagger. *Photo by L. Marek.*

Ryc. 23. Nagrobek księcia jaworskiego Henryka I i jego żony: a – widok ogólny; b – ujęcie ukazujące księżęcy basilard. *Fot. L. Marek.*

Bolko II of Świdnica and Jawor and nephew of Henry I to Jenchin von Redern one of her courtiers.

As already pointed out with right by Witkowski (*ibidem*, 69), the whole program of the paintings had a moralizing character and their message is the approval of loyalty towards the sovereign. All of the scenes are complementary in this program and should be considered as a whole. The *memento mori* part (Fig. 22) warns against carnal pleasures of this world which always bring sorrow and misfortune upon people. Elaine, who committed suicide because of her love to Lancelot, and Lancelot's love to Guinevere which led him to the betrayal of his overlord is used here as an example of human irrelevant desires. Just next to this scene on the right is the most prominent gigantic figure of St. Christopher (Fig. 22) – the knightly patron of loyalty towards the sovereign (in this case: Jesus Christ). Among other associations with St. Christopher, as a patron of wanderers and

the one who protects against evil or sudden death – the most feared kind of death in the middle ages, the aforementioned role of the saint fits well into the message of the paintings (*ibidem*, 69). The two narrative bands on the right present the knightly adventures of Lancelot, during which he earned the title of the best among Knights of the Round Table (the lower band), and finally the events which lead to his downfall – the adulterous love to Guinevere (the upper band). The latter chain of events is closed by a scene, where Guinevere is reunited with Lancelot after rescuing her by the hero from the hands of Maleagant. In old French the name of the latter means literally: Bad glove (Nickel 1993, 5). In Arthurian iconography the knight has his shield of gules emblazoned with three sinister gloves argent with fingers upwards (*ibidem*), associated with malefaction. The lovers are holding their left hands as a symbol of adultery. This scene was probably placed in the paintings



Fig. 24. The embroidery with the story of Tristan, among others the Silesian eagle-coat of arms, Wienhausen Monastery, Germany, early 14th c. (after <http://wkneedle.bayrose.org>).

Ryc. 24. Haft przedstawiający historię Tristana, m.in. herb Śląska – orzeł, klasztor w Wienhausen, Niemcy, wczesny XIV w. (wg <http://wkneedle.bayrose.org>).

as an antithesis to St. Christopher the patron of worthy knights. The last and unfinished scene, on the Western wall shows Lancelot in the armour of seneschal Key overcoming the most renowned knights of the Round Table and healing Urry of Hongre. The enchanted wounds of the latter, couldn't be healed by over 100 other knights of the Round Table who tried to help him before the successful attempt of Lancelot. The scene is regarded in Arthurian studies (Atkinson 1981) as showing the triumph of Lancelot as one of the best knights on earth. At the same time it symbolizes his spent talent and failure in meeting spiritual standards of the Grail quest (*ibidem*, 351), because of his betrayal of Arthur, which eventually led to the downfall of the kingdom of Logres. According to the specialists on Arthurian literature (*ibidem*, 349-350), this was the reason why, after healing Urry Lancelot wept, while all other courtiers of Arthur were cheering. The mentioned battle scenes on the Northern wall of the hall in Siedlęcín probably represent the disastrous conflicts that torn Arthur's kingdom apart. One of the recognizable contour drawings in this location shows a mounted knight with the alleged von Redern crest on his helm.

The moralizing character of the Siedlęcín murals could be compared with the ideological program of the grave slab of their probable founder. This unique monument among similar works of art from Silesia, which deserves a separate study on arms and armour, dated to circa 1340 represents duke Henry I of Jawor and his lawful and beloved wife Agnes (Fig. 23). The spouses are holding their right hands, which is a symbol and approval of lawful marriage and loyalty. Loyalty in marriage, accentuated here, was regarded in the same way in the middle ages as loyalty towards a sovereign (see Boulton 2000, 92).

In our opinion a hypothesis that Henry I of Jawor and Świdnica created a fraternity of knights – the supporters of the duke, around the idea of the Round Table seems probable. Such fraternities, based on the Arthurian tradition, as the *Rudenband* order created in 1413 by Wenceslas, bishop of Wrocław and Louis II of Legnica and Brzeg (Kaczmarek 1991, 13-14) are documented in Silesia at least from the 1st quarter of the 15th c. In the early 14th c. an example of such a fraternity which could be copied by the Silesian dukes was at hand, at the court of king Charles I of Hungary who created the mentioned order of St. George, flocking his supporters in this organization.

It seems highly probable that in the hall of the Siedlęcin tower members of such a fraternal society, or at least the closest supporters of the duke under his personal leadership held their meetings. The paintings' ideological program would have played a didactic role during such events.

Perhaps it is a mere coincidence that the family von Redern (*Ritter mit dem Rade*) have an identical coat of arms to Wigalois – one of the Knights of the Round Table (Loomis 1938, 80). The facts are that duke Henry I of Jawor hosted a German knight called von Redern on his court, and made him one of his closest supporters, whose son eventually became the owner of the Siedlęcin estate. After acquiring the tower, the Arthurian tradition must have been still alive among the family von Redern. We learn from a document dated to 1409 that Siedlęcin belonged to Heintze and his brother Tristram von Redern³² (Probst 1942, 8). In this context it is worth mentioning that on one of the 15th c. stove-tile fragments found during an archaeological survey at the site a representation of Aristotle and Phyllis was identified. Perhaps it also could be a part of a moralizing picture story related to the Arthurian iconography. The latter often used examples of men brought to shame and misery by women, in such scenes as Delilah cutting Samson's locks, Aristotle ridden by Phyllis, Virgil arranging an assassination with his mistress, etc. (see Loomis 1938, 37, 79). Perhaps the Rederns still regarded themselves in the 15th c. as "Knights of the Round Table" – the table of the Silesian Piasts.

As pointed out already by J. Witkowski (2002, 55-56) an identical St. Christopher as in the Siedlęcin murals was painted by the same artist in the nearby village in Lubiechowa at a local church. It didn't have anything to do with the patron of the church. Written accounts confirm that the building was founded by the courtier of Henry I of Jawor – Magnus de Borowitz – who bought the estate from the duke in 1317 (*ibidem*, 56). St. Christopher in this case could be a sort of a votive offering, a wish of Magnus de Borowitz or his son Henry to be loyal to his sovereign – Henry I of Jawor.

It is also interesting to note that on the tomb of Bolko II of Świdnica and Jawor, the second owner of Siedlęcin, the most prominent courtiers of the duke³³ were represented instead of the

usual, funeral procession (see Adamska-Heś 2001). This shows the special concern of the dukes of Świdnica and Jawor with the creation of a circle of their trusted supporters.

In the 13th and 14th c. dukes from the royal Polish Piast family were well acquainted with the most popular knightly romances. This fascination with courtly literature influenced local documents such as the *Chronical of Great Poland* where the narration of an important battle near Poznań in 1146 was copied with almost every detail from the description of the siege of Joyeuse Guard in the 13th c. Vulgate Lancelot (Wiesiołowski 1995). Moreover, Arthurian heraldry most probably influenced the heraldry of some of the Great Polish dukes in the 13th c. (*ibidem*). Even the decoration of the Royal, Polish coronation sword belonging originally to the 13th c. dukes of Great Poland, was most probably borrowed from the description of Roland's sword – Durendal known from the knightly literature (see Biborski, Stępiński, Żabiński 2011, 113, 135, 138). On the other hand, especially Silesian Piasts were present in the occidental courtly literature and iconography. Apart from the most famous representation of Henry IV Probus, duke of Wrocław from the *Codex Manesse*, a shield with the Silesian eagle is depicted in the early 14th c. Wienhausen embroidery with the legend of Tristan (Fig. 24).

If duke Henry's intention was to decorate his hall in Siedlęcin with a story of courtly love, he would have probably chosen the legend of Tristan – the most popular motif in Arthurian iconography. The tragic history of Sir Lancelot, known only from two representations of medieval wall paintings in the world, was used by the duke for didactic reasons. It reminded his subjects of allegiance to their lord and how disobedience or betrayal leads directly to disaster, the collapse of the kingdom and the dissolution of social order.

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³² Arthurian names given to members of noble families in a region where Arthurian tradition flourished in art and literature is a common practice, known from other regions of Europe (see Loomis 1938, 114).

³³ These noblemen were identified in an extremely interesting paper by D. Adamska-Heś (2001). She was able to confirm the identity of figures represented on the tomb to the courtiers of Bolko II of Świdnica and Jawor, namely: Peter Czedlicz, Reinczke Schaff and Nicolas Bolcze (*ibidem*, 322-326).

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RYCERZE OKRĄGŁEGO STOŁU Z WIEŻY W SIEDŁĘCINIE, ŚLĄSK

Streszczenie

Książęca wieża mieszkalna w Siedlęcínie to jeden z najważniejszych średniowiecznych zabytków architektury w Polsce. Jej wyjątkowość podkreśla bardzo dobry stan zachowania budowli, która uniknęła znaczniejszych przekształceń w późniejszych okresach, oraz unikalne w skali Europy średniowieczne malowidła, które dzięki Jackowi Witkowskiemu (2002) możemy łączyć z arturiańską legendą o sir Lancelocie z Jeziora. Badania dendrochronologiczne (Chorowska 2003, 122) pozwoliły wydatować powstanie wieży na drugą dekadę XIV w. (daty 1313 i 1314), co bezspornie wskazuje na czas początków panowania Henryka I jaworskiego i książęcą atrybucję wieży.

J. Witkowski w monografii dekoracji malarskiej Wielkiej Sali siedlęcínskiej wieży sugeruje, że malowidła, będące dziełem prawdopodobnie szwajcarskiego artysty pracującego dla księcia, powinny być datowane na lata 1338-1346 (Witkowski 2002, 49). Jednocześnie wskazuje jednak, że pewne elementy stylistyczne, kostiumologiczne oraz związane z uzbrojeniem wyglądają na wcześniejsze. Według Witkowskiego fakt ten należy wiązać z zabiegiem zamierzonej archaizacji (*ibidem*, 42), mającej swój cel w ukazaniu rzeczywistości minionej. Pewnym problemem dla przyjęcia tej tezy jest jednak zbyt mała różnica czasu pomiędzy zaproponowanym przez Witkowskiego czasem powstania malowideł, a datowaniem elementów (zwłaszcza uzbrojenia), które przez artystę miałyby być poddane archaizacji – okres zaledwie dwóch, maksymalnie trzech dziesięcioleci. Analiza stylistyczna elementów uzbrojenia oraz ich detali występujących na siedlęcínskich malowidłach (na ścianie południowej i zachodniej) sugeruje bowiem, że pochodzą one z drugiej lub najpóźniej trzeciej dekady XIV w. Jest to czas krótko po tym, kiedy wzniesiona została siedlęcínska wieża, a młody władca budował i umacniał grupę swoich zwolenników, którzy funkcjonowali na jego książęcym dworze.

W pełni należy zgodzić się ze wskazanym przez Witkowskiego (*ibidem*, 69) moralizatorskim charakterem malowideł i ich przesłaniem – potwierdzenie lojalności wobec suwerena. Wszystkie sceny są bowiem komplementarne i powinny być traktowane jako całość. Oba wątki narracyjne, ilustrujące przygody

Lancelota, przedstawiają dzieje bohatera – od momentu jego wielkiej chwały, kiedy to zdobył tytuł najlepszego spośród rycerzy Okrągłego Stołu (dolny pas malowideł), symbolicznie ukazanego poprzez zamykającą wątek scenę hołdu seneszala Keya, do jego upadku – zdrada Artura przez grzeszną miłość do Ginewry (górny pas malowideł), symbolicznie podkreślona w scenie połączenia lewych dłoni rycerza i królowej po uwolnieniu z rąk Meliaganta.

Powstanie malowideł o takiej treści w obiekcie o bardziej rezydencjonalnym niż obronnym charakterze można próbować wiązać z przypuszczeniem, że Henryk I jaworski mógł stworzyć wspólnotę rycerzy – swoich zwolenników i dworzan, bazującą na znanej w dworskich kręgach idei Okrągłego Stołu i gromadzącą się w Wielkiej Sali wieży w Siedlęcínie. Takie wspólnoty, oparte na tradycjach arturiańskich, mogły być nawet sformalizowane, jak Rudenband utworzony w 1413 r. przez biskupa wrocławskiego Wacława II legnickiego oraz jego kuzyna Ludwika II brzeskiego (Kaczmarek 1991, 13-14). Podobne stowarzyszenia są udokumentowane na Śląsku co najmniej od I. ćwierci XV stulecia. Na początku XIV w. zaś przykładem takiego ukonstytuowanego bractwa był Zakon św. Jerzego, powstały na dworze króla Węgier – Karola Roberta.

W XIII i XIV w. książęta piastowscy (głównie wielkopolscy i śląscy) byli dobrze zaznajomieni z najbardziej popularnymi romansami rycerskimi. Jeśli intencją Henryka I jaworskiego było ozdobić Wielką Salę swojej rezydencji w Siedlęcínie (krótko po jej wzniesieniu – w drugiej bądź trzeciej dekadzie XIV wieku) historią dworskiej miłości, prawdopodobnie wybrałby legendę o sir Tristanie – najpopularniejszy motyw w arturiańskiej ikonografii. Tragiczna historia sir Lancelota z Jeziora, znana tylko z dwóch przedstawień średniowiecznych malowideł ściennych na świecie, mogła być wykorzystana przez księcia z bardziej dydaktycznych powodów. Przypominała ona jemu i jego towarzyszom o konieczności wierności swemu panu i o tym, że nieposłuszeństwo lub zdrada prowadzi bezpośrednio do katastrofy i upadku.

Tłumaczyli Przemysław Nocui i Lech Marek