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A sacred monument of the family. Unusual architectural sculpture of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Nowa (Bolesławiec Municipality)

Abstract

The church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Nowa stands out among other medieval rural churches of the former Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor due to the richness of its stone architectural sculpture, both in terms of quantity and ideological content. Considering the scale of the building, the lavishness of this decoration is remarkable. An even more distinctive feature is the exceptionally strong emphasis placed on the role of the founders, expressed through the prominent display of their coats of arms. Despite this, the ensemble has received only cursory attention in previous publications.

I sought to fill this gap by undertaking an in-depth analysis of this decoration and addressing the question of the reasons for its uniqueness. To this end, I conducted a literature review and field research, drawing conclusions through stylistic, comparative, iconographic and heraldic analyses, as well as through the examination of mason's marks and the chronology of motifs.

Research has confirmed the uniqueness of this sculptural ensemble against the backdrop of medieval rural ecclesiastical architecture in the region. Particularly unique is the strong family-oriented ideological programme, expressed through extensive heraldry. I have proposed the period between 1406 and 1423 as the date of the church's construction, and I have identified Nickel Hocke and his wife, Hedwig of Borsnitz, as its probable founders. I have explained the uniqueness of the church's decoration by reference to the Hocke family's economic status and ambitions, the planned function of the church as a family necropolis, and the preservation of the ensemble resulting from the absence of major later reconstructions. I have also challenged the prevailing view that the Hocke family permanently lost their patronage of the church in 1423, as well as most of the workshop affiliations previously suggested; the latter issue requires further research.

Key words: Hocke (family), Borschnitz (family), Redern (family), Gothic architectural sculpture, the church in Nowa (Bolesławiec Municipality)

Introduction

The first unquestionable mention of Nowa (Bolesławiec Municipality) is found in the *Liber Foundationis Episcopatus Vratislaviensis*, a source most likely compiled around 1305 (Markgraf, Schulte 1889, D 206). From the 14th century until 1740, the village was continuously part of the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor. The church in Nowa was built in the first quarter of the 15th century (Fig. 1). It is located in the centre of the village and is surrounded by a cemetery enclosed by a ring of walls. The church is oriented. It consists of a rectangular nave, a chancel attached to the east and

enclosed by a three-sided, buttressed apse, a square-shaped tower attached to the nave on the west (with the narthex on the ground floor), and a rectangular sacristy adjacent to the choir on the north. The church is 26 m long, 12 m wide, and the height of its tower to the crowning cornice is approximately 18 m. Gray-yellow sandstone (probably sourced from local deposits) was used in its construction, both in the form of quarried stone and regular blocks of various sizes. A large complex of stone architectural sculpture from the time of the church's construction has been preserved within the sanctuary (Fig. 2). Five portals connect the church to the exterior and to the various parts of the building. All passages, with the exception of two, are adorned with more or less elaborate sculptural decoration. Additionally, a heraldic panel is located above the southern portal. The chancel is covered by an eight-part ribbed vault,

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Fig. 1. Church in Nowa. View from the southeast
(photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 1. Kościół w Nowej. Widok od południowego wschodu
(fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

with ribs converging at a relief boss and resting on eight figural corbels. The sacrament house is located on the north wall of the chancel. This extraordinary richness of the stone architectural sculpture – both in terms of its quantity and its symbolic significance – sets the church in Nowa apart from other medieval rural churches in the former Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor. Given the size and character of the building, the lavishness of this decoration is particularly striking. An even more significant distinguishing feature is the exceptionally strong emphasis on the role of the founders through their numerous coats of arms (including full heraldic achievement with supporters) and the depiction of a knightly couple as worshippers of the Crucified Christ in the tympanum of the portal leading to the nave – this program has no parallel among the medieval churches of this scale and status that have survived to this day in the area of the former Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor. Despite this, in previous publications, the architectural sculpture of the church in Nowa has not received the attention it deserves and has been mentioned only briefly. I set out to fill this gap by analyzing this stonework decoration in the context of its style, workshop connections, the history of the village and the church, its symbolic content, its ideological significance and the motivations of its founders. I also sought to answer the question of what makes the stone sculptural decoration of the church in Nowa so unique. The field research and literature review that I conducted yielded many new findings in the areas mentioned above and also allowed me to formulate proposals for future research and conservation.

State of research

The oldest known description of the church in Nowa is contained in a report on a bishop's visitation dated May 28, 1666; however, it is very superficial regarding the church's decoration (Jungnitz 1902, 341). In works from the second half of the 19th century, various dates for the building's construction were proposed; stonemason's marks observed on the church's details were identified and linked to other

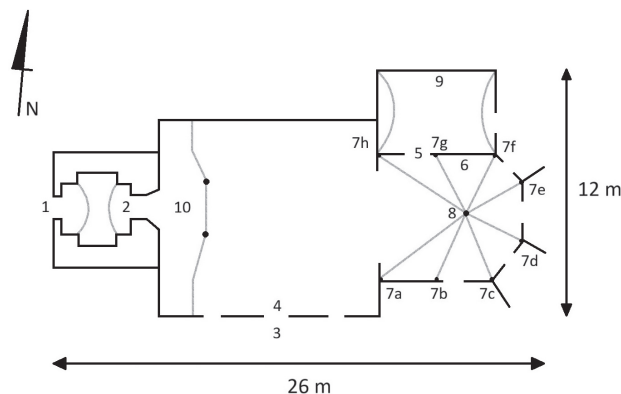


Fig. 2. The schematic arrangement of architectural sculptures in the church in Nowa: 1 – the outer western portal, 2 – the inner western portal, 3 – the southern portal, 4 – the heraldic panel, 5 – the portal of the sacristy, 6 – the sacrament house, 7 – the corbels (a – with bust of probably a youth, b – with bust of a calm bearded man, c – with bust of a maiden, d – with bust of a man with a book, e – with bust of a man with a scroll, f – with bust of a woman in a kruseler, g – with bust of an irate bearded man, h – with bust of probably a woman in a headscarf), 8 – the boss, 9 – the piscina, 10 – the portal on the second storey of the church tower (elaborated by J.F. Tomczyk on the basis of “Kościół katolicki filialny p.w. Matki Bożej Bol. Karta Ewidencyjna...”)

Il. 2. Schemat rozmieszczenia elementów rzeźby architektonicznej w kościele w Nowej: 1 – zewnętrzny portal zachodni, 2 – wewnętrzny portal zachodni, 3 – portal południowy, 4 – tablica heraldyczna, 5 – portal zakrystii, 6 – sakrarium, 7 – wsporniki (a – z popiersiem prawdopodobnie młodzieńca, b – z popiersiem spokojnego brodatego mężczyzny, c – z popiersiem panny, d – z popiersiem mężczyzny z księgą, e – z popiersiem mężczyzny ze zwojem, f – z popiersiem kobiety w kruzelerze, g – z popiersiem wzburzonego brodatego mężczyzny, h – z popiersiem prawdopodobnie kobiety w chuście), 8 – zwornik, 9 – piscyna, 10 – portal na drugiej kondygnacji wieży (oprac. J.F. Tomczyk na podstawie „Kościół katolicki filialny p.w. Matki Bożej Bol. Karta Ewidencyjna...”)

buildings; coats of arms were described; and the identification of the church's founders was proposed, along with the first (though very brief, incomplete, and often erroneous) information about the iconography of the sculptural representations (Wernicke 1876, 116, 117; 1877b, 163, pl. 3; 1886, 454, 455; Lutsch 1891, 495, 539, 572, 573). In the second half of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century, encyclopedic and regional guide publications featured brief descriptions of the church, based largely on earlier literature (e.g., Brzezicki et al. 2006, 602, 603). Among these, the catalog section of the monumental publication *Architektura gotycka w Polsce* [Gothic architecture in Poland] deserves special mention, as it was likely the first to recognize the uniqueness of the church in Nowa, including it as one of only five rural churches from Silesia listed in this study (Stulin, Włodarek 1995, 164). In their works from the first two decades of the 21st century, Dagmara Adamska (2005, 138, 202) and Romuald Kaczmarek (2023, 89, 90) indicated the heraldic decoration in Nowa as an exceptionally vivid example of the construction of a family iconosphere and the emphasis placed on the patronage of the church by its knightly founders. To date, the most comprehensive account of the church in Nowa has been provided by Anna Skowron in her master's thesis sub-

mitted to the Institute of Art History at the University of Wrocław (Skowron 2010). Regarding the heraldic decoration, the date of the church's construction, and its potential founders, she essentially repeated the conclusions reached by earlier researchers. She was, however, the first to provide a broader description of the sculptural decoration of the church's chancel, reflecting on its ideological program and analogies, as well as workshop aspects, though she did not reach any more concrete conclusions.

Methods

I conducted field research at the church in Nowa in May 2025. During this work, I assessed the current condition of the objects under study and prepared photographic and measurement documentation. To draw conclusions from these observations, I employed stylistic, comparative, iconographic, and heraldic analyses, as well as an analysis of stonemason's marks and the chronology of motifs. From January to June 2025, I conducted a literature review, during which I reviewed previous studies on the church in Nowa, the broader scholarly literature on the subject, relevant supplementary publications, as well as published source materials and conservation documentation. The preparation of the article was also informed by my broader knowledge of the prevalence of particular iconographic motifs, types of representations, or ideological programs, which I gained through my studies on medieval architectural stone sculpture in the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor conducted since September 2024 in connection with my doctoral thesis.

Description and analysis of the architectural sculpture

Portals

- The outer western portal

The main portal (Fig. 3), leading from the west to the narthex on the ground floor of the tower, is 4.6 m high and 2.7 m wide. Its decoration is concentrated in the upper section. The outer band of the richly profiled archivolt is supported by two corbels in the form of human heads, topped with pyramidal imposts. Their poor state of preservation does not allow for a more detailed analysis, but the right one likely depicts a mature man (as indicated by the mustache), while the left one depicts a woman or a young man (due to the wreath or torse covering the head). In the tympanum field, bordered on the inside by a bordure of connected fleur-de-lis, the Hocke family coat of arms is depicted in its full heraldic achievement – with a crest (now almost completely destroyed), a frog-mouth helm, mantling, and anthropomorphic supporters (deprived of their heads at least since the turn of the 1880s and 1890s – see Wernicke 1886, 454; Lutsch 1891, 572). The figures of the supporters wear skimpy attires and are naked from the waist down. The figure on the left heraldic side clearly depicts male genitalia,

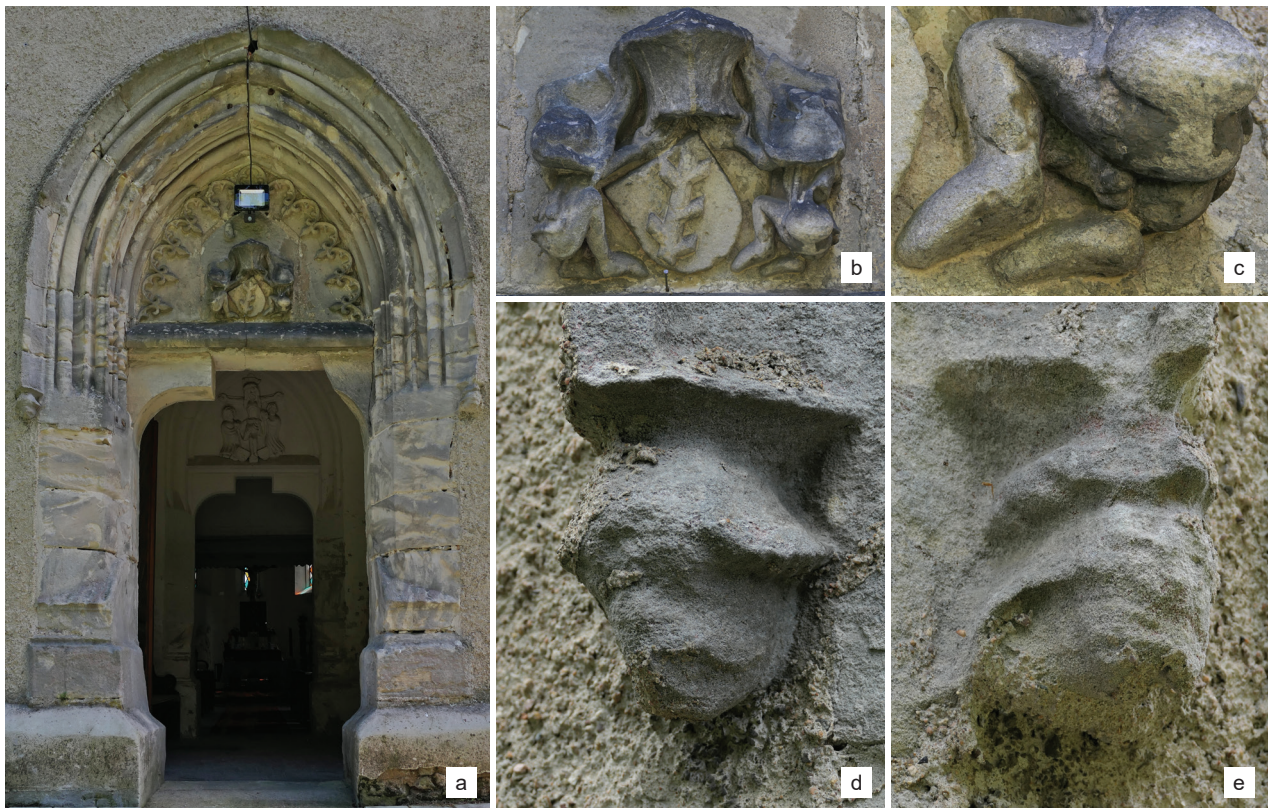


Fig. 3. The outer western portal of the church in Nowa: a) full view, b) the coat of arms on the tympanum, c) genitals of the left heraldic supporter, d) the left corbel, e) the right corbel (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 3. Zewnętrzny portal zachodni kościoła w Nowej: a) całość, b) herb w tympanonie, c) genitalia postaci lewego (heraldycznie) trzymacza, d) lewy wspornik, e) prawy wspornik (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)



Fig. 4. The inner western portal of the church in Nowa: a) fullview, b) depiction on the tympanum (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 4. Wewnętrzny portal zachodni kościoła w Nowej: a) całość, b) przedstawienie na tympanonie (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

featuring an erect penis and testicles. A horn on a strap and a large pouch hangs over on its back. This way of depicting a heraldic supporter is unique among medieval Silesian sculpture. In the previous literature, the phallic motif in the church in Nowa has not been noted. Male genitalia may be interpreted here in the context of the attributes of the family – they symbolize its strength, fertility, and creative energy. The apotropaic dimension may also be significant – phallic representations were used in the Middle Ages as amulets to ward off evil forces (Kopaliński 2012, 85, 86). The horn and the pouch are also linked to the symbolism of the genitalia, serving as references to abundance and wealth (Kopaliński 2012, 360, 362). The depiction of the hunting horn can additionally be interpreted as an attempt to emphasize the family's status, as hunting was then an elite pastime of the knighthood. The figure of the supporter on the heraldic right does not have a similarly defined gender (perhaps it could be identified by the head, which has not survived to this day), while the object suspended on its back is difficult to identify.

Both here and in the other depictions in the church, the charge on the shield in the Hocke family coat of arms is consistently shown as a cut off tree stump with five spurs. Meanwhile, in roll of arms and literature, the Hocke family's charge is a tree stump with six spurs, while the one with five belongs to the Hertel family (Appuhn 1989, pl. 55, 64; Sękowski 2003, 152). Certainly, however, the Hocke used both variants, as evidenced not only by the absence in

known documents of any connections between the Hertels and Nowa (while numerous connections with the Hocke family do exist), but also by a tombstone from the second half of the 15th century belonging to perhaps the most prominent medieval representative of the Hocke family – Georg Hocke from Tomaszów Bolesławiecki, Bishop of Trent from 1446 to 1465 (Jungnitz 1910, 25–28), currently located in the early Christian undergrounds of St. Vigilius Cathedral in that city. The coat of arms of his family is depicted on it in the version present in Nowa¹.

• The inner western portal

The portal leading from the narthex to the nave (Fig. 4) is 4 m high and 1.8 m wide. Its tympanum features a depiction of the Crucified Christ, adored by a kneeling man from the Hocke family and a woman from the Borsnitz family. Given the location and manner of their depiction, this couple should be considered the founders of the church. As in the case of the Hocke coat of arms described above, the typical variant of the Borsnitz coat of arms was not used in Nowa. On the family's seals from that period, the checkerboard occupies the entire field of the shield (Wójcik 2018, 180–185), whereas here the shield is divided by a band, and the checkerboard fills only the lower part of the field, while the upper

¹ See photo by Niccolò Caranti, 2016. Accessed June 1, 2026. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51755905>.



Fig. 5. The portal of the sacristy of the church in Nowa: a) full view, b) the coat of arms on the corner segments of the portal, c) plant ornament on the left jamb, d) plant ornament on the right jamb (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 5. Portal zakrystii kościoła w Nowej: a) całość, b) herby na przyłuczach, c) detal roślinny lewego ościeża, d) detal roślinny prawego ościeża (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

part contains no figures. The Bindemann family, present on the Silesian-Lusatian border since the 15th century, had such a coat of arms (Sękowski 2002, 198). However, the known sources provide no evidence of a connection between this coat of arms and Nowa. At the same time, the documented marriage of Nickel Hocke and Jadwiga of Borsnitz during the period in which the church was built lends credence to the claim that this is, in fact, the Borsnitz coat of arms, albeit used, like the Hocke coat of arms, in a variant that is less familiar today. Aside from heraldry, the main feature identifying the figure on the left as a man is his mustache. The couple wears long, nearly identical robes, tighter at the top and looser at the bottom. Skowron regarded their flowing, somewhat shapeless form as evidence of the stonemason's lack of skill (Skowron 2010, 27). Indeed, these sculptures are not of particularly high artistic quality; however the workshop responsible for them was capable of differentiating the figures' attire, as is best evidenced by the corbels in the chancel. The depiction of the founders was too important an element of the church's sculptural decoration for its patrons (who were themselves being commemorated) to have allowed the use of random clothing. The form of the robes and the fact that the man from the Hocke family was depicted in such an attire, rather than, for example, in armor, must have had their justification. In my opinion, the answer lies in the meaning of the entire depiction. This couple is shown primarily as worshippers of the Crucified Christ, who is the source of Salvation. The robes in which they are clothed may therefore be regarded as the wedding garment mentioned in the parable contained in the Gospel of Matthew (Pismo Święte... 1980, Mt 22:1–14). An analogy in this regard is provided by the tombstone of Jan of Czernina from around 1425, located in the Church of St. Stanislaus the Bishop in Rydzyna (Kalinowski 1989, 381, 384, 394, 398, 399, 407). Given that the figures depicted in these garments are shown adoring the crucifix, the robes can also be seen as a symbol of the robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb from the Book of Revelation (Makarewicz 2007, 197, note 199). The depiction on the tympanum of the portal in Nowa thus served as a form of commemoration of the church's founders both during their lifetimes and after their deaths, and their adoration of the Crucified Christ thereby acquires an eternal character and a salvific dimension.

• The portal of the sacristy

The most modestly sculpturally decorated portal in the church in Nowa is the one leading from the chancel to the sacristy, set into the north wall of the chancel (Fig. 5). It is 2.2 m high and 1.2 m wide. Two coats of arms of the Hocke family are placed in its corner segments, while stylized leaves, probably oak, are depicted at about one-third of the jamb's height, where the chamfering begins. Given the symbolism of this tree, associated with divinity, glory, strength, and durability (Kobielus 2006, 52–55), their use can be explained both by their placement in the chancel and by their co-occurrence with heraldic decoration, as a further emphasis on the positive traits characterizing the family.

The decoration of the chancel vault

All eight corbels supporting the vault of the chancel (measuring on average 0.5×0.4 m) and its boss (with a diameter of approx. 0.4 m) are decorated with figurative representations – in the first case in the form of busts, and in the second as the head (Fig. 6). The depictions on the corbels vary in terms of the figures' gender, age, and marital status, and these distinctions are conveyed through facial features, attire, and attributes. The corbel in the southwest corner of the chancel probably depicts a young man. This is indicated by the figure being shown in rather masculine attire, while simultaneously having a wreath adorning his head. The next corbel (facing east) on the south wall, depicts a calm, bearded man, likely a giant – this is indicated by the head's larger size relative to the other sculptures, suggesting the figure's superhuman stature. The next corbel, located in the southern corner of the chancel apse, depicts a maiden holding a wreath or torse in her hands. Her marital status is indicated by her long, loose hair and the presence of a wreath or torse on her head. Two corbels located on the east wall of the chancel apse depict two mature, bearded men dressed in buttoned robes. The figure on the south side holds an open book in his hands, while the one on the north side holds an unrolled scroll. Another corbel, located in the northern corner of the chancel apse, depicts a married woman, as indicated by the presence of a headscarf. Her head is adorned with a *kruseler* – a type of veil popular from the mid-14th to the mid-15th century, worn by ladies from knightly and burgher's

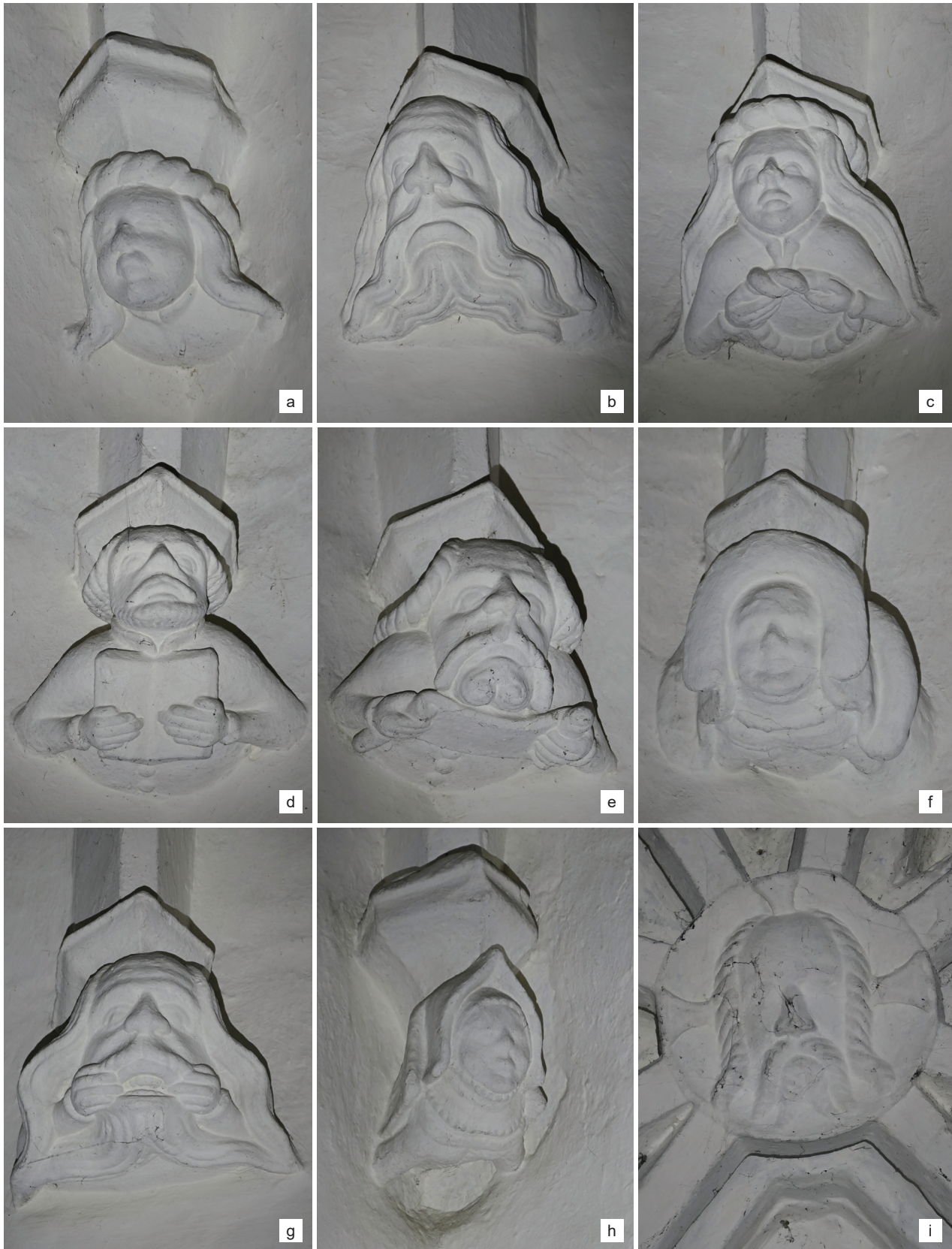


Fig. 6. Architectural sculpture on the vault of the chancel of the church in Nowa: a) the corbel with bust of probably a youth, b) the corbel with bust of a calm bearded man, c) the corbel with bust of a maiden, d) the corbel with bust of a man with a book, e) the corbel with bust of a man with a scroll, f) the corbel with bust of a woman in a kruselerze, g) the corbel with bust of an irate bearded man, h) the corbel with bust of probably a woman in a headscarf, i) the boss (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 6. Rzeźba architektoniczna na sklepieniu prezbiterium kościoła w Nowej: a) wspornik z popiersiem prawdopodobnie młodzieńca, b) wspornik z popiersiem spokojnego brodatego mężczyzny, c) wspornik z popiersiem panny, d) wspornik z popiersiem mężczyzny z książką, e) wspornik z popiersiem mężczyzny ze zwojem, f) wspornik z popiersiem kobiety w kruselerze, g) wspornik z popiersiem wzburzonego brodatego mężczyzny, h) wspornik z popiersiem prawdopodobnie kobiety w chuście, i) zwornik (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

families (Gutkowska-Rychlewska 1968, 161, 162; Moskal 2008, 105). Adjacent to this depiction on the west side is a second corbel depicting a monstrous bearded man, this time irate, and opening his mouth with his hands and baring his teeth. The last corbel probably depicts a woman wearing a headscarf and a shawl on her head². The keystone shows the head of Christ in a cruciform halo.

The ideological program of the chancel vault is likely not uniform, but all the figures can be linked to the image of Christ on the boss. Given their attributes, age, and location within the chancel vault – and thus closest to the altar – the men holding a scroll and a book may be, respectively, a prophet and an apostle – the former announcing the coming of the Messiah, the latter attesting to His presence (e.g., as an Evangelist). It is possible that their attributes originally bore writings. In the context of the distinctly heraldic decoration of the rest of the church, it is possible that the four figures, differing in age and headgear, symbolize a cross-section of the knightly class subject to God. In turn, the two monstrous bearded figures may be a reference to the tamed and untamed forces of nature (analogous to the so-called wild men, as Wiese 1927, 154, identified them; see also Kopaliński 2012, 277, 278 on the symbolism of giants, and Bernheimer 1952 on the motif of the wild man in the Middle Ages), especially since the figure with the aggressive facial expression was placed on the northern side, often associated in the Middle Ages with threats and evil.

The rest of the church's sculptural decoration

- The heraldic panel

Above the south entrance to the church is a heraldic panel (Fig. 7), which has received only brief mention in previous publications, where authors merely listed the coats of arms depicted on it (sometimes incorrectly – see Lutsch 1891, 572). It is 1.3 m high and 1 m wide. The panel features a relief depicting the full heraldic achievement of the Redern family coat of arms, complete with a crest, a frog-mouth helmet, mantling, and anthropomorphic supporters. The supporters hide one pair of hands in the mantling, while the other pair holds two smaller coats of arms – Hocke on the right and Borsnitz on the left, facing each other in a heraldic courtesy. Unlike those on the tympanum of the outer western portal, the figures of the supporters are fully clothed – wearing flowing robes. The robe of the figure on the right is additionally tied with a cord. Based on

² Interpreting this bust as male seems less likely, though it cannot be entirely ruled out. The headgear depicted here resembles a kettle hat, a type of helmet that was particularly popular from the 13th to the 15th century (for more on this, see Gosk 2022). If this figure were to be identified as a knight, then the form with serrated edges surrounding his face and neck would likely be mail, and the entire armor would resemble that present in the Passion panels in the Grudziądz Polyptych. The male identification of the figure is also supported by the pairing of this sculpture with what is likely a depiction of a young man in the southwest corner, analogous to the evident pairs of a married woman and a maiden, a man with a scroll and a man with a book, and an irate bearded man and a calm bearded man on the remaining corbels. However, this thesis is contradicted by the probable outline of a bosom, more clearly visible from the bottom of the depiction, as well as the shape on the figure's back, which is unlikely to be a shield due to its too big curvature.

the stylistic features of the figural representations, the shape of the shields, and the type of helmet and border, it can be concluded that the panel was created around the same time as the rest of the church. This work was most likely commissioned by a couple one generation younger than the church's founders – a woman from the Hocke family (on the distaff side Borsnitz) and her husband from the Redern family. There is no information in known documents about the connections between the Rederns and the Hocke of Nowa at that time, although sources indicate that earlier, in the 1360s, 1380s, and 1390s, there were contacts between these families (Wernicke 1886, 452; Jurek 2000, 226, no. 1184, 261, no. 1418; 2004, 7, no. 19).

- The sacrament house

A wall-mounted sacrament house is located on the north wall of the chancel (Fig. 8). In terms of form, it consists of a niche with an architecturally shaped frame. It is 1.7 m high, 0.6 m wide, and the depth of the niche itself is 0.25 m. In the field of the wimperg, originally supported by two small columns, a relief head of Christ in a cruciform halo is depicted, while on either side of the fleuron crowing the whole are two shields with the Hocke family coat of arms. The placement of heraldic depictions on an object used to store the consecrated Host can be seen as the founders' desire to emphasize their role as guardians and defenders of the church – after all, stone tabernacles secured with a grille (as was originally the case here as well) were intended to protect the Blessed Sacrament. Additionally, the duplication of the coat of arms, present both here and on the portal leading to the sacristy, may have had a purely aesthetic purpose, serving to maintain symmetry, or it may also have been a sign of the participation of a larger number of representatives of the Hocke family in the church's foundation – however, at this stage of research, this cannot be proven³.

The time of creation and the founders of the decoration

In previous studies, the church in Nowa has been dated to various periods – the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries (e.g., Wernicke 1886, 455; Adamska 2005, 138; Bartnik et al. 2005, 256). Any other period than the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries and the first half of the 15th century is contradicted by an analysis of the building's architecture, including the sculptural details decorating it. The kruseler on the head of the woman on the corbel in the northeast corner of the chancel apse (Fig. 6f) takes the form of a semicircular roll with several rows of frills flowing down onto the shoulders, present in Silesian art from at least the 1370s through the 1430s⁴. The combination of a mustache with a clean-shaven

³ I omit the portals on the south side of the church and on the second floor of the tower, as well as the piscina in the sacristy, because they lack sculptural decoration.

⁴ For example, on the seal of Duchess Agnes of Habsburg on a document from 1370 approving the sale of the estate in Jeżów Sudecki (Dokument książęcej..., APWr, department Jelenia Góra) and on the tombstone of Princess Elizabeth of Hohenzollern and her husband Louis II of Legnica from ca. 1435 in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul the Apostles in Legnica (Czechowicz 2003, 128).



Fig. 7. The church in Nowa: a) the southern portal, b) the heraldic panel above it (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 7. Kościół w Nowej: a) portal południowy, b) tablica heraldyczna nad nim (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

chin, seen on face of the kneeling man in the tympanum of the inner western portal in Nowa (Fig. 4b), appears, for example, in the case of Jan of Czernina on his aforementioned tombstone from around 1425 in the Church of St. Stanislaus the Bishop in Rydzyna (Kalinowski 1989, 383). In turn, the shape of the heraldic shields used in the decoration is analogous to the designs of the shields of these coats of arms on the seals of the families that used them in the first and second decades of the 15th century (see Wójcik 2018, 183–185, 630, 631), whereas on older seals dating from 1400 and earlier, the shields generally have a slightly pointed lower edge (see Wójcik 2018, 172–183, 317–319, 630).

Above all, however, the only known medieval document mentioning a married couple consisting of a husband from the Hocke family and a wife from the Borsnitz family dates to the first decade of the 15th century, specifically 12 January 1406. In this document, Nickel Hocke granted his wife, Hedwig of Borsnitz, a life estate (*Leibgedinge*), consisting of the revenues from Tomaszów Bolesławiecki (Jurek 2007, 409, no. 1590). Given the match between the style of the church and the date of the document, as well as the family affiliations of the individuals mentioned therein, the attribution of the church's foundation in Nowa to Nickel Hocke and Hedwiga of Borsnitz, as found in the previous literature, appears to be the most likely option. However, it should not be forgotten that documents from the last quarter of the 14th century in this part of Silesia mention more than ten of the Hocke family members (Jurek 1996, 318),

and the marital status of some of them and the family affiliations of their possible wives remain unknown.

Based on the document mentioned above and another one from two years later that also mentions Nickel (Wernicke 1886, 454), Adamska concluded that the church in Nowa was built between 1406 and 1408 (Adamska 2005, 138). However, these sources do not mention a possible church in the village. Nevertheless, the first document may be helpful in establishing the lower limit for the church's construction date. A life estate (*Leibgedinge*) is a form of financial security for a wife in the event of widowhood, typically included in a marriage contract. Therefore, assuming the most likely scenario that Nickel and Hedwig are depicted on the tympanum of the inner western portal, the church in Nowa could not have been built before 1406. In turn, the upper date limit for the church's construction, is a document dated March 23, 1423 (Wernicke 1884, 98), which, as the earliest known archival record, notes the presence of a church fief in the village, thus proving the existence of a sacred building there.

The issue of the workshop

In the analysis of the sculptural decoration of the church in Nowa, another important issue is the workshop responsible for its creation. Numerous mason's marks can be found both on the church's elevations and inside the building (Fig. 9). I identified them on the western portals (one on

each), on the southern portal (two), on the niche of the piscina in the sacristy (one), and on the jambs of the southern and southeastern chancel windows (two on the former – one on the exterior face and one on the interior face – and one on the interior of the latter). Some of them have not been documented in the existing literature. At the same time, I was unable to locate some of the marks mentioned by Ewald Wernicke and Hans Lutsch in their late 19th century publications (Wernicke 1877b, 163, pl. 3; Lutsch 1891, 572). It still remains unclear whether this is due to their being hidden under layers of whitewash or because of an error on the part of these authors. Additionally, all the marks I have found share the same form – an L-shape with a T-shaped extension curving inward; in one instance (on the southern portal), a cross was used instead of the T, though it is barely visible (Fig. 9d). Meanwhile, Wernicke listed as many as seven types of mason's marks on the church. On the one hand, based on the locations and forms he provided, I believe that at least some of them were mistakenly duplicated, essentially being a single mark. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that only one or two stonemasons worked on the construction of a church so rich in architectural sculpture. In addition, I found several possible mason's marks, which cannot be identified with certainty due to their poor condition.

Symbols analogous to the marks used in Nowa are known from Grodziec Castle and several parish churches: in Świdnica, Lwówek Śląski, Rzęsiny, and Płóczki Górne – they had been already documented there by Wernicke and Lutsch, with the latter author regarding their presence as evidence of workshop connections between these churches, a view later echoed by Adamska (Wernicke 1877a, 143, 1877b, pl. 1, 160, pl. 3; Lutsch 1891, 539, 572; Adamska 2005, 267). Apart from the parish church in Świdnica (which requires further research in this regard), it cannot be the case that the same stonemason worked on the construction sites of the above-mentioned buildings as in Nowa, since all of them – or the parts marked with this sign – date from approximately eighty to one hundred years later than the church in Nowa⁵. How, then, can this similarity in the form of the mark be explained? The mark may have been passed down to the son or grandson of a stonemason working in Nowa (we know that such cases occurred, for example, in Lwówek – see Białek 2007, 46), or it may have belonged to a person completely unrelated to him, with the similarity resulting from its assignment within a much later lodge originating from a different artistic region, without any awareness of its earlier use by another stonemason.

Judging by the low artistic quality of the sculptures in Nowa, the workshop that produced them was likely one of many small studios operating in the first quarter of the 15th century in the Silesian region, influenced by local traditions and artistic trends from neighbouring regions, of which Bohemia was the most significant for the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor at the time for political and economic reasons.

⁵ Another good example is – previously unknown in the literature – an analogous mark to the ones located in Nowa, found on the vaults of two rooms in the east wing of the Franciscan monastery in Lwówek Śląski. A stylistic analysis of the decoration on these vaults clearly indicates that they were created several decades later.



Fig. 8. The sacrament house in the chancel of the church in Nowa (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 8. Sakrarium w prezbiterium kościoła w Nowej (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

However, at this stage of the research, it is difficult to draw broader conclusions about the creators of the church decorations in Nowa. Further analysis of the stylistic features and stonemason's marks of other buildings constructed during the same period in the region – which I am conducting as part of my doctoral thesis – may prove helpful in this regard.

The church in Nowa as a sacred monument of the family

Many features of architecture of the church in Nowa – its relatively complex form and the articulation of its elevations, used materials and techniques, and above all, the extraordinary abundance of architectural sculpture, testify to the founders' intention to create an outstanding, even elite, church, incorporating motifs borrowed from large urban churches, scaled down in size but not in diversity.

Full heraldic achievements are rarely found in well-known examples of architectural sculpture commissioned by medieval knights in Silesia. It is also a rarity that a foundation tympanum depicting the lay patrons who commissioned the church's construction appeared in a small rural church – such an element is typically associated with the iconography of rulers, as exemplified by the tympanums in the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross in Wrocław and in the castle chapel dedicated to St. Hedwig in Lubin. The above features, along with the almost ostentatious use of



Fig. 9. Mason's marks on the church in Nowa: a) on the left corner segment of the outer western portal, b) on the left jamb of the inner western portal, c) on the left corner segment of the southern portal, d) on the right jamb of the southern portal, e) on the niche of the piscina, f) on the outer jamb of the southern window of the chancel, g) on the inner jamb of the southern window of the chancel, h) on the inner jamb of the southern window of the presbytery apse (photo by J.F. Tomczyk)

Il. 9. Znaki kamieniarskie z kościoła w Nowej: a) na lewym przyłuczcu zewnętrznego portalu zachodniego, b) na lewym ościeżu wewnętrznego portalu zachodniego, c) na lewym przyłuczcu portalu południowego, d) na prawym ościeżu portalu południowego, e) na wnęce piscyny, f) na zewnętrznym ościeżu południowego okna prezbiterium, g) na wewnętrznym ościeżu południowego okna prezbiterium, h) na wewnętrznym ościeżu południowego okna absydy prezbiterium (fot. J.F. Tomczyk)

coats of arms on numerous elements of the church's sculptural decoration, point to an exceptionally strong desire to emphasize the role and social standing of the founders. This reflects the late medieval tendency of feudal lords to treat a church serving the entire local community as their own family church, a phenomenon that is expressed here in an exceptionally emphatic manner (Adamska 2005, 138, 184, 201–204; Kaczmarek 2023, 89, 90). Another significant impetus for the creation of this decoration was the desire for commemoration. This interpretation is reinforced by the presence of a crypt beneath the chancel (no longer in use by the 17th century – see Jungnitz 1902, 341), which attests to plans to turn the church in Nowa into a family necropolis.

Among the reasons for the creation of such spectacular decoration in a rural church, the status of the Hocke family at the time appears to have been a key factor. During the period when the church in Nowa was built, the Hocke family was among the more affluent knightly families in the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor (Adamska 2005, 216). This is indicated by the numerous donations they made to the Church at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries (Adamska 2005, 113, 154, 155, 216, 311, 313, 318, 329 – specific examples of endowments are provided there). Given the general impoverishment of the Silesian knighthood at that time, only families of higher economic status could afford such activities (Adamska 2005, 216, 217). The significant position of the Hocke family is also indicated by the important roles held by its representatives – e.g., Konrad and Henryk, active in the second half of the 13th century at the courts of the Dukes of Legnica and Wrocław (e.g., Wernicke 1886, 450),

and above all the aforementioned Georg from Tomaszów Bolesławiecki, Bishop of Trent, and his brother Happi, Marshal to Duke Sigismund of Tyrol (Jungnitz 1910, 25).

Previous studies have assumed that the Hocke family sold their estate in Nowa in 1423 and never again held property there (most recently Skowron 2010, 12, 56, 64; Adamska, Dulęba 2015, 142). Indeed, according to a document dated March 23, 1423, Peter Hocke sold everything he owned in Nowa (including the church fief) to the knights Petsche and Jeschke Schellendorf (e.g., Neuling 1885, 408; Wernicke 1886, 454). However, this does not imply that other members of the Hocke family could not continue to hold property in Nowa, nor that Peter or another family member did not later repurchase this estate, but no document attesting to such a transaction is known. Although the Hocke family no longer appear in connection with Nowa in the archival records known today, and for the next hundred or so years the Schellendorfs were listed as the owners of the local estates (e.g., Wernicke 1884, 121, 144, 145, 204), a certain piece of the church's former furnishings in Nowa contradicts the thesis that the Hockes' ties to this village definitively ended in 1423. As late as the end of the 19th century, a heavily damaged late-Gothic triptych was located in the church in Nowa; in the 1930s it formed part of the collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław, and after 1945 was transferred to the storage facilities of the National Museum in Warsaw, where it remains to this day (e.g., Wernicke 1876, 116, 117; Ziomecka 1976, 99). Given the dimensions of the retable, the limited interior space of the church in Nowa and its layout, it can be considered the

former main altarpiece of this church. The triptych is dated to the 1470s–1480s (Ziomecka 1976, 99, 100). On the reverse sides of its wings were painted (described as damaged as early as the 19th century and now partially lost) images of two saints (St. Nicholas on the right, an unknown saint on the left), as well as a depiction, divided between the two wings, of a kneeling knight bearing the Hocke coat of arms, the inscription “Cunrad Hocke”, and the invocation “Sancte Nicolae ora pro me!” (e.g., Wernicke 1876, 116, 117; 1886, 455; Lutsch 1891, 573; Ziomecka 1976, 99)⁶. This triptych should therefore be regarded as a donation by a member of the Hocke family and direct evidence that the family’s ties to Nowa did not end in 1423.

In the centuries that followed, the state of neglect in which the church had already found itself by the 17th century paradoxically helped preserve its sculptural decorations (Skowron 2010, 14). Until the 20th century, the only known repairs were those that did not substantially interfere with its architecture; in the case of stone decorative elements, these were limited to whitewashing them as part of interior refurbishment and efforts to combat moisture (e.g., Lutsch 1891, 573; Pater 1982, 140; Bartnik et al. 2005, 256). On the other hand, this is precisely what led to the loss of the full legibility of the depictions, and in the case of exposed exterior details – their significant and irreversible damage due to weathering.

⁶ An interesting point, given the likely founders of the church in Nowa – namely Nickel Hocke and Hedwig of Borsnitz – is the fact that Cunrad directed his prayers to St. Nicholas rather than to his own namesake patron saint. It is possible that this was an expression of respect for the church’s founder and evidence of the prayers still being offered here for his soul, though one must also bear in mind the great popularity of this saint in the Middle Ages as well as other possible reasons, now unknown, for singling out this particular figure.

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Summary and recommendations

The analysis presented in this article has confirmed the uniqueness of the architectural sculptural complex of the church in Nowa within the context of medieval rural religious architecture in the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor. Particularly unique is the distinctly family-oriented ideological program, which makes extensive use of heraldry. I have proposed the period between 1406 and 1423 as the date of the church’s construction, and I have considered Nickel Hocke and his wife Hedwig of Borsnitz as its likely founders. I attributed the uniqueness of the church’s sculptural decoration to the ambitions of the Hocke family (which at the time was among the wealthiest and most influential in the duchy) and the church’s intended function as a family necropolis, and its completeness to the absence of significant later alterations to the building. I called into question the previously held view that the Hocke family permanently lost patronage over the church in 1423, as well as most of the workshop connections suggested in the past. From a scholarly perspective, the most important priorities include further exploration of technical aspects and the search for direct and indirect sources of inspiration for this decoration. From a conservation perspective, it is crucial to protect the exterior details from further destructive effects of rainwater, and in the case of the architectural sculpture inside the church, it is necessary to remove the layers of overpainting, which would allow for a more complete assessment of its stylistic characteristics and perhaps lead to the discovery of traces of the original polychromy. In this way, the measures undertaken by conservation specialists will contribute to a better understanding and preservation of this sacred monument of the region’s historic noble families for future generations.

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Streszczenie

Sakralny pomnik rodu. Niezwykła rzeźba architektoniczna kościoła pw. Matki Bożej Bolesnej w Nowej (gm. Bolesławiec)

Kościół pw. Matki Bożej Bolesnej w Nowej wyróżnia się na tle średniowiecznych świątyń wiejskich z obszaru dawnego księstwa świdnicko-jaworskiego bogactwem kamiennej rzeźby architektonicznej, zarówno pod względem jej ilości, jak i wymowy ideowej. Uwzględniając skalę obiektu, zwraca uwagę wystawność tej dekoracji. Jej jeszcze istotniejszą cechą jest wyjątkowo silne zaakcentowanie roli fundatorów, poprzez ich licznie umieszczone herby. Mimo to w dotychczasowych publikacjach zespół ten był jedynie lakonicznie wspominany.

Moim celem było zapełnienie owej luki poprzez poddanie tej dekoracji analizie oraz odpowiedź na pytanie o przyczyny wyjątkowości tego wystroju. W tym celu przeprowadziłem kwerendę literaturową oraz badania terenowe, z których wyciągnąłem wnioski, posługując się analizą styloznawczą, metodą porównawczą, ikonograficzną i heraldyczną, analizą znaków kamieniarskich oraz chronologią motywów.

Wyniki badań potwierdzają unikatowość zespołu rzeźby architektonicznej kościoła w Nowej na tle średniowiecznej wiejskiej architektury sakralnej w regionie. Niezwykły jest zwłaszcza wybitnie rodowy program ideowy, posługujący się rozbudowaną heraldyką. Jako czas powstania kościoła zaproponowałem okres między 1406 a 1423 r., zaś za jego prawdopodobnych fundatorów uznałem Nickela Hocke i jego żonę Hedwigę z Borsnitzów. Wyjątkowość wystroju rzeźbiarskiego świątyni uzasadniłem statusem ekonomicznym oraz ambicjami rodu Hocke i planowaną funkcją kościoła jako nekropolii rodowej, a jego kompletność brakiem późniejszych większych przebudów. Podważyłem dotychczasowy pogląd o trwałej utracie przez ród Hocke patronatu nad świątynią od 1423 r., a także większość sygnalizowanych w przeszłości powiązań warsztatowych – druga z tych kwestii wymaga dalszych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: Hocke (ród), Borschnitz (ród), Redern (ród), gotycka rzeźba architektoniczna, kościół w Nowej (gm. Bolesławiec)