

*Tykocin: Castle-Palace-Fortress. Architectural and functional transformations in the late Middle Ages and modern times based on written and archaeological sources.*

The dissertation discusses the functional and architectural changes of the Tykocin castle from the late Middle Ages to the modern times. It consists of 8 chapters summarising the results of all field research carried out at the site.

Field surveys were initiated in the 1960s, and the outcomes of these efforts not only restored public awareness of the castle's existence but also provided a basis for formulating hypotheses regarding its origins, form, and past transformations. Further investigations were conducted between 1999 and 2007, as well as in 2021.

In my studies I employed historical data and several archaeological techniques: geotechnical boreholes, test trenches and geophysical surveys – geo-radar prospection. These investigations provided material evidence enabling the verification of previous findings and revealed previously unknown elements of the site and facts from its history. The data were correlated with source records, which were reinterpreted and contrasted with existing hypotheses in the literature. This approach led to numerous new insights, broadening understanding of the site, primarily allowing for the identification of phases of its transformation and the linking of investment activities with changes in ownership.

The study focused on several key issues: the role of the castle in shaping the estate of the Lithuanian Gasztold family – the first owners of this residence; the castle's place within King Sigismund II Augustus's investments into defence of the realm; the development of fortification systems in Polish territories during the 16th and 17th centuries; and the unique features of the Tykocin complex in the context of other early modern residential-defensive structures in northern Podlachia (Podlasie). These aspects allowed for a broader contextualisation of the complex within the time period and the region, taking into account the contemporary geopolitical situation, the dynastic policies of the Gasztold family and the last Jagiellons, as well as architectural and construction advancements in the area.

The results of this research have addressed gaps in historians' findings, particularly regarding the layout, furnishings and fittings of the castle complex. They have also established a solid foundation for periodizing the site's history over four centuries, capturing the main spatial and ownership transformations and the manner and standard of its operation—a framework previously unavailable. Three primary phases were identified: (1) the wooden castle (second half/end of the 15th century – c. 1519), (2) the Renaissance masonry castle (mid-16th to end of the 16th century), and (3) the Baroque palace and fortress (first half of the 17th century–18th century).

Given the scarcity of written sources, the latest excavations have enabled the identification of the site's initial phase (at the time owned by the Gasztołd family), at the end of the Middle Ages and before the construction of the masonry castle. These findings also provided evidence to date its chronology and reconstruct its layout. The complex served as a temporary residence for the owners and, above all, as the economic and administrative centre of their Podlachian estates.

It was further established that the masonry Tykocin castle, built in the third quarter of the 16th century was a new construction (including its foundations), rather than a redevelopment of an earlier structure, as previously assumed in many historical studies. The complex was erected on the opposite riverbank from the existing town, as part of a cohesive and systematically executed construction project. Archaeological research uncovered previously unknown 16th-century masonry bastion fortifications surrounding the castle. In the following century, this line of fortifications was replaced by a timber-and-earth bastion system. In its most developed form, the fortress was impressive in both size and extent, as illustrated by the latest elevation models of the site. The research also documented the modernisation of some of these fortifications at the beginning of the 18th century, which had previously been suggested only by written sources.

Little is known about other work within the complex that coincided with the construction of the new fortification system in the early 17th century. Evidence that these efforts focused on modernising the facilities primarily comes from movable artefacts. Improvements in both comfort and interior decoration are suggested by the remains of several heating stoves from this period, discovered through excavations.

Various archaeological finds, alongside stratigraphy and building relics, have become the primary materials confirming the subsequent stages of the complex's use. These finds offer insights into many aspects of daily life and significant events that occurred at the castle over its period of existence.

Based on written sources, it is assumed that by the late 1760s at the latest, the site had been abandoned and gradually fell into ruin, eventually serving as a source of building materials for numerous projects in the town. However, archaeological evidence suggests that the castle grounds were still used occasionally until the mid-19th century.

The history of the Tykocin castle complex has been significantly explored through both archaeological research and historical accounts. Remaining gaps may be filled by yet undiscovered archival sources and further fieldwork employing multidisciplinary, modern scientific methods. The latter holds particular importance, especially in the area of the complex's facilities (outbuildings), which are currently inaccessible for research.