

## **The cultural identity of medieval Silesia: the case of art and architecture**

### **Abstract:**

The cultural identity of architecture and visual arts of the Middle Ages in Silesia can be analyzed in the following frameworks: 1.) the distinct formal features of local artwork; 2.) the specific content expressed through it. Macro factors (the type of materials and their availability) are important in architecture, as are architectural patterns and styles. Of greatest frequency in this context are brick buildings, with sandstone used for details. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century distinct and formal patterns of style in architecture took shape (such as the basilica form of town churches), as was the case with detailed construction and aesthetic solutions applied in walls and vaults. Factors shaping the specific nature of Silesian art were the influence of dominant styles (initially from the Czech state, later southern Germany, including Nuremberg), political contexts (affiliation with the Bohemian Crown) and religious ones (mostly the selection and popularity of patron saints).

### **Keywords:**

vaults, ducal tombstones, Piast dynasty, St Hedwig, St John the Baptist

The subject of Silesia's cultural identity in the Middle Ages, viewed from the narrow perspective of architecture and fine arts, has not had much scholarly attention devoted to it in recent decades, notwithstanding a few attempts to identify unique Silesian characteristics in certain groups of work or artistic genres. One obvious reason for this restraint may be to some extent the decision to disqualify texts which attempted to develop a more general approach to this subject. These texts, produced directly before the outbreak of World War II, were to various degrees burdened with nationalist or even racist ideals, and as a consequence their authors attempted to describe certain features specific to Silesian art within the framework of concepts such as nation (*Nation*), tribe (*Stamm*), tribal territory (*Stammesboden*, *Stammesgebiet*), cultural nationality (*Kulturnation*) and colonization (*Kolonization*).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The length restrictions imposed upon this paper make it impossible to examine here the work published in the pre-war period (and, partially, right after the World War II), which relate to the specific artistic image of Silesia. The most extensive of them, devoted to art from two pivotal periods – the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> centuries and 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries – was written by Dagobert Frey, *Schlesiens künstlerisches Antlitz*, [in:] *Die Hohe Strasse. Schlesische Jahrbücher für deutsche Art und Kunst im Ostraum*, vol. 1, ed. Gustav Barthel, Breslau 1938, pp. 12–45. A closer look on this subject was also presented by August Grisebach, *Die Kunst der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften*, Wien 1946, pp. 309–329, where in the chapter entitled *Schlesien und der Nordosten* we read about medieval art, see *ibidem*, pp. 309–316. In reference to architecture see Hans Tintelnot, *Die mittelalterliche Baukunst Schlesiens*, Kitzingen 1951, whose methodological assumptions were criticized in the review by Mieczysław Zlat 'Roczniki Sztuki Śląskiej', 1 (1959), pp. 155–161. Cf. also the critical characteristics of these and other pre-war German scholarly papers – Marian Kutzner, *Schlesische Sakralarchitektur aus der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts: zwischen allgemeinen Stil und regionalem*

However, starting from the assumptions of the geography of art and making use of analyses of artistic work that consider the historical and social contexts in which they were produced, we may in fact conduct a preliminary attempt to identify the specific characteristics of medieval Silesian art. To do this, we need to look for unique features which expressed or reflected the particular historical, civilizational and social processes that were prevalent within the examined region. The identification of such features is naturally a long-term process which may, in the end, produce a complex pattern of results: the uncovered features may not relate to the entire territory of the region or the wider spectrum of artistic culture equally and the intensity of such expressions may vary from piece to piece, and may be subject to changes or modifications in time, including – in the context of the history of art – evolutions that take place within a particular style period. We may, however, assume that certain specific formal-ideological entities, having once appeared in a particular moment, simply inspired other artists and were copied over a period of time. The cultural identity of a region, as expressed in art, is developed by drawing on local history and tradition. It is grounded in a particular group of features that allow local art to be easily distinguished from the art of neighbouring and more remote territories. Therefore, this study will not focus on incidental cases – even though they may document the public memory of particularly important historical figures – unless they are part of a more extensive system or series of representations. What is therefore of great significance is the presence of a certain repetitiveness (as regards formal or iconographic works); if a particular event or person from medieval Silesia is rediscovered and later presented as an element of local identity, this would be always done in relation to those later, non-medieval, times. Silesian historiographers, commissioners and artists of a modern era were in possession of extensive, mainly historic, material, based on which it was possible to shape the regional identity in a fully conscious manner.

Searching for identity in the art of medieval Silesia is undoubtedly exceptionally difficult. For example, for the period of Roman art it would be advisable to refrain from formulating any type of conclusion on the subject of regional specificity and, most importantly, on its role in the process of building a cultural identity. The reason for this is that there is a relatively small number of preserved monuments of art and architecture from the period of the 12<sup>th</sup> to mid-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the case of Gothic art it is necessary, it seems, to classify its manifestations as follows: 1.) those which became characteristic mostly as a result of an unplanned accumulation or repetition, and which are expressed on a typological, formal and stylistic rather than iconographic level; 2.) works which were intentionally constructed in order to give expression to phenomena related to the history and contemporary social and political situation of the region (which should be easily traceable in iconographic sources).

---

*Modus*, [in:] *King John of Luxemburg (1296-1346) and the Art of his Era* (Proceedings of the International Conference, Prague, September 16–20, 1996), ed. Klara Benešová, Prague 1998, pp. 167–168.

When it comes to fields such as construction and architecture and their decorative features, it is necessary to discuss macro-factors such as the type of building materials available and their accessibility. Architectural models and styles, usually coming to the region from distant lands, were subject to transformation not only on their way to the new location and after finding themselves in their destination (under the influence of active local artists), but also as a result of the way designers and builders had to adapt them in accordance with the type of building materials that were accessible locally. What was specific to Silesia was undoubtedly the issue of uneven distribution of building stone deposits. This resulted in brick becoming the dominant building material of Gothic architecture but simultaneously, with the popularization of brick constructions from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, they began to be abundantly adorned with stone elements (mostly sandstone) obtained from materials imported to central parts of Silesia from the west of the region and to its northern parts from the south. If one looks at the construction and architecture of medieval Silesia from the perspective of its neighbouring lands, it becomes obvious that the richness of stone details in Silesian brick buildings is one of their principal characteristics.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Silesia's neighbours we can usually observe the use of either slightly different materials or the same materials in different proportions. Because of this, the buildings of Greater Poland are mainly examples of brick architecture, at times enriched with artificial materials that were to replace stone; the architecture of Lesser Poland often combined brick and limestone, with contrasting colours and textures; in Lusatia and the region of Lubusz parts of buildings were sometimes constructed using lightly hewn natural stone blocks. Nevertheless, the boundaries between the territories where the aforementioned material compositions were used cannot be drawn with a clear line. From both the west (Lusatia and Saxony) and the south (Czech, Moravia) these boundaries are blurred, but the number of buildings of hammered ashlar grows larger the farther one moves away from the region of Silesia.

Of crucial importance for the development of architectural stylistic forms was the great construction boom of the 14<sup>th</sup> century which, to a large extent, determined the basic types and forms of architecture present in Silesia at the close of the Middle Ages. One indicator of the specificity of the Silesian architectural landscape of the Gothic era was usually the basilica form of parish churches which began to replace the earlier hall churches,<sup>3</sup> and which to a large extent remained unchanged until the end of the Middle Ages. The reduced number of architectural forms that were used at the time, influenced by

---

<sup>2</sup> Marian Kutzner, *Śląsk. Okres 1200-1350 roku*, [in:] *Architektura gotycka w Polsce*, Teresa Mroczo, Marian Arsyński, Warszawa 1995 (=Dzieje sztuki w Polsce, vol. 2), p. 1, p. 126; Mieczysław Zlat, *Śląsk. Okres 1350-1550 roku*, [in:] *ibidem*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Marian Kutzner, *Spoleczne uwarunkowania rozwoju śląskiej architektury w latach 1200-1330*, [in:] *Sztuka i ideologia XIII wieku*, ed. Piotr Skubiszewski, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1974, pp. 223–224, 229–232; *idem*, *Kościół bazylikowy w miastach śląskich XIV wieku*, [in:] *Sztuka i ideologia XIV wieku*, ed. Piotr Skubiszewski, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1975, p. 305; *idem*, *Śląsk. Okres 1200-1350*, pp. 130–131; *idem*, *Schlesische Sakralarchitektur*, pp. 134, 139–141, 152–153.

trends developed from the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the western and eastern part of the Reich, included, however, designs which, having been modified and adapted to local needs, became permanent elements of the Silesian construction style. These included, among others, the characteristic form of a polygonal elongated pier which accentuated the wall planes and a tunnel-like interior style (fig. 1–2), as well as using lesenes as final elements of wall articulation and, optionally, a shortened lesene underlay for rib bundles placed on walls (fig. 3). Extending cross-rib vaultings using lierne ribs and combining stellar-like vaults in the nave with tripartite vaulting in the aisles (fig. 4) became highly popular in Silesia.<sup>4</sup> From the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century net-like vaults also became characteristic of certain places (Legnica, Środa Śląska, Strzegom, Jelenia Góra) (fig. 5), which in various styles were applied until the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Opole, Świdnica, Dzierżonów), in naves, chapels and porches in cloisters. In the beginning of the period Parler in Prague was an important influence, but this was later replaced by inspirations from Saxony and Brandenburg. Compared to neighbouring regions, 14<sup>th</sup>-century Silesia saw a considerable growth in the number of figural carvings (corbels, bosses) placed in interiors, which to a large extent softened the austere character of architectural forms of the time (fig. 6). Outside of Wrocław – where this trend applied to the majority churches (except the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene and the Church of Saint Dorothy) – they may be observed, in the parish churches in Strzegom, Świdnica and Jawor, for instance.<sup>5</sup> The achievements of the period of ‘the golden bishopric’ of the 14<sup>th</sup> century undoubtedly shaped the local tradition, but they also resulted in the architecture of the following periods, which only duplicated formerly-developed solutions, being strongly traditionalistic.<sup>6</sup>

As far as fine arts are concerned, local characteristics regarding both style and form were developed mostly based on the strong political and administrative connection between Silesia and the Crown of Bohemia and, between AD 1300 and the outset of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the dominant status of Prague. This easy, two-way transfer of works, artists and formal novelties resulted in the fact that the Silesian art that developed was unique when compared to that of other territories that were not part of this political structure. It was influenced by Bohemian or Prague variants of, for example, the Parler style and the international Gothic style in sculpture and painting (fig. 7–8). At the same time, some features that are specific to Silesian art developed as a result of a local

<sup>4</sup> H. Tintelnot, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–180; M. Kutzner, *Kościół bazylikowe*, pp. 275–277, 287–288; Dalibor Prix, *Silesian-Bohemian Relations in the Medieval Architecture of the Luxembourg Period*, [in:] *Silesia - a Pearl in the Bohemian Crown. History - Culture - Art*, eds Mateusz Kapustka, Jan Klipa, Andrzej Koziół, Piotr Oszczanowski, Vit Vlnas, Praha 2007, pp. 162, 165–169; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Średniowieczna architektura sakralna*, [in:] *Leksykon architektury Wrocławia*, eds Rafał Eysymontt, Jerzy Ilkosz, Agnieszka Tomaszewicz, Jadwiga Urbanik, Wrocław 2011, pp. 45–48.

<sup>5</sup> Tadeusz Jurkowlaniec, *Wystrój rzeźbiarski prezbiterium kościoła Św. Marcina w Jaworze i dzieła pokrewne na Śląsku*, ‘Ikonotheka. Prace Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego’, 6 (1993), pp. 123–166; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Rzeźba architektoniczna XIV wieku we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 1999.

<sup>6</sup> M. Zlat, *Śląsk. Okres 1350-1550*, p. 146.

transformation process and drawing on external influences. This is evident in the case of characteristic forms of the 'Madonna on lions' style, which was not restricted to works depicting the subject of the Madonna only (fig. 9). Claims of its political, Czech genesis are probably too far-fetched;<sup>7</sup> what is certain, however, is that it became one of the more widespread artistic phenomena over the entire territory of Silesia in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was probably exported to places even further away. What should be noted in connection with this style is the formation, at the end of the century, of an extremely popular formal and iconographic structure of altarpieces, where the representation placed in the central panel (the coronation of the Madonna) is flanked by four Holy Virgins figures.<sup>8</sup>

The following century brought another important point of reference both for the economy as well as the forms of artistic expression in Silesian fine arts: the art of Franconia and Nuremberg. The growth of importance of familial and commercial connections, especially with the Wrocław patrician families, brought about a change of paradigm in Silesian art in the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The introduction of both foreign artists and their works to Silesia, together with the indirect impact of foreign art, was a crucial force in shaping the Silesian artistic landscape, most notably Silesian painting (fig. 10).<sup>9</sup> In this context, the impact of Nuremberg on Silesia in the late Gothic period naturally complemented (or perhaps amplified) another important factor – the location of Silesia and its capital on the 'High Road' leading to Cracow.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the role played by the art of Lesser Poland was significant, especially for the territories of Upper Silesia, but at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it also influenced the art of Lower Silesia, which is best illustrated by copies of the Cracow works of Veit Stoss (fig. 11).<sup>11</sup>

The traditional connection between Silesia, Cracow and Poland (which extended beyond art) was reflected in Silesian artistic iconography from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century until

<sup>7</sup> This was suggested by Robert Suckale, *Die 'Löwenmadonna', ein politischer Bildtyp aus der Frühzeit Kaiser Karls IV.?*, [in:] *Iconographica. Mélanges offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski*, eds Robert Favreau, Marie-Hélène Debiès, Poitiers 1999, pp. 221–229.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. for example Erich Wiese, *Schlesische Plastik vom Beginn des XIV. bis zur Mitte des XV. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1923, pp. 21–28, 58–62; Dagobert Frey, *Die Kunst im Mittelalter*, [in:] *Geschichte Schlesiens*, Bd. I, *Von der Urzeit bis zum Jahre 1526*, ed. Hermann Aubin, Breslau 1938, pp. 462–464; Zofia Białłowicz-Krygierowa, *Studia nad snycerstwem XIV wieku w Polsce*, part 1: *Początki śląskiej tradycji ołtarza szafowego*, Warszawa-Poznań 1981; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Art in Silesian Duchies and in the Lands of Bohemia in the Period of the Luxembourg Patronage. Between Complicated Neighbourhood Relations and Complete Acknowledgement*, [in:] *Silesia - a Pearl in the Bohemian Crown*, pp. 131–132.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jacek Witkowski, *Gotycki ołtarz główny kościoła Świętych Piotra i Pawła w Legnicy*, Legnica 1997; Anna Ziomecka, *Malarstwo tablicowe na Śląsku*, [in:] *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce*, vol. 1: *Synteza*, eds Adam Labuda, Krystyna Secomska, Warszawa 2004, pp. 229–232, 238–241, 246; Robert Suckale, *Die Erneuerung der Malkunst vor Dürer*, Petersberg 2009, vol. 1, pp. 104, 250, 382, vol. 2, pp. 24–29.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Romuald Kaczmarek, *Wrocław w sieci. Uwagi na temat artystycznych powiązań miasta od początku panowania Luksemburgów do końca epoki Jagiellonów*, 'Quart', 4/26 (2012), pp. 22, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Mieczysław Zlat, *Sztuki śląskiej drogi od gotyku*, [in:] *Późny gotyk. Studia nad sztuką przelomu średniowiecza i czasów nowych*, Warszawa 1965, p. 178; Anna Ziomecka, *Wit Stosz a późnogotycka rzeźba na Śląsku*, [in:] *Wit Stosz. Studia o sztuce i recepcji*, ed. Aleksander S. Labuda, Warszawa-Poznań 1986, p. 144n.

the outset of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the person of Saint Stanislaus, who, together with Saint Wenceslaus, the patron of Bohemia, was one of the most famous local patron saints, together with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Hedwig of Silesia.<sup>12</sup> In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the circle of traditional patron saints was extended by two saints of Nuremberg – Sebalduš and Laurentius – who were depicted on several Wrocław epitaphs and altarpieces. This was a conspicuous sign of the aforementioned shift in the main economic and cultural trends of the time. Of all the saints that were popular subjects of central European medieval iconography, it was John the Baptist who enjoyed the greatest interest of Silesian artists. There is a logical justification for this: John became the patron of the Wrocław diocese in AD 1000. The saint's image appears both in places that typically contained such artistic representations and in works whose function was to represent the diocese, the cathedral chapter or the cathedral itself (which actually housed St John's relics following their donation by Charles IV). Although the saint was usually presented in a traditional manner, what was unique about his representations was the fact that he was incorporated into three-member altarpiece figural groups, presented together with patrons of other churches or chosen as an individual patron. Remarkably, the way St John's image is used in the municipal iconography of Wrocław is completely non-standard. It was first manifested in the representation of the Saint placed on the municipal seal from 1292. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards what begins to dominate – *pars pro toto* – is the representation of the Saint's head on a platter. This representation was probably inspired by a skilfully carved relief situated under an oriel of the town hall chapel (1356–58). In the following century, the image became widely popular: it was placed on keystones of vaults and church facades, private homes, as well as in the Great Hall of the Wrocław town hall (fig. 12 a-b). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century it spread even further but its meaning was also extended: John's head was included in heraldic representations placed on coats-of-arms. Finally, it was placed in the central field of the new coat-of-arms of Wrocław, approved in 1530.<sup>13</sup>

A most unique status was granted in all of Silesia to Saint Hedwig, probably for the reason of her personal connection with the region she was introduced to as the wife of Henry I the Bearded.<sup>14</sup> Hedwig was included in a small group of most eminent and pious women of mid-13<sup>th</sup>-century Poland, and surely her unique charisma and cult that

<sup>12</sup> Cf. works devoted to the issue of patrocinium: Werner Marschall, *Mittelalterliche Heiligenkulte in Schlesien*, [in:] *Heilige und Heiligenverehrung in Schlesien*, ed. Joachim Köhler, Sigmaringen 1997, pp. 19–30, and Winfried Irgang, *Die politische Bedeutung der Heiligen im Mittelalter (Wenzel, Adalbert, Stanislaus, Hedwig)*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 31–50.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Knötel, *Siegel und Wappen*, [in:] *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Breslau*, ed. Ludwig Burgemeister, Breslau 1930 (=Die Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Niederschlesien, vol. 1, part 1), pp. 28–35; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Znaki czeskiego panowania w średniowiecznym Wrocławiu*, [in:] *Wrocław w Czechach, Czeši we Wrocławiu. Literatura - język - kultura*, eds Zofia Tarajło-Lipowska, Jarosław Malicki, Wrocław 2003, pp. 207–220.

<sup>14</sup> Recently: Winfried Irgang, *Die heilige Hedwig – ihre Rolle in der schlesischen Geschichte*, [in:] *Das Bild der heiligen Hedwig in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, eds Eckhard Grunewald, Nikolaus Gussone, München 1996, pp. 23–38.

developed immediately after her death (1243) resulted in the fact that she was soon canonized (1267). Her earliest, and famous, representations in Silesian art date to the period following the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, but from then on they come in all typologies and genres – from miniatures of the so-called *Pictorial Legend of St Hedwig* (1353) illustrating the text of her *Vita maior*, through painted representative images carved in stone and destined to decorate the facades and interiors of sacred buildings (the Castle Church at Brzeg, ca. 1370; the Castle Chapel at Lubin, ca. 1350; Wrocław Cathedral, ca. 1350/60 and ca. 1468, the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 1380/90), wooden cult figures (e.g. in Trzebnica, ca. 1450/60) and figural groups of saints in altarpiece central panels (the oldest one from ca. 1380 from Pełcznica), representations of Saint Hedwig together with other individual patron saints on pictorial epitaphs, series of paintings in church altarpieces or walls, and finally the saint's representation in goldsmithery (including reliquaries). The process of shaping Silesian identity by means of Saint Hedwig's iconography was based on the strategy of filling the cultural landscape with the saint's representations.<sup>15</sup> Two artistic works exist that are pivotal examples of this intensive and purposeful activity. The aforementioned *Pictorial Legend* ordered by Duke Louis I of Brzeg was developed on the basis of a well-thought-out concept, where Hedwig plays a key role in the history of Silesia and the Piast dynasty. A historical approach (the history of the Piasts and the battle of Legnica in 1241 concluded with the death of Henry II – the so-called 'absolute time') makes a clear statement on the status of Saint Hedwig by comparing her to Virgin Mary (fig. 13).<sup>16</sup> The accuracy of her choice is confirmed by her canonization, which gives the saint not only universal significance, but also strengthens the dynasty. From a historical point of view, the Silesian past is ultimately included in the overall Salvation plan, where Virgin Mary plays a special role. However, what needs to be highlighted is the fact that the impact of the manuscript with *Pictorial Legend* (although it was copied many times) must have been restricted. Nonetheless, it is one of the most important pieces of evidence that matters of local history were reflected upon by the members of the dynasty (this was to some extent probably attributed to Cistercians) and was an attempt to highlight its universal message.

Another work that may be viewed as especially intriguing in the context of the issue of regional identity is a herm reliquary of Saint Hedwig from the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross, whose base contains a pair of shields with coats-of-arms of Silesia and Poland (fig. 14). They communicate, by means of heraldic language, Hedwig's descriptions

<sup>15</sup> Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa, *Fundacje artystyczne księcia Ludwika I brzeskiego. Studia nad rozwojem świadomości historycznej na Śląsku XIV-XVIII w.*, Opole-Wrocław 1970; Romuald Kaczmarek, Jacek Witkowski, *Dzieje relikwii i relikwiarze świętej Jadwigi*, [in:] *Święta Jadwiga Śląska. W 750 rocznicę śmierci*, ed. Tadeusz Krupiński, Wrocław 1993, pp. 31–47, 59, 64–66, 77–82; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Das Bild der heiligen Hedwig. Zeugnisse in der Kunst vom 13. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Das Bild der heiligen Hedwig*, pp. 137–144.

<sup>16</sup> Such an interpretation was presented by A. Karłowska-Kamzowa, *Fundacje artystyczne*, p. 17. It was repeated by Dariusz Tabor CR, *Malarstwo książkowe na Śląsku w XIV wieku*, Kraków 2008, pp. 213–229.

contained in various texts devoted to the saint, including the papal bull of her canonization ('Polonorum patrona') and her *Vita minor* ('ducissa Slesie tociusque Polonie').<sup>17</sup> The fact that these representations are found in the Collegiate Church established by Henry IV the Righteous also seems to be a result of a conscious analytical reflection on the Church's history and figures of its duke-founder placed there.<sup>18</sup> However, in this case we are probably dealing with an attempt to highlight the universal and historical themes connected with the Piast dynasty by placing emphasis on its key figure, that is the canonized duchess-ancestor.<sup>19</sup>

Other events that had a very significant impact on the character of Silesian identity between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries as expressed in fine arts included the growing fragmentation of its duchies and the process of Silesia's incorporation to the Crown of Bohemia and the way it functioned thereafter. The dynamics of these changes may be observed on representative ducal tombstones,<sup>20</sup> the vast majority of which have survived until today. Figural sculptures alone commemorate a dozen or so representatives of nine various branches of the Silesian Piasts. This impressive number is therefore surely evidence of the fragmentation of territorial authority. However, the vast majority of these monuments are sculptures of rulers who were liegemen of the King of Bohemia. One could also wonder whether it was not in fact caused by another stimulus: the intention to commemorate the members of a once-mighty and independent dynasty with a long-standing tradition, which at the time was in a state of utter decline? Historical awareness was supported here by the contents of annals and chronicles. In the initial period of Luxembourg's expansion in Lower Silesia, the creation of tombstones of former sovereigns could be viewed as a manifestation of their political views. Centuries later, it is much easier for us to deduce this message from the content of the inscriptions placed on the tombs than from the form of the work. Praising the virtues of the young Duke Przemysł (Przemko) II of Głogów (d. 1331), with special attention devoted to highlighting his Polish character, may be properly understood only in the context of the death of the Duke, which coincided with the military annexation of Głogów by John of Luxembourg.<sup>21</sup> Dynastic and historical reasons appear to dominate later, which is proven by the fact that the foundation of the tombstone of the hero of the battle of Legnica, Henry II the Pious, took place almost 140 years following his death. At the same time, the battle

<sup>17</sup> W. Irgang, *Die politische Bedeutung*, p. 47; *idem*, *Die heilige Hedwig*, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> R. Kaczmarek, J. Witkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 66; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Kolegiata Krzyża Świętego we Wrocławiu jako fundacja Henryka IV Probusa. Impuls i następstwa - świadectwa ikonograficzne*, [in:] *Śląsk w czasach Henryka IV Prawego*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Karłowska-Kamzowa, *Fundacje artystyczne*, pp. 134–136.

<sup>20</sup> Janusz Kęmbowski, *Nagrobki gotyckie na Śląsku*, Poznań 1969; *idem*, *Pomniki Piastów Śląskich w dobie średniowiecza*, Wrocław 1971 (=Monografie Śląskie Ossolineum, 20).

<sup>21</sup> Romuald Kaczmarek, '*QVE DEDIT IN DONIS DEVS ET NATURA POLONIS...*'. *Kwestia identyfikacji i datowania jednej z płyt nagrobnych w Lubiążu*, [in:] *Visibilia et invisibilia w sztuce średniowiecza. Księga poświęcona pamięci Profesor Kingi Szczepkowskiej-Naliwajek*, eds Artur Badach, Monika Janiszewska, Monika Tarkowska, Warszawa 2009, pp. 375–390.

with the Tatars, which was referred to in the national legends and which is known to us from several medieval artistic representations, became a myth of the genesis of Silesia. However, from about the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century the dependence of the majority of Silesian lands on the Crown of Bohemia became a fact that was widely accepted and manifested. Although – to be honest – evidence of this fact in fine arts, mainly in heraldry, is known to us only from duchies that became directly subordinated to the Crown. Only in this context can we interpret the meaning of the tomb inscription of the last Duke of Wrocław, Henry VI (d. 1335) (fig. 15). There is no doubt that this vast collection of Piast tombstones was related with historical and dynastic interests showed especially by Duke Louis I,<sup>22</sup> which were most likely also familiar to monastic circles – although for quite different reasons.

---

<sup>22</sup> A. Karłowska-Kamzowa, *Fundacje artystyczne*, pp. 99–143.



Illustration 1. Wrocław, Church of St Mary Magdalene, the nave looking to the east.



Illustration 2. Brzeg, Church of St Nicholas, the nave vault looking to the east.



Illustration 3. Wrocław, former Franciscan Church of St Jacob, the north side of the nave viewing from the south aisle.



Illustration 4. Wrocław, Church of St Mary, view of vaults in the nave and in the aisles.



Illustration 5. Strzegom, Church of St Peter and St Paul, the nave vault looking to the east.



Illustration 6. Wrocław, Church of St Mary, view of vaults with sculptured corbels in the north aisle.

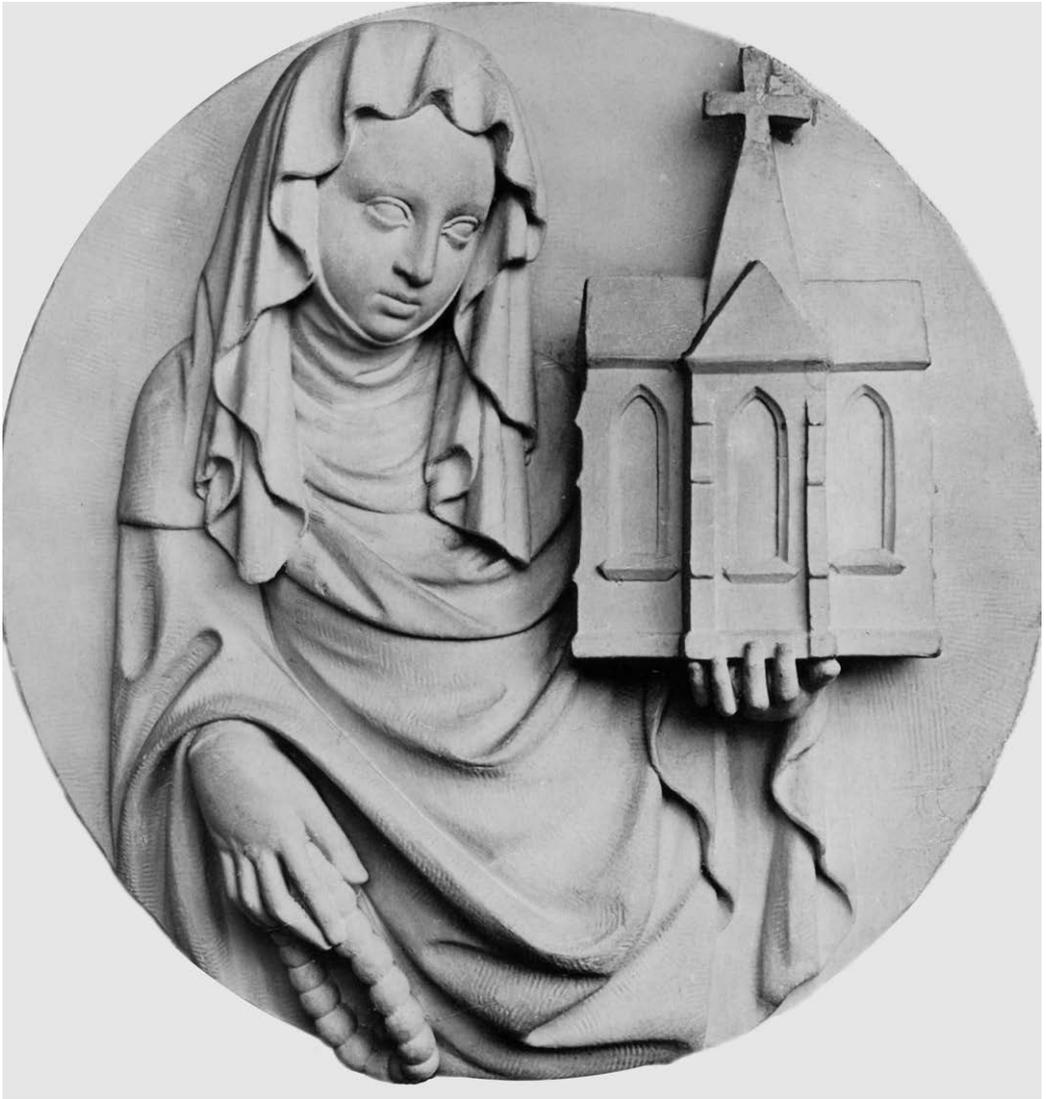


Illustration 7. Wrocław, Church of the Holy Cross, keystone with image of St Hedwig.



Illustration 8. Wrocław, sculpture of the Pietà, Church of St Elizabeth (lost).



Illustration 9. Madonna on lion from the Church of St Matthias in Wrocław (Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław).



Illustration 10. Hans Pleydenwuff, panel representing the Descent from the cross from former retablo (1462) of the main altar in the Church of St Elisabeth in Wrocław.



Illustration 11. *Dormition of the Virgin*, central scene of the retablo (1492) from the Church of St Stanislaus and St Wenceslaus in Świdnica.



Illustration 12 a-b. Head of St John the Baptist on a platter, sculptures from building facades in Wrocław.



Illustration 13. St Hedwig with the remains of her son, Henry II the Pious, on the battlefield near Legnica; woodcut from *The Legend of St Hedwig*, pub. Konrad Baumgarten, Wrocław 1504.



Illustration 14. Reliquary of the mandible of St Hedwig (1512)  
from the Church of the Holy Cross in Wrocław.



Illustration 15. Tombstone of Henry VI, Wrocław, Church of St Clara.