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REMAINS OF UNKNOWN EARLY ROMANESQUE BUILDINGS AT WĄCHOCK (CENTRAL POLAND)

In the years 1974—1976, during the course of archaeological and architectural explorations at the Cistercian abbey of Wąchock, Krystyna Białoskórska discovered fragments of pre-Cistercian buildings in the area occupied by monastery buildings from the years 1218—1239.¹

In the discoverer's opinion we have here the remains of a residential complex, consisting of two structures: a sacred one — i.e. a palace chapel (length of building, about 20.5 m., width, up to 17 m.), and a secular *palatium*. The latter building probably consisted of two elements of different width. Within the broader segment, a room 11.3 m. by 8.1 m. has been identified, while two chambers have been discovered within the narrower segment — one 10 m. in length, the other 8 m. in width. The two buildings were situated next to each other, the axis of the chapel being at right angles to the axis of the palace building.

If we accept that we are dealing at Wąchock with the remains of a residential complex, then — irrespective of the question of detailed reconstruction — we have to agree with Bialo-

¹ K. Białoskórska, *Wąchocka rezydencja księżca. Nieznany epizod z dziejów Polski wczesnopiastowskiej* [The Wąchock Ducal Residence. A Little-known Episode in the History of Early Piast Poland], "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", vol. XLI, 1979, No. 2, pp. 135 - 178 (with French summary).

skórska's assertion that "examined against the background of all known Polish palace complexes from the 10th and 11th centuries, the Wąchock *palatium* invites attention by virtue of its distinct character".² Firstly, it is more extensive; secondly, the two buildings are not placed along the same axis, as is generally the case in other structures of the type; thirdly, the chapel does not repeat the arrangement of the central building. Fourthly, if the palace consisted of elements of varying width, it did not duplicate the pattern of an elongated building — characteristic of Polish residential complexes.

The author links the origins of the Wąchock chapel with the abbey church of the Holy Trinity in Essen, in the shape it assumed during the course of reconstruction before the middle of the 11th century. She also allows the possibility of influences from the artistic background of other structures from the Rhineland-Meuse region, especially of Ottonian buildings (with recesses) of the first half and middle of the 11th century in the Essen-Werden area. As regards the shape of the palace building and its position in relation to the chapel, the author points to similar features of certain Carolingian and Ottonian residences (Ingelheim, Goslar, Paderborn).

In Białoskórska's opinion the stylistic features of the Wąchock construction date it to around the middle of the 11th century. She links its origin with Casimir I the Restorer, Duke of Poland (1034 - 1058), chiefly on account of his extensive contacts with the Rhineland area.

As regards the subsequent fate of the structure, the author puts forward the theory that at the end of the 11th century, the site on which the residence had been erected may have been granted to the Cracow bishopric. For within the confines of the monastery buildings a large pre-Cistercian cemetery has been discovered, founded, perhaps, towards the close of the 11th century. This would mean that by that time the chapel had assumed the functions of a parish church. Who might have used the palace remains an open question. However, in connection with the founding of the abbey in 1179, the palace was adapted

² *Ibidem*, p. 156.

to perform new functions — those of a temporary site for the monastery (the author believes she has found remains from the first Cistercian church within the palace area). The palace is meant to have been finally demolished after 1218, in connection with the erection of new monastery buildings.

Białokórska's paper provoked opposition from Przemysław Gartkiewicz, Andrzej Grzybowski, Robert Kunkel and Jarosław Widawski.³ Their main objection concerned the lack of documentary evidence to support Białokórska's arguments. Related to this were further objections, e.g. concerning lack of precision in describing the remains under study. Reservations were also voiced on the question of chronology: on what basis does the author date the cemetery to the turn of the 12th century? Are there really no archeological pointers for dating the remains discovered?

The results obtained by Białokórska, who gave her opponents an extensive reply,⁴ began to gain scientific currency in Polish art history circles. Not so long ago they were utilized by Klementyna Żurowska in her *Studia nad architekturą wczesnopiastowską*.⁵ It is true that she wrote about "the supposed palace at Wąchock", but, on the other hand, she did include Białokórska's Wąchock gallery reconstruction in her deliberations on the "gallery programme" in early Piast architecture.⁶

A new phase in the discussion on the Wąchock discoveries was marked by the views expressed by the historian Gerard Labuda.⁷ The starting-point of his thoughts on the subject was

³ P. Gartkiewicz, A. Grzybowski, R. Kunkel, J. Widawski, *Do Redakcji "Biuletynu Historii Sztuki"* [To the Editors of the "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki"], "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", vol. XLIII, 1981 [1982], No. 1, pp. 98 - 102.

⁴ K. Białokórska, *W związku z pismem w sprawie artykułu o wczesnopiastowskiej rezydencji w Wąchocku* [In Connection with a Letter Concerning the Article on the Early Piast Residence at Wąchock], "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", vol. XLIII, 1981 [1982], No. 1, pp. 103 - 110.

⁵ K. Żurowska, *Studia nad architekturą wczesnopiastowską* [Research into Early Piast Architecture], "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", vol. DCXLII, 1983, Prace z Historii Sztuki, Issue 17 (with French summary).

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 94 - 95, but compare p. 97.

⁷ G. Labuda, *W sprawie osoby fundatora i daty powstania najstarszych (przedcysterskich) budowli sakralno-palacowych w Wąchocku* [Concerning the Person of the Founder and Date of Erection of the Oldest

acceptance of the thesis concerning a residential complex at Wąchock, and the connection of the chapel with 11th-century architecture from the Rhineland-Meuse area. But he linked the origin of the palace with Judith-Maria, wife of Ladislaus I Herman, Duke of Poland (1081 - 1102), and sister of Emperor Henry IV, "who lived in Poland certainly during the years 1087/88 - 1105, and possibly even somewhat longer." In Labuda's view these attributes explain the purpose of erecting the residence. For Wąchock lay on the road linking the two chief residences of the ruler in those days — Cracow and Płock — and passing through the three landed estates comprising Judith-Maria's dowry. It is even possible that Wąchock formed part of Judith's "dowry". Irrespective of which of the two spouses endowed the residence, in the author's view Judith-Maria may have influenced the artistic shape of the building in accord with her aspirations. So that the dating of the structure would have to be altered to the close of the 11th century.

Labuda linked the decline of the residence with two factors: firstly, the division of the country between Ladislaus Herman's sons, following his death in 1102, and in consequence of which "Wąchock ceased to be a staging post on the road from Płock to Cracow"; and secondly, Judith-Maria's departure for Germany and the transfer of her property to the Church. The passing of Wąchock and its appurtenances into the hands of the Cracow bishops, Labuda dated to 1124, linking this — in general terms — with diocesan reform within the Polish Church.

Białokórska acknowledged Labuda's opinion as being "very significant, and perhaps even conclusive".⁸ On the question of shifting the dating of the building to the end of the 11th century, she wrote: "such a dating does not have to clash at all with the chronology which emerges from the architectural forms them-

(*Pre-Cistercian*) *Sacred and Palace Buildings at Wąchock*], "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", vol. XLV, 1983 [1985], No. 3/4, pp. 251 - 255 (with French summary).

⁸ K. Białokórska, *Kilka uwag na marginesie dyskusji o przed-cysterskich budowlach odkrytych w Wąchocku* [A Few Remarks on the Sidelines of the Debate Concerning the Pre-Cistercian Buildings Discovered at Wąchock], "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", vol. XLV, 1983 [1985], No. 3/4, pp. 256 - 258 (with French summary); here p. 256.

selves, since the prototypes indicated in my article set a terminus post quem only for the erection of the Wąchock residence, and although restricted in their influence to a relatively narrow time span (basically such influence did not extend beyond the second half of the 11th century), nevertheless they could still have been the subject of imitation towards the end of the century".⁹

A few reflections of a more general nature, on the sidelines of the discussion here reported. The issue of early Piast residential complexes is an unusually controversial one in the literature on the subject. The genesis of the forms of these structures has not yet been properly established. The sensational discoveries at Wąchock revealed the remains of buildings without parallel among Polish constructions encountered to date. This circumstance, along with the fact that Wąchock did not play a vital role in the organization of the early Piast state, represents an additional difficulty in interpreting the finds. Above all we must pin our hopes on a continuation of the research work at Wąchock — suspended, unhappily, in 1977. Further to this, publication of the entire research documentation will be essential — a *sine qua non* for continuation of this fascinating debate.

(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 257.