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## *Research and conservation of the so-called Studentate at the Dominican Priory in Krakow*

### *Introduction*

The Dominican priory in Krakow owes its beginnings to the involvement of Bishop Iwo Odrowąż, who in 1222 had the newly arrived Dominican friars settle alongside the St. Trinity Church, the center of the oldest parish in the city. Shortly afterwards, the Dominicans began to remodel the church. Its remains in the form of stone foundation walls were uncovered during archaeological and architectural research in the interior of the present-day Basilica in 2018. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery had been systematically extended, and ultimately became an extensive multi-cloistered complex focused around three internal garths, extended along the north–south direction. Over the last decade, the church and priory were subjected to interdisciplinary research with a scope of unprecedented scale. It was associated with the conservation, renovation, modernization, and adaptive reuse of a part of the priory as a museum. This paper presents the discovery made in the years 2017–2018 during the renovation of three small spaces located in the northernmost part of the priory relative to the church, i.e., in the northernmost part of the priory’s eastern wing, near the so-called third garth. This part of the priory is called the studentate, as it is dedicated to housing the youngest members of the Dominican community and is – in part – a functionally autonomous complex. Particularly notable is the space that had previously been used as a kitchen, and which through the discoveries made during the research has regained its historical, although entirely unexpected, appearance and décor. Thanks to this text, we would like to contribute to spreading the belief in

the necessity of conducting interdisciplinary research, as it is only through this type of studies that we can access the true appearance of architecture that is authentic in its original, intentional aesthetic message. We also want to highlight the significance of the involvement of historical building owners and users in the process of the conservation of said buildings and their awareness of its importance, without which it would be difficult to achieve the best possible results.

### *State of research*

The first academic publications on the buildings owned and developed by the Krakow-based Dominican friars, especially the church, were published in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and then later in the beginning of the past century. One of the first 20<sup>th</sup>-century authors were Feliks Kopera [1] and Józef Jamroz [2], who discussed the complex’s medieval architecture on the pages of “Rocznik Krakowski” [Krakow Yearbook]. What is notable, is that Jamroz based his discussion on the findings of an original architectural study, which continues to be used as a basis for all research on the church’s architectural transformation to this day. Another important literature item is the monograph by Marcin Szymba, in which he discussed early transformation phases, and which was published in 2004 [3]. In the meantime, a range of individual publications appeared, whose number rose after 2010, when the monastery, and later the church as well, became subjected to large-scale archaeological and architectural research associated with ongoing construction projects. The sites researched included the crypt under the church presbytery (2010–2011), the cloister at the first garth (2011–2013), the northern wing of cloister at the third garth (2009 and 2012–2015, Agnieszka Luboń-Radwańska), the second and third garth, the so-called atrium – the Gothic hall

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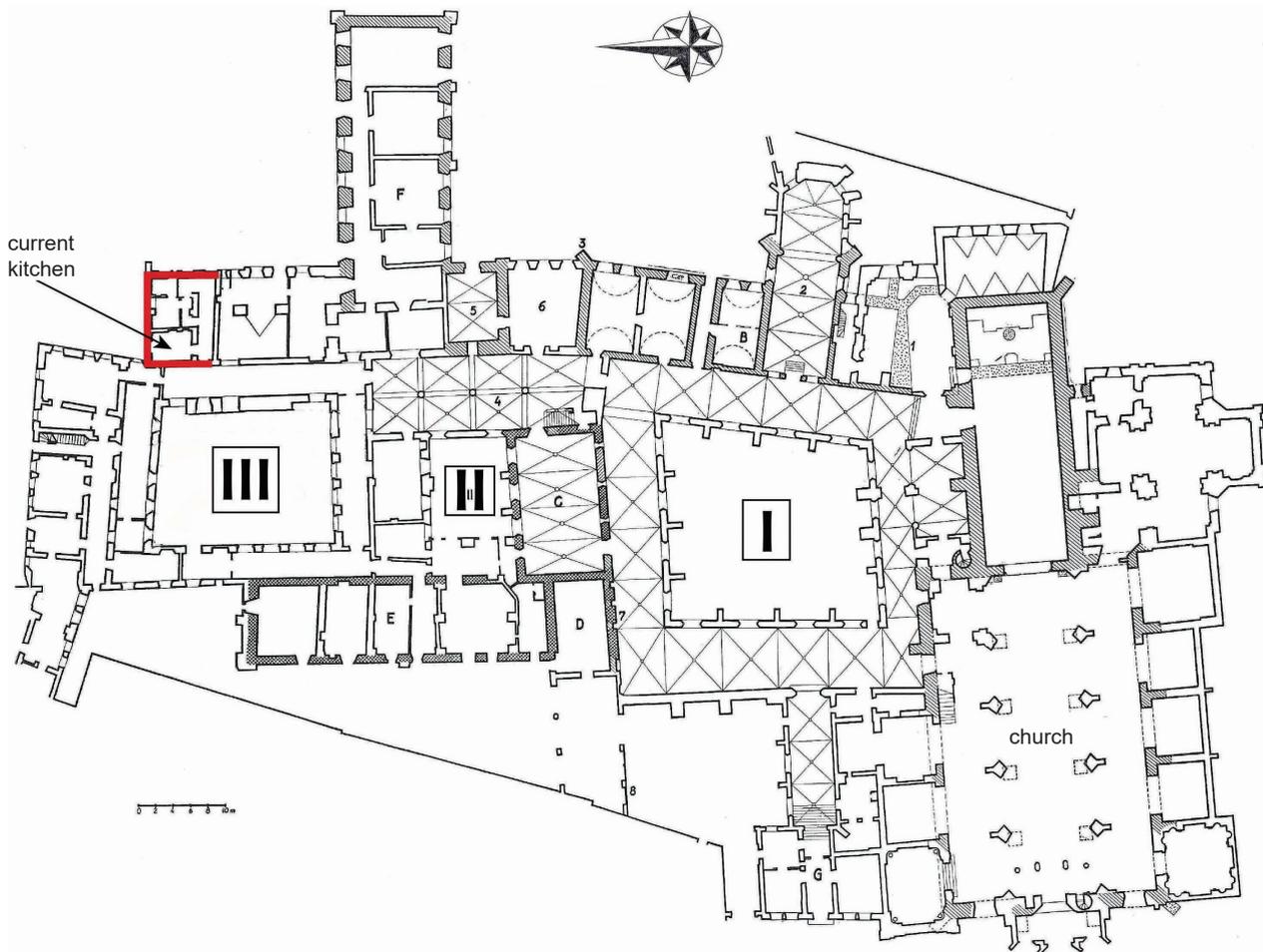


Fig. 1. Plan of Dominican priory in Krakow; the range of supposed 13<sup>th</sup> century building marked in red; I, II, III – cloisters (elaborated by A. Bojęs-Białasik)

Il. 1. Plan klasztoru dominikanów w Krakowie. Na czerwono oznaczono zasięg domniemanej budowli z XIII w.; I, II, III – kolejne wirydarze (rys. A. Bojęs-Białasik)

(2015, third garth 2009, 2011 and 2013), the western courtyard, studied in 2012, Anna Bojęs-Białasik, Dariusz Niemiec); the cellarium underneath the Romanesque refectory (2016), the southern section of the presbytery (2017), the main nave of the church (2018, Anna Bojęs-Białasik, Monika Łyczak); the square in front of the western façade of the church (2011–2012, Monika Łyczak, Waldemar Niewalda, Halina Rojkowska, Magdalena Goras); the church's side chapels (2019–2019, Maria Filipowicz). Of note is also the sizeable volume in the *Sztuka w kręgu krakowskich dominikanów* [Art in the circle of Krakow's Dominicans] series, which is a collection of works by many authors related to the analysis of Dominican architecture and art [4]. We must also mention Fr. Adam Stuziński OP, a long-standing scholar and caretaker of monastic architecture, whose legacy (manuscripts, photos) is a rich source to draw on in researching the seat of Krakow's predicants.

The spaces discussed in this paper had never before been subjected to architectural research, and their immediate vicinity had only been incidentally studied. Due to the somewhat peripheral location relative to the church, namely at the edge of the eastern wing of the priory, near

the distant third garth, the spaces were usually not included in the most urgent development plans, and therefore also research plans (Fig. 1). The first research in this area was conducted by Maria Filipowicz in 1996 and identified a stone and brick wall of a building with a brick portal, with a lintel in the form of a broken arch, located in northern section of the eastern wing's eastern wall [5, p. 299]. At the time, Filipowicz dated it to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the vicinity of the spaces, in the adjacent arm of the cloister that had been remodeled into six cells, research and conservation work was conducted in stages in the years 2012–2015 (Agnieszka Luboń-Radwańska, Anna Bojęs-Białasik), which found that the oldest parts of the cloister walls (the outer walls) date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and their net vaults – with a complex rib figuration – refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the years 2018–2019, the spaces adjacent to the rooms under study from the south were studied (Dariusz Niemiec, Maria Filipowicz), but the results have not been published. However, it is known that that the above-mentioned stone and brick structure was re-dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

While the research discussed in this study was conducted in three spaces: the kitchen, its preceding space and

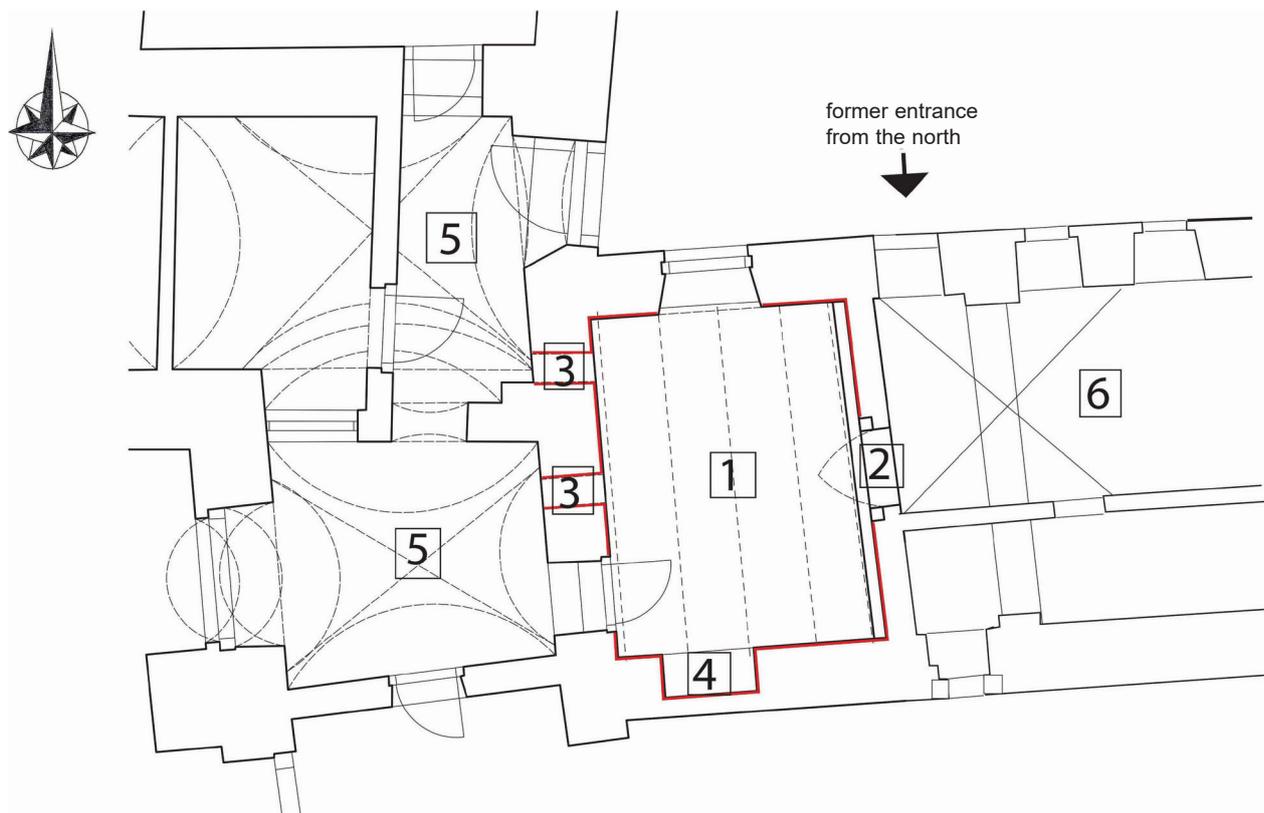


Fig. 2. Dominican priory in Krakow – plan of rooms researched in 2017–2018. The kitchen and ducts in western wall marked in red; 1 – kitchen covered with Late Gothic wooden beam ceiling, 2 – Gothic portal of 15<sup>th</sup> century, 3 – duct in the western wall, 4 – former entrance to the kitchen from the south (bricked up), 5 – rooms separated from the former cloister, 6 – adjoining cell (elaborated by A. Bojęś-Białasik)

II. 2. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – plan pomieszczeń przebadanych w latach 2017–2018.

Na czerwono oznaczono kuchnię i kanały w ścianie zachodniej, 1 – kuchnia ze stropem późnogotyckim, 2 – portal gotycki z XV w., 3 – kanały w ścianie zachodniej, 4 – dawne wejście do kuchni (zamurowane), 5 – pomieszczenia wydzielone z dawnego krużganka, 6 – sąsiednia cela (oprac. A. Bojęś-Białasik)

a small vestibule, it was a part of the research performed in just one of them – the kitchen – that resulted in the most interesting findings (Fig. 2). The two other spaces were created as a result of partitioning a former cloister that was erected around the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The kitchen was created by partitioning an older building, probably the stone and brick structure found by Filipowicz. The structure may have originally been detached and, over time, became absorbed into the priory. The peripheral walls of its cellars were erected using limestone, with large relieving arches built with large blocks of this stone. This quite archaic structural system allows re-dating it to the 13<sup>th</sup> century [6]<sup>1</sup>. The surviving remains of the composition of the northern façade of the ground floor, with a portal with an arched archivolt and probably two windows on both of its sides, are slightly off the axis of symmetry of the presumed building (Fig. 3). The dearth of data does not allow for wider conclusions on the original



Fig. 3. Dominican priory in Krakow – the northern elevation of the eastern wing of monastery located at the 3<sup>rd</sup> cloister, relics of the façade composition at the ground floor: portal with semicircular brick archivolt and windows, partly rebuilt (photo by A. Bojęś-Białasik)

II. 3. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – północna elewacja wschodniego skrzydła klasztoru przy III wirydarzu, widoczne relikty kompozycji elewacji na parterze: portal o półkolistej ceglanej archiwoltce i okna, częściowo przebudowane (fot. A. Bojęś-Białasik)

<sup>1</sup> The stone walls and arch of the lintel of a structure recently found in Grodzisko near Skała (near Krakow), dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and initially interpreted as the remains of the walls of a former Poor Clares convent, may be an analogy to the construction technology of these arches, laid from large, roughly worked limestone blocks.



Fig. 4. Dominican priory in Krakow – the kitchen interior at the preliminary stage of work:

a) view of the northern side of the kitchen, b) view of the southern timber boarded duct with grate (photo by A. Bojęs-Białasik)

Il. 4. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – wnętrze kuchni na wstępnym etapie prac:

a) widok w stronę północną, b) widok szalowanego drewnem i zakończonego kratą kanału południowego (fot. A. Bojęs-Białasik)

shape of this 13<sup>th</sup>-century structure. However, we can conclude that, as a result of partitions (secondary?), the present-day kitchen found itself in the westernmost part of the building, adjoining a cell and a small hallway<sup>2</sup>, which occupy its remaining section. Due to the scope of research – in reference to this interesting part of the priory – and the absence of historical records older than the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our knowledge of the transformations undergone by the rooms in question is mostly incomplete.

### *Architectural and conservation research from 2017–2018*

Research and conservation work was undertaken in association with the renovation of a group of significantly neglected rooms, which were tellingly named “the slums” by the Dominicans owing to the level of damage and the longstanding lack of investment. The unassuming kitchen, which did not show signs of practically any historical or aesthetic value prior to the works, with one probe of the western wall suggesting the presence of an illegible painting notwithstanding, became an unexpectedly fascinating field of study. The aforementioned wall probe was probably the work of the aforementioned Fr. Studziński OP, who as a Dominican educated in artwork conservation conducted essential conservation work on a fragment of the painting in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the previous century<sup>3</sup>. Leaving the probe uncovered, he signaled the space’s artistic

potential with hope of future exposition. Before the research in the kitchen began, it had featured a plank floor and a flat ceiling made of boards, while the walls were covered with contemporary plaster and the interior was illuminated by a single window in the northern wall. The research of all the interior’s elements – the walls, ceiling and floor – was conducted simultaneously (Figs. 4a, b).

The preexisting probe provided a basis for the conservation research of the walls, on which the remains of polychromies in the form of irregular spots made on a layer of lime plaster were found. Fragments of the painting were uncovered in the upper parts of the western wall, where its largest part had survived, on the eastern wall where only a colored spot with an unclear composition was found, and fragmentarily on the southern wall<sup>4</sup>. Larger fragments were certainly subjected to conservation by Fr. Studziński, which was confirmed during the conservation work, as injections and putty consistent with those used between the 1960s and 1990s were discovered<sup>5</sup>. The painting on the western wall was made in a linear, almost calligraphic style, using dark lines, with fragmentarily preserved elements with chiaroscuro. Large spots of missing plaster located in areas considered strategic to identifying compositional elements did not allow for clear reading of the painting’s content itself, nor did they help in determining the function of the entire space.

The main compositional motif of the painting were acanthus leaves scaled to the size of large tree branches, which acted as a frame of a scene formed by incomplete figures of winged angels, one playing a harp, and an unidentified, forward-facing female (?) figure. The intention behind the movement of the angels and their clear orientation towards the female figure make it the scene’s central

<sup>2</sup> Both the cell and the hallway that included a staircase, led to the cellar, and were not a part of the project and were not researched.

<sup>3</sup> Father Adam Franciszek Studziński (1911–2008), chaplain of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, participant in the Battle of Monte Cassino, a Dominican friar and artwork conservator, caretaker of the Krakow monastery, supervised numerous renovations conducted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Dominican monastery in Krakow. He wrote their detailed descriptions and produced an extensive photographic documentation. His legacy is an invaluable source for research on the history of the Dominican monastery.

<sup>4</sup> A walled-up niche of the former entrance to the kitchen from inside the monastery was also discovered in the southern wall.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Studziński’s participation in the polychromy’s conservation is confirmed by archival photos of these paintings.

Fig. 5. Dominican priory in Krakow – view of the western kitchen wall with revealed fragments of polychrome – after conservation work completion (photo by A. Luboń-Radwańska)

Il. 5. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – widok ściany zachodniej kuchni z ujawnionymi fragmentami polichromii – etap po zakończeniu prac konserwatorskich (fot. A. Luboń-Radwańska)



element, although gaps in the painting's continuity may lead to erroneous interpretations of the whole (Fig. 5). The painting's context appears to suggest that the central figure may be Mary adored by a group of angels that play music<sup>6</sup>. The scope of the missing elements was extensive enough to prevent a clear confirmation of these observations. During the removal of contemporary plasters, a continuation of these motifs up to the ceiling boards was discovered, along with individual traces of them in other places. These traces show that the polychromy formed a complete decoration of the interior, reaching the central, most important scene painted on the opposite (eastern) wall and separated by a bordure (discussed further in the paper).

The architectural research on the western wall also brought interesting results. It was built using bricks that measured 7.5–8 × 13–14.5 × 28–29 cm, in an irregular brick bond, with a predominance of the Polish bond, while at a height of ca. 80 cm above the floor, there were two ducts (tunnels) with square-shaped cross-sections that measured 35 × 35 cm, which ran along the entire width of the wall<sup>7</sup>. The interior of one of the ducts was deliberately lined with boards and fitted with an iron woven gate, placed in the external opening of the duct<sup>8</sup>. The ducts were built at the same time as the wall, but traces show that they were later slightly enlarged/widened (there were visible hack marks on the side walls), perhaps in association with the boarding of their interior, only to brick them up from both sides after some time (Fig. 4b). The brick and brick bond parameters indicate that it can be dated to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>6</sup> An analysis of the depictions on the polychromies and decorations of the ceiling and their initial dating was performed by dr hab. Paweł Pencakowski of the Faculty of Artwork Conservation and Restoration of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible that originally there had been three ducts, but the current entrance to the kitchen from the bay of the old cloister was created here as part of a remodeling project. Prior to the entrance's construction, the kitchen was connected to the cloister solely by the ducts.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the second duct was also lined with boards, as it is possible they may have not survived.

On the opposite (eastern) wall, another fragment of the painting had survived, but in a vestigial form. Apart from the linear drawing of acanthus leaves, it also featured a vertical strip of colorful bordure that framed a figural scene with three figures presented on a blue background. Only fragments of these figures have survived, but the attributes and the placement of the central figure suggest the depiction of the Crucifixion of Christ<sup>9</sup>. Notably, the painting was placed on a thin brick coat that probably covered the entire face of the eastern wall and was made very poorly. The brick coat that covered the wall showed signs of frequent interference; one of these was the creation of a shallow recess with a bottom lined with a wooden board, but without a lintel, which resulted in a wide crack in the layer above the recess. During research, underneath the lower, very loose portion of this coat, there was a Gothic portal built of Jura limestone (secondarily bricked up) with stylistic features typical of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 6a).

Traces showed that up to the point of being covered by the coat with the polychromy, the portal had functioned as a passage between the present-day kitchen and the nearby cell (located from the east). The construction of the wall was associated with bricking it up and covering it with a layer of brick coat with polychrome.

At an unspecified time, a part of the coat was removed from the aperture of the portal, once again allowing for passage to the adjacent space. The toothing of the coat was then evened out using brick, with the construction of lintel above the portal, made from brick with a header bond. After some time, the portal aperture was once again bricked up and later – probably in contemporary times – the opening in the coat was also sealed. Due to a lack of access

<sup>9</sup> In the center of the scene there are visible sections of legs with knees, covered above this level with heavily draped cloth (perizonium?). Their elevated position relative the two flanking figures (also fragmentarily preserved) suggests a classical depiction of the crucifixion, namely a distinctive elevation of the figure of Christ hanging from the cross relative to the people standing around him.



Fig. 6. Dominican priory in Krakow – the eastern wall with a brick covering and a fragment of polychrome above it (Crucifixion?):  
a) gothic portal while uncovering, b) gothic portal and polychrome after conservation work completion  
(photo by A. Luboń-Radwańska)

Il. 6. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – ściana wschodnia z ceglany opłaszczowaniem i fragmentem polichromii (Ukrzyżowanie?):  
a) gotycki portal podczas odkrywania, b) gotycki portal i polichromia po zakończeniu prac budowlanych i konserwatorskich  
(fot. A. Luboń-Radwańska)

to the load-bearing wall located deeper, it was difficult to date it and ascertain whether the portal was its original part or a later addition. The portal survived along with a sill, located 8 cm below the previous level of the kitchen floor.

The revealing of the complete form of the Gothic portal contributed to the decision to exhibit it. As part of conservation work, a carefully made ogival brick arch was built above the portal in the brick coat, while the portal itself was subjected to technical, preservative, aesthetic and visual conservation, with the gaps in plaster and monochromies filled in (Fig. 6b). The surviving fragments of wall polychromy were cleaned and subjected to conservation, i.e., gaps were sealed and the content of the painting was highlighted using pointing, preserving the subtlety of the original modeling. Decorative motifs and forms and the calligraphic character of the polychromy appear to be typical of the late 15<sup>th</sup>- and early 16<sup>th</sup>-century Late Gothic aesthetic, which attached great significance to sophisticated form and artistic elegance of the final product.

The distinctive motif of acanthus leaves vines – which weaved in semicircular patterns – was also present on the beam ceiling that was uncovered after the removal of the contemporary soffit boards<sup>10</sup>. The beam ceiling structure consisted of five beams with chamfered edges, which ended on both sides with interpenetrating convex molding so-called curtain-crystal (converging stop), as from wide straight deck boards laid perpendicularly with scarf joints.

<sup>10</sup> The boards of the deck, which were anchored to additional simple beams, were dated to the period of Fr. Studziński's activity as a conservator.

All the ceiling beams had central moldings (with curtain-crystal edges at intersections with chamfers), whose location correlated with the tip of the pointed arch of the eastern wall's portal. The faces of the moldings were painted with coats of arms whose content was impossible to read. The longitudinal – not transverse – arrangement of the beams relative to the space's plan and the two-sided profiling of the beams near the walls indicated either the reuse or relocation of the ceiling deck, with an intent to correlate it with the portal's position (Figs. 2, 7a). The contact between the furthestmost ceiling beams with the plaster featuring the painting, fragments with technological plasterwork underneath the contemporary soffit and the uniform decorative motifs of the ceiling and walls show that they were components of a chronologically coherent décor.

The modest character of the decoration and beam molding, typical especially for Krakow (and Lesser Poland) defined the broad framework for dating the beam ceiling between the late 14<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century [7], although the period of the greatest popularity of this type of aesthetic in wooden beam ceilings coincided with the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The polychromy with the acanthus vines motif on the ceiling was covered with a younger layer of colorful paint, which featured concentric circles – rings with varying widths and fragmentarily preserved drawings of wreaths and fruit motifs. The circles were traced on the ceiling deck boards using a chisel/calipers, whose traces were perfectly preserved on the underside of the deck boards. The rings were painted in alternating, contrasting colors, with the dominant and best-preserved color being green with a mala-



Fig. 7. Dominican priory in Krakow – Late Gothic wooden beam ceiling (“lower” one):  
a) while uncovering, b) after building and conservation work completion (photo by A. Luboń-Radwańska)

Il. 7. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – strop późnogotycki (niższy):  
a) w trakcie odkrywania, b) po zakończeniu prac budowlanych i konserwatorskich (fot. A. Luboń-Radwańska)

chite pigment with plant-based black, which also covered the beams. Due to the small amount of data, the latest coat of paint on the deck was dated in a very general manner to the early modern period (Fig. 7b).

The technical condition of the beam ceiling elements was good, but the structural members showed very pronounced bending, which required urgent intervention, especially in terms of the planned structural reinforcement and emergency support, which was in effect for the entire period of work. The conservation of the Late Gothic beam ceiling followed two ways. The beams were left in place and subjected to in-situ conservation, while the deck boards were dismantled and transported to the workshop. Prior to the conservation, a fragment of the polychromy was subjected to a macro X-ray fluorescence (MA-XRF) analysis to mark the content of each element in the pigments. Afterwards, infrared images of all boards were taken, highlighting the outline of fragments of the linear drawing of the vines. The boards were cleaned from the remaining bits of clay plaster and impregnated, the gaps in the wood were filled in, and pointing was applied (linear, watercolor), enhancing the surviving polychromy fragments from both historical periods. The basis for this decision was the similarity between the circular motifs, which did not cancel each other out in terms of aesthetics. Afterwards, the surface of the boards was covered with shellac and proofed with wax.

The dismantlement of the boards unexpectedly contributed to yet another discovery. Around 80 cm above the board deck (let us call it the lower deck), another wooden beam ceiling with the same structure was discovered (beams and transverse deck boards), but that also spanned the adjoining cell, or at least a part of it. This higher beam ceiling consisted of evidently secondary elements, but these were largely sourced from a uniform cover, which had been dismantled and used here as a technical ceiling to lighten the load applied to the lower deck. The notches in the ends of the beams and traces of cut elements indi-

cated that it had featured dense beams ceiling with fasciae and a central molding on one beam, with the beam edges molded using a combination of rollers and undercuts, which was very popular in Krakow both in the 16<sup>th</sup> and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century [7], [8] (Figs. 8a, b). The vast majority of the beams were in a state of nearly complete decay (dry rot), and they were anchored into the walls in a makeshift and amateurish manner, without adherence to the logic of construction of both the beams and the entire ceiling. Some of the beams featured secondary trimming and were left without original endings. The ceiling surface was formed by all sorts of boards, with some featuring surviving molding, which suggests they may have been sourced from a dismantled deck or from other structures, such as furniture, while others were simple unworked boards, used without deliberate intent. The elements of the upper ceiling that could be accessed for research showed no signs of polychromy. The space between the two ceilings was filled with rubble with fragments of brick and pieces of broken up clay plaster. In that area, in the south-eastern corner of the space, we observed signs of the extensive application of clay putty in the beams and wall, with the applications connected to the chimney vent – located inside the wall – of a furnace located in the cellar [9, pp. 142–144]<sup>11</sup>.

The catastrophic technical condition of the upper beam ceiling (which supported a layer of rubble, grout and the flooring of the first-floor hallway!) first required a decision to be made concerning the structure of the new ceiling above the kitchen so as to prevent structural failure and collapse. The assembly of this ceiling was an extraordinarily difficult task, which was performed in stages and with the application of due caution<sup>12</sup>. The new deck,

<sup>11</sup> The remains of this functionally unidentified furnace were dated to the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century [9].

<sup>12</sup> The dismantling of the upper historical deck and the installation of a new structure with steel beams was done without compromising the thin flooring of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

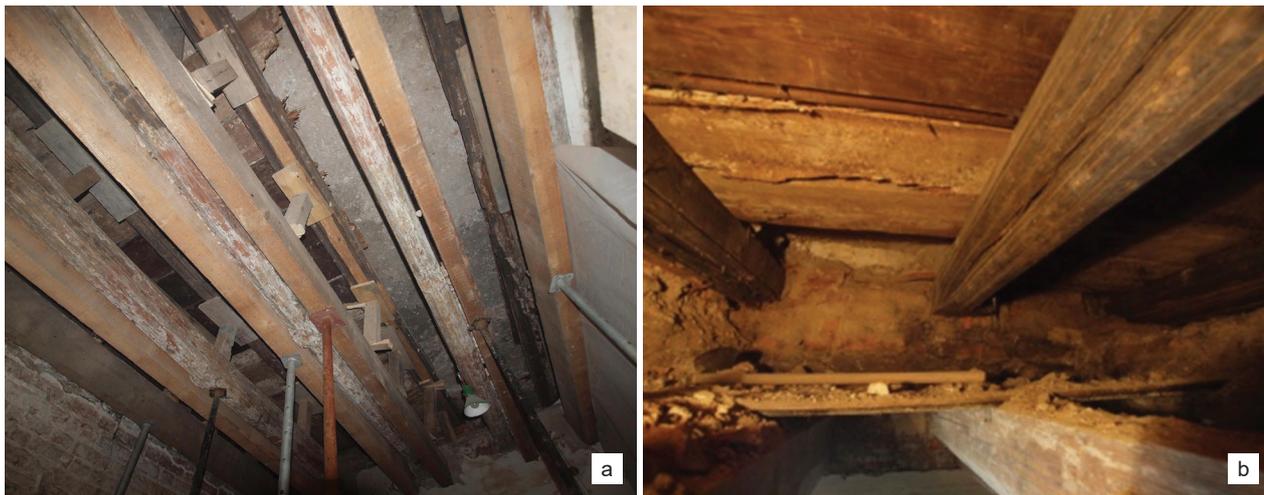


Fig. 8. Dominican priory in Krakow – wooden beam ceiling (“higher” one) – “technological”:  
a) both ceilings while exploring with intervention support, b) rubble charge filling the space between the ceilings  
(photo by A. Bojęs-Białasik)

Il. 8. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – strop wyższy – „techniczny”:  
a) obydwie stropy podczas eksploracji, z interwencyjnym podparciem, b) zasyp przestrzeni pomiędzy stropami  
(fot. A. Bojęs-Białasik)

supported by steel beams, anchored directly underneath the first-floor flooring layers, took over the function of a horizontal load-bearing and fire barrier element. Underneath it, only a single beam of the upper beam ceiling was left in place, which was proofed and disinfected, while other beams had disintegrated completely and had to be removed.

The Late Gothic lower deck, with painted beams and boards, was left in its original position in a complete state, and subjected to thorough conservation. Its beams were also strengthened using rods suspended from the steel beams of the new ceiling, thus relieving it from all of its previous load and giving it a purely aesthetic function (Fig. 7b). Another unexpected discovery was made during

the work. During the dismantlement of the deck boards of the lower ceiling, manuscripts in Latin were found in a narrow opening between them, probably used as a makeshift sealant. The cut-up strips of paper, covered in handwritten text, were formed into spirals like oakum, which was typically used to seal gaps like this. The manuscripts were secured and given over to the Dominicans (Fig. 9).

The dismantlement of the contemporary board flooring revealed a thin layer of rubble, which laid directly on the upper face of the cellar vault. This fact and the aforementioned position of the Gothic portal’s sill indicate that the level of the kitchen’s floor had not changed significantly over the centuries.

## Conclusions

After the research and conservation work was concluded, the kitchen space received a previously unknown, stylistically coherent aesthetic expression from the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The surviving remains of the décor indicate that the acanthus vines “weaved up” both the walls and the ceiling, stylistically unifying the entire interior. The supposed interpretations of the two fragmentarily surviving scenes of the painting link it with religious themes, but the wealth and intensity of the décor require us to explore the function of the space and its user (users). In previous studies of the part of the priory in question, the presence of lay people in this space was considered, and it had been attested not only by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions of the complex, but also the distinctive spatial layout of the northern wing, located near the third garth, which had doubled circulation spaces that were separate from and ran parallel to each other. This atypical situation could be justified by the necessity to separate the friars from the lay people present there, whose presence may have resulted from the relocation of the priory gate to this



Fig. 9. Latin manuscripts found during disassembling of the Late Gothic ceiling in Dominican priory in Krakow  
(photo by A. Bojęs-Białasik)

Il. 9. Rękopisy łacińskie znalezione podczas demontażu stropu późnogotyckiego w klasztorze dominikanów w Krakowie  
(fot. A. Bojęs-Białasik)



Fig. 10. Dominican priory in Krakow – kitchen views after completion of research and conservation works:  
a) view of the ceiling and polychrome on the eastern wall, b) view of the ceiling and polychrome on the western wall  
(photo by A. Luboń-Radwańska)

Il. 10. Klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie – widok kuchni po zakończeniu prac badawczych i konserwatorskich:  
a) widok stropu i polichromii na ścianie wschodniej, b) widok stropu i polichromii na ścianie zachodniej  
(fot. A. Luboń-Radwańska)

area after the great fire of Krakow (and of the church) in 1850. However, this was a late tradition, which does not shed light on the matter of the space's Late Gothic décor and its form of use.

The décor's iconographic program is generally tied with religious or residential use, but by a clergyman, or with both of these uses at the same time. This may have been a chapel (perhaps a private one) of a man of the cloth who lived there, but most probably not a "rank-and-file" monk, but rather a person of high status within the ecclesial hierarchy, such as a hierarch or bishop. Considering the uncovered portal (currently walled up) that led to the nearby space (the guest cell), it can be presumed that the user of the present-day kitchen had at their disposal (at least temporarily) a much larger interior. In addition, the remains of an entrance in the northern façade (outside of the kitchen) point to the ability to enter the building directly from outside in the past, which made it functionally independent of the internal linkages with the monastery. These observation may confirm the status of the resident and their potential autonomy in relation to the priory's organizational structure.

The research discussed here enabled the reconstruction of merely a small and incomplete frame from an entire sequence of architectural and stylistic transformations of the studentate's kitchen space (Figs. 10a, b). The lack of research into the architectural spatial context of this unfortunately means that the start and end of this sequence are unknown. Let us then confine ourselves to statements concerning the Late Gothic stylistic phase, supported by the findings discussed, while also accentuating the doubts. Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century or around the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the western part of an older and larger building featured a room (a present-day kitchen); its eastern wall, which featured a portal leading to an adjacent space, was covered with brick coat (for reasons unknown); above the room, a beam ceiling deck

was built (with five load-bearing beams), either relocated from a different level or another place, and the interior was covered with plaster and a polychromy with an acanthus motif, and at least two figural scenes. The entrance to the space (currently walled up) was from the south side, from the eastern wing of the monastery; the entrance to the entire building from outside was in the northern wall, but not in the kitchen space<sup>13</sup>; the southern wall featured a window, whose form is unknown (it was remodeled), while in the western wall there were two or three ducts that ran along the entire thickness of the wall. At this stage, the Late Gothic beam ceiling covered the space. At an undetermined time, perhaps during the extension of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor (superstructure of the dormitory), a second "technical" deck was constructed above the Late Gothic ceiling, and was clearly relocated from a different room and put to secondary use, and which was to act as the actual load-bearing deck for the part of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor located directly above the kitchen.

There is significant doubt concerning interpretation, stemming from the limited scope of the research, as the most important part of it concerns development from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, namely the oldest phases of the transformation of the stone and brick building that the kitchen is a part of, and the functional and spatial relationships with the remaining part of the priory. At a smaller scale, the matter of the function of the wall ducts in the western wall of the kitchen remains unresolved. Their intentional placement and low position relative to the floor level of the space suggested a range of possible solutions, such as a sort of internal confession space or a general opening that can be used for verbal communication between rooms. In another case,

<sup>13</sup> However, it should be noted that we do not know its relationship to the eastern entrance portal with the broken arch discovered by Filipowicz in 1996.

similar wall ducts discovered in the walls of a residential section of a different monastery were interpreted as personal storage spaces that monks had used to preserve food<sup>14</sup>. Perhaps the publication of findings by other researchers may aid in better interpreting these unidentified tunnels.

Independently of the prevailing interpretation doubts, we wish to underline the immense benefit that came from

<sup>14</sup> Very similar ducts that ran along the entire thickness of the wall separating the first-floor cells of the eastern wing of the Augustinian monastery in Krakow were discovered in 1994 by M. Niewalda and M. Bicz-Suknarowska during their research. They did not determine their purpose [10].

the research. Most importantly, unexpected discoveries were made, which led to a complete transformation of the image of the space in question and its artistic expression. The previously ordinary and anonymous kitchen was aesthetically promoted and its utilitarian use became secondary, yielding to its use as a space with a deep religious and artistic message. Because of this, the friar candidates that use this space every day have gained a new asset and a basis for a better identification with the artistic and spiritual legacy of their new community.

Translated by  
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## Abstract

### *Research and conservation of the so-called Studentate at the Dominican Priory in Cracow*

The topic of the article is architectural and conservation research in one of the rooms of the so-called studentate in the Dominican priory in Krakow, which brought very interesting and unexpected results. In a small room that served as a kitchen, elements of late-Gothic decoration were discovered, e.g. beamed ceiling, portal and large fragments of polychrome. The article describes the course of research and subsequent discoveries, each of which required individual decisions regarding the method of conservation and exposition. An important issue was the interpretation of the iconographic program of the polychrome and the analysis of the entire decoration in the context of architectural transformations and the supposed historical function of the room. Reference was also made to conservation and technical procedures related to, among others, the need to introduce a new load-bearing ceiling above the room.

**Key words:** Dominican priory, Krakow, research, conservation, wooden beam ceiling, polychromy, portal

## Streszczenie

### *Badania i konserwacja pomieszczeń tzw. studentatu w klasztorze dominikanów w Krakowie*

Tematem artykułu są badania architektoniczno-konserwatorskie jednego z pomieszczeń tzw. studentatu w klasztorze dominikanów w Krakowie. Prace te przyniosły bardzo ciekawe i nieoczekiwane rezultaty. W niewielkim pomieszczeniu pełniącym funkcję kuchni odkryto bowiem elementy późnogotyckiego wystroju, m.in. strop belkowy, portal oraz duże fragmenty polichromii. W artykule opisano przebieg badań oraz kolejne odkrycia, z których każde wymagało indywidualnych decyzji dotyczących sposobu konserwacji i ekspozycji. Istotną kwestią była interpretacja programu ikonograficznego polichromii i analiza całości wystroju w kontekście przemian architektonicznych i domniemanej historycznej funkcji pomieszczenia. Odniesiono się także do procedur konserwatorskich i technicznych związanych m.in. z koniecznością wprowadzenia nowego stropu nośnego nad pomieszczeniem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** klasztor dominikanów, Kraków, badania, konserwacja, strop drewniany, polichromia, portal