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## Medieval bells in Lower Silesia in Hans Lutsch's inventory of monuments. The state of knowledge and postulates of the research

Średniowieczne dzwony Dolnego Śląska w katalogu zabytków Hansa Lutscha.  
Stan wiedzy i postulaty badawcze

**Abstract:** Hans Lutsch's inventory of monuments of Silesia, compiled at the turn of the 20th century, remains the most comprehensive compilation of bells in the area, though more than hundred years have passed since its publication. This work, however, in spite of its merits, remains far outdated — both in view of the tremendous war losses in the first half of the 20th century and its methodological foundations. Therefore, there is a need to carry out an inventory of these artefacts, basing on modern and interdisciplinary methods used in campanological research. The aim of the article is to address the problems arising from the study of bells in the Lutsch catalogue, and to refer to contemporary conservation documentation. The article's thesis draws attention to the poor state of research on the oldest bells in Lower Silesia.

**Key words:** Hans Lutsch, Lower Silesia, bells, inscriptions, field studies, campanology

**Abstrakt:** Inwentarz zabytków Śląska, opracowany przez Hansa Lutscha na przełomie XIX i XX w., pozostaje mimo upływu ponad stu lat od jego publikacji nadal najpoważniejszym zestawieniem dzwonów na wskazanym obszarze. Opracowanie to, pomimo swoich zalet pozostaje dalece zdezaktualizowane — zarówno ze względu na bardzo liczne straty wojenne w pierwszej połowie XX w., jak też w odniesieniu do podstaw metodologicznych. Współczesnym wyzwaniem pozostaje konieczność przeprowadzenia inwentaryzacji tych zabytków, opartej na nowoczesnych i inter-dyscyplinarnych metodach stosowanych w badaniach kampanologicznych. Celem artykułu jest odniesienie się do problemów wynikających z opracowania dzwonów w katalogu Lutscha oraz ich współczesnej dokumentacji konserwatorskiej. Teza artykułu ukazuje niedostateczny stan badań najstarszych dzwonów na Dolnym Śląsku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Hans Lutsch, Dolny Śląsk, dzwony, inskrypcje, badania terenowe, kampanologia

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\*\* The text was prepared in fulfilment of a 'Small Grant', the research was funded by the University of Zielona Góra.

The activity of Hans Lutsch (1854–1922), conservator of historical monuments in the former German provinces of Lower Silesia and Pomerania, has been the subject of relatively extensive accounts in the context of Polish research into the broad field of documentation and monument preservation. Above all we should mention the leading works of the Szczecin (German: Stettin)-based researcher Barbara Ochendowska-Grzelak, who, in her two books, drew attention to numerous biographical and methodological aspects of H. Lutsch's research.<sup>1</sup> His elaborations, especially the multi-volume catalogue of monuments of the former Silesian province published in the years 1886–1903, remain at the same time the subject of many contemporary publications, being a source of reference for knowledge about monuments in a broad problematic dimension. This applies to documentation and inventory projects, as well as to research on the losses of monuments in the context of two world wars or the fate of monuments in Silesia after the Second World War in the Polish post-migration reality.

Therefore, leaving aside a broader presentation of H. Lutsch's research — which is relatively well recognised thanks to, among others, his archival legacy preserved in the State Archives in Szczecin — the article uses select examples in order to reconsider the methodological aspects of his publications regarding the study of bells.<sup>2</sup> Bells, in which I take particular interest, continue to present a challenge for their cataloguing in Lower Silesia. Their registration and description is not a new postulate, although it remains unrealised. Silesia, a region with a particularly rich tradition of old crafts, has so far received neither a catalogue nor a monograph devoted to them. This applies to both older German and contemporary Polish studies.

Jakub Pokora's 1972 article on the need for bell research in Poland also referred to relics from Lower Silesia. The author indicated that an unknown group of bells were to be found in Germany, referring to the war losses in this area.<sup>3</sup> As a parallel example serves the research of the Gdańsk (Danzig)-based campanologist Krzysztof Maciej Kowalski, who carried out similar studies for Gdańsk Pomerania.<sup>4</sup> Bells in Lower Silesia belong to a poorly researched group of historical objects. Apart from H. Lutsch's register, there are still relatively numerous examples of German regional studies, which originated in the circle of the so-called *Heimatkunde*,<sup>5</sup> and — after 1945 — also in the circle of former German communities, as part of memoir literature.<sup>6</sup> The bells from Lower Silesia were also the subject of major scientific study within the pre-war German campanology.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, these works are still scholarly important, but present the state of knowledge based on catalogues from the turn of the twentieth century. The Lower Silesian bells have also been the subject of endeavours such as the *Deutsches Glockenatlas*, work on which has been carried out in Germany since the 1950s. It presents objects that had been transported from Lower Silesia to Germany and remained there after 1945. Research on this group of bells was also undertaken in 2010 by Jörg Poettgen, who studied their founders,

<sup>1</sup> Ochendowska-Grzelak B. 2002, pp. 425–432; Ochendowska-Grzelak B. 2013; Ochendowska-Grzelak B. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> AP Szczecin, SHL, ref. 122, 123, 124.

<sup>3</sup> Pokora J. 1972, pp. 285–290.

<sup>4</sup> Kowalski K.M. 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Schultz A. 1881, pp. 66–67; Schultz A. 1888, pp. 493–497.

<sup>6</sup> Grundmann G. 1961, pp. 63–74; Radler L. 1981, pp. 219–255.

<sup>7</sup> Otte H. 1884; Walter K. 1913.

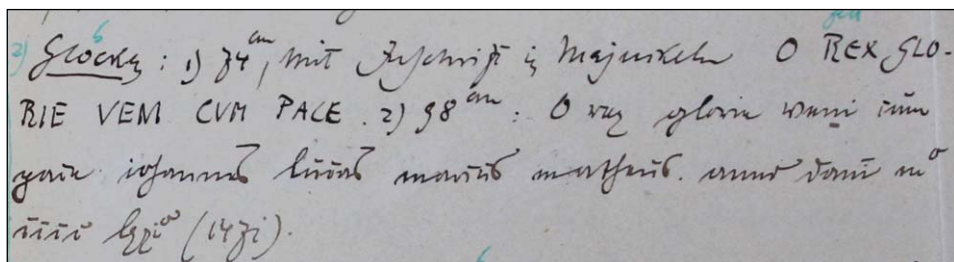


Fig. 1. Handwritten note by Hans Lutsch describing bells from the village of Popęszyce, now the County of Nowa Sól. Attention is drawn only to a copy of the inscription and the bottom diameter of the bells, while any information on decorative elements etc. is missing. Source: AP Szczecin, SHL, ref. 124; photo by M. Tureczek

a) links vom Beschauer die Verkündigung und Geburt,  
 b) rechts: Darstellung im Tempel und Beschneidung.  
 Die Rückseiten der Flügel zeigen in Malerei die Heiligen  
 Michael und Barbara, Anna und Hedwig. Pfarramtl. Mittlwg.  
 Glocken: 1) 74<sup>cm</sup>, mit Majuskelinschrift: O Rex Glo-  
 rie Veni Cum Pace. 2) 98<sup>cm</sup>, O rex glorie veni cum  
 pace. Mathäus, Marcus, Lucas, Johannes. anno  
 domini m cccc lxxi (1471). Pfarramtliche Mitteilung.

Fig. 2. Fragment of Hans Lutsch's catalogue of monuments with a description of the village of Popęszyce and the publication of the bells. Source: Lutsch Hans. 1891, p. 97

basing on the holdings of the Deutsches Glockenmuseum in Nuremberg.<sup>8</sup> Although a number of such works exist, since H. Lutsch's time, no attempt has been undertaken to produce a comprehensive study — also serving catalogue purposes — for the area in question. This task has not been fulfilled by the *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* [Catalogue of Art Monuments in Poland], which deals only with select areas of Lower Silesia. Polish literature on the subject remains very scarce in relation to the issues raised in the present article. The bells from Lower Silesia are not the part of mainstream research interests not only in Poland, but also in the Czech Republic and Germany, where academic discourse is frequently based on older works from the first half of the twentieth century. The most detailed Polish works on the bells from Lower Silesia are two studies by Marcei Tureczek from 2011 and 2015. The first, dealing with the issue of war losses, is a comprehensive account of the objects which remained in Germany after the Second World War. The group includes medieval bells, but these constitute only a portion of about 600 objects from Lower Silesia discussed in this catalogue.<sup>9</sup> The second study is problem-oriented, dealing with crafts as well as artistic and technological features, but it encompasses only the northern part of Lower Silesia. Nonetheless, it is the first more extensive compilation of literature and sources.<sup>10</sup> The volumes of the *Corpus inscriptionum Poloniae* for the

<sup>8</sup> Poettgen J. 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Tureczek M. 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Tureczek M. 2015.

administrative area of Lubuskie Voivodeship should also be mentioned here. The studies of districts of: Zielona Góra (Grünberg in Schlesien), Nowa Sól (Neusalz), Świebodzin (Schwiebus), Żagań (Sagan) include medieval bells from the area of northern Silesia. It is worth noting that these works prove that, thanks to the research conducted in Lower Silesia, many unknown artefacts were discovered. Among more recent problem-oriented works, mention should also be made of, for example, studies by Piotr Oszczanowski,<sup>11</sup> Barbara Ławnikowska,<sup>12</sup> Michał Poźniak;<sup>13</sup> however, apart from the work by M. Poźniak, they do not concern medieval bells. Medieval bells have also been the subject of museum exhibitions, e.g., *Ornamenta Silesiae*.<sup>14</sup> The state of knowledge about archival sources constitutes a separate problem. The so-called 'Erwin Hintze's file', in the collection of the National Museum in Wrocław (Breslau) remains a constantly cited "compilation of sources", especially in relation to bell founders in Lower Silesia. These materials have neither been verified through field research nor confronted with other archival material. For instance, municipal and ecclesiastical sources have not been examined in this respect; they may provide a large amount of data for bell founding in Lower Silesia (including in the medieval period). Another reason for drawing attention to the bells from Lower Silesia in the context of H. Lutsch's publication, is the poor state of the conservation documentation — especially within the records of movable relics kept by the Lower Silesian Provincial Heritage Conservator (Dolnośląski Wojewódzki Konserwator Zabytków — DWKZ). The author conducted a detailed search in the DWKZ archives in Legnica (Liegnitz) and Wrocław, establishing, among other findings, that the documentation regarding the oldest Silesian bells remains incomplete, both in terms of cataloguing and of the information on the objects, as well as in the quality of substantive descriptions in the record cards, which will be discussed later. The problem of medieval bells in Lower Silesia is additionally defined by the state of preservation of the objects *in situ*; in practice, there is a need to verify the information about the losses,<sup>15</sup> and to verify such works as H. Lutsch's inventory. This work, despite its still being useful for basic research into the history of art, monument studies, *etc.*, remains in many respects out of date, mainly due to the current state of preservation of the objects; moreover it is often archaic in regard to the description and study of bells. It should be noted that the inventory of bells in Lower is not an easy task in view of the scale of such an undertaking. It, therefore, seems appropriate to first address the oldest items and to make a step-by-step inventory of the successive groups of these objects.

Among the movable historical objects included in the catalogue of monuments of the Silesian province — H. Lutsch himself was primarily interested in architecture — bells occupy an important place. According to the model inventories of monuments of the time and to the methodological guidelines already worked out by this art historian on the occasion of the Wrocław catalogue, the oldest objects, especially medieval and early-modern ones, were of particular interest. Thus, a very large number of church furnishings were described in the inventory, including ecclesiastical paraphernalia, sculptures, paintings, tombstones, and bells. In the fifth volume of the catalogue, which is a register of the monuments, H. Lutsch states that the work encompasses 716 objects crafted up to 1550.<sup>16</sup> The core of the index is the classification of bells according to the presence of inscriptions, the nature of those inscriptions in terms of script, and

<sup>11</sup> Oszczanowski P. 2003, pp. 75–87. The author has worked out a relatively extensive compilation of older campanological literature concerning Wrocław, see pp. 80–81.

<sup>12</sup> Ławnikowska B. 2011, pp. 169–180.

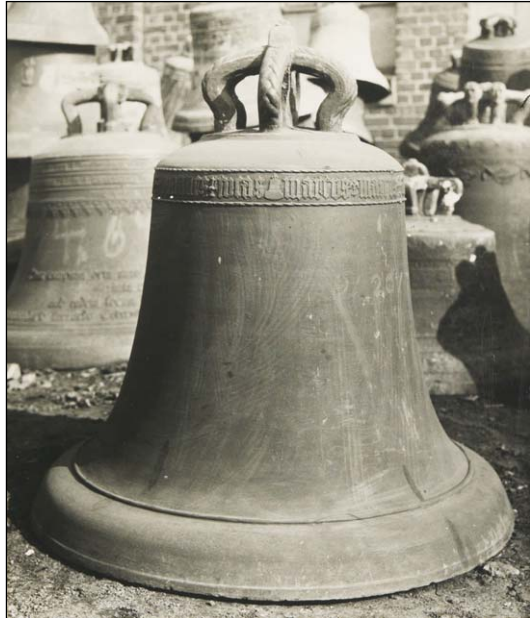
<sup>13</sup> Poźniak M. 2022, pp. 43–75.

<sup>14</sup> *Ornamenta Silesiae*. 2000.


<sup>15</sup> Tureczek M. 2019, pp. 69–98.

<sup>16</sup> Lutsch H. 1903, pp. 226–238.

Fig. 3. A bell from 1471 from the village of Popęszyce. The photograph shows decorative elements within the inscription, omitted from Hans Lutsch's study. Source: DGa collection, ref. 9/20/71C. Compare A. Górski, Nowa Sól district (in:) Corpus inscriptionum Poloniae (CiP), vol. X, z. 6, Toruń 2013, p. 37



R 9/24, 110, neue Nr. 143



9246 *gesamt in der Platte*  
 9408 *Inschr.* Nummer der Glocke: 9/20/72 *Fl. Popęszyce*  
 Abformung: Bewertung: L

G 9/20/72 e

Popęszyce Kreis: Freystadt  
 Provinz: Niederschlesien

Dm.: 70 cm  
 Höhe: 82 cm  
 Höhe der Bügel: 20 cm  
 Gewicht:  
 Material: Bronze  
 Name:  
 Zeit: 14. Jh.  
 Gießer:  
 Gießort:  
 Verzierung und Inschrift:  
 Kette, Apfelkette, abgerundete Gabel.  
 Am der Kette hängen drei kleine Glocken  
 Majuskel in Schrift:  
 \*✠ ORAX \* GLORIA \* VARI \* AVA  
 \* PAQA \*  
 Auf der Platte & Buchstaben in regelmäßigen  
 Abstand.  
 Am der Platte ein Kette.  
 Kette hängen, gelber Holz.  
 Gf. von 126 abgerundeten Glocken mit  
 abgerundeten Kette.

Fig. 4. 14<sup>th</sup> century bell from the village of Popęszyce. Visible decorative elements within the inscription and a copy of the inscription with decorations. Source: DGa collection, ref. 9/20/72C. Compare A. Górski, Powiat nowosolski (in:) Corpus inscriptionum Poloniae (CiP), vol. X, z. 6, Toruń 2013, pp. 38-39. The author probably follows Hans Lutsch in dating the bell to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, overlooking the peculiarities of the Gothic majuscule on it and duplicating Lutsch's general description

their content. Finally, a separate iconographic index presents in detail the figural representations found on the bells of Lower Silesia. Regarding the contemporary need for bell identification, H. Lutsch's work is still the most complete inventory of bells in Lower Silesia.

Referring directly to the individual volumes of the catalogue, analysis of the bell descriptions leads to a number of important conclusions. The listing of all bells in the fifth volume reveals, above all, the statistical nature of the entire study. A noticeable element is the difference between the detailed descriptions of medieval bells — for which H. Lutsch gives, for example, the basic dimensions (see below) — and those of modern bells, which are both much less common and more general in content. With regard to the medieval bells, his interests are clearly directed towards the inscriptions — most of them are cited, however, the way their record was produced and their content was rendered were determined by the quality of the surveys that formed the basis of the data collection. Thus, while the register in volume five compiles, for example, the inscriptions in terms of the form of writing, the description itself focuses only on the content. The author's approach to inscriptions varies greatly. For example, in case of a gravestone from Szprotawa (Sprottau, Żagań District) of cleric Bertold from Wierzbnia (Würben),<sup>17</sup> the inventory description contains only a fragment of the inscription along the information that it is the oldest known grave plate in Lower Silesia. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that such objects were of great interest to H. Lutsch, as evidenced by notes preserved in his archives.

In the case of bells, there is an inconsistency, visible, for instance, in regard to the bell preserved to the present day in Jabłonów (Schönbrunn) in the Żagań District. In the description of the village, H. Lutsch refers to two objects. The first (preserved) dates from 1448. In the inventory, the inscription is rendered as follows: “in honore s andr — ee ano dni m cccc xl viii o rex glorie veni cvm pace”. In brachygraphic sense, an abbreviation mark appears next to the letters ‘n’ in the words “anno domini”. This copy does not include the initials in a cross form and dividers, on the bell having a shape of a lily, which is a Marian symbol.<sup>18</sup> The second Jabłonów bell dates from 1494. Although this object has not been preserved *in situ* — since it was requisitioned during the Second World War — a photograph of very good quality has been preserved in the Deutsches Glockenarchiv in Nuremberg, which shows interesting decorative elements. Particularly notable is the one in form of a small bell, which is a bell-founding motif present on medieval bells in Lower Silesia. In the register from the fifth volume of H. Lutsch's work, there is no mention of these features.<sup>19</sup>

Another example of a problematic description comes from Gościszowice (Gießmannsdorf, Żagań District). In the inventory, a bell from Gościszowice is described without dating (most probably, it is a fifteenth-century object, based on its minuscule inscription). The description in the catalogue includes the initial in the form of a Maltese cross and the following inscription: “helf got maria berot alias das wir beginnen”.<sup>20</sup> The bell was requisitioned for wartime purposes, but a card with a photograph of this object has been preserved in the Nuremberg collection. A copy of the inscription, dating from around 1943, contains only its altered fragment: “• ave helf got vnde berot”. Looking at the photograph, it seems that this time it is the rendition in H. Lutsch's inventory that more reliably reflects the original wording. This time, the problem of discrepancies concerning one bell results from differently produced records.<sup>21</sup>

An example from Dzikowice (Ebersdorf, Żagań District), where a bell from the early sixteenth century has been preserved in a local church. It features a typical prayer to Christ the

<sup>17</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, pp. 117–118; cf. Zdrenka J. et al. 2018, pp. 29–30.

<sup>18</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 167.

<sup>19</sup> DGa, HK-N, ref. 9/32/101C.

<sup>20</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> DGa, HK-N, ref. 9/32/107C.

Glory (o rex glorie christe veni cum pace). It is worth noting that in the northern areas of historical Lower Silesia this inscription was among the most popular in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The bell, with a diameter of 109 cm, is dated by the inscription to 1525, while in H. Lutsch's inventory based on survey descriptions, the date 1522 is given. The description itself does not contain the dimensions of the object, although the specimen ranks among the largest medieval castings in this part of Lower Silesia. Moreover, the decorative elements of the inscription are once again omitted; they are also not described in the iconographic list. Significantly, there is also a graphic motif of a small bell here, interpreted in the literature as a bell-founder's mark.<sup>22</sup>

The bell from Konotop (Kontopp, Nowa Sól District), an outstanding object cast by Georg Wield in Żytawa (Zittau, now Germany) in 1595,<sup>23</sup> received a slightly more detailed description in H. Lutsch's work, indicating that its quality was already recognised at the time. The inventory, however, contains only a fragment of the inscription, which refers to the bell-founder, and a brief iconographic description<sup>24</sup>. Emphasising once again the very purpose of the compendium — which was not intended as an exhaustive analysis of every object included, even though certain areas, such as architecture, clearly stand out owing to the author's particular interests — it is worth asking how many bells of this kind have survived in Lower Silesia without more detailed analysis. These objects, despite their undeniable scholarly value, thus remain effectively anonymous and outside the scope of academic study.

The lack of research into medieval bells in Lower Silesia is highlighted by a special example of the so-called Świętosław bell, held in the collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław. The bell originates from Kłobuczyn (Klopschen, Polkowice District).<sup>25</sup> H. Lutsch describes it as the oldest specimen known from the region.<sup>26</sup> It is convincingly dated to 1300, which makes it the oldest bell in present-day Poland. However, a broader assessment of this issue — namely the incomplete identification of bells, both in the region and in Poland in general — has several important consequences. Firstly, the Kłobuczyn bell has long been absent from the Polish academic discourse. As a result, it is still wrongly assumed that the oldest bell in Poland is "Piotr" (in Sandomierz), dated to 1314. Secondly, Polish scholarship has thus far neglected to include, alongside bells dated by inscription, instruments whose chronology can be established from the profile of the bell rib and, additionally, through comparative acoustic methods. Naturally, H. Lutsch's inventory does not include more extensive descriptions in this respect. Lower Silesia, given its artistic importance already in the Middle Ages, undoubtedly remains a challenge. Examples such as the bell from Borów Wielki (Grossenbohr; see below) suggest that the lack of research in this area has resulted in a generally low level of knowledge and interpretation in this field in Poland.<sup>27</sup>

Setting aside the analysis of a broader group of objects — bearing in mind that similar uncertainties concern numerous Lower Silesian examples described by H. Lutsch — the need for a secondary examination of the preserved specimens becomes evident specifically within the area in question. Unfortunately, for lost objects — most often requisitioned ones — available knowledge will be based exclusively on earlier research, which, as demonstrated by the examples above, also includes numerous inaccuracies. Looking at H. Lutsch's compilation in

<sup>22</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 106; cf. Zdrenka J. et al. 2018, p. 71, no. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Recently, the bell received more extensive literature, mainly due to the restoration work carried out during the reconstruction of the bell tower; Tureczek M. 2020, pp. 64–69; Poźniak M. 2022, pp. 43–75.

<sup>24</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 126.

<sup>25</sup> Pater J. 2000, p. 66; cf. remarks on this object: Tureczek M. 2015, pp. 45, 89, 215, 256–258, etc.

<sup>26</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Tureczek M. 2021, pp. 187–215; there, the author explores this problem in detail (also regarding the bell from Kłobuczyn) and provides a critical account of the Polish scholarship on the subject.

the fifth volume, it is clear that formulas of medieval bell-founding inscriptions in Lower Silesia were limited. They focus primarily on Marian invocations and the Prayer to the King of Glory, only infrequently containing other elements — as confirmed also by the contemporary field research. To no extent, however, does the monument inventory address the forms of writing — the quality of inscriptions, the errors and linguistic inaccuracies resulting from the scribes' skills, or the stylistic patterns followed by their creators. Of course, this was not the purpose of the publication. The problem, however, lies in the current state of knowledge — or rather, the absence of knowledge — concerning medieval epigraphic sources in Lower Silesia. This is largely the result of their poor state of preservation, particularly in the case of inscriptions on bells, which form a significant part of this material. In the context of present-day research, the H. Lutsch catalogue may therefore serve as a guide for field investigations that have yet to be undertaken, but it cannot provide a basis for broader interpretation. A similar conclusion can be drawn with regard to iconographic elements. Medieval iconography on campanological objects from Lower Silesia remains a completely unknown and unexplored subject in Polish scholarship, apart from the author's 2015 study, which, however, makes only fragmentary reference to this region.<sup>28</sup>

Completely separate from the knowledge of bells derived from H. Lutsch's inventory are the technical aspects of casting (as already indicated by the specimen from Kłobuczyn).<sup>29</sup> These remain an important yet largely unexplored area in the study of historical bell-founding. In the catalogue, the basic description includes only bells' lower diameter, a figure verified by the paper's author through more detailed field measurements — though even this data is not always precise. From an art-historical perspective, this measurement alone is of limited significance. However, when methods specific to heritage and organological studies are taken into account — approaches that are invaluable for classifying bells in their historical development — the need for comprehensive analysis becomes evident. This raises an important issue concerning the accuracy of measurements, given the wide range of calculations required to determine the proportions of bell-rib profiles. For basic dimensional analysis, it is essential to record not only the lower diameter but also the height (excluding the crown) and the diameter of the sound bow. In the medieval period, numerous bell-foundries functioned in Lower Silesia, as the province was known for its developed craftsmanship and artisan production. The majority of these workshops remain anonymous, at least the ones operating before the end of the fifteenth century, making it a difficult research problem. A broader identification of bells, including consideration of their technical characteristics, would allow Lower Silesia to be positioned within the context of the significant transformations in bell-founding during the Middle Ages — developments directed toward the pursuit of optimal acoustic qualities. Many scholars studying historical bell-founding focus primarily on its historical and artistic values — which is understandable — but tend to overlook the technological aspect, even though it is fundamental to assessing the technical level of bell production. It was, in fact, this technological aspect that also influenced the development of decoration and inscriptions, both in their form and content. Lower Silesia, in this sense, remains an unexplored territory; H. Lutsch's inventory by no means fills this gap. Later catalogues of monuments issued for Brandenburg or Pomerania also take into account, for example, indications of unusual bell shapes. A comparison with H. Lutsch's descriptions and research conducted at the Deutsches Glockenmuseum in Nuremberg — where photographic documentation of bells has been preserved — indicates the existence of numerous examples representing early casting forms, referred to in Polish scholarship as proto-Gothic and in German as *Zuckerhutglocke*. The author does not refer to this type of data, which is largely based on questionnaires sent in by the church administrators of the time. For instance, the bell

<sup>28</sup> Tureczek M. 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Tureczek M. 2021, pp. 187–215.



from Borów Wielki (Nowa Sól District), whose rib-profile proportions — the ratio of the height without the crown to the lower diameter according to data from the Nuremberg collection, being 1.239<sup>30</sup> — identify it as an exceptional work, although the bell bears no inscription or decoration. Recent research classifies it among the oldest examples in Poland. It is worth noting that this bell has not been melted down and is most likely located in the vicinity of Münster (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany).<sup>31</sup> The Lutsch inventory contains neither a description nor even a mention of the object. Therefore, the question can be posed what is the scope of our knowledge, based on the catalogue of Lower Silesian monuments from the turn of the twentieth century?

The lack of a modern and comprehensive bell inventory for Lower Silesia — and the continued reliance on outdated documentation from the late nineteenth century — is also reflected in the bell records of the Lower Silesian Provincial Heritage Conservator (DWKZ). A query has been conducted in the resources of the regional branches of this authority in Wrocław and Legnica, revealing substantial gaps in our knowledge of the condition and preservation of medieval bells *in situ*. Of the 190 bells listed in the register of movable monuments, only 17 are medieval bells outside the city of Wrocław. However, the number alone does not convey the scale of the problem. Within the area of activity of the Wrocław branch of the DWKZ, of the 190 bells listed in the register of movable heritage objects, only 17 are medieval bells located outside Wrocław, while within the city itself there are six such specimens (as of May 2023). However, the number alone does not illustrate the problem. A far more significant issue — highlighting the need for a comprehensive reassessment of the state of knowledge about Lower Silesian bells — lies in the record cards themselves, whose entries in no way meet the standards of modern documentation. Prepared in 2007, the card for the bell from the village of Domaniów (Thomaskirch) in Oława (Ohlau) District — no. B/1880/1-28 in the register of historical monuments — contains a description, indicating that an inscription on the bell was made in Gothic majuscule (“*inskrypcja majuskułowa o gotyckim kroju liter*” — “a majuscule inscription with Gothic letterforms”). Not only does the copy of the inscription contain an erroneous identification of the lettering style — in fact, the minuscule Gothic lettering, characteristic for the second half of the fifteenth century, is shown in the photograph attached to the card — but its transcription is also incorrect. H. Lutsch dates the bell, basing on the copy of the inscription, to the year 1462. In the card, however, the reading is given as “MCCCCXVII (1417)”, although Lutsch’s date is noted in the ‘dating’ section). The rest of the inscription is also problematic. H. Lutsch’s version is as follows: “*o rex glorie veni cvm pace. a.d.m cccc lxxvii maria osan=na gos inawriafuh domeschirec*”,<sup>32</sup> indicating the bell is not from 1462 but from 1467; the last fragment is interpreted as “Thomeskirce” — a reference to the German name of Domaniów, *i.e.*, *Thomaskirch*. In the monument record card, the second part of the text was rendered as follows: “*MARIA HOSAN=NA GOS IN AWRIFUCH DOMESCHIREC*”.<sup>33</sup> This example, therefore, shows a number of discrepancies between the Lutsch inventory and the 2007 monument card, which are the result of further misinterpretation of the already flawed transcription by the nineteenth-century art historian. The problem lies in the lack of a reliable inventory and the insufficient evidence to evaluate if H. Lutsch’s description is correct. The very date record in this study may suggest that the inscription was not read. Moreover, the interesting and rather complex formula within the second part of the inscription, after the prayer to Christ the Glory, may contain a number of elements that raise curiosity. First of all, when comparing these two recorded inscriptions, we do not know whether the original one contains the formula: “*osanna*”

<sup>30</sup> Tureczek M. 2021, p. 196.

<sup>31</sup> DGa, HK-N, ref. 9/20/50B.

<sup>32</sup> Lutsch H. 1889, p. 386.

<sup>33</sup> AWUOZW, Sebzda B. 2007.



Fig. 5. Medieval Bell  
from Domaniów; photo by  
M. Tureczek

or “hosanna”. However, the very meaning of the joyful invocation to Mary is the same in both cases.. The further passage contains a German word: “gos” which is a form of the verb: *gießen* meaning in English: to cast. This fragment undoubtedly means that we are dealing here with a relatively early formula referring to the foundry worker or the place of casting. Such forms did not appear on a larger scale on bells until the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Next, the record from 2007 quotes after H. Lutsch: “inawriafuh domeschirec”. What can we deduce from this cluster of letters? Well, it is easy to see here the notation: *in wria fur domeschirec*, which can be interpreted in English as: *cast in Wrocław for Domaniów*.

Finally, it is worth referring to the monument itself, which the author has recognised *in situ* in order to make a proper comparative analysis. The investigation allowed him to correct both the reading published in H. Lutsch’s work and in the card of the monument from the DWKZ resource. The inscription produced in minuscule Gothic script is provided with a group of initials and interludes in the form of a lily, which clearly refers to Marian symbolism. Taking into account the abbreviations, which are missing in both records cited earlier, the text should be read as follows:

• a(nno) • d(omini) • m • cccc • lxxvii • maria • osan • na • gos(s) •  
inawria(tislaviae)fuh • domeckirce • orex • glorie • veni • cvm • pace



Fig. 6. Fragment of the inscription from Domaniów with decorative elements;  
photo by M. Tureczek

The correct reading of the inscription confirms not only the earlier interpretation of the reading, but also, for example, the interesting form of the old name of Domaniów fixed in the inscription. At the same time, the form: “domeschirec” is not present in the original inscription, but one may find there the word: “domeckirce”. This means that in this instance the record from 2007 copied inaccurate record produced by H. Lutsch. The author’s translation of the original text gives an interesting religious and historical composition of the whole: In the Year of our Lord 1467, cast in praise of Mary in Wrocław for the church in Domaniów. O King of Glory, Christ, come with peace.

The inscription proves that the object has been preserved since its creation in its original context. To correctly interpret the work in its historical and artistic dimension, and to appreciate the entirety of its aesthetic composition, it is also necessary to consider its religious symbolism. Finally, the application of approaches from cultural heritage and organological studies requires consideration of the specimen’s technical features. The bell from Domaniów has following measurements: diameter measured crosswise,  $\varnothing=107.5$  cm; height without the crown,  $h=81$  cm; crown height = 20 cm. The oval of the sound bow is correct, as confirmed by the continuous non-waving overtone which was recorded during the sound analysis of the object. The technological evaluation shows that the ratio of the bell rib profile equals ( $p=h/\varnothing$ ): 0.753. This indicates that the bell has a highly individualised form for the period of its creation; its proportions make it appear overly archaic, resembling earlier medieval bells more typical of fourteenth-century forms. Looking at the horn, its longitudinal cross-section is characterised by a relatively straight shoulder and a pronounced expansion within the sound bow. Gothic profiles are defined by ratios typically above 0.900, whereas modern bells fall within the range of 0.780–0.820. The evidence perhaps points to an interesting yet somewhat archaic fifteenth-century bell-founding workshop in Wrocław, as bells from this period typically display markedly different proportions and longitudinal sections.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Tureczek M. 2021, pp. 187–215; Tureczek M. 2023, Anexes: 1ab, 3ab, 4ab.

A comparison of the two transcriptions of the inscription, containing seemingly minor differences — without even consulting the original on the preserved bell — demonstrates the significance of an accurate inventory for monuments of this kind. In practice, both records do not meet the need of examining the historical source in question for the purpose of developing our historical knowledge of both Wrocław — accepting only the hypothetical interpretation of the inscription — and Domaniów itself. Neither source provides information about the decorative elements of the inscription or addresses whether the recorded casting's features allow for a more precise identification of the bell-founding workshop. Finally, the technical description of the bell in the record card contains further inaccuracies. H. Lutsch gives a different lower diameter, the card does contain measurements for the lower diameter and height (both parameters of about 110 cm), but such a description (erroneous as shown above) is incompatible with the construction of a musical instrument such as a bell, and thus as such remains useless. The card includes a following description of the bell's crown: "[...] korona wysoka z trzech kabłąków [...]" ("high crown with three canons"). Even the attached photo already shows that there are at least four canons. In fact, there are six, with a fastening key inside. Without delving into issues related to the maintenance of record cards, it suffices to note that they are either inaccurate, contain incorrect terminology, or lack conservation issues altogether.

Another example concerns the village of Snowidza (Nieder Hertwigswaldau) in Jawor District. H. Lutsch provides a description of two bells in his catalogue. The first, with a diameter (Ø) of 103 cm, is described as having a majuscule inscription, undated, of following wording: "O Rex Glorie Veni Cum Pace. Amen." The second bell, with a diameter (Ø) of 76 cm, was to contain an inscription in minuscule and majuscule Gothic script: "Anno D mccccxxii a. o rex glorie vene cvm pace".<sup>35</sup> In 2012, a registration card for the larger bell was prepared and is now kept at the Legnica regional office of the DWKZ (B/2130/1-28).<sup>36</sup> Already the photograph attached to the card shows the majuscule Gothic script within the prayer to the King of Glory. H. Lutsch indicated the uncertain dating of the bell by adding a question mark after the date, implying doubt as to the accuracy of the reading — presumably the restorer did not examine it directly. The card cursorily dates the bell to the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century and describes it as a historicist object. In addition, it notes that the inscription could not be read because it was obscured by dirt, but that comparison with H. Lutsch's transcription made it possible to grasp the intended meaning of the text and thus to offer a different and more accurate assessment of the object. It has, however, already been pointed out that H. Lutsch's account of the bell from Snowidza is imprecise.

An *in situ*-analysis of the bells in Snowidza has provided a number of interesting conclusions. The documentation card for the bell records incorrect dimensions (their origin is unknown). The valid measurements are: lower diameter, Ø=102 cm; height without the crown, h=81 cm; crown height = 16 cm; rib profile ratio=0.794. The last value determines the profile as pertaining into the early modern forms. The inscription indeed contains a prayer to the King of Glory; its majuscule Gothic lettering is richly decorated, including cross-shaped initial symbols. These characteristics are, however, omitted in H. Lutsch's description and, in particularly, in the erroneous record in the documentation card. The actual reading of the inscription is as follows:

## • • O REX GLORIE VENI CVM PACE ANEN

In the words *veni* and *amen*, a minuscule form of the letter 'n' appears with an increased modulus, adjusted to the size of the majuscule characters; moreover, the word *amen* contains

<sup>35</sup> Lutsch H. 1891, p. 400.

<sup>36</sup> AWUOZW-L, Dobrzyniecki L. 2012.





Fig. 7. A large bell from Snowidza; photo by M. Tureczek



Fig. 8. Majuskule lettering on a large bell from Snowidza; photo by M. Tureczek



Fig. 9. The word „AMEN” on a large bell from Snowidza; photo by M. Tureczek

an error — majuscule letter ‘n’ instead of ‘m’; interestingly, a stylised majuscule letter ‘m’ is used in the word *cum*. The decorative lettering finds analogies in the inscription of the Legnica baptismal font. The effect is achieved with the help of decorated wax plates applied to a false bell.<sup>37</sup> The text itself is a formula typical for medieval bells. The Snowidza bell is, therefore, a valuable medieval artefact bearing a relatively uncommon inscription in Gothic majuscule. Its significance and artistic value, however, cannot be inferred from either the H. Lutsch’s catalogue or the documentation card from the DKWZ archive. What is the source of incorrect dating given by the card? It may derive from the inscription — painted in yellow inside the — which gives the date 22 September 1878 (indeed corresponding to the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century). This graffiti, nonetheless, is unrelated to the bell’s manufacture. Moreover, the card does not describe the technical condition of the medieval object, failing even to mention the significant wear of the sound bow.

It is also worth referring to the second bell from Snowidza — another medieval object described in the H. Lutsch’s inventory. The bell’s measurements are: lower diameter, Ø=74 cm; height without crown, h=61 cm; crown height = 16.5 cm. In accordance with the nineteenth-century art historian’s study, the quoted inscription is indeed designed and composed using majuscule and minuscule lettering. This situates the Snowidza inscription among the transitional productions of the fifteenth century and helps to define the maker’s artistic practice. For both the interpretation of the inscription and the identification of the workshop, it is significant that the lettering was designed so that the minuscules equal the majuscules in size. This indicates that the maker intended the inscription to be read as wholly majuscule, with the adjusted modulus giving the composition a deliberate artistic coherence. Taking into account the decorative elements in the form of crosses, the text should be transcribed as follows:

• ANNO • D(OMINI) M • CCCC LXXII • A • O • REX • GLORIE • venecvm • PACE

Under the inscription there are three figural representations of unspecified saints. The fragment with the letters ‘A’ and ‘O’ separated by a dotted line is an interesting composition. The form of the separators may insert an additional “ligature of meaning” into the text, referring to symbolism of the Greek letters A and Ω. The analysis of the Snowidza inscription demonstrates the importance of a comprehensive understanding of both the text and the object as a whole, and it also reveals the shortcomings of H. Lutsch’s inventory and of later studies based on it.

In the bell section of the archive of the Legnica DWKZ, there are 19 cards of medieval objects. Each of these records contains inaccuracies which, when compared with the analysed

<sup>37</sup> Tureczek M. 2015, pp. 253–276.



Fig. 10. A small bell from Snowidza; photo by M. Tureczek



Fig. 11. Decorative element and fragment of the text “VENECVM” with a visible differentiated module of minuscule letters; photo by M. Tureczek

catalogue, raise doubts about descriptions published by H. Lutsch — particularly regarding the content and form of the inscriptions — as well as the reliability of the cards themselves. None of the cards were prepared correctly. The problems concern not only the readings of the





Fig. 12. Figural representation with an inscription on a small bell from Snowidza; photo by M. Tureczek

inscriptions, but above all the descriptive methodology, terminology, inaccurate measurements, and the absence of essential technical and conservation data. The examples from Domaniów and Snowidza — drawn from several dozen analysed,<sup>38</sup> many of which revealed comparable errors and inaccuracies — underscore the continuing need for a comprehensive new inventory in light of the data recorded in H. Lutsch's catalogue. The aim here is not to criticise the documentation cards themselves — though they certainly require revision, particularly since some concern objects listed in the Registry of Cultural Property — but rather to highlight the shortcomings of H. Lutsch's publication, which, in the absence of a modern reference work, is still too often treated as the principal source of information on Lower Silesian bells and related artefacts. Its basis consisted of descriptions submitted through questionnaires, which, for obvious reasons, could contain errors reflecting the knowledge of those who completed them. This raises the question of whether the current state of research on the oldest surviving bells in Lower Silesia should continue to rest on such a foundation.

The study of bells in Lower Silesia within Polish scholarship remains limited, especially when compared with work of this kind conducted for Western Pomerania or today's Lubuskie Voivodeship. Beyond field inventories, such investigations should also include broad historical and art-historical analyses, incorporating epigraphic and iconographic inquiry as well as technological examination. The latter should draw on methods from physics and chemistry, such as acoustic analysis and energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence for non-invasive metallographic testing, to meet the requirements of historical scholarship on such valuable artefacts. Acoustic measurements, adapted from laboratory techniques, should be based on the analysis of sound recordings at a basic level. Given wartime losses, the fragmentary state of current knowledge, and continuing documentation and conservation needs, undertaking a systematic inventory that would verify the existing information on Lower Silesian bells — still largely based on H. Lutsch's catalogue — is essential for advancing work in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany. The study of bells in Lower Silesia should therefore be viewed within the framework of these three academic communities.

Lower Silesia, given its history and artistic significance, constitutes an important field of study for scholars from the aforementioned countries. It is the task of the Polish scientific

<sup>38</sup> I examined the cards of Lower Silesian medieval bells from: Prochowice, Mściwojów, Świerżawa, Miłkowice, Szklary Górne, Prusice, Olszany, Pielgrzymka, Rudna, Paszowice, Niemotów, Bolków, Męcinka, Gaworzyce, Krzydlowice, Brennik, Jakubów, Domanów, Kilianów, Prusy, Mieczków, Oleśnica, Wrocław.



community to initiate basic research for this region, which would provide a basis for more problem-oriented studies. The lack of such research — despite the eighty years that have passed since the region's incorporation into Poland — may be viewed as a serious negligence. The new research on bells of Lower Silesia should contribute to their protection by raising greater awareness among researchers, preservationists, and the general public of the historical value of these objects.

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