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BIBLICAL SCENES ON MEDIEVAL SEALS OF SILESIAN PARISH PRIESTS

Abstract

This article deals with the appearance of biblical scenes on the medieval seals of Silesian parish priests, which is one of the least examined areas of sigillography. Six imprints from the 13th through 15th centuries are analysed, belonging to Wojślaw, the parish priest of Otmuchów; Bertold, the parish priest of Nowy Kościół; Stefan, the parish priest of Nysa; Jan, the parish priest of Wegry; Tomasz, the parish priest of Strzelin; and Jan Bawde, the parish priest of St Peter's Church in Legnica. The above-mentioned analysis confirms the adoption of biblical scenes on parish sigils. Moreover, all six cases exhibit references to the New Testament. Five of the seals show events known from the Gospel: the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary or the baptism of Jesus (the only reproduction available today is blurry, preventing a clear interpretation of the image it represents), the Flight into Egypt, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and his meeting with St Thomas. One of the imprints portrays the scene of Archangel Michael's Battle with the Dragon as it is described in the Apocalypse of St John. The iconography of those sigils is related to the iconosphere that surrounded its disposers. Such a measure proved that a parish priest's choice of sigil image was not always influenced by the *patrocinium* of his parish church; sometimes the images represented only their personal piety. However, the scarcity of those relics proves that they are exceptions among the seals of Silesian parish priests.

Keywords: seals; iconography; biblical scenes; parish priests; Silesia

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Recent decades have seen a surge in sigillography research in Polish historiography¹. Proposals for new typologies of seals have become the epiphenomenon of in-depth methodological reflection.² There is also a growing interest among researchers in historical iconography, which offers a broader interpretation of seal imagery.³ At the same time, searches are constantly being carried out for the purpose of the arrangement and scientific development of groups of seals in general or only functioning to a modest degree in historiography.⁴ This is because

¹ The latest developments have been summarized recently by Zenon Piech, cf. Z. Piech, *Perspektywy polskich badań sfragistycznych*, in: *Pieczęcie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Stan i perspektywy badań*, eds. Z. Piech, J. Pakulski, J. Wroniszewski, Warsaw 2006, pp. 31–58; idem, *Współczesne badania sfragistyczne w Polsce. Osiągnięcia i postulaty*, „Sfragističnij Šoričnik”, 1 (2011) pp. 160–188; idem, *Seminaria sfragistyczne a systematyczne badania sfragistyki polskiej*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie. Typologia – metody badań – interpretacje*, ed. Z. Piech, Warsaw 2015, pp. 9–13. Achievements in the individual field of sigillography are discussed by the authors of articles collected in the publication *Pieczęcie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*.

² Z. Piech, *Uwagi o typologii i nazewnictwie pieczęci w polskich i zagranicznych badaniach sfragistycznych*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie*, pp. 15–46.

³ From the rich bibliography of Polish research on seal iconography, let us limit ourselves only to works of a synthetic and methodological nature: Z. Piech, *Czy ikonografia historyczna powinna być nauką pomocniczą historii?*, in: *Tradycje i perspektywy nauk pomocniczych historii w Polsce. Materiały z sympozjum w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim dnia 21–22 października 1993 roku profesora Zbigniewowi Perzanowskiemu przypisane*, ed. M. Rokosz, Kraków 1995, p. 133, footnote 40; idem, *Źródła ikonograficzne w badaniach historyka mediewisty*, in: *Pytania o średniowiecze. Potrzeby i perspektywy polskiej mediewistyki*, ed. W. Fałkowski, Warsaw 2001, p. 189; idem, *Jakiej ikonografii potrzebują historycy?*, in: *Dzieło sztuki: źródło ikonograficzne, czy coś więcej? Materiały sympozjum XVII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków w Krakowie, 15–18 września 2004*, ed. M. Fabiański, Warsaw 2005, pp. 19–36; idem, *Pieczęć jako źródło ikonograficzne: ze studiów nad ikonografią historyczną*, „Sfragističnij Šoričnik”, 5 (2015) pp. 21–87; T. Kałuski, *Badania nad wizualnością pieczęci w Europie Zachodniej i w Polsce. Główne kierunki i nowe możliwości interpretacji*, „Sfragističnij Šoričnik”, 3 (2012) pp. 262–270; idem, *Semiotyka w badaniach sfragistycznych*, in: *Znaki i symbole w przestrzeni publicznej od średniowiecza do czasów współczesnych*, eds. A. Jaworska, R. Jop, K. Madejska, Warsaw 2016, pp. 11–19.

⁴ The results of such activities are source editions published in the form of seal catalogues, cf. B. Marcisz-Czapla, *Pieczęcie biskupów lubuskich*, „Nadwarciański Rocznik Historyczno-Archivalny”, 11 (2004) pp. 75–97; M. Hlebionek, *Katalog pieczęci przy dokumentach samoistnych w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Bydgoszczy*, Warszawa 2012; idem, *Pieczęcie przy dokumentach Związku Pruskiego. Akt erekcyjny i dokumenty akcesyjne*, Toruń 2017; B. Małachowska, *Pieczęcie miast księstw opolsko-raciborskiego i cieszyńskiego do roku 1740*, doctoral dissertation, Library of the University of Silesia, Katowice 2013, pp. 248–433, <https://www.sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/107315/edition/101026/content> (accessed on: 31.01.2022); M. Szymoniak, *Pieczęcie klasztoru bożogrobców w Miechowie*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie*, pp. 378–412; M.L. Wójcik, *Pieczęcie rycerstwa śląskiego w dobie przedhusyckiej*, vol. 1–2, Kraków-Wrocław 2018; T. Kałuski, *Od przedstawień figuralnych do heraldycznych. Opaci lubiąscy i ich pieczęcie od schyłku średniowiecza do sekularyzacji klasztoru w 1810 roku*, „Studia Źródłoznawcze”, 57 (2019) s. 177–209; idem, *Projekt edycji pieczęci cystersów śląskich. Francuskie i niemieckie przykłady wydawania pieczęci cysterskich*, in: *Editiones sine fine*, vol. 2, eds. K. Kopiński, J. Tandecki, Toruń 2021, pp. 117–130.

sigillographers are aware that a complete picture of Polish seal material can only be provided by its full recognition.

The political changes that took place in Poland in the late 1980s and early 1990s unshackled science from the restraints of Marxist-Leninist ideology. This allowed researchers to freely take an interest in church *sigilla*, not adhering to the research trends favoured by the communist authorities, and thus poorly developed to that point.⁵ At present, we already have at our disposal works presenting the seals of bishops, members of cathedral and collegiate chapters and abbots, as well as the institutions they represented, i.e. bishoprics, chapters and monasteries.⁶ The focus of researchers' attention on the seals of these groups of owners should

⁵ Piech, *Współczesne badania*, p. 181. Cf. article by M. Haisig, *Osiągnięcia i postulaty w zakresie sfragistyki polskiej*, „Studia Źródłoznawcze”, 4 (1959) pp. 164–166, which does not formulate any postulates on church sigillography.

⁶ Cf. P. Wiszewski, *Średniowieczna śląska pieczęć klasztorna jako środek przekazu informacji (XIII – I połowa XVI w.)*, in: *Pieczęć w Polsce średniowiecznej i nowożytnej. Zbiór studiów*, ed. P. Dymmel, Lublin 1998, pp. 11–29; M. Starnawska, *Pieczęcie zakonów krzyżowych na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu jako źródło do ich dziejów. Perspektywy badawcze*, in: *Pieczęć w Polsce*, pp. 89–119; M.L. Wójcik, *Pieczęcie cystersów jemiełnickich do połowy XVI wieku (z zespołu Rep. 85 Archiwum Państwowego we Wrocławiu)*, in: *Pieczęć w Polsce*, pp. 31–37; idem, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie cystersów rudzkich*, in: *Cystersi w społeczeństwie Europy Środkowej. Materiały z konferencji naukowej odbytej w klasztorze oo. Cystersów w Krakowie Mogile z okazji 900 rocznicy powstania Zakonu Ojców Cystersów. Poznań – Kraków – Mogiła 5–10 października 1998*, eds. A.M. Wyrwa, J. Dobosz, Poznań 2000, pp. 405–415; idem, *Pieczęcie opatów rudzkich*, in: *Klasztor cystersów w Rudach. Materiały z ogólnopolskiej konferencji naukowej odbytej 7 czerwca 2008 r. w Rudach*, ed. N. Mika, Racibórz 2008, pp. 41–56; idem, *Pieczęcie klasztoru Premonstratensek w Czarnowasach*, in: *Sztuka dawnego Opola*, eds. B. Czechowicz, J. Filipczyk, A. Kozieł, Opole 2018, pp. 27–44; J. Pakulski, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie pralatów i kanoników kapituł katedralnych metropolii gnieźnieńskiej*, in: *Duchowieństwo kapitułne w Polsce średniowiecznej i wczesnonowożytnej. Studia nad pochodzeniem i funkcjonowaniem elity kościelnej*, eds. A. Radziwiński, Toruń 2000, pp. 177–196; idem, *Geneza pieczęci herbowych biskupów i arcybiskupów metropolii gnieźnieńskiej*, in: *Polska heraldyka kościelna. Stan i perspektywy badań*, eds. K. Skupieński, A. Weiss, Warsaw 2004, pp. 23–41; idem, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie kapituł katedralnych metropolii gnieźnieńskiej w świetle dotychczasowych badań*, in: *Pieczęcie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 169–196; Marcisz-Czapla, *Pieczęcie biskupów*, pp. 49–98; idem, *Święci w ikonografii nowożytnych pieczęci klasztornych na Śląsku*, in: *Człowiek – obraz – tekst. Studia z historii średniowiecznej i nowożytnej*, ed. M.L. Wójcik, Dzierżoniów 2005, pp. 89–107; P. Pokora, *Stan i perspektywy badań nad pieczęciami episkopatu średniowiecznej Polski*, in: *Pieczęcie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 135–167; idem, *Herby na pieczęciach episkopatu doby jagiellońskiej (do końca XV wieku)*, in: *Pieczęcie herbowe – herby na pieczęciach*, eds. W. Drelicharz, Z. Piech, Warsaw 2011, pp. 109–190; idem, *Typologia i nazewnictwo pieczęci biskupich*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie*, s. 145–196; P. Stróżyk, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie templariuszy i joannitów na ziemiach polskich*, in: *Pieczęcie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 197–217; idem, *Herby na pieczęciach cysterskich – wybrane zagadnienia*, in: *Pieczęcie herbowe*, pp. 191–215; idem, *Klasyfikacja pieczęci benedyktyńskich i cysterskich z ziem polskich*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie*, pp. 197–206; E. Knapke, *Średniowieczne i wczesnonowożytne pieczęcie oficjalów i wikariuszy generalnych krakowskich*, in: *Dawne pieczęcie*, pp. 285–325; Szymoniak, *Pieczęcie klasztoru*, pp. 327–412; Kałuski, *Od przedstawień*, pp. 159–210.

not come as a surprise, since they are the ones that have survived in the greatest number to our time.

However, there is a lack of separate studies devoted to the seals of the lower clergy, primarily parsons. The *sigilla* belonging to them, both from Polish lands and neighbouring countries, have not, so far, enjoyed a separate monograph. We find little information about them on the pages of synthetic studies of sigillography by Polish,⁷ Czech⁸ and German⁹ researchers. The specific studies on this issue include only a few isolated works by Michael Gosmann,¹⁰ Enno Bünz and Petr Kubín,¹¹ Karel Maráz,¹² Miroslav Glejtek,¹³ and more recently also Leszek Krudysz.¹⁴ It is also worth noting at this point that research on parish seals is developing separately.¹⁵ To date, the question of Silesian medieval parsonage *sigilla*, was most extensively covered, although only in less than four pages, before the

⁷ *Sfragistyka*, eds. M. Gumowski, M. Haisig, S. Mikucki, Warsaw 1960, pp. 215–216; M. Gumowski, *Handbuch der polnischen Siegelkunde*, Graz 1966, p. 77.

⁸ J. Krejčíková, T. Krejčík, *Úvod do české sfragistiky*, Ostrava 1989, pp. 63–67; T. Krejčík, *Pečeť v kultuře středověku*, Ostrava 1998, p. 248; K. Maráz, *Sfragistika. Studijní texty pro posluchače pomocných věd historických a archivnictví*, Brno 2014, pp. 97, 99, 104.

⁹ W. Ewald, *Siegelkunde*, München-Berlin 1914 [reprint: München-Wien 1972], p. 219; A. Stiel-dorf, *Siegelkunde. Basiswissen*, Hannover 2004, p. 72.

¹⁰ M. Gosmann, *Ein Siegelstempel des Pfarrers Friedrich von Hüsten (um 1300) im Arnsberger Stadtarchiv*, Jahrbuch Hochsauerlandkreis. Berichte, Erzählungen, Aufsätze, Gedichte, 8 (1992) pp. 37–39.

¹¹ E. Bünz, P. Kubín, *Sigillum Petri plebani de Glathovia. Ein spätmittelalterliches Pfarrersiegel aus Klattau (Böhmen)*, „Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde”, 50 (2004) pp. 35–45; E. Bünz, *Spätmittelalterliche Pfarrei- und Pfarrersiegel*, in: *Das Siegel. Gebrauch und Bedeutung*, hrsg. G. Signori, Darmstadt 2007, pp. 31–43; idem, *Die mittelalterliche Pfarrei. Ausgewählte Studien zum 13.–16. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 2017, pp. 334–351 (chapter titled *Spätmittelalterliche Pfarrei- und Pfarrersiegel*).

¹² K. Maráz, *K pečetím farního kléru v českých zemích v letech 1283–1310*, in: *Sacri canones servandi sunt. Ius canonicum et status ecclesiae saeculis XIII–XV*, ed. P. Krafl, Praha 2008, pp. 623–629.

¹³ M. Glejtek, *Texty na stredovekých cirkevných pečatiach uhorskej proveniencie (11.–16. storočie)*, in: *Inskrypcje na pieczęciach. Treści, formy, funkcje*, eds. P. Pokora, M. Hlebionek, T. Kałuski, Poznań 2016, p. 56.

¹⁴ L. Krudysz, *A Unique 14th Century Seal-Matrix from Gieblo, Zawiercie District*, „Archaeologia Polona”, 59 (2021) pp. 139–154.

¹⁵ Literature on the subject up to 2011 was compiled by Piech, *Współczesne badania*, p. 181, footnote 65. Later works include: T. Kałuski, I. Matejko, *Treści ideowe pieczęci parafii wiejskich na obszarze archidjako-natu glogowskiego (XVIII–XX w.)*, in: *Wież w heraldyce i sfragistyce polskiej*, eds. A. Gut, P. Gut, Warsaw 2012, pp. 149–170; A. Karpacz, *Typariusz pieczętny z dawnego kościoła pw. św. Katarzyny Aleksandryjskiej w Krzeszowie a przestrzeń wiejskiej świątyni*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ. Nauki Społeczne”, 9 (2014) pp. 183–209; T. Kałuski, *Inskrypcje na pieczęciach instytucji kościelnych oraz duchowieństwa w archiprezbiteracie świębodzińskim (XVII–XX w.)*, in: *Inskrypcje na pieczęciach*, pp. 93–121; G. Trafalski, *Treści i funkcje napisów w polu pieczęci parafialnych z XVIII–XIX wieku*, „Sfragistični j Šoričnik”, 6 (2016) pp. 421–428; M. Szczepanowski, *Współczesne wizerunki napieczątne parafii częstochowskich*, „Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Zeszyty Humanistyczne”, 16 (2017) pp. 415–432.

war by Marian Gumowski¹⁶. Notes on these monuments have also been made by Helene Krahrmer¹⁷ and Józef Mandziuk,¹⁸ although these are of marginal significance. I have recently outlined more extensively the current state of research on parish sigillography in a separate text, also postulating the need for their further continuation and an inventory of such monuments.¹⁹ It is clear, however, that as the searches conducted in this direction progress, it also becomes indispensable to elaborate on the collected sources. In this article, based on the material collected so far, which includes more than 70 sphragistic monuments from 1228–1449,²⁰ I will analyse a selected problem, which is biblical motifs appearing on medieval *sigilla* belonging to parish priests of Silesian churches, both rural and urban.

The analysis of the iconography of the parsons' seals should be made – as with any sigillographic source – keeping in mind the broad context in which they were created. Their possession was commanded by numerous statutes for the clergy, first issued in 1248 by the papal legate James, and later by bishops and archbishops.²¹ The parish priests' choice of seal imagery was influenced by the sacred nature of their ministry, which consists mainly of the celebration of the Eucharist and catechetical work,²² but it seems that the greatest influence in this case was exerted by the surrounding iconosphere, that is, all the pictorial messages available to them. They provided the parsons with iconographic motifs, which they then transferred to their own seals.²³ I have outlined iconosphere of the pastors of the era in detail in a separate article.²⁴ At this point, however, I feel obliged to reiterate the most important findings contained therein, relevant to the subsequent argument, and to make a few additions, as they are necessary for the proper placement of the seals discussed herein in the context of the iconography of the time, which in turn will form the basis for the analysis of the images present on them.

Four levels can be distinguished in the iconosphere in which medieval parsonages functioned, consisting of iconographic messages created by numerous entities (individuals and institutions) in the form of various painting forms, sculptures, tombstones, but also present on more mobile media such as coins or seals, namely:

¹⁶ M. Gumowski, *Pieczęcie śląskie do końca XIV wieku*, in: *Historja Śląska od najdawniejszych czasów do roku 1400*, vol. 3, ed. W. Semkowicz, Kraków 1936 [reprint: Kraków 2013], pp. 314–317.

¹⁷ H. Krahrmer, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des geistlichen Siegels in Schlesien bis zum Jahre 1319*, „Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte Schlesiens”, 69 (1935) pp. 1–39.

¹⁸ J. Mandziuk, *Historia Kościoła katolickiego na Śląsku. Średniowiecze*, vol. 1, part 1 (until 1302), Warsaw 2003, pp. 215–219.

¹⁹ J.R. Sobel, *Pieczęcie proboszczów – zapomniany dział sfragistyki. Przyczynek do badań nad pieczęciami kleru parafialnego na przykładzie pięciu sigillów śląskich plebanów z początku XIV w.*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 75 (2020), issue 1, pp. 32–40.

²⁰ They constitute the source basis of a monograph I am currently preparing on the medieval seals of the parish priests of Silesian parish churches.

²¹ *Sfragistyka*, pp. 209, 215; Gumowski, *Handbuch*, p. 77; Pakulski, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie parafiatów*, pp. 194–195; Karpacz, *Typariusz pieczętny*, pp. 185–186.

²² K. Dola, *Dzieje Kościoła na Śląsku*, part 1: *Średniowiecze*, Opole 1996, pp. 148–154; Mandziuk, *Historia Kościoła*, pp. 115, 239–245.

²³ Piech, *Jakiej ikonografii*, p. 26; idem, *Pieczęć jako źródło*, pp. 76–77.

²⁴ Sobel, *Pieczęcie proboszczów*, pp. 41–44.

personal, local, regional and general.²⁵ The personal iconography of a parish priest includes basically only one element – his own coat of arms, shaped under the influence of knightly or bourgeois culture (in the case of house marks). However, not every parish priest had this kind of identification and ownership mark, especially from the 14th century onward, since an increasing number of these clergymen were recruited from outside the knighthood,²⁶ hence it is not reasonable to distinguish the personal level in the case of every possessor of the seals of interest to us. The local iconosphere was formed mainly by iconography related to the patron saint(s) of the parish temple, that is both their images and attributes. Iconic messages filling the interior of the church were also significant, particularly the image placed in the main altar, usually referring to the *patrocinium* of the temple.²⁷ The scope of the next, regional, level was determined in ecclesiastical terms by the boundaries of the diocese, which provided the parson with motifs related to the cathedral's invocation, the person of the bishop or its own culture. The parish priest's reference to such iconography in the field of his seal could sometimes even become political, especially during the period of disputes between the Church and the laity (the appropriate choice of sealed imagery served, for example, to manifest ties with the bishop ordinary). On the secular side, the regional iconosphere was complemented by princely, chivalric and urban iconography. The general level consisted essentially of the entire universal iconographic output of Europe at the time, which – let us point out – remained under the overwhelming influence of Christianity. Obviously, being acquainted with all these pictorial messages was, even then, beyond the capacity of one man. The emphasis is therefore placed on the widespread motifs, themes and topoi in the culture of the time, which the parson may have encountered, if only by interacting with the works of local artists. As a special element of the general iconosphere, monastic iconography should be singled out, appearing on parish seals in the form of symbols or emblems of the congregations to which their bearers belonged or whose superiors they were subordinate to (we are referring, for example, to the situation where the abbot had the right of patronage over a particular church and, on that account, collation of its parson).²⁸ Importantly, the spheres presented did not function independently of one another. On the contrary, they interpenetrated one another, with the higher

²⁵ In my earlier publication, I proposed a three-level division of the iconosphere into local, regional and general tiers, cf. *ibidem* p. 41. However, seals found during further archival searches exposing the personal coats of arms of parish priests prompted me to highlight a fourth, personal level.

²⁶ Dola, *Dzieje Kościoła*, p. 77; A. Radziwiński, *Kościół w Polsce około 1300 r.*, in: *idem, Kościół i duchowieństwo w średniowieczu. Polska i państwo zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach*, Toruń 2012, p. 139.

²⁷ On the role of the altar in the liturgical space of the church cf. P. Łobodzińska, *Przestrzeń liturgiczna kościoła św. Elżbiety we Wrocławiu w późnym średniowieczu*, in: *Fara w mieście od średniowiecza do współczesności. Społeczność – duchowość – architektura – wystrój. Studia z historii sztuki*, eds. R. Eysymontt, D. Galewski, Wrocław 2019, pp. 121–122.

²⁸ An example of a parish priest's reference to such iconography can be found in the *sigillum* of Marcin, parson in Osina Wielka, cf. Sobel, *Pieczęcie proboszczów*, pp. 57–59, 64 (photo 5).

levels remaining an inspiration for the lower ones and providing them with material in the form of iconographic patterns and widely known and clear symbolism. It should be remembered that the reference of a pastor commissioning his stamp to a particular level was never a random decision and always resulted from an intention to communicate through the seal specific content reflecting his family, professional, political relationships, personal beliefs or individual piety.

It is not difficult to see in the considerations presented that – not counting heraldic depictions, taken mainly from knightly culture – the vast majority of the imagery of seals' *sigilla* belonging to parish priests drew their motifs from sacred iconography. Dominant among them were depictions of saints, under whose images we often see a kneeling adorer (distinguished by *Vocabularium internationale sigillographicum* separately as devotional, votive or cult type).²⁹ They are usually patrons of specific parish churches, such as St Lawrence on the *sigillum* of Rudolf, parson in Głuchołazy from 1312,³⁰ or the Blessed Virgin Mary depicted with the infant Jesus in her arms, thus in the so-called Hodegetria type, on the seal of Michał of Niemiecki Bród, parish priest in Opava from 1394,³¹ which makes us include the iconography of these *sigilla* within the level of the local iconosphere. The latter parson was at the same time a member of the Teutonic Order,³² an organisation with special ties to the Mother of God, a fact reflected in the congregation's official name: the Order of the Teutonic Knights of St Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem. The stamp image of his *sigillum* therefore does not refer exclusively to the church's *patrocinium*, but also to the monastic iconography at the same time.

In addition to the aforementioned images, which draw their motifs from parish iconography, there are seal depictions with figures of saints in no way associated with the *patrocinium*. An example is the seal of Piotr, the parson in Gajków, which – known from two imprints dated 1313 and 1317³³ – depicts the Mother of God, also in Hodegetria type, on an architectural arch, under which an adorer prays. However, the patroness of the parish is not – as the *imago* of the seal suggests – Mary, but St Margaret (of Antioch).³⁴ Through references to the then universal Christian culture, such depictions are part of the level of the general iconosphere. They include many saints known from the Bible, as evidenced by the aforementioned *sigilla* of the pastors of Opava and Gajków. Nevertheless, whether or not

²⁹ *Vocabularium internationale sigillographicum*, ed. K. Müller, L. Vrtel, Bratislava 2016, p. 299.

³⁰ State Archives in Wrocław (hereinafter: AP Wr.), Rep. 88 no 48 (74a). For more on this seal, cf. Sobel, *Pieczczęcie proboszczów*, pp. 51–54, 63 (photo 2).

³¹ Státní okresní archiv v Opavě, Archiv města Opava, inv. č. 193, sign. IV/4. Opava, despite not being part of the diocese of Wrocław, is considered the capital of the so-called Opavian Silesia, hence the inclusion of the seal of the parish priest in question within my considerations. This is because the boundaries of the region of interest extend beyond the Wrocław Diocese to include parts of the Olomouc and Lubusz dioceses.

³² This is evidenced by an excerpt from the titles included on the document he issued (ibidem): 'frater Ordinis Sancte Marie hospitalis Ierosolimitani de domo theutunica'.

³³ AP Wr., Rep. 66 no 43 (51); ibidem, Rep. 125 no 142 (158).

³⁴ H. Neuling, *Schlesiens ältere Kirchen und kirchliche Stiftungen nach ihren frühesten urkundlichen Erwähnungen*, Breslau 1884, p. 74.

these saints appear in the pages of Scripture, the seals with their images should be analysed together, as that distinction did not affect the way these figures were presented (saints, both from biblical times and later, are found on portrait seals, with an adorer, as patrons over coats of arms in the case of bust/coat-of-arms depictions, as patrons of cities on their walls, etc.).

The subject of this sketch, however, relates to biblical scenes, and those on stamps belonging to parish priests appear very rarely, even incidentally. Of all the sphragistic material known to me, which includes more than 70 types of parsons' seals, it is represented by only five *sigilla* belonging to: Wojśław – parish priest in Otmuchów – from 1280; Stefan – parson in Nysa – from 1298; Jan – parish priest in Węgry – from 1309; Tomasz – parson in Strzelin – from 1390 and Jan Bawde – parish priest in Legnica – from the 1430s and 1440s. In my considerations, I also include a sixth seal, belonging to Bertold – parson in Nowy Kościół (Nova Ecclesia, Neukirch, now Żerniki within the borders of Wrocław) – dated 1280. No copy of it has survived. It is known only because of the reproduction included in the 19th century catalogue of seals compiled by Paul Pfothenhauer.³⁵ This sporadic presence of subjects of interest concerning the seals of Silesian parish priests makes them all the more worthy of scientific analysis.

Their sparse group is headed with the aforementioned *sigillum* of Otmuchów parson Wojśław, who affixed it to a document issued on 27 May 1280 by Szymon, the prebendary of Opole³⁶ (Fig. 1).

Running around the surround of the seal, partially blurred, a majuscule legend states: '+ S VOISLAY CAN(onici) WRAT(islaviensis) Et REC(toris) I(n) EKLE(-sia) OTOMVChOVIEN(sī)'.³⁷ In addition to his position as a parish priest, it also indicates that Wojśław held the office of canon of the Wrocław cathedral chapter.³⁸

³⁵ P. Pfothenhauer, *Die schlesischen Siegel von 1250 bis 1300 beziehentlich 1327*, Breslau 1879, p. 19, tab. 12, no 84.

³⁶ Archdiocesan Archives in Wrocław (hereafter: AAd. Wr.), Documents with alphabetical references, DD 58.

³⁷ A slightly different interpretation was given by W. Irgang, eg. *Schlesisches Urkundenbuch* (hereinafter: SUB), Bd. 4, hrsg. W. Irgang, Köln-Wien 1988, p. 262, seeing the word 'IN' in place of the short form 'CAN'. This passage is also quoted after him by E. Wólkiewicz, *Kapituła kolegiacka św. Mikołaja w Otmuchowie. Dzieje – organizacja – skład osobowy (1386–1477)*, Opole 2004, p. 71. I cite the contents of the seal legends analysed in this article generally in accordance with the guidelines in the publication entitled *Zasady transkrypcji inskrypcji napieczętej*, in: *Opracowanie materiałów sfragistycznych w archiwach. Wyniki prac zespołu naukowego powołanego przez Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych do przygotowania wskazówek metodycznych do opracowania materiałów sfragistycznych w zasobie archiwów państwowych*, eds. P. Gut, M. Hlebionek, Warsaw 2020, pp. 159–163, with the difference that I use uppercase and lowercase letters to distinguish between majuscule and minuscule inscriptions.

³⁸ He was a member of the chapter, according to research by E. Wólkiewicz (*Kapituła kolegiacka*, p. 71), in 1264–1288. A slightly different time period of Wojśław's canonry, namely the years 1264–1285, was given by R. Samulski, *Untersuchungen über die persönliche Zusammensetzung des Breslauer Domkapitels im Mittelalter bis zum Tode des Bischofs Nanker (1341)*, Teil 1, Weimar 1940, p. 152. In addition, he also held the office of procurator of Wrocław, which is noted in the sources under 1273 (ibidem, p. 120; Wólkiewicz, *Kapituła kolegiacka*, p. 71).



Fig. 1. Seal of Wojśław, parish priest in Otmuchów, dated 1280. Source: AAd. Wr., DD 58, photo by J.R. Sobel

Commissioning a seal stamp, which represented a fairly high artistic level, this clergyman evidently renounced any motifs referring to the iconography of his own parish church, whose patron saint was St Nicholas.³⁹ Instead, he chose to appeal to the level of the general iconosphere, placing in the imaginary field the dying Christ on the cross, above which are the moon and the sun (in the form of a six-rayed star).⁴⁰ The Messiah is accompanied by a figure of a saint standing on a small elevation on the left (heraldically), wearing a halo and a long, undulating robe with his hands folded in a gesture of prayer, while on the right is a kneeling adorer, probably personifying the owner of the seal, i.e. the priest of Otmuchów. Due to the lack of attributes and the mediocre state of preservation of the imprint (some elements of the image blurred), the precise identification of the person with the halo remains impossible, although it is most likely either St John or the Mother of Jesus. In the case of the former, the symbolism of the seal, in addition to its

³⁹ Neuling, *Schlesiens ältere Kirchen*, p. 90; Wólkiewicz, *Kapitula kolegiacka*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ The aforementioned heavenly bodies are common elements found in depictions of the Passion of Christ (appearing in them as early as the 6th century), cf. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (hereinafter: LCI), Bd. 2, hrsg. E. Kirschbaum, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1970, p. 609; E. Panofsky, *Ikonografia i ikonologia*, in: idem, *Studia z historii sztuki*, Warszawa 1971, p. 25.

possessor's personal reverence for the Saviour, could also express his faithfulness shown to God by the example of the 'beloved disciple of Christ,' who was the only one of the apostles to remain by his side during his passion on the cross. However, if the figure was Mary, then the symbolism of the *sigillum* could refer to Jesus' testament spoken from the cross, immortalized in the pages of the Gospels by St John: 'When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.' (John: 19, 26–27). In such a case, the parson would place himself, as it were, in the place of St John, which would express his personal attachment to the Blessed Virgin.

Conflicting interpretations have been reported by researchers on the now-lost seal of Bertold, parish priest in Nowy Kościół, authenticating a 1280 diploma issued by Reinold, procurator of the Poor Clares convent in Wrocław.⁴¹ As already mentioned, we can only know its *imago* from the lithographic reproduction by P. Pfothenauer, included in his publication *Die schlesischen Siegel* (Fig. 2).

Unfortunately, the state of preservation of this *sigillum* was poor, so it caused problems for the publisher both in reading the legend and interpreting the seal image. While he managed to decipher from the inscription only the explicit wording of 'ECCE NOUE,' which he was also not certain about, as he annotated it with a question mark,⁴² the *imago* was described by him as follows: 'Im oberen Theile zwei Figuren (vielleicht die Taufe Christi darstellend), darunter ein Betender unter einem gothischen Portal.'⁴³ Another proposal was put forward in the 1930s by M. Gumowski, one of the most prominent Polish sigillographers, who saw in it a scene of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁴⁴ Unravelling this mystery is not facilitated by the *patrocinium* of the church where Bertold ministered, as it

⁴¹ SUB, Bd. 4, pp. 267–268, no 400.

⁴² Pfothenauer, *Die schlesischen Siegel*, p. 19. It should be noted that W. Irgang, the issuer of the 1280 document, attributed the authenticating seal to another Bertold, serving as Prior of the Red Star Crusader Monastery of St Matthias in Wrocław, reading the fragment of the legend as 'VRAT,' cf SUB, Bd. 4, p. 268. His proposed solution is presumably based on the order of the persons noted in the corroboration formula and the corresponding order of the seals attached to the parchment (originally there were four *sigilla* hanging by it, but by the end of the 19th century only three remained). However, it cannot be ruled out that this order has been disrupted, as has frequently happened in law office practice. Moreover, it is difficult to clearly identify its bearer on the basis of the reproduction of the seal alone, as it is impossible to see either the formula 'ECCE NOUE,' or the word 'VRAT' on it. Nevertheless, I favour P. Pfothenauer's position, attributing the seal to the parson, as, while before the war W. Irgang used, in view of the failure to preserve the original document, most likely its photocopy, P. Pfothenauer had the original in his hands along with the accompanying seals. I assume, therefore, that the legibility of Bertold's *sigillum*, despite its generally poor state of preservation, was far better, and thus more accurate, than the photocopy that formed the basis of W. Irgang's edition.

⁴³ Pfothenauer, *Die schlesischen Siegel*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Gumowski, *Pieczenie śląskie*, p. 316. This representation was common for the lower clergy of the Polish lands. Among the Lesser Poland material we can mention, for example, the *sigillum* of the provost of the Premonstratensians of Zwierzyniec, cf. F. Piekosiński, *Pieczenie polskie wieków średnich doby piastowskiej (uzupełnienie)*, Kraków 1936, p. 8, no 655.



Fig. 2. Seal of Bertold, parish priest in Nowy Kościół, dated 1280.
Source: P. Pfothenhauer, *Die schlesischen Siegel*, p. 19, tab. 12, no 84

invokes St Lawrence and St Margaret, patron saints of the parish since its foundation before 1265.⁴⁵ Additional iconographic inspiration could possibly have been provided to the parish priest by the monastery of the Poor Clares of Wrocław, since the village of Nova Ecclesia was the property of this abbey.⁴⁶ The reconstruction of its iconosphere was made by Przemysław Wiszewski. Based on his research, we can conclude that the scene of Christ's baptism generally did not appear in it (not counting one depiction in a 13th-century psalter, which is, however, a typical Christological motif appearing in these books).⁴⁷ Medieval seals of the Poor Clares of Wrocław depict Our Lady with the Child on a throne (a stamp belonging to the prioress) and Mary in the company of St Clare and St Francis (*sigillum* of the convent).⁴⁸ It contains no motif of St John the Baptist among them. Late medieval ornamental elements of the monastery church, relating to the lives of Christ and

⁴⁵ Neuling, *Schlesiens ältere Kirchen*, pp. 83–84.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ P. Wiszewski, *Herb mało użyteczny. O słabości tradycji heraldycznej wybranych klasztorów żeńskich na Śląsku (XIII – I. połowa XIX w.)*, in: *Polska heraldyka kościelna*, pp. 72–73.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 65. The National Museum in Wrocław has preserved its original 14th-century stamp, cf. B. Marcisz-Czapla, *Tłoki pieczętno i pieczęcie kościelne z terenu Śląska*, in: *Gloria Deo. Rzemiesło sakralne*, vol. 2, ed. M. Korżel-Kraśna, Wrocław 2010, p. 158, no 220.

Mary,⁴⁹ could theoretically support the thesis of placing the Annunciation scene on the seal of the associated priest. However, it should be remembered that St John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Diocese of Wrocław, and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River appears on the then *sigillum* of the local cathedral chapter.⁵⁰ In that case, placing a similar image on the seal of the parish priest would find its justification, expressing his ties to the bishopric. However, this issue cannot be resolved with only a 19th-century reproduction of an indistinct print, and therefore without the possibility of an autopsy of the original.

Sigillum of the Nysa parish priest Stefan,⁵¹ indicated by a seal engraved in Gothic majuscule with the legend '+ S STEPhANI PLE/BANI DE NIZA,' preserved on two copies of the same document dated 31 July 1298, issued by the Bishop of Wrocław Jan III Romka,⁵² exposes the well-known scene from the Gospel of St Matthew, in which Holy Family flees to Egypt with an adorer kneeling below, under an architectural arch, with his hands folded in a prayerful gesture⁵³ (Fig. 3).

This representation finds no analogy on church seals known either from Silesia or from other Polish lands, whether collected by me during archival searches or described by sigillographers in the literature. However, we see this scene on several medieval *sigilla* from the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the State of the Teutonic Order and Denmark, which were analysed in the 1950s by Eberhard Crusius.⁵⁴ In terms of form, the seal of the parson in Nysa does not deviate from the examples of imagery established by the above author – it shows the Mother of God with the infant Jesus in her arms, seated on a donkey led by St Joseph, walking – to the left (heraldically), as is characteristic of representations of this scene.⁵⁵ An important (unprecedented) novelty here is the addition of a fourth figure closing the parade.⁵⁶ Its exact identification is unfortunately hindered by the poor state of preservation of the two imprints, most likely made with a worn stamp or blurred in later years. However, we can assume that its presence is a testimony to the reception of some apocryphal texts mentioning an additional companion of

⁴⁹ Wiszewski, *Herb mało użyteczny*, pp. 72–73.

⁵⁰ Pakulski, *Średniowieczne pieczęcie kapituł*, pp. 179–180.

⁵¹ Cf. A. Müller, *Die Pfarrer von Neiße, ein Beitrag zur schlesischen Presbyterologie*, „Archiv für Schlesische Kirchengeschichte”, 14 (1956) pp. 65–66; E. Wólkiewicz, *Proletariusze modlitwy? Drogi karier, finanse i kultura materialna niższego kleru w średniowiecznej Nysie*, Warsaw 2020, pp. 190–191. According to both researchers, Stefan ministered in the Nysa parish between 1292 and 1312. After 31 July 1298, however, he must have made a change in his stamp, because with the document he authenticated on 6 May 1312 (AP Wr., Rep. 88 no 48 [74a]) we find a seal showcasing a completely different image – the figure of St James, before whom the adorer is praying, cf. Sobel, *Pieczęcie proboszczów*, pp. 49–51, 62, no 1.

⁵² AAd. Wr., Documents of the municipal parish of Nysa, 31 VII 1298; AP Wr., Rep. 102 no 6.

⁵³ A similar description of this seal imagery was provided by the editors of SÜb, Bd. 6, hrsg. W. Irgang, D. Schadewaldt, Köln-Weimar-Wien 1998, p. 282.

⁵⁴ E. Crusius, *Flucht und Heimkehr. Studie zur Ikonographie der mittelalterlichen Siegel mit 10 Abbildungen*, „Archivalische Zeitschrift”, 49 (1954) pp. 65–71.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, pp. 65–66.

⁵⁶ Attention to this fact has already been drawn by E. Crusius, cf. ibidem, p. 67.



Fig. 3. Seal of Stefan, parish priest in Nyxa, dated 1298.
Source: AAd. Wr., Documents of the municipal parish of Nysa,
31 VII 1298, photo by J.R. Sobel

the Holy Family exodus.⁵⁷ The *imago* of this seal is in no way connected with the *patrocinium* of the church where parish priest Stefan ministered. Its patron saint since the temple was erected, probably at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, was indeed St James⁵⁸ (currently it is known as the Basilica of St James the Apostle and St Agnes). While commissioning the seal stamp, the parson evidently abandoned the manifestation of ties to his own parish and referred to a well-known event from the New Testament, whose reception on German, Danish and Teutonic seals was proved by the aforementioned E. Crusius. We can see here a reference to the level of the general iconosphere. We are unable to answer the question of what influenced such a choice of iconography by parish priest Stefan, as it has always remained an individual matter for each holder of *sigillum*. However, we can recognize in this decision a desire to convey certain ideas, derived in this case from the theological meaning of the scene. As the evangelist notes, after the Magi left ‘[...] the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell

⁵⁷ LCI, Bd. 2, pp. 43–44.

⁵⁸ Neuling, *Schlesiens ältere Kirchen*, p. 81.

you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,’ (Matthew: 2, 13–14). The behaviour of St Joseph is very clear: he shows readiness to fulfil the task God has given him, trusting Him implicitly. He does not hesitate or ask any questions. The message of the seal image in question may thus have promoted an attitude of trust in the Almighty and openness to carrying out His will in one’s own life.

A similar abandonment of the parish’s own iconography in favour of the influence of universal Christian culture is seen on the seal of Jan, parish priest in Węgrzy⁵⁹ (a village near Żórawina, south of Wrocław), authenticating a document dated 28 November 1309, issued by Henry, parson in nearby Domaniów (Fig. 4).

The owner of the seal is easy to identify from the majuscule legend as it reads: ‘+ S IOH(ann)IS PLEBANI / DE W[ANGERN].’ Its *imago*, depicting St Thomas putting his hand into the side of Christ to confirm his resurrection, in no way refers to the invocation of the local church, because since the temple’s erection, which probably took place at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, it referred to St Hedwig.⁶⁰ Here too, therefore, the theological significance of the seal imagery seems relevant. The ideological content communicated by them can be linked to the words of Jesus addressed to St Thomas during his encounter with him, shown in the field of the seal in question: ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ (John: 20,29). One can see here the call to develop a faith that overcomes all doubts, which may have been the very intention of the parson when he commissioned the *sigillum* stamp.

We encounter a reference to the parish iconosphere on an imprint belonging to a parson in Strzelin, preserved with a diploma dated 4 August 1390 (Fig. 5).

Its exhibitors were the canon of Otmuchów and the judicial vicar of Wrocław Jerzy Fulschussil and the rectors of five parish churches from Oława and the surrounding area, including the one in Strzelin. The parish priest’s name is revealed by a minuscule legend running around the surround of his seal: ‘+ sigillum thame plebani in strelin.’ Such a passage of a rather illegible inscription is also confirmed by diplomatic sources, mentioning in 1396–1399 the Strzelin parson named Tomasz.⁶¹ Although the exact date of his assumption of the local parish is unknown, this identification is supported by the fact that Franciszek (Franz), Tomasz’s predecessor at the Strzelin rectory, was last recorded in 1364, and in 1396 Thomas mentions him as having passed away.⁶² In the field of the heavily blurred imprint, one manages to see the figure of St Michael the Archangel facing (heraldically) to the left, probably clad in knightly armour, with wings and a nimbus around his head, who, treading on the dragon’s tail that winds through the entire lower part of the *sigillum*, pierces its throat with a spear and thus strokes the monster. The prominence of this particular saint is an obvious reference to the patron saint

⁵⁹ R. Stelmach, *Katalog średniowiecznych dokumentów przechowywanych w Archiwum Państwowym we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław-Racibórz 2014, no 1060, mistakenly identifies the name of this village as Węgrów.

⁶⁰ Neuling, *Schlesien ältere Kirchen*, p. 136.

⁶¹ F.X. Görlich, *Geschichte der Stadt Strehlen in Preußisch-Schlesien*, Breslau 1853, p. 15.

⁶² *Ibidem*, pp. 14–15.



Fig. 4. Seal of Jan, parish priest in Węgry, dated 1309.
Source: AP Wr., Rep. 125 no 132 (148), photo by J.R. Sobel



Fig. 5. Seal of Tomasz, parish priest in Strzelin, dated 1390.
Source: AP Wr., Rep. 125 no 266 (280), photo by J.R. Sobel

of the Strzelin temple.⁶³ Starting in the 1430s, he was also the point of reference to Strzelin authorities, putting his images on the fields of city seals. He is first shown, winged and blowing a trumpet, on a seal used between 1336 and 1369, and then, without the instrument but with a sword in his right hand, on a *sigillum* from 1409–1540, whose stamp, however, was probably created as early as at the end of the 14th century.⁶⁴ Archangel Michael was thus consistently pictured on these seals with his proper attributes,⁶⁵ but never during the battle with the dragon, visible on the imprint belonging to the Strzelin parish priest.⁶⁶ His desire to show his ties to the parish and its patron saint by placing an image of St Michael on his stamp thus ran the risk of duplicating a motif already rooted in local iconography, as a result of which the *sigillum* would lose its identifying qualities. The parson's decision to use this biblical scene may therefore have been motivated by a desire to distinguish his mark from the image present on the city seal. Since medieval *sigilla* belonging to other Strzelin parish priests have not survived, it is impossible to determine whether this was a motif inherited by successive priests assuming this prebendary or the exclusive invention of one of them. Finally, when analysing the content communicated by the monument under study, one cannot overlook its theological significance, relating to the events described in the Book of Revelation: 'Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.' (Revelation: 12, 7–8). The scene exposed on the seal of Parson Tomasz, reminded all those viewing the *sigillum* of the final defeat of Satan and the triumph of the Lamb, due at the end of time. It also reminded them about the need to prepare for these events by repenting, doing good deeds and undertaking the struggle with their own sins. The attitude of St Michael fighting the dragon – a symbol of evil⁶⁷ – should therefore be a model of conduct for every believer.

⁶³ Neuling, *Schlesiens ältere Kirchen*, p. 127.

⁶⁴ M.L. Wójcik, *Herb miasta Strzelina – historia i współczesność*, „Rocznik Polskiego Towarzystwa Heraldycznego”, 19 (2020) pp. 268–270. Cf. P. Wiszewski, *Między konwencją, polityką i modą. Średniowieczne śląskie pieczęcie miejskie z wizerunkami świętych*, in: *Formuła – archetyp – konwencja w źródle historycznym. Materiały IX Sympozjum Nauk Dających Poznawać Źródła Historyczne, Kazimierz Dolny, 14–15 grudnia 2000 r.*, eds. A. Górak, K. Skupieński, Lublin-Radzyń Podlaski-Siedlce 2006, pp. 289–291.

⁶⁵ LCI, Bd. 3, hrsg. E. Kirschbaum, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1971, p. 257; J. Marecki, L. Rotter, *Jak czytać wizerunki świętych. Leksykon atrybutów i symboli hagiograficznych*, Kraków 2013, pp. 609–610.

⁶⁶ The dragon did not appear on Strzelin *sigilla* until the modern era. Presumably, as early as 1518, a new city seal was put into use, on which the image of the Archangel Michael was supplemented by a scale held by him in his left hand. On it were placed a man and the dragon, symbolizing Satan, which referred to the assessment of the good and bad deeds at the final judgement. This motif is found on the seals of the city of Strzelin at least until the end of the 17th century, cf. Wójcik, *Herb miasta Strzelina*, pp. 270–272.

⁶⁷ LCI, Bd. 1, hrsg. E. Kirschbaum, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1968, pp. 516–517; S. Kobielius, *Bestiarium chrześcijańskie. Zwierzęta w symbolice i interpretacji. Starożytność i średniowiecze*, Warsaw 2002, p. 296; L. Rotter, *Zwierzęta jako atrybuty świętych*, in: *Symbolika zwierząt*,

An interesting example of the influence of another prebendery held by a parish priest on the choice of iconography of his seal is the youngest of the analysed monuments, namely the *sigillum* of Jan Bawde, parson of St Peter's Church in Legnica in 1432–1450 and provost of the Holy Sepulchre Collegiate Church in the same city in 1429–1450⁶⁸ (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Seal of Jan Bawde, parish priest of St Peter's Church in Legnica and provost of the chapter of the Holy Sepulchre, dated 1439.

Source: AP Wr., Rep. 93 no 34 (113), photo by J.R. Sobel

At present, we know of as many as nine copies of it, which definitely stands out from the material discussed so far. They are preserved with documents issued between 1439 and 1446,⁶⁹ that is, at the time when J. Bawde, in place of Henryk Senfleben, archdeacon of Legnica, performed the duties of *causarum ecclesias-*

eds. J. Marecki, L. Rotter, Kraków 2009, p. 139; idem, *Mityczne oraz legendarne stwory i bestie*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 172–173.

⁶⁸ S. Jujeczka, *Duchowni średniowiecznej Legnicy. Studium prozopograficzne nad klerem diecezjalnym*, Legnica 2006, pp. 130, 146, 266–267.

⁶⁹ AAd. Wr., Alphabetically referenced documents, A 10, GG 76a, P 73, SS 21; AP Wr., Rep. 66 no 576 (561); Rep. 93 no 34 (113), 41 (120); AP Wr. Legnica Branch, Documents of the City of Legnica no. 397, 413.

ticarumin judge in the archdeaconry, which took place between 1437 and 1446.⁷⁰ It is this latter function that is indicated by the inscribed Gothic minuscule legend of its seal, which states: ‘+ s + iohanis + bawde + comissarii [divisor in the form of a lily] archidiaconatus + legniczensis [divisor in the form of a six-rayed star].’ As evident, the content of the inscription does not reveal the parson function of this clergyman. Nonetheless, given the very modest number of parish seals displaying biblical scenes, it is worth including his *sigillum* in this analysis. This is made possible by the fact that J. Bawde performed the pastoral duties assigned to him in the St. Peter’s Church in Legnica, as described above, from 1432 until his death in 1450,⁷¹ i.e. also at the time of the use of the aforementioned stamp. The image on display, also found on parish seals known outside of Silesia,⁷² shows a resurrected Christ in a field dotted with stars, with a cross nimbus around his head and wearing an undulating robe, emerging from an open tomb. However, it is not the grotto known from the Gospels, but a Gothic sarcophagus typical of the seal owner’s time. Leaving it, Jesus raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing, while in his left hand he holds a wooden beam topped with a cross, to which a two-striped banner (the so-called Resurrection Flag) is attached, hanging behind his head. Beneath the scene described, at the very bottom of the seal field, a small shield was placed with the seal bearer’s mark, revealing his bourgeois origin (self-reportedly, he came from Kluczbork).⁷³ Thus, in this representation, we see an obvious reference to the *patrocinium* of the Legnica collegiate church, of which J. Bawde was the provost, rather than to his function as a commissioner, mentioned in the legend of the *sigillum*. It can be assumed that this image is a continuation of the iconographic motif present on the older seal of J. Bawde, which is not preserved today, dating back to the time when he was only a provost, and thus created in 1429 at the earliest. When he additionally assumed the parish of St. Peter’s three years later, he no longer changed the stamp, as the provostry surpassed the parish in dignity. He had the new *stamp* made after assuming his duties as commissioner of the archdeaconry in 1437, albeit at the latest in early 1439, as the oldest known documents bearing this *sigillum* date from March of that year. Of all the offices held by J. Bawde, the dignity of parson stood lowest in the hierarchy, and it was probably this fact that lay behind the decision to disregard any reference to the function of parish priest on his seal. The diplomas sealed by him are signed only with the title of provost, often supplemented by the dignities of commissary and judge *causarum ecclesiarum*.⁷⁴ In addition to referring to

⁷⁰ Jujeczka, *Duchowni średniowiecznej Legnicy*, pp. 169, 267, although elsewhere (ibidem, p. 244) it is stated that J. Bawde’s duties related to the office of archdeacon were performed in place of Senfleben in 1439–1444, i.e. in a four years shorter period.

⁷¹ Ibidem, pp. 146, 267.

⁷² E.g., on the *sigillum* of Jindřich, parson in Miroslav, dated 1267, where the sealed image is further explained by an inscription reading ‘SVRREXIT DOMINVS IESUS CRISTUS,’ cf. Krejčíková, Krejčík, *Úvod do české sfragistiky*, s. 67.

⁷³ Jujeczka, *Duchowni średniowiecznej Legnicy*, p. 266.

⁷⁴ Two documents in Latin, dated 11 March 1439 and January 30, 1443, referred to J. Bawde as ‘prepositus (ecclesie) collegiate sancti sepulcridominici legnicensis’ (AP Wr., Rep. 93 nos 34

the *patrocinium* of the collegiate church, the *imago* of Bawde's seal also carried an important theological message. It was a reminder of the final defeat of death by the risen Christ. After all, this event is the climax of salvation history, the most important for every baptised person. Although we do not know from the pages of Scripture the exact description of this moment, the scene present on the *sigillum* of the Legnica clergyman recalls St Matthew's account of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women. The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.' (Matthew: 28, 5–6). What catches the eye in addition to this scene is the house mark below, which is J. Bawde's mark of recognition and ownership. The seal is an example of combining in a single depiction of the heraldic element of the parson's personal iconography with a motif embedded in the iconosphere of the church where he ministered, although in this case there can be no parish level representation.⁷⁵

The presented sigillographic monuments document the reception of biblical content on the seals of parish clergy. Noteworthy is the fact that all six cases analysed in the paper featured scenes taken from the New Testament, with five references to events related to the life of Christ described in the pages of the Gospels, and one to a prophetic vision from the Revelation of St John. They present a good testimony to their disposers, because – given the rather low requirements for candidates for the clerical state at the time⁷⁶ – they attest to their adequate intellectual and

[113], 41 [120]), and five more, dated 9 March 1439, 12 December 1444, 3 May 1445, 14 July 1445, and 10 September 1446, expanded this title to include the office of commissary and judge, adding the formula: '(wratislaviensis dioecesis) commissarius et iudex causarum ecclesiasticarum (executor)'. (AAd. Wr., A 10, GG 76a, P 73, SS 21; AP Wr., Rep. 66 no 576 [561]). Furthermore, the terms 'arbiter,' 'arbiter et amicabile' and 'iudex' were used with reference to him in diplomas: dated January 30, 1443 and December 12, 1444 (AP Wr., Rep. 93 no 41 [120]; Rep. 66 no 576 [561]). The editors of the two documents, dated 29 July 1442 and 29 August 1446, written in German, title him only as the collegiate provost: 'Thumprabist der kirchen czu legnicz' (AP Wr. Branch in Legnica, Legnica City Documents no 397), 'Tumprobist zu legnicz' (ibidem, no 413). It is worth noting that in the years 1437–1450 he appears as parson only in documents that he did not seal in person (*Urkundenbuch der Stadt Liegnitz und ihres Weichbildes bis zum Jahre 1455*, hrsg. F.W. Schirmacher, Liegnitz 1866, nos 666, 667, 753).

⁷⁵ Notably, however, that this type of seal, exposing the image of a saint with the bearer's coat of arms beneath it, was widespread in the 14th–15th centuries among *sigilla* belonging to members of cathedral chapters. This trend includes the seals of the provosts Trojan of Poznań and Mirosław of Gniezno, the dean of Poznań Piotr Drogoslawic, the dean of Wrocław and Duke of Legnica Henryk, the canon of Wrocław Jan, as well as numerous *sigillas* of the cathedral canons of Kraków. For these monuments see Pakulski, cf. *Średniowieczne pieczęcie praelatów*, pp. 185–188; E. Kozaczekiewicz, *Ikonoğrafia średniowiecznych pieczęci krakowskich kanoników katedralnych*, in: *Kultura religijna i społeczna Małopolski od XIII do XVI wieku*, eds. W. Szymborski, J. Koziół, Tarnów 2011, pp. 128, 137–141.

⁷⁶ Dola, *Dzieje Kościoła*, p. 147; I. Skierska, *Pleban w późnośredniowiecznej Polsce*, in: *Kolory i struktury średniowiecza*, ed. W. Fałkowski, Warsaw 2004, pp. 164–167; E. Wiśniowski, *Parafie w średniowiecznej Polsce. Struktura i funkcje społeczne*, Lublin 2004, pp. 158–160; Radziwiński, *Kościół w Polsce*, p. 139.

theological formation. However, the small number of the *sigilla* proves that they were an exception to the entire group of parish clergy. It is also worth noting that the functions of these seals were not limited to identifying and representing their owners. They expressed the parson's personal piety and, in some cases, also his connection to the parish. Finally, by communicating theological content through images, much more strongly appealing to the public's imagination than today, these seals were a kind of complement to the traditional *Bibliae pauperum*. Thus, they could also serve as an additional teaching aid for a parish priest carrying out catechetical duties to the faithful of his parish.

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SCENY BIBLIJNE NA ŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH PIECZENIACH ŚLĄSKICH PROBOSZCZÓW

Abstrakt

W artykule został podjęty temat obecności scen biblijnych na średniowiecznych pieczeniach proboszczów śląskich, będących przedmiotem badań jednego z najsłabiej rozpoznanych do tej pory działów sfragistyki. Analizie poddano sześć odcisków z XIII–XV wieku, należących do Wojysława – proboszcza otmuchowskiego, Bertolda – plebana w Nowym Kościele, Stefana – proboszcza nyskiego, Jana – plebana w Węgrach, Tomasza – proboszcza w Strzelinie oraz Jana Bawdego – proboszcza kościoła św. Piotra w Legnicy. Potwierdziła ona recepcję scen biblijnych na sigillach plebańskich, przy czym we wszystkich sześciu przypadkach były to nawiązania do Nowego Testamentu. Na pięciu pieczeniach znalazły się wydarzenia znane z Ewangelii: zwiastowanie Najświętszej Maryi Pannie lub chrzest Jezusa (jedyna dostępna dziś niewyraźna reprodukcja tego zabytku nie pozwoliła rozstrzygnąć kwestii interpretacji obecnego na nim wyobrażenia), ucieczka Świętej Rodziny do Egiptu, ukrzyżowanie

i zmartwychwstanie Chrystusa oraz Jego spotkanie ze św. Tomaszem. Jeden odcisk eksponuje opisaną w Apokalipsie św. Jana scenę walki św. Michała Archanioła ze smokiem. Ikonografię tych pieczęci odniesiono do ikonosfery otaczającej ich dysponentów. Zabieg ten wykazał, iż nie w każdym wypadku plebani dobierali wyobrażenia napieczęte, kierując się patrocinium swojego kościoła parafialnego. Niekiedy wyrażały one wyłącznie ich osobistą pobożność. Niewielka liczba tych zabytków świadczy jednak o tym, iż są wyjątkami na tle śląskich pieczęci proboszczowskich.

Słowa kluczowe: pieczęcie; ikonografia; sceny biblijne; proboszczowie; Śląsk