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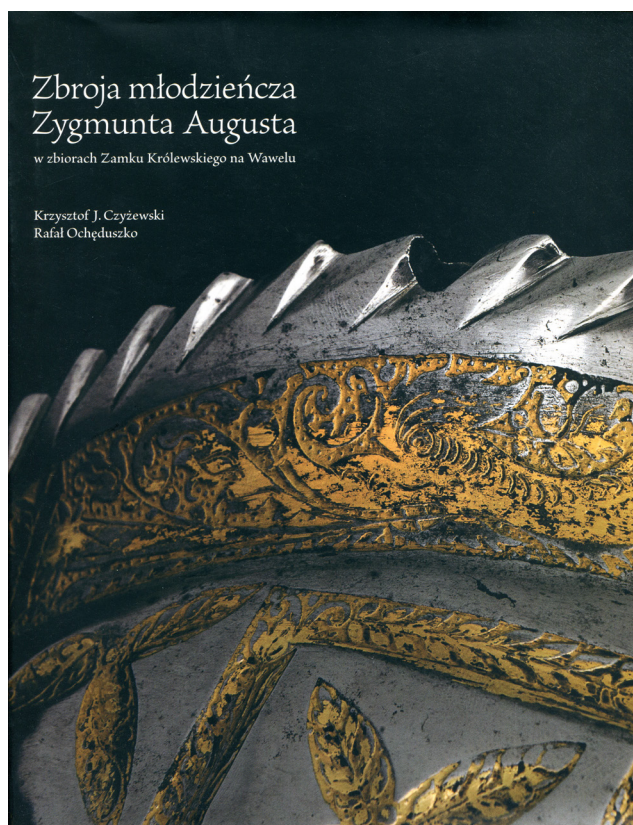
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**REVIEW OF KRZYSZTOF J. CZYŻEWSKI, RAFAŁ OCHĘDUSZKO,
ZBROJA MŁODZIEŃCZA ZYGMUNTA AUGUSTA W ZBIORACH ZAMKU
KRÓLEWSKIEGO NA WAWELU / ARMOUR FOR THE YOUNG KING SIGISMUND
AUGUSTUS IN THE WAWEL ROYAL CASTLE COLLECTION. WYDAWNICTWO
ZAMKU KRÓLEWSKIEGO NA WAWELU, KRAKÓW 2022, PP. 140**

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In 1939, Bruno Thomas, an Austrian art historian and museologist and prominent arms expert, published an article in which he argued that one of the sets of child armour identified with the Hungarian court of Louis II Jagiellon was, in fact, made in the workshop of Jörg Seusenhofer on the order of Ferdinand I of Habsburg.¹ Commissioned in 1533 in Innsbruck, it was supposed to be a gift for the then-teenage Sigismund II Augustus. The whole undertaking was connected with the young king's planned betrothal to Elisabeth, daughter of Ferdinand. However, as the marriage did not take place until 1543, the armour never reached the Polish court. It was kept in the Habsburg armoury until the signing of treaties at Saint-Germain-en-Laye (10 September 1919), Trianon (4 June 1920), and Venice (27 November 1932). As a result, a certain part of the historic substance belonging to the Habsburg monarchy was transferred to the Hungarian state, including the above-mentioned armour. In a completely different political



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¹ Thomas 1939.





Fig. 1. Armour of the Young King Sigismund Augustus from the Wawel Royal Castle Collection.
Source: Czyżewski and Ochęduszek 2022.

reality, on 17 February 2021, the armour was once again handed over, this time to a Polish collection (Wawel Royal Castle). In a sense, therefore, the intention of Ferdinand Habsburg was finally realised, but – it should be emphasised – the armour never became the property of Polish rulers or the Polish state.

Czyżewski and Ochęduszek's study, therefore, was written relatively soon after the Polish museum came into possession of this unique artefact – one of the few such sets of child armour known in Europe. Such armour specimens are rare, while the known examples demonstrate not only the outstanding skill of the artisans performing the tasks entrusted to them by the courts, but also the splendour that was to accompany the user (e.g., Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Hofjagd- und Rüstammer, A 109, commissioned by Maximilian I of Habsburg in 1512, Konrad Seusenhofer's workshop; or Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1977-167-29a-j, late 16th century, Northern Italian workshop). Children's armour continued to be used until the early 18th century, completely losing its potential military significance. Of its two original functions, combat (insofar as one can speak of participation in combat – for example a tournament – in the context of a boy of a few years old) and ceremonial functions, the latter lasted the longest.

The beginning of the 18th century was no longer eminently conducive to the use of even the most technically advanced 'feldharnisch' in battle, but this does not alter the fact that, as late as 1712, armour was made for the then five-year-old Spanish infante Luis, Duke of Asturias (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.3).

Krzysztof J. Czyżewski and Rafał Ochęduszek rightly emphasise that the making of richly ornamented armour required the involvement of many specialists, including artists responsible for the applied decorations (Fig. 1). Although the armourer-creator himself was responsible for the conception and construction of the individual elements, it was the goldsmiths and engravers who gave the work its final shape. In terms of typology and form, child armour resembled sets that could be assembled into suits of armour. In symbolic-functional terms, on the other hand, they are part of the typical representative weapons used to show the prestige of the ruler. They thus constitute a specific attribute of power. Armour emphasised the chivalrous qualities of the ruler or heir to the throne, but at the same time was a valuable collector's object, becoming an element of the composition of the owner's wealth (pp. 32-34). The authors of the study also alluded to this theme, emphasising Sigismund II Augustus' fondness for creating his own collection of armour.²

A considerable part of the study is filled with a discussion of the history of the child armour intended for Sigismund II Augustus and the circumstances of its creation. The information cited is, in principle, fairly well known. Indeed, the vicissitudes of the first nuptials between the Polish king and the Habsburgs have been recognised in literature as a manifestation of the complicated Jagiellonian-Habsburg relations in the first decades of the 16th century at least since the studies of Zygmunt Wojciechowski and Władysław Pocięcha.³ However, this does not change the fact that, thanks to their study's cumulative format, the Authors have deftly placed the moment of the armour's creation against the broader background of political events. In fact, they refer to this thread elsewhere in their study, emphasising that the armour was intended as a diplomatic gift and was ultimately used as such in 2021, albeit in a radically different context.

The second part of the publication is devoted to a detailed catalogue description of the artefact and contains numerous colour photographs (pp. 51-135). Such a study is not only important for its academic value, but accompanied by the additional photographic documentation, greatly facilitates the perception

² Żygułski Jr. 1975, 202.

³ Wojciechowski 1946, 218-257; Pocięcha 1949, 134-210; Pocięcha 1958, 7-224.

of individual elements of the armour. This is particularly important when the photographic documentation reveals numerous ornamental details that are difficult to observe even during a visit to the museum exhibition.

The publication by K. J. Czyżewski and R. Ochęduszek therefore deserves the attention of specialists

not only of the history of armaments, but also researchers of court culture and Jagiellonian-Habsburg relations at the turn of the Middle Ages and modernity. It goes without saying that in the relatively poor collections of Polish museums, the child armour intended for Sigismund II Augustus is an extremely valuable object, worthy of detailed discussion and recognition also in a broader historical context.

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