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A STUDY OF THE DEFENSIVE SYSTEM OF JELENIA GÓRA IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND TOPOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY

THE HUSSITE SIEGE

The following description of the Hussite Wars in the surrounding area can be found in late 18th century chronicles of Jelenia Góra (Hensel 2005, pp. 96–97):

Die jetzt folgende für ganz Schlesien traurige Zeit, war es auch für das Gebirge, und für Hirschberg. Die Hussiten, die im Jahre 1425 schon in Schlesien eingefallen waren, kamen 1426 auch ins Gebirge, wo sie in unserer Gegend den Kynast und Falkenstein vergeblich bestürmen. Im Jahr 1427 belagerten sie Lehnhaus vergebens, und stecken aus Verdruck darüber die Stadt Lehn in Brand; gingen vor Löwenberg, wo man aber die Brücke über den Bober zum Teil abgetragen hatte, und wo der eben ausgetretene Fluss sie hinderte, in die Stadt zu bringen. Hierauf wendeten sie sich nach Hirschberg und setzten dieser Stadt an dreien Tagen den 13ten, 17ten und 18 September dieses Jahres in verschieden Sturmen hart zu, wurden aber jedesmal durch die Tapferkeit der Burger zurückgeschlagen. Eben so gut hielt sich die Burg auf dem Hausberge, die damals in sehr gutem Verteidigungsstande gewesen sein muss, und das Bolkenhaus (am Bober bei Eichberg). Sie konnten nur das Schloss im Grünbusche (eine halbe Viertelmeile von der Stadt) und das Schloss auf Berge bei Boberrörsdorf (den man jetzt auch den Sechsstädterberg nennt) einnehmen. Da sie sahn dass ihre Wut gegen Hirschberg nichts vermochte, stecken sie die ganze Vorstadt in Brand und legte sie in Asche. Mehr Umständliches über die Hussitischen Unruhen zu Hirschberg lasst sich nicht auffinden, da

diese Begebenheit sehr ins Altertum trist und alle die nachmals darüber geschrieben haben, nur des hier angeführten im Allgemeinen Erwähnung tun¹.

From this short excerpt from the chronicles, we can draw some interesting conclusions about the fortifications around the town. Except the main Jelenia Góra castle, called Hausberg, there were three smaller points of defence located near the town (Fig. 2).

¹ The immediate future appeared to be bleak for Jelenia Góra and the surrounding area as well as the whole of Silesia. The Hussites invaded Silesia in 1425 and by 1426 they had expanded into the mountainous areas where they unsuccessfully besieged Chojnik and Sokolec Castles. In 1427 the Hussites besieged Wleń Castle but to no avail, so, enraged, they burnt and pillaged the town of Wleń and moved on towards Lwówek. However forwarned, the inhabitants of Lwówek had dismantled the bridge on the river Bóbr and the waters were too high to ford. Therefore they went towards Jelenia Góra and managed to destroy most of the city during three consecutive attacks on 13th, 17th and 18th of September 1427. All the assaults were heroically fought off by townsmen. The fortified manor house on the Krzywousty Hill and the Koziniec Castle were also able to defend themselves. Both of them have been evidently greatly reinforced then. In the end there were only two castles taken by the Hussites: the one on the Castle Hill in Grünbusch situated about a quarter of a mile in front of the city of Jelenia Góra and the so called Sechsstädterberg Castle situated on a hill near Siedlecin. Seeing that their continued hostility had not led anywhere, the Hussites in their frustration fired the suburbs of Jelenia Góra, turning them to ash. Information regarding the very ashes. More Hussite attacks on Jelenia Góra are hard to find because the contemporary sources that have survived are scarce and rather vague and undetailed.

THE TOWN OF JELENIA GÓRA

Jelenia Góra is located on the southwest of Poland, in the Jelenia Góra Valley (Fig. 1). The town is surrounded by mountain ranges of Karkonosze, Rudawy Janowickie and Kaczawskie Mountains. There are also lower ridges around Jelenia Góra – the Height of Rybnica and Łomnickie Hills (Kwaśny 1989, p. 8).

The establishment of Jelenia Góra took place probably in the 2nd half of the 13th century. The earliest document known which mentioned the citizens of Jelenia Góra was written in 1288 (Grünhagen 1886, No. 2060). The medieval town was located on a high river terrace near the mouth of the Kamienna River.

Because of its peripheral location in relation to other Silesian centres, along with being situated on the trade's route from Wrocław to Lusatia (Nowakowa 1951, p. 77), the town was provided with highly developed system of fortifications. Jelenia Góra was undoubtedly fortified since its establishment, at first probably with earthworks. There are no written sources that allow certain dating of the beginnings of the stone defensive wall. The assumption that the town was fortified can be indirectly drawn from the document written in 1341 by Henryk, Duke of Jawor (Wutke, Randt 1930, p. 173). The area enclosed by the town walls was about 10 ha.

The reconstruction of Jelenia Góra's fortifications is partially possible due to remaining iconography and excerpts from modern period chronicle (Hensel 2005; Herbst 2007; Vogt 2008). Parts of the fortifications were unveiled during archaeological excavations preceding building development. The results of archaeological and architectural research have given no certain answer to the question of the origins of stone fortifications. A significant part of town walls was dismantled in the mid-19th century. In the same time the town moat was filled up (Szczepański 1982, p. 114). Two tower gates remained in changed form, as well as few parts of walls with towers.

The location of town gates and the layout of town suburbs allow to trace the oldest trade routes leaving the town. The Castle Gate tower is placed in the northwestern part of town and was the beginning of the pathway connecting the town with the castle and the routes leading to Lwówek Śląski and Lusatia. The excavations in the tower were held in 1996. The aim of the excavations was to clean the inside of the lowest level of the tower from the layers of recumbent dirt. Five levels, corresponding to different functions were discovered. Some archaeological material was obtained, the oldest pieces of pottery were dated to the 15th century. The most interesting relics collected during excavations were a stone cannonball, 10 cm

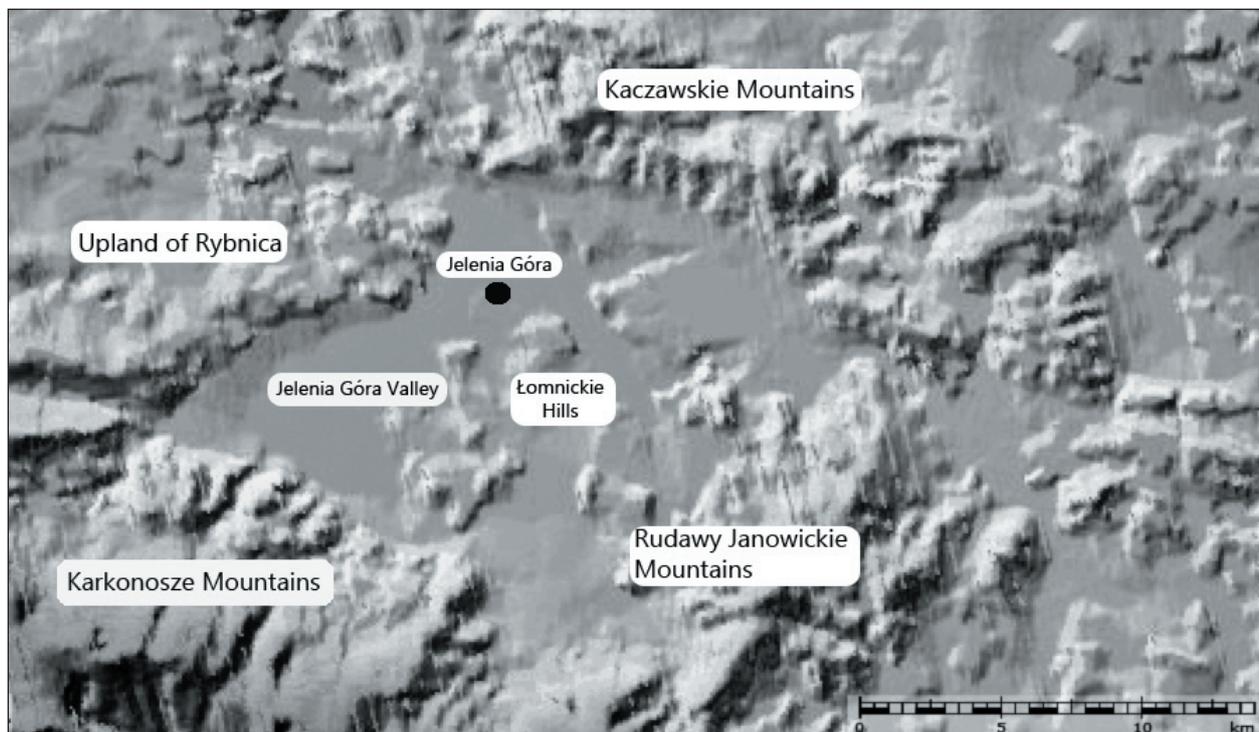


Fig. 1. Land relief of Jelenia Góra Valley and surrounding mountain ridges



Fig. 2. Location of defensive objects around Jelenia Góra (Grossblatt 447, 1940)

in diameter, made of sandstone, and a metal device, interpreted as a cannon holder (Miszczyk 1997, p. 19).

The purpose of Wojanowska Gate (*Schildauer Tor*) was to defend the east side of the town. The gate was provided with a flanking bastion, which was rebuilt in the modern period as a chapel of Saint Anne (Rozpędowski 1975, p. 141). As the name of the gate suggests, the way that was leading through it went alongside the Bóbr River to Wojanów (*Schildau*), located near the mouth of the Łomnica River. Presumably, it was also the beginning of a route connecting Jelenia Góra with Bolków, Świdnica and Wrocław. The third town gate was Brama Ulicy Długiej (*Langgassenthor*), leading south, to Cieplice.

The fortifications of Jelenia Góra consisted of two lines of curtain walls separated by an internal pomerium. The first line, probably built in the 14th century, was about 7 meters high, which can be

concluded on the basis of its remains. The walls had three gates reinforced with gate towers and 36 opened at the back wall towers (Szczepański 1980, p. 103). The oldest iconographical representation of Jelenia Góra is dated to the end of the 17th century (Fig. 3). Despite its naivety, it depicts the most characteristic parts of the defence system. All three gate towers: Zamkowa, Długa and Wojanowska were presented. The Zamkowa and Długa gates are also provided with barbicans. The outside, lower wall had bastions (Szczepański 1980, p. 104). It is possible that in later, modern period, Jelenia Góra had some additional earthworks, presumably in form of bastions.

By the time of the Hussite raid, Jelenia Góra had only one line of fortifications with towers, the other one was built at the beginning of the 16th century (Kwaśny 1989, pp. 46–47; Rozpędowski 1975, p. 141).

JELENIA GÓRA, CASTLE ON WZGÓRZE KRZYWOUSTEGO

About one kilometre southwest from the town centre, on Wzgórze Krzywoustego, one can find the

remains of the Jelenia Góra castle (Fig. 4). The castle was built on a steep hill in a bend of the Bóbr River,



Fig. 3. View of Jelenia Góra from 1682 r. by G. Kleiner

near the mouth of the Kamienna River. Originally, the hill (375 m a.s.l.) was located in the bend of the river and the mouth of the Kamienna River was where currently the stream of Młynówka has its mouth. After passing the hill, the Bóbr River enters a four kilometre long gorge called Borowy Jar. The hill is made of gneiss and granite which create rock formations, mainly in the western slopes. The culmination is placed about 55 meters above the river. The northern and eastern slopes fall steeply into the riverbed. The eastern slope is a morphological and geological border between the Valley of Jelenia Góra and the Foothills of Izery (Paczos 1998, p. 11). Despite its relatively small height, the hill had wide visibility range. From the top, there is a view on the Valley of Jelenia Góra, Karkonosze, and Kaczawskie Mountains, and the hills of Rudawy Janowickie. From an object located on the hill, it was probably possible to make eye contact with Koziniec, Zamkowa Góra, Zamczysko, Sokolec, Tunelowa Góra or even Chojnik castle. This position enables one to control all routes crossing the Valley of Jelenia Góra. Only the view on the west side is limited by the hills of Upland of Rybnica.

The first archaeological research that took place at the castle was carried before World War II. During

excavations in 1936–1937 the remains of a stone wall surrounding the top of the hill were found (APW: WSPŚ, sign. 712, pp. 266–273). There were also works carried on the earthwork located on the west side of hill. The goal of excavations in 1958 was to prove early medieval dating of a burg located on the hill (Sarnowska 1960; Kramarek 1961), but their results were questioned by the archaeological research held in 1995–1997. Relics of two earth and timber defensive walls, separated by a layer of charcoal, dating to the mid-14th century, were found. The rampart was enclosing the peak of the hill. Below, there was a stone wall separating the lower and high castle. The lower castle was reinforced by a high bank, which still exists on the west side of the hill. Pottery found at the excavation site is dated to second half of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. Among the finds there were also some metal objects (nails used in construction of the earthwork, horseshoes, crossbow arrowhead), wooden objects, animal bones (mainly poultry, sheep/goat, cow, swine), pieces of glass vessels and stone balls, interpreted as ammunition (Firszt 1998, pp. 54–59).

Archaeological finds from those excavations were not reliable enough to establish a precise dating of the object, but were sufficient to refute the thesis of

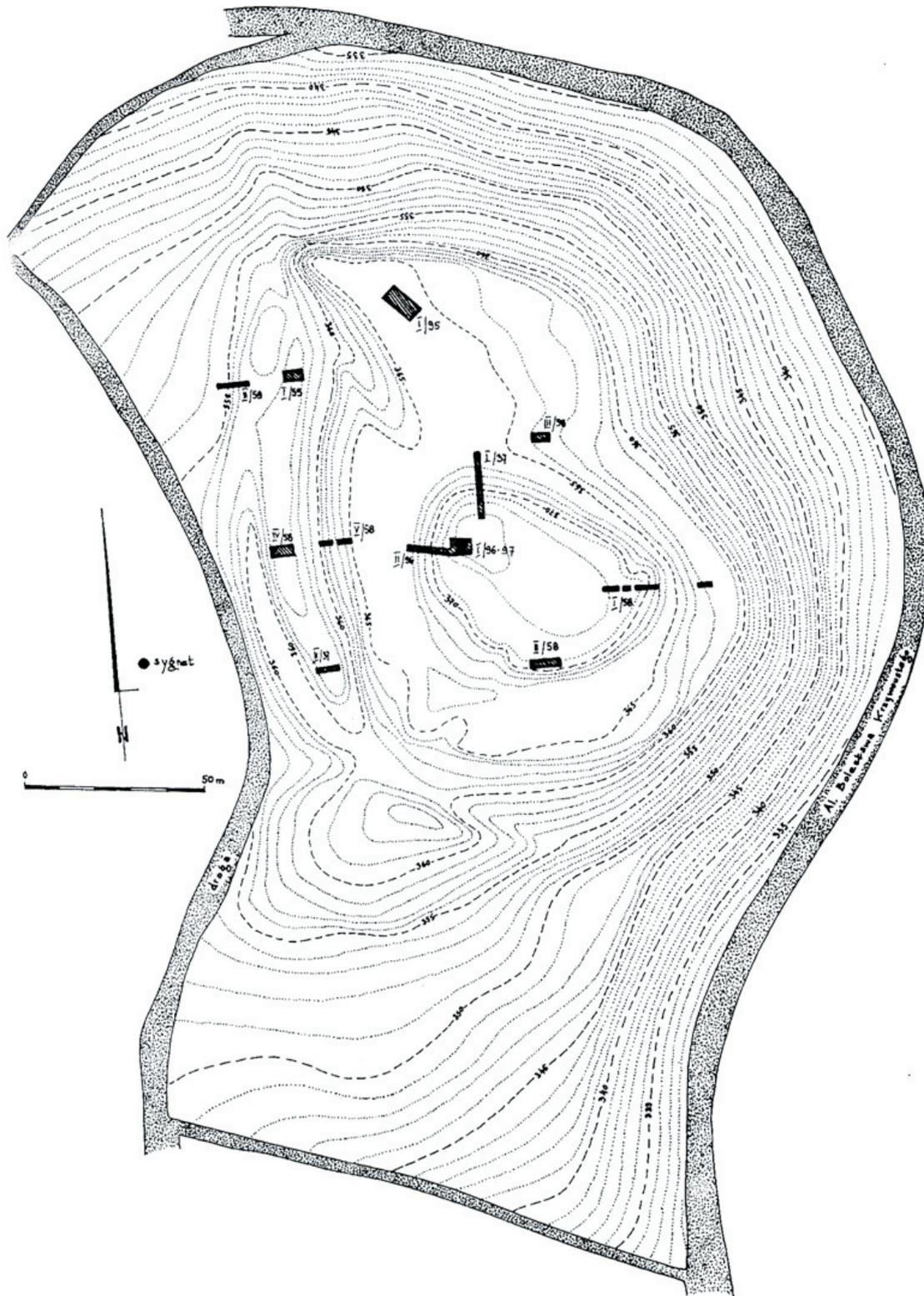


Fig. 4. Layout of archaeological trenches on Wzgórze Krzywoustego (Hausberg) (after Firszt 1998)

its early medieval origins (Rzeszowski 1996, 1998). The castle was most probably built in the 2nd half of the 13th century and can be classified as an earthwork

castle – transitional form between a fortified settlement and a stone (masonry) castle. The castle was first mentioned in 1291 as a place where a charter

of Bolko I for the citizens of Świdnica was written (Grünhagen 1886, p. 153). In the 14th century the castle was a centre of ducal administration (charter of Bolko II for Kamienna Góra from 1345). Later, in the 2nd half of the 14th century, the castle was owned by nobility. After the Hussite raid in 1433, the castle was handed on to the citizens of Jelenia Góra and the fortifications were dismantled (Hensel 2005, pp. 75–76). The research on the castle is not sufficient to reconstruct the layout of the castle. The poor condition of the remains of the castle is a result of the

works carried out on the hill in the modern period. During the Thirty Years' War, when the town was again under siege, the troops under the command of General Goltz seized the Hausberg and built a few earthworks on it (Łaborewicz 1998, p. 31). Since the late 18th century, it has been a popular recreation ground for the citizens. At that time, a restaurant was built under the top of the hill. At the beginning of the 20th century a tower with a terrace on top was built next to the restaurant (Łaborewicz 1998, pp. 32–34).

BOROWY JAR, ZAMCZYSKO

An object located on Zamczysko (Fig. 5), also known as *Raubschloss* or *Sechtättenburg* is located about 2 km northwest from Jelenia Góra castle, in the middle of a narrow gorge of the Bóbr River, called Borowy Jar, between Jelenia Góra and Siedlecin. A small castle was established on a rocky cape with steep slopes, surrounded by water. The peak of the cape was separated by a rock-hewn dry moat. The

view from the top of the hill (350 m a.s.l.) is limited to a narrow part of Borowy Jar towards Jelenia Góra and Siedlecin. Nevertheless, it was possible to make an eye contact with the castle on Wzgórze Krzywoustego.

Excavations in 1937 resulted in finding pieces of pottery and metal objects. A 2 meter long part of a curtain wall was also discovered (APW: WSPŚ,

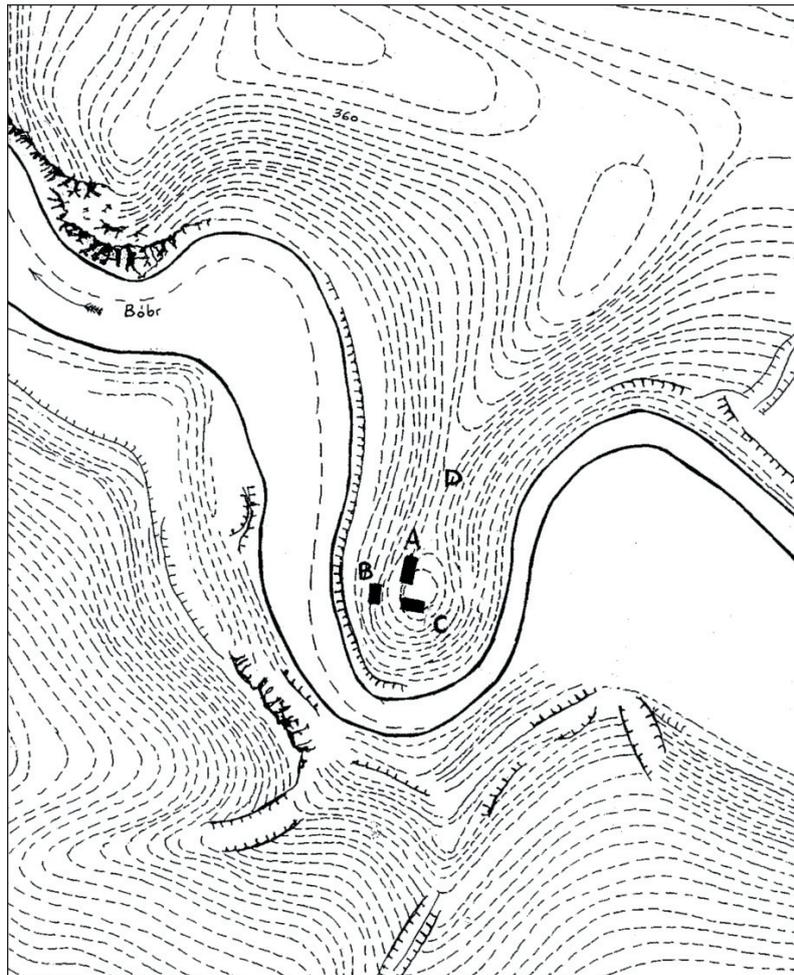


Fig. 5. Plan of Zamczysko hill with the location of trial trenches (after Rzeszowski 2000)

sign. 712, pp. 179–180). Excavations held in 1996 resulted in unveiling of part of the curtain wall about 4 meter high and 2 meter long and an object which was probably a vat (cistern). The wall was built using local broken stone cemented by lime mortar. Numerous pieces of pottery dated from the 14th to the 15th century and metal objects, such as horseshoes nails and an iron knife, were also found (Miszczyk 2000; Rzeszowski 2000, pp. 237–241). Despite mentions in chronicles, there are no other known reliable written sources describing this object that may explain the castle's function and ownership. In the closest neighbourhood there are no settlements or farms that could be interpreted as a facility of the castle. The closest settlement is Siedlęcín, which had its own feudal establishment. Thus, the object in

Borowy Jar is supposedly a guard post connected to Jelenia Góra's feoff. It is also possible that the forests between Siedlęcín and Jelenia Góra were hunting grounds. As mentioned in the chronicles, the castle was destroyed by Hussites in 1427 (Vogt 2008, p. 28). Zamczysko should be probably considered as the *Burg in der Sechsstädten*, mentioned in literature (Chorowska *et al.* 2009, p. 275). The identity of those two objects may be concluded from the comparison of excerpts from the chronicles (Hensel 2005, pp. 74–75; Herbst 2007, p. 47; Vogt 2008, p. 28), where the name Zamczysko is used interchangeably with *Burg in der Sechsstädten* and *Sechstättteburg*. It is also significant that the terrain on the right riverbank of the Bóbr River, between Siedlęcín and Wzgórze Krzywoustego was called *Sechstätter Wald*.

KOZINIEC

Molkenschloss castle, also known as *Bolkoburg*, is located 5 km east from Jelenia Góra, on the Koziniec Hill which is 120 m above the Bóbr riverbed (462 m a.s.l.). The visibility from the peak of the hill is satisfactory and enables the observation of the terrain in the centre of Jelenia Góra Valley as well as the trade routes leading alongside the Bóbr River and through Radomierska Pass.

The peak of the hill is in a natural way divided into two parts: a flat area between rock formations, where the living quarters and facilities were probably located, and a rocky top, which could bear a watchtower (Fig 6). Remains of a wall of stone with lime mortar, connecting close rock formations, were found on the peak. The area surrounded by the defensive wall was shaped nearly rectangularly and measured

from 14 to 30 meters. The wall was not surrounding the rocky top of the hill, which was separated by a ditch. During archaeological examinations, which took place in 1997, seven excavation trenches were opened. Numerous fragments of pottery dated from the 14th to 15th century and animal bones were found (Wilk 1998; 2000, pp. 243–245). Pieces of stove tiles found at the excavation site confirm that the castle could be inhabited throughout the year.

Similar to the Zamczysko castle, there are no known written sources mentioning the object. It was presumably part of the estate in Grabary (*Hartau*) and it might be connected with a farm located at the foot of Koziniec. As mentioned in chronicles, the farm was acquired by the town of Jelenia Góra in 1479 (Herbst 2007, p. 50).

ZAMKOWA GÓRA

Zamkowa Góra (*Schlossberg*) is a 449 meter high hill, located southeast of the town centre. The hill is situated on the edge of forested area, known as *Grünbusch*. The area is bounded by the Bóbr River valley on the north and route connecting the Jelenia Góra and Kowary on the south. This area was almost unsettled. At least since the mid-19th century a quarry had been working on the hillside, which, unfortunately, destroyed the entire western part of the hill.

Zamkowa Góra, because of its name, had been an object of interest for archaeologists already in the 1930s. Basing on the name, they conjectured the existence of an object on the top of the hill. Therefore, there was a claim that the remains found on

the excavation site were a piece wall or foundations of a tower (APW: WSPŚ, sign. 712, pp. 997). The surface survey held in 2008 revealed the remains of a wall, part of which was visible on the profile of the stone pit's wall. In 2009 students from the Student Archaeological Association of the University of Wrocław in cooperation with the Museum of Karkonosze Mountains in Jelenia Góra excavated the site. A 12 meters long section of a wall built of stones joined with lime mortar was discovered (Fig. 7). The wall was 120–130 cm thick. On the inner side of the wall there was a 20 cm thick fuller. The wall was curved circularly with radius of about 15 meters. The wall is only 12 meters long, probably because

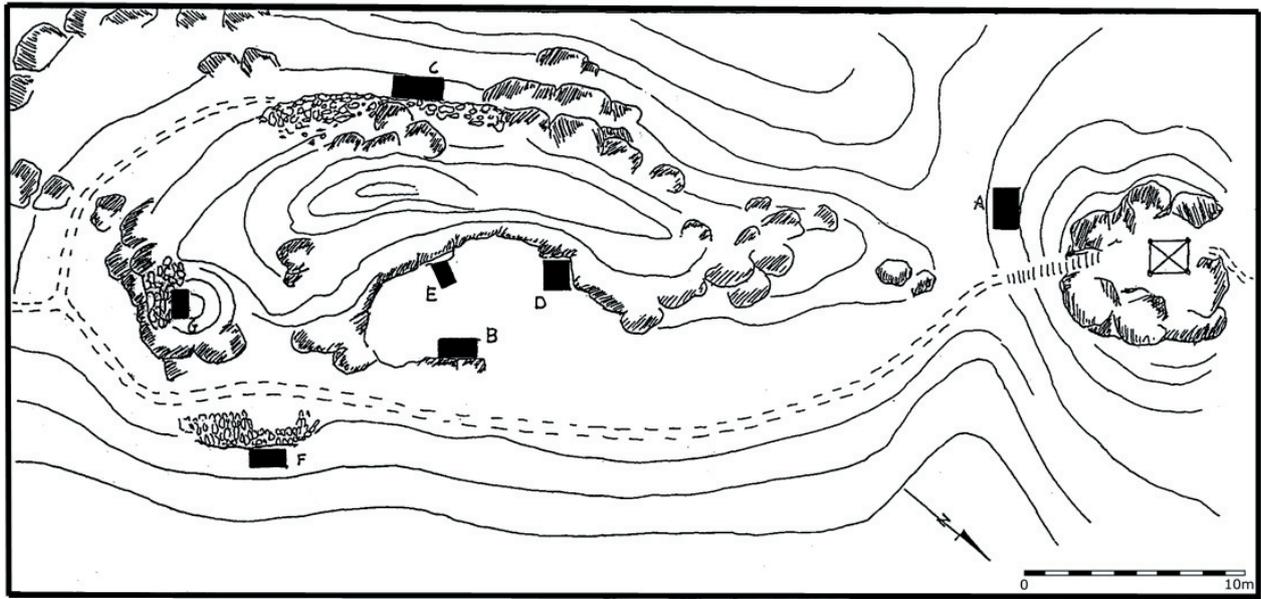


Fig. 6. Plan of Koziniec hill with location of trial trenches (after Wilk 2000)

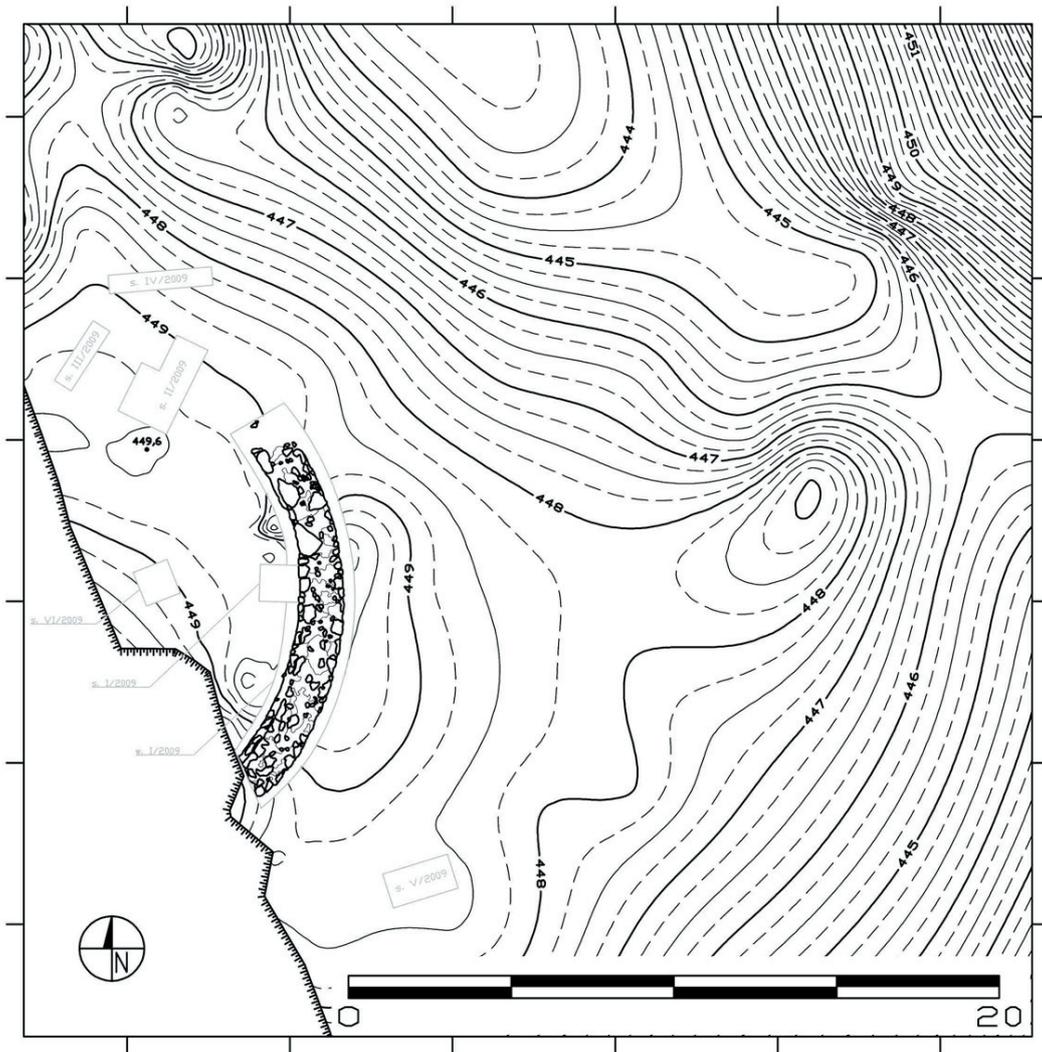


Fig. 7. Plan of Zamkowa Góra with discovered relics of masonry wall (prepared by M. Mackiewicz)

of it being built on hard rock and demolished during the use of the quarry. Despite the implementation of six trial trenches around the wall, the examinations

failed to yield any fragments of pottery that could enable establishing the exact chronology of the object. Nevertheless, the technique of construction of the wall would indicate its medieval origins.

THE POTENTIAL DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

Defence systems consisting of multiple devices are characteristic for the early modern and modern period (Bogdanowski 2002, p. 551). First attempts to create such systems may have appeared in the Middle Ages. Objects located in Jelenia Góra Valley give the impression of deliberate and well thought defensive system, highly dependent on the visibility of each object and land relief.

Although the town was located on a high river terrace, it was surrounded by the forested Łomnickie Hills and Uplands of Rybnica, which significantly limited the visibility to the east and west. The Jelenia Góra castle had incomparably better view conditions, limited only from the west by the Uplands of Rybnica.

Objects located on Zamczysko, Zamkowa Góra and Koziniec are all visible from Jelenia Góra castle. Moreover, their locations enable to control all potential routes leading to Jelenia Góra Valley, through Bóbr River Valley, Radomierska Pass, passing through Kaczawskie Mountains and Uplands of Rybnica. Zamczysko could be in control of the long gorge of the Bóbr River between Siedlecin and Jelenia Góra, at the same time guarding the back of the main Jelenia Góra castle. Koziniec is open to the north of the Valley, including Kaczawskie Mountains and higher Bóbr River Valley. Complementary, Zamkowa Góra had the possibility to guard the southeast grounds of the Valley, not visible from Koziniec and Jelenia Góra because of the Łomnickie Hills in between. Thus, Zamkowa Góra and Koziniec, visible from one another, were forming a gate on the Bóbr River Valley. The core of the system was the castle on Wzgórze Krzywoustego, which additionally was in the range of sight of other castles, like Chojnik or Sokolec.

The exact time of establishment of all mentioned objects is unknown. Based on the note in chronicles, a conclusion can be drawn that all of them were func-

tioning at the beginning of the 15th century. This fact is also confirmed by the dating of the pottery found on Zamczysko and Koziniec. What is unclear is the ownership of those objects, whether they were in possession of duke, nobility or the citizens of Jelenia Góra. The other doubtful matter is their function. Lack of any economic base for objects on Zamczysko and Zamkowa Góra suggests that they were not mansions and their existence was based on other properties. In the case of Koziniec, its relations with the nearby farm in Grabary (*Hartau*) are not known. The conclusion that it was an all-year residence can be made based on the finds of stove tiles, but it is not a definite claim. Except from their potential military function, the objects may have been used for hunting purposes. The last conclusion is justified by their location in the centre of forested and not settled areas. An indirect condition, allowing to incline a relation between mentioned objects and hunting grounds is a charter of Henryk, Duke of Jawor, written in Lwówek Śląski, on 24 June 1320, which grants the care of the hunting terrains in the Jelenia Góra Weichbild as well as profits from duties collected in Jelenia Góra to duke's head huntsman Friczo (Grünhagen, Wutke 1898, nr 4049, p. 158–159). The hunting origins are highly probable for object on Zamczysko, located halfway between the Jelenia Góra castle and ducal residential tower in Siedlecin.

What is worth mentioning is that the objects located on Zamczysko and Zamkowa Góra were captured by Hussites, despite their defensive locations and strong fortifications, whereas the Jelenia Góra castle and Koziniec were successfully defended. The defeat at the two objects may be explained by the lack of troops residing in the castles. On the other hand, the fact that both main castle and the town remained unconquered suggests that the potential defensive system was well planned and efficient.

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis of the existence of a distributed yet integral defensive system surrounding Jelenia Góra is based on the analysis of the relief and topography of the area and one not completely reliable mention in the chronicles. Research and excavations

conducted on referred sites were fragmentary and have not given any straightforward answer to the question of their beginnings and functions. The confirmation of co-existence of the objects located on Koziniec, Zamczysko and Zamkowa Góra as

a developed diverted defensive system requires continuation of excavations on those objects and an extended literature research.

Groups of defensive sites, located within eye contact is known (Kubů, Zavřel 2006) and associated

with terrains of complex topography, highlands and mountain ridges. The location of the distributed system around a town is, in the light of recent research, a unique phenomenon in Silesia.

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