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ON IDENTIFYING CHIVALRIC CULTURE. AN OUTLINE OF RESEARCH ISSUE

ABSTRACT

The article is an attempt to capture the chivalric culture on the basis of various activities of the nobility, as reconstructed by an analysis of written records as well as artefacts discovered mainly in Silesian castles during archaeological research. In order to objectify the results of this research, the concept of habitus proposed by sociologist of culture Pierre Bourdieu and his continuators

was used. This approach redirects focus to the question of a range of capitals – economic, social, cultural, and others – which were at the disposal of the lord of the castle, discernible on the basis of the analysis of archaeological materials and written records. The possibility of converting them into symbolic capital is identified here with the culture of chivalry.

Keywords: chivalric culture, mediaeval Silesia, castles, archaeology, Pierre Bourdieu, habitus, symbolic capital

Even though the term ‘chivalric culture’ is well established in the Polish language, anyone trying to find its definition rooted in the local system of notions is bound to fail. This, however, has never discouraged some researchers, who – without any in-depth methodological reflection – indulge in narratives which – based on arbitrarily selected sources – illustrate their authors’ subjective concepts. This approach might be recognized as ‘substantive’ if it were not to a great extent grounded in popular notions, which – in turn – are rooted in literary tradition, from the chivalric epic or troubadour poetry to the decidedly more inspiring role of historical or gothic novels and their modern-day spin-offs. This text is an attempt to define the notion employing appropriate research tools so as to impart an objective character to the conclusions drawn in the process.

In order to clarify the literal meaning of the latter element of the notion ‘chivalric culture’ we may resort to one of many definitions of culture, e.g. that proposed by Clifford Geertz, who views it as ‘[...] a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’.¹ A problem arises when attempting to interpret the other element of the notion, i.e. ‘chivalry’.

This is pointed out by Werner Paravicini, who, viewing it from the perspective of Western- and Central-European realities, concludes that the notion ‘knight’ is unclear due to its ambiguity, as it refers to a social function, the office held, legal status as well as an idea.² Availing himself of Gerard Labuda’s study, he attempts to define the notion of chivalric-courtly culture, which – referring to the achievements of classic ethnology – he recognizes as a typical cultural phenomenon comprising: tradition, innovation, reception and diffusion. In mediaeval Central Europe, i.e. in the German lands, it appeared as a result of adoption of foreign patterns. In this view its potential innovation was determined by the geographical factor and would have been primarily based on diffusion and acculturation rather than constituting an autonomous occurrence. In his characteristic of the chivalric-courtly culture he also distinguishes – among other elements – a set of status symbols reflecting the system of values inherent in a mediaeval society. First of all, he mentions the attire, then gestures and speech, the courtly meal, broadly conceived cavalryman’s weaponry – primarily the sword and belt, bearing various symbolic meanings. He also highlights the role played by a castle as the place of residence. Further status symbols involve the way of spending leisure time, especially hunting the big game (a class privilege of the nobility), hunting with

¹ Geertz 1973, 89.

² Paravicini 1999, 3–4.

hounds and falcons, and participating in all kinds of fun and games. Finally, he mentions the question of gold and silver, seen both as precious metals and colours reserved for the highest class of the mediaeval society.

At least some of the status symbols listed above may be attributed to the sphere of material culture, thus enabling the use of the potential offered by the research methods of archaeology to broaden the source basis. Of significance here is Jürg Tauber's systematization of the data acquired during the excavations carried out in 11th–14th-century fortifications in north-western Switzerland.³ Characteristically, he adopted *expressis verbis* the assumption that the mere fact that the artefacts he studied were located in a castle by default rendered them elements of 'chivalric culture'. Leaving aside the author's analyses of the settlement context, the architecture and infrastructure of the strongholds as well as some of the artefacts found in castles, let us take a closer look at the categories of finds directly identified with the nobility (*aldige Komponente*). The artefacts which the researcher identified as the 'noble component' included elements of horse trapping and riding gear, such as horseshoes, combs, bits, stirrups and spurs; these were followed by weaponry – the most frequently found elements of defensive armament were fragments of chain mail, armour plates (discovered less frequently) and – exceptionally – helmets. Offensive weaponry was represented by numerous finds of heads of arrows and bolts as well as swords, daggers and spearheads. In addition to these, the 'noble component' was represented by the artefacts used during various leisure activities, such as musical instruments as well as balls, dice, spillikins and chess pieces used in games.

Christoph Krauskopf's monograph *Tric-Trac, Trense, Treichel* might be regarded a specific detailed summary of the results of research carried out by representatives of various disciplines who focused on the material culture of the nobility in the 13th and 14th centuries.⁴ On the basis of the movable material discovered in the castles in Switzerland as well as in southern and central Germany, he distinguished 47 functional groups of various artefacts. The analysis did not culminate in any more profound reflection on the 'noble' character of the finds, which was probably taken for granted, considering the fact that they were excavated within the strongholds' limits. According to the author, only some decorations prove

that the nobility adopted literary or ethical models characteristic of knighthood.⁵ Additionally, among the movable material he identifies as the nobility's status symbols: decorations and elements of horse trapping from 'precious', i.e. non-ferrous, metals, swords (rarely found) and their fragments as well as the material evidence of ways of spending leisure time, mainly hunting. However, as he was quite correct to conclude, the most significant status symbol of the nobility and at the same time the evidence of stratification within this social class was the form of the family seat and its furnishing.⁶

Yet we must not ignore many factors responsible for the fact that the castle and the artefacts discovered there cannot be unambiguously related to the culture of the nobility, a chief one being the diversification and transformation of the castle form throughout centuries. In this regard, the question of the origins of noblemen's castles and the impact of fortification rights in Silesia, Poland and Central Europe is a debatable issue.⁷ There is well substantiated evidence that the reception of the ideas forming the basis of chivalric culture that affect the ethic of this social group significantly preceded the emergence of architectural solutions typical of castles in this part of Europe.⁸ This is seen in the fact that the elites adopted the idea of *militia Christi* very early on, which resulted in their participation in the crusade movement and donations for the military orders, which intensified especially after the Second Crusade.⁹ An example of this phenomenon in Silesia is the seat of the Order of Malta founded in Tyniec nad Ślężą (Fig. 1) by the family of Awdaniec, or possibly Wilczek/Wilczyc, between 1170 and 1189,¹⁰ and – a short time later – in Strzegom by the family of Strzegom-Illikowicz before 1203.¹¹

A separate issue, evident particularly in the Late Middle Ages, when castles had already become widespread in Central-Eastern Europe, are the changes of ownership. Not only were the castles taken over by the representatives of various social groups, e.g. ecclesiastical institutions or burghers, but they were also converted or even rebuilt from scratch. An especially complex question are the intentions behind that.

The bishops of Wrocław erected the castle in Otmuchów in order to strengthen their territorial rule in the land of Nysa-Otmuchów, which caused fierce objections from Henry IV of Wrocław and Bolko I of Fürstenberg.¹² Among the burghers who erected castles

³ Tauber 1985, 588–623.

⁴ Krauskopf 2005.

⁵ Krauskopf 2005, 22–23.

⁶ Krauskopf 2005, 119–122.

⁷ Boguszewicz 2012; Gawlas 2017; Nowakowski 2017, 245–250.

⁸ Vauchez 1996, 46–52; Cardini 1990, 76–81; Flori 2003, 161–209.

⁹ Gładysz 2002.

¹⁰ Starnawska 1999, 39–40; Heś 2007, 124–132; Legendziewicz 2013.

¹¹ Starnawska 1999, 46–48; Heś 2007, 132–134.

¹² Goliński 2005; Boguszewicz 2010a, 120–124.



Fig. 1. The commandery of the Order of Saint John in Tyniec nad Ślązą. The body of the building from the 14th century (photo by A. Boguszewicz).

at the beginning of the modern period some undoubtedly did so to elevate their status, which is exemplified by the residence in Wojnowice (Fig. 2) built in 1513–1560 by the Boner family¹³ or the investments made by the Saurmann family in 1518 in the castle in Jelcz and in 1523 in Smolec.¹⁴ However, it seems that most burghers of Wrocław who bought landed property outside the city, which is confirmed by the sources from the 13th century onwards, had reasons other than simply to elevate their social standing. Admittedly, the properties included defensive fortifications of the motte type, whose residential comfort seemed questionable even to the contemporaries, but they also had features like farms, which could bring additional income. Profits could also be generated by purchase and resale of the property. This at least seems a plausible explanation of frequent changes of ownership between representatives of burgher and noble families, as was the case of Złotniki,¹⁵ Sołtysowice¹⁶ and Strachowice¹⁷ near Wrocław. Economic factors were quite probably behind the purchase of the property in Gajków (Fig. 3) in 1344 by a partnership formed by the nobleman Konrad Schellendorf and the Wrocław patrician Jan Reste, who – *nota bene* – had been addressed as *miles* since the 1320s.¹⁸

This issue also involves the interpretation of archaeological finds excavated in castles, which – due to their location – are usually automatically treated as evidence of chivalric culture. This stereotypical approach often concerns the artefacts identified as the ‘noble component’ mentioned above. It is also accompanied by a subjective

interpretation of a certain category of finds as belonging to the elite and testifying to the high living standards of a castle’s residents, solely due to the fact that they are rarely ever present among the artefacts discovered during archaeological excavations. A unique opportunity to verify this view arose when Mateusz Goliński published the lists of pledges, debentures and Jewish property made in 1453 in Wrocław during a pogrom and judicial murder.¹⁹ The data, concerning the first half of the 15th century, prove that the clients of the Jewish usurers came from all estates of the Christian society, even though their majority were the burghers and nobility. The pawned movable goods included attire, table and bed linen, cloth, girdles, haberdashery, devotional objects, jewellery and decorations, weapons and tools, tableware and metal vessels.

The analysis of these materials failed to prove that there were any substantial differences in the range and value of the goods pledged with lenders by the burghers and nobility. However, there were differences in the elements of attire pledged by women and men, as seen in the descriptions of items like girdles. Comparison of these objects with the finds discovered during archaeological excavations also yields interesting conclusions. Artefacts made of precious metals are only exceptionally rarely excavated as – due to their relatively high value – they were often pledged with usurers. In the experience of the archaeologists excavating mediaeval towns and castles, gold rings with precious stones were lost extremely rarely. Equally rare are metal vessels, which is sometimes interpreted

¹³ Kutzner 1990.

¹⁴ Zlat 1990, 79–80.

¹⁵ Nowakowski 2017, 213–214, 477–478.

¹⁶ Nowakowski 2017, 212–213, 431–432.

¹⁷ Nowakowski 2017, 210, 438.

¹⁸ Nowakowski 2017, 209, 295; Wójcik 2018, 652.

¹⁹ Goliński 2006.



Fig. 2. The castle in Wojnowice, built in 1513–1560 by the Boner family (photo by A. Boguszewicz).



Fig. 3. The motte in Gajków (photo by A. Boguszewicz).

as a proof of their high value. However, the documents quoted above reveal that these items were very frequently pawned, the value of metal vessels approximating that of bed linen sheets – the objects most often pledged with lenders.²⁰ Another reason for the absence of metal vessels among the excavated artefacts is the relative durability of the material which they were made of – even after a vessel was seriously damaged, the metal could still be re-melted.

Confrontation of these lists of movables with castle inventories in the context of the ‘noble component’ mentioned above leads to especially interesting conclusions, as exemplified by the frequently mentioned girdles and elements of weaponry, whose metal parts are also present among the artefacts excavated in castles.²¹

An undecorated belt was often listed together with a knife, which suggests that they constituted a set, pos-

sibly with an unmentioned scabbard. The price offered by users was not high, ranging between 2 and 4 groschen.²² Compared with these, the girdles described as ‘silver’ or ‘gold-plated silver’ constitute an altogether separate category; they were possibly made from leather or textile straps with metal mounts, the latter usually silver – often gold-plated. These girdles were quite valuable and – like in the case of other expensive pledges – their value was set in guilders. However, the prices varied greatly, ranging from 2 to 15 guilders.²³ From the point of view of social divisions, it is interesting that girdles differed in form depending on the gender of their owners. This, however, did not affect their prices and a woman’s silver girdle could reach a high value of 8 guilders. On the other hand, there are no mentions of a burgher’s, nobleman’s or knight’s girdle being pledged. There is

²⁰ Goliński 2006, 122–123, 130–132.

²¹ Boguszewicz 2015.

²² Goliński 2006, 152, no. 37; 162, no. 165.

²³ Goliński 2006, 129.

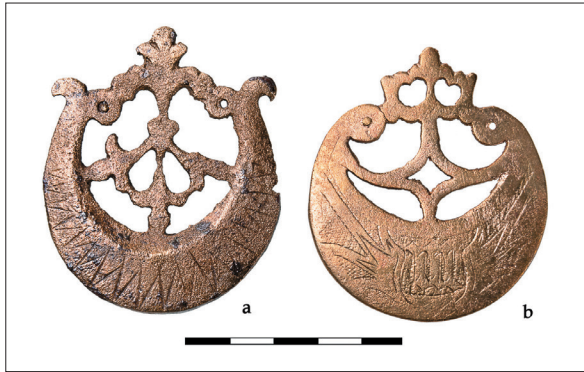


Fig. 4. Copper alloy strap-ends: a – from Silesia (exact location unknown); b – from Miłochowice (photo by T. Gašior).



Fig. 5. Copper alloy strap-end. The castle on top of the Ślęza Mountain (photo by A. Boguszewicz).

only one mention of a ‘*knecht*’ (boy’s / farm worker’s / mercenary’s?) girdle – ungilded, with such characteristic features as mounts and a letter.²⁴

The quoted data prove that despite the symbolic significance of the girdle, no conclusive opinion can be formed concerning its owner’s social stratum, even if the girdles displaying precious metal decorations do undoubtedly testify to his or her economic status. This is especially important in the case of archaeological finds, frequently all too hastily recognized as elements of the ‘noble component’ and sometimes even the remains of a ‘nobleman’s girdle’. Occasional discoveries of the objects made of precious metals in settlements, especially castles, resulted in attributing nearly all objects carefully made from non-ferrous metals, such as richly decorated strap-ends and mounts from copper alloys (Figs 4–5), to the higher stratum of the mediaeval society. However, it follows from the document mentioned above that such elements could have been characteristic of the girdle considered by the contemporaries as typical of a *knecht*.

Yet the question of attributing mounts made of non-ferrous metals to lower social strata seems more ambiguous, which is exemplified by bronze strap-ends displaying noblemen’s coats of arms (Fig. 6). It is also quite probable that in everyday life, or – especially – in combat, even representatives of the highest social stratum wore girdles and belts of very good quality but without elements made from precious metals. It should be noted that polished mounts made of copper alloys could imitate gold, which fulfilled their owners’ aspirations.

The issue of class affiliation also involves the interpretation of non-heraldic symbols displayed on girdles. Characteristically, metal applications in the form of

letters, engraved monograms or acronyms became very popular in the 15th century. Even though they are sometimes identified as elements representing chivalric culture and courtly love, they actually constitute devotional symbols.²⁵ The most frequently encountered is the miniscule letter ‘m’, sometimes multiplied (Figs 4b, 7a), which may refer to Mary, Christ’s mother, the Christogram ‘IHS’ (Fig. 7b), and majuscule ‘A’ (Fig. 8) or miniscule ‘a’ as the abbreviation of the Hail Mary address *Ave Maria*.

Leaving aside the question of literacy of the 15th century Central European society and its awareness of the messages conveyed by the discussed decorations, monograms and acronyms were universally used in the period, especially those bearing devotional meanings. Their primary application were strap-ends decorations, which – characteristically – were similar in shape, despite diversified form of the mounts themselves.²⁶ They certainly belonged to people involved in soldiering, irrespective of their social origins, which is evidenced by the considerable frequency of finds of this kind in castles, in the layers identified as battlegrounds that formed in the wake of sieges. It is thus quite probable that the initials and monograms may have played a devotional and apotropaic role for their owners.

As far as weaponry is concerned, the nature of the objects pledged with Jewish lenders was different. First of all, they occurred in sets and – secondly – certain items are missing from the lists, e.g. firearms, which in the mid-15th century must have been commonly used by the burghers of Wrocław.

It is impossible to conclude whether knives – mentioned frequently yet highly laconically – constituted elements of weaponry. Some were described as ‘big’ (*groß*

²⁴ Goliński 2006, 163, no. 177.

²⁵ A different interpretation of these symbols was proposed by Krzysztof Wachowski, who identified them as elements representing courtly love. He interpreted the monogram ‘m’ as an ab-

breviation of MINNE and ‘A’, ‘a’ as an abbreviation of AMOR (Wachowski 2013, 51–52, 78–80).

²⁶ Dufranes 2020, 21–33.



Fig. 6. Copper alloy strap-end with engraved coat of arms. Rogowiec Castle (photo by A. Boguszewicz, drawing by N. Lenkow).

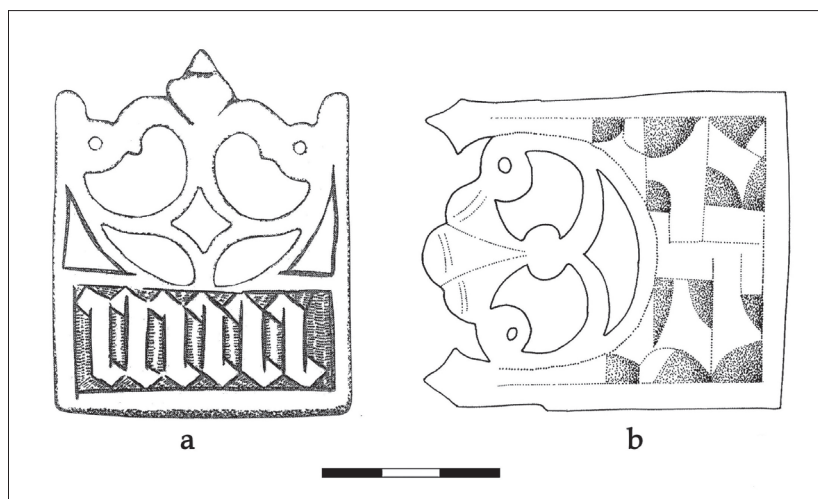


Fig. 7. Copper alloy strap-ends with engraved black letters 'mm' and 'IHS': a – Brzeźnica; b – Szczerba Castle (drawing by N. Lenkow).

meß(er)), which may indicate that they were one-handed swords (Polish *kord*).²⁷ The most often pawned elements of weaponry were crossbows, sometimes accompanied by cases, quivers and bolts. There are also swords (*swert*)²⁸ and elements of defensive armament, usually listed as *pantczir*,²⁹ which may have denoted universally used chain mails or brigandines.



Fig. 8. Copper alloy mount with the majuscule 'A'. The castle on Ostrówek in Opole (photo by Archive of IAiE PAN in Wrocław).

The prices of crossbows varied greatly, which probably resulted from the quality of the equipment prone to wear and tear, and ranged between 6 groschen and 1 guilder.³⁰ A quiver with bolts was priced at 3 groschen. The prices of swords were very diversified, which may point to the inaccuracy of their laconic descriptions, comprising diametrically different types in one category. Thus, there were swords worth 8 groschen and a sword which together with a quiver and crossbow bolts was priced at 4 guilders. A body armour was worth 1.5 guilder, while the one accompanied by a damask jacket (*jope*) reached the price of 3 guilders.³¹

The analysis of the lists of pawned goods prompts the conclusion that despite the high price offered by the usurers, elements of weaponry were rarely pledged. In the case of burghers it may mean that they obeyed the orders of the municipal council requiring every member of the community to be equipped with basic weaponry: firearms, polearms and blunt weapons.³² These data also do not reveal any substantial differences between the armament of burghers and nobility; however, there is one interesting detail: while the nobility pledged crossbows and armour, no mentions of swords have been recorded. Rather than being a coincidence, this fact may prove that the nobility attached greater significance to swords as a symbol of their class affiliation, strengthened by family tradition.

Contrary to the sparse information about elements of armament in the lists of pledges, debentures and

²⁷ Goliński 2006, 130, 154–155, nos 58, 72; Marek 2008, 45–67.

²⁸ Goliński 2006, 170, no. 259; 178, no. 361.

²⁹ Goliński 2006, 165, no. 197.

³⁰ Goliński 2006, 130.

³¹ Goliński 2006, 185, no. 436.

³² Goliński 1990; 2006, 105.



Fig. 9. Crossbow bolt heads. Rogowiec Castle (photo by A. Boguszewicz).

Jewish property made in 1453, this category of artefacts is quite abundant in Silesian castles, found in the battle-grounds – sites of sieges from the war of Silesian succession in the second half of the 15th century.³³ Especially interesting is the evidence of use of firearms, absent in the preceding century. It comprises fragments of burst hand cannon barrels and numerous missiles: from small calibre lead bullets to medium and large calibre cylindrical missiles from the same material, to stone balls shot from large calibre mortars in an attempt to destroy the walls of a besieged castle. The most numerous of the excavated artefacts are crossbow bolt heads, which still predominated on the period's battlefield (Fig. 9). The Jewish lenders were not interested in the heads, or to be more precise – bolts, unless they came as a set together with a decorative quiver. These were accompanied among the battleground finds by numerous elements of horse trapping and riding gear (bits, stirrups and spurs), which usurers also refused to take. Interestingly, the range of the finds and their

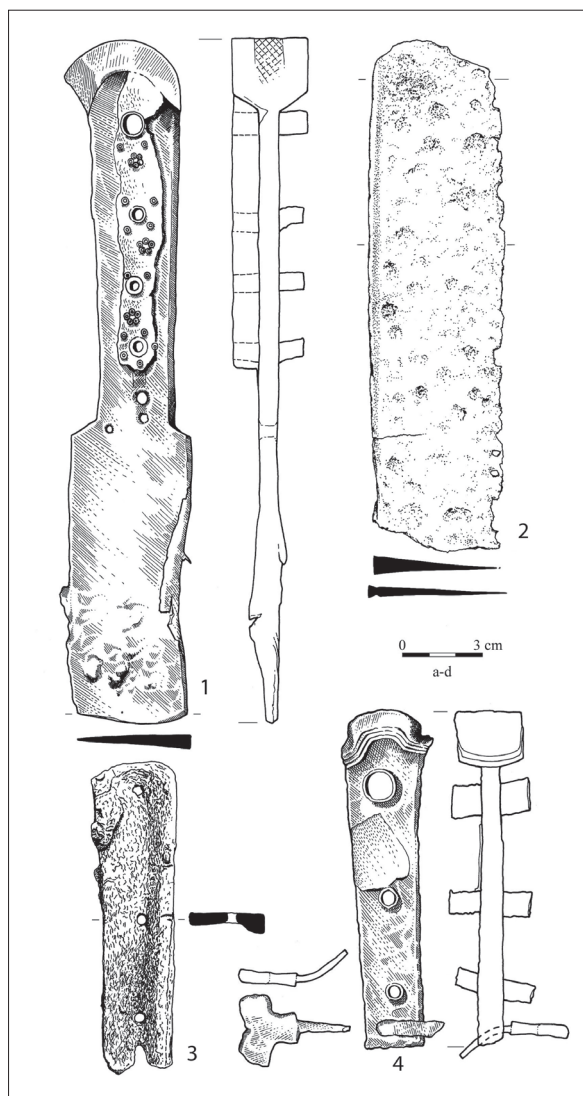


Fig. 10. Fragments of one-handed swords. Rogowiec Castle (drawing by N. Lenkow).

mass occurrence has a completely egalitarian character. A crossbow was a basic weapon not only for the burghers but also for the peasants obliged to render services for local castles.³⁴ On the other hand, classification of numerous fragments of one-handed swords discovered in castles and probably registered by lenders as 'big knives' remains an open question (Fig. 10). Their plebeian nature is reflected in German (*Bauernwehr/Hauswehr*), yet in the 15th century they were evidently very popular with all social strata as a versatile and relatively cheap weapon. Its practicality was especially appreciated in cavalry formations: it was considerably more convenient than an ordinary sword and its merits were also appreciated in

³³ Boguszewicz 2010b; 2018a.

³⁴ Kouřil *et al.* 2000, 210.

later times, when sabres became more popular. This is substantiated by the sentences from Mączyński's dictionary (1564): 'kord, jezdecki miecz' ('a one-handed sword is a cavalryman's weapon') and from Rysiński's collection of proverbs (1619): 1) 'Kord broń, szabla strój' ('A one-handed sword – a weapon, a sabre – decorative attire'). 2) 'Kord do boju, szabla do stroju' ('A one-handed sword for the battle, a sabre to dress up'), quoted in Gloger's Old Polish Encyclopaedia.³⁵

Problems with identifying the manifestations of chivalric, courtly-chivalric or, alternatively, noble culture on the basis of written sources and archaeological discoveries may by all means be overcome when a broader social context of this phenomenon is taken into consideration. In the case of the castle seen as a point of reference, it would require analyzing the relations existing between various groups of its residents implementing elements of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of sociology of culture. In this respect an analysis of the artefacts excavated in castles should focus on defining the habitus of the lord of the castle, i.e. his inherent patterns of thought, behaviour and taste.³⁶ Thus, the analysis of the issue cannot be limited to mere identification of the function of individual buildings, appliances and objects and attributing them to particular social groups. They need to be perceived in the context of the structure which Bourdieu calls the field, which encompasses the residents of the castle and the landed property that belonged to it, or possibly more distant neighbours when the influences of the castle exceeded the boundaries of its lord's estate. The most important character, the *acteur*, was the stronghold's owner, who – at least in Silesia in the 15th century – was considered a member of a separate group of feudal lords known as 'lords of castles'.³⁷ In the contemporary sources written in German they were referred to as *Schloßherren*³⁸ and in those written in Latin as *castellanis*.³⁹ Thanks to his position, 'the lord of the castle' structuralized all the castle's residents as well as those living in the surrounding estate and further away. Another very helpful tool is an analysis of various manifestations of his activity and that of his dependants from the perspective of the notion of symbolic capital, which comprises a number of smaller capitals (cultural, economic, social, legal and many others).⁴⁰ Thus perceived, symbolic capital would be tantamount to the (usually ambiguous and vague) notion of chivalric culture.

From this perspective, the objects mentioned in the lists of pledges, debentures and Jewish property may be

seen as evidence of the economic capital of the nobility and burghers. The differences between the capitals of both groups were not significant, while the only differences in social capital, reflected in their attitudes to individual categories of objects, e.g. weaponry, are so nuanced that they are practically imperceptible. However, the same categories of objects represented by the artefacts retrieved in castles take on a different meaning. An exceptional amassment of elements of weaponry is evidence of the ongoing military operations and therefore it is of no significance that they were typical, mass-produced objects, like crossbow bolt heads. The most important fact is that the battleground was there because the lord of the castle was able to concentrate a number of capitals in his hands, most notably legal and, more broadly, social capital, which enabled him to defend the stronghold and its surrounding infrastructure. The battleground, the effect of a long-lasting siege, appeared because the stronghold had been appropriately fortified, which was possible thanks to the lord's cultural and economic capitals – without them neither he nor his advisors would have had indispensable knowledge of defensive structures and means to finance the investment. Once again his social capital, and the political capital included therein, enabled him to summon the defenders from among his subjects and partners representing similar political views. In this context the support from the rulers pursuing their own policies was also of extraordinary significance. Economic and cultural capitals should be mentioned here once more, as they enabled the lord to arm and command the mobilized men. Ultimately, the lord of the castle was able to concentrate all these capitals in his hands and convert them into the symbolic capital enabling him to implement symbolic violence.⁴¹ But for him, none of the besieged castle's residents would have taken the risk of its defence, which entailed injuries or even loss of life.

It would seem that the example above should exhaust the question of building symbolic capital by the lord of the castle, but there were also other forms of activity of a more peaceful nature, less obvious from the perspective of the research of chivalric-courtly culture, e.g. economic activity. In this context an especially interesting phenomenon are specialized workshops operating in castles, like metallurgical workshops functioning independently of smithies, such as the one discovered in the castle in Wierzbna near Świdnica.⁴² The site, whose chronology goes back to the third quarter of the 13th century, is one of the oldest nobleman's castles in Silesia. Its residential

³⁵ Gloger 1958, 82.

³⁶ Bourdieu 1984, 101–103, 169–170; 1977, 78–87.

³⁷ Jurek 2004, 416.

³⁸ CDS 27, nos 21, 23.

³⁹ Häuffer 1932, 110.

⁴⁰ Bourdieu 1984, 175–176; 1990, 112–121.

⁴¹ Bourdieu 1990, 122–134.

⁴² Boguszewicz 2005, 285–292; 2012, 124–128; Jurek 2006.

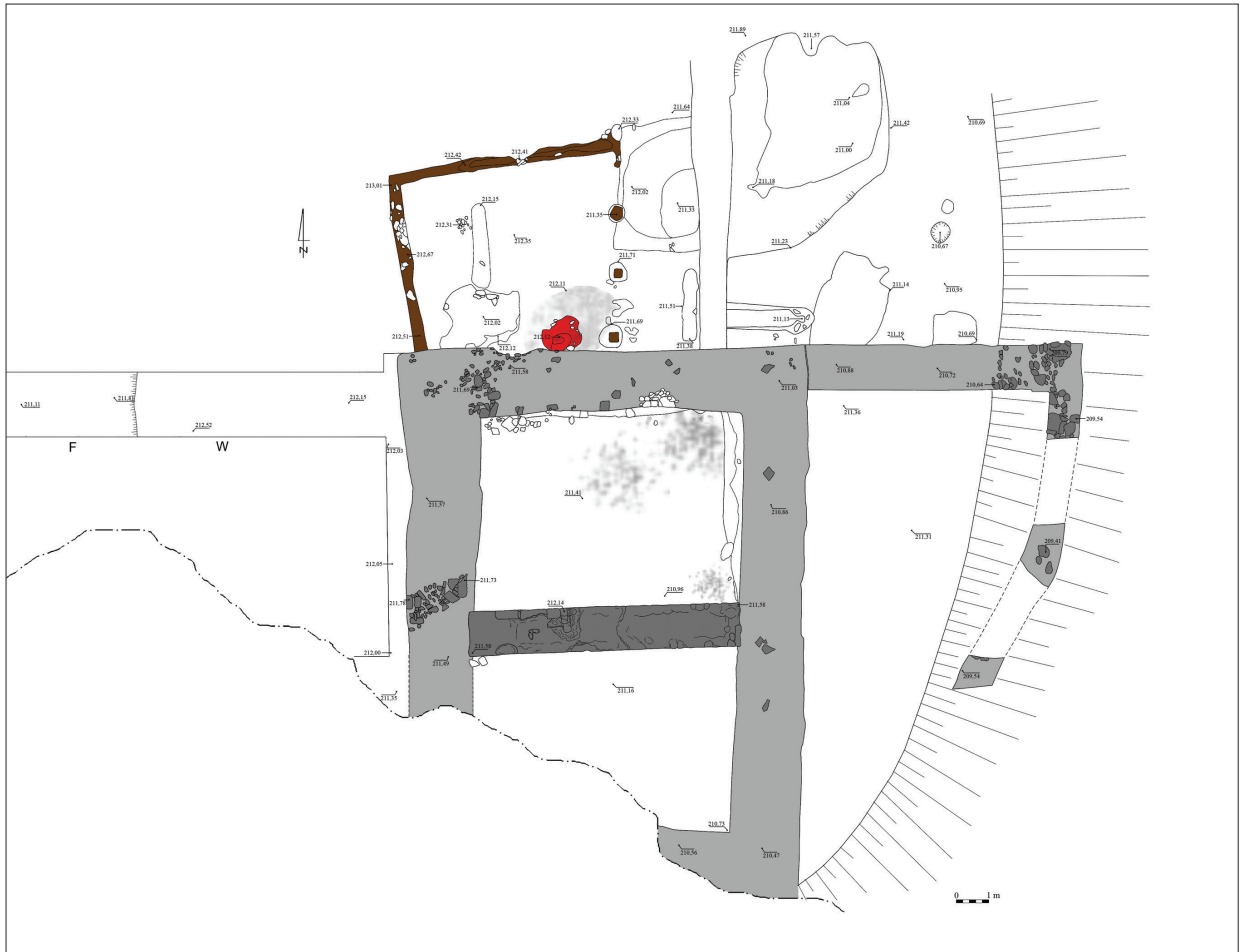


Fig. 11. The castle in Wierzbna in the second half of the 13th century (drawing by N. Lenkow).

part was formed by a dwelling tower with a small inner courtyard surrounded by a wall (Fig. 11). The economic facilities were situated in the outer courtyard, surrounded by a rampart and a moat. The only utility object within it functioning at the initial stages of the castle's existence in the second half of the 13th century was a wooden outbuilding with traces of a hearth. The object's cultural layers yielded tools, such as a light hammer, fragments of melting pots, semi-finished products and production waste from copper alloy (Fig. 12), which proves that it was a workshop processing non-ferrous metals. Quite significantly, the employed craftsman was highly qualified: not only did he emulate the patterns developed elsewhere but also created unique ones himself, which is substantiated by the find of a bar of copper alloy bearing an engraved heraldic eagle (Fig. 12a).

Correct interpretation of this artefact requires an analysis of the stronghold's immediate surroundings.

Performing primarily the residential function, it was situated on the edge of the village, while its economic infrastructure consisted of an unfortified manor house owned by the lords and a church situated nearby, founded by the castle's owners, and it is there that the objects indispensable for the functioning of a feudal seat, such as a smithy, stables and cowsheds, were probably situated.⁴³ Due to the social status of the lords of Wierzbna, who had their own retinue, burgrave and notary, the workshop mentioned above cannot be interpreted solely as an element of economic activity aimed at increasing economic capital. Its location directly next to the residence testified, on the one hand, to the craftsman's high social standing and on the other – to the aspirations of the feudal lords, who took the liberty of acting like rulers by employing goldsmiths. It was this group of craftsmen, working directly for the rulers, who acquired special privileges and had their workshops located within castle walls.⁴⁴ Thus, their

⁴³ Boguszewicz 2005, 292–296.

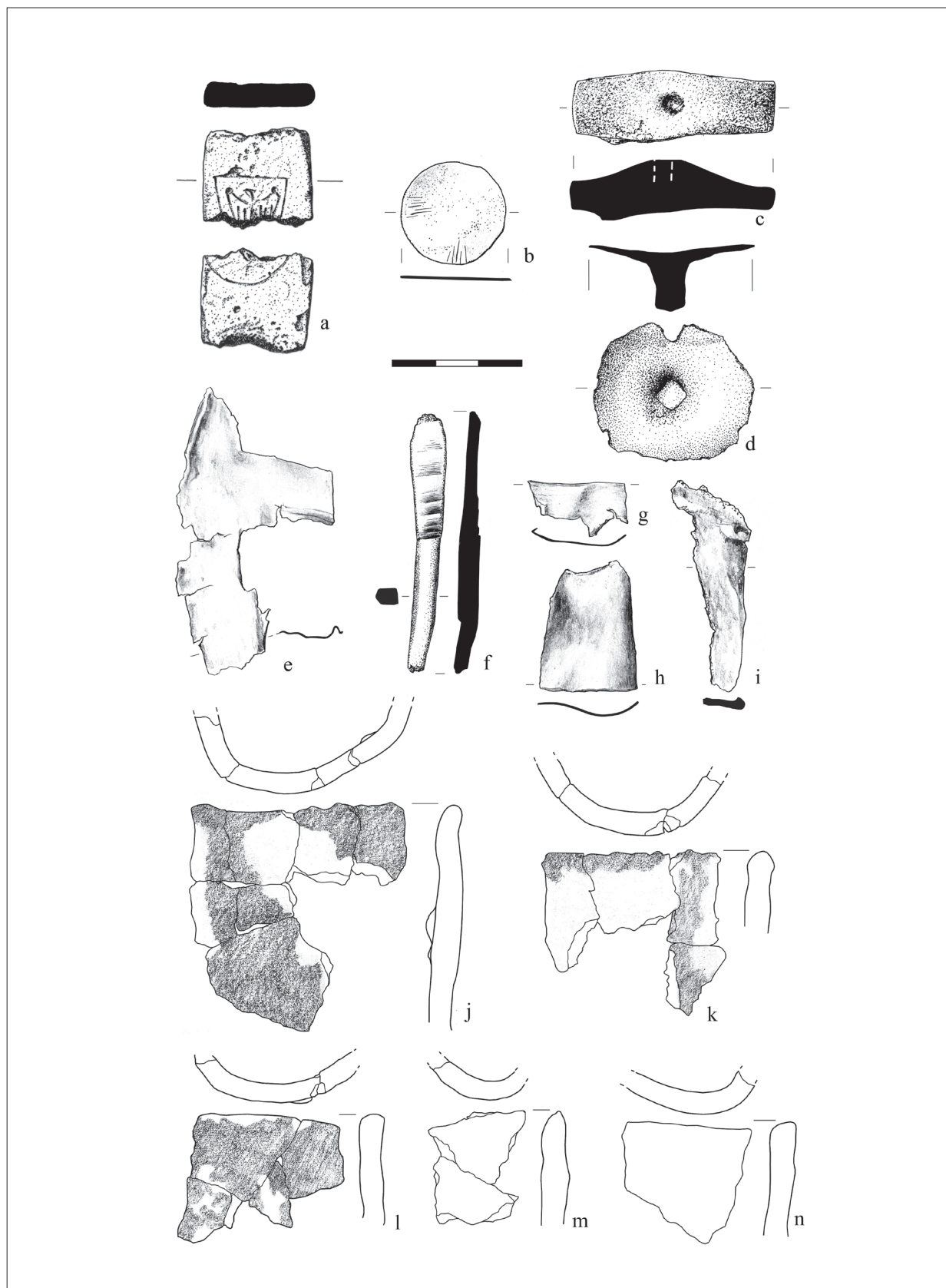


Fig. 12. Traces of a non-ferrous metal workshop from the castle in Wierzbna: a – bar of copper alloy bearing an engraved heraldic eagle; c – light hammer; b, d–h – semi-finished products and production waste from copper alloy; j–n – fragments of melting pots (drawing by N. Lenkow).



Fig. 13. Strzelin, St Gotard Church with relics of a rotunda in the lower parts of the tower. Foundation of the lords of Strzelin from the 12th/13th century (state as of 2006, photo by A. Boguszewicz).

presence and work should be considered an element of cultural capital, which was directly converted into symbolic capital.

An example of the most advanced form of economic activity of exceptional complexity, which required considerable investment, was the promotion of settlement by founding villages and towns under German law. In both cases it involved, to a greater or lesser extent, assuming the prerogative of territorial rule. This phenomenon is best illustrated by the creation of their own territorial rule by the bishops of Wrocław in the land of Nysa-Otmuchów, which was opposed in vain by the Piast dukes.⁴⁵ Quite understandably, the greatest number of towns was founded in Silesia by the highest stratum of the nobility during the crisis of ducal power following the invasion of the Mongol army in 1241. It was then that urban centres were founded by the family of Pogorzale in Grodków and Lewin⁴⁶ and later, in the 1280s, in Przeworno.⁴⁷ Quite probably, shortly before 1264, Strzelin (Fig. 13) was founded by the lords of the same name.⁴⁸ These private towns were soon taken over or marginalized in the second half of the 13th century by the Piast dukes, who perceived them as competition to their own network of urban centres.

However, not all private foundations were subject to the hostile takeover by the Piast dukes, which is exemplified by the initiatives on the part of the Jeleńczyk family.⁴⁹ Before 1288 they founded a town in Prusice, which they had owned from at least the mid-13th cen-

tury.⁵⁰ However, in the early 14th century they began to gradually sell this poorly developing urban centre to the representatives of other noble families and Piast dukes. A yet another example was the fate of the Jeleńczyk family estate in Prochowice, where they had been present from the end of the 13th century.⁵¹ Taking advantage of relative weakness of the competing lines of Piasts of Legnica and Głogów, they took over a border settlement complex on the lower Kaczawa, which consisted of a ducal castle and the surrounding settlements as well as the town of Las. These they merged into one settlement centre named Prochowice (Fig. 14). However, despite lack of competition from the dukes of Legnica and the town's undisturbed development, they eventually had to sell the heavily indebted Prochowice estate to the dukes of Legnica in 1383. It seems that in this case the financial ruin was caused by the lords of Prochowice living beyond their means. They had their own court with a burgrave, vassals among the local knights and a chaplain, but the greatest burden may have been excessive investment in erecting the castle or possibly municipal fortifications, which was recorded in 1374.

The example of Prochowice and other instances of founding towns by the nobility recorded earlier seem to confirm the thesis put forward by Tomasz Jurek that the predominating motive was not the intention to further the economic development of the estate but to demonstrate the lord's own power equalling that of dukes.⁵² Consequently, the primacy of cultural capital (erecting

⁴⁴ Blaschitz, Krabath 2004, 743.

⁴⁵ Goliński 2005; Boguszewicz 2010a, 120–133.

⁴⁶ Jurek 2002, 89–93, 95–96; 2005.

⁴⁷ Jurek 2002, 93–95; Adamska 2019, 157.

⁴⁸ Jurek 2002, 93; Adamska 2019, 151–154.

⁴⁹ Jurek 1992.

⁵⁰ Eysymontt 2009, 482–484.

⁵¹ Boguszewicz 2018b.

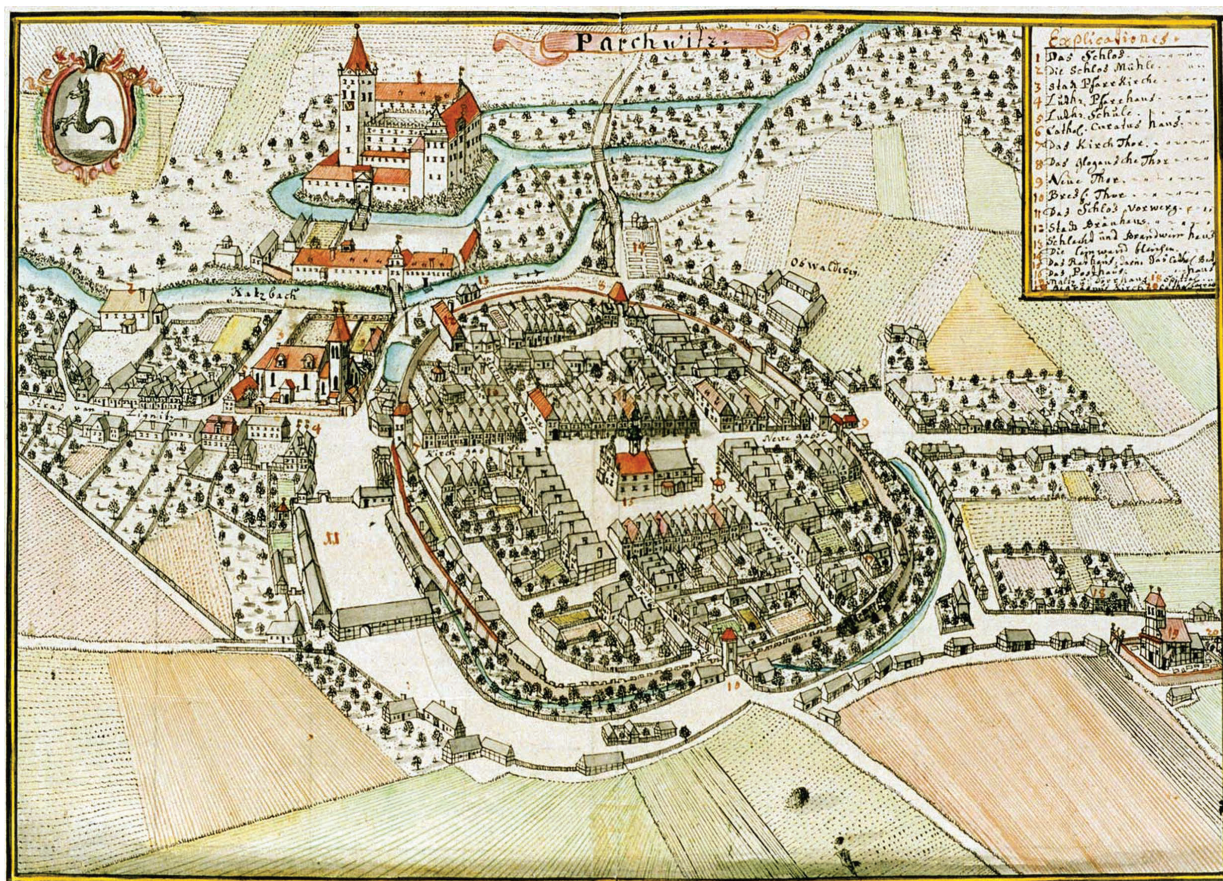


Fig. 14. Prochowice Castle and Town. View by F.B. Werner from around the mid-18th century (Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu, Oddział Rękopisów, sygn. Akc. 1848/1094, Bd. 2, fol. 130–131).

castles and city walls) over weak social and economic capitals (the competition from economically stronger ducal towns) resulted in a failure to build or solidify symbolic capital (decline of towns or their takeover by the dukes).

The quoted examples of the nobility's economic endeavours, which are not exhaustive, not only deviate from the stereotypical image of the mediaeval knight-hood, but also exceed the range of activities identified as typical of courtly-chivalric culture. What is more, they testify to a versatility of activities which enabled the nobility to participate actively in social life, to keep up with and even initiate changes. Undoubtedly, this versatility and readiness to embrace new phenomena was based on close cooperation with representatives of many social and professional groups. The diversity and intensity of their efforts, seen from the angle of archaeological artefacts excavated in castles, attests to the position of the lord of the

castle. It was also him who converted a number of capitals (economic, social and cultural) into symbolic capital.

This brings to mind the phenomenon of 'cultural omnivorousness',⁵³ or – less harshly put – 'cultural mobility',⁵⁴ which the continuators of Pierre Bourdieu's thought observed in modern elites. However, considering the various activities connected with 'chivalric culture' mentioned above, it becomes obvious that this phenomenon has a very long history. When compared with representatives of modern-day elites, the position of mediaeval nobility would approximate that of broadly conceived creative circles. Founding towns and villages, participating in the creation of art, they were not just consumers of complete products of culture but were instrumental in their emergence and to an extent affected their ultimate form, which perfectly corresponds with a reflection voiced by Bonnie K. Erickson, who pointed out that 'cultural mobility' offers the elites an insight into

⁵² Jurek 2002, 97.

⁵³ Peterson 1992; Peterson, Simkus 1992.

⁵⁴ Emission 2003.

various social groups and enables the use of versatile tools enhancing interaction. In this context the significance of social capital becomes obvious.⁵⁵ All this leads to the conclusion that 'cultural mobility' serving the purpose of increasing social capital is a universal phenomenon. Both now and in the Middle Ages, or at any other time, it facilitates acquiring a dominating position in an imperceptible but universally acceptable way by imposing symbolic violence. The role of social capital emphasized

here, perhaps even greater than that of cultural capital, and of the conversion of both these capitals into the symbolic one, is undoubtedly among the more significant elements constituting the social phenomenon identified as chivalric – or courtly-chivalric – culture. However, it bears stressing that similar social phenomena promoting the domination of the elites are universal and are by no means restricted to the Middle Ages.

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⁵⁵ Erickson 1996.

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