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CASTLES AND OTHER FORTIFICATIONS VERSUS MARTIAL ART

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Zamki i inne fortyfikacje wobec sztuk walki

Streszczenie

W artykule ukazane zostały wybrane przykłady średniowiecznej sztuki fortyfikacji z perspektywy *General Theory of Fighting Arts* oraz wiedzy o architekturze obronnej i historii. Autor postawił dwa pytania problemowe: 1) Jakie zachodzą powiązania pomiędzy *General Theory of Fighting Arts* a wiedzą o architekturze obronnej? 2) Jak dziś traktowane jest to kulturowe dziedzictwo?

Zamki obronne, zarówno jako przejaw kultury rycerskiej, jak i z punktu widzenia *General Theory of Fighting Arts* oraz szeroko rozumianej antropologii sztuk walki, stanowią interesujący temat badań hopologicznych.

Rozważania zawarte w niniejszym artykule opracowano w oparciu o kilka kategorii źródeł i literaturę przedmiotu. W tekście stwierdzone zostało, że stan wiedzy o wojnie (sztuka wojny), w tym o obronie własnych i zdobywaniu wrogich fortyfikacji, skutkowałam łączeniem ze sobą nauczania techniki i inżynierii, taktyki walki i architektury obronnej. W historii są zauważalne takie powiązania. Natomiast obecnie, podobnie jak to ma miejsce w przypadku tradycyjnych sztuk walki, grody i zamki stanowią narodowe oraz kulturowe dziedzictwo ludzkości. Jako element architektury krajobrazu i interesującej przestrzeni antropogenicznej są one obecnie wykorzystywane zwłaszcza w turystyce, muzealnictwie lub też – niekiedy – w hotelarstwie.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, sztuka fortyfikacji, sztuka obronna, zamek.

Abstract

From the perspective of the *General Theory of Fighting Arts* and the knowledge of defensive architecture and history, selected examples of medieval art of fortifications were shown. The author posed two problem questions: 1) What are the connections between the General Theory of Fighting Arts and the knowledge of defensive architecture? 2) How is this cultural heritage treated today?

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The defensive castles, as a manifestation of knightly culture, are an interesting topic of hopological research, as well as from the perspective of the General Theory of Fighting Arts and the broadly understood anthropology of martial arts.

The considerations were based on several categories of sources and literature on the subject. It was found that the knowledge of war (the art of war), including the defense of one's own and the capture of enemy fortifications, resulted in the combined teaching of technology and engineering, combat tactics and defensive architecture. Historically, these relationships occur. At present, however, wooden and stone castles are the national and cultural heritage of humanity, similarly to traditional martial arts. The castles are currently used especially in tourism, museology, and sometimes also in the hotel industry, as a component of landscape architecture and interesting anthropogenic space.

Keywords: martial arts, art of fortification, art of defence, castle.

Introduction

This is an essay devoted in particular to the art of fortification. The examples are specifically based on a 1900 publication, i.e. the book, whose hard cover shows the coat of arms of the First Republic in the form of a bas-relief. This book was then published in Polish (despite the time of the partitions, both in Warsaw and Kiev books were published relatively often in the Polish language), but the fact of language changes is easily noticeable. For example, the Tatar horde is called a horde here, as it is associated today with a group of barbarians or bandits / villains. Instead of the thickness of the defensive walls, one speaks of their width. Pilgrims come to "France", etc.

Other examples of fortifications cited in this study come mainly from what is now Poland. The scientific basis (scientific framework) for reflection is the General Theory of Fighting Arts on the one hand, and the knowledge of defensive architecture and history on the other hand.¹ What are the connections here? How is this cultural heritage treated today?

Let us establish the conceptual language first. The term stronghold is defined as "buildings or groups of buildings with earthen fortifications, designed to

¹ Cf. W.J. Cynarski, J. Skowron, *An analysis of the conceptual language used for the general theory of martial arts – Japanese, Polish and English terminology*, "Ido Movement for Culture Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology" 2014, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 49–66; W.J. Cynarski, *Sztuki walki i sporty walki: w kierunku ogólnej teorii [Martial Arts & Combat Sports: Towards the General Theory of Fighting Arts]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, Gdańsk 2019 [in Polish]; J. Bogdanowski, *Sztuka obronna. Natura i kultura w krajobrazie Jury [Defensive art. Nature and culture in the Jura landscape]*, Zarząd Zespołu Jurajskich Parków Krajobrazowych w Krakowie, Kraków 1993 [in Polish]; J. Bogdanowski, *Architektura obronna w krajobrazie Polski. Od Biskupina do Westerplatte [Defensive architecture in the landscape of Poland. From Biskupin to Westerplatte]*, PWN, Warszawa – Kraków 1996 [in Polish]; Ch. Gravett, *Średniowieczna sztuka oblężnicza [Medieval siege art]*, Napoleon V, 2018 [in Polish]; A. Witold-Alexandrowicz, *Rozwój historyczny fortyfikacji [Historical development of the fortifications]*, Napoleon V, Łódź 2019 [in Polish].

maintain a specific area and protect important passages (e.g. bridge, ford, section of road, etc.). The strongholds were armed, stocked with food supplies to survive the siege.”² Fortification (Latin *fortificatio* – strengthening) – it is usually a closed area, surrounded, for example, by walls; a set of military facilities in the form of appropriate buildings and devices intended for defensive operations. The art of fortification is also a field of military technology and engineering known since antiquity, which deals with the preparation of the terrain for combat by developing, designing and organizing works aimed at the construction of fortification facilities and complexes used to protect troops and territory during combat operations. Elements of fortifications can be moats, drawbridges, towers, barbicans (reinforced gates), etc.³

Prof. Janusz Bogdanowski proposed the following definition: “a castle is an independent defensive work with compact buildings, built in the Middle Ages, combining the dominant defensive function with residential and economic ones [...] it was adapted to defend with a closed defensive perimeter.”⁴ Due to the type of material used in the construction, wooden castle, stone and brick locks are distinguished.

Various types of fortifications are part of the field of defensive architecture and defensive art, and indirectly also landscape architecture.⁵ In turn, the art of defence is related to the art of war and military science on the one hand, and General Theory of Fighting Arts on the other hand.⁶

Traditional schools that still teach relatively complete martial art systems today, such as *Tenshinshōden Katorishintō-ryū*⁷, include *gunkaku / gunbai-heihō* (strategy and tactics) and *chikujojutsu* (field fortification art) in their curricula.

² M. Świeży, *Zamki, twierdze, warownie* [Castles, Fortresses, Strongholds], Gryfów Śląski 2002 [in Polish].

³ Cf. A. Witold-Alexandrowicz, *Rozwój historyczny fortyfikacji* [Historical development], op. cit.; P. Nastrożny [ed.], *Ars fortificandi. Studia i materiały z dziejów architektury obronnej* [Studies and materials on the history of defensive architecture], Vol. II, Napoleon V, 2018 [in Polish].

⁴ *Zamek* [The Castle], <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zamek>.

⁵ Cf. J. Bogdanowski, *Sztuka obronna* [Defensive art], op. cit.; J. Bogdanowski, *Architektura obronna* [Defensive architecture], op. cit.; Q. Borderie, T. Ball, R. Banerjee, M. Bizri, C. Lejault, S. Save, A. Vaughan-Williams, *Early Middle Ages Houses of Gien (France) from the Inside: Geo-archaeology and Archaeobotany of 9th–11th c. Floors*, “Environmental Archaeology” 2020, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 151–169.

⁶ Vide: W.J. Cynarski, *Zamki obronne na ziemiach polskich. Wykorzystanie dziedzictwa sztuki fortyfikacji w turystyce kulturowej* [Defensive castles on Polish lands. The use of the heritage of fortification art in cultural tourism], “Folia Turistica” 2012, no. 26, pp. 195–212 [in Polish]; W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art and as a tourist attraction*, “Ido Movement for Culture Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2012, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 44–55; W.J. Cynarski, *Sztuki walki i sporty walki* [Martial Arts & Combat Sports], op. cit.

⁷ A Japanese school of fencing and martial arts from the mid-15th century, founded by the master (*kenshi*) Iizasa Choisai Ienao (1387–1488) [more: *ibidem*, pp. 305–316].

Even *dōjō* - a place of teaching martial arts - was built according to the principles of strategy and fortifications - on a hill, with difficult access through a river or lake, and taking into account other natural conditions of the surrounding area. Defending and conquering fortifications was one of the basic war skills of knights, samurai and warriors of different cultures.

Medieval examples of fortifications

Here in the Middle East, the Syrian city of Antioch was considered an impregnable fortress because of the 450 towers and thick walls surrounding it [Fig. 1]. In the 11th century, it was both conquered and defended by the Crusaders in their fights with the Seljuk Turks.⁸ Does this wall not look a bit like the Great Wall of China?

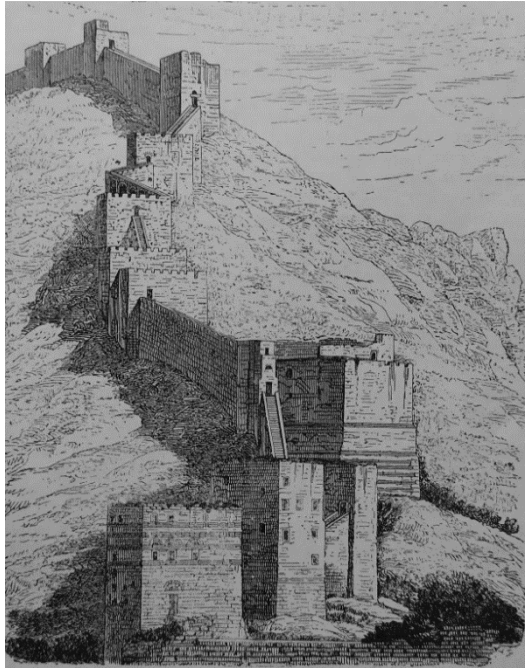


Fig. 1. Walls of Antioch – west side [Lityński, Riszka 1900, p. 11]

⁸ M. Lityński, R. Riszka, *Ilustrowana Historia Średniowieczna*, vol. 2: *Od wypraw krzyżowych aż do czasów Renesansu* [*Illustrated Medieval History*, vol. 2: *From the Crusades to the Renaissance*], Published by Franciszek Bonde, Vienna [in:] L. Kubala [ed.], *Dzieje Powszechne Ilustrowane* [*Illustrated History*], Part II, Vienna 1900, pp. 11–14 [in Polish]; J. Ziemiński, *Architektura obronna i sztuka oblężnicza bliskowschodnich państw krzyżowych w latach 1099–1291* [*Defensive Architecture and Siege Warfare of Middle-Eastern Crusader States between years 1099–1291*], thesis under the supervision of Rafał Hryszko, Repository of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków 2020 [in Polish].

At that time, in the Polish lands, ramparts were basically built using stones, wood and earth. Stone walls and castles became popular later.⁹

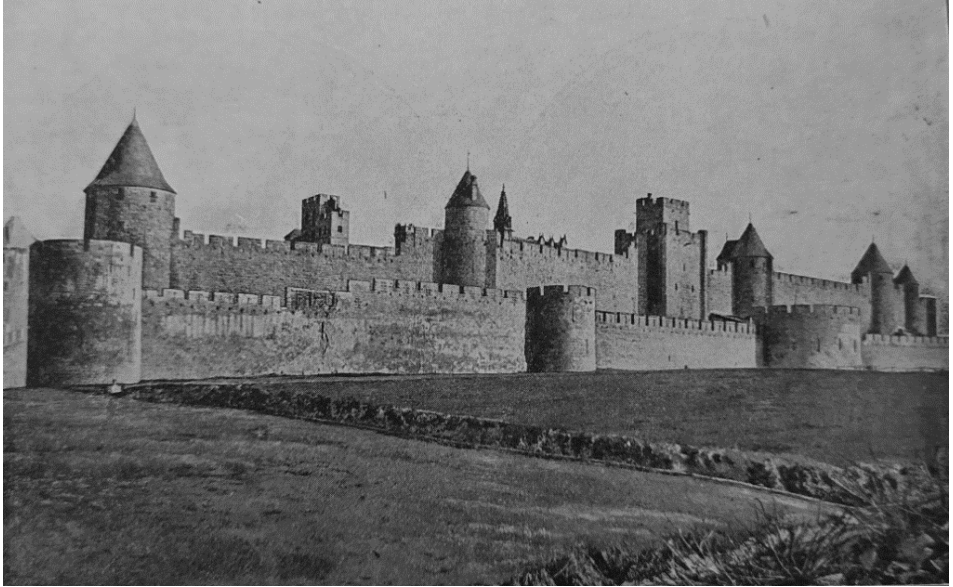


Fig. 2. View of the old town of Carcassonne (upper part). A double wall with numerous towers from the 6th-14th centuries [Lityński, Riszka 1900, p. 52]

Carcassonne fortifications, a medieval architectural and urban complex near Toulouse in France, includes fortified walls and a castle [Fig. 2]. This stronghold was founded in the place of a settlement on a hill from around the 6th century BC. A similar thing happened in the Polish lands, where castles and stone towns were built in the place of previously existing strongholds.

“La Falconara” castle [Fig. 3] in Sicily (Italy) shows a specific location on a rock, which was once used throughout Europe – from the island of Rhodes with the fortress of the Joannites to, for example, castles on the trail of the “Eagles’ Nests” in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains and in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland (Poland). Here we can see a specific spatial arrangement of the so-called defensive complex. We can distinguish the lower, middle and upper castle, which in this case is one tower – a bergfried, i.e. a tower of final defence.

⁹ B. Guerquin, *Zamki w Polsce* [*Castles in Poland*], 2nd edn., Arkady, Warszawa 1985 [in Polish]; W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art...* op. cit.; W.J. Cynarski, *Zamki obronne na ziemiach polskich* [*Defensive castles on Polish lands*], op. cit.; L. Kajzer, S. Kołodziej-ski, J. Salm, *Leksykon zamków w Polsce* [*Lexicon of castles in Poland*], Arkady, Warszawa 2012 [in Polish].



Fig. 3. Norman castle “La Falconara” in Sicily (13th/14th century) – drawn by Otto Girard [Lityński, Riszka 1900, p. 57]

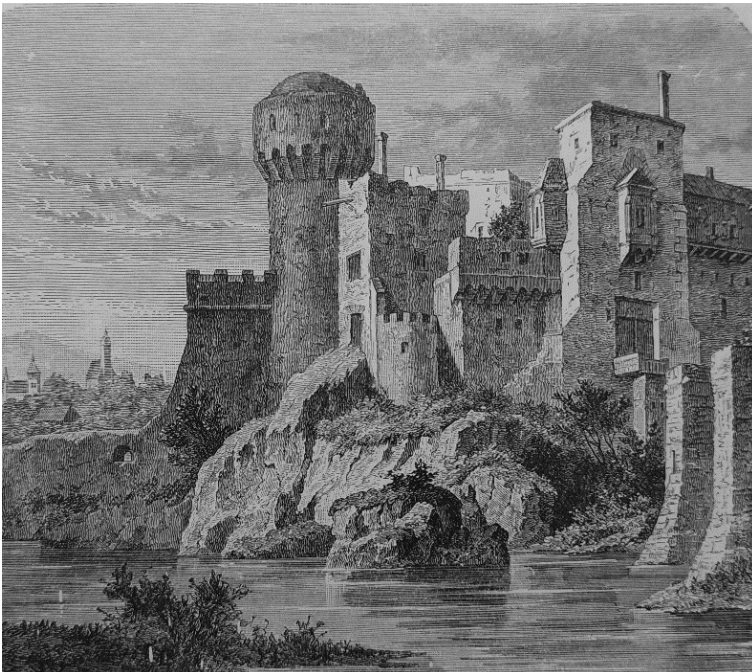


Fig. 4a. Jan Hunyade's castle near Hatszeg in Transylvania [Lityński, Riszka 1900, p. 311]



Fig. 4b. Jan Hunyade's castle, today's view. Hunedoara, Romania [HunyadCastle.jpg, 2009; *Zamek w Hunedoarze* 2022].

An element of the art of fortifications observed both in Europe and Asia (e.g. in Japan) was inaccessibility, i.e. the use of terrain obstacles. It could be a mountain/rock, a water obstacle (lake, river) or a swampy area. These rules were already known in antiquity.¹⁰

Built in the 15th century by the ruler of Transylvania, Jan Hunyade, the castle [Fig. 4a-b], also called Corvin's Castle (Romanian Castelul Corvinilor, Hungarian Vajdahunyadvár), used the terrain conditions appropriately. Access, apart from the walls, was protected by a hill and a water barrier. A narrow bridge, gate and defensive towers are the components of this fortification, which is quite typical for European castles of that time.

As for particularly interesting defensive castles listed among the most interesting ones for various reasons, the following fortification solutions are worth mentioning:

- Krak de Chevaliers (or Crac des Chevaliers, "Fortress of knights") – the largest fortress of the Crusades – Hospitallers, today's Syria;
- Hochosterwitz Castle, Austria – a fortress on a hill with several levels of defensive walls at the approach to the upper castle;
- Malbork Castle, Poland – once the capital of the Teutonic State, the largest brick castle in Europe, with very modern solutions in the art of fortifications.¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. P. Jasienica, *Słowiański rodowód [Slavic Lineage]*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1978 [in Polish]; M. Hislop, *Jak czytać zamki. Krótki kurs wiedzy o fortyfikacjach [How to read castles. A crash course in understanding fortifications]*, trans. E. Romkowska, Arkady, Warszawa 2018 [in Polish].

¹¹ Cf. T. Hardin, *Forts and Castles. Masterpieces of Architecture*, Todtri Productions, New York, NY 1997; W.J. Cynarski, *Zamki obronne na ziemiach polskich [Defensive castles on Polish lands]*,

On Polish lands

When the crusaders were fighting for Antioch, (at that time) the Polish lands were basically building ramparts using stones, wood and earth. The defensive stronghold in Biskupin (8th century BC) “was surrounded by a vertical embankment of the so-called box or ice-apron construction: high and strong boxes made of logs laid on the framework, filled inside with compacted earth. The same method of fortifications will be found in Slavic fortifications several hundred years later” as Paweł Jasienica aptly noticed.¹² This method of building fortifications was modified from the mid-10th century (during the reign of Mieszko I). A “hook construction” was used. Logs located transversely to the course of the embankment were equipped with powerful catches that prevented the beams from slipping out of the upper, longitudinal layer. This made the structure more stable. Jasienica showed that this Lechic or “Old Slavonic fortification system” was completely separate and “not at all similar to foreign models”.¹³

Stone walls and castles became popular later.¹⁴ Ever since the reign of Casimir III the Great (1310–1370) the fortifications changed into stone-made structures, i.e. castles, walls, city gates, defensive monasteries, etc. Since that king’s reign and based on his idea, bays – a cheaper but equally efficient form of defending the wall’s flanks, were used in a few Polish castles. This solution, used in municipal fortifications as well, became a distinguishing mark of Polish fortification art.¹⁵ Especially in provinces bordering on aggressive neighbours, people built defensive castles, which were usually erected in hard-to-reach places of strategic importance in place of previously constructed defensive strongholds. For example, Mazovia had to defend itself against the attacks of the Balt tribes (Prussians, Yotvingians, Lithuanians), and later the Teutonic Knights.¹⁶

op. cit.; W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art*, op. cit.; A. Witold-Alexandrowicz, *Rozwój historyczny fortyfikacji [Historical development]*, op. cit.; J. Kulpiński, B. Prukop, P. Rut, A. Rejman, P. Świder, W.J. Cynarski, *Defensive Strongholds and Fortified Castles in Poland – From the Art of Fortifications to Tourist Attractions*, “Sustainability” 2022, vol. 14, no. 6, 3209.

¹² P. Jasienica, *Słowiański rodowód [Slavic Lineage]*, op. cit., p. 41.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 91.

¹⁴ B. Guerquin, *Zamki w Polsce [Castles in Poland]*, op. cit.; W.J. Cynarski, *Zamki obronne na ziemiach polskich [Defensive castles on Polish lands]*, op. cit.; W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art*, op. cit.; L. Kajzer, S. Kołodziejki, J. Salm, *Leksykon zamków w Polsce [Lexicon of castles in Poland]*, op. cit.

¹⁵ J. Bogdanowski, *Architektura obronna w krajobrazie Polski. Od Biskupina do Westerplatte [Defensive architecture in the landscape of Poland. From Biskupin to Westerplatte]*, PWN, Warszawa – Kraków 1996, p. 64; W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art and as a tourist attraction*, “Ido Movement for Culture Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2012, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 48.

¹⁶ Cf. R. Kierzkowski, *Mazowiecka szkoła fortyfikacji grodowej [Mazovian school of castle fortifications]*, “w Sieci Historii. Magazyn o Polsce i Kulturze” 2023, no. 3–4, pp. 34–35 [in Polish].

Someone who could conquer strongholds could also defend them. The military skill (the art of war) required just that. An example is the Polish nobleman Bartłomiej Nowodworski, coat of arms *Natęcz* (1552–1625), a Knight of Malta. He was an efficient pyrotechnician, the conqueror of Smolensk and the Lepanto stronghold, as well as a persistent defender of the Conflans-sur-Oise castle in France.¹⁷ Defensive architecture and siege art together create a composition of technical or engineering skills necessary for the implementation of warfare – defensive or offensive, respectively.¹⁸

Castles on the Polish lands – from strongholds and castles in Lusatia and Western Pomerania from the times of the first Piast dynasty, through Teutonic castles (conquered or redeemed, such as the castle in Malbork, the largest brick castle in the world), to strongholds of the First Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in today's Lithuania, Belarus and Western Ukraine¹⁹ co-create both the Polish cultural heritage and the universal heritage of military culture, the art of fortifications and defensive architecture. Like other preserved medieval castles, today they are most often used in tourism, museology, the hotel industry, or as a place of cultural events (staging, tournaments / knights' competitions as part of the sports discipline functioning today - team combat sport).²⁰

¹⁷ Cf. W. Lada, *Wysadził Smoleńsk [He Blew up Smolensk]*, "Sieci" 2022, no. 51, pp. 90–92 [in Polish].

¹⁸ Ch. Gravett, *Średniowieczna sztuka oblężnicza [Medieval siege art]*, Napoleon V, 2018 [in Polish]; J. Ziemiński, *Architektura obronna i sztuka oblężnicza bliskowschodnich państw krzyżowych w latach 1099–1291 [Defensive Architecture and Siege Warfare of Middle-Eastern Crusader States between the years 1099–1291]*, thesis under the supervision of Rafał Hryszko, Repository of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków 2020 [in Polish].

¹⁹ J. Bogdanowski, *Architektura obronna w krajobrazie Polski [Defensive architecture in the landscape of Poland]*, op.cit.; O. Maciuk, *Zamki i twierdze Ukrainy Zachodniej. Wędrówki historyczne [Castles and fortresses of Western Ukraine. Historical walks]*, Centrum Europy, Lwów 2008; W.J. Cynarski, [rev.] Orest Maciuk, *Zamki i twierdze Ukrainy Zachodniej. Wędrówki historyczne, Centrum Europy, Lwów 2008 [Orest Maciuk, Castles and fortresses of Western Ukraine. Historical walks, Center of Europe, Lviv 2008]*, [in:] A. Andrusiewicz [ed.], *Polska – Ukraina. Terazniejszość i przyszłość. Studia społeczno-polityczne [Poland – Ukraine. Present and future. Socio-political studies]*, Rzeszów – Sanok 2010, pp. 450–452 [in Polish]; W.J. Cynarski, *Zamki obronne na ziemiach polskich. Wykorzystanie dziedzictwa sztuki fortyfikacji w turystyce kulturowej [Defensive castles on Polish lands. The use of the heritage of fortification art in cultural tourism]*, "Folia Turistica", 2012a, no. 26, pp. 195–212 [in Polish]; W. J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art and as a tourist attraction*, "Ido Movement for Culture Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology", 2012b, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 44–55; B. Arciszewska, *Chapter 22. Early Modern Conceptualizations of Medieval History and Their Impact on Residential Architecture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* [in:] *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture*, Brill 2018, pp. 649–681; J. Kulpiński, B. Prukop, P. Rut, A. Rejman, P. Świder, W.J. Cynarski, *Defensive Strongholds and Fortified Castles in Poland...*, op. cit.

²⁰ Cf. B. Guerquin, *Zamki w Polsce [Castles in Poland]*, op. cit.; J.L. Adamczyk, *Fortyfikacje stałe na polskim przedmurzu. Od połowy XV do końca XVII wieku [Permanent fortifications on the Polish bulwark. From the mid-15th to the end of the 17th century]*, Politechnika Świętokrzyska, Kielce

A little summary

Generally, strongholds, castles and fortified castles were built to defend borders and trade routes, and as centres – temporary or permanent seats of rulers. They were also built by rich representatives of knightly families – the elite of a given country. The Polish and Lithuanian nobility (of mainly Ruthenian, but not Russian origin) built the strongholds of the Commonwealth between the Baltic and the Black Sea. However, south of Poland we find German castles in the Czech Republic, and Hungarian ones in Slovakia (Beckov, Lietava, Trenczyn and others),²¹ which is the result of the historical fate of individual nations.

The knowledge of war, including the defence of one's own and the capture of enemy fortifications, resulted in the combined teaching of technology and engineering, combat tactics and architecture / construction of fortifications. Medieval castles originally functioned as the protection of the lands of a given ruler – the main way of organizing defence, apart from the combat skills of a single knight and commanding troops. Defending and capturing castles were skills no less important than fighting and winning battles and entire military campaigns.

In the traditions of Japanese and Okinawan karate there are forms of *Bassai kata*, which means “conquering a fortress” – *BassaiShō* and *Bassai Dai*. Even though they are performed with bare hands, they are a movement demonstration of the fight for fortifications. The connection between fortifications and martial arts can be found both in the history of castles/fortifications, in the techniques of defending or conquering them, and some traces of this – in the technical forms (of martial arts) themselves or in their names.

Thus, defensive castles, as a manifestation of knightly culture,²² are an interesting topic of hoplological research, taking into account both the perspective of the General Theory of Fighting Arts and the broadly understood anthropology

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²¹ More: T. Hardin, *Forts and Castels. Masterpieces of Architecture*, Todtri Productions, New York, NY 1997; O. Maciuk, *Zamki i twierdze Ukrainy Zachodniej. Wędrówki historyczne [Castles and fortresses of Western Ukraine. Historical walks]*, op. cit.; A. Wasilewski, *Zamki i zamczyska Słowacji. Przewodnik [Castles and chateaux in Slovakia. Guide]*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rewasz, Pruszków 2008 [in Polish]; J. Kulpiński, B. Prukop, P. Rut, A. Rejman, P. Świder, W.J. Cynarski, *Defensive Strongholds and Fortified Castles in Poland*, op. cit.

²² R. Barber, *Rycerze i rycerskość [The Knight and Chivalry]*, (trans. J. Kozłowski) Bellona, Warszawa 2003 [in Polish].

of martial arts. As a component of landscape architecture and interesting cultural / anthropogenic space, they are now used especially in tourism, museology, or sometimes also in the hotel industry. Especially that some of them are on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.²³

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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²³ P. Wroński, *Poland. UNESCO World Heritage Sites*, Polish Tourism Organization, Warszawa 2018; J. Kulpiński, B. Prukop, P. Rut, A. Rejman, P. Świder, W.J. Cynarski, *Defensive Strongholds and Fortified Castles in Poland*, op. cit.

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