

Sources and Ways of Wrocław's Promotion in the Structures of the Bohemian Crown in the Luxembourg Era: Polemic Recapitulation

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This article presents the consequences of the establishment of the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1348, which entailed the incorporation of Silesia with its rich and ambitious city of Wrocław. Initially, Wrocław posed many challenges for Prague, but over time, it became its competitor. The growing position of Wrocław in the Bohemian Crown stemmed from the legitimization of its rights to the Bohemian throne. Hence, Wrocław's art and architecture of that time reveal many political undertones. In the winter of 1358/1359, the emperor chose Wrocław to ensure the succession of the Luxembourg secundogeniture. The birth of Wenceslaus IV in 1361 simplified the matter of succession. But when Charles IV's younger son, Sigismund, was not accepted in Prague after his brother's death in 1419, he took the Bohemian throne via Wrocław, calling it in 1420 "the second capital of his Rule and the source of law".

Keywords: Wrocław. Bohemian Crown. Luxembourgs. Political ideology. Legititism.

In recent years, a more comprehensive view of the history of the Czech state has been developed. Unlike the paradigms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – which were limited to the Czech ethnicity (František Palacký's paradigm)¹ or to the area of the Czech Republic (Josef Macek's concept)² – it covers the whole area of the Bohemian Crown. However, this synthetical view still meets with a wall of bohemocentrism, which is especially evident in the discourse about Silesia, the largest realm of the Bohemian Crown after the Kingdom of Bohemia, and Wrocław, the largest urban centre after Prague.

Currently, Czech studies of the history and culture of late medieval and early modern Silesia seem to be keen to break the old myths and stereotypes. However, it is difficult for many Czech researchers to abandon the preconception that if the fate of the Czech state was shaped outside of Prague, or even outside Bohemia, this occurred only very rarely and only in more recent times.³ This might be seen as part of the aftermath of the traumatic centuries when Prague was politically dependent on Vienna, then a short but fateful time when the decisions about Czechoslovakia were taken in Munich, and finally its dependence on Berlin and Moscow. Nevertheless, this modern trauma should not

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1 KUTNAR – MAREK, *Přehledné dějiny*, 213–230. MAUR, *A země horami obložena*, 622–636.

2 IWAŃCZAK, *Echa śląskie*, 381–390.

3 Virtually every sentence of this review article could be annotated with dozens of citations from historical sources, monographs and articles. To avoid this temptation, I only provide the most recent literature and refer to the most important sources. On the subject of historiographic nuances see: GOLIŃSKI, *Czechy w historii Śląska*, 81–94. JIRÁSEK, *Dějiny Slezska*, 5–10. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 15–95. CZECHOWICZ, *Czeska historia Śląska*, 163–172. CZECHOWICZ, *Idea i państwo*, I.

obscure the academic discussion about earlier periods, including the role of Wrocław in the Bohemian Crown at the end of the Middle Ages.

Czech researchers readily notice the monumental scale of the Bohemian Rule in the times of the kings John and Charles IV.⁴ However, when in the fifteenth century, Silesia and Wrocław forcibly on key issues, the historical role of Wrocław was “silenced”. Wrocław’s role was brushed aside with statements about the Germanization of the city and its anti-Bohemian and anti-Hussite character – which amounted almost to the banishment of Wrocław from the Bohemian history of the fifteenth and later centuries.⁵

The same process has been going on for generations in Polish historiography, which in general has been unable to go beyond the idea of Silesia as a realm that was lost in the fourteenth century, but which “was still Polish”, just subject to the Bohemian political influence, and thus Germanized.⁶ Conversely, Czech historians emphasized that the integration of Silesia with the political centre in Prague had saved this area from even stronger Germanization.⁷

Not only Czechs and Poles, but also German researchers have struggled to understand the role of Wrocław. Usually, their view on history has been shaped by the current situation. Even though at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Wrocław was still capable of financing the participation of the Habsburgs in the War of the Spanish Succession,⁸ its role kept diminishing over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

However, a close analysis of the sources reveals that Wrocław played an exceptionally important role in the politics of the Bohemian Crown. Its role increased during the rule of John of Bohemia (died 1346), Charles IV (died 1378) and Wenceslaus IV (died 1419), strengthened thanks to the decisions of Sigismund of Luxembourg (died 1437), and culminated during the reign of two Bohemian kings (1458–1490): George of Poděbrady (died 1471) and Vladislaus II Jagiellon (died 1516). Interestingly, George of Poděbrady was rejected by Wrocław, which gave its support to the other Bohemian monarch, Matthias Corvinus (died 1490).

This unusual situation – the rule of two Bohemian kings simultaneously (1469–1490) – is deeply rooted in the distant Luxembourg era. There are many recent articles, papers and books trying to explain this phenomenon.⁹ Nevertheless, the reinterpretation of the Bohemian Crown in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries proposed by some of these authors meets not so much with opposition, but rather with misunderstanding.¹⁰ Perhaps there are too many of these publications, or perhaps they are too analytical. However, it is also probable that this discourse, confined to the Czech, Polish and (to a lesser extent) German languages, should be expanded beyond the barriers of national and patriotic nostalgia or sentiment.

4 Among others SPĚVÁČEK, *Rozmach české státnosti*.

5 A monumental work from recent years is very symptomatic here: CERMANOVÁ – NOVOTNÝ – SOUKUP, *Husitské století*; critically about its bohemocentrism: CZECHOWICZ, *Idea i państwo*, I, 121–123.

6 On this topic recently: CZECHOWICZ, *Migotanie przeszłości*, 12–17, 123–150.

7 MACŮREK, *O polsko-czeską wzajemność*, 182–199.

8 OTRUBA, *Bedeutung*, 192–234.

9 GRIEGER, *Die Pläne*, 163–180. ČORNEJ – BARTLOVÁ, *Velké dějiny*, 241–272, 403–471. KALOUS, *Matyáš Korvín*, 168–194. BOBKOVÁ, *Česká koruna*, 25–105. CZECHOWICZ, *Między katedrą*, 181–256. CZECHOWICZ, *Idea i państwo*, I, 149–204. CZECHOWICZ, *Idea i państwo*, III.

10 ČAPSKÝ, *Zrození země*. ČAPSKÝ, *Przestrzeń jako miejsce pamięci*, 3–14. polemic with this article: CZECHOWICZ, *Když se pán volí*, 27–42. See also: ČAPSKÝ, *K postavení Vratislavi*, 346–383. ČAPSKÝ, *Urban History*, 223; – I will discuss this article at the end of this text.

The purpose of this article¹¹ is to show once again the mechanisms leading to the fact that in 1420 Sigismund of Luxembourg, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, called Wrocław – which he had just taken over from his late brother Wenceslaus IV – the second capital of his Bohemian realm (*“Wratislaviensem tamen civitatem nostram, que velut altera sedes et caput eiusdem regni est fonsque legalitatis irrignus affluentia prelargata derivans [...]”*).¹²

An important part of this research is the analysis of sources, not only written, but also visual. Art and architecture of that time – even though their interpretation is not always straightforward – permanently infused some political themes into the public space. Monumental buildings and their decorations were created with a great expenditure of effort and resources, which means that their significance is in no way less important than the written documents, which are much easier to record (and destroy). In Wrocław, there are more artistic, visual and material sources connected with political ideology than in any other city in Bohemia, Moravia and Lusatia, including even Prague. Contrary to previous false beliefs, they are not only signs of Wrocław’s subordination to the Bohemian rulers,¹³ but more often than not, they are manifestations of the ambitions of the city, which had its own ideas about how the Bohemian Crown should function. The following paragraphs of this article are an attempt to outline the sources of these ambitions of Wrocław – an urban republic that was an economic partner not only for the great European metropolises,¹⁴ but also for its great monarchs, including John of Bohemia, Charles IV, Wenceslaus IV and Sigismund, as well as the King of Poland, Casimir III the Great (died 1370).

The death of Wenceslaus III in 1306, the last of the royal branch of the Přemyslid Dynasty (a cadet branch survived in the Duchy of Racibórz until 1521), caused a big stir in Central Europe. There were many pretenders to the Prague throne, including Rudolf Habsburg, called the “Porridge King” (died 1307), and Henry of Carinthia (died 1335). However, the decisive voice belonged to Henry VII, Holy Roman Emperor (died 1313), as the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia were imperial fiefs. From 1306, however, it was a dormant fief, and the sovereign had the right to dispose of it as he wished. In turn, from 1212 the Bohemians had a right to choose their own king if there was no father-to-son succession. From the clash of these two political concepts and various other interests, a new Bohemian king and a new Bohemian dynasty emerged – the Luxembourgs – as Emperor Henry granted the Bohemian fief to his young son, John. To legitimize his rights to the Prague throne, John married the Přemyslid heiress, Elisabeth of Bohemia (died 1330), the daughter of Wenceslaus II and the sister

11 I realised that there was a need to write this article while preparing a synthetic book: CZECHOWICZ, *Stołeczne miasto Wrocław* in 2019; so some paragraphs in the middle part of this article are similar to those in the book. However, here I am introducing elements of an academic discussion and provide a critical apparatus, which are missing in the book.

12 MARKGRAF – FRENZEL, *Codex diplomaticus Silesiae* XI, 181, no. 39.

13 In this spirit, e.g.: KACZMAREK, *Znaki czeskiego panowania*, 206–220.

14 GRÜNHAGEN, *Breslau und die Landesfürsten*, 14–23. HOFFMANN, *Towards a City-State*, 173–199. GOLIŃSKI, *Socjotopografia*, 289–330, 465–470, 507–511. MYŚLIWSKI, *Wrocław w przestrzeni gospodarczej*; PATAŁA, *Wrocławscy kupcy w Antwerpii*, 33–47.

of Wenceslaus III (died 1306). With Elisabeth, John fathered his great successor – the Bohemian King and Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV of Luxembourg.¹⁵

It was also the time for the reintegration of Silesia with Prague (reintegration, as the various political ties between Silesia and Bohemia in the tenth–fourteenth centuries had not yet been forgotten). This reintegration process started with the first tributes paid by the Silesian dukes to the Bohemian ruler in 1389. However, the decisive role in Silesia was played by Wrocław – the seat of the bishop and the duke, an economic centre and a wealthy urban area (Fig. 1). Founded on the Oder River, Wrocław was surrounded by city walls with towers and gates. From 1264, it expanded through the New Town. Furthermore, the islands on the Oder were urbanized and the Wrocław area included also a slightly isolated Romanesque Premonstratensian Abbey in Ołbin. The whole urban area encompassed three chapters – the cathedral and two collegiate chapters – as well as ten abbeys and monasteries. Apart from the Catholic Church, two other entities played an important role in the city – dukes, who were slowly losing their political power, and burghers, who were growing more and more powerful.

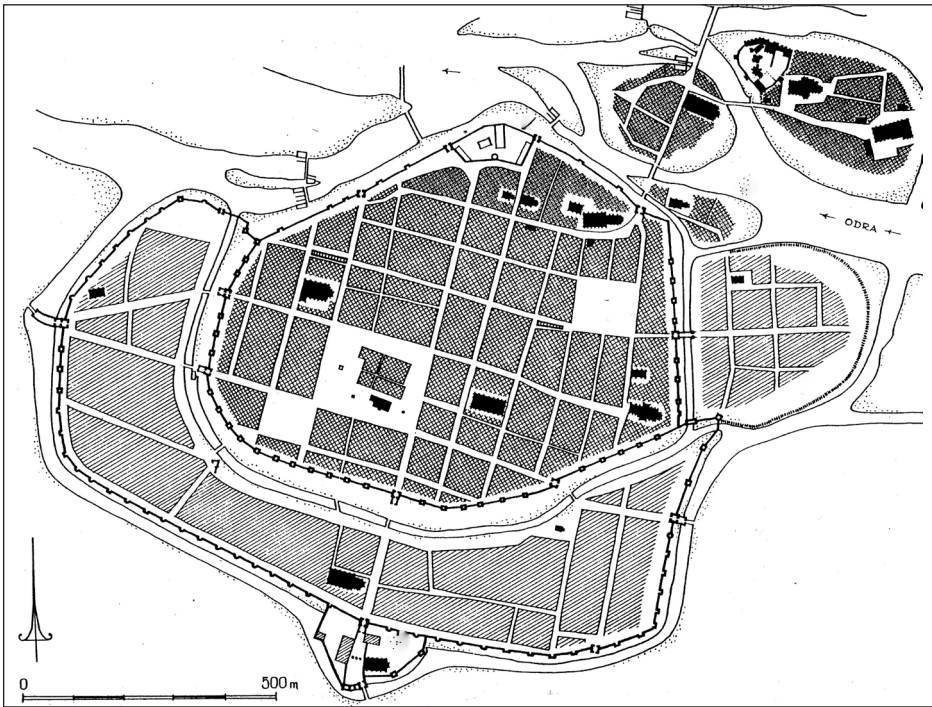


Figure 1: Schematic map of Wrocław around 1500 (excluding Ołbin and the suburbs)¹⁶

¹⁵ BOBKOVÁ, *Jan Lucemburský*.

¹⁶ GOLIŃSKI, *Socjotopografia*.

After the death of the ambitious Henry IV Probus in 1290, the Wrocław burghers turned against his successor, the charismatic Henry III of Głogów (died 1309), and instead chose Henry V the Fat of Legnica as their duke. Defeated by his Głogów opponent, Henry V of Legnica died in 1296, but the rights to Wrocław were inherited by his sons, Bolesław III (died 1352) and Henry VI (died 1335). While the sons were still minors, the regency was held by the Duke of Świdnica, Bolko I (died 1301), and – after his death in 1301 – by Bishop Henry of Wierzbna (died 1319), who became the first Prince-Bishop of Wrocław.

Meanwhile, in the first years of the fourteenth century, the sons of Henry V the Fat became adults. The eldest son, Bolesław III, later called Wasteful, married around 1303 Margaret (died 1322), another daughter of the King of Bohemia and Poland, Wenceslaus II. This is an important sign of the political significance of Wrocław rulers, who – albeit only dukes – were deemed worthy of marrying into the royal family. But it should also be seen as a confirmation of the significance of Wrocław itself, especially since the Duchy of Wrocław – after the “partition” following the death of Henry IV Probus in 1290 – was one of the smallest duchies in Silesia. This was compensated by the city’s size and potential – both economic and political.¹⁷

Wrocław was the apple of the eye of John Luxembourg, who was the successor of the Přemyslids to the thrones of Bohemia and Poland. By receiving tributes from the dukes of Silesia, Kuyavia and Mazovia, John was becoming the King of Poland not only in name, especially as it was not until 1320 when the Polish crown was taken by John’s main rival in Poland, Ladislaus the Short (died 1333). However, even Ladislaus’ coronation in Cracow in 1320 did not make a great impression on John – in Bohemia and Silesia, Ladislaus the Short and his son Casimir III the Great were referred to just as the Kings of Cracow. The reason for this disapproval was probably the fact that the coronation of both Piasts – Ladislaus in 1320 and Casimir in 1333 – took place in Cracow Cathedral, instead of the archbishop’s cathedral in Gniezno. The place of the coronation was of great importance at that time, as evident by John’s and Charles’s considerable efforts to create a metropolis in Prague, which came to fruition in 1344.¹⁸

During his conquests in Poland, Ladislaus the Short – supported by Charles Robert of Hungary (died 1342), who was married to his daughter Elizabeth (died 1380) – was not interested in Silesia, or at least in Wrocław. Ladislaus’ disinterest is still not sufficiently clear, but this article is not the right place to dwell on it. The important fact is that in 1327 the Duke of Wrocław, Henry VI the Good, the younger son of Henry V the Fat, having no male descendant, paid tribute to John, who was referred to as the King of both Bohemia and Poland. Other Piasts followed suit. It was not until the tribute of Bolko II of Ziębice (died 1342) that tribute would be paid to John as the ruler of only Bohemia. However, once Casimir the Great, the ruler of Cracow, renounced his claims to Silesia in 1335, John also renounced his rights to the Polish Crown.¹⁹ Wrocław – one of the most important cities of the Kingdom of Poland landed in the hands of a ruler from outside the Piast dynasty. Moreover, in the same year of 1335, John gave up his rights to the title of the King of Poland. John’s fiefdoms in Silesia and Mazovia (Płock) were still part of Poland, but they were becoming more and more integrated with the

17 GRÜNHAGEN, *Breslau und die Landesfürsten*, 1–23.

18 GOLIŃSKI, *Wrocław*, 95–220.

19 BOBKOVÁ, *Jan Lucemburský*, 301–327; from the point of view of the history of law: ORZECOWSKI, *Historia ustroju Śląska*, 33–35, 60–69.

political centre in Prague. In other words, the Polish domain split into two parts: a larger part under the rule of the Piasts in Cracow (after Ladislaus the Short, Casimir III the Great) and a smaller one under the rule of the Luxembourgs in Prague. This observation is crucial for understanding the next paragraphs of this article.

Wrocław – now the largest Polish city of the Bohemian monarchs (although it is worth remembering also the Polish city of Płock, still a Bohemian fief and the bishop's seat) – was very quickly integrated into the Bohemian Crown. John often visited Wrocław, but his power was exercised by the hauptmann, who in some cases had more authority than the duke and who supervised almost all of Silesia. Almost all, because at that time, John's sovereignty was still not recognized by the dukes of Świdnica and Jawor.²⁰ This situation is depicted in the east tympanum, which was once the main portal of the Old Town Hall in Wrocław (Fig. 2), probably built at the end of John's reign. In the centre, it depicts the Bohemian lion wearing a helmet on his head, which means that the king's power was represented by his hauptmann (local governor). The lion sits between two shields leaning towards him with the emblems of the Duchy of Wrocław and the city council of Wrocław.²¹



Figure 2: The tympanum of the east face (former principal façade) of Wrocław Town Hall, probably from 1343; Photo: Bogustaw Czechowicz

20 WÓLKIEWICZ, *Capitaneus Slesie*, 169–225; and the studies in BOBKOVÁ – ČAPSKÝ – KORBELAŘOVÁ, *Hejtmanská správa*.

21 KACZMAREK, *Portal z tympanonem*, 95–105. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 141–145.

The tympanum was built a few years after Silesia and Bohemia were shaken in 1341 by a conflict between Nanker, the Bishop of Wrocław (d. 1341), and King John. The dispute was caused by a papal tax (called Peter's Pence), which was paid in Poland (in the Archdiocese of Gniezno), but not in Bohemia. While the Church authorities insisted on the tax, King John and the Wrocław burghers refused to pay it. After John took over the bishop's castle in Milicz near the border with Greater Poland, Nanker cast an anathema on the king. According to a later testimony from the 1390s, the bishop also reproached John for being a deplorable king, since there was no archbishop in his capital (Prague) to crown him.²²

With the support of his older son, Charles, John started the process of raising Prague to the rank of a metropolis, which came to fruition in 1344. At the same time, the construction of a new, enormous cathedral, the first of its kind in Central Europe, began at Prague Castle. Was it a challenge for King John? Most likely yes, just as it is likely that the inspiration for the huge New Town of Prague, founded by Charles IV in 1348, was the development of Wrocław under Henry VI. The Wrocław Old Town had been girded by buildings, a new moat, and (external) walls. Most probably, this covered the area planned already during the original locating of the city, back in the times of Henry I the Bearded.²³

Charles IV did a similar thing in Prague, but he acted on a much bigger scale. His ambitions – the ambitions of the Roman and Bohemian ruler – and his powers were much greater, as he aimed at creating a new capital of the Holy Roman Empire on the Vltava River. Moreover, Charles IV wanted to combine the Old Town and Vyšehrad, the former seat of the first Bohemian king, Vratislav, into one urban area.

In Wrocław, the new area, called Karlstadt since the times of Charles IV (although it was built earlier, i.e. before Charles IV), allowed for a closer urban integration of the Old and New Towns. However, back in the Piast times, the New Town had lost its legal and administrative independence and was dominated by the Old Town.²⁴ Thus, in the mid-fourteenth century, the Wrocław agglomeration was spread across both sides of the Odra River: on the left bank there were the founding towns – Old and New – and on the right bank, Ołbin Abbey. Between them, there were islands with numerous church institutions, monasteries and chapters, and – most importantly – the bishop's seat and the cathedral. After Nanker, the new bishop, Przeclaw of Pogorzela, was generally favourable towards Charles IV. He was even intermittently the Chancellor of the Kingdom of Bohemia. However, there was one issue on which the bishop and the emperor disagreed – Charles's plan to incorporate the Diocese of Wrocław into the Archdiocese of Prague. Both Casimir the Great and the Wrocław clergy vehemently opposed this scenario. After a failed audience in Avignon, the seat of the popes at that time, Charles IV made a peculiar attempt to divide the Wrocław Diocese into two parts: one subordinate to Gniezno and one to Prague. We do not know any further details, but many questions arise; for example, was there a plan to create two Wrocław dioceses? As far as we know, this had no precedent in Europe at that time and it would entail a need to build a new cathedral, though these are just far-reaching speculations.²⁵

22 WISZEWSKI, *Czasy biskupów*, 33–44.

23 CZECHOWICZ, *Ars lucrum nostrum*, 9–23.

24 BOBKOVÁ, *Biskupstwo wrocławskie*, 92–95. CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 20–48; about the Prague of Charles IV and Prague Cathedral, among others: KUBÍNOVÁ, *Imitatio Romae*. KUTHAN – ROYT, *Katedrála sv. Víta*.

25 CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 135–137. HUCZMANOVÁ, *Die Kirche der hl. Wenzel*, 229–239.

Charles IV also had other ideas, which he implemented in 1348, in a different political reality, which Polish historiography generally does not recognize, and Czech historiography does not always interpret correctly. We are talking here about the act of 7 April 1348 to establish the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia, which included the Polish lands, Silesia, and the Plock part of Mazovia (as well as the Margraviate of Moravia and the Lands of Bautzen and Görlitz). Charles IV did this not as a Bohemian king, but as a Roman ruler, i.e., his own sovereign (the Bohemian Kingdom was a fief of the Holy Roman Empire). It happened during an impasse during the war with Casimir the Great over Silesia, which had been raging for three years. Finally, the Treaty of Namysłów, concluded in autumn 1348, stabilized the situation.

The Crown of the Kingdom – *Coronae Regni* – is a concept of a monarchy extending across two levels: symbolic and real. Symbolically, the ruler of each crown was the patron saint of the dominion, usually the saint worshiped in this political centre. He or she would hand over the crown – the sign of power – to the real sovereign, who ruled on the saint's behalf. In reality, it was a territorial structure transcending the formerly established borders of the dominion, which allowed the incorporation of these new lands into the political centre of power.

Although its cornerstone was still the person of the king, in the late Middle Ages, the Crown of the Kingdom was a state in which the ruler shared his prerogatives with his subjects (representatives of the clergy, nobility and burghers). They participated through, first, proto-parliamentary and, with time, parliamentary procedures. The state was no longer the property of the king, but – through the ideological involvement of the patron saint and the real engagement of the political elites – it was an entity placed above the monarch. This paved the way for the process in which the king would become just one of the institutions of the state.²⁶ Although the term *Coronae Regni Bohemiae* appeared in two documents by John of Luxembourg, it was probably just an automatic transfer from Western European chancellery practice in the era of the ruler, who spent more time south of the Alps and west of the Rhine than in Central Europe. His son Charles IV, brought up at the French court, took steps to sanction the use of this term in 1348. On April 7 (i.e. Easter), as the Roman king, he issued 13 edicts validating the earlier documents which politically linked together the Duchy of Wrocław with the Holy Roman Empire and the political centre in Prague. Moreover, he established the affiliation of Polish principalities (not only Silesia) to the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia. This document concerned also Moravia and the lands that more than a century later would be called Upper Lusatia. However, the concept of the Crown of the Kingdom was especially crucial for connecting the Polish lands, mainly Silesia, with Prague. The feudal tributes of individual Duchies played here the most significant role, but they were still – according to contemporary sources – the Duchies in Polonia, i.e. in Poland. By incorporating them into the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the ruler – the Roman king (not yet the emperor) as the supreme secular political authority – created a new political structure above the previous political divisions.

From then on, the Bohemian Crown – which already consisted of two entities, i.e. the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia – received an even more complicated structure. From then on, the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia comprised the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, the Duchy of Silesia and the Lands

26 PROCHNO, *Terra Bohemiae*, 217–270. BOBKOVÁ, *Velké dějiny*, 230–237, 278–290, 552–589.

of Bautzen and Görlitz (only from 1469 they were referred to as Upper Lusatia).²⁷ But that was not all. The monarch incorporated also the Upper Palatinate (eastern part of Bavaria), henceforth known as New Bohemia, Vogtland (south-eastern tip of Upper Saxony), Lusatia (later known as Lower Lusatia) and the Margraviate of Brandenburg. Furthermore, there were numerous exclaves in Saxony and Bavaria, not to forget about Luxembourg, the hereditary domain of the Luxembourgs, which was then much larger than the present Duchy of Luxembourg. However, in 1356, Charles IV ceded the Płock part of Mazovia. A small Central European empire was established. Its status was elevated by the fact that the throne of Saint Wenceslaus was occupied by the Holy Roman rulers: Charles IV, and then his sons Wenceslaus IV and Sigismund (Wenceslaus IV as king, while Sigismund became emperor).

It is in this political reality that we find Wrocław in 1348. It was not – as was believed for centuries – only a satellite of Prague, even though Charles IV did his best to make Prague the capital of the empire, the largest city north of the Alps and an ideological synthesis of the former political centres of Europe: Rome, Constantinople, Aachen and Paris.²⁸

What were Wrocław's assets and what was its appeal? Definitely, the economic power of the city played a key role. It was the richest urban centre in the Bohemian Crown. Its importance was also elevated by the fact that it was the seat of the bishop of a large diocese. But there was something else – the ideological heritage of the Wrocław Piasts, who became affiliated with the Bohemian kings in the thirteenth century – Anne of Bohemia (died 1265), wife of Henry the Pious (died 1241) – and in the fourteenth century – Margaret of Bohemia, wife of Bolesław III Wasteful, who for a short time even used the title of the heir of the Kingdom of Bohemia: *heres regni Bohemiae*. As already mentioned, the succession of the Luxembourgs after the Piasts in Wrocław was not certain, especially since the brother of Henry VI, Bolesław III, lived until 1352, and then was superseded by his sons, Wenceslaus I and Louis I. Although they were loyal supporters of the Bohemian king, they did not renounce their hereditary rights to Wrocław, as manifested by the inscription on the tomb of their father, Bolesław III. He was named there the Duke of Wrocław, Legnica and Brzeg, although he never really ruled Wrocław, except for a very short period. This epigraph was created at the same time as the second tomb of Bolesław's brother, Henry VI. Here, in turn, it was emphasized that it was the duke who handed over the power over Wrocław to the Bohemian ruler. Thus, on both monuments dedicated to the ducal brothers, we can notice a political and ideological discourse that had been taking place in Silesia, and especially Wrocław, for several decades. I once described it as a "silent dispute over Wrocław" – a dispute between the Luxembourgs and the Piasts of Legnica and Brzeg, who had been disinherited from Wrocław.²⁹

The Luxembourgs, especially Charles IV, did a lot to strengthen the conviction that the taking over of Wrocław from the local Piasts had been done in a rightful way: Documents often using the formula *iusto et legitime* – lawfully and legitimately;³⁰

27 HRUBÝ, *Archivum Coronae Regni Bohemiae*, 41–67. JIREČEK, *Codex juris Bohemici* II, 3, 283–308.

28 CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 35–77.

29 KĘBŁOWSKI, *Pomniki Piastów*, 91–108. KACZMAREK, *Italianizmy*, 172–184. CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 62–65. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 99–113, CZECHOWICZ, *Anna ducissa*, 219–232.

30 For example, in Charles IV's document of 13 December 1358: "[...] *Johannes condam Boheme rex, genitor noster karissimus, pro se, heredibus ac successoribus suis, regibus Boemie, et eiusdem regni corona omnia predicta*

Founding the tombs of Henry IV Probus (Fig. 3) and Henry VI the Good (Fig. 4) – even though these initiatives did not come directly from the Bohemian kings, they were conducted by their Wrocław (Silesian) officials; Supporting the convent of the Poor Clares in Wrocław, where the mausoleum of several Wrocław Dukes is located, as well as the collegiate Church of the Holy Cross (Fig. 5), where the remains of Henry IV are buried. These are only a few examples of the comprehensive, multifaceted programme to present themselves as the continuators of the Piasts.³¹



Figure 3: Lithograph depicting the top of the tomb of Prince Henry IV Probus (died 1290) from around 1330, originally placed in the chancel of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross in Ostrów Tumski in Wrocław, currently in the National Museum in Wrocław³²

et eorum quodlibet ex donacione pie record. ill. Henrici sexti et ultimi ducis Wratislaviensis hereditario, iusto et legitimo titulo possidebat [...]". MENDL – LINHARTOVÁ, *Regesta diplomatika* VIII/1, 48, no. 60; more on this subject: CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 110–113.

31 In addition to the works cited in footnote 22, see also: KACZMAREK, *Nagrobek księcia*, 23–34. KACZMAREK, *Kolegiata Krzyża Świętego*, 85–100. KACZMAREK, *Art in Silesian Duchies*, 1–33. KACZMAREK, *Breslau im Netz*, 77–92. CZECHOWICZ, *Bone memorie*, 3–17.

32 LUCHS, *Schlesische Fürstenbilder*.



Figure 4: Lithograph depicting the top of the tomb of Duke Henry VI the Good (died 1335) in the former Church of Poor Clares in Wrocław from around 1355³³

33 LUCHS, Schlesische Fürstenbilder.

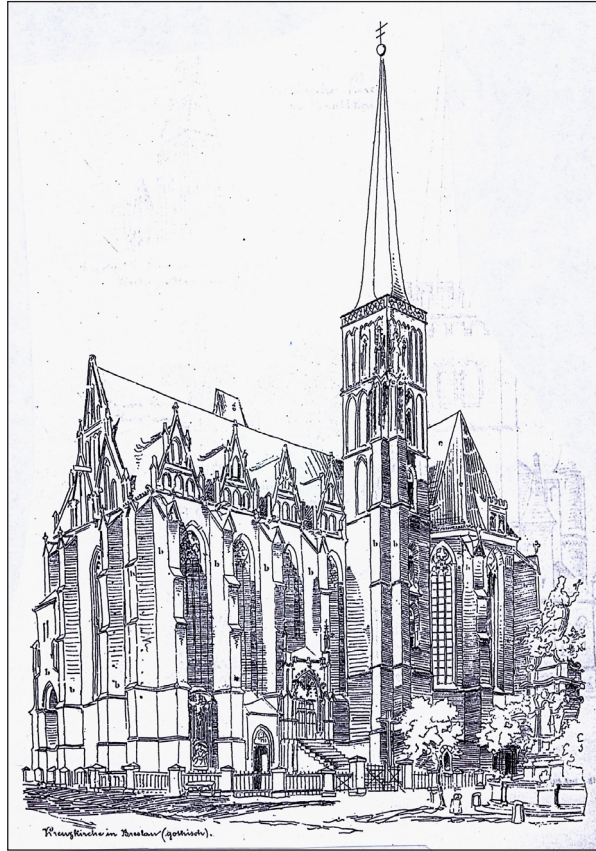


Figure 5: Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross in Wrocław from 1288 to around 1400 viewed from the south-west³⁴

Charles IV continued the Piast tradition of monastic foundations in Wrocław by founding the Augustinian hermit monastery of Saint Stanislaus, Dorothea and Wenceslaus (Fig. 6).³⁵ The subordination of the city to the Bohemian Crown is also visible in the coats of arms on the keystones in the south nave of the Church of St Elizabeth in Wrocław (Fig. 7).³⁶ The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene received a gift from Charles IV in the form of important relics.³⁷ The monarch also did not forget about the cathedral and the bishop, presenting himself in the documents as the bishop's patron

34 *Schlesiens Vorzeit in Bild und Schrift* 2, 1875.

35 WALTER, *Haben König Karl IV.*, 430–437. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 30–141. HUCZMANOVÁ, *Die Kirche der hll. Wenzel*, 229–239.

36 KACZMAREK, *Gotycka rzeźba*, 53–73. KACZMAREK, *Rzeźba architektoniczna*, 187. CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 217, note 249.

37 BOBKOVÁ, *Relikvie darované Karlem IV.*, 175–188.

and guardian – “a special protector”. And it is probably Charles IV that is portrayed in the statue situated in the vestibule of the cathedral (Fig. 8), which is also the image of the patron saint of the Bohemian Crown – St Wenceslaus. As evidenced in his own documents, Charles IV identified with this Duke of Bohemia from the tenth century (Charles was originally named Wenceslaus and he changed his name only after his confirmation). He also mentioned the “double face” of the monarch, the terrestrial and extra-terrestrial. Therefore, we can assume that the ruler depicted in this sculpture is a peculiar synthesis of St Wenceslaus and Charles IV – the new St Wenceslaus.³⁸



Figure 6: Fragment of the chancel façade of the former Augustinian Hermits Church in Wrocław with the shields depicting the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire in the centre, the coat of arms of the Bohemian Kingdom on the right (in the heraldic sense, i.e. on the left for the viewer), and the Duchy of Wrocław on the left (heraldically, i.e. on the right), 1355 or shortly before; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz



Figure 7: The keystone on the vault of the east part of the south aisle in the Church of St Elizabeth in Wrocław with the coat of arms of the Duchy of Wrocław; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz

³⁸ Recently in a new light: CZECHOWICZ, *Migotanie przeszłości*, 55–63; where you can find earlier studies of this subject.



Figure 8: Statue in the west vestibule of Wrocław Cathedral depicting Emperor Charles IV as St Wenceslaus (coalescence of both of these figures), probably from the mid or second half of the 1350s; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz

Here we must return to the political and legal context. When it came to appointing the ruler, the Bohemian monarchy had a double character. It was hereditary if a son inherited the throne from his father, but it was elective when such a simple succession was not possible. It was a great privilege that the Bohemian lords (magnates) received from the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II, in 1212.³⁹ With the passage of time, Charles IV had to figure out who would inherit the throne of St Wenceslaus after him. His subsequent marriages were either childless, or his descendant died (Wenceslaus was one year old at the time of his death in 1351). In 1353, Charles married Anna of Świdnica (Schweidnitz), but a few years into their marriage, she still had not given him an heir to the throne. According to contemporary notions, by the 1360s, Charles IV (born in 1316) was entering an advanced age. The risk that after his death, the Bohemian lords would choose someone from outside the Luxembourg dynasty as their king was becoming more and more probable. This problem had to be solved.

³⁹ WIHODA, *Zlatá bula sicilská*, 5–17.

And here – perhaps paradoxically – Wrocław becomes a crucial element, paradoxically as the potential successor was Charles’s younger brother, John Henry, Margrave of Moravia. While Charles IV was still waiting for a son, his younger brother had multiple descendants: Jobst, John Sobieslaw and Prokop. The continuation of the Imperial-Royal line of the House of Luxembourg was secured, but only through its cadet branch. There were no laws to guarantee that one of the Margrave’s sons would become the Bohemian king, or even the Margrave of Moravia. If someone from another family had been elected as the Bohemian ruler, he could have easily removed the Luxembourgs from Moravia.⁴⁰

Charles IV had already been making efforts to treat John Henry and his sons as the potential heirs to the throne in Prague, but he took decisive steps during his very long stay in the capital of Silesia in the winter of 1358/1359. Together with the emperor, the secular and spiritual elites of the Bohemian Crown came to Wrocław to conclude a multilateral agreement *in evento*. In the event of the childless death of Charles IV, his brother John Henry and his descendants were to be the rightful successors to the Bohemian throne. John Henry issued a number of documents in which he pledged that – after becoming the Bohemian king – he would respect the current legal order of the Crown and its lands (Fig. 9). Many Silesian dukes, the Bishop of Wrocław, the city council of Wrocław and the superiors of significant monasteries approved this situation. This was a great distinction for Wrocław, but in the following year (1360), the city received one more privilege from the emperor – it was allowed to mint its own gold coin (Fig. 10). However, for unknown reasons, the coins were never minted, or at least none are known. Presumably, the main obstacle was the lack of gold (the Silesian mines did not meet expectations).⁴¹

40 MORAW, *Die Länder der Krone Böhmen*, 143–168.

41 KORN, *Breslauer Urkundenbuch*. I, 197–198. PIENKOWSKI, *Czesko-śląskie relacje monetarne*, 130. MYŚLIWSKI, *Wrocław w przestrzeni*, 519–532. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 185–220.

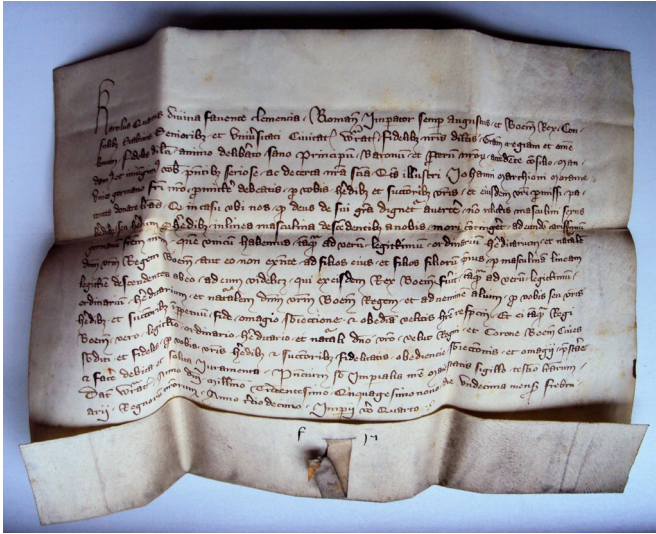


Figure 9: Document of Emperor Charles IV issued in Wroctaw on 11 February 1359, asking the townspeople of Wroctaw to submit a feudal tribute to the Margrave of Moravia, John Henry of Luxembourg, as a potential future Bohemian King⁴²

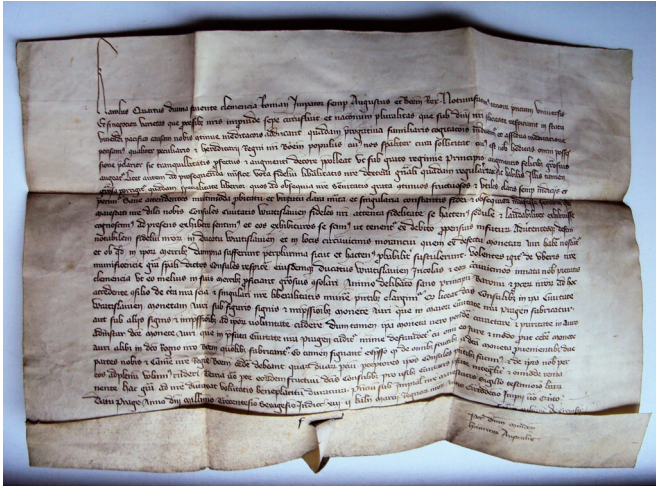


Figure 10: The privilege of Emperor Charles IV authorizing the issue of a gold coin by Wroctaw on 29 February 1360⁴³

42 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu [State Archive of Wrocław], Fond Dokumenty miasta Wrocławia, 350. Photo: Bogustaw Czechowicz.

43 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu [State Archive of Wrocław], Fond Dokumenty miasta Wrocławia, 362. Photo: Bogustaw Czechowicz.

The question arises as to why Charles IV did not settle an issue of such great political importance in Prague or – due to the role of his brother, the Margrave of Moravia – at least in Olomouc or Brno. The answer lies in the fact that Charles IV, as the Bohemian ruler and the Duke of Silesia, was a hereditary ruler in Wrocław and in Silesia in general. Hereditary succession – not election – was a political practice followed by the Piasts. This is how Wrocław was becoming the second – next to Prague – pillar of the Bohemian king's power.⁴⁴

The agreements concluded in Wrocław were also a kind of “trick” against the Bohemian lords. If the lords had not respected the agreements and had chosen someone other than Charles IV to be appointed as their next king, they could have caused the partition of the Bohemian Crown, i.e. the secession of Moravia and Silesia from Prague, for these two lands were now obliged to recognize John Henry and his sons as king. Importantly, this agreement was at odds with the position of the Bohemian lords on this matter.

We need to remember that Bohemian lords were a powerful political force that even Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor from 1355, had to take into account and sometimes even capitulate to. The Bohemian magnates taught him a bitter lesson right after his power reached its apogee – in 1355, Charles obtained the coveted imperial crown. Before he left for his coronation in Rome, he gave the Bohemian elites a draft codification of the legal code – practically the constitution – known in historiography as *Maiestas Carolina*. The aim of this code was to strengthen the royal power at the expense of the prerogatives of the higher nobility. When the emperor returned in an aura of glory from Rome to Prague, he had to abandon these reform plans under the pressure of the Bohemian lords. He had to issue a document – which he probably found humiliating – in which he stated that such a codification project had never been created.⁴⁵ It was certainly a bitter lesson, but Charles IV was aware of the price of this compromise. In return, he obtained approval for his plans: in the event of his childless death, the throne would go to the Moravian secundogeniture, i.e. the Luxembourgian cadet branch. As mentioned, Charles sanctioned this plan three and a half years later in Wrocław.

And it was Wrocław, in the form of the monogram “W”, that was placed on the new Imperial seal of Charles IV as the Holy Roman Emperor in 1355 (Figures 11–12). Some researchers have been inclined to interpret this W as a monogram of the name of the patron saint – St Wenceslaus.⁴⁶ However, the placement seems surprising – under the emperor's throne, at his feet – hardly a worthy place for the saint. It would even be degrading to the authority of St Wenceslaus. Besides, I do not know any other royal seal of this period where the monogram of the saint would be under the ruler, not above or next to him. I think that Charles IV, already in 1355, humiliated by the Czech lords, discreetly demonstrated that Wrocław was also an undisputed foundation of his power as a Bohemian monarch.⁴⁷

44 “*Hinc est, quod ad ciuitates nostras Pragensem et Wratislauensem, nec non Montem Chuttensem et oppidum Sulczbach, que et eorum singula de regum ac regni nostre Bohemie et insignis eiusdem regni corone legitimo et vero dominio et immediata proprietate consistere (...)*”; privilege of Emperor Charles IV of 23 March 1359; ČELAKOVSKÝ, *Codex juris Bohemici I*, 117–119.

45 PALACKÝ, *Archiv český III*, 65–181. HERGEMÖLLER, *Maiestas Carolina*.

46 KAVKA, *Vláda Karla IV.*, 17; see also: KRÁSA, *Karlovy pečeti*, 405–418.

47 CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmische Erbfolge*, 185–220.



Figure 11: The imperial seal of Emperor Charles IV from 1355 attached to a document from 19 January 1359⁴⁸



Figure 12: Detail of the imperial seal of Emperor Charles IV of 1355 attached to the document of 3 August 1356⁴⁹

48 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu [State Archive of Wrocław], Fond Dokumenty miasta Wrocławia, 344. Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz.

49 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu [State Archive of Wrocław], Fond Dokumenty miasta Wrocławia, 328. Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz.

All this ideological planning turned out to be unnecessary when Anna of Schweidnitz (died 1362) gave him in 1361 the long-awaited son and heir, Wenceslaus IV, and another wife – Elizabeth of Pomerania (died 1393) – two further descendants: Sigismund and John of Görlitz (died 1396). The prolificacy of the Luxembourgs exceeded all expectations. In time, there were six young representatives of the next generation: three sons of John Henry (died 1375) and three of Charles IV. However, the following decades were to show that it would also be the last generation of the imperial-royal branch, whose male bloodline would die out with Sigismund in 1437. It was undoubtedly the most powerful dynasty in Europe at that time, especially since its golden age coincided with the Hundred Years' War. With time, the war weakened England and France so much that the political centre of gravity shifted to the central part of Europe.

After his death in 1378, Charles IV had left a flourishing Bohemian Crown, and at the same time had lived to see the Western Schism. The Schism was one of the reasons why the emperor's eldest son, Wenceslaus IV, had only the title of Bohemian and Roman King, but never received the imperial coronation. Further, discouraged by his inept rule, in 1400, the electors chose a new Holy Roman King – Rupert from the House of Wittelsbach (died 1410). But before this happened, Wenceslaus had ensured that his succession after the Wrocław Piasts had been completely legitimized. In 1383, he forced the elderly Duke of Brzeg, Louis I, his son Henry VII (died 1399), and his nephews, the sons of Wenceslaus I of Legnica (died 1364) to give up any claims to Wrocław.

This matter was becoming urgent, as the cathedral chapter appointed one of the sons of Duke Wenceslaus I, Wenceslaus II (died 1419), as the Bishop of Wrocław. A Piast on the bishop's seat posed a certain threat to the Bohemian succession in Wrocław. We should remember that the Piasts of Legnica and Brzeg had both Piast and Přemyslid roots, which was probably discreetly emphasized by the new tombstone of Anne of Bohemia (died 1365) in the Church of the Poor Clares in Wrocław. These two families were also related through the daughter of Wenceslaus II, King of Bohemia and Poland – Margaret, who was the mother of Louis I of Brzeg and the grandmother of Bishop Wenceslaus and his brothers. These ties of blood gave no real political power, but the Bohemian rulers – first Charles IV and then young Wenceslaus IV – were very sensitive about this point. This was evident in Wenceslaus IV's claims to the heritage of his mother, Anna of Świdnica (Schweidnitz), to the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor, which was orphaned in 1368 (and finally in 1392). Bolko II the Small, the Duke of Świdnica and Jawor, died in 1368, followed 24 years later by his widow Agnes (died 1392).

Unlike his father, who was half Luxembourg and half Piast – Wenceslaus IV was half Piast (after his mother), and he liked to manifest it (either directly or through his officials) both in Świdnica and in Jawor. He also focused on Wrocław, where during his early rule we can notice many symbols of not only the subordination of the city to the Bohemian ruler and the Bohemian Crown, but also the city's important rank in the Crown.⁵⁰

Let us begin the review of these visual manifestations from Ostrów Tumski, literally Cathedral Island, in Wrocław. King Wenceslaus IV came to Wrocław in the summer of 1381 to receive tribute from his Silesian vassals. However, from the end of 1380, there was a conflict between Bishop Wenceslaus and the cathedral chapter against the city council of Wrocław, known in historiography as a beer war. As a consequence

50 KĘBŁOWSKI, *Pomniki*, 134–139. WITKOWSKI, *Posągi na wieży*, 229–240. JURKOWLANIEC, *Wystrój rzeźbiarski*, 123–166. CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 82–90. CZECHOWICZ, *Böhmisches Erbfolge*, 153–184.

of this dispute, the bishop imposed an interdict on the city. In this situation, fearing the consequences of the Church's punishment, none of the dukes came to the city. The king's demands to revoke the interdict were ineffective, especially since the ruler refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Piast's appointment as a bishop. The king's army plundered Ostrów Tumski and the chapter's property near Wrocław, while the bishop and his canons fled to Nysa to avoid the royal anger.⁵¹

Under these circumstances, Wenceslaus IV revived the memory of the ducal castle built in Ostrów Tumski by his predecessors, the Piasts. During the fourteenth century, the castle had been taken over by the canons and divided up for their houses. However, the king decided to restore the residence and rebuild it – as he pointed out in the document – like his Prague seat, with the costs to be covered by the Wrocław Cathedral Chapter. The document of 7 May 1382 states that: "[...] *vt in parte montis ecclesie sancte crucis predictae, in quo temporibus longe preteritis bone memorie princeps Slezie et dominus Wratislaviensis aliquando consueuerunt residere, regalibus habitacio sine castrum cum duabus turribus fornito, si opus fuerit, secundum decenciam habitacionis regie construatur*"⁵² (translation: "so that on the side of the mountain of the Church of the Holy Cross, where the Duke of Silesia and the Lord of Wrocław [Henry IV Probus] used to stay in the times long gone in good memory, a dignified, vaulted house or a castle with two towers should be erected, as it is fit for the seat of the ruler"). And elsewhere in the document, we can read that it was supposed to be a home for the royal family.⁵³

However, nothing came of it. In 1383, a treaty was signed, part of which stipulated the already mentioned fact that the dukes from the Legnica-Brzeg line, including Bishop Wenceslaus, would renounce all their claims to Wrocław. The bishop also paid the king a homage from Grodków (hence the Duchy of Grodków, and not Nysa, as is often stated), so he considered himself a vassal of the Bohemian ruler.

However, something remained from these events in Ostrów Tumski. Instead of financing the construction of the king's castle, the cathedral chapter erected its own seat next to the cathedral, which was then expanded in the early sixteenth century. At that time, the construction of the collegiate Church of the Holy Cross, which had been founded by Henry IV Probus almost 100 years before, was also nearing completion. We can see a reminder of this foundation in the keystone on the vault of the so-called chapter house, i.e. rooms on the north side of the collegiate chancel on the upper level. It depicts a bust of the duke with features very similar to those on Probus's tombstone. He's holding two shields with eagles – they refer to the entire heritage of Henry IV Probus, including Świdnica, which now belonged to Wenceslaus IV, not only as the Bohemian king, but also as the Duke of Wrocław and Świdnica (Fig. 13).⁵⁴

51 GRÜNHAGEN, *König Wenzel*, 231–257. CZECHOWICZ, *Querendo episcopos*, 17–27.

52 Cited after: SCHULTE, *Die politische Tendenz*, 243; about the circumstances of issuing this document: HOLÁ, *Curia imperialis*, 175–176.

53 CZECHOWICZ, *Dvě centra*, 90–101. CZECHOWICZ, *Bone memorie*, 13–16.

54 In addition to the works cited in footnote 39, see also: KACZMAREK, *Kolegiata Krzyża Świętego*, 94–95. KACZMAREK, *Związki artystyczne*, 435–449.



Figure 13: Vault keystone in the so-called chapter house of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross in Wrocław depicting a bust of Duke Henry IV Probus with shields containing the coats of arms of his territorial heritage, the successor of which was then (around 1383) Wenceslaus IV, the Holy Roman and Bohemian King; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz

The young King Wenceslaus IV was depicted in a sculptural decoration on a house on the Wrocław Market Square, Rynek No. 30 (Fig. 14). This sculpture should be dated after 1370, when Wenceslaus IV married Joan of Bavaria, also depicted here, and before 1376, when he was crowned Holy Roman King (the ruler is not wearing the crown on the relief). However, another fragment of this decoration showed the coat of arms of the Holy Roman King (Fig. 15). Therefore, I suppose that this decoration was created in 1376 or just before, during the preparations for the coronation. Another detail from this house showed coats of arms similar to those on the east façade of the Church of St Dorothy. However, here the coat of arms of the Duchy of Wrocław was on the right side, which was considered in heraldry as "stronger", while the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Bohemia was on the left. This could indicate that the decoration was created in closer connection with the Wrocław patricians. In the Duchy of Wrocław, the city council exercised the power of the *hauptmann* (in fact, it was exercised on the council's behalf by the senior of the council). I suppose that it was a sign that the city's elites had already visually demonstrated what was to be verbally declared only in 1433: that Wrocław was the capital of Silesia (*das Bresslaw in der Slesie die hauptstat ist*).⁵⁵ In reaction to this, the royal *hauptmann* Albert of Koldic (died 1448) wrote that the head of Silesia was the king, not the city. The decoration from the house at Rynek No. 30 discreetly shows the ambitions of the city authorities towards the kingdom and the king. But we still do not know the answer to this question: how did these sculptural

⁵⁵ According to: WÓŁKIEWICZ, *Capitaneus Slesie*, 195.

elements end up on the house at Rynek No. 30, this probably not being their original location (currently they are in the National Museum)? One of the possibilities is the fact that the town hall was significantly expanded during the fifteenth century, which might have given an opportunity to replace some elements, for example if they were considered out-of-date at the time.⁵⁶



Figure 14: Relief from the former house at Rynek No. 30 in Wrocław (originally perhaps from Wrocław Town Hall), most likely with the image of King Wenceslaus IV with his wife, 1376 or just before, currently at the National Museum in Wrocław; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz



Figure 15: Relief from the former house at Rynek No. 30 in Wrocław (originally perhaps from Wrocław Town Hall), 1376 or just before, a fragment of a drawing from 1871 housed at the National Museum in Wrocław; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz

⁵⁶ KACZMAREK, *Prawdopodobny dom*, 255–268. CZECHOWICZ, *Między katedrą*, 104–107. CZECHOWICZ, *Kdyż se pán voli*, 30–31. KACZMAREK, *Das Haus Ring*, 177–192.

Later than the details from the house at Rynek No. 30, but still from the times of Wenceslaus IV, there is the tympanum of the town hall portal – located between the Great Hall and the former chapel (on the side of the chapel). It has motifs that are almost analogous to the tympanum of the east portal of the town hall, which is about half a century older (Fig. 16). However, there is one major difference – in the older portal, the eagle has a crescent on its chest, symbolizing the Duchy of Wrocław, while in the newer portal the crescent is missing.



Figure 16: The tympanum of the portal between the former chapel and the Great Hall of Wrocław Town Hall, dated around 1382–1385 or around 1395. It almost exactly repeats the design of the tympanum from the town hall's east portal from 1343. The main difference is the fact that the eagle does not have a crescent in the newer tympanum, which allows us to interpret it as the coat of arms not of the Duchy of Wrocław, but of the whole of Silesia; Photo: Bogusław Czechowicz

The eagle without a crescent is interpreted for the fifteenth century as an all-Silesian emblem, which appeared in this function for the first time in Wrocław Town Hall at the end of the fourteenth century. This can be explained in various ways: as an expression of the ambition of the Wrocław patriciate to show the dominant role of Wrocław in Silesia; as a manifestation of the consolidation of Silesia as a unified political space under the rules of Charles IV and Wenceslaus IV; and finally, as a demonstration of the position of the king himself, who – unlike his grandfather (John) and father (Charles IV) – not only had the rights to Wrocław with its Duchy and several other territories of Silesia (Duchy of Głogów, Duchy of Ścinawa, Ząbkowice Śląskie District), but was also

the heir of Świdnica and Jawor. Moreover, of course, he was the sovereign of all the Dukes of Silesia. He therefore had greater rights to Silesia than Charles IV.

However, there was one big problem. After a successful debut and several years of efficient rule (when he was still surrounded by the advisers from his father's time), Wenceslaus IV's power began to waver from the end of the 1380s. The king turned out to be incapable of ruling both in the Bohemian Crown and in the Holy Roman Empire. Twice imprisoned, stripped from power as the Roman king, at odds with his much more capable brother Sigismund, who settled on the Hungarian throne and was a Brandenburg margrave, Wenceslaus IV had to also deal with the conflict between brothers Jobst and Prokop, two Moravian margraves from the Luxembourg dynasty. In short, at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the central authority of the crown was crumbling.

Various political factions were taking matters into their own hands. Confederations were established to ensure road safety. Wrocław – which in return for numerous economic privileges was burdened with royal debts – was fighting against the Dukes of Opole, who were Wenceslaus IV's creditors. The proud city even dared to arrest the archbishop-nominee of Gniezno, Jan Kropidło (died 1421), who was a member of the Opole Piast family.

At that time, no one was yet openly saying – or at least the sources do not relay it – that Wrocław was the second royal city in the Bohemian Crown after Prague. However, it was called the main city of Silesia, once again integrated into the Bohemian rule – once again, that is, treated as a common political space covering Silesia, later called Lower Silesia, and the Opole-Racibórz-Cieszyn region. Silesia entered the fifteenth century as a politically unified entity within the Crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia, stretching from Wadowice and Frydek (today Frýdek-Místek) in the east and south to Przewóz and Lubrza in the west and north.⁵⁷ From the very beginning, Wrocław held supremacy in Silesia, but now – within the Bohemian Crown – it was also competing with Prague.

In the above-mentioned *Maiestas Carolina* – the unsuccessful attempt to codify domestic laws of the Kingdom of Bohemia, but with references to the entire Bohemian Crown presented by Charles IV in 1355 – Wrocław was already listed among the most important cities of the Bohemian rule, next to Prague, Kutná Hora and Bautzen (*Honorabiles et egregias Civitates regni nostri Bohemiae, Pragam, Wratislaviam, Budissin et Montes Kutnis, regiae nostrae majestati carissimas et dilectas*).⁵⁸ The decorations in one of the rooms of the castle in Lauf an der Pegnitz – a royal exclave on the road from Bohemia to Nuremberg – depict the coats of arms of only the three most important cities of the Bohemian rule: Prague (more precisely, Prague's Old Town), Kutná Hora and Wrocław.⁵⁹ Kutná Hora owed its high position mainly to the silver mines and the royal mint – probably the most important source of income for Bohemian rulers in the late Middle Ages. Prague's position does not need any explanation. The position of Wrocław – in the light of what was written in the previous paragraphs – should

57 Some more recent works on the formation of the Silesian identity in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries: CZECHOWICZ, *Książęcy mecenat*. CZECHOWICZ, *Między katedrą*. RÜTHER, *Region und Identität*. ČAPSKÝ, *Zrození země*. WISZEWSKI, *Cuius regio*.

58 PALACKÝ, *Archiv český III*, 126–128. HERGEMÖLLER, *Maiestas Carolina*, 48–49.

59 BOBKOVÁ, *Die Oberpfalz*, 25–34.

also be self-evident. Apart from its political and economic domination in Silesia, Wrocław was also the carrier of hereditary rights to the Bohemian throne. This shaped Wrocław's relation towards Prague as the second capital of the country (Fig. 17).



Figure 17: A copy of a nineteenth century map of Wrocław from 1562, lost in 1945; Photo: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu [Wrocław University Library]

Therefore, we should not argue with Sigismund's document from 1420 quoted at the beginning of this paper, which called Wrocław *the second capital of his Bohemian Rule and the source of law* (i.e. the source of the legitimization of power). This declaration, like many other ideas of Sigismund of Luxembourg, resonated almost half a century later in the work of the Wrocław city writer Peter Eschenloer (*Breslow ist der andir stul in Behem*),⁶⁰ and around 1530 – in the annalistic work of one of his successors, Franz

60 ROTH, *Magister Peter Eschenloer I*, 304–305.

Faber ([Wratislav] *altera sedis Regni a Caput eiusdem Regni est*).⁶¹ This ideological line stems from the political practice of the fourteenth century.

Researchers trying to recount the history not only of Silesia, but also of the entire Bohemian Crown, must take this into account. And when they enter into polemics, they should acknowledge the entire spectrum of arguments, not just selected ones.⁶² I believe that this article explains the premises that prompted Sigismund to distinguish Wrocław in his document in 1420 and it will encourage contemporary researchers to emphasize this fact in the long process of events leading up to it and then following it. It is necessary to perceive historical phenomena in a long-term view,⁶³ just as the existence of a medieval (and not only) city is characterized by longevity. However, this existence may be disturbed not only by historical cataclysms, but also – in a metaphorical sense – by historiographic shortcomings.

Therefore, contemporary researchers must pay great attention not only to the new interpretation of the past and what is left of it, but also to the changing or prevailing paradigms in the construction of this view. The domination of the national axiology, culminating – as it seems – in the twentieth century, was not conducive to understanding the phenomenon of cities, especially those ambitious, significant cities with great economic and ideological potential. This is exactly the case with Silesian Wrocław. The city, which was never the capital of a kingdom or state and which had a complex ethnic character throughout its history, was almost always at a disadvantage in an academic discourse that was focused on the state-national axiology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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61 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu [State Archive in Wrocław], Akta miasta Wrocławia, E 18 (new reference 583): Ordentliche entzugunge und austzuge der Stadt Bresslau priuilegien, was sich aber zugetragen, 216'.

62 This is a polemic against ČAPSKÝ, *K postavení Vratislavi*, 372; who claims that in 1420 Sigismund declared Wrocław as the capital only in the context of Silesia, not the Bohemian Kingdom – even though, in fact, this term refers to the entire Bohemian Crown. This researcher also maintains – contrary to what was briefly reiterated in this article – that Bohemian kings respected the symbolic significance of Prague towns, but in the case of Wrocław – only its actual political power. This researcher did not notice at all the “capital symbolism” of Wrocław – which has been a topic of academic discussions for years. In the end, he came to the conclusion that the term “second capital of the kingdom” is only a “rhetorical strategy” of Wrocław burghers, forgetting that this phrase comes actually from the king’s document, not the burghers’.

63 With varying degrees of success, the following monographs meet this stipulation: CZECHOWICZ, *Między katedrą. RÜTHER, Region und Identität. KACZMAREK, Breslau im Netz; and WISZEWSKI, Cuius regio*.

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