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Lost and Found The Residence of Nostitz Family in Chotków, Lower Silesia

Zagubiona i odnaleziona
Siedziba rodu von Nostitz
w Chotkowie na Dolnym Śląsku

Abstract: The archaeological research conducted in Chotków, Lower Silesia focused on verifying the existence and character of a presumed defensive-residential site associated with the von Nostitz family. Archival studies indicate that from the 14th to the 16th centuries, Chotków hosted multiple stone residential towers with defensive features, though their precise locations had remained unverified until recently. Remote sensing and geophysical surveys, combined with archival

cartographic analysis, helped identify a mound with rectangular relics of masonry structures, partially surrounded by a former moat. Excavations revealed architectural remains, yet the precise nature of the wall and avant-corps requires further interpretation. The limited artefactual material, predominantly from the 15th–16th centuries, implies either a brief period of occupation or later structural transformations, potentially linked to an economic repurposing.

Keywords: archaeology, history, architecture, post-medieval period, castle, residence, nobility, material culture

Introduction

In the second half of August 2021, the Archaeological Museum of the mid-Oder Region conducted archaeological excavations at a defensive site (?) in Chotków, in the Brzeźnica commune (Michalak et al. 2021; Legendziewicz 2021). The impetus for this investigation was a report by the head of Brzeźnica commune, Jerzy

Adamowicz, about the discovery in 2021 of mysterious architectural remains in a hard-to-reach location.

Located almost in the centre of the village, near the parish church in Chotków, the site features a polygonal, conical earthen mound with visible remains of masonry architecture (Fig. 1). There was a possibility that this structure might be the remnants of a residential-defensive tower in Chotków, which had been mentioned in the literature but whose exact location had not been verified in the post-war period (Nowakowski 2008: 446). The planned work aimed to verify this hypothesis and determine the chronology and function of the structure.

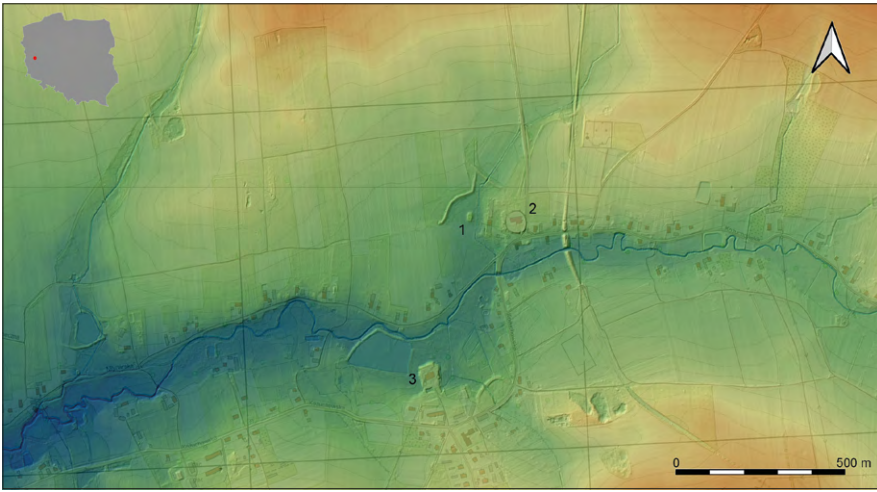


Fig. 1. Topography of the Chotków area with the layout of the village and the location of the discussed site (1), the parish church (2), and the Renaissance manor (3). Graphics: Hubert Augustyniak.

Location and Topography of the Site

According to the physical-geographical regionalisation by Solon et al. (2018: 318.42), the Chotków region is situated within the Central European Lowland province, the Central Polish Lowlands subprovince, the Dalkowskie Hills mesoregion, and the Trzebnica Ridge macroregion.

The site is located in the central part of the village of Chotków, to the east of the parish church – a 13th-century early Gothic parish church that has undergone multiple renovations and is surrounded by a stone wall (Fig. 1). To the west of the church was also a Vorwerk, parts of which still survive, while other elements remain visible in the terrain in the form of preserved foundations (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Aerial photograph of the site from the north. In the distance, the Renaissance manor is visible. Photo: Hubert Augustyniak.

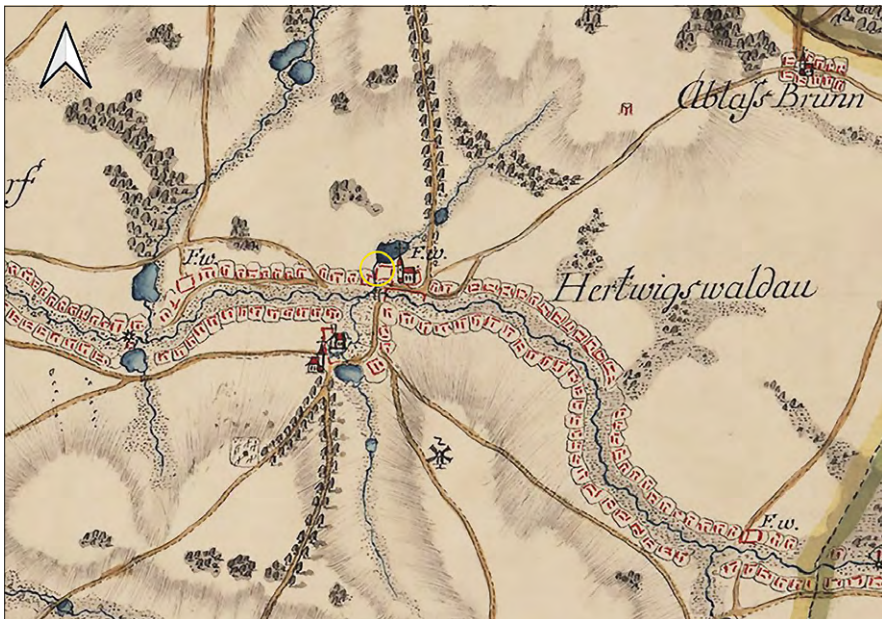


Fig. 3. Location of the discussed site (in yellow circle) on the mid-18th century map of Chotków by Christian Friedrich von Wrede. Source: *Krieges-Carden von Schlesien*, sygn. 15060, Bd. 4, Bl. 13.

A stream flows west of the structure of interest, eventually feeding into the Brzeźnica River. It appears that this stream may have flooded in the past, leading to waterlogging of the site area – what can be observed on Wrede’s 18th-century map (Fig. 3).

Written sources

Chotków (German *Hertwigswaldau*) is mentioned in historical evidence as early as 1305 (*Liber fundationis Episcopatus Vratislaviensis* 1889: 149). In 1328, it appears for the first time as property of the von Nostitz family: Henryk of Żagań, in exchange for a debt of 170 *marca*, transferred the villages of Chotków and Wrzesiny to the brothers Ulmann and Dytryk von Nostitz, and their uncle Otto (Steller 1968: 150). In the 15th century, the village was divided into four properties. The first, originally owned by the von Rechenberg family, was purchased in 1439 by the von Nostitz family, who were already owners of the main, oldest part of the village known as Property IV. Property II, belonged to the von Promnitz family from Jelenin in 1439. This later fell into the hands of the von Königsfeld and von Schönaich families, and was included into Property IV in 1573. Property III, owned by the von Harrach family in 1466, was incorporated into Property IV (owned by the von Nostitz family) between 1495 and 1508 (Kąsinowska 1970: 3). In 1393, Property V is mentioned as belonging to the Augustinian canons of Żagań until 1417. What eventually happened to Property V remains unknown. In 1508, the Chotków properties were divided, and the residence near the church, along with other holdings, was given to Antoni von Nostitz (Steller 1968: 150). In the first half of the 16th century, sources mention Jan and Stenzel von Nostitz. By the mid-16th century, the von Nostitz family shared the village of Chotków with the von Wächsdorf family. In 1559, the properties of the brothers Stenzel and Hans von Nostitz were purchased by Fabian von Schönaich, the owner of Witków. After Fabian, the property passed to his brother Johann Georg, who in 1578 bought the property belonging to Fabian von Wächsdorf. Johann Georg von Schönaich died in 1587 at the age of 37. The property was inherited by his widow, née von Zedlitz, who remarried in 1590 to Margrave Heinrich von zu Dohna (Domagalska 2008). By decision of the reigning authority, Heinrich von zu Dohna became the rightful owner of Chotków in 1596 by purchasing the village (Steller 1942: 102). After his death in 1618, the property passed to his daughter, who was married to Joachim von der Schulenburg, who died in 1619. She later remarried David Heinrich, Baron von Tschirnhaus (d. 1642). After the death of David Heinrich’s widow in 1659, the property was inherited by Karl Moritz von Redern of Krapkowice and Małomice, who was married to Ursula Marianna, Baroness von Kittlitz, the great-granddaughter of Margrave Heinrich von zu Dohna. After her husband’s death, Ursula Marianna held the property

until 1687, when it was purchased by Georg Christoph, Count von Proskau (Steller 1968: 150). He died in 1701, and the property passed to his son, who in 1709 renovated the manor house, as indicated by a plaque above the main entrance. By 1730, the heavily indebted owner of the property put it up for sale. In 1732, the properties in Chotków and Witków were valued by an imperial commission at 183,000 Rhenish guilders and were taken over by the town of Szprotawa in order to clear the debts. Until 1945, the property was rented out. In 1869, the property, covering 2,496 morgens of land, was leased by Lieutenant Miessner. In 1886, the Peckmann family rented the property, which then covered 635 hectares. In 1926, the lessee was the Beckmann family, and by 1937, it was leased by a certain F. Grabert. At that time, the property encompassed 571 hectares (Steller 1968: 150). After World War II, the property came under the management of a State Agricultural Farm (PGR).

Due to the existence of three residences (two stone and one timber) in Chotków, most likely all belonging to the von Nostitz family, the analysis of the written sources in this regards is significantly impeded (Nowakowski 2008: 444–447). According to the studies of Georg Steller (1941: 2; 1942: 100), the noble property in Chotków, which was in that time under the control of the town of Szprotawa, had two stone tower castles in the 16th century. These were noted to have had “good fortifications around the residence (1559)”. Both towers – according to a urbarium from 1591 were, like the tower in Witków, three floors high (Steller 1942: 101; Nowakowski 2008: 444–445). One of the residences (*Schloss*) (Castle), serving as the residence of Hantsche von Nostitz around 1440–1490, was subsequently used until 1559 by his son Stenzel (Stanislaus) von Nostitz. Steller (1942: 101) quote not preserved urbarium according to which, this residence was completely made of stone and had 4 bastions, with rooms and chambers. It was still inhabited until 1591, but due to poor ground conditions, the walls were cracked in many places and roof was dilapidated. It was later demolished to the level of the first vaulted story and repurposed for agricultural functions. In 1709, a new palace was built within the perimeter of the old surrounding walls.

The second tower house was mentioned in the sources as a *Rittersitz* (noble residence) and *Oberwerk* in 1508, and had good moat around the tower. In 1559 it was mentioned as *Marrochvorwerk*¹ and *alten Rittersitz* (old noble residence), which may suggest that it no longer served as the primary residence, having been replaced by a contemporary complex. In urbarium from 1591 this residence was mentioned under the name *Doktorberg* – named after the mentally ill Dr. Hans von Nostitz (Steller 1942: 100–101). He was married to Magdalena, a daughter of the Žagań

1 The name comes from the previous owners of these properties, namely the von Morroch family. They also owned the Upper estate, with timber castle associated with this possession (Steller 1942: 102).

administrator Seifried von Nechern from Kunzendorf. Since Seifried (d. 1539) was married with the widow Katherina of Stenzel (the mother of Hans Nostitz), who died in 1521, there were strange relationships in this family: mother = stepmother-in-law, own wife = step-sister. Shortly before 1540, Hans von Nostitz fell into melancholy and depression. The feudal commission of 1551 recognised him as insane. His wife returned to her brother Franz von Nechern from Chichy, while Stenzel took over the custody of his brother's assets in accordance with the decision of the governors of Duke Heinrich von Sachsen from January 26th, 1540. Hans lived in the tower until 1559 (Steller 1942: 100–101). Urbarium of 1591 mentions a house with three floors, which then served as a *Schüttboden* (possibly a drying facility) and granary. It still had surrounding walls and the moat. The residence then included the Upper Mill as well as 5 peasants and 4 gardeners (Steller 1942: 101). Sources mentioned that this residence was located near the parish church, so it may be identified as the tower that we have excavated. According to Steller by the 1940s, it was reportedly completely destroyed, with only the mound still visible where the tower had once stood. It can be assumed that the site was still accessible in the 1940s. However, archaeologists conducting surface survey in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 21st century were no longer able to locate it in the field, despite intensive research (Lewczuk 2001: 162; Nowakowski 2008: 446). In the literature, the site is considered completely destroyed (Nowakowski 2008: 446).

The Research

The site was heavily overgrown with vegetation; the former moat was covered in dense blackthorn bushes, which impeded access. This most likely contributed to the inability to locate it earlier (Fig. 2). Therefore, a necessary preliminary step was clearing the area of the stronghold of vegetation by cutting down bushes and trees growing on the site and mowing the grass. The top of the slightly elevated mound was surrounded by the remains of a stone wall, heavily damaged on the western side, where its outline was almost indiscernible (Fig. 4). The resulting rectangular structure measured approximately 12.2 by 22.5 meters, with the longer side oriented along a north-south axis.

The work at the site in Chotków consisted of several stages:

Passive remote sensing

The first stage of the work involved analysing historical cartographic data relating not only to the site itself but also to its surroundings. These data enable a comprehensive tracing and understanding of landscape processes and are often the last available source of information about archaeological features that no longer exist. The only known 18th-century map from the atlas *Krieges-Carte von Schlesien* by

Christian Friedrich von Wrede does not feature the site of interest – even in the form of symbols commonly used in historical cartography. However, the second residence of the Nostitz family is clearly marked (Fig. 5).

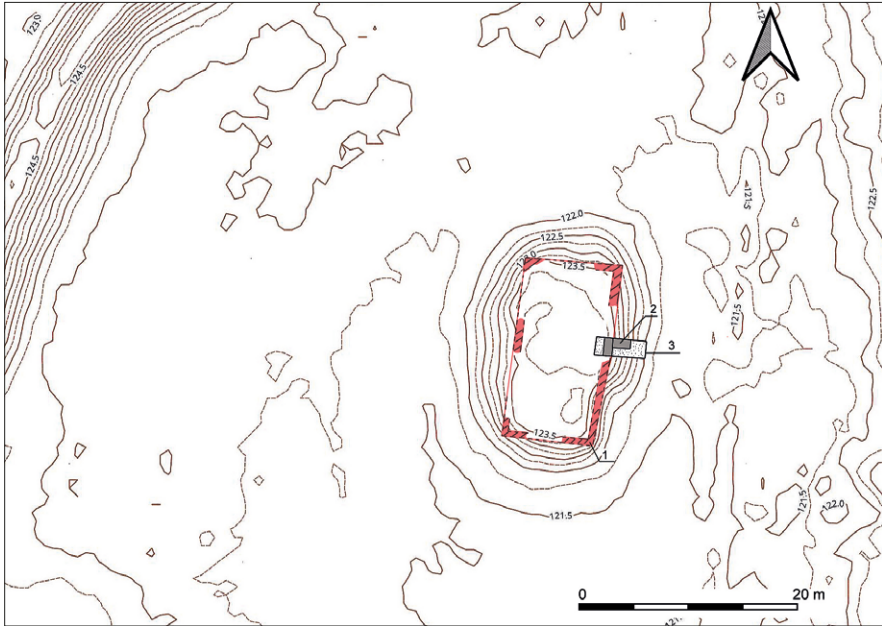


Fig. 4. Contour plan of the site with the preserved layout of the walls (1), the uncovered foundation (2), and the excavation trench (3). Graphics: Hubert Augustyniak.

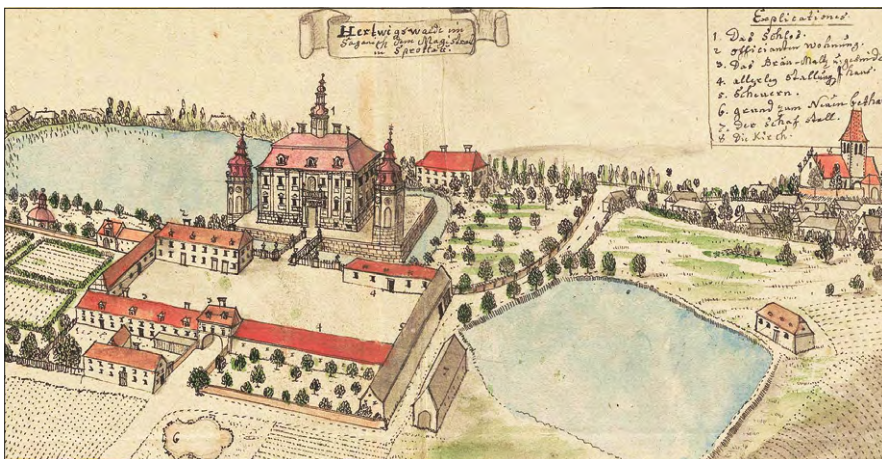


Fig. 5. The Renaissance manor in Chotków in a by F.B. Werner's (1758) drawing from *Topographia Silesiae* (1758). On the right side of the manor, the discussed building is likely depicted.

An engraving of Chotków from around the mid-18th century by F.B. Werner (1758: 336–337) offers some interesting findings. It appears that the building in question is visible in the upper part of the engraving, situated between the palace of the von Prosskau family and the church. The two-story structure, featuring five window bays, is topped with a hipped roof covered with tiles (Fig. 5). Unfortunately, none of the other known historical depictions of Chotków show any remains of the defensive site in question, which may suggest that it was already in ruins at that time. The site, as revealed from aerial observation (Fig. 2), is shaped like a truncated oval cone, raised approximately 1 metre above the current ground level (Fig. 4). The former moat is also clearly visible, now overgrown with blackthorn. The plateau of the site itself is roughly quadrilateral in shape, distinctly widened on the northern side.

Active remote sensing

The next stage involved geomagnetic surveys using a single-sensor magnetometer, PMP 5–6, with an accuracy of 0.1 nT. Increased geomagnetic readings at the level of 49775 units were obtained locally in the southern part of the site. However, due to the use of bog iron ore in the construction of architectural remains throughout the entire complex, these results are difficult to interpret unequivocally.

At the same time, ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys of the site were carried out. Their purpose was to detect any possible structures within the area and to plan an excavation that would cover the interior². Unfortunately, these surveys did not yield clear, verifiable results that could provide information about the remains of interior structures or allow for their precise location in the field. No discernible underground structures were observed that could be identified as remnants of buildings or constructions (Fig. 6). It may be necessary to repeat the surveys using equipment with different parameters. Contributing factors could include the dense vegetation covering the interior of the site, as well as significant terrain damage observed in the form of looting pits. Transformations that occurred after the site's original function ceased – related to its use for agricultural activities – may have also had an impact.

² The ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey was conducted using a RAMAC GPR unit by the company MALA. A shielded antenna with a frequency of 250 MHz was used (to eliminate interference caused by electromagnetic wave reflections from existing above-ground objects – walls, ceilings, and other structures). The average penetration depth was approximately 5–8 meters. The survey grid – parallel lines spaced every 2 meters (denser in some areas where research conditions allowed) – was created for both magnetometer and GPR work. The survey was carried out by Janusz Osowiec, Wrocław.

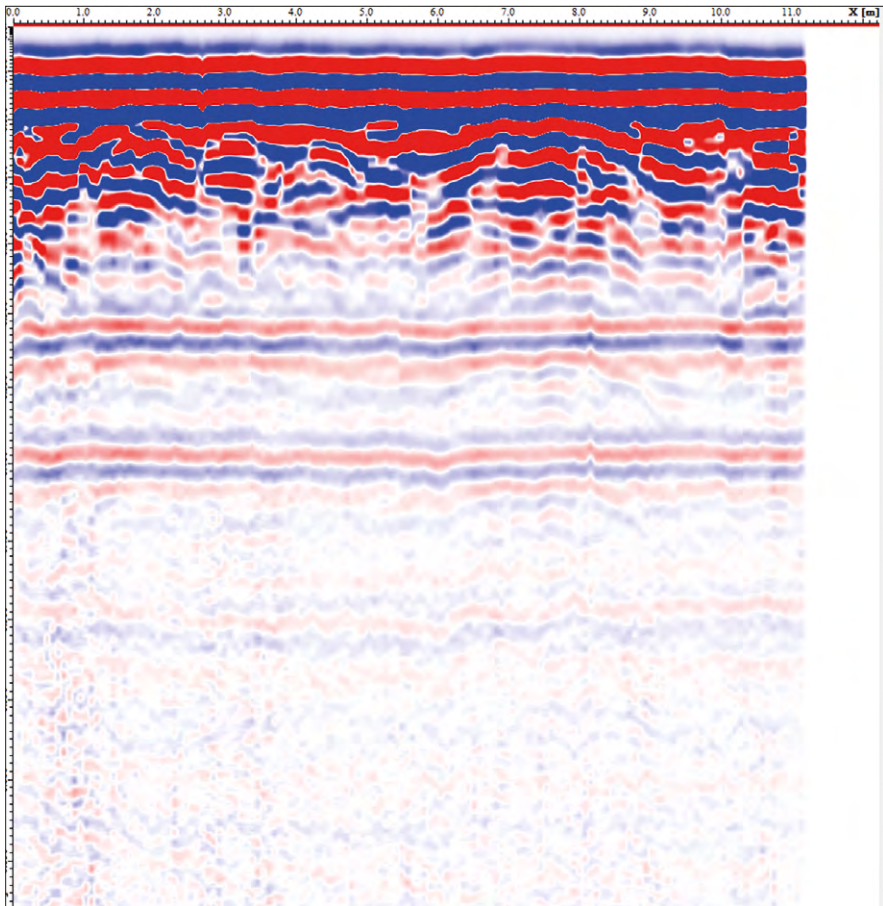


Fig. 6. Results of ground penetrating radar (GPR) prospecting of the east section of the complex, performed in 2021. Graphics: Janusz Osowiec.

Surface survey and archaeological excavations

An important part of the work carried out was the surface survey of the entire area using metal detectors. The aim was not only to recover metal artefacts but primarily to clear the site of metal debris prior to the planned geomagnetic and ground-penetrating radar surveys.

The results of this work must be considered somewhat disappointing. The survey was significantly hindered by the heavy littering of the site's surface and the interference caused by the use of ferromagnetic bog iron ore blocks as building material by the builders of the residence in question. Although several dozen metal objects

were recovered, over 90 percent of them consisted of fragments of iron bars, amorphous metal lumps, or other iron objects of similar characteristics, whose purpose cannot be determined today; nor is it possible to date them.

The final stage of work involved trial excavations covering an area of approximately 12 m² (6 x 2 m) within the courtyard of the residence, with the aim of also identifying any potential remains of accompanying structures adjacent to the complex (Fig. 4). The excavation trench was located in the eastern side, where a rectangular element measuring 3.5 x 2 m was clearly added to the quadrilateral perimeter wall located at the top of the mound.

The primary goal of this excavation was to determine the function and chronology of the added element, as well as to address questions regarding the form, dating, and function of the perimeter wall surrounding the top of the mound. The work was carried out manually, using excavation layers approximately 0.1 m thick.

Analysis of stratigraphy

A trial excavation was conducted in the eastern sector of a small elevation, where the outlines of stone wall remnants forming a rectangular structure were discernible along the edges. These remains delineate a layout measuring approximately 12.5 by 20.0 meters, with the shorter sides oriented along the north–south axis.

The earliest masonry element identified is a section of wall uncovered within the trench, extending in a north–south direction. It was constructed using erratic stones, laid in segments with levelling courses maintained at intervals of 50 to 60 cm. On the face of the wall, these courses were accentuated with smaller stones arranged horizontally, which, in combination with larger boulders, produced a distinctive surface texture. The wall was built within a shuttered trench. The stonework was bonded using a lime-sand mortar of a creamy-yellow hue, medium hardness, and containing visible clumps of unslaked lime up to 10 mm in diameter.

The wall segment exposed during excavation represents a remnant of a larger architectural complex, currently forming the outline of a modest elevation, and measuring approximately 12.5 by 20.0 meters. It constitutes part of the foundation of the eastern wall of the structure. The absence of architectural detailing and ceramic building material precludes a precise chronological attribution. Nonetheless, the construction technique suggests a medieval dating, most likely the 14th or 15th century.

The foundation walls uncovered during the course of the investigation suggest that they may represent the lower sections of a formerly enclosed masonry perimeter. Access to the interior of this structure appears to have been from the east and was, during the second construction phase, reinforced by a small projection



Fig. 7. 3-D scan of relics of the castle. Graphics: Piotr Domagalski.

(*avant-corps*) that housed the drawbridge span. The perimeter walls likely enclosed a modest residential building occupying the southern part of the complex, while the northern section may have functioned as a service or economic courtyard.

This type of defensive layout existed in Silesia from the 14th century onward. It is observable in the earliest parts of castles such as Chrzelice, dating to the second half of the 14th century (Legendziewicz 2013: 90–91); Chojnik, circa 1400 (Chorowska 2003: 92); and Namysłów, from the end of the 14th century (Lasota, Małachowicz 2019). This scheme was also replicated in noble residences. Architectural remnants reflecting such a layout are preserved in the walls of the castle at Miłaków, likely built in the second half of the 15th century (Legendziewicz 2017: 49–50), and in the residence house at Czarne near Jelenia Góra, constructed before the mid-16th century (Chorowska 2003: 175–176).

It appears that the prototype for the *avant-corps* featuring a gate and drawbridge should also be sought among the ducal castles of Silesia. In these structures, gateways were often reinforced with buildings of decorative architectural form. Such a solution was employed between 1387 and 1388 in the tower of the Upper Castle in Opole (Legendziewicz 2019: 29). The most direct model for the residence at Chotków seems to be the ducal castle in Koźuchów, where a gatehouse with a drawbridge was likely constructed at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries (Legendziewicz 2024: 83–84).



Fig. 8. Remains of the outer wall visible in the north (1), west (2) and southern part of the seat. Photo: Arkadiusz Michalak.



Fig. 9. Remains of the foundation wall with adjacent avant-corps. Outline (1) and section (2). Photo: Hubert Augustyniak.

During the excavation, a total of 14 stratigraphic layers surrounding the perimeter wall on both the western and eastern sides were explored. Of these, 10 layers can be classified as either backfill deposits or associated with the formation of the motte (artificial mound). The exposed perimeter wall, approximately 0.6 meters thick, was built using erratic stones laid in sections with levelling courses 0.5 to 0.6 meters high, bonded with a cream-yellowish lime-sand mortar. This wall likely represents the foundational remains of either a tower or a perimeter wall; current research does not allow for a definitive determination (Fig. 10).

The wall exhibits clear evidence of deliberate dismantling, possibly corroborating written sources that describe its conversion into agricultural or utility structures. Chronologically, the construction can only be tentatively attributed to the 15th century based on architectural characteristics.

The foundation footing was reached at a depth of 3.5 meters below the present courtyard level. Significantly higher in the stratigraphy, sterile calcareous layers devoid of anthropogenic material were recorded; these were likely used in the construction of the mound. Only in the eastern section of the trench was a backfill layer that contained the vast majority of the artefactual material, most likely associated with a later transformation of the site.

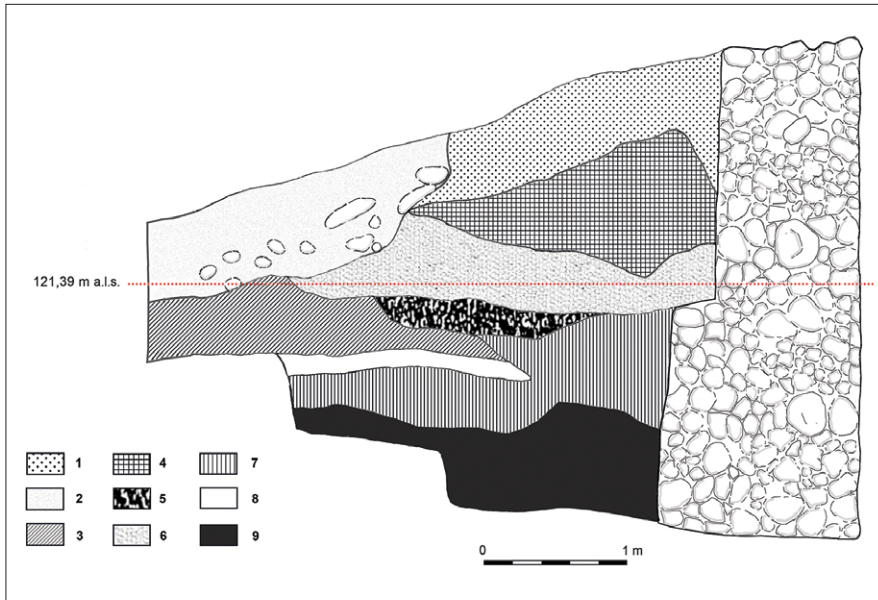


Fig. 10. Chotków, south section of the excavation trench. Key: 1 – Dark brown and gray humus with stones; 2 – Brown, slightly clayey humus with gray humus; 3 – Brown-gray mottled humus with a large amount of organic remains; 4 – Light gray sand with rusty concretions (iron nodules); 5 – Brown-gray sand; 6 – Dark yellow clay with an admixture of sand and rusty concretions; 7 – Gray-brown, slightly clayey humus with an admixture of sand; 8 – Orange-gray clay; 9 – Light brown clay. Drawing: Monika Kaczmarek.

Analysis of the artefacts

During the course of the investigation, a total assemblage of artefacts was recovered. The bulk of the material consisted primarily of pottery fragments (863), followed by tile fragments (177), glass (10), iron items (9), construction ceramics (45), and animal bones (28).

Among the recovered fragments of architectural ceramics were pieces of bricks (20 fragments), roof tiles (11 fragments), floor tiles (5 fragments), and amorphous lumps of daub with no identifiable impressions or function. Two of the recovered brick fragments bore fingerprint impressions indicative of association with Gothic bricks with finger marks (Dziedzic et al. 2004: 90). However, the preserved dimensions of these fragments are insufficient to reconstruct their original size. The roof tiles can be unequivocally identified as post-medieval plain tiles, a form commonly used at urban and defensive sites (Dziedzic et al. 2004: 90, Table XV:1).

The pottery from Chotków were classified using the typology developed for the castle at Krosno Odrzańskie by P. Dziedzic and S. Kałagate (2002). A minor

proportion of the assemblage comprised greyware, with 154 fragments assigned to this group. These include pieces of kitchenware ceramics characterised by relatively coarse surface textures (typical of Technological Group II) (constituting approximately 60% of this group, or 92 fragments) – as well as tableware ceramics, distinguished by more refined temper selection and thinner, sometimes burished walls (Group III) (representing 40%, or 62 fragments). Due to the high degree of fragmentation, precise identification of vessel forms is inconclusive (Fig. 11).

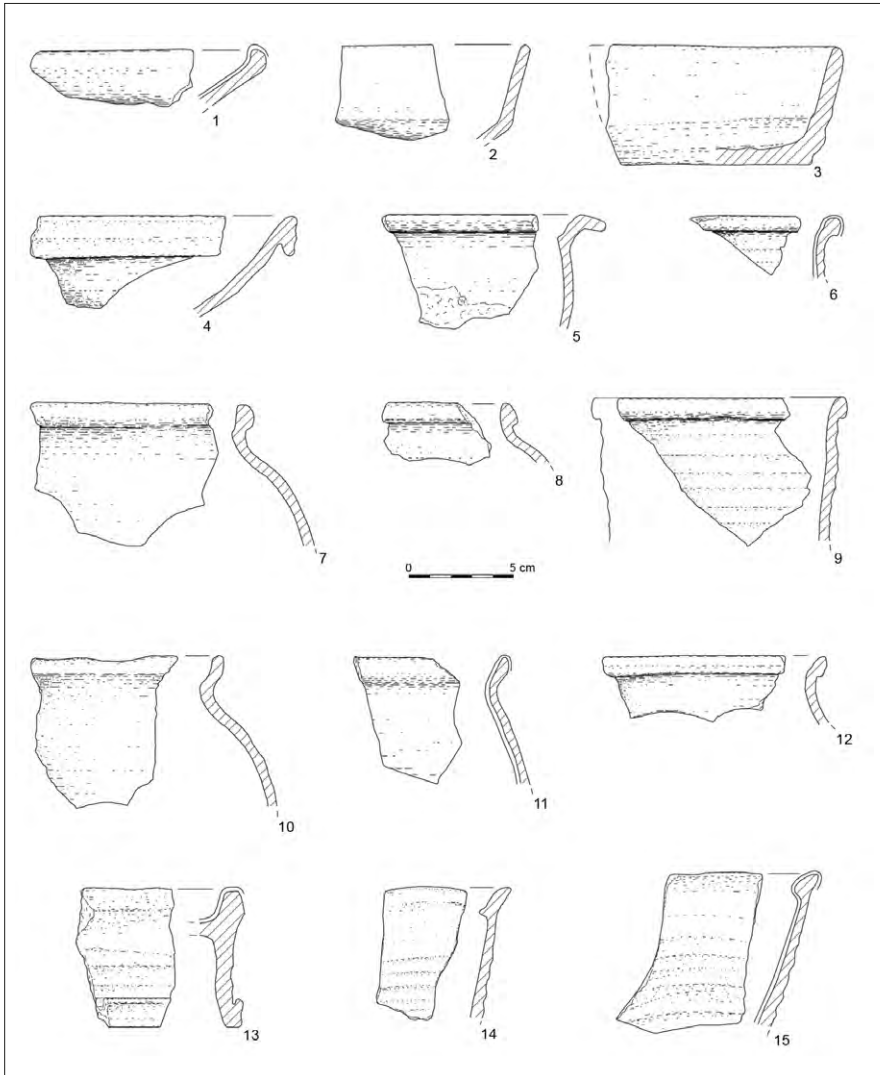


Fig. 11. Selected pottery discovered in Chotków. Drawing and photo: Hubert Augustyniak.

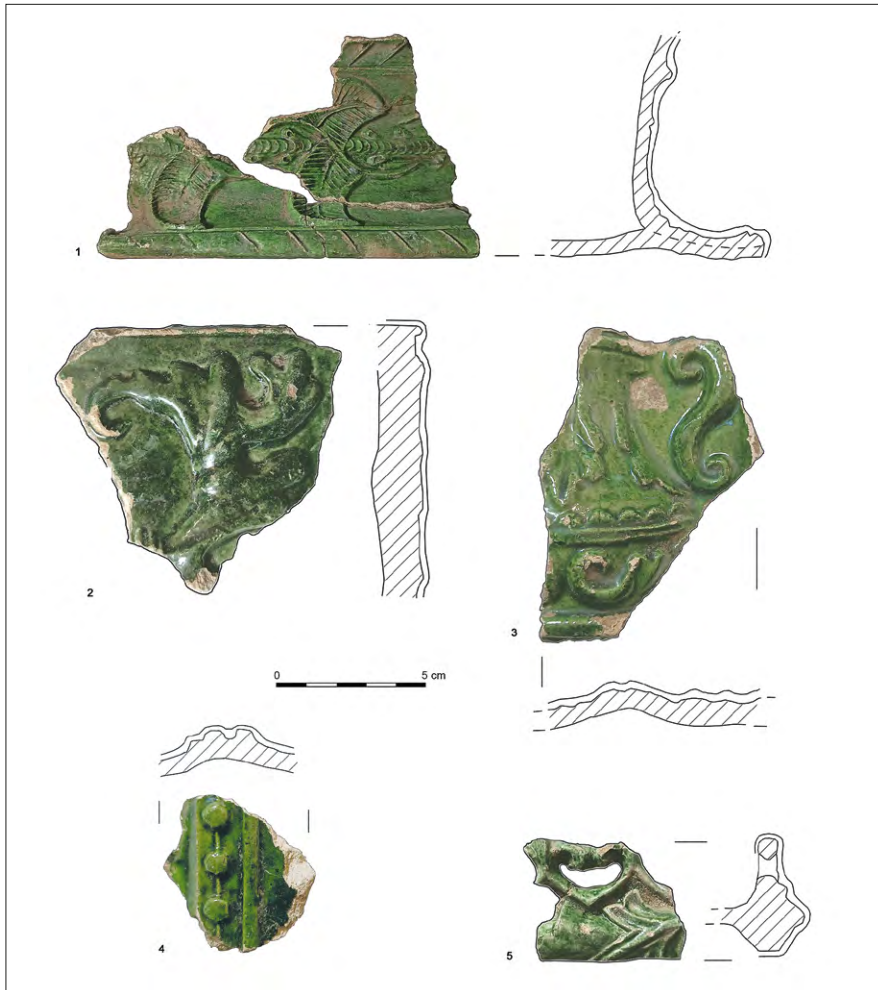


Fig. 12. Selected tiles discovered in Chotków. Photo and drawing: Hubert Augustyniak.

Notably, fragments of cooking pots with thickened, outwardly flared rims and pronounced lid notches (Group XVII – at least 32 fragments) were predominant. These forms are known from the second settlement level at the Krosno castle, dated to the late 14th to early 15th century (Dziedzic, Kałagate 2002: 95). A minimum of 10 fragments can be linked to Type III jugs, also documented at Krosno. It appears highly plausible that a significant portion of the undecorated and morphologically indistinct ceramics may derive from a later phase of the site's occupation. Greyware ceramics were, after all, in use until as late as the 17th century (Malinowski, Kałagate 1999: 73).

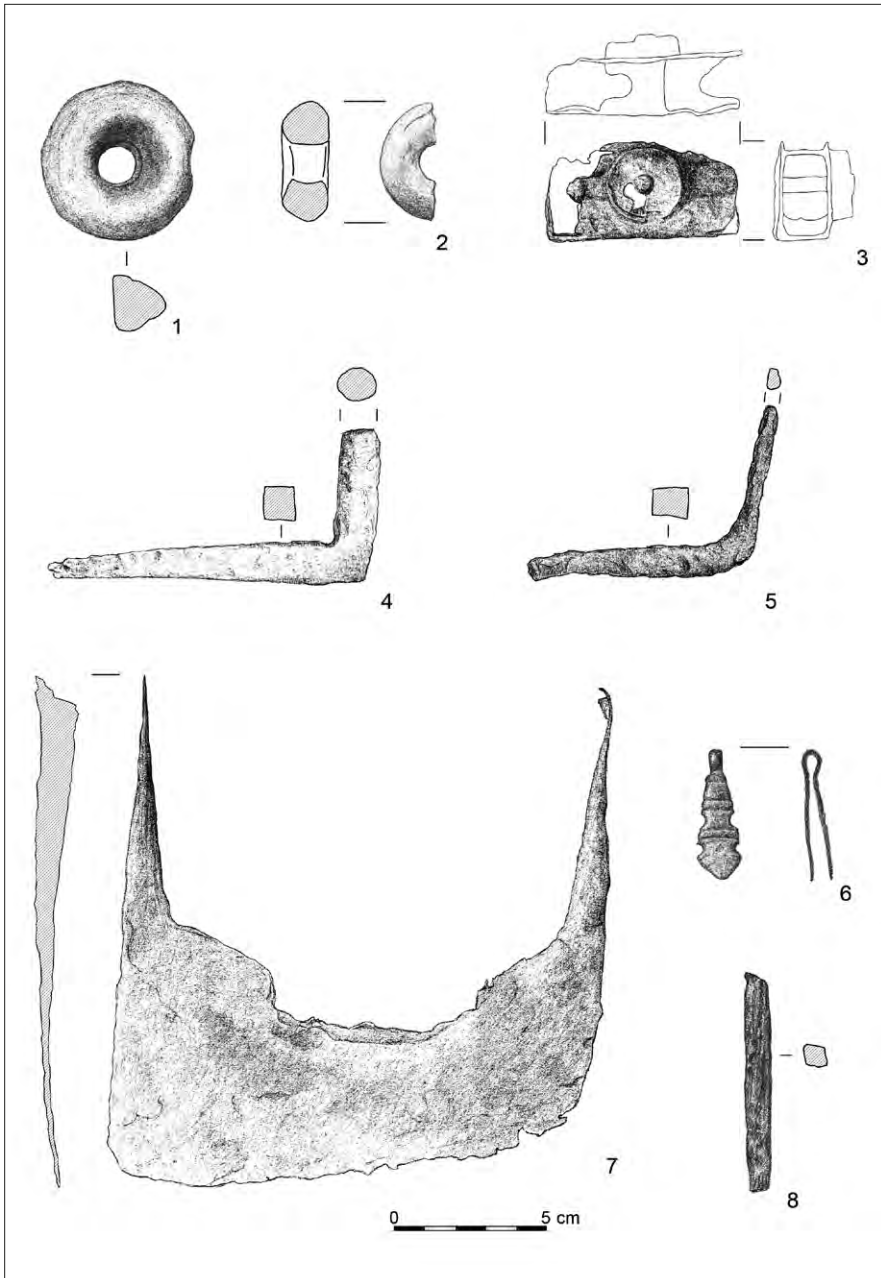


Fig. 13. Selected metal and clay artefacts discovered in Chotków: spindle whorls (1–2), iron padlock (3), hinge hooks (4–5), copper-alloy loop (6), shovel ferrule (7), iron bar (8). Drawing: Anna Sabak-Stachowiak.

Only three fragments associated with Group IV (glazed greyware) were recorded, though vessels belonging to this group are generally rare. Due to the favourable properties of greyware ceramics, these vessels did not require additional glazing.

Group V is the most numerously represented within the assemblage. Within this group, fragments were identified as fired in a reducing atmosphere using either ferruginous clays (subgroup A) or kaolinitic clays (subgroup B). Subgroup A comprises 200 fragments, while subgroup B includes 403 fragments. These represent various vessel types, including jugs, cooking pots, bowls, and tripod pans.

Group VI, comprising vessels manufactured using both technological traditions mentioned above, includes a total of 14 fragments. Additionally, 25 fragments of glazed redware ceramics were assigned to subgroup A – 7 glazed on both surfaces and 18 glazed only inside – while subgroup B consists of 81 fragments, including 70 glazed externally and 11 glazed on both surfaces.

Among the vessel fragments, particularly notable are the slender, ovoid cooking pots, both with and without handles, typically featuring flat bases. These vessels were most likely used for storing and preparing various types of food, as suggested by the presence of soot, discolouration, and burnt residues on the surfaces of several fragments. A distinguishing feature of the assemblage – also indicative of its chronology – is the relatively low frequency of vessels glazed on the interior. A majority of the vessels exhibit decoration, most commonly in the form of shallow, circumferential grooves covering substantial part of the surface.

Analogous vessels have been recovered from a well on Lisowskiego Street in Zielona Góra, dated to the 17th century (Dziedzic 2002: 240–241), and from the fill of Feature 10 in Żagań, where they were found in association with a glass Willkomm goblet inscribed with the date 1609, thereby providing a secure 17th-century context for that assemblage (Dziedzic et al. 2004: Tables I–III). Based on these analogies, the analysed ceramic assemblage should be attributed primarily to the second half of the 16th century through the 17th century.

A distinctive element uncovered in at least several fragments consists of small bowls made of kaolinitic clay, fired in an oxidising atmosphere, and usually unglazed (Fig. 10.2–3). This form was in use both during the late Middle Ages and the Early Post-medieval period. Comparable vessels have been found in contexts such as those from Witków and Olszanica (Kałagate 1994: 173; Bober-Tubaj et al. 2004).

An intriguing, albeit small, assemblage of stove tiles was also recovered, with plate stove tiles clearly predominating (121 fragments), although bowl (13 fragments) and pot tiles (43 fragments) are also represented (Fig. 10.14–15). The collected fragments of bowl and pot tiles are predominantly unglazed, though a few glazed examples were also identified (Fig. 10.15). The pot tiles feature square openings and are made from well-fired kaolinitic clay, which results in a cream or light cream-coloured walls. These tiles are decorated with rounded grooves extending

almost to the base, and their rims are arched and inclined inward. Such forms are commonly found both in urban and fortified sites (Poklewska-Koziell 2022: Fig. 13; Kałagate 2023: Fig. 43).

The plate tiles are typically glazed with a lead-based glaze applied over a white slip. All were made from ferruginous clays and fired in an oxidising atmosphere. At least several decorative motifs can be identified, all of which appear to be related to floristic themes – primarily foliage with smooth or fringed edges (Fig. 12). These are mostly fragments of filling tiles, although corner and crown tiles are also present. No clear artistic inspirations have yet been identified in the material from Chotków; however, one fragment is certainly decorated with a candelabrum motif (Fig. 12.3).

Among the metal excavated finds, a decorative U-shaped bronze loop is particularly noteworthy. The lower part was shaped into a small eyelet. The front side of the object is broader and leaf-shaped, adorned at the top with decorative incisions, while the lower part features horizontal grooved ornamentation. The reverse side is narrow and bar-shaped (Fig. 13.6). This artefact (4 cm in high) appears to be associated with horse tack, most likely a loop fastening the end of a leather strap from the bridle. Such elements were typically placed near the buckle on a horse's bridle to prevent the loose end of the strap from whipping against the animal's head. Similar loops, both in form and function, are documented in early modern bridle fittings (Grancsay 1955: 7, cat. 43).

More difficult to date are two relatively flat clay spindle whorls discovered within the fill of the mound, near the *avant-corps* (Fig. 13.1–2). Both were made of clay fired in a reducing atmosphere, resulting in a grey coloration. One whorl is larger, measuring over 5 cm in diameter, while the second is smaller, preserved only partially, with an estimated diameter of 3 cm. Both pieces are decorated with circumferential grooves. These objects served as weights for spindles during the spinning of thread. This form of spindle whorl was in use during both the medieval and post-medieval period (Dziedzic et al. 2004: 87, pl. X:2,4,6; Kałagate 2023: 230).

Agricultural activity of the site is attested by the discovery of an iron, quadrilateral spade/shovel ferrule, measuring 15.6 cm in width, recovered near the moat area (Fig. 13.7). The ends of side arms of the fitting (16 cm in length) have circular nail holes for attachment to a wooden blade. The artefact represents a relatively universal form that could have been used in both the medieval and post-medieval period. Comparable fittings have been identified at abandoned village sites in the regions of Bohemia and Moravia (Krajčíc 2003: 138) and Picardy (Legros 2015: Fig. 41:181).

A hinge hook discovered in Chotków is associated with the construction of a building. Such hooks were driven into wooden frames, door jambs, or directly into the building's walls, serving as supports for mounting doors and windows. The specimen was uncovered in the area of the moat during metal detector surveys. It is shaped like an inverted L, featuring a vertical shank with a square cross-section, measuring 10.6 cm in length and 1.5 cm in width, and a circular pivot (4.7 cm in length) onto which a door

or window, fitted with a hinge, would have been mounted. The horizontal spike, which was driven into the frame, measures 10.6 cm in length and has a rectangular cross-section, tapering towards the end (Fig. 13.4). Based on its dimensions, it can be presumed that the hook was intended for mounting a door (cf. Krauskopf 2005: 59–60, pl. 6:1). Hinges of this type have been found both at fortified sites (Nowakowski 2017: 487, pl. 1:1, 3) and within urban locations (Dziedzic et al. 2004: 147, pl. XXII:3), in both medieval and post-medieval contexts. A second architectural element is a small L-shaped iron bar with a square cross-section along its entire length. This item is significantly smaller, measuring 7.7 cm in height and 6.0 cm in length (Fig. 13.5). Artefacts of this type were in use during both the medieval and post-medieval periods (Krauskopf 2005: pl. 4:2). Another find, also difficult to interpret functionally, is a square-sectioned iron rod preserved to a length of 7 cm (Fig. 13.8).

Of particular interest is a fragmentarily preserved iron padlock. It has a cuboid body with a cylindrical protrusion on the front face, which contains a keyhole for a hollow-shank key (Fig. 13.3). Such padlocks were used more frequently for securing chests and cabinets than for locking doors (Marciniak-Kajzer 2011: 121). A comparable examples were excavated in Gdańsk from layers dated from 15th/16th to 17th centuries (Trawicka 2020: 240; Janowski 2021: 78). Similar ones were also recovered from the graves of cemetery near medieval Church of St Nicholas in Łeba, Łęborsk county (Dąbal et al. 2021: 201–202, fig. 9:1–2). Another specimen was recovered during an underwater survey at Danków, Strzelce-Drezdenko County, among other items dated to the 16th–17th centuries (Chudziak et al. 2011: 63, Fig. 35:f). This type of padlock was popular throughout Central Europe, though it did not gain widespread use in all regions (Welker 2014: 176).

The artefacts from Chotków confirm that this site was occupied continuously from the late Middle Ages into the post-medieval period, with activities centred on domestic life, food preparation, heating, textile production, agriculture, and minor security needs. The mix of basic kitchenware, some decorated tableware, and domestic stoves suggests moderate prosperity, with no luxury goods but a clear concern for household comfort.

Conclusions

The interdisciplinary research conducted in 2021 represents only a preliminary stage in the investigation of this intriguing heritage site. Following the first season of fieldwork, many questions regarding its history remain unanswered. It is difficult to determine conclusively whether the uncovered wall encircling the summit of the mound constitutes the remains of a residence (tower house or small castle), or whether it represents a perimeter wall behind which internal buildings of the complex were located. Similarly, the quadrilateral extension (*avant-corps*) added

to the eastern side – dating from the second phase of the site’s use and revealed in the excavation trench – could plausibly be interpreted either as the remains of a gatehouse or as a bridge abutment connected with the parish church.

The small number of items recovered from the central courtyard suggests either limited use of the residence or significant destruction of its buildings. Based on the excavation results, the site appears to have been in use primarily during the 15th–16th centuries, although very little material from that period was actually recovered during the research. The investigation covered only the lower sections of the complex. The small quantity of pottery from the 15th and 16th centuries may suggest that the structure was levelled. This could have been related to the introduction of a new (possibly economic?) function. This hypothesis may be supported by the drawing of F.B. Werner, which depicts the building with two storeys and covered by a multi-hipped roof. At present, the site can, with a certain degree of probability, be associated with the von Nostitz family residence known from historical sources. However, the chronological relationship between the two known residential complexes in the village remains entirely unclear.

Further research is essential to better understand the layout and function of the establishment that once existed in Chotków. Regardless of its precise nature, it is beyond doubt that the site warrants legal protection through inclusion in the register of historic monuments.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Jerzy Adamowicz, the mayor of the Brzeźnica commune, whose initiative was the driving force behind this research. We also express our gratitude to Barbara Bielenis-Kopeć, the Lubuskie Voivodeship Monument Conservator, for the financial support provided for the project. Sincere thanks are due to the participants of the excavations in Chotków: Aneta Bogacka, Monika Kaczmarek, Hubert Augustyniak, and Paweł Stachowiak from the Archaeological Museum of the mid-Oder river Area. We were also supported in our fieldwork by members of the ‘Nadodrze’ Lubuskie Exploration Group: Jerzy Adamowicz, Tomasz Łuckiewicz, Michał Łukowski, and Dariusz Zajęc. Special thanks go to Piotr Domagalski, Żary, who generously provided 3D scans free of charge. We are grateful to Sławomir Kałagate, Zielona Góra, for his assistance in identifying the ceramic material. Valuable bibliographic suggestions were provided by Andrzej Janowski, Szczecin, and we obtained many important historical sources related to Chotków through the kind assistance of our colleague Karol Błaszczuk, Szprotawa.

FUNDING INFORMATION: Lubuski Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków w Zielonej Górze
THE PERCENTAGE SHARE OF THE AUTHOR IN THE PREPARATION OF THE WORK: AM 75%, AL 25%

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Streszczenie

Przeprowadzone w Chotkowie na Dolnym Śląsku badania archeologiczne miały na celu weryfikację istnienia i charakteru domniemanego założenia obronno-rezydencjonalnego związanego z rodem von Nostitz. Analiza źródeł pisanych wskazuje, że od XIV do XVI w. w Chotkowie istniały liczne kamienne wieże mieszkalne o cechach obronno-mieszkalnych, których dokładna lokalizacja pozostawała dotąd nieweryfikowana. Zastosowanie badań teledetekcyjnych i geofizycznych, w połączeniu z analizą kartografii archiwalnej, umożliwiło ustalenie lokalizacji kopca z czworobocznymi relikami murów, częściowo otoczonego dawną fosą. Prace wykopaliskowe odsłoniły pozostałości architektury, jednak dokładny charakter muru obwodowego i ryzalitu wymaga dalszych badań. Ograniczona ilość materiału zabytkowego, pochodzącego głównie z XV–XVI w., sugeruje krótki okres użytkowania obiektu lub późniejsze przekształcenia strukturalne, być może związane z nadaniem mu nowej, gospodarczej funkcji.

Słowa kluczowe: archeologia, historia, architektura, okres nowożytny, zamek, rezydencja, szlachta, kultura materialna

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