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Originalveröffentlichung in: IBI bulletin / Europa Nostra United with the International Castles Institute 47.1990/1991 (1992), S. 99-104
 Online-Veröffentlichung auf ART-Dok (2024), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.0009161>

THE LATE MEDIAEVAL CASTLES IN THE DUKEDOM OF MAZOVIA. STRONGHOLDS, RESIDENCES, ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRES.

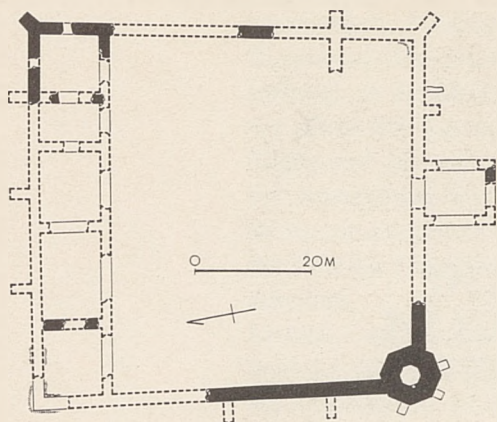
The dukedom of Mazovia, ruled since the middle of the XIIth century by one of the several branches of the Piast dynasty, was situated on the north-eastern border of the Polish kingdom, i.e. on the confines of medieval Latin Europe (Fig. 1). Its relatively small territory, a plain half-covered by a big forest, sparsely populated and with few towns, was socially and economically under-developed in comparison with the other parts of Poland. The poor condition of the country was also a result of constant wars with neighbouring pagan tribes – Sudovians and Lithuanians – as well as of the closing of the Baltic trade routes by the Teutonic Knights. Their Order was invited by Konrad, Duke of Mazovia, in 1226, and it quickly set out to establish on the border of the Baltic sea a powerful religious state which was hostile both to Christian Poland and to pagan Lithuania.

Until the second half of the XIVth century no brick or stone castles were built on the territory of the dukedom. Its system of defence was formed by a network of traditional earthwork enclosures of fortified boroughs, which could be easily constructed and maintained by unqualified serf labour from the villages. These timber antecedents of later castles were situated near the rivers on the main trade routes, and were scattered more densely in the northern than in the thinly populated eastern part of the country.

The construction of the first brick castles was connected with the growth of the Mazovian state under the rule of Siemowit I (d. 1381) who united the dukedom in 1370 and through

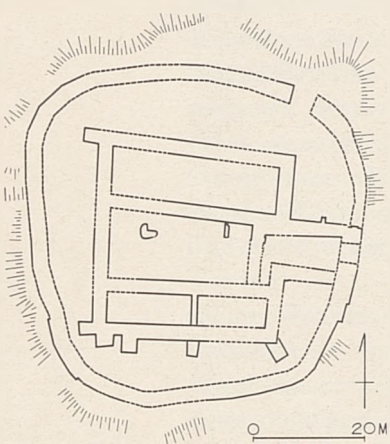
1. Map of Kingdom of Poland and Dukedom of Mazovia c. 1370, after: A. ZAMOYSKY, *The Polish Way*, London 1987.





2. Plan of the castle in Rawa, after B. Guerquin.

3. Remains of the castle in Rawa, photo W. Wolny.



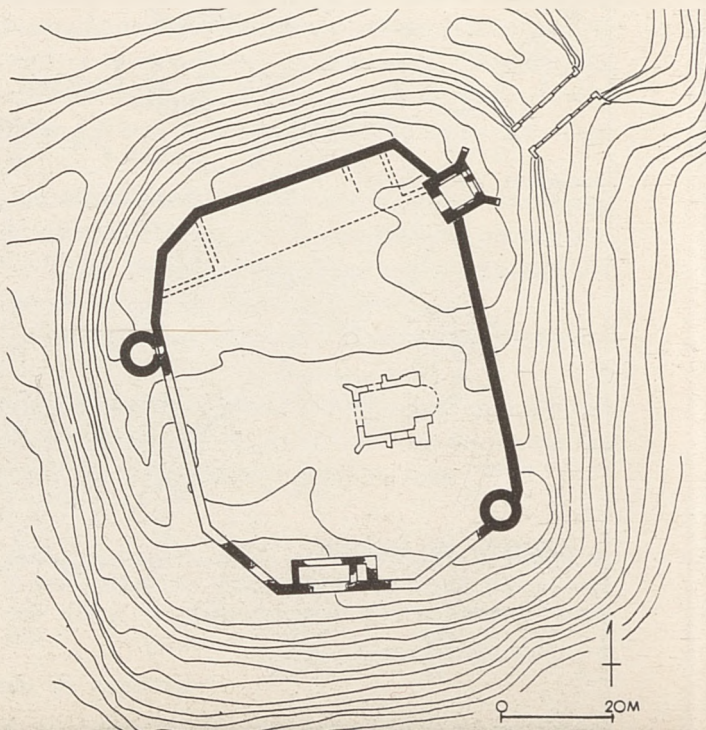
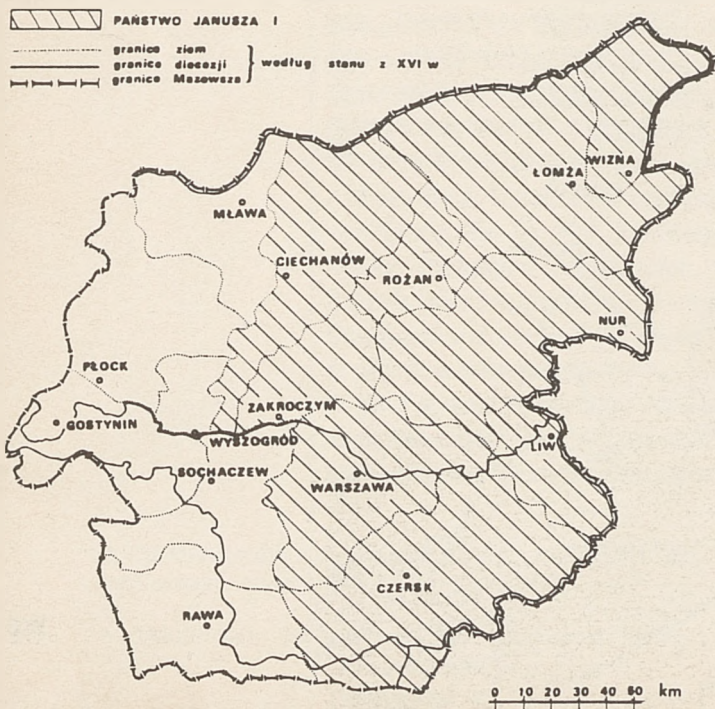
6. Plan of the castle in Czersk, after B. Guerquin.

4. Plan of the bishops' castle in Lowicz, after B. Guerquin.

5. Map of Dukedom of Mazovia in time of duke Janusz I, after M. Wilska.

7. Castle in Czersk, photo IS PAN.

8. Gate tower of the castle in Czersk, photo IS PAN.



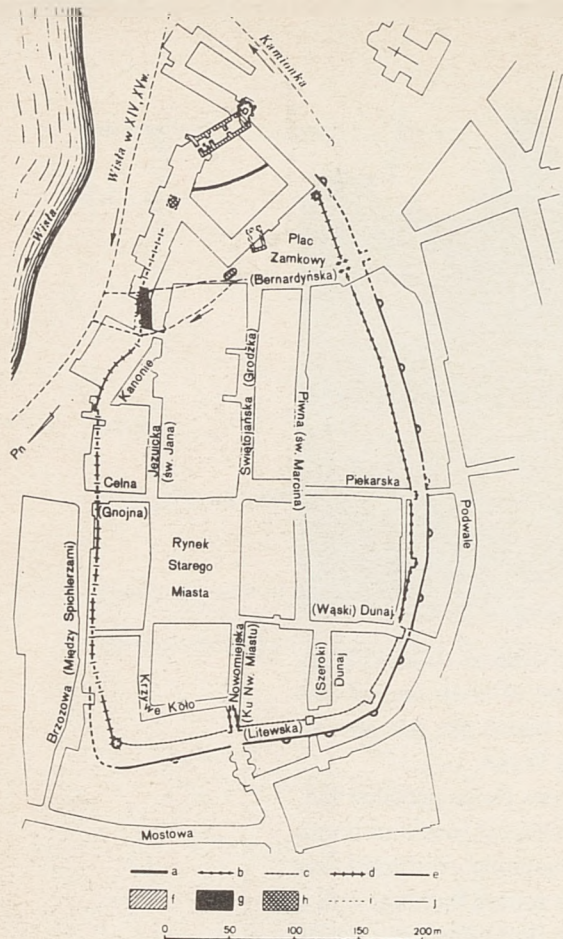


his wise policy contributed to its economic development. Only a few remains of his activity as castle builder have been preserved to our day. They are: a section of walls and of two towers of the castle in Płock, the ruins of the castle in Sochaczew, which are not easy to date, and the ruins of the castle in Rawa, the main residence of the Duke.

The brick castle in Rawa, situated at the confluence of two water courses on an artificial hill, was given a simple rectangular plan (Fig. 2). The wall of the long two-storied mansion house (*domus ducalis*) formed the north curtain of the castle. The big rectangular courtyard was surrounded by curtain walls with parapet walks on the top, to which a square building with a gate was added at the south. The high watch tower with a crenelle dominated the whole stronghold (Fig. 3). Its location at the corner of the walls resembles similar solutions in the castles of the northern part of the Polish kingdom (e.g. Koło), as well as some castles constructed by Teutonic Knights in Prussia (Reszel-Rössel, Olsztyn-Allenstein). The octagonal tower, infrequent in buildings of the Teutonic Order, is however similar to those built by the Polish King Casimir the Great (e.g. Kruszwica, Konin, Bolesławiec).

We have but few sources concerning the existence in Mazovia of private brick castles owned by single knights e.g. Sarnowo, Szreńsk. They were uncommon and none has been preserved until the present day. So, apart from castles which were ducal property, only those owned by the Church, such as the bishops castles in Łowicz and Pułtusk, or the convent castle in Czerwińsk were of real importance. These castles too no longer exist, having been destroyed or completely rebuilt in later times. Thanks to recent excavations we know the general shape of the castle in Łowicz (Fig. 4). Its plan with the two rectangular buildings symmetrically situated on the opposite sides of the courtyard foreshadows the arrangement of some later castles in the region.





A new wave of building activity is connected with the name of Duke Janusz the Old (d. 1429), the most important ruler of Mazovia in late medieval times. He was the lord of the eastern, the largest part of the dukedom (Fig. 5), which was divided in 1379 between him and his younger brother Siemowit IV (d. 1426). Educated at the royal court of Casimir the Great (d. 1370) in Cracow, he married a Lithuanian princess in 1376, and supported the idea of the union of Poland and Lithuania. As a faithful vassal of the new Polish-Lithuanian monarch, King Ladislaus Jagiełło (d. 1434), he commanded in person the Mazovian troops during the great war with the Teutonic Order in 1410-1411; after the victory at Grunwald (Tannenberg) he expressed his thanks to the king of Poland on his knees.

When the Lithuanian menace disappeared the main problem for Duke Janusz was still the threat from the powerful state of the Teutonic Order, with which Mazovia had been having constant troubles for many years. For instance, notwithstanding the peace between the two countries, the Duke was taken prisoner by Teutonic troops in 1393 while supervising the construction of the stronghold in Złotoria near the Prussian border, and was confined to jail for a short time. The incident, which was long remembered, stimulated him to new efforts in strengthening the defences of his country on the Teutonic border.

To this purpose he not only intensified the colonization of the north-eastern parts of the country by giving lands to poor nobility on the condition of military service (*ius militaris*), but also converted the traditional enclosures earthwork into brick castles and built several new ones. After 1406 he rebuilt in brick the castle in Czersk. In the years after 1408 new works were started in the strongholds of Wyszogród, Zakroczym and Wizna. In the second decade of the century a new residence in Warsaw (Curia Maior) was constructed inside the new walls of the town fortifications. To the third decade can be dated the new brick castles in Ciechanów and in Liw. Nowadays only ruins of these buildings are preserved and some of them, such as the castles in Wyszogród, Zakroczym, have completely disappeared.

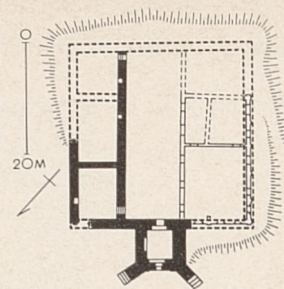
The biggest of the new castles was that in Czersk (Fig. 7). Situated on a tongue of land on the high Vistula bank, it was erected on the site of a former borough, and was therefore of irregular shape; it had high walls with two round towers and a square gate tower. Parts of the walls were decorated by chequered ornamentation of glazed bricks. The foundations of two rectangular houses, a bigger and a smaller one, located near the curtain walls on the two opposite sides of the courtyard, as well as the foundations of a small chapel in the

9. Fortifications of the Old Town of Warsaw, after M. Wilska.

10. Gothic wing of the castle in Warsaw, photo IS PAN.

11. Plan of the castle in Liw, after B. Guerquin.

12. Gate tower in Liw, before and after restauration (photos: IS PAN, J. Langda).



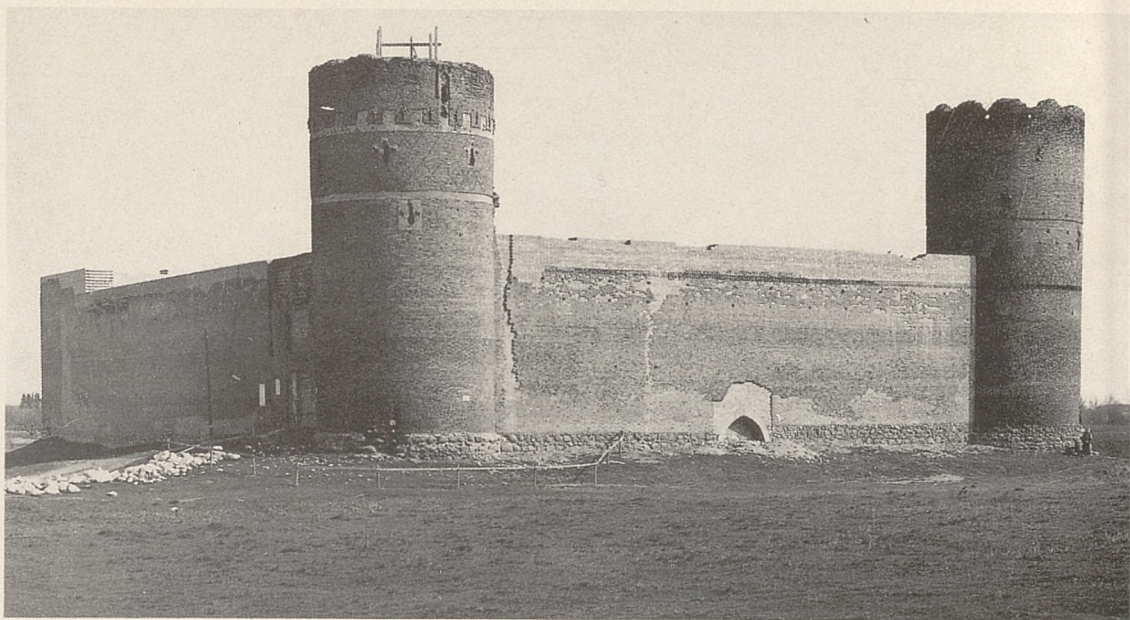
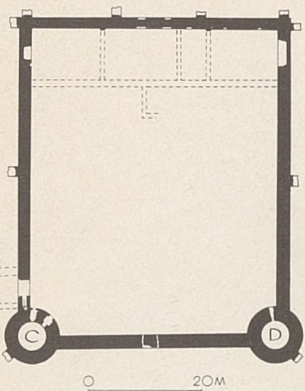
centre, were discovered in recent times (Fig. 6). We have no idea what these buildings looked like, but the perfection of the construction of the other parts of the castle, e.g. of the gate tower with a drawbridge and two entrances (for horsemen and for pedestrians), as well as the glazed ornamentation (Fig. 8), give us an idea of the probable style of the houses. During the rule of Janusz the Old Warsaw began its career as the main town of the dukedom. In 1379 the Duke ordered the construction of new double walls with several towers all round the town, including the castle itself (Fig. 9). Parts of these fortifications were discovered and reconstructed after the 2nd world war. After 1410 a new two-storied duke's house (Curia Maior) was added to the older brick donjon of Warsaw castle. Its fine external decoration with gothic blind arcades was uncovered during the restoration work in the nineteen twenties (Fig. 10). The whole system of fortifications of the castle still remains unknown.

Among new castles built by Janusz the Old the most important was that of Ciechanów, in the borderlands of the Teutonic state. Situated on a hill above the boggy grounds of the riverside, it was given the shape of a regular rectangle (Fig. 13). Strong walls with two round towers surrounded a big courtyard with the ducal palace inside. It was erected near the curtain wall opposite the entrance gate, which was originally situated along the axis in the curtain between the towers. The duke's palace was a long, two-storied building.

The regular plan of the castle recalls that of the castle in Bytów (Bütow) constructed by the Teutonic Knights in the years between 1398-1406; after the battle of Grunwald it fell for a time into Polish hands. The same ornament of blinded crenelles as seen in the towers in Ciechanów was used in the decoration of the gate tower in Liw – another newly built castle in Mazovia (Fig. 3). The resemblance seems to prove that both buildings were constructed by craftsmen of the same masonry workshop.

The castle in Liw, situated on an artificial hill in the flood plain of the river Liwiec, has a completely different shape (Fig. 11). It consists of two rectangular wings of two-storied houses situated on opposite sides of a narrow courtyard enclosed by walls. A massive gate tower was added on the north, square in its lower parts and polygonal in the upper stones (Fig. 12).

The plan of Liw castle repeats the composition of some castles of the private knights in the Kingdom of Poland, such as that in Gosławice 1418-1426 and in Borysławice ca. 1423. It was also foreshadowed in Mazovia by the bishops castle in Lowicz (late XIVth c.). But the



13. Castle in Ciechanów, Plan after B. Guerquin, photo S. Deptuszewski.

actual model for the Liw buildings seems to be yet another fortress outside of Polish lands, namely the insular castle in the Lithuanian town of Troki (Trakai, 1400-1413), the main residence of the Grand Duke Vytautas, brother-in-law of Janusz the Old. This supposition is confirmed not only by the similarity of the plans and of the dimensions and proportions, with two symmetrical houses, but also by the position of gate towers axially situated outside the curtain walls.

Troki castle was constructed by masons coming from the Lands of the Teutonic Order, and we have documentary evidence that a master mason of German extraction named Niclos, probably from the Order's lands, worked in the castles of Ciechanów and Liw. The similarity of the three buildings, in Mazovia and in Lithuania, could thus be explained by a common source in the same workshops. The proximity of the state of Teutonic Knights, so dangerous politically to both countries, was at the same time a positive factor in the field of technology and art.

Let me now try to answer the main question of my paper: were the Mazovian castles, both new and old ones, constructed or modernized with the purpose of creating a planned and coherent defence system? It is not easy to give a clear answer to that question. The main purpose of all these castles and strongholds was of course to defend the dukedom against the Teutonic Order, and this fact explains their constant modernization during the whole of the XVth and the beginning of the XVIth century. But at the same time, as the distance from one castle to the other was usually one day's ride on horseback (25 to 30 km.), they were used as the duke's temporary residences during the constant travels of his court all over the land. They were also centres of local administration, and last but not least, being situated near the rivers and other main trade routes, they maintained a watch over the economic life of the country.

After the secularization of the Teutonic Order's state (1525) and after the annexation of the dukedom of Mazovia to the Polish Crown (1526) the castles lost their importance. They were ruined during the wars in the middle of the XVII century, and slowly ceased to exist.

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