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**THE OCTAGONAL TOWER AT CASTLE OJCÓW –
A COMMEMORATIVE REALISATION OF KING
KASIMIR III THE GREAT?**

Abstract: The octagonal tower of the ruined castle Ojców (southern Poland) is considered one of the most impressive foundations of king Kasimir III the Great (†1370). The purpose of this paper is to discuss the results of archaeological dig carried out in 2016 and to combine it with written evidence to form the basis for the reconstruction of its long-gone past. The tower is an octagon in plan, has 11.55 m in diameter and has walls that are ca. 2.7-2.8 m thick. On the inside it is round, 6.2 m in diameter. It was built of carefully processed hewn limestone set in lime mortar and what is important to note, it is the only known castle tower realisation of king Kasimir which was built on such blocks. On the other hand, the raw material used for building the tower has close affinities with church foundations of the king (e.g. in the collegiate church in Wiślica).

Noteworthy, the fieldwork of 2016 provided rich assemblage of architectural details, including stylistically homogenous window or portal framings with characteristic pear-shaped mouldings and hollow-chamfered profiles, which likely relate to the earliest stages of the castle, perhaps already to the realisation of king Kasimir. There is a high degree of confidence that these elements were originally placed in the tower, and, if so, they determined rich and representative design of the whole structure.

According to the author of the paper, there are strong indications that the impressive octagonal tower which is distinguished among the other contemporary defensive realisations by its building material, size and, possibly, a decor, was built as a commemorative realisation, given to honour the memory of the father of king Kasimir – Władysław the Elbow-high, who according to the local tradition, early in the 14th c. found a refuge in a cave located nearby (note the castle's name: *Oczecz* – further *Ojców* – in Polish means *Father*).

Last but not least, the archaeological dig brought to light the remains of an undefined building from the late 15th-mid 16th c. west from the tower, the remains of post-medieval (17th c.?) wall adjacent to the tower from the north, and some important stratigraphic observations, which allow to state that the octagonal structure witnessed some extensive restoration work in the second half of the 15th c.

Key words: castle Ojców, tower, Kasimir III the Great, architectural detail, commemorative realisations

I. INTRODUCTION

The ruin of castle Ojców, sited in a picturesque setting of the Polish Jura Chain in Ojców National Park (southern Poland), is a mere vestige of one of the most impressive defensive foundations of king Kasimir III the Great (†1370). The site in question is situated in the middle part of the locality Ojców (Kraków province, Skala commune), at the flat crest of a limestone hill on the right bank of Prądnik river (Fig. 1).

When we look at the present-day state of the castle it is hard to believe in its prosperous past. At the moment, there are only a few readable elements of its bygone-era planning. To start from the west, these are: 1) stone pillars supporting the bridge before the gateway; 2) a gateway; 3) relics of masonry residence on the southern part of the castle, altogether with adjacent remains of a chapel; 4) an octagonal tower occupying the highest point of the hill; 6) a large rock-cut well in the middle part of the courtyard and 7) remains of the curtain wall (Fig. 2). All these elements represent different phases of the castle's occupation, from the Middle Ages to the post-medieval and modern times. It is noteworthy, however,

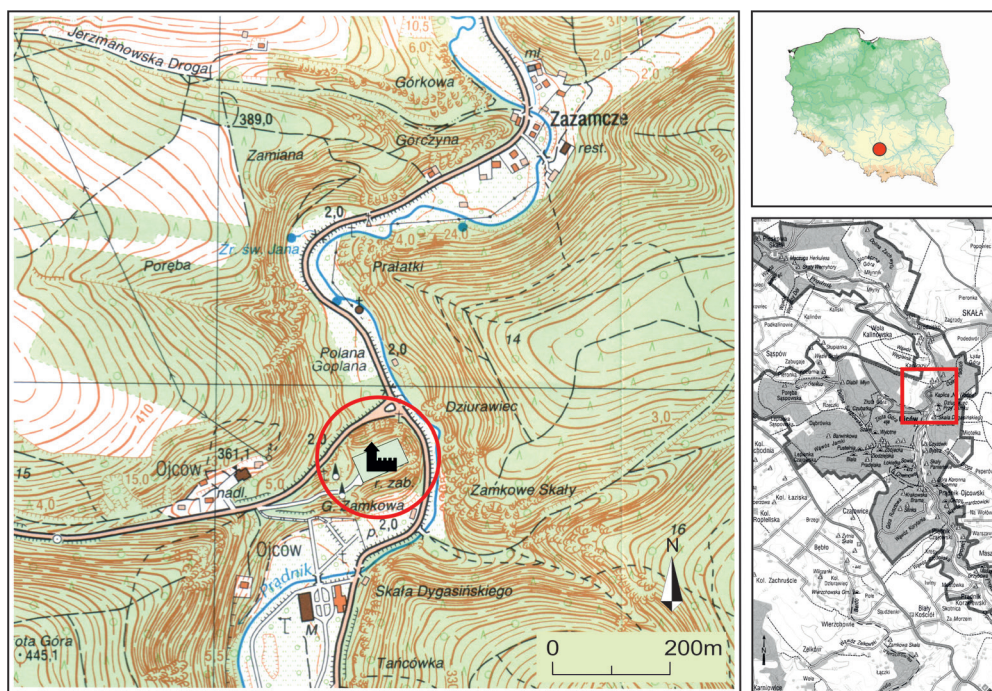


Fig. 1. Location of the castle Ojców. Computer design by M. Wojenka

that only a few of these are recognized as parts of the medieval castle. These include the lower parts of the gateway and the outer gable of its arcade opening, the lower parts of the tower (Frazik 1966, 30-31) and the well (Wojenka 2016, 211-215). The other elements of the site's medieval layout are covered by ca. 1.5-2 m thick sequence of post-medieval strata and are not easily recognisable.

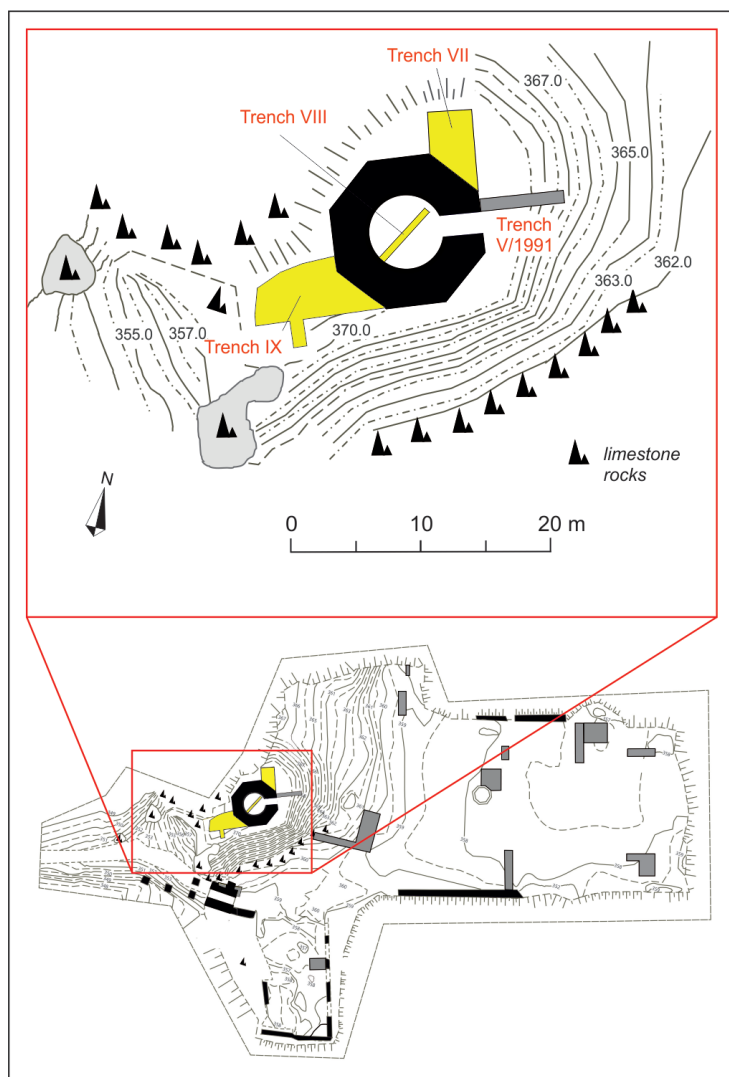


Fig. 2. The castle Ojców. Location of the tower area (archaeological trenches V/1991 and VII-IX marked with grey and yellow colour). Drawn by M Wojenka

The first archaeological excavations at the site took place in 1991, when 5 trenches were set out to examine stratigraphy in the east, north and the west part of the castle (Kruczek 2001). The new research programme started in 2006, and since then, on and off, the Ojców castle ruins have been witnessing archaeological excavations held by Jagiellonian University (see recently Wojenka 2016). In 2016 fieldwork reached the area of the octagonal tower (Fig. 2). The outcomes of these excavations shed light on both the construction and functional meaning of the tower, as well as on the spatial layout of its immediate surroundings. The purpose of this paper is to synthesise the results of the archaeological dig, which allow to demonstrate the octagonal tower as a key factor for defining the status of the castle – the local centre of royal power.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As the earliest written source date from May 16, 1370, when *Zaelica burgrauio de Oczech* is mentioned in a royal document (Mp. 3, no. 834), and a bit later anonymous text called *Quomodo regebat regnum et populum* mentions the site in the index of foundations of king Kasimir III the Great (Kętrzyński 1897, 351; Jan from Czarnków 2001, 15-19), there is no reason to doubt that the castle was a royal foundation of king Kasimir. The beginnings of the fortress are, however, debatable. In light of Jacek Laberschek's important works, a starting point for the discussion on this topic is a document of 1354, certifying a land exchange between king Kasimir and the bishop of Kraków, Bodzanta. The exchange resulted in the inclusion of former bishopric village Smardzowice into the set of royal lands. As Laberschek rightly argues, the area of present-day Ojców primarily belonged to this settlement (Laberschek 1996, 270). This leads to the point that it was not until the incorporation of Smardzowice that the king was able to start the investment. Thus, the beginnings of building work at Ojców castle can be placed in 1354-1370. In this context it should be noted that these assumptions seem to correspond with archaeological sources: the earliest assemblages representing medieval phases of the castle are not earlier than the 14th century. Previous presumptions that the castle was rooted in the early medieval period and started as a timber-earthen stronghold (see: Sukertowa 1922, 12-17) must be therefore completely rejected.

Before 1385 the castle was given as a tenure (for 500 marks of silver) to Jan from Korzkiew, and since then, albeit still formally being a royal site, it regularly changed hands. Early in the 15th c. it has fallen to the hands of Piotr Szafranec of Starykoń house, the ruler of the nearby castle Pieskowa Skała (1404-1406), later it was held by Jan Męzyk from Dąbrowa, Wadwicz house (1406-1437), Mikołaj from Balice and Ossolin, Topór house (1440-1459) and Zbigniew from Wodzisław, Zadora house (1485-1497), to mention only a few (Falniowska-Gradowska 1999,

83-84). In the 16th century the castle has fallen to the hands of, one by one, Andrzej Tęczyński (1525-1536), queen Bona Sforza (1536-1556) and Stanisław Płaza from Mstyczów (1556-1587). In the 17th century (since 1619 till 1676) it became a seat of Koryciński family, Topór house, who rebuilt it in a modern style. Later on, it was held by Warszycki (1676-1706), Morski (1706-1715), Łubieński (1715-1756) and Załuski family (1765-1795). Due to the political conditions at the end of the 18th c. the castle lost its tenurial status for a while and since it was not any longer profitable, at the early 19th c. it was abandoned by the last governor, Teofil Załuski. Since it was uninhabited, the castle's state of repair inevitably went from bad to worse. In 1815 it passed to the Kingdom of Poland (Congress Poland) but already in the 1829 it was bought by Konstanty Wolicki, who started to dismantle its walls for building materials (Fig. 3:2-3) (Falniowska-Gradowska 1995, 74; 1999, 74; Ziarkowski 2015, 219). In the mid-19th c. the castle ruins witnessed the first attempts to reconstruct their walls. The gateway was restored by Henryk Prezdziecki in the Neo-gothic design between 1851 and 1859, and later on, likely between 1861 and 1863¹ (Kolberg 1871, 33-34) thanks to the efforts of Aleksander Przedziecki the upper parts of the octagonal tower were given a new shape (Fig. 3:4-5; see Niewalda, Rojkowska 2001, 428-430). Further restoration works at the castle were to be carried out in the late 19th and early in the 20th century (Fig. 3:6-8; see Ziarkowski 2015).

III. THE OCTAGONAL TOWER AT CASTLE OJCÓW – GENERAL FEATURES

The tower is situated on the highest point of the castle hill, on its north west part. It is sited on a flat top of a limestone monadnock with walls facing north, west and south east (Fig. 2, 3). As the landform indicates, the tower area must have been connected to the courtyard from the north east. As it is today, in the Middle Ages it was undoubtedly a dominant feature within the castle (Fig. 4). According to the architectural and art historians, along with the external part of gate's arcade and the south-eastern corner of its internal arcade, the lower sections of the octagonal tower are commonly regarded as the relics of the oldest, Gothic-age castle (Frazik 1958, 3; Frazik 1966, 32).

The tower (Fig. 4, 5) is an octagon in plan, has 11.55 m in diameter, and walls that are ca. 2.7-2.8 m thick. On the inside it is round, has 6.2 m in diameter (Fig. 6:1). At the moment the structure is around 13 m high, but since it was extensively

¹ The timeframe of these architectural works is indicated via the pencil-made picture of Alfred Schouppé, dated to the 1861 and the endpoint of restoring activity of Przedziecki in 1863 (see Blombergowa 2006, 86).



Fig. 3. The octagonal tower at castle Ojców in the iconographic material. 1 – a watercolour of Z. Vogel, 1787; 2 – a watercolour of J.N. Głowacki, 1826; 3 – a litography of K. Stronczyński, 1844-1855; 4 – a litography of N. Orda, 1873-1883; 5 – the octagonal tower in 1885, a postcard; 6 – the tower in the early 20th c., a postcard; 7 – the tower during restoration works in 1912-1914, a postcard; 8 – the tower in the early 1930s, a postcard.

1, 3-8: Thanks to the archives of the Ojców National Park; 2: after Niewalda, Rojkowska 2001



Fig. 4. The octagonal tower at castle Ojców. View from the east. Photo by M. Wojenka

restored in the late 19th and early in the 20th century (see further remarks), it is difficult to draw certain conclusions on their original height. Hypothetically, in the last stages of castle use it might have measured around 20m².

The building material for the tower are regular limestone blocks measuring 36-52 cm (height) by 60-80 cm (length) by 36-52 cm (width) (Frazik 1966, 31), with numerous silex inclusions. The stone extraction-site has not been discovered yet, although it is to be expected that the material was acquired from a local quarry. On the south and east gable the blocks of a hewn stone bear traces of fire.

The written evidence of the tower is scarce. The earliest mention dates to the Middle Ages and relates to the events of 1429, when Andrzej Lisek, a peasant from the village Szyce, was imprisoned in *a tower* by the burgrave Wojciech (Laberschek 1993, 18). The lack of more detailed informations makes the *tower* difficult to identify, although it is most likely that the villager was cast into prison inside of the octagonal structure.

² In 1912 an architect from Warsaw, Stanisław Grochowicz noted that during the previous two decades the tower had been reduced by around 6 m (Ziarkowski 2015, 231).

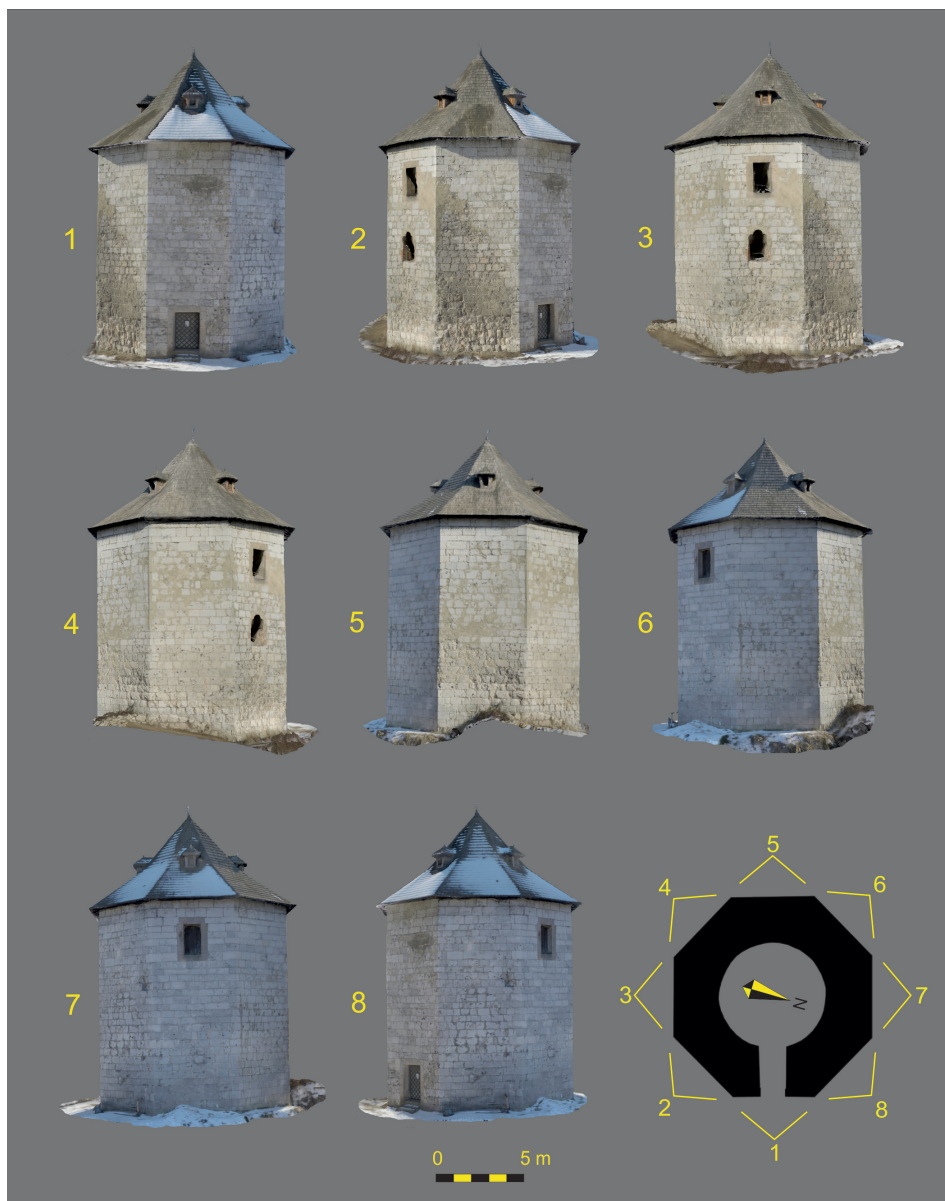


Fig. 5. The octagonal tower at castle Ojców. Photo by R. Kaźmierczak.
Thanks to the kindness of the Ojców National Park

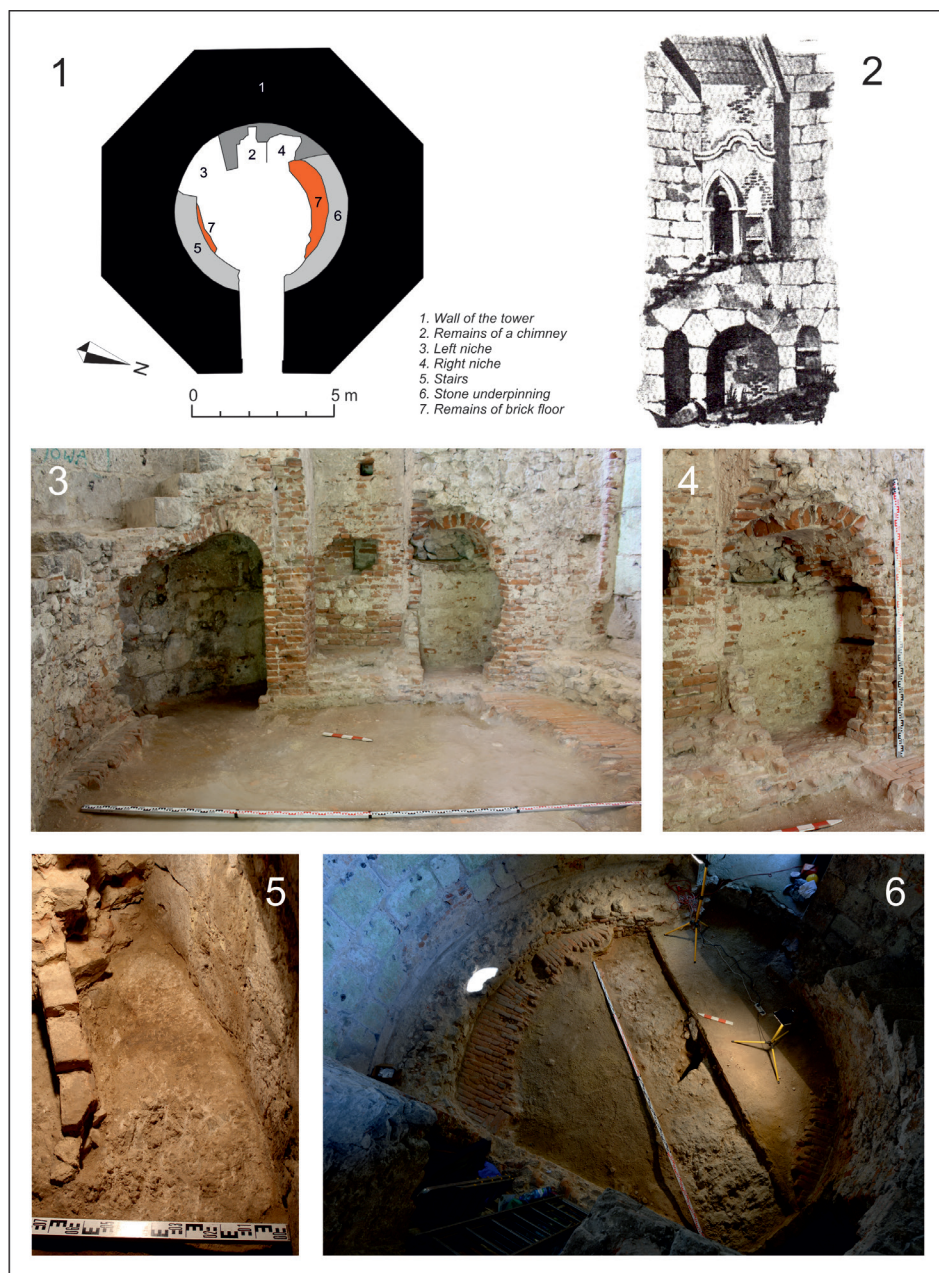


Fig. 6. 1 – Plan of the tower; 2 – the inner furnishings in 1893; 3-4 – modern state of repair of the inner furnishings; 5 – bedrock in the left vaulted niche; 6 – bedrock in the trench VIII.

1, 3-6: Computer design and photo by M. Wojenka, 2: after Wróblewski 1907

The next accounts are post-medieval and leave no doubt that it is all about a tower on the highest point of the castle, thus, the octagonal one. First of them dates back to 1660 and mentions a *sexangularis* (sic!) *figurae tower*, of three storeys and iron door (*Description* 1660, 224). Later on, in 1721, a tower of two storeys and iron door is mentioned in inventory of the castle, which report on the poor state of repair and the necessity of roof replacement (*Inventory* 1721, 230-231). In the second half of the 18th c. the tower served as a prison. Two storeys *for incarcerated* are mentioned in 1765 and 1789 (*Description* 1765, 232; *Description* 1789, 234). The last comment on the octagonal tower was made on the eve of castle complete abandonment, in 1803. This account reports on two storeys where at least the second one, locked with separate door, would appear to be an office with a large paper-storage cabinet and two fir tables inside. The source from 1803 provides us with additional data: on the devastated shingle roof and on a maple tree in front of the tower, with a bell attached (*Description* 1803, 240).

As we can see, in the written accounts of the early 1800s the tower is only marginally described, and the scarce available data does not allow for a precise determination of its appearance and internal design. To some extent this disadvantage is compensated for by the iconographic sources dated to the late 18th c., which demonstrate the tower as a high landscape-dominant building, with a couple of windows and an octagonal gable roof of „Polish” type. Below the roof line there was a row of rectangular window-like openings (Fig. 3:1; Nowacki 1958, 14).

Soon after the castle is abandoned, the original elements of the tower begin to blur (Fig. 3:2). Due to the state of repair, its upper section was dismantled by Ludwik Krasiński between 1893 and 1895. His ambitious plan was to rebuild it, ended with his early death in 1895 (Fig. 3:6; see Ziarkowski 2015). The look of the tower as can be seen at present (Fig. 3:8) results from extensive restoration work carried out by his daughter Maria Ludwika, in 1912-1914 (Fig. 3:7; Ziarkowski 2015, 235; Falniowska-Gradowska 1999, 81). It is most likely that around the same time a new door and window framings were placed (Frazik 1966, 31). A bit earlier it might have looked quite different. Thanks to Kazimierz Wróblewski, the author of a guidebook for the Prądnik river valley travellers’ from the turn of the 20th c., we are able to get a glimpse into the tower’s inside before it was partially dismantled by Krasiński. As he reports, yet in 1893 the entrance to the tower was narrow³ and vaulted. The passage led to the inside of a ground level, without any window, and next to the doorway there were remains of a chimney and two smaller niches – the right yet with shelves, which suggests its storage function, and the left one, which was regarded by Wróblewski as a bouldered passage to a dungeon (this is a significant point to which we will return later). As of today, a stairway on

³ A narrow door opening on a ground level was marked on the castle plan made by Wilhelm Giersz, in 1829 (Wróblewski 1907, 130).

the left, yet at the end of the 19th c. concealed by a thin wall, led to the first floor of the tower, which had one window (facing south; see Fig. 3:3-4) and included a finely decorated fireplace (Fig. 6.2). The second floor had two windows (facing south and east; Fig. 3:3-5), while the third was equipped with eight T-shaped openings (Fig. 3:4-5), doubtlessly loop-holes (Wróblewski 1907, 132-136). As regards window openings, in light of iconographic sources it is likely that it was only the third floor which originated from the restoration works of Przewdziecki; the number of windows seen at the first and the second level probably resembles the original pattern from the times of the tower's residual function.

Nowadays, the only furnishings seen inside of the tower consist of stone stairway relics (preserved up to the first floor; Fig. 6:1, 6:3), remains of a chimney (Fig. 6:1-3), the two niches previously commented by Wróblewski (Fig. 6:1, 6:3-4) and a flat stone underpinning in the north part of the tower, supplemented by bricks (headers ca. 6 × 12-13 cm), which was likely related to the stairway (Fig. 6:1, 6:6). The niches and chimney are built of brick. On the ground there are still remains of paving (Fig. 6:1, 6:3, 6:6) which survived by the northern and southern parts of the wall, built of bricks of 6 × 12-13 × 27 cm. As the size of bricks indicates, the furnishings largely, if not entirely, correspond with the 18th c. (Nowacki 1958, 9-10).

Moving on to archaeology, it should be noted that excavations of 2016 were not the first field research within the area of tower. The very first insights into the nearby stratigraphic sequence we owe to Krystyna Kruczek, who excavated a trench V/1991 (ca. 2 × 6 m) east from the tower, in 1991, during the very first archaeological prospection of the site (Fig. 2). Not to mention recorded stratigraphic sequence of medieval origin (Kruczek 2001; Wojenka 2008, 359), at base of the octagonal structure, right next to the present-day entrance she was able to find „a masonry wall built in the *opus emplectum* technique”. According to Kruczek, the wall might have provided external support, preventing the tower from landsliding (Kruczek 2001, 398).

IV. THE EXCAVATION: A SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The 2016 excavations took place in three trenches (VII-IX). Trench VII, situated on the northern side of the tower was orientated NS and measured 3.5 × 6.5 × 3 m. Trench VIII was set out inside of the tower; it was orientated ca. NE-SW and measured 5.1 × 1 m. Trench IX was situated to the west from the tower; it was orientated WE and measured ca. 10 × 3-5 m (Fig. 2). In all trenches the recorded stratigraphic evidence was relatively simple and all of them were completely excavated down to the top of bedrock or to the architectural remains. In trench VII the bedrock was recorded at a depth of 100 cm max., in trench VIII – only 10-15 cm, and in trench IX 60-80 cm; see Fig. 7:A-B).

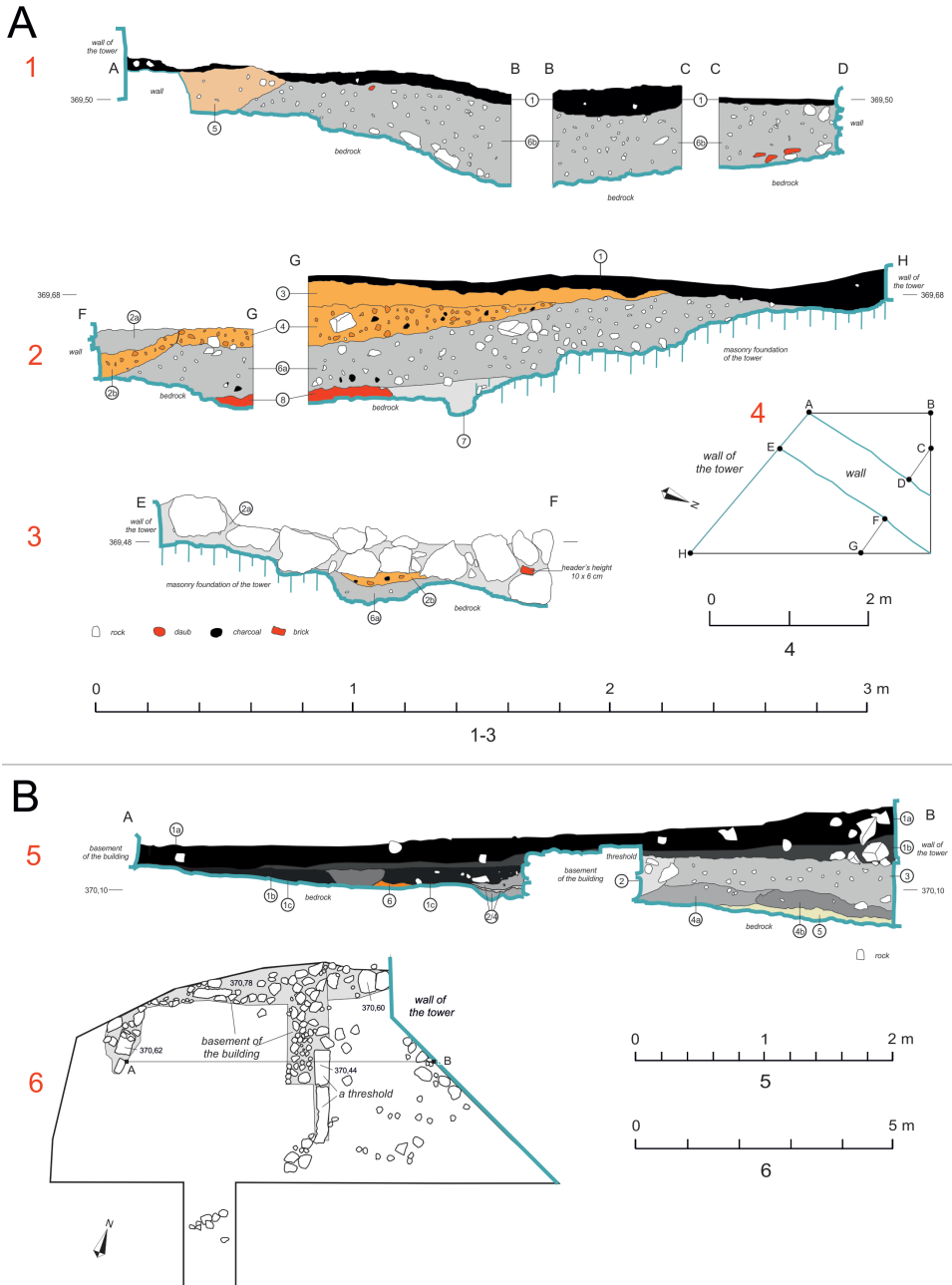


Fig. 7. Stratigraphic sequence in the trench VII (A.1-3) and IX (B.1), a plan of a building localised west from the tower (B.6). Drawn by M. Wojenka

It is noteworthy that in comparison with the other fieldwork made at castle Ojców (Wojenka 2008; 2016), the excavations carried out inside of the tower and around it provided small amount of finds⁴.

Trench VII

The trench VII, localised north-east from the tower (see Fig. 2) was set out to examine the stratigraphic evidence and to confront it with the results achieved by Krystyna Kruczek in 1991. The goals have been completed, but apart from these the trench VII brought new evidence for the castle planning.

In the trench VII the recorded stratigraphic evidence may be characterized as follows (Fig. 7:A.1-3): **layer 1** – modern-date humic layer with small admixture of limestone rubble; **layer 2** – filling of a foundation ditch for the wall adjacent to the tower (2a: upper layer of mortar, 2b: lower layer of redeposited elements of layer 4); **layer 3** – yellow clayey loess, ca. 20-10 cm thick; **layer 4** – yellow clayey loess, ca. 20-30 cm thick, with charcoal, small pieces of daub and pieces of heavily eroded bricks in large quantities; **layer 5** – humic layer mixed with large quantities of mortar, all grey-yellowish in colour, occurring close to the tower's gable in the south-west part of the trench; **layer 6a** – dark grey mortar layer with sparse humic inclusions on the east side of the limestone wall, ca. 50-60 cm thick; **layer 6b** – dark grey mortar and humic layer fused together on the west side of the limestone wall; **layer 7** – light grey mortar lying on the bedrock, ca. 10-20 cm thick; **layer 8** – dark red layer of daub with charcoal, ca. 10 cm thick, in the east part of the trench lying directly on the bedrock.

The upper humic level (**layer 1**) yielded around 200 pieces of pottery, few dozens of clay roof tiles and and more than a 100 metal objects, almost exclusively iron nails. The pottery assemblage shall be dated mostly to the 15-16th c. (ca. 90-95%) and since it lacks a series of younger elements, it is expected that the upper part of this strata was removed, possibly as a result of ground arrangement after the restoration works carried in the 19-20th c. Soon after removing the uppermost layer of humus, the remains of a masonry limestone wall set in lime mortar, of differing 110-120 cm width, were found⁵ (Fig. 8:A-B). The structure was lining from the north-east gable of the tower to the north, and was poorly preserved – only through its bottom part, which consisted of limestone rocks supplemented by a brick (the header size 6 × 10 cm). The precise chronology of the wall is uncertain, although it is beyond any doubt that it was built in post-medieval period. This is evidenced by the finds assemblage of the **layer 4**, which was cut across by the wall.

⁴ The most characteristic finds from the 2016 fieldwork are depicted in Figure 11.

⁵ It is probably the same wall which appears on the castle plan by Wilhelm Giersz, made in 1829 (see Wróblewski 1907, 130).

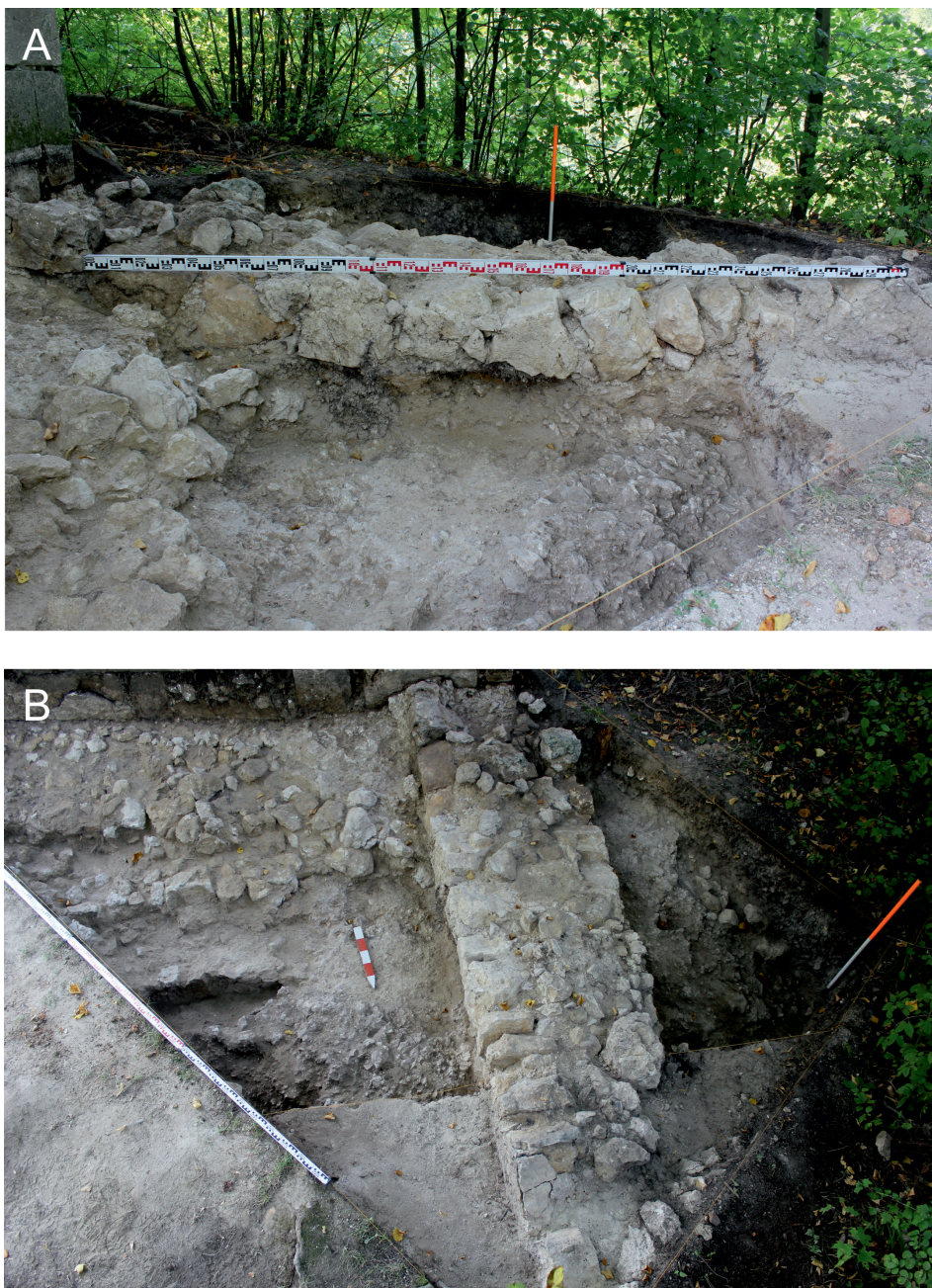


Fig. 8. Trench VII. Remains of limestone wall. A – view from the east; B – view from the north.
Photo by M. Wojenka

The layer 4 contained fragments of a clay daub (including pieces with braid impressions), two iron nails and a couple of pottery sherds, which shall be dated both to the late Middle Ages and the 16th c. (see Fig. 11:6). It is impossible to say precisely when exactly the wall was erected, but it can not be excluded that it resulted from the big-scale restoration works by Koryciński family in the 17th century. As for the layer 4, the abundance of daub points to the fact that it is a relic of some undefined wood and daub construction, possibly bound with fence or even related to the upper part of the tower.

The deposits below layer 4 almost entirely consist of lime mortar mixed with small (**layer 6a**) and considerable admixture of loose humic dirt (**layer 6b**). The archaeological material from these strata is scarce and consists of around a dozen of iron nails and several late medieval pottery sherds, including one rim fragment (Fig. 11:1). Below there was another, lighter mortar layer (**layer 7**, which yielded an iron nail) and a brown-reddish deposite of daub with braid impressions (**layer 8**; almost 100 g of daub). The latter stratigraphical unit may be regarded as medieval, due to the stratigraphic sequence and the find of an iron nail which occurred inside. As well as the previously mentioned layer 4, the layer 8 should be considered as a remnant of undefined wood and daub construction which could conceivably have been used around the tower, e.g. for fencing.

Both layer 7 and 8 were lying directly on the bedrock or were covering the another masonry structure, which deserves special attention. These were the remains build up by small limestone rocks (ca. 10-15 cm), set in lime mortar. The structure was unearthed below mortar layers 6 and 7 at the bottom part of trench, practically at the level of bedrock. It took a stair-like form with the height of each single "step" ca. 20 cm (Fig. 9:A-B). It is difficult to draw conclusion on its function. Obviously, it is tempting to regard this structure as remains of medieval stairway leading to the entrance of the tower. On the other side, the stair-like form of the structure may have been seen in context of natural form of the bedrock, which in many places of the hill is characterized by an irregular course with frequently occurring natural fissures (*cf.* Fig. 6:6 and Fig. 10). Thus, it may as well be presumed that the stair-like structure resulted from necessity to fill the natural fissure in order to keep the tower's basement firm and even. In light of observations made in the trench VII it would also appear that the stone wall which was seen by Krystyna Kruczek in 1991, forms part of the same construction (see Kruczek 2001, 398).

Trench VIII

The trench VIII which was localised inside the tower (Fig. 2) has not produced data of major significance in its development. The meticulously levelled bedrock was covered by a thin (10-15 cm) sequence of dusty mixed layers, which provided with few pottery sherds of medieval and post-medieval origin. This makes it



Fig. 9. Trench VII. Remains of a stair-like limestone construction. A – view from the east;
B – view from the north. Photo by M. Wojenka

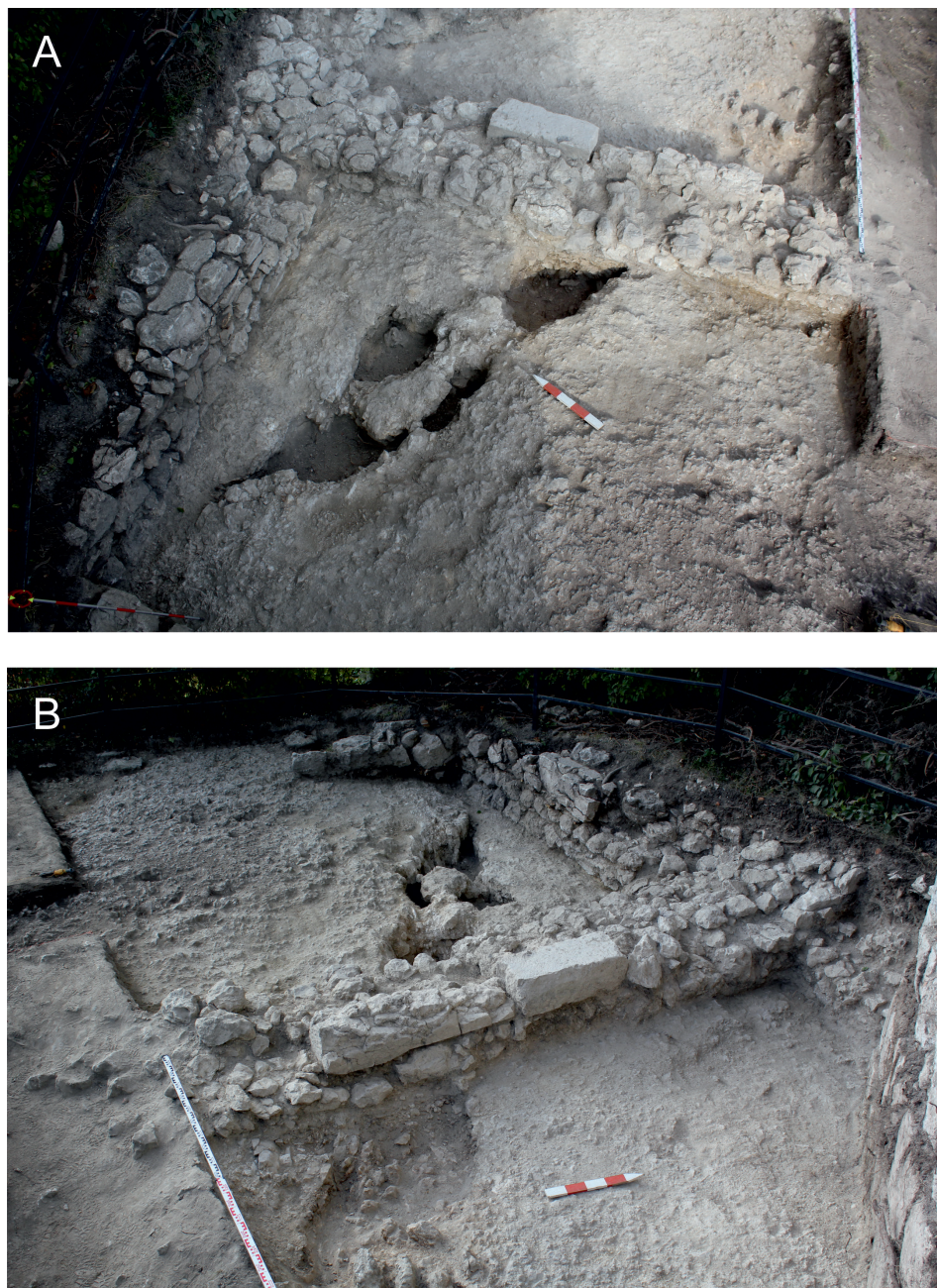


Fig. 10. Trench IX. A limestone base of the building localised west from the tower. A – view from the west; B – view from the east. Photo by M. Wojenka

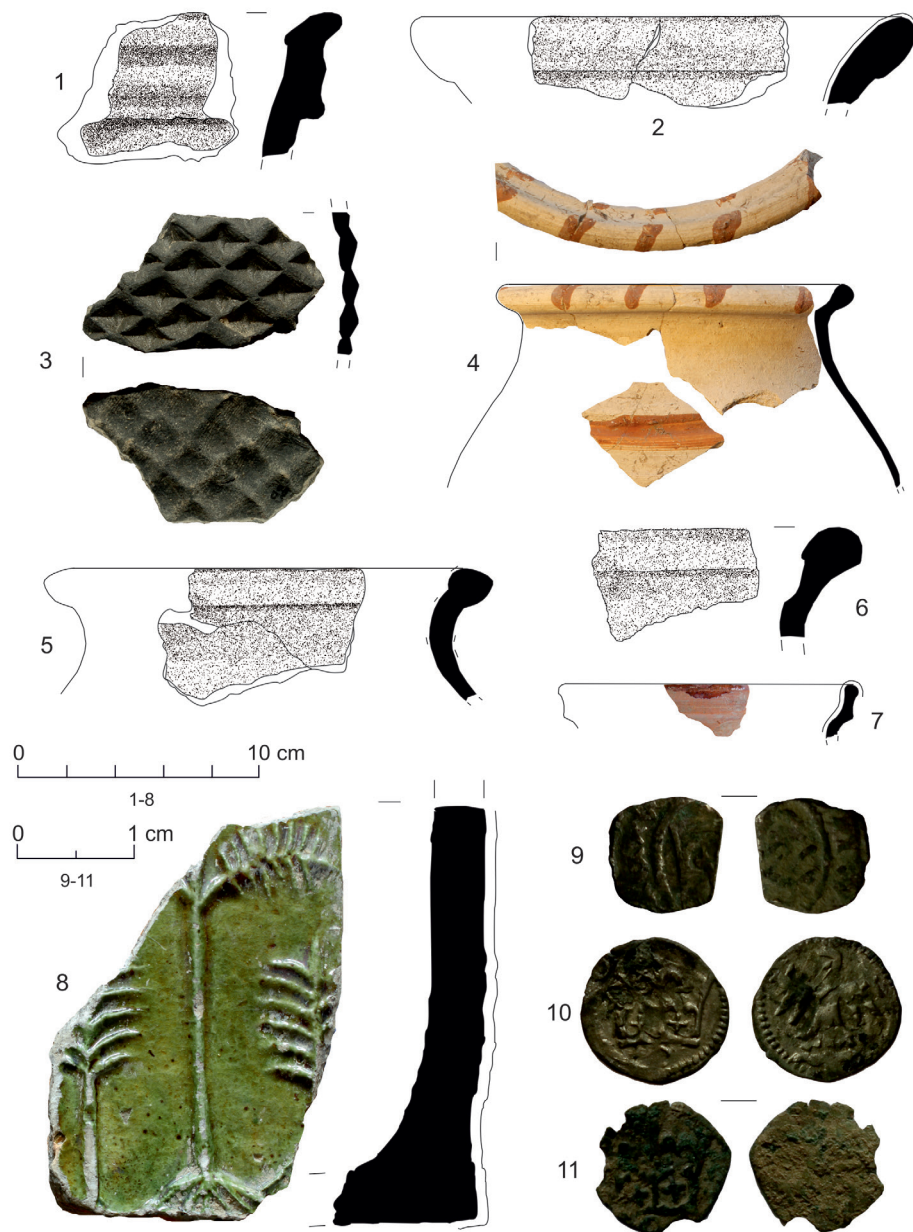


Fig. 11. Finds assemblage from trenches VII (1, 6), IX (2, 4-5, 7-11) and V/1991 (3). 1 – trench VII, layer 6a; 2 – trench IX, layer 4a/4b; 3 – trench V/1991; 4, 5 – trench IX, layer 2; 6 – trench VII, layer 4; 7 – trench IX, layer 4a/4b; 8 – trench IX, layer 1; 9, 11 – trench IX, layer 4a/4b; 10 – trench IX; layer 3/4a/4b/5. 1-8: clay; 9-11: silver. Photo and drawings by M. Wojenka

impossible to agree with Kazimierz Wróblewski, who visited the tower in the very late 19th c. and reported that *in front of the entrance there were three vaulted hollows* [brick-made; see Fig. 6:3]. *The right one was still attached with shelves, so it likely served as a medicine cabinet or a handy storage. The middle hollow, twice roomy as the right one, was a fireplace, while the left, the same size as the right one, housed an entrance to the dungeons; than bouldered* (Wróblewski 1907, 133; transl. MW). Inside the left vaulted niche, as well as in the middle part of the tower, the levelled bedrock was reached right after the fieldwork has begun (Fig. 6:5-6).

Trench IX

In the trench IX the recorded stratigraphic evidence (Fig. 7:B.5) may be characterized as follows: **layer 1a-d** – modern-date humic layers with a small admixture of limestone rubble, ca. 20-50 cm thick; **layer 2** – filling of a foundation ditch for the building placed west from the tower; **layer 3** – light grey mortar layer with a small admixture of limestone rubble, ca. 30 cm thick; **layer 4a** – light grey mortar layer with a small admixture of limestone rubble, ca. 20 cm thick; **layer 4b** – dark grey mortar layer with a small admixture of limestone rubble, of similar thickness to the layer 4b; **layer 5** – yellowish mortar layer covering the bedrock in the east part of the trench, ca. 10 cm thick; **layer 6** – reddish orange residual clay in a fissure in the middle part of the trench, ca. 5 cm thick.

As in the trench VII, the upper humus (**layer 1**) yielded most archaeological finds. Not to mention iron nails (almost a hundred), this strata yielded around 150 pottery sherds, and, among others, several pieces of daub with braid impressions, three fragments of stove-tiles and a brick with finger channels on the top (header size 13.4 × 9.7 cm). Excluding daub the above-mentioned clay objects were the only datable finds. These seem to correspond to the forms of the late Middle Ages (Fig. 11:2) and the 16th c. and, as well as in the humic layer in the trench VII, it was very noticeable that in the assemblage some younger finds are lacking. Below the layer 1 there was a rich set of light and dark grey deposits, each comprised of lime mortar mixed with limestone gravel in varying quantities (**layers 3, 4a-b, 5**). And as it turned out, the mortar layers were cut by a foundation ditch (**layer 2**) for a stone-founded building, which occupied larger part of the terrain west from the tower (Fig. 7:B.6; Fig. 10:A-B). The remains of the building were preserved only in the northern and eastern parts of a basement, but, due to the landform it may be reconstructed as 4.5-5 × 4.5-5 m structure with wall ca. 80 cm thick. As is evidenced by a threshold, the entrance to the building was from the east (Fig. 10:A-B). Worth noting is that the north-eastern corner of the building was joined to the tower with a short line of a limestone wall (Fig. 7:B, 10:B). Due to its poor state of repair, little can be said about its thickness or chronology; it

appears that it is a structure younger than a base for a building with threshold. Both the building and adjacent wall were built directly on a bedrock.

It is fair to say that the discovery of a building west from the tower was quite unexpected, as it has never been mentioned in the written sources. Its function must therefore remain unclear. Thankfully, the archaeological finds from the **layer 2** allow its dating to the late 15th – mid 16th century. This is evidenced by rim fragments of a white kaolinite clay vessel decorated with painted dark orange lines (Fig. 11:4; see Bis 2014, 130-133) and a rim part of a pot made of iron-rich clays (Fig. 11:5). Both finds were well-fired and had one-coloured thin sections. As regards chronology of the building, a mention should also be made of its threshold, which was a piece of limestone architectural detail – it likely came from a Gothic portal (Fig. 13:6).

Moving on to the older deposits, it needs saying right at the beginning that all the strata filled with mortar (**layers 4ab and 5**) do not seem to correspond with process of building the tower, although it provided only medieval finds. Apart from pottery fragments (layer 4a/4b – Fig. 11:2 and 11:7) these layers yielded three coins (layer 4a/4b – Fig. 11:9-11) which form the basis for its datation to the second half of the 15th c. One is a silver denarius which was cut out⁶ from a half-grosz (in Polish – *półgrosz*) of Władysław Jagiello (Fig. 11:9), the other two are silver denarii of reduced fineness, minted during the reign of Kasimir IV Jagellon, in 1455-1479 (Fig. 11:10-11; Kubiak 1998)⁷. To the circumstances under which the mortar layers were accumulated we shall return later, let us now focus for a moment on the finds discovered at the base of layer 1 (**layer 1b**) and on the top of the upper mortar strata (**layer 3**).

The aforementioned part of stratigraphic sequence, right next to the tower's gable, unexpectedly revealed 18 fragments of limestone architectural details (Fig. 13:1-5). Apart from possible elements of a door framing (?) (Fig. 13:4-5) this assemblage provided a series of stylistically homogenous window or portal framings, with characteristic pear-shaped mouldings and hollow-chamfered profiles (Fig. 13:1-3). There is a high degree of confidence that these elements were originally placed in the tower, and, if so, they determined rich and representative design of the whole structure.

It shall be assumed that from the details unearthed in 2016 at least the objects with pear-shaped mouldings relate to the earliest stages of the castle, perhaps already to the realisation of king Kasimir III the Great. For obvious reasons it is difficult to speculate on where the richly-decorated portal or window was placed. It is possible that it adorned a dwelling or representative floor of the tower, but it may as well be referred to the chapel (a chapman named Jan was mentioned in 1397; Laberschek 1993, 18).

⁶ On the rarity of these coins see: Woźniak 2018, 85-86.

⁷ The datation of coins I owe to the kindness of Mateusz Woźniak from the National Museum in Kraków.

To conclude, in light of archaeological excavations of 2016 the history of the octagonal realisation may be reconstructed as follows:

1. The emergence of the tower may be conditionally dated to the second half of the 14th c., likely from ca. 1354 to 1370. The structure was built directly on a purposefully leveled bedrock. The building material comprised of carefully processed hewn limestone set in lime mortar;
2. At early stages of the castle (the second half of the 14th – the first half of the 15th c.), apart from its defensive functions it served as a dwelling place, possibly for the burgraves. This hypothesis may be evidenced by the size of structure (6,2 m of diameter inside) and, conditionally, by the richly profiled window or portal, which was likely to have been placed in the tower. In regard of dwelling function, of minor importance are another finds, such as a piece of green-glazed stove-tile with a tree (palm?) motive (Fig. 11:8), or fragments of stoneware beakers (Fig. 11:3). In regard of the provenance of the first item, a tile workshop from Kraków may be suspected (see Fig. 12:1 with the identical find from the Wawel castle in Kraków – Firlet 1993, 108, Plate XXVI), while the beakers undoubtedly came from abroad, possibly from Moravia (Fig. 12:2-3; see Nekuda, Reichertová 1968, 370, 371). Clearly, this is only a sort of circumstantial evidence, though it has to be admitted that it fits to the assumed dwelling function of the tower. It is fair to say, however, that both finds may be as well referred to a bit later medieval episodes from the tower's history (see below).

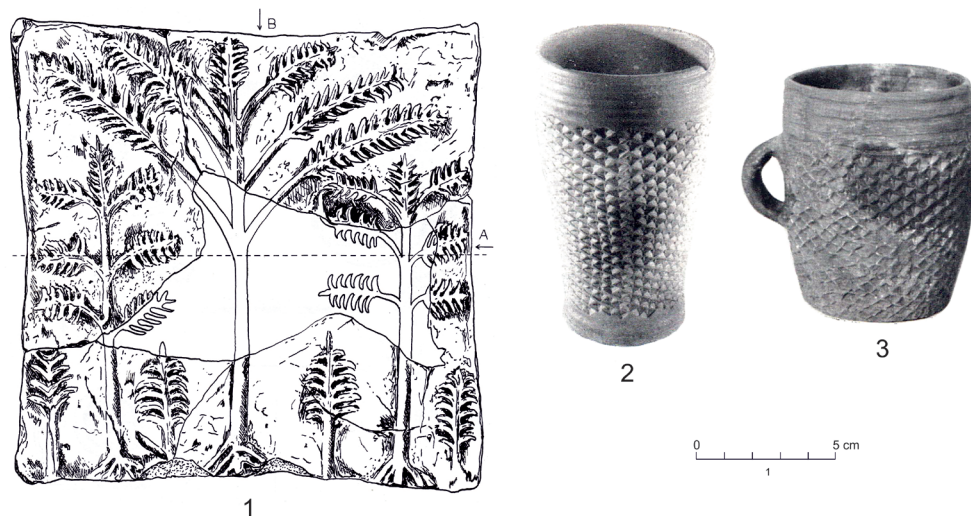


Fig. 12. The stove-tile from Kraków-Wawel (1) and beakers from Moravia (2 – Brno; 3 – Mstěnice). After Firlet 1993 and Nekuda, Reichertová 1968

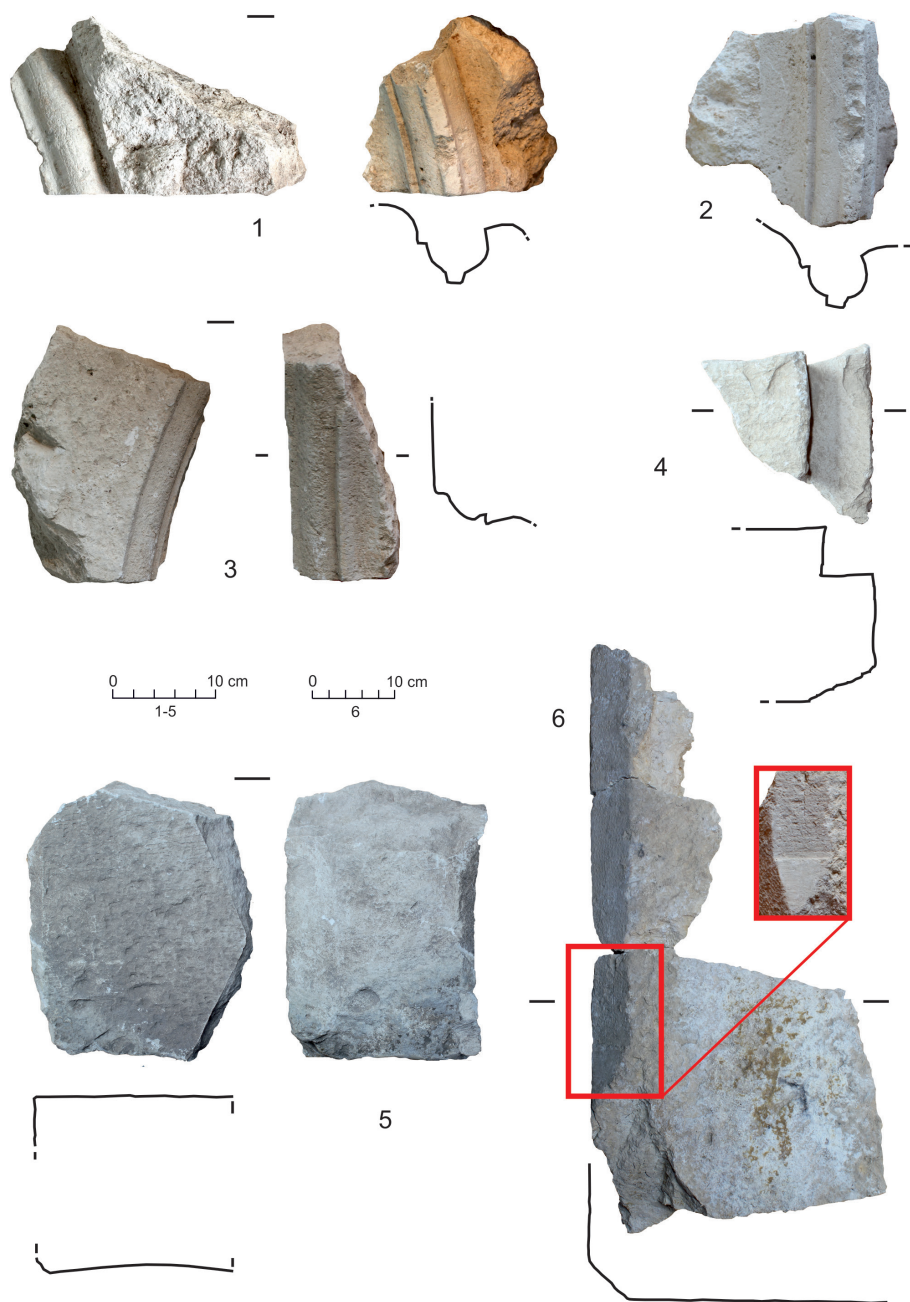


Fig. 13. The architectural details from the trench IX. 1-5 – layer 1b/3; 6 – a detail used as threshold in the building placed west from the tower. Photo and drawings by M. Wojenka

I believe that at early stages of castle it was the meticulously levelled bedrock which served as a ground level. In the immediate vicinity of the tower all around is flat and even (Fig. 6:6, Fig. 10), apart from the area north east from the octagonal structure (Fig. 9), where the artery of communication between courtyard and the tower area is expected to have been placed. The area of the tower might have been fenced around (see the clay daub with braid impressions found within trench VII in the layer 8; Fig. 7:A.2); 3. In the 15th c. the tower lost its dwelling function. It remains an open question whether this occurred around 1429 (imprisoning of Andrzej Lisek from Szyce in *a tower*) or later. A shift from a dwelling to another function may have resulted from building of another residential place (possibly the early phase of a building in the south part of the castle or the so called „eastern building”⁸).

As evidenced by the coins discovered in the mortar layer west from the tower, we can confidently assume that in the second half of the 15th c. the octagonal structure witnessed some essential restorations. These may have resulted from the poor state of repair⁹, although examination of the watercolour of Vogel from 1787 one might wonder at the concentration of small window openings at the top part of the tower (Fig. 14). The window-like openings, unless we consider the upper row of them as a walled-up crenelation, may be seen in the context of what was happening elsewhere in the 15th c., namely that they equipped the castle towers’ with loop-holes designed for the active defense with the use of firearms¹⁰. Such innovations were introduced in the second half of the 15th c. in the Wawel castle in Kraków (*the tower of Sandomierz*; Pianowski 1991, 84-85), in the tower at castle Lipowiec (Holcerowa 1989, 29-31) or in the tower in the Pieskowa Skała castle (Lasek 2013, 161, Fig. 3). Understandably, whether this hypothesis holds true, remains an open question;

4. Late in the 15th c. or – what is more likely – in the first half of the 16th c., the immediate vicinity of the tower was supplemented from the west with a building founded on a stone basement. It is likely that to the same period we shall date the remains of some undefined wood and daub construction, which was preserved through the layer 4 in the trench VII. Concerning the building, it probably functioned for a short period¹¹, as it was not recognised in 1660 (see *Description* 1660).

⁸ It is important to note that the medieval phases of these buildings are recognized only at an early stage; see Kruczek 2001; Niewalda, Rojkowska 2001, 431; see Olszacki 2011, 278-279.

⁹ In this regard interesting is a layer 8 in the trench VII, which is likely a remnant of an undefined wood and daub construction destroyed by fire; worth remembering are also the traces of fire seen at the hewn stones on the east and south gable of tower.

¹⁰ The loop-holes for firearms were recognised during the architectural survey of Waldemar Niewalda in 1991 within late medieval part of the massive building situated in the south part of the castle; in some cases the distance between them was about 1,5 m (Niewalda, Rojkowska 2001, 432, Fig. 7), as in the case of the distance between the window-like openings in the upper part of the tower.

¹¹ In this regard we must again focus our attention on the possible fire – see the layer 4 in the trench VII, with several pieces of clay daub and charcoal – likely a remnant of wood and daub construction destroyed by fire. Cf. footnote 9.

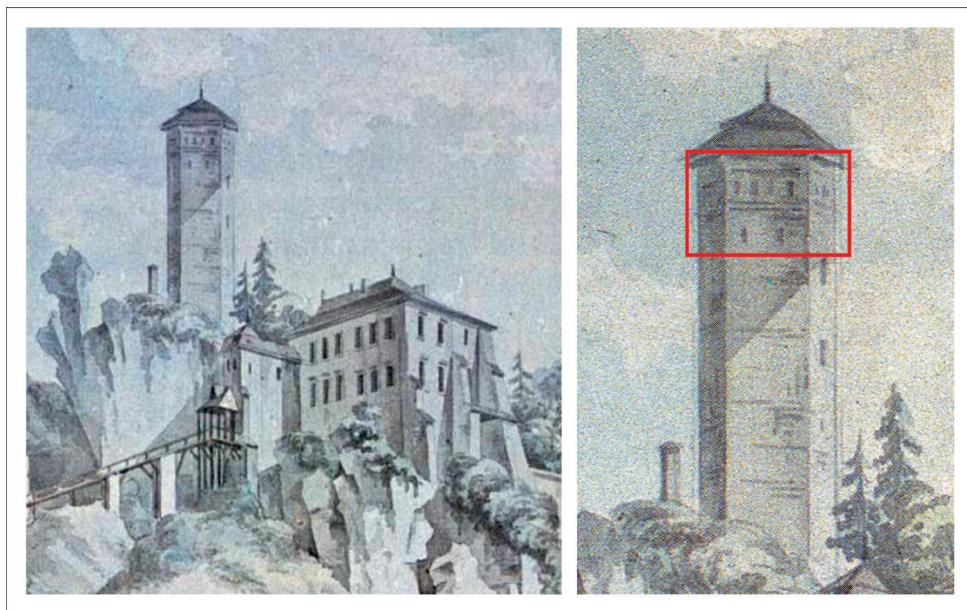


Fig. 14. The octagonal tower at castle Ojców on the watercolour of Z. Vogel (1787).
Thanks to the Ojców National Park

5. In the post-medieval period, possibly in the 17th c., the tower was provided with a masonry wall from the north-east, which was likely to take part of a curtain wall;
6. Later on, in the 18th c., the tower played a minor role and served as a prison (*Description* 1765, 232; *Description* 1789, 234).

V. FINAL REMARKS

In comparison with other castle realisations linked with the king Kasimir III the Great, the tower at Ojców stands out for many reasons. Less importance may be drawn to its octagonal plan, which, although atypical for the Little Poland, is known from the other contemporary sites (e.g. in castle Inowłódz; see Augustyniak 1992). Doubtless, the unique feature of the tower is the raw material used for its building – the regular, carefully processed cubic blocks of a hewn stone of considerable dimensions (Fig. 15:1-2). It is the only known tower realisation of king Kasimir which was built on such blocks (see Zaniewski 2012, 133-134)¹². If we

¹² I do not share the view of P. Zaniewski, who considers the octagonal tower at Sandomierz castle

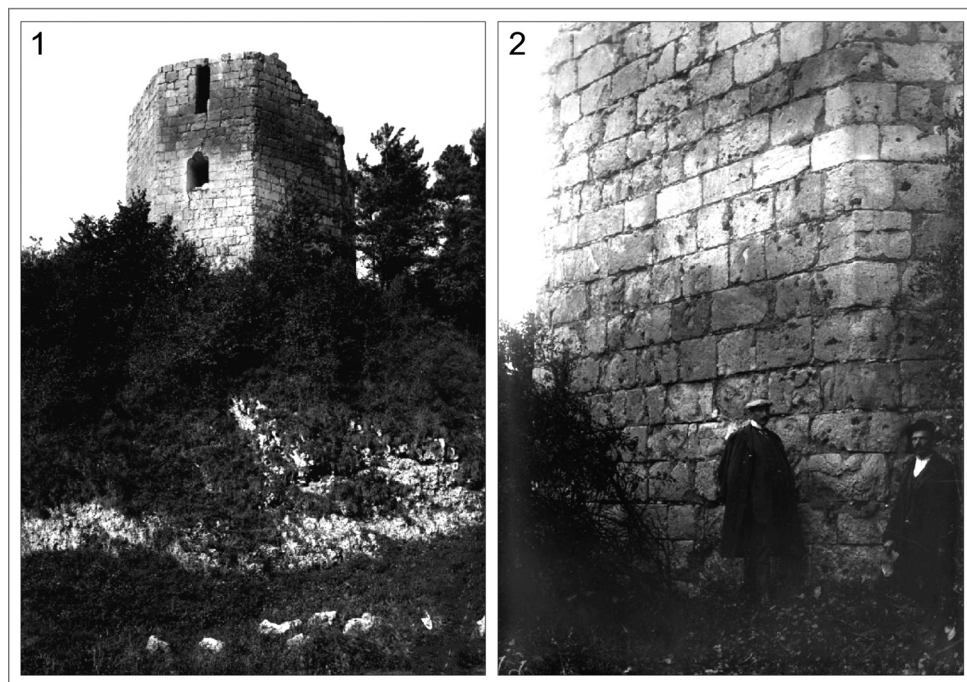


Fig. 15. The octagonal tower before restoration works carried out in 1912-1914.

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search for close affinities with this raw material in the time of king Kasimir, we need to forget the defensive structures and look closely at his church foundations, especially at the collegiate church in Wiślica and the cathedral church on Wawel hill in Kraków (Frazik 1966, 32). Of special interest is the first realisation, built on blocks of hewn stone and adorned inside with rich architectural design, including sculptures and heraldic decor (Szyszko-Bohusz, Sokołowski 1912, 72-89; Walczak 2006, 288-305). Worth noting is the fact that building works in Wiślica started from c. 1350, therefore in the same stage of king Kasimir's rule, as Ojców. The decoration of the church nave was likely finished in the late 1360s, possibly after the death of the king (Walczak 2006, 305).

There are strong indications that to the same period we shall date the architectural details unearthed during the 2016 excavations, which were in all likelihood attributed to the tower. It is important to note that the pear-shaped

as built of hewn sandstone (Zaniewski 2012, 134). This interesting realisation may be studied only via its base part, which is built of irregular „broken” stone (Polanowski, Zub 1997, 150).

mouldings¹³ and hollow-chamfered profiles are common in portals elaborated during Kasimirian period, like in the churches in Niepołomice (built in 1350-1358; Łuszczkiewicz 1866), in the aforementioned collegiate church in Wiślica or in the churches founded by the king in Sandomierz (c. 1360-1382; Crossley 1985, 223; Walczak 2006, 333), Stopnica (c. 1350-1380; Szyszko-Bohusz, Sokołowski 1912, 85, Fig. 24; 93, Fig. 35) and Szydłów (Crossley 1985, 223; Walczak 2006, 288, 345), to mention only a few¹⁴. And even though it is necessary to regard the details from Ojców within a broader timeframe, if we respect the history of the site it is still the second half of the 14th c. which is the most probable moment for the finely elaborated portal (or window framing) to show up at the castle. More importantly, concerning royal residential sites of Little Poland from that time, the Ojcowian details¹⁵ may be compared only with castle Wawel (Stępień 2000/2001; Ratajczak 2014) and with the palatial structure within castle Szydłów, dated to the late 14th – c. 1420s (Olszacki 2017, 978-979; see also Frazik 1966, 32; Kajzer 1999, 97; Olszacki 2011, 265). Finally, let us give the floor to Paul Crossley, who noticed that „portal design is an obvious index of the royal style” (Crossley 1985, 223).

If we combine the high level of details' processing with fine-quality raw material used for building of the tower, it will be hard to resist the impression that we are dealing with a magnificent piece of work. This needs saying that the special nature of the castle Ojców was already pointed out in the literature (Frazik 1966, 32; Kajzer 1999, 96; Olszacki 2011, 265). And although the reason why the king decided to build such a structure in the Prądnik river valley is lost in the mists of time, it does not exempt us from searching for the reasons of his intention.

Interestingly, some light on these motives may be thrown thanks to the 15th c. written account by Jan Długosz in his *Liber beneficiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis*, in a part dedicated to Wiślica – the town of the aforementioned magnificent collegiate church built by the king Kasimir. When referring to the collegiate church, Długosz noted that in times of clashes for the rule over Kraków with the Bohemian king Venceslaus II, a father of king Kasimir – duke Władysław the

¹³ See also Frazik 1978, 522-523 and Mencl 1952.

¹⁴ Let us add that outside Poland, like in Bohemia, the pear-shaped mouldings were of particular popularity in the second half of the 14th c. Apart from the churches (Mencl 1960, 113-140, Fig. 102, 116, 125, 137-138), they appear in the residences of king Charles IV (†1378), among others in Prague-Hradčany and in the castle Lauf in Germany (founded c. 1357-1360) (Němec 2015, 50-57, 109), as well as in the royal castles founded by his son, Venceslaus IV (†1419), e.g. in castle Točník (after c. 1385; Záruba 2015, 136-138, Fig. 90:14).

¹⁵ Thanks to the above-mentioned finds, the collection of Gothic-date details from the castle Ojców has broadened significantly. Until 2016 only 4 details were known. Two were secondarily used in the post-medieval courtain wall (Frazik 1966, 32, Fig. 5, Picture 6; 33, Picture 7), the third one – a fragment of rectangular window framing with a pear-shape moulding, was discovered in the walls of the 18th c. chapel (Niewalda, Rojkowska 2001, 434, Fig. 10). The fourth is mentioned by Kruczek in relation to the „eastern building” (Kruczek 2001, 398). Noteworthy, the aforementioned fragment of rectangular, highly-profiled window may not necessarily correspond with „Kasimirian” castle (see Olszacki 2017, 976-977; see also Ratajczak 2014, 184-185).

Elbow-high, took refuge in the crypt of Wiślica church and prayed there in front of the statue of Virgin Mary and Jesus¹⁶ for help and for positive outcomes of his struggle. According to Długosz, later on the figure of blessed Mary was relocated to the freshly built collegiate church and put there on the stone pillar¹⁷ (Dlb I, 404). In times of Jan Długosz a story about the Wiślica episode of duke Władysław must have been very popular among local townsmen, as well as the memory of a glorious role played then by the town (see Długopolski 2009, 73; Kardys 2006, 81-84); it is not surprising therefore, that such a well-informed person as Długosz was, he broadly invoked this oral tradition.

What is more important is a clear suggestion of Jan Długosz, who seems to consider the foundation of the impressive collegiate church in Wiślica by king Kasimir evidently in a context of estimation for the memory of his father, whose fate was closely entwined with Wiślica during the final stages of rivalry with the Bohemian king (Walczak 2006, 291; Wojciechowska 2016, 129-130; see also Wróbel 1966, 176-177; cf. Gadomski 1970, 180-182). In such a case this magnificent church may be considered as a sort of commemorative monument, built as thanks for helping in Władysław's struggle to wrest the throne of Kraków.

Wiślica is not the only part of the former Kraków Land, the history of which is linked with duke Władysław's efforts to reach control over the country. At the turn of the 14th c. the Ojców region have witnessed a turbulent moment in the history and is considered a playground for the rivalry between him and the supporters of Bohemian rules. According to the local tradition, at that time the area of Prądnik river valley was to play an important role in the Władysław's struggle – he was to find a safe refuge inside a gloomy cave. Moreover, the archaeological evidence from caves of the region speaks in favour of this tradition (Wojenka 2017), and the historians conditionally argue that this event might have taken place at spring of 1306, shortly before the conquest of Kraków (Długopolski 2009, 80; Baszkiewicz 1968, 90). Let us return to the early moments of the castle Ojców to look at the circumstances surrounding its foundation.

According to Jacek Laberschek, the main reasons for the Kasimirian investment in Prądnik river valley were two. First, it has to be seen in a context of essential reinforcement of the northern foreground of Kraków, which in the mid-14th c. was

¹⁶ For a figure of Virgin Mary and Jesus see: Gadomski 1970.

¹⁷ *Casimirus tandem secundus, Poloniae rex, qui illam singulari venerabatur devotione et cultura, parens enim suus Vladislaus Loktek, Vineslaum fugiens, Poloniae et Bohemiae regem, et in cripta illius latitans, imaginis cuiusdam Beatae Mariae Virginis puerum baiulantis ex petra ruditer effigatae, in suis tribulationibus, si quid veri vetus habet relatio, habere solebat solantia illum colloquia, angustiis illius abolitis, novam ecclesiam in loco priori etiam et lapide quadro, iustioris tamen quantitatis fabricavit, et in memoriam imaginem ipsam uni columnae affixit, qua ad integrum consummata doluisse fertur, quod in loco basso, et non in eo, in quo est regia, fabricam eius posuerit, et loco meliori pro se reservato devotionem Deo consignaverit; qua de re poenitentia frequenti actus, ecclesiam iam perfectam demolire, et in regia novo opere illam erigere destinabat, nisi saluberrimum eius propositum importuna procerum consultatio, verentium, ne diem obiens fabrica relinqueretur, infecta damnasset* (Dlb I, 404).

insufficiently secured, what was shown in 1345 during the raid of John of Bohemia – after his troops were driven out of Kraków they were able to undisturbedly retreat back across a part of the Polish Jura Chain. Second, the Ojców castle was to be constructed for playing a role of a centre for a set of the nearby royal lands (Laberschek 2016, 83).

Particular attention should be drawn to the name of the castle, as the term *Oczecz* (later *Ociec*, and, since the 18th c. *Oycow* and *Ojców*) in Polish means *Father*. In the consciousness of the castle holders there was no doubt that its name harks back to the turn of the 14th c. and was given to honour the memory of the father of king Kasimir – Władysław the Elbow-high, and to his cavern episode. This can be seen in the relation of Józef Załuski, a son of the last governor of Ojców, who was born in the castle in 1787. Załuski explicitly links the name of the castle with the adventure of duke Władysław (Załuski 1976, 26), and this needs saying that it must have been a story that he heard in childhood. This etymology was repeated in the work of Ambroży Grabowski (1822, 207) and later on it was widely accepted in the literature, both in the field of onomastics (Rymut 1967, 116) and history (Falniowska-Gradowska 1999, 14; Pajor 2015, 107; Laberschek 2016, 83).

In my opinion there are strong indications that it was not only the name which honoured the memory of duke Władysław. Bearing in mind the relation of Jan Długosz on the Wiślica collegiate church, I am inclined to consider the impressive octagonal tower at the Ojców castle, which is distinguished among the other Kasimirian realisations by its building material, size and, possibly a *decor*, as a commemorative realisation¹⁸, a magnificent symbol and a recognisable hallmark of the royal power.

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¹⁸ See also: Mrozowski 2006, 91-92 and, especially, Pajor 2015: 107.

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