

Culinary Topography of the Castle in Sieradz (Central Poland) in the Early Modern Period (16th Century- 1st Half of the 17th Century)

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PL ISSN 0860-0007; e-ISSN: 2719-7069

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23858/FAH37/2024.005>

<https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/281143>

Jak cytować:

Olszacki, T. (2025). Culinary Topography of the Castle in Sieradz (Central Poland) in the Early Modern Period (16th Century - 1st Half of the 17th Century). Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae, 37, 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.23858/FAH37/2024.005>

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CULINARY TOPOGRAPHY OF THE CASTLE IN SIERADZ (CENTRAL POLAND) IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (16TH CENTURY - 1ST HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY)

Abstract

The article discusses the broadly understood issue of food in the castle in Sieradz in the 16th century - 1st half of the 17th century, which was the capital seat of the county – starosty (Polish: *starostwo*) and also land, and later of the Sieradz voivodeship, an administrative and economic centre headed by startoste (Polish: *starosta*) – an official appointed for life by the king. Although the castle was destroyed about 200 years ago, its form and many aspects of everyday life are perfectly legible in the light of numerous archival written sources and, to a lesser extent, archaeological evidence, which allows for its analysis in the historical context of ‘food studies.’ They enable us to determine the location and formal reconstruction of places where food products were processed and stored (larder, kitchen, bakery, brewery, breeding and cultivation areas), make an attempt to recreate the inventory of the objects collected in these places, and capture the dynamics of the accompanying changes. An attempt was also made to hypothetically reconstruct the dishes and places where they were served, and the groups of people who consumed them. This enabled us to notice social stratification manifested in the standards of food and the conditions of its consumption.

Received: 17.12.2024 Revised: 23.12.2024 Accepted: 03.01.2025

Citation: Olszacki T. 2024. *Culinary Topography of the Castle in Sieradz (Central Poland) in the Early Modern Period (16th Century - 1st Half of the 17th Century)*. “Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae” 37, 75-92, DOI 10.23858/FAH37/2024.005

INTRODUCTION

The state of research on various detailed aspects of the functioning of state castles (including issues related to food production and consumption, so-called ‘food studies’) in the area of the historical Province of Greater Poland (*Wielkopolska*) is not satisfactory.¹ Since the publication of Janusz

Pietrzak’s excellent study titled *Castles and fortified manors in the area of the Wielkopolska province. A study of the history of state fortified seats at the turn of the Middle Ages and the modern period*²

near Częstochowa: Nabiałek 2012, and also a more narrowly outlined study of the Niepołomice Castle in the times of Sigismund Augustus (1548-1572): Januszek 2006. A classic work, however, which refers to the issue of the castle space itself to a negligible extent, is the economic monograph of the castle in Nowy Korczyn: Wyczański 1964. The historical ‘Wielkopolska Province’ is considered to be the Greater Poland proper (with the historical Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships), then the Sieradz and Łęczyca voivodeships (and previously the lands), i.e., Central Poland, as well as Kuyavia located in the north (voivodeships with the capitals in Brześć Kujawski and Inowrocław), and the Dobrzyń Land (*ziemia dobrzyńska*), compare e.g., Pietrzak 2003, 12.

² Pietrzak 2003.

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¹ Also in relation to other areas of the former Kingdom of Poland, the problem of studies going beyond the narrowly understood issues of construction, archaeology, and the ownership context is very poorly advanced, reflecting the initial stage of development of Polish castle studies, still expressing aspirations to join the trend developed by the French ‘Annales’ school, rather than actually remaining in it. A model example of complementary studies on the castle as the centre of the starosty in the multiplicity of its functions is the monograph on Olsztyn

KEYWORDS

- castle
- food studies
- kitchen
- Sieradz
- early Modern Period



over twenty years ago, which was a general analysis of the issues presented in the title, drawing almost exclusively on archival written sources, there has been no publication – with the exception given below – developing the issues discussed by Pietrzak.³ This is probably largely due to the poor state of preservation of the buildings and the practical annihilation of their economic base, associated almost exclusively with outbuildings and other structures erected from perishable materials. Therefore, unlike, for example, the castles of Lower Silesia,⁴ the feudal seats from Greater Poland can only be the subject of archaeological research and analysis of archival written records, with all the limitations resulting from this situation. Fortunately, written sources concerning state castles (i.e., royal castles, administrated and often leased by starosts) are extremely abundant and sometimes allow for an advanced reconstruction of the past. The basic sources in this category include inventories (descriptions of properties, most often written down when the starosts' domains changed, varying in the degree of recorded details), inspection records (the *lustracje*, drawn up by virtue of parliamentary decisions, aimed at providing a current summary assessment of the state of crown assets, also covering issues related to employment, wages, income and investment needs), and accounts (documenting the investments made). The above-mentioned sources, with a few exceptions, were written from the beginning of the 16th century, and the steady disintegration of the state, observed in the perspective of the analysis of the royal domain from the mid-17th century, resulted in a situation in which later texts (from the second half of the 17th century and the 18th century) present a rather sad picture of a degenerate system that had no control over its own resources.

A model example of a castle that is not even partially preserved but was excellently recorded in the early modern period by written sources and also – although to a much lesser extent – archaeologically explored, is the castle in Sieradz, i.e., one of the two (along with the castle in Łęczycza) capital defensive seats of two historical lands constituting Central Poland, currently forming most of the territory of the Łódź voivodeship. More than 10 years ago, I published a book titled *The Royal Castle in Sieradz. History-Research-Architecture*,⁵ which I considered not so much an exhaustive study but

a work that was *rather a multi-threaded contribution to such a monograph*.⁶ The study's overarching goal was to organise various categories of sources, including many years of excavation research that have never been jointly analysed and the equally abundant and often unknown corpus of archival written sources that I published and widely reported on. Taking advantage of the opportunity, it is worth returning to the source material, this time looking at it in the context of socio-economic studies (while emphasising issues of construction and the world of things) and a case study, in reference to the 'culinary' issues discussed in this volume. The article aims to provide a possibly complete analysis of places, objects, and people related to the issue of food production, processing, and consumption in the Sieradz Castle from the beginning of the 16th century to the first half of the 17th century (or more precisely, the moment of the castle's description in the inspection from the years 1628-1632). I make only a few references to the late Middle Ages and the modern period.

Let us start with an outline of current knowledge about the castle in Sieradz. The brick castle in the heart of the Sieradz land (formerly a principality, later a voivodeship) was built on the site of an early medieval stronghold, which in the 2nd half of the 13th century and the 1st half of the 14th century was replaced by a fortified princely seat. The brick castle was built on the orders of King Casimir the Great (King of Poland in the years 1333-1370), most probably after 1357⁷ and acquired its final late medieval form during the times of Władysław Jagiełło (King of Poland in the years 1386-1434). It consisted of a circuit of defensive walls repeating the oval form of the old timber and earth fortifications, enclosing an area of approximately 4,000 m². A moat surrounded the castle, and the entrance, located in the gate building, was on the northern side. A defensive tower (*bergfrid*), approximately 16 m in height, was located in the north-western corner. The main castle building, referred to in written records as the 'great house' (Polish: *dom wielki*, *dom wielki albo kamienica*, Latin: *domus magna lapidea seu murata*), was built on the opposite side of the large courtyard, to the south. It was divided into three storeys, but only the central and eastern parts had cellars. In the lower storey of the western part of the building, a basement containing a larder (important for this study) reached the south-western corner of the defensive wall. The impressive block of the great house was approximately 10.60×46 m.

³ It is also necessary to mention the work by Tomala 2011, which is more than a concise catalogue of state, church, and private castles and manors in the same territory.

⁴ Chorowska 2003.

⁵ Olszacki 2013

⁶ Olszacki 2013, 2-3.

⁷ Olszacki 2013.

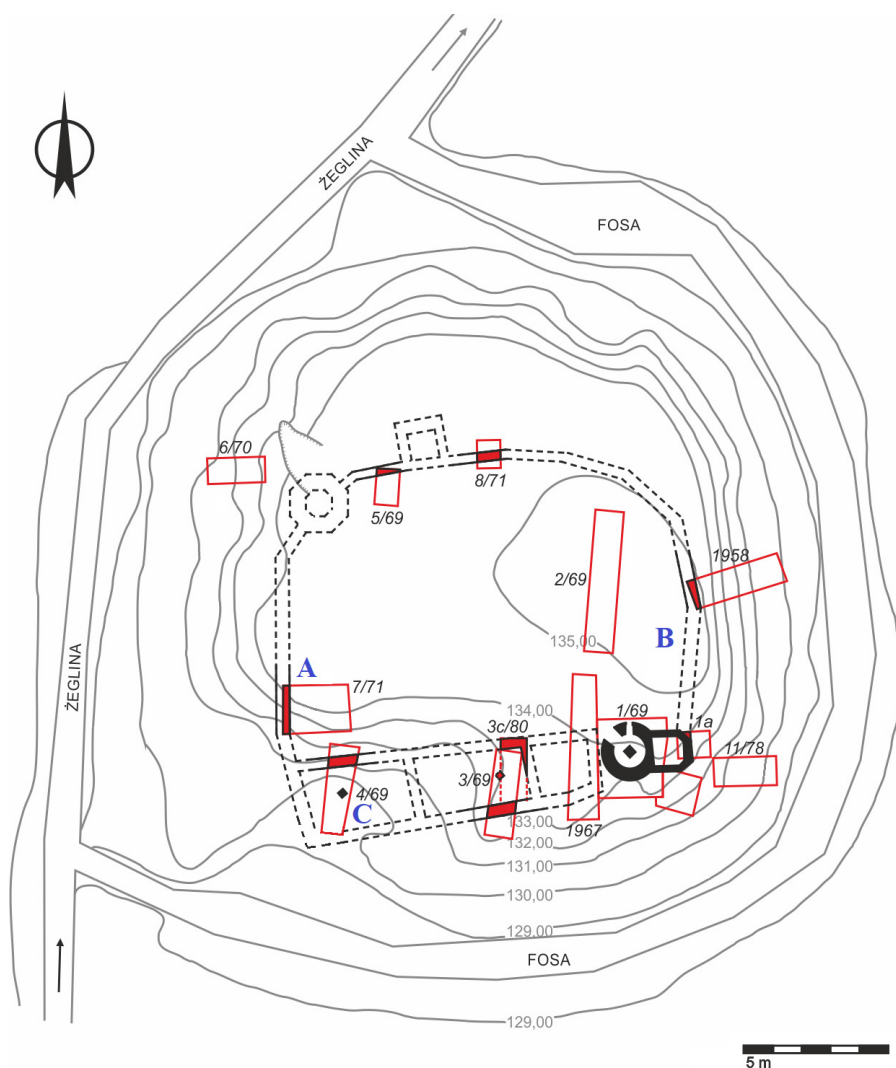


Fig. 1. Sieradz Castle, reconstruction of the plan based on the correlation of archaeological research and archival sources. Black-preserved wall fragments, red-negatives of walls, A - kitchen area; B - bakery area, C - larder area. According to T. Olszacki, made by T. Olszacki and M. Cichocki 2013, corrections by T. Olszacki 2024.

Its eastern side housed an interesting early Gothic chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity (which certainly existed in the 15th and early 16th centuries) with a circular main nave and a polygonal chancel, which was secondarily incorporated into the defensive wall. It was founded in the 2nd half of the 13th century by Duke Leszek the Black (Duke of Sieradz from 1261, Duke of Kraków from 1279, died in 1288). In the 14th and 15th centuries, the castle belonged to the exclusive group of the main royal residences, frequently being a home for monarchs and their families, and on a daily basis, the ‘capital’ of the Sieradz starosty and land, an important judicial and economic centre.

In the 16th century, the function of the royal residence in the Sieradz land was fully taken over by the castle in Piotrków, located in the eastern part of the province, associated with the birth of Polish parliamentarism, while Sieradz was primarily associated with successive starosts. In the years 1507-1532, the starost of Sieradz was Krzysztof Szydłowiecki of the Odrowąż coat of arms, lord of Ćmielów

Castle, the most powerful Polish magnate during the reign of Sigismund the Old (King of Poland in the years 1507-1548), who served as the chancellor and voivode of Kraków (and the castellan of Kraków at the end of his life).⁸ The next important period was the years of rule of two subsequent representatives of the Tarnowski magnate family of the Leliwa coat of arms: the Crown Treasurer Jan Spytek (1536-1547) and his son (also the Treasurer and the Voivode of Sandomierz) Stanisław (1547-1568), who, like Krzysztof Szydłowiecki, were also primarily associated with the province of Lesser Poland (Małopolska).⁹ In May 1588, a large part of the Sieradz castle was destroyed by a huge fire, which is a significant turning point in its history. The renovation and, in the residential part, partial reconstruction of the castle were undertaken by the starosts from the Bykowski family of the Gryf coat of arms, representing the regional

⁸ *Urzednicy* 1993, 170-171.

⁹ *Urzednicy* 1993, 171.

landed elite (the castellan of Łęczycza, Stanisław Bykowski in the years 1588-1606, and after him his son, the royal courtier Jan Bykowski until 1632).¹⁰ We have excellent written sources from that time that are of fundamental importance for the research on the castle: inventories from 1507, 1533, 1568, and twice from 1588, as well as inspection records from 1564 and written in the years 1628-1632.¹¹ The modernisation of the castle, combined with the Renaissance-style features carried out by Jan Spytek Tarnowski, is documented in excellently kept accounts.¹² The sources mentioned above provide a wealth of information not only about the castle itself, but also about the adjacent farmstead, hereinafter referred to as the outer ward (in the cited archives called *przygródek*).¹³ The destruction during the Polish-Swedish War (the 'Deluge') in the mid-17th century, the economic decline of the country, and further devastation related to the war theatre in the first half of the 18th century led to the decline of the Sieradz castle, which was completely demolished in the early 19th century after the noble Republic of Poland had lost its independence.

Currently, the castle grounds are occupied by the recently established, interesting 'Castle Hill' Cultural Park, which, through its exhibits, recalls the history and architecture of the non-existent complex identified during the insufficiently developed archaeological research from 1956-1980¹⁴ and

¹⁰ *Urzędnicy* 1993, 171.

¹¹ AGAD: ASK, section LIV, S-9, book 3 [hereinafter: 1507]; AGAD: ASK, section LVI, S-2/I, books 9-14 [hereinafter: 1533]; *Lustracja* 1564-1565, 54-56 [hereinafter: 1564]; AGAD: ASK, section LVI, S-2/III, books 2-7 [hereinafter: 1568]; AGAD: ASK, section LVI, S-2/IV, books 143-146 [hereinafter: 1588-I]; AGAD, *Księgi ziemskie i grodzkie sieradzkie*, no. 56, *Libri inscriptionum* 1588, books 706-708 [hereinafter: 1588-II]; *Lustracje* 1628-1632, 76-78 [hereinafter: 1628-32]. I published all the above-mentioned archive materials in the unpaginated part of the work Olszacki 2013 entitled: *Aneks-teksty źródłowe*. Due to the full availability of these sources, I refer to this edition below, indicating it each time in the main text, not in the footnotes.

¹² The invoices are attached to the annual register of the starost's expenses, usually entitled: *Regestrum distributorum proventum Capitaneatus Siradiensis Anni Supscripti* (under the numerically marked year) as *Distributa in fabricam novorum et restauracionem antiquorum Arcis Siradiensis edificiorum*, a total of 27 cards in AGAD: ASK, section LVI, S-2/I, book 414; AGAD, ASK, section LVI, S-2/II, books 63-64, 121, 178-180, 247-250, 287-289, 323-324. I have discussed these sources in detail for comparative purposes but they are still awaiting full publication: Olszacki 2013, 45-64.

¹³ Żemigala 2010 presented an interesting outline of the problem of the outer wards (*przygródki*) of the Wielkopolska province. Perhaps she was too hasty in connecting their appearance with the times of Władysław Jagiełło, cf. Olszacki 2013, 69.

¹⁴ Archaeological research on the Castle Hill was initiated by Janina Kamińska (Muzeum Archeologiczne i Etnograficzne w Łodzi), who worked in the eastern part of the archaeological site in the years 1956-1960. Their continuation was the research

later source research combined with the reinterpretation of these excavations, which were the work of the author of these words.¹⁵ (Figs. 1 and 2).

PLACES

The kitchen of the Sieradz Castle was located on the western side of the inner courtyard, in the immediate vicinity of the western section of the perimeter wall – probably filling almost the entire length of its straight section, and therefore starting about 10 m north of the great house and slightly over 5 m south of the defensive tower (as recorded in the inspection record from 1564: *Podle tej wieże kuchnia z drzewa* (English: *Next to this tower there is a wooden kitchen*). It can be assumed that there were at least three kitchen buildings in this area, namely a late medieval one ('kitchen 1'), an early modern one from phase I ('kitchen 2'), and an early modern building from phase II ('kitchen 3'). The first of these buildings can be identified with the remains visible in trench 7/71, in which the south-western corner of a log building, most probably situated along the South-East – North-West axis, has been preserved. The length of the gable wall (South-East) was about 6 m and was probably captured in the excavation trench almost along its entire length. The size of the longer walls of the building remains unknown. However, taking into account the probable location of the defensive tower, it was no greater than about 18-20 m. The floor of the building was lined with planks laid along its axis. The building was founded on the inner layer of the destruction material from a rampart dated to the 2nd half of the 13th century, therefore – taking into account the origins of the brick castle associated with Casimir the Great – the probable time of the construction of 'kitchen 1' can be considered to be the 3rd quarter of the 14th century. Numerous fragments of ceramic vessels typical of kitchen items were recovered from there (thick-walled,

of Anna Kufel-Dzierzgowska (Muzeum Okręgowe w Sieradzu), focusing on the southeastern part of the castle. The accidental uncovering of the walls of the Gothic rotunda led to the transfer of research to Państwowe Przedsiębiorstwo 'Pracownie Konserwacji Zabytków'; Krzysztof Nowiński (in years 1969-1971) and then Urszula Perlikowska-Puszkarska (1972-1980) were delegated to manage the excavations in Sieradz. At this stage, exploration was expanded in the southern zone of the castle, primarily in the area of the sacral building, with individual sections being established in the western and northern parts of Castle Hill. In total, excavations covered an area of approximately 1200 m². Except for the extensive presentation of the oldest studies, Kamińska 1962, the unpublished monographic architectural study of the rotunda, Koczorowski 1979, the remaining studies were presented only in general outline, Perlikowska-Puszkarska 1988. Apart from the rotunda, the main object of research remained the stronghold and the settlement preceding it, while the brick castle itself was considered a distant research target.

¹⁵ Olszacki 2013, 88-110.

undecorated vessels – pots and jugs, with evidence of their contact with fire and dishes prepared on it, fired, as can be seen from the available documentation, in a reduction atmosphere), which were dated to the 14th and 15th centuries.¹⁶ The information about two levels of layers and the presence of dark clay with traces of burning and stones allows us to assume that the functioning of ‘kitchen 1’ was ended or interrupted by a fire. Other artefacts recovered from the interior included a sandstone whetstone, an iron hook, and unspecified bone (knife?) grips. It should be noted that if the western wall of the castle ran meridionally, which is indicated by the location of its negative discovered during excavations, the results of electrical resistance tests from 1974, and the archival cartography (Prussian plan from 1796), then the medieval kitchen may not have been built completely parallel to its face.¹⁷

The 16th-century kitchen, known only from written sources, was most likely not the same feature as the one previously described, although it was placed in a similar location and could have had similar dimensions. The absence of specimens typical of early modern kitchens is worth noting among the materials from the above-mentioned fill: glazed pottery vessels, including a three-legged cooking pot, and tiles (probably pot-shaped tiles – more on this later). Therefore, the utility level of the new kitchen may have been located slightly higher and was not preserved until the time of archaeological excavations. Archival descriptions do not allow that kitchen to be located in any other way than parallel to the defensive wall – with it being placed against the face of the wall, which would also suggest

¹⁶ Research observations based on the unpublished reports by K. Nowiński and U. Perlikowska-Puszkarska, discussed in Olszacki 2013, 106.

¹⁷ Which would make the situation of Sieradz similar to that observed during the research of the prince’s castle in Wyszogród in Mazovia. The remains of a kitchen built in a timber-framed structure and an accompanying presumed larder were identified there, created in the courtyard space, away from the walls and built without any relationship between their location and the course of the fortifications. As the castle’s monographers noted: *The most important information, however, is the information, largely based on archaeological evidence, about the existence of a rather chaotically built settlement in the area within the castle walls, which seems to be a legacy of the older phase and a certain archaism. Unfortunately, given the state of knowledge about the courtyards of other Masovian castles, we do not know how common this was at that time:* Olszacki and Róžański 2018, 207. In both castles (i.e., Sieradz and Wyszogród), their construction as brick structures was preceded by the functioning of defensive princely residences surrounded by wooden and earthen ramparts. However, any conclusions are weakened by the quality and incompleteness of the documentation from the archaeological research of the Sieradz Castle. It is only marginally worth mentioning that ‘kitchen 1’ was most likely the place where food was prepared for the Polish kings and their families who frequently visited the castle in the 15th century.

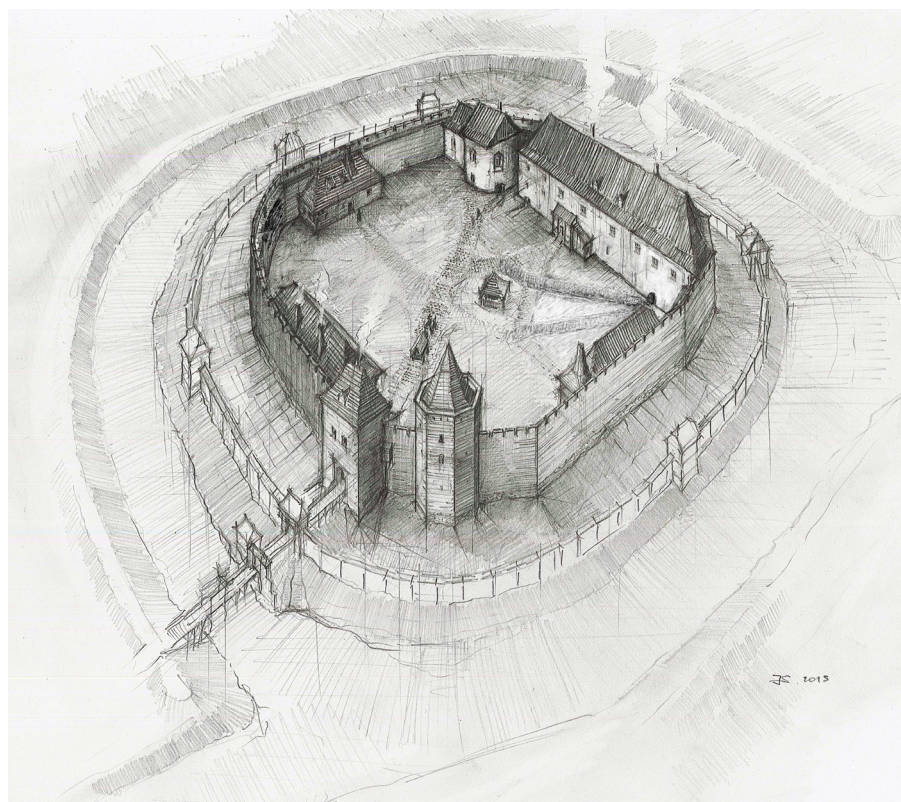
demolition and construction of a new building, also from non-durable materials (in 1564 it was noticed that it was *kuchnia z drzewa* – English: *a wooden kitchen*), although in an unknown carpentry construction. ‘Kitchen 2’ was probably created during the rule of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki, known for the modernisation of the production and sanitary zones of the estates he owned.¹⁸ In any case, it existed when the inventory was drawn up after that nobleman’s death in January 1533. At that time, it was a single-storey building divided into three rooms called ‘small storerooms (*camerulae*), on a one-and-a-half-bay layout, without a vestibule and most likely with an entrance to the larger of the rooms. As reported by the inspection record from 1564, there were iron bars on the windows on the lower floor, and the doors leading inside were mounted – as noted in the inventory from February 1588 – on hinges and were closed with a hasp (Polish: *wrzeciadz*), without padlock or a chain. We know about the fireplace inside the kitchen, which was probably built on a substructure – a hearth (called a stove?) under or on which the fire was stoked, and it was likely that a clay fireplace cap hung above it (in the inventory of 1588-I, it was noted: *piecz y komin zły* – English: *stove and chimney in poor condition*). This was part of *sztagowy* chimney (a pyramid-shaped structure on a square or rectangular plan, built of wood covered with clay), which was later (after the building was raised by one storey in 1547) built over with bricks (1568: *kuchnia w ny komin glinyany na virzchu szczegli vipuszczony* – English: *kitchen with a clay chimney on top made of brick*). The kitchen hearth (Polish: *trzon kuchenny*) was probably located in the larger of the rooms and on its western side, which made it possible to drive a chimney into the castle’s defensive wall, properly anchor the hood, and distance the fireplace from the wooden walls. The kitchen was extended by one storey in 1547, and this floor served as the castle’s plebeian dining room. We will return to this issue at the end of this article.

The above-mentioned kitchen burned down, like the entire southwestern part of the castle, in a huge fire in May 1588, apparently during the ingress of the new starost, Andrzej Zebrzydowski.¹⁹ The inventory from November of the same year, written after the magnate’s sudden death, describes the walls of the great house as completely destroyed by fire but does not mention the kitchen at all, so it burned down completely. Perhaps it was from there that the fire spread to the great house during

¹⁸ Kajzer and Olszacki 2011, 62.

¹⁹ *Urzednicy*, 171.

Fig. 2. Sieradz Castle view from the north-west, an attempt at reconstruction around the middle of the 16th century. According to T. Olszacki, drawing by J. Serafin 2013, with changes by T. Olszacki 2024.



the intense cooking activities related to the organisation of the ceremonial feast. However, this is only a conjecture.

In the inspection record from the first half of the 17th century, a new 'kitchen 3' was described (1628-32: *kuchnia nowo zbudowana* – English: *newly built kitchen*), so it was created on the initiative of Starost Jan Bykowski. It was most probably built in the same place as the previous one and generally in a similar form, i.e., with a kitchen space and adjacent premises on the ground floor (therefore also on a one-and-a-half-bay plan) and most probably with a dining room on the first floor. The building was constructed in a timber-framed construction, with walls filled with wooden elements covered with clay (1628-1632: *ściany wiązane w strychulce, lepione gliną*). The inspector found it to be *good and spacious* (1628-1632: *dobra i przestronna*), although – which may be surprising in comparison to the previous building from about a hundred years ago – an archaic, wood-pannelled (!) fireplace was introduced, separated from the rest of the floor (1628-32: *ognisko w niej okaszowane drewnem*). A chimney was probably above it, described only as *good*. The kitchen room was adjoined by two rooms connected to it by a door, namely a storeroom (*komora*, with doors on iron hinges) and, probably on the western side, a small room (*izdebka*) with wooden doors on two hinges, in which there was *piec dobry, prostych kafli* (English: *good stove with simple tiles*), probably

using the same chimney carved into the castle's defensive wall as the fireplace in the neighbouring kitchen room. The stairs led to the upper floor, where a small vestibule (*sionka*) and a small room (*izdebka*) were also built in a timber-framed construction, the second lit by four windows with glass panes in lead frames and heated by a stove made of used tiles (1628-1832: *piec z kafli stary*). The whole thing was protected with a roof covered with wooden shingles.

Although this is naturally an *ignotum per ignotum* conclusion, one can cautiously assume that the main reason for the reconstruction of the kitchen in the same location was the presence of a chimney shaft in the castle wall. The existence of beam sockets was probably also important here, as they allowed for the efficient construction of stairs (the old ones had burned down) leading to the defenders' porch, from which slops were poured under the wall and waste was thrown away. There can be no doubt about the unsophisticated custom of getting rid of kitchen waste by the shortest route, not only because of the analogy but also thanks to the mention in the sources concerning the Sieradz Castle, although this time from a period beyond the chronological framework of this article. In a rather convoluted text entitled *Opis odnowionej wieży zamku sieradzkiego* (English: *Description of the renovated tower of Sieradz Castle*) from 1688, we read: (...) *drugi ganek kucharzowi wylewać pomyje wodę z muru* (English: *on the second porch the cook is to pour*

the stops water from the wall),²⁰ the crossing out and blurring of that word suggests that the auditor, nobleman Michał Żegocki, while approving such practices, was at the same time aware of their inappropriateness, so he withdrew his pen and decided to self-censor, not perpetuating in writing (fortunately unsuccessfully!) the crude image of his era.

The bakery was the next production building associated with the culinary history of the Sieradz Castle. Unlike the kitchen, which was a separate building that had served this function probably since the very beginning of the castle's existence, the bakery was only brought into the inner courtyard in 1546. Previously – probably since the Middle Ages – it was located on the outer ward (*przygródek*), just behind the castle moat. It was housed in a multifunctional building made of non-durable materials and covered with boards, divided into a brewery and a bakery (1533: *domus asseribus tecta in qua braxatorium pistrinum*). We know nothing more about this building. In 1546, beer and bread production were separated. The former was left in the outer ward as a nuisance, while the latter was placed in a building that had already been standing in 1533 (and had been built shortly before) opposite the kitchen, on the other, western side of the inner courtyard, which again can be explained by the successful development of the social space of the castle organism. The building was initially the seat of the armed crew, or more broadly – the servants – as it was written in 1533: *Domus lignea quae peditibus Castreum noviter constructa atque tegulis ligneis tecta*. With the incorporation in 1546 between the kitchen and the great house of a two-storey building intended for the castle servants (to which we will return later), the former quarters were vacated, and their function was changed, which, however, did not involve any major transformation. The single-storey building, similarly to the kitchen, was characterised by a one-and-a-half-bay division, with a central vestibule (*sień*), a bakery room (*izba piekarska*) on the southern side (1533: *In qua palacium, a parte cuius dextra stuba*), and three (in 1533) and later – after being converted into a bakery – two storerooms (*komory*) on the northern side of the vestibule (1533: *A leva parte vero palacy (...) camerulle*). Three windows provided light the bakery room, and thanks to the inventory from 1533, we know its internal dimensions: it was a square with sides of 10.5 ells, i.e., about 6.20 m (1533: *stuba ad longitudinem 10 ½ ad latitudinem totidem cubitorum*), which

also determines the approximate width of the building. Similarly to the early modern kitchen building, the building was also located along the defensive wall (in 1564, clearly: *dom drzewiany przy murze* – English: *a wooden house next to the wall*). The oven was already there in 1533 and was probably rebuilt into a bread oven in 1546. Unfortunately, the sources do not describe it in more detail. Only in the first inventory from 1588 was it called a *simple oven*, and the interior itself was referred to as a *white room* (*izba biała*) (1588-I: *pikarnia drzewiana w niey izba biała, piecz prosthy*). The building survived the fire but was already in poor condition before it; for example, its windows were not glazed at that time (1588-II: *okna trzy, nanich błon niemasz* – English: *three windows, no membranes on them*). After the fire, the bakery was no longer present in the castle, and the building most likely began to serve as crew quarters again, assuming that it was mentioned in the 1628-1632 inspection record: (...) *na podwórzu budowanie na kształt chałupy, stare wiązanie w strychulce, dla piechoty*. If so, this provides additional information about the timber-framed construction of the building erected during the time of Starost Szydłowiecki and indirectly allows us to assume that 'kitchen 2' had an analogous structure (while 'kitchen 1' was supposed to have been built using log construction in the light of archaeological research).

The last building directly related to food processing is the castle brewery complex.²¹ The unpleasant smells accompanying fermentation and the need for constant access to water contributed to locating beer production outside the closed perimeter of walls, away from the residential zone, which was also the case in Sieradz. The multifunctional wooden building mentioned above housed a brewery and a bakery in 1533. It stood on the outer ward (*przygródek*), i.e., on the western side of the castle, at the end (probably the northern end) of a large pond over a hundred meters long (1568: *sadzawka wsdlus na staju. W konczu thei sadzawki iest Browar*). Until 1546, the building was divided into a brewery and a bakery, and from that year, it was designated exclusively for brewing, but it seems that a completely new building was erected at that time (which allows us to assume that the previous building could still have medieval origins). This is suggested by the scale of expenditure documented by invoices, in which the carpenter received 5 florins and 21 groats for building the brewery, in addition, 3 florins and 9 groats were spent on

²⁰ AGAD: KMS, section 148, book 37 and 204 v. – cf. Olszacki 2013: *Aneks-Teksty źródłowe*.

²¹ Issues related to brewing were discussed by Pietrzak 2013, 69-99 in the context of the farm facilities of the bishop's estates similar to the issues of the castle's outer wards.

shingles to cover it, and 2 florins and 26 groats were spent on 163 *kopa* of nails (9,780 pieces) needed for these activities.²² The building was plastered by Leonard, who was also involved in the expansion of the kitchen and who also built the chimney in the brewery, earning a total of 1 florin and 24 groats on it. A stove called *simple (prosty)* was installed there, which cost 15 groats. The windows were filled with glass that cost 21 groats for 150 glass panes of crown glass. A total of 14 florins and 16 groats were paid for work on the brewery (perhaps also related to the construction of the later-mentioned malt kiln). As can be guessed from descriptions from the years 1564-1588, the building was divided into two rooms: an interior with production functions called the *brewery*, and an adjacent *white room (izba biała)* with a stove and a chimney (1568: *Isba Biała spieczem*) lit by four windows with crown glass panes (1564: *Przy tym browarze izba, okien 4, blony szklane, komin murowany*).

Beer was brewed in the brewery, while the preceding stage of malting the grains (i.e., bringing the grains to the initial germination stage after pouring water over them) and drying them took place in a separate malt kiln building, first clearly distinguished in 1564 and then called an *ozd* (1564: *ozd do oždzenia słodów* - English: *ozd for malt fermentatio*), and later a *mieleczuch* (1568).²³ It was located on the opposite (southern) side of the above-mentioned pond, right next to the first gate of the outer ward (1568: *Mieleczuch zbudowany polie wroth*). It was a small wooden building divided into a vestibule (*sień*) and a room (*izba*) with two small windows. The condition of the castle brewery after years of neglect related to the time of management by the Starost Baltazar Lutomirski (1569-1586) was bad.²⁴ Even before the disastrous fire (which did not affect the outer ward) in May 1588, it was mentioned as severely damaged (*Browar sthary przed Zamkiem upadły* - English: *the old brewery in front of the Castle collapsed*), its windows were broken, the door to it was missing, and the old stove had also disappeared. In both inventories from 1588, the malt kiln building no longer appears, so it must have been previously devastated and demolished. The brewery is no longer mentioned in the inspection record from the years

1628-1632. The stagnation of Starost Lutomirski's times, followed by the long-drawn-out restoration of the burnt *castrum* carried out with Starosts Bykowski's own funds, and the problem with obtaining building materials (1628-32: *w tym starostwie wielki niedostatek borów i lasów* - English: *in this district there is a great shortage of coniferous and deciduous forests*, which were leased together with the village income) led to the desertion of the outer ward, which had previously been a well-organised economic zone.

The kitchen and the bakery were places where food was prepared but not where products intended for it were stored. At that time, no pigs or cattle were kept within the inner courtyard, as their presence would have been a nuisance given the proximity of the residential area (the stables were also located exclusively in the outer ward). According to the oldest full inventory description from 1533, food products were located in the cellar (1533: *cellarium*) under the great house and in the larder/granary (1533: *promptuarium*, 1588-I: *spizarnia*), which was a basement in the western part of this building (1533: *supra idem celarium versus occidentem situm*). This is also indicated by the results of archaeological research, in which a fragment of the preserved brick floor of the larder (or the substructure for the pillar) was located about 0.70 m higher than similar relics under the eastern part of the great house. Thanks to the dimensions of the interior located directly above the larder in the western part of the upper storey of the great house, provided in the inventory, we also know the size parameters of the larder itself, which was a large room measuring about 10×16 m (secondarily, probably during the renovation by Jan Spytek Tarnowski, it was reduced by a separate small room on the eastern side). The larder was, therefore, located very close to the kitchen and was accessible directly from the courtyard; its resources are documented by descriptions from 1507, 1533, 1568, and 1588. The cellar and the larder guaranteed what was necessary to effectively store food: coolness and darkness.

Freshwater, necessary for culinary production, was available from a well located in the middle of the castle courtyard. In 1568, its casing was made of roughly cut planks, and the roof above it was covered with shingles. Water was drawn with two buckets reinforced with iron hoops (1568: *W Posrodku thego zamku studnia obrąbiona dilamy na virzchu gontami pobitha v ny viadra dwie okowane zeliagem*). The inventory from 1588 shows that they were lowered by ropes wound around a metal shaft, probably with the help of a crank (1588: *wal*

²² Polish florin (*florenus polonialis*), also called 'Polish złoty,' divided into 30 groats (Polish: *grosz*), was the basic unit of accounting (not a coin) in the 16th-century Kingdom of Poland. The monetary unit in force at that time was *grzywna krakowska (marca polonici)*: Szwagrzyk 1990, 57-58, 109-110.

²³ Combining the malting (raising) and drying processes within one building was still the norm in the 17th- and 18th-century farm brewery complexes in Mazovia., cf. Pietrzak 2013, 72-73.

²⁴ *Urzędnicy*, 171.

okowany). After the fire, the well was neglected, and water was still brought or transported from outside to the castle renovated by the Bykowski family in the third decade of the 17th century, since, as we read in the inspection from the years 1628-32: *Na podwórzu studnia, nad nią alkierz, zawalona. Tę JMP starosta restaurować chce* – English: *In the yard, there is a well, a roof over it, collapsed. This His Lordship starost wants to restore.*

THINGS

The archives acquaint us with the inventory of movables gathered in the kitchen on the lower (production) floor of the above-described building. They are excellently described in the inventory from 1533.²⁵ Let us try to categorise them here. A butcher's axe (1533: *securis alias thopor*) was used for butchering meat, probably was larger and with a slightly differently shaped blade than the axe for cutting firewood (1533: *securis ad secanda ligna*). Utensils for the heat treatment of food were stored there: two cauldrons for cooking (1533: *caldearia*) and two larger and two smaller frying pans (1533: *patelle*), as well as a tool for roasting meat: one grate (1533: *craticula alias rosth*) and a utensil for straining or rinsing food, i.e., one deep colander – apparently, then as now, Poles popularly called it *durszlak* after its German name (1533: *colus altri fferris alias durblak*). Next, we can distinguish kitchen utensils for carrying and serving food: four larger vessels, perhaps saucers, and two smaller ones, perhaps saucers/platters (1533: *scutelle*) – the latter were then called *przestawki* (1533: [scutelle] *minores alias przestawky*) and six pewter bowls (*orbes stanei*), as well as most probably two tablecloths (*verna magna*). In addition, cutlery was stored there: two iron forks, laid out – which was clearly indicated – for eating roasted meats (1533: *ferra alias wylky supra quibus verna pro assandis carnibus promuntur*), which was probably a noteworthy proof of modernity for the inspector. Potentially double function: tools for chopping cabbage in the kitchen and cutting meat, but also for their consumption at the table, were probably knives called 'choppers' (1533: *cultei alias syekacze*), all the more so because the equipment at that time did not include cleavers intended for the kitchen, only the previously noted axe. The

cook worked at one long table (1533: *mensa longa ex asseribus facta*), and also had five stools (1533: *mensalia 5*) at his disposal.

The presented kitchen assortment should be separated from that described below and treated as a collection appropriate for the kitchen of the starost's castle from the first three decades of the 16th century, held by Krzysztof Szydłowiecki, although – in terms of tableware – these items should rather be attributed to the use of the official elite associated with the castle, rather than to the chancellor himself, who, when visiting the place occasionally, probably travelled there with his own exquisite movables. At the same time, our attention should be directed both to the resources described here and to further registers of movables, and one must not forget about the 'trap of obviousness' that is constantly present in such records, in this situation probably resulting in the omission of pottery containers or smaller wooden items, especially objects carved in wood, as well as products of the basketry craft.²⁶

The next list of kitchen utensils is three and a half decades younger, and this difference seems to be legible both in the expanded morphology of the assortment, its specialisation, and the diversity of raw materials. Here, we can most certainly observe the process of assimilation and dissemination of standards set by the customs of the royal court of the last two Jagiellons, which were significant for the Old Polish culture and the courts of magnates who drew from it; standards certainly fully assimilated by the powerful Tarnowski family, who ruled the Sieradz county from 1536 to 1568. Although they probably rarely visited the castle (the younger Tanowski might have been there more often, although he did not reside there for long as he had his own court seat in Klonowa, a two-hour horse ride from Sieradz), they inspired its further positive transformations.

The inventory was drawn up on 1 May 1568, just after the death of the Sandomierz voivode Stanisław Tarnowski in April of that year, and, as in the previous paragraph, provides insight into the homogeneous set of objects typical of that period. Let us look in the same order as above. Three cleavers (*tassaki 3*) were used for chopping meat or shredding cabbage, and the previously noted axe was not mentioned. Containers for the heat treatment of food are represented by as many as six copper cauldrons (*Kothlow miedzianich 6*), of which one, suspended on a chain, was used only for boiling water (*ieden na lanczuchu dlia grzania vodi*), another for boiling meat (*A drugi do warzenia*

²⁵ It is worth referring these and further remarks to the interesting observations made by Anna Marciniak-Kajzer, with which they are basically consistent, and the noticeable change between the assortment of Sieradz kitchen, not so much medieval, but rather slightly more provincial in 1533, and the early modern kitchen, or rather the kitchen included in the sphere of higher needs in 1568, seems to be a specific commentary on these remarks: Marciniak-Kajzer 2019.

²⁶ Pośpiech 1992.

miessa), while the remaining four were described as small (and therefore probably closer to the function of a modern pot), which naturally allows us to perceive the previously mentioned ones as more impressive. The set includes only one frying pan, but it is a copper one (*patella miedziana*). A large copper bowl (*missa wielka miedziana*) was probably also used for the heat treatment. The number of accessories for roasting meat over the fire has increased significantly, but instead of a grill, there are three large iron spits and four smaller spits (*Roznow 3 (...) Roznow 4*). The equipment still included one colander, this time made of copper (*dursliak miedziani*), as well as perhaps a kind of hook for hanging, smoking, or fishing out meat from broth (*wathka do vibierania massa*), and perhaps an iron staff (*laska ziliazna*) was used for carrying or hanging cauldrons. There was probably also a stave vessel at hand that is difficult to interpret unequivocally, a type of trough (*Kimar do kladzenia*, from the German *Kimme*). Tableware was made largely of tin, and included four bowls and five plates (*4 misz czinovich 5 talerzi czinovich*) and as many as twelve saucers/platters (made of an unknown material), if – using the translation of the Latin term *scutellum minorum* contained in the previous inventory – we are to translate the word *przystawka* in this way (*12 przystawki*). A novelty was a brass mortar (*mozdierz mossiqdzowi*), probably for grinding spices, the presence of which is mentioned in the inspection record from 1564, as described below. Cutlery is represented by an unknown number of forks, already integrated into the Old Polish table manners (*wilki*) and, similarly to 1533, two chopping knives (*sikacze 2*), but this time probably used exclusively for ‘table’ purposes. Finally, four tablecloths (‘obrussow 4’) were stored in the kitchen.²⁷

Let us move on to the presentation of the bakery and brewery equipment. The description from 1533 mentions that the bakery had a large kneading trough for kneading flour and rising bread dough, called a *tok* (1533: *alveus magnus pro fermentarione farine alias thok*) and two smaller bread bowls (1533: *alvei minores pro faciende pane 2*). In addition, a small vessel was also kept there, probably a bowl (1533: *vasculum*) and a wooden vessel – a watering can (1533: *centarus ligneis*), needed for mixing flour. After the bakery was moved to the inner courtyard, its movable assets probably did not change much. In 1564, it was probably the same or a similar large kneading trough that was noted:

²⁷ The presented inventories do not differ significantly from, for example, the resources of the wealthier bourgeois kitchen, cf. e.g., M. Bogucka 1977.

koryto wielkie dla pieczenia chleba – English: *a large trough for baking bread*. The collective list of castle equipment drawn up in 1568 with the bakery certainly allows us to connect the kneading trough – *tok*, the trough, and perhaps the pastry board (1568: *thok 1 koritho 1 stolnicza 1*), so it was not very diverse.

A greater variety of miscellaneous equipment was found in the brewery. In 1533, a new cauldron for brewing beer was recorded there (1533: *caldear pro braxanda cervisia bonam et integrum*), five large barrels with tin lids (1533: *dolia magna cum opertorys stamneis 5*), and four smaller barrels, probably with wooden lids (1533: *item [dolia] minora*). There were also two buckets (1533: *urne alias czebri 2*) and an unspecified *alia necessaria pro braxanda cervisia*. In the description from 1564, when the brewery was already operating in a building on the outer ward, without a bakery nearby, the same big cauldron was probably used for brewing beer (the wort alone?), but also another one – for brewing hops (probably wort with hops) (1564: *kociol wielki do warzenia piwa, drugi mniejszy do chmielu*). In addition, there were two vats used for fermenting beer, as well as one *przykadek* (probably a small vat), and a barrel for pouring the finished beer from the vats, called *drybus* (1564: *drybus do zlewania piwa*). There was also one vat in the malt kiln associated with the brewery. Unlike in 1533, empty barrels for storing beer seem to have been omitted in both the 1564 and 1568 descriptions or were not kept there.

To avoid repetition, the food packaging found in the cellar and larder/pantry, along with the food itself, will be shown below. However, it is worth mentioning that the larder was also a place for storing wax candles, of which there were 600 pieces (1533: *candelarum capecie 10*), and storage for a few castle weapons. For example, in 1588 four simple arquebuses hung on new bars and two flagpoles were stored there (1588-I: *drzgi do strzelby wiessania nowe, kii zelazne do strzeliania cztery. Drzewa do choragwi dwie*). The abundance of goods stored there required proper protection, so the door leading to the larder was closed with a hasp and a padlock (1588-I: *Drzwi wniesy na zawiassach z wrzeciadzem y klothkam*).

FOOD

Let us take a comparative look at the inventories of food resources in the above-mentioned interiors. In 1533, three different cellars under the great house were used to store different categories of supplies, and another cellar, for a change, did not serve as a warehouse, but as a prison, and was

suggestively called *męczarnia* (English: *the torment*). So, apart from this dungeon, the second cellar contained thirty onion wreaths (one of the two vegetables stored in the castle), i.e., dried bulbs tied with their stems around a rope, in an estimated total of about 700-800 pieces (1533: *In sedem cepearum sertoquadraginta habentur*). The third cellar from the east served as a beer cellar at that time (1533: *In tercio cervisia servantur*). There were nineteen beer containers defined by the term *vasa* (1533: *vasa pro servanda cervisia 19*), probably not full-size wooden barrels (*dolium* – this word was later used to describe a container for cabbage) but smaller containers, e.g., with a volume close to a cask (a quarter barrel), which would give a completely hypothetical volume of about 500 litres of the hop drink.²⁸ Large wooden pails, of which there were five, were probably used to transport the poured beer to the place of consumption (1533: *cantari lignei magni*). Three wooden tankards were stored there (1533: *Poccula lignea alias kofflyi*), probably used for tasting the beer on site; storing them far from the target consumption area and in damp cellar conditions seems unjustified. The fourth cellar, closing the line on the western side, was intended for sauerkraut, of which at the time of taking the inventory, there were one and a half barrels left (1533: *caulium salitarum dolia 1 ½*), i.e., probably about 150 litres.

In 1568, the inventory did not exactly specify what was kept in the cellars, but after completing the description of the castle and listing its military items, and before listing the larder's resources, the text included a collection of all the movables that made up the *castle equipment* (1568: *Sprzeth zamkowi*). Of the above, twenty beer logs and sixteen cabbage logs (1533: *klod piwnich 20 kapustnich 16*) should certainly be referred to as the basement food storage, i.e., probably not archaic containers in the form of hollowed-out wooden logs (although this cannot be ruled out), but rather smaller barrels corresponding to the previously used Latin term *vasa*. Thus, it can be stated that the number of beer containers differed only by one compared to 1533, but there were more supplies of sauerkraut (perhaps around 400 litres), which was stored in smaller, more practical barrels (?).

The oldest note on the larder's resources comes from 1507, when, in early March, Andrzej Dunin from Pratkowice took over the Sieradz starosty on behalf of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki. The contents of the larder at that time were rather modest.

Only two halves of lard were recorded, and apart from that, half a barrel of oil, three bushels (Polish: *korzec*) of peas (about 216 litres)²⁹ and the same amount of millet, and two bushels (about 144 litres) of wheat groats. The well-developed castle estate left by Szydłowiecki looked completely different in January 1533. At that time, as many as nineteen sides of fat from that year's slaughter were recorded (1533: *lardi anni presentis perne*) and eight gallons (Polish: *garniec*) of salted meat (1533: *carnium salitarum vasa 8*). There were as many as twenty pots of butter there (1533: *olle butiri 20*), although the term *olla* – used only once in the quoted description – should probably be understood here not as a measure (gallon) but literally, as a category of packaging – a ceramic pot of unknown capacity. In addition, four bushels of loose evaporated salt (1533: *salis cocti coreti 4*) were found, i.e., about 288 litres of this valuable spice and preservative. The supplies were supplemented by grain, hemp, and flax seeds. This amounted to eighty bushels of wheat (1533: *siliqinis coreti 80*), or about 5,760 litres, or about fifty large sacks of the present standard. Hemp seeds (1533: *seminis canapum coreti 8*) were stored in the amount of 8 bushels (approximately 576 litres), and flax (linseed) seeds were recorded as three and a half bushels – over 240 litres (1533: *seminis linii coreti 3 ½*). There were also ingredients for producing beer: about 20 bushels of dried hops (1533: *humuli cita vel ultra coreti 20*), i.e., about 1,440 litres, and one and a half bushels of malt (1533: *pulvis ordeareorum coretus 1 ½*). Onion wreaths were also moved from the castle cellars to the larder; in 1568, twenty-six were hanging, roughly the same number as before. Fish and hunted wild birds were not stored in the larder but they certainly found their way to the castle table 'on an ongoing basis' after fishing and hunting, for which the accessories present in the analysed room were used: two towed fishing nets, also known today as trammels (1533: *pro piseandis piscibus recia nyewoth vulgariter wlok*) and four hunting nets, probably intended for catching waterfowl, although perhaps also for catching mammals (1533: *retia ferina*), including one assessed by the inspector as *new and excellent* (1533: *quartum rete novum perfectum ferinus*).³⁰ There were also two large empty containers in the larder: a large barrel with a capacity of eight

²⁹ Being aware of the existence of any inaccuracies, when converting the measures contained in the sources to modern measures of capacity, the value of the Sieradz bushel (Polish: *korzec sieradzki*) was assumed to be equal to approximately 72 liters, cf. Boroda 2023, 115-116.

³⁰ Probably a kind of latching mechanism for connecting the nets (*feras partinentibus nondum fferee obductus*).

²⁸ Beer was always produced to meet current needs; storing larger quantities than could be consumed due to ignorance about the pasteurization process would have been pointless.

beer barrels (1533: *dolia magna in modius braxatorio doliey 8*: at least around 1,000 litres!) and a large kneading trough – *tok* (1533: *alveus magnus alias thok*).

Unlike the range of kitchen equipment, the resources of the larder were not formally different in May 1568 in relation to the previously discussed period, although their significant quantitative increase can be observed, which indicates a period of prosperity in the functioning of the castle's social microcosm during the years of the rule of the two of two starosts from the Tarnowski family. Thus, there were fifteen half-carasses of animals, eight fattened lards (1568: *miessa polczy 15 sadel 8*), one and a quarter barrels of salted meat, and one pot of lard. Dairy products were represented by five butter churns (Polish: *faska*) and nine threescores of cheese (probably 540 dried lumps of it). Salt, probably evaporated, was stored in the amount of eight bushels, or about 576 litres; its stock thus doubled compared to 1533. Grains were recorded as much less, at just twelve bushels of wheat (about 864 litres – about eight modern large sacks). Hemp and flax seeds were counted as five and four bushels (360 and 288 litres), respectively. In the larder, peas – 1.5 bushels and a bushel of buckwheat groats (1568: *krup tatarczanich corczy 1*) appeared, absent in the previous inventory but recorded in 1507. In 1533, there was no mention of rye flour, of which this time, the inspector measured out as much as 66 bushels (approximately 4,752 litres – about 40 large sacks). The grain was stored in large wooden containers serving as silos (1588-I: *do sypania zboza kadzi sescz*), of which there were six in 1588. In the same year, the new wooden slatted chest for oats was also mentioned.

To conclude this part of the text, it is worth pausing for a moment to discuss the issue of animal breeding and plant cultivation for the castle table and the location of places related to these activities. Due to the need to use eggs in the kitchen and the bakery, chickens and geese were the only animals bred within the walls, although only the inventory from 1533 clearly mentions this; maybe it changed later. The eastern room (*komora*) in the lower storey of the courthouse, standing next to the defensive wall on the eastern side of the entrance to the castle courtyard, served as a henhouse (1533: *a parte vero dextra aliud promptuarium in quo galli et anseres nutritur*). Grain, also used for feeding poultry, was kept there in massive wooden chests standing in front of the entrance to the building (1564: *Przed tą sienią zrzębione z drzewa 2 skrzyni, co w nich*

zboże albo słody chowają). The moat surrounding the castle was not only an obstacle making it difficult for the enemy to access the castle, but also a breeding reservoir in which fishing was carried out using nets kept in the larder and stretched between the banks. Interestingly, the fish farming area did not cover the entire ring of the moat but only its western section (which would suggest the presence of some kind of delimitation, for example, piling with fascine). In the inventory from 1533: *A pistrini domo* was noted (this refers to the bakery located at that time on the outer ward, at the end of the road to the castle) *protenditur fossa usque ab stabulum magnum* (this stable was located to the south of the road leading from the first gate to the outer ward) *qua loco reservaculi pisceum utuntur*. This part of the moat (currently occupied by the small Żeglina River) was probably the least silted up due to the existence of a canal allowing water to flow from the Warta River. In 1568 there was a mention of: *przekop z rzeki Warty zarosły* (English: *The ditch from the Warta River overgrown*). The pigs were kept in a pigsty on the outer ward, right next to the brewery, which probably provided the animals with feed from production waste. In 1533, nine pigs were there (1533: *Item penes idem pistrinum est domicula saginantur porci 9*). In February 1588, two pigsties were there (1588: *Thamze chlewy czo wieprzi karmią dwa* - English: *There are two pigsties where they feed the pigs*). In the immediate vicinity of the castle, garden crops were also grown to meet local culinary needs. The inventory from 1533 mentions three gardens: two on the outer ward (behind the bakery-brewery and on the south side of the stables) and one between the outer ward and the city, next to the Holy Trinity Church. We know for sure that the castle gardens were planted with cabbage, among other things (1588-I: *Ogrody dwa Przy Zamku Wszystkom zassiane y kapustham zassadzone* – English: *Two gardens near the castle, completely sown and planted with cabbage*).

PEOPLE

Treating the presented issues as a multiple contribution to future research going beyond the subject presented here, I would like to conclude by attempting to answer four questions: who? ate what? prepared by whom? and where? in the Sieradz Castle in the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century. Here, I must immediately make a reservation that, not claiming to be an expert in the field of historical culinary culture, I can only present a general ('raw material') answer to

the first question of *what*,³¹ while from the answer to the *who* question I exclude unusual situations, which certainly include the presence at the table of the starost himself, especially powerful magnates: Krzysztof Szydłowiecki, Jan Spyttek Tarnowski or his son Stanisław, for whom Sieradz was only one of many, and certainly not the most important, residences they could use (and when they appeared there they probably used their own tableware, and partly also their victuals). Finally, the answer to the fourth question, *where*, is burdened with a large degree of hypotheticality, which does not mean that it cannot be formulated with due caution.

The everyday staple of main dishes was probably sauerkraut, of which we observe large and growing supplies all the time. We can assume that it was often served for dinner boiled (maybe also baked), garnished with bacon, and eaten with bread produced in the bakery, probably rye, judging by the type of flour stored there. An analysis of the bakery's modest assortment suggests that some baked goods could have been prepared on the pastry board in addition to bread. Groats (buckwheat and pearl barley) were probably served just as often. There was also no shortage of meat, which was eaten either boiled (probably obtaining a nutritious broth at the same time), fried, or roasted, which was more common around the middle of the 16th century. Both meat preserved in pots and pieces cut from stored, perhaps smoked, carcasses were eaten, although it was probably almost exclusively pork. Poultry also found its way to the table: chickens and geese, as well as their eggs. The fact that a significant amount of hemp seeds was stored in the larder suggests that they were used for culinary purposes, perhaps for making soup, or as an addition to other dishes, or perhaps for baking. Peas were also eaten, probably with cabbage, or cooked in broth for soup. For non-dinner meals, bread was served with lumps of cheese and butter, and a smaller amount of lard. The improvement in taste in everyday cooking was mainly due to the addition of salt and onions to a large extent. The weekly Friday fast, as well as the annual Lent, were probably an opportunity to eat fish frequently, caught in the breeding area of the moat, where crucians, tenches, and possibly carp probably thrived. The lord's table was definitely more varied. The total register of annual expenses, which was part of the 1564 inspection, clearly distinguishes the item *na kuchnię (...) urzędnikom* – English: *for the kitchen [for] officials*. This item, which

annually costs a very high amount of 160 florins,³² most likely includes meat (lamb?, beef?), fish (predatory species?, carps?, herrings?), and foreign spices (i.e., spices imported from abroad: pepper, cloves, nutmeg, saffron, and cinnamon) that came from outside the castle farm. The basic drink of the castle was beer, always stored in the cellars in large quantities and probably not of excellent quality, considering that it was brewed with standing water from the castle pond (which was not uncommon).³³ The sources are silent about wine, or mead, but also about strong distilled alcohol in the context of typical food supplies. The annual expenditure of 4 florins and 28 groats mentioned in 1564 for *wax and wine* for the clergy associated with the castle probably covered only the purchase necessary for liturgical purposes.

The preparation of food and drinks was handled by specialists hired for this purpose, as noted in the same inspection record. The cook was the highest in this hierarchy, followed by the brewer – *mielcarz* and baker, probably assisted by lackeys, if necessary. The castle's food was, as one might assume, divided into four groups, which again can be listed in relation to their social status. The group standing highest, but also visiting the castle exceptionally, was the starost himself and the guests he entertained. Jan Bykowski probably often visited there, as he could already use the castle, mostly renovated after the fire, and being undoubtedly less titled and busy than his father who gave up the starosty for him, he probably divided his life between the family's impressive defensive manor house in Byki (now within the borders of Piotrków Trybunalski) and the Sieradz castle. The second group was the castle elite, which consisted of officials and office-chancery workers. They were the vice-starost (earned in 1564 60 florins per year), the burgrave (32 florins), and the clerk-notary receiving a salary covered by petitioners. The clerk's assistant (deputy notary, *podpisek*) could probably have eaten with them as well, although judging from the location of his place on the lower floor of the court building next to the henhouse, his rank was inferior to the others. One or two priests also sat at the table (in the 1564 inspection, there is an amount of 32 florins for the Sieradz clergy). In the early 16th century, priests still served

³² For comparison, the entire renovation of the castle carried out in the years 1537-1547 cost just over 836 florins: Olszacki 2013, 5758, 61-64.

³³ Cf. Pietrzak 2013, 74-76. However, although the sources do not mention it, it cannot be ruled out that the water from the pond was used only for auxiliary purposes, and better quality water was piped to the brewery. The castle employed *rurnik* (plumber) and we also know of a *rurmus* operating nearby.

³¹ The proposed conclusions are worth comparing with the still fundamental study: Wyczański 1969.

the castle Holy Trinity chapel in the old rotunda from the 13th century, and after its destruction and transformation into an archive for castle books and a room located above it, associated with the same patronage of the Holy Trinity church situated in front of the outer ward – in the area of today's Praga estate.

The third group, probably the most numerous, consisted of plebeian craftsmen and servants associated with the castle. According to the 1564 inspection record, there was a cook (receiving 6 florins and 12 groats annually) and a door-keeper (*klucznik*) earning the same amount, then probably three soldiers who also occasionally performed other functions assigned by the burgrave (possibly also court ushers) and were then called *grodzinie* and previously *piechota* (English: infantry), each of whom received 6 florins and 4 groats annually, a brewer (4 florins and 24 groats), a baker (4 florins), and two watchmen (each receiving only 2 florins annually). Perhaps the priests' servant (called a *kompanator* and receiving a castle salary of 2 florins and 12 groats) dined with them, unless his duties required him to stay with his principals. The same group should also include the highly skilled craftsman who was the plumber (in old Polish: *rurnik*, 14 florins and 4 groats), for whom servicing the castle was certainly not the only place of employment, and therefore, he was probably not an everyday guest at meals. It is possible that among those listed, there were also people not mentioned in the settlements, for example, the wives of those listed or their offspring, who also performed some odd jobs for the needs of the castle. Finally, the fourth group consisted of prisoners of noble origin serving their sentences in the castle tower and those arrested. In total, not counting the unknown representatives of the third group and the prisoners, the kitchen had to feed at least 15 people a day, whose diet corresponded to their position in the feudal world of the castle microcosm.

PLACES OF CONSUMPTION AND DEFECTION

Meals were eaten, I presume, primarily in three places. Representatives of the first and second group in the 16th century – although the sources do not mention it *expressis verbis* – ate in a large house, located relatively close to the kitchen from which food was brought there, if necessary, heated on the spot in the fireplace. Such functions could have been fulfilled by the smallest of these interiors – a room (*izba*) heated by a stove and lit by three windows, located on the eastern side of the first floor of the building, in which the inventory from

1533 noted the presence of two long oak tables and two benches. If anyone present needed to go to the latrine, they went to the other side of the floor, through the vestibule (*sień*) to the western chamber (*komnata*) from which the latrine-oriel hanging on the wall was accessible (1533: *ex qua est cloaca ex muroeducta*). Completely different needs, perhaps due to the highly probable presence of the clergy at meals, which was part of the daily routine, were provided by the chapel, the upper floor of which was accessible from the eastern room (*izba*) by a short porch. The chapel, last recorded in 1533, was later renovated and turned into a secular room with its own latrine-oriel, which was probably used after meals (the western side of the first floor was then designated as a private living area, probably belonging to the starost, or, on a daily basis, to one of his subordinates). After 1568 and before 1588, the function of the rooms on the first floor of the great house was probably changed, and the private zone was moved to the eastern side of the vestibule (along with the bedroom separated by a wooden partition). The room on the western side intended for consumption was then called the *great room* (*izba wielka*, earlier: *komnata*). In 1588, this room was heated by a stove and a fireplace. There were, among other things, four tables, a luxurious seat with armrests and probably a backrest (1588-I: *sedil z poreczem*), and two benches, including a smaller one with armrests (1588-I: *ławka y druga ławka mała sporeczem*). If necessary, other benches placed along the walls could also be used (1588-I: *ławy przy szcianach*). Physiological needs were taken care of in the same latrine-oriel as before the renovation, which was accessed at that time through a green-painted door (1588-I: *wychod, u niego drzwi zielone na zawiasach y zamek*).

The great house restored by the Bykowski family was preserved in 2/3 of its original volume, i.e., in the central and eastern parts, and was expanded towards the northeast, absorbing the former chapel. However, the most severely damaged western part, which once housed a larder in the basement and a *great room* on the second floor, was not rebuilt. It can be assumed that the room intended for meals by the castle elite, designated as the *dining room* (*izba stołowa*) in the inspection record of 1628-32 (which leaves no doubt as to its function), was located in the space of the former upper floor vestibule (*sień*). The 17th-century *dining room* was lit by four large windows (three to the north, one facing away from the castle to the south and thus framed by an iron grille), and its floor was covered with planks. There was a tiled stove there,

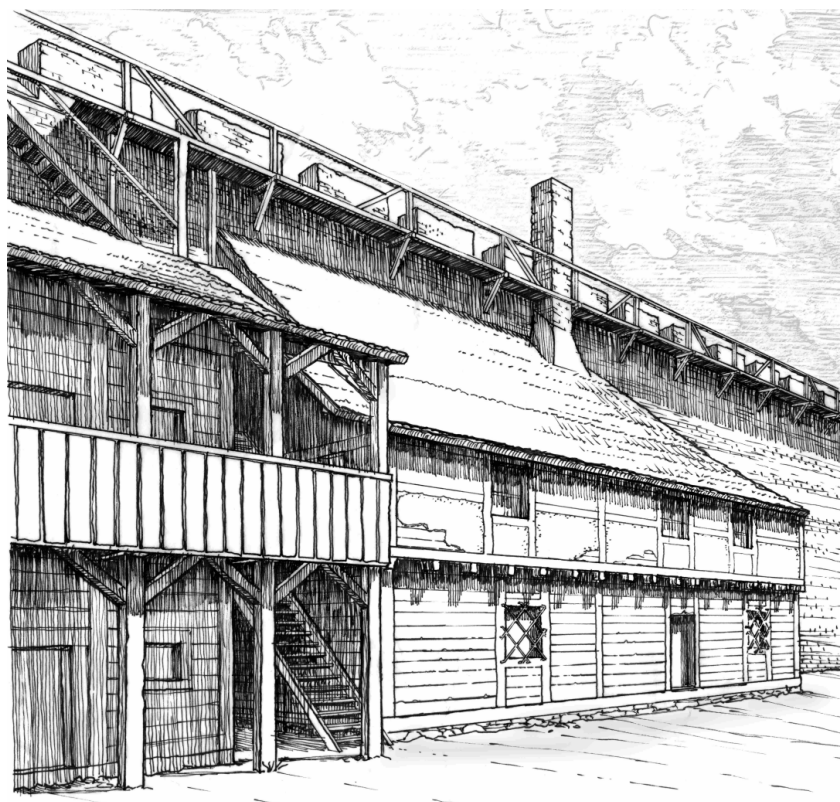


Fig. 3. Sieradz Castle, an attempt at reconstructing the castle kitchen (right) and the house 'for the servants' (left) around the middle of the 16th century as seen from the south-east. According to T. Olszacki, drawing by P. Rajski 2014.

as well as a fireplace providing light and allowing for heating meals (1628-32: *piec chędogi, biały na fundamencie murowanym, białymi kaflami jako u wierzchu wszędy obwiedziony (...) komin murywany*). The same description includes a wall cabinet typical of this type of interior, probably divided into shelves and closed with doors on whitened hinges (1628-32: *szafeczka w murze, drzwiczki na zawiasach żelaznych pobielanych*). Tableware and perhaps tablecloths were probably kept there, but unfortunately, the sources do not specify this. The interior furnishings consisted of two tables and two stools, which may suggest that the number of members of the castle elite who visited the room was limited.

Perhaps the feudal elite also ate on the floor above the castle gate, where a small room appears in subsequent descriptions (1533: *supra portam stibella murata*) with a stove and a fireplace, equipped with a table, benches placed around it, and a sideboard (called *slużba* – English: *servants*). Two barred windows provided light, and from the chamber next to it, there was a passage to the latrine-oriel (1533: *cloaca per murum educta*), which completed the whole functional setup. It can be assumed that this was a more common location for the second group to eat meals, its advantage being the proximity of the courthouse, i.e., the workplace of officials, and a small cubic capacity that could be heated faster and cheaper than the interiors of the great house. However, the inconvenience was the considerable distance from the kitchen. (Fig. 2).

The large third group gathered for meals before 1547 in a room in a house built probably in the 1520s, which later housed the castle bakery and, previously, the castle crew. They have already been described above in connection with the analysis of the bakery itself. Starting this year, it moved to the newly built floor above the castle kitchen, serving as a plebeian dining room. The first floor of that building (*domus nova supra coquina*) was built by carpenter Michał from Szadek (a nearby town in the Sieradz region), who received 7 florins and 26 groats for it. The scope of his activities most likely included the demolition of the old truss, construction of new external walls and an internal partition (separating the small room – *izdebka* – from the vestibule), and construction of a new truss and covering the roof with shingles. The five windows were set in wooden frames and glazed. The recorded carpentry work, as well as the bench priced at 2 groats, was made by a carpenter called Jan. The walls of the first floor were plastered by Leonard for 16 groats. The invoices also recorded the work of stove maker Wawrzyniec Koza, who put up a stove in the kitchen on the first floor for 26 groats. Judging by the reasonable price, it can be assumed that the heating device was made of pot-shaped tiles. Unfortunately, despite the constant designation of the larger of the upper rooms as a 'small room' (*izdebka*: 1564, 1568) and room (*izba*: 1588) – which clearly indicates that the interior was heated with a stove – the only mention of it appears in

a text from 1588, in which it is described as being in poor condition. After the kitchen was rebuilt following the fire, a dining room for the castle servants and employees was probably reintroduced to the first floor.

The furnishings of the floor above the kitchen, apart from the above-mentioned invoices, are not described in any texts, although it can be assumed that at least two of the sixteen larger tables (1568: *stollow wietssich numero 16*) and several of the seven benches without backrests or rails (1568: *lavek bez porecza 7*) mentioned in the collective list of movables from 1568, could have stood there. The location of the dining room above the kitchen was well thought out. A house for the servants (1568: *dlya sluzebnikow*) was built in 1546 between it and the western side of the great house (which housed the larder on the ground floor), containing four rooms on two floors. Stairs leading to their floors and the porch of the defensive wall were built between the gable walls of both buildings. This entire zone thus compactly combined the functions of production, storage, and space for collective consumption related to food with residential tasks and (as already mentioned above) and the shortest route for removing waste, probably both kitchen waste and 'night' waste. The accumulation of wooden structures also had its unpleasant consequences. Even before the great catastrophe of May 1588, a smaller fire had broken out and consumed the servants' house. In the inventory drawn up in February of that year, it was noted that: *Podlie kuchni, bely komory sluzebnicze alie se wniwecz obrozily, ieno ych znak bo ie popaliono* – English: *Next to the kitchen there were servants' quarters, but they have been turned into nothingness; only a trace remains of them because they burned down.* (Fig. 3). If the plebeians used sanitary facilities at all, they probably had access only to the aforementioned latrine-oriel on the first floor of the gate building. The prisoners and individuals under arrest belonging to the fourth group received their modest food rations in the place of permanent or temporary isolation, that is, in the prison tower or the jail, initially located in the basement located on the eastern side under the great house, and after the 17th-century reconstruction following the fire, in the annex at the northern wing of the same building.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

Janusz Pietrzak, quoted at the beginning of this text, rightly noted that: *In general, it can be assumed that the castle's economic tasks included two levels of activity. The first was related to the implementation of the county's management*

*because it was the place where a significant part of the decisions were made, and their implementation was ultimately settled. The second was activities aimed at securing the daily consumption needs of the castle's inhabitants. The castle is also a place where food products are produced (and processed), as well as prepared for consumption. This includes brewing beer, baking bread, and preparing meals.*³⁴ So far, castle studies on the Kingdom of Poland have focused almost exclusively on the issue of the military functions of castles. A lot of space was also taken up by general formal analyses, which – combined with the aspect of determining the chronology of the building and the group of potential construction analogies for it (and the symbolic content embedded in them, but usually subject to shallow analysis), concluded the research process. Only recently have studies been recognising the value of studying castles from this territory as a spatial and social structure with complex functions, including perhaps the most impressive function of the capital's royal residence,³⁵ as well as detailed research on artistic issues, also regarding the highest level of foundations.³⁶ However, it seems that we are only at the beginning of the 'second wave' of castle studies, in which not only the analyses of the best-preserved and most fully illuminated castles but also (if possible) holistic research on provincial sites will allow us to get closer to understanding the past reality. These studies should cover the widest possible range of aspects of the functioning of castles. The example of the culinary topography of the castle in Sieradz seems to illustrate well the possibilities hidden in these types of studies. The analysis of available historical sources, interpreted in the context of the selected function of the castle, allowed us to recreate a credible, 'living' image of the past co-created by the space and the people and things filling it. Further research on this issue is necessary because, without it, our knowledge of the economic (and social) context of the castle's functioning is far from complete. Of course, it is worth postulating their continuation, extended by archaeological research (and zooarchaeological analyses) and comparative studies, carried out both in the regional context and in a much broader one, including European.³⁷ The

³⁴ Pietrzak 2003, 217 (transl. T. Olszacki).

³⁵ Mossakowski 2013.

³⁶ Ratajczak 2011.

³⁷ Archaeological research combined with the analysis of source texts, but also comparative studies of written sources alone, have allowed for making discoveries of varying degrees of elaboration: a very interesting early modern kitchen with an open hearth, central chimney, and half-timbered building bypass was identified in the castle in Kruszwica: Małachowicz

remarks presented above constitute extensive material and probably the first attempt in the scientific literature to provide complementary insight into the titular ‘culinary topography’ of a castle in the historical Province of Greater Poland of the Kingdom of Poland in the early modern period. It can also be treated as a supplement to the research by Urszula Sowina, still rare in Polish medieval studies,

on the socio-topography of a city at the turn of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, which fortunately also focuses on Sieradz.³⁸

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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2019, 124-125. In the southwestern corner of the castle in Kalisz, there was an impressive bakery with a large domed oven: Poklewski-Kozieł 2012, 142. Certainly the best preserved, but also well-described by sources, is the medieval brick kitchen that continued to operate in the early modern period, with

a large hearth and a central chimney rising above it, examined only in 2023-2024 by Artur Różański in the castle in Poznań in a spacious building adjacent to the defensive wall on the northern side.

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