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**JEMIOŁOWO – A COUNTRYSIDE TOWER HOUSE
IN THE TEUTONIC ORDER'S STATE IN PRUSSIA**

Abstract: The feature discovered at Jemiołowo was in all probability a vestige of a multi-storey building. Its overground part was constructed in half-timbered technique and it was provided with a stone cellar. The discovery is unique against the background of hitherto archaeological research on the Late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Period in the territory of the Teutonic Order's state in Prussia.

Keywords: Middle Ages, the Teutonic Order's State in Prussia, a countryside tower house, archaeology

In the course of two research seasons in 2006-2007 archaeological examinations were carried out in Jemiołowo, the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship¹. The examined area was a small and perhaps artificially made plateau, about 150 m to the south of the coast of Lake Jemiołowo. In the course of research remains of a rectangular stone foundation with external dimensions of 5x7 m were discovered (Fig. 1). Individual walls survived to a various degree. The height of the highest part (fragments of walls of the south-eastern corner) was 1.75 m, measured along the internal face of the eastern wall.



Fig. 1. Plan of the foundation. Drawing E. Wtorkiewicz-Marosik.

The foundation was made in a rectangular trench, by means of putting stones of lower parts of the foundation to the walls of the trench. The foundation was constructed from unworked fieldstones of various size. Their diameters varied between merely a few to 50 cm. The stones were not joined with mortar. Between them there was pale yellow fine-grained sand, which occurred in the direct neighbourhood of the feature. The width of surviving parts of the foundation varied between 0.5 to 1.2 m. Deformations of some fragments resulting from the destruction of the feature could be observed. In all probability, the original width was 0.5-0.6 m.

While constructing the foundation a technique of laying subsequent layers of large stones separated with tightening layers of small pebbles was used (Fig. 2-3). Careful workmanship and precise laying of subsequent layers could be seen on the best preserved internal face of the fragment of the eastern wall. In some parts of the internal face, especially of the northern wall, there were plasters of cob of various size, which partially entered the space between the stones (Fig. 4). This cob was believed to be remains of clay lining, which occurred at least in some parts of the wall faces. A complete lack of traces of clay within the foundation demonstrates that clay was not used as joint.

An entrance opening with a diameter of c. 0.8 m was discovered in the western wall (Fig. 5). A cluster of fragmented cob was discovered directly in the opening and in front of it to the west. This cluster was a fill of a small corridor which was dug into the ground here. Its length was c. 1.4 m, measured from the external face of the foundation and it went in perpendicular to the foundation along the NW-SE axis (Fig. 6). Remains of strongly charred wooden

¹ Świętosłowski 2009, 91-98.



Fig. 2. Face of a fragment of the eastern wall.
Photo W. Świętosłowski.



Fig. 3. North-eastern corner.
Photo W. Świętosłowski.



Fig. 4. Face of a fragment of the northern wall. Photo W. Świętosłowski.



Fig. 5. North-western corner. Photo W. Świętosławski.



Fig. 6. Trace a small corridor. Photo W. Świętosławski.

planks were discovered in the external borders of this cob cluster. These planks were originally a formwork of the corridor. After the removal of stone rubble deposited in the entrance opening, a flat threshold stone was discovered. Its length was 0.8 m and its maximum width was 0.5 m (Fig. 7). On the side of the foundation's interior the stone had a straight edge, while its external edge was semicircular. No traces of processing were observed. The stone had a natural shape, but it was intentionally selected.

In the northern part of the western wall, directly at its interface with the northern wall, a socket made from three large unworked stones with natural flats was revealed. These stones were approximately placed on the plan of a rectangle, with no stone facing the interior of the feature. The internal dimensions of the socket were 0.4 x 0.34 m (Fig. 8). It served for installing an end of a timber beam, which was part of a structure dividing the building's storeys. A considerable amount of charred cob and remains of burnt timber discovered inside the feature demonstrate that the overground part of the building was built in half-timbered construction and was destroyed by fire.

Only natural fine-grained sand was discovered on the examined surface which surrounded the foundation. No traces of possible remains of management of the direct vicinity of the building (within a radius of a few metres) which was constructed on the discovered foundation were identified.

Inside the stone foundation remains of a large trench (encompassing a major part of the feature) were discovered. This trench may have been dug for the purpose of stone extraction. The chronology of the trench is defined by a very numerous presence of shards of contemporary vessels (19th-20th c. ones). The fact that none of present-day inhabitants of Jemiołowo knew about the existence of the foundation demonstrates that part of foundation stones was dug out and extracted before the Second World War at the latest. A laconic remark in the 4th issue of „Altpreussen” in 1936 may be a trace of these activities. It informs about a discovery of: *zwei spätheidnische preußische Siedlungsgruben mit Gefäßresten*.

The trench destroyed a major part of layers related to the construction and existence of the Jemiołowo feature. Earlier layers survived only in some parts inside the foundation, especially near the walls, in the corners and outside the feature, in a few places directly next to the walls. A layer of dark-brown humus with sand was uncovered. It came into existence in result of bedding of the stone foundation from outside, perhaps after the completion of construction works and during levelling of the terrain around the building. A layer of humus with pieces of charcoal and cob was vestigially preserved inside the foundation. It was deposited directly above the undisturbed subsoil at more or less the same height as the upper surface



Fig. 7. Flat threshold stone. Photo W. Świętosławski.

of the flat threshold stone, found in the entrance opening in the western wall. This layer may have been remains of the original usage level of the feature. A few layers deposited above it came into existence in result of filling up the feature in the course of its destruction and directly thereafter.

Exceptionally numerous finds were obtained from the interior of the foundation: 10,500 shards of clay vessels and one complete pot with a lid (deposited directly above the undisturbed subsoil); 150 fragments of bowl tiles; other clay artefacts: a spinning whorl, a weight and a hackbut missile; 70 iron artefacts; two bronze belt fittings; a bronze brooch; a bronze belt buckle; two silver coins; stone artefacts: a whetstone, a grinder and an architectural detail.

Fragments of vessel pottery can be divided into two chronological groups: the later one – 19th-20th c., and the earlier one – 2nd half of the 14th-early 16th c. A great variety of forms and technologies of manufacture are remarkable traits of the latter group. The discovered fragments are remains of kitchenware: mainly pots, jugs, bowls, small three-legged frying pans, fired in reducing and oxidising atmosphere (there was a similar proportion of both groups). A relatively numerous part of these fragments bear traces of ornamentation: with motifs of straight and wavy ambient lines, and on some shards there are also knurling ornaments (herringbone, stanchions). A small part of shards come from vessels covered with dark-brown or yellow

glazing. Both identified technologies of manufacture, as well as ornaments and shapes of discovered fragments of rims, bodies and handles are very typical and characteristic for the period from the 14th to the early 16th c. A general and tentative assessment of these finds can suggest that a majority of them come from the 15th c.

Fragments of tiles can also be classified as mass finds. These are most often edges of so-called bowl tiles, which were in a vast majority fired in reducing atmosphere. Only a few shards come from tiles covered with yellow glazing. These are typical tiles which can be dated to the period from the 14th to the 16th c.

In the course of examinations at Jemiołowo, in spite of the fact that the examined surface was relatively small (slightly more than 1.5 ares), an exceptionally numerous assemblage of 70 iron artefacts was discovered. A diversity of finds must be stressed. Among them there are numerous remains of artefacts related to the construction and use of the feature (e.g., nails, construction fittings, hinges, hooks of various size), household tools, with special reference to agricultural tools (e.g., a few kinds of pitchforks, a fitting of a swingletree, a plough coulter). There are also finds of horse harness and riding gear, horseshoes, and weaponry (e.g., a crossbow spanning hook, which is exceptional with regard to carefulness of its manufacture and its ornament, as compared with known artefacts of this kind from the



Fig. 8. Socket made from three large unworked stones. Photo W. Świętosławski.

territory of Poland)². These artefacts have Late Medieval analogies.

Finds from bronze sheets are spectacular: belt fittings and a star-shaped brooch with dot ornament, which is stylistically related to similar Late Medieval artefacts from the Balt zone.

Of special significance are two coins – silver shillings of Grand Masters of the Teutonic Order: Michael Kūchmeister von Sternberg (minted in the years 1414-1416 in the Gdańsk mint) and Heinrich von Plauen (minted in the years 1410-1413, also in the Gdańsk mint)³.

The first of these two coins was discovered in the layer of humus with strong admixture of fragmented cob and small pieces of charcoal, in its part lying under broadly placed stones of the southern segment of the foundation's western wall. As mentioned above, this part was assumed to be remains of a repair-reshaping of the original premise. In result of this activity, among others, the entrance opening was diminished. Therefore, the coin may be used to identify the date of these building activities.

Among clay finds which are typical for the Middle Ages (e.g., the spinning whorl, the circular weight with a hole), a special attention is attracted to the missile. Its diameter is 39 mm and it bears traces of blackening with smoke and of hitting against an obstacle. The missile was found directly at the external face of the western wall, next to the entrance opening. The projectile is not only a trace of military activities, but also an important find in the ongoing discussion on Late Medieval clay projectiles for firearms.

Merely a few stone artefacts were discovered at the site in Jemiołowo. Apart from typical finds (the grinder, the large whetstone), the stone architectural detail was also discovered. It is made from sandstone which is not present in the neighbourhood and it is a fragment of an arch impost, possibly of a door jamb. It was found in the trench, which does not allow to unambiguously relate it to the structure constructed on the stone foundation. On the other hand, this detail is Late Medieval in its nature, and in the vicinity of Jemiołowo there is no architectural feature from which it could possibly come. Therefore, it can be assumed with some degree of probability that this detail comes from the destroyed building at Jemiołowo. This suggests a possible presence of stonework, which stresses the significance of the feature.

The chronology of the most characteristic finds discovered at the site in Jemiołowo demonstrates without doubt that the discovered foundation is a vestige of a building constructed and used in the period between the 2nd half of the 14th and the early 16th c. This assessment also receives support from the technique used for the construction. This technique consisted in laying alternate layers of unworked large stones and tightening layers of small pebbles. This

technique was typical for Late Medieval stone building and it was widespread in the territory of the Teutonic Order's state in Prussia in the Late Middle Ages, at least since the 14th c.

The carefulness of construction of the foundation, which has already been stressed above, demonstrates a unique nature of the feature. The assortment of finds was also quite rich for a countryside feature. Vessel pottery was typical for this territory in the period from the 14th to the early 16th c. On the other hand, the discovery of numerous shards of bowl tiles was a surprise. Such tiles demonstrated the presence of a tile oven (or ovens), which was rather typical, as it is stereotypically assumed, for buildings of richer strata of the Late Medieval society. The assemblage of discovered iron artefacts proved to be exceptionally numerous. It testifies to a considerable wealth, which allowed for using numerous iron elements of building gear, tools, horse harness, and weaponry.

The building constructed on the discovered foundation was in all probability used in two phases. Damages to the original premise – perhaps due to a fire caused by military activities (the hackbut projectile found near the face of the western wall of the foundation), as well as repair works which, among others, diminished the size of the entrance opening in the western wall, in all probability took place around the mid-15th c., which is implied by the discovered coin. The building perhaps came into being in the 2nd half of the 14th c., and its final destruction may have taken place in the early 16th c. Within this period there were numerous war activities in the region where the site is located. According to written sources, they had a direct impact on the village, whose present-day name is Jemiołowo (its original Pruthenian name was Amelingen, and it was later called Mispelsee in German). One can mention the most significant wars between Poland and the Teutonic Order: the Great War in the years 1410-1411, the Hunger War of 1414, the Thirteen Years War in the years 1454-1466, and the last Polish-Teutonic War in the years 1519-1521.

To sum up, it should be said that the feature discovered at Jemiołowo was in all probability a vestige of a multi-storey building. Its overground part was constructed in half-timbered technique and it was provided with a stone cellar (Fig. 9). So far, in the territory of the Teutonic Order's state in Prussia we do not know any analogies of such countryside tower houses which were not provided with any additional defensive features (e.g., earthworks, moats, palisades). Remains of Late Medieval towers with half-timbered walls were discovered in the territory of present-day north-eastern Poland only in the course of excavations of more developed defensive features – motte strongholds (e.g., in Plemięta, Chmielno, or Leśno)⁴. Therefore, the discovery in Jemiołowo demonstrates that independent tower

² Świętosłowski 2008, 189-198.

³ Piniński 2007, 124-125.

⁴ *Plemięta ...* 1985; Walenta and Wójcik 1989; Lepówna 1998.



Fig. 9. Hypothetical reconstruction of the tower building from Jemiołowo. Drawing J. Koperkiewicz.



Fig. 10. Fragment of the engraving „Virgin and Child with a Monkey” by Albrecht Dürer, c. 1498.

buildings were also present in countryside areas of the Teutonic Order’s state. These buildings were perhaps similar to those constructed in Late Medieval Western Europe, which are testified to in iconography of that time (Fig. 10).

The structure in Jemiołowo was not typical for Late Medieval countryside buildings and it was probably not used by average inhabitants. Results of hitherto examinations offer no grounds for drawing conclusions concerning its function. However, it can be suggested that its construction and use may have been related to administrative or military activities of the Teutonic Order.

The discovery at Jemiołowo is unique against the background of hitherto archaeological research on the Late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Period in the territory of the Teutonic Order’s state in Prussia. So far, the research has mainly focused on urban areas and castles. The discovery of stone remains of the stone tower building with reduced defensive traits (without an earthwork, moat or rampart) which was constructed in the countryside and which has no analogies so far, opens new research perspectives.

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Streszczenie

Jemiołowo – wiejski dom wieżowy z terenów państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach

W Jemiołowie, woj. warmińsko-mazurskie, odkryto relikw prostokątnego fundamentu kamiennego o zewnętrznych wymiarach 5 na 7 m. Poszczególne ściany zachowały się w różnym stopniu. Wysokość najwyższej partii wynosiła 1,75 m. Fundament wykonano w prostokątnym dole, dostawiając kamienie dolnych partii fundamentu do ścian wykopu. Wzniesiono go z kamieni polnych nieobrabianych, różnej wielkości. Ich średnice wahały się od zaledwie kilku do 50 centymetrów. Kamienie nie były łączone. Wznosząc fundament zastosowano technikę układania kolejnych warstw dużych kamieni przedzielonych uszczelniającymi warstewkami z drobnych kamieni. Na niektórych partiach lica wewnętrznego występowały płyty polepy – pozostałość wykonanego z gliny pokrycia, występującego na przynajmniej części lic.

Znaczne ilości przepalanej polepy i ślady spalonego drewna, odkryte we wnętrzu obiektu, wskazują, iż nadziemna część budynku wzniesiona była w konstrukcji szachulcowej i została zniszczona przez pożar.

Z wnętrza fundamentu pozyskano wyjątkowo liczne materiały zabytkowe: 10 500 ułamków naczyń glinianych, 150 fragmentów kafli miskowych, 70 przedmiotów żelaznych, dwa brązowe okucia pasa, brązową zapinkę, brązową sprzączkę pasa, dwie monety srebrne, szelągi Wielkich Mistrzów Zakonu Krzyżackiego: Michała Kuchmeistera von Sternberg (bita w latach 1414-1416, w mennicy gdańskiej) oraz Henryka von Plauen (bita w latach 1410-1413 również w mennicy gdańskiej).

Podkreślić warto różnorodność zabytków żelaznych. Są wśród nich liczne pozostałości przedmiotów związanych z budową i funkcjonowaniem obiektu (np. gwoździe, okucia budowlane, zawiasy, haki, haczyki), narzędzia gospodarcze, szczególnie te potrzebne do uprawy roli (np. widły kilku rodzajów, okucie orczyka, krój pługa), ale również elementy rzędu końskiego i oporządzenia jeździeckiego, podkowy, militaria. Przedmioty te mają analogie późnośredniowieczne.

Datowanie najbardziej charakterystycznych zabytków znalezionych na jemiołowskim stanowisku jednoznacznie wskazuje, że odkryty fundament jest reliktem budowli wzniesionej i funkcjonującej w okresie od 2. połowy XIV do początku XVI w. Najprawdopodobniej był to budynek kilkunastykowy, wykonany w partii nadziemnej w technice szachulcowej, z kamienną piwnicą. Jak dotąd nie znamy z terenów państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach analogii takiego budynku wieżowego w terenie wiejskim, pozbawionego dodatkowych elementów obronnych (np. nasypu, fosy, palisady). Relikty późnośredniowiecznych wież z szachulcowymi ścianami odkryto na terenach dzisiejszej północno-wschodniej Polski jedynie w trakcie badań bardziej rozbudowanych obiektów obronnych – gródków stożkowatych. Odkrycia w Jemiołowie dowodzą więc obecności na terenach wiejskich państwa krzyżackiego także samodzielnych budynków wieżowych, zapewne podobnych do wznoszonych w późnośredniowiecznej Europie Zachodniej.