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IN THE WORLD OF MEDIEVAL SYMBOLS.  
DEPICTION OF A SHIELD FROM THE FRESCO OF  
ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH IN WICHÓW

**Keywords:** shield, Late Middle Ages, human face, *apotropaion*

**Słowa kluczowe:** tarcza, późne średniowiecze, ludzka twarz, *apotropaion*

At least from the 19<sup>th</sup> century iconographic sources have been used in the arms and armour studies<sup>1</sup> (see: Hewitt 1885–1890). This tendency is also visible in the latest research (Čepela 2010; Marek 2010). This kind of sources not only allows us to identify the destination of objects discovered during archaeological excavations, but also the way how they were used. One should however be very cautious and critical while using them, as the nature of such sources is determined by the aim they were created for. It was not only, what many scholars forget, recording the reality but also transmitting special ideas to the viewers. In many medieval pieces of art, only a symbolic shape, full of scheme and convention, is imagined. It was not easily influenced by time or fashion (Żygulski 1978; 1984). This obviously does not mean that pieces of art which truly documented the reality were not created (contra Chmielowiec, Kašpar 2010). They were however also limited by characteristic frames of the canon. Despite these reservations, these works of art allow us to penetrate into the world not lit up by material sources: mentality, faith, superstitions.

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The illustration of such a situation can be most likely noticed on frescos, which were discovered in 1976 in St. Martin's church in Wichów near Żagań. In the one-nave temple, built probably in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt in the

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<sup>1</sup> The final form of this article was achieved thanks to the fascinating discussion with Dr. Lech Marek from the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Wrocław, whom I would like to thank for all his remarks.

16<sup>th</sup> century (Lutsch 1891, p. 100), on the northern wall of the choir a three-zone painting was created, illustrating the cycle of *The Passion of Christ* and a large size figure of St. Christopher. The frescos from Wichów, according to Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa (1984, p. 90), may have been based on panel paintings or most likely miniature. The composition of *The Crucifixion* scene alludes to the scheme created on the painting from the Emaus monastery in Prague and distributed in East-Central Europe (fig. 1). Other figures of saints depicted on these frescoes refer to these known from Bohemian and Silesian illuminated manuscripts from the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as the 15<sup>th</sup> century (*České umění...* 1970; Karłowska-Kamzowa 1979, p. 67; 1984). Other *Passion* depictions from Wichów (*The Crowning with Thorns, The Nailing to the Cross, The Resurrection, The Entombment of Christ*) were created in the way of typical mural painting from Silesia (see: Koziół 1977). According to this scholar, this allows to recognise it as a work of local creativity of a guild, which was developed for didactic use in parish churches (see: Karłowska-Kamzowa 1993).

This text will primarily focus on a shield which appears in the scene of *The Crucifixion of Christ* and is held by a Centurion of the Roman guard, who points at the crucified (see: Schiller 1968; Kliś 2006). On the triangular shaped artefact a bearded human face with a satirically enlarged nose and eyes was depicted. Typologically this artefact can be classified as a heater-shield, which was typical mainly for the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Nickel 1974). However, their appearance in the 15<sup>th</sup> century should not be considered as an anachronism, because they were used in this period as funeral shields. This can be confirmed by the shield of Henry V, King of England, which can be dated to the period before 1422 (Kohlmorgen 2002, pp. 115–116, Abb. 124).

The shield from Wichów has a convex relief of the depicted face (fig. 1). This is a quite common procedure used in the decoration of shields, where coat of arms were usually modelled from plaster or cut out from parchment and glued to the surface of the shields (ibidem, pp. 141–183). We know at least several artefacts with relief decoration, e.g., of Arnold von Brienz (1180–1225), Konrad von Thüringen (before 1240), Heinrich of Hessen (1292–1308), of von Raron or von Weingarten family (from ca. 1300) (ibidem, pp. 48–55, 74–81).

The motif itself is not very common<sup>2</sup> and it is worth to briefly describe similar known examples, as well as to discuss their chronology and prove-

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<sup>2</sup> One should also remember that other elements of weaponry were also decorated with this kind of symbols. The motif of a bearded human face can be found on the hilts of baselard type daggers from the former Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg. The



**Fig. 1.** The shield depicted on The Crucifixion of the Christ scene from frescoes of St. Martin's church in Wichów (photo by A. Michalak)

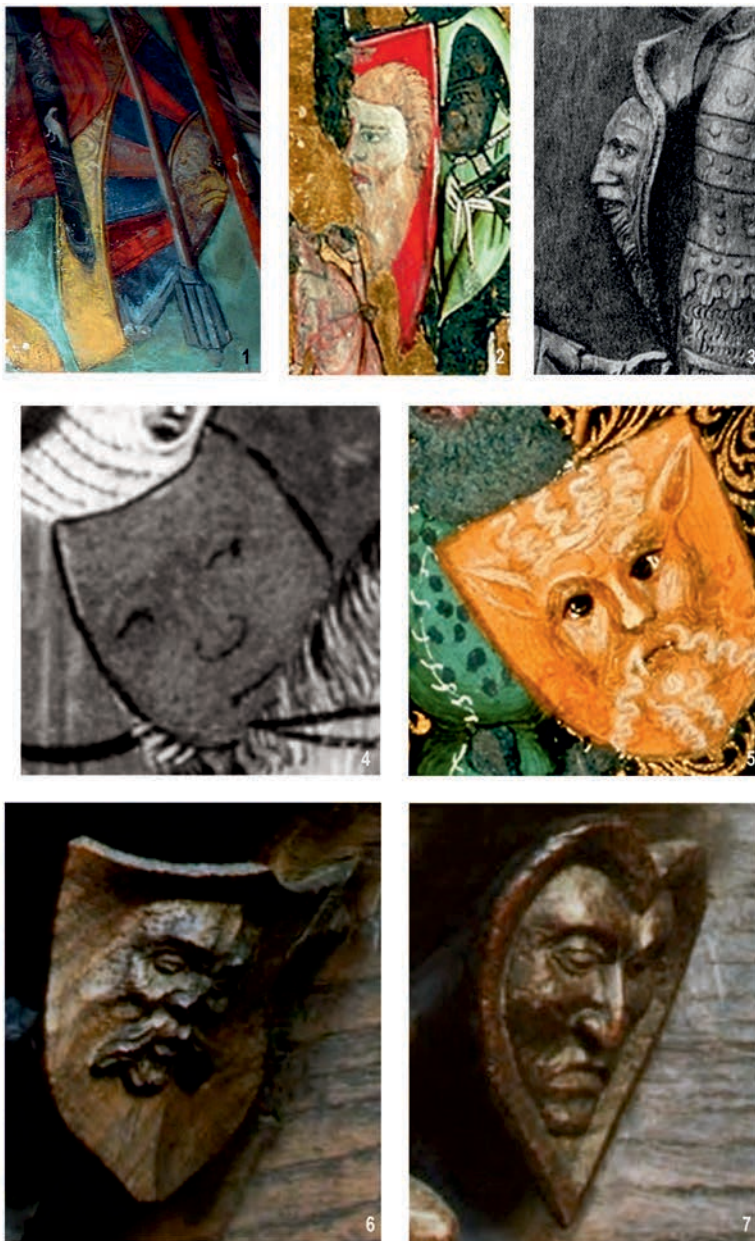
nance. Most often it appears in the depictions of biblical scenes. The oldest depiction of such a shield from Central Europe is known from the scenes of *David kills Goliath*, from the Psalter of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien collection (cod. 1813, fol. 8r) (ca. 1315–1325) (Fingernagel, Roland 1997, pp. 246–250). On the analogous scene from the choir stall of the Scharnebeck church in Hanover, from ca. 1370 (fig. 2:2–3), Goliath is also holding shield with such a motif (Habicht 1915, Pl. XI, fig. 24). On the miniature of *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* from the Krumlov codex (ca. 1400–1425) (the collection of the National Museum Library in Prague, III B 10, fol. 18b), the image of a male mask is completely hairless (fig. 2:4) (Krása 1974a, pp. 17–55). In the miniature of *The siege of Jericho* from the Bible from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien (cod. 2774, fol. 92r) (ca. 1448), the Canaanites were depicted behind the *Setzschild* with an exaggerated mouth and nose (fig. 3:3). David's adherents in the illumination of *Uriah's Death* from the work of Hans Vintler *Blumen der Tugend* (the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien collection, cod. s. n. 12819, fol. 17v) (ca. 1400–1450), were equipped with the oval shield with an image of a bearded face (fig. 3:4). In the scene of *King Codrus gave himself to his destruction for his people* from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, one of the armored knights who is killing the king at the majesty's own request, for the sake of his people, has a shield with a sun face mask (fig. 4:7) (Wilson, Joyce 1984, chapter XXIV:c). In an image of St. Olaf's vision from the triptych of Länna church (half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), next to a ladder raised into heaven, stands an armoured knight holding a hairless mask shield, "sinister with staring, forbidding gaze" (fig. 4:6) (Kretzenbacher 1987, pp. 20–21, fig. 1).

A significant series of depictions with the image of the human face can be found in the *Passion* scenes from Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Italy, France, most likely as an attribute of the captain of Roman soldiers (Centurion). These effigies differ from one another with the details of the depicted face and with the form of the shield itself. The oldest *Passion* depiction with this kind of element appears in the *Crucifixion* of the Master of the Vyšší Brod Cycle, painted in ca. 1350 (in the collection of the Convent of St. Agnes,

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face of a Jew is visible on the grip of baselards from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and Coesfeld (Rotschild's private collection in Frankfurt). They were probably made in North Germany, ca. 1300–1350 (Rohde 1922; Müller 1975, figs. 5–6). A human face also appears quite often on sword pommels from Italy. They are mainly dated to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup>–beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Boccia, Coelho 1975, figs. 131–133, 224–225; Boccia 1982; Oakeshott 1991, p. 182). The human face emblem is also noticeable on the surface of maceheads found in Sandviken in Sweden and Bergen in Norway (Nilsson 1866, p. 144, Taf. 5, fig. 64; Grieg 1933, pp. 304–305, fig. 281; 1943, p. 125, fig. 98).





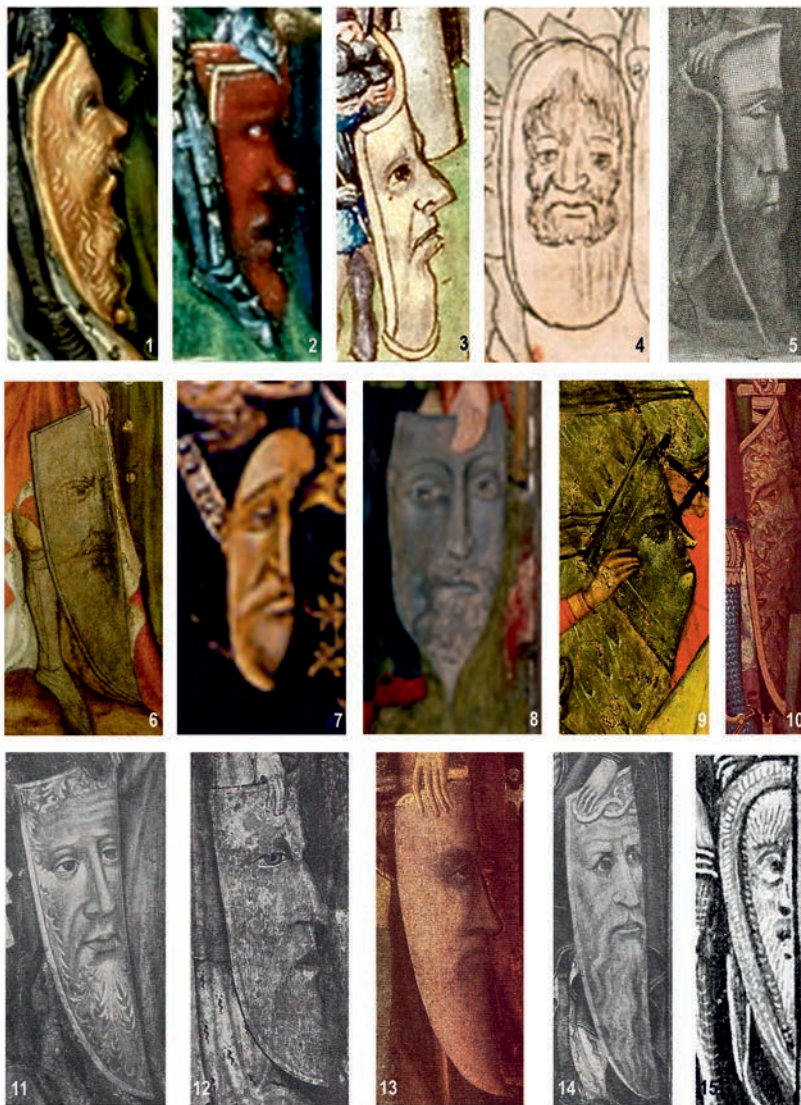
**Fig. 2.** Depictions of shields with the face image: 1 – fresco with St. George depiction from *Katolikon* from Vatopedi Monastery; 2 – *David kills Goliath* from the Psalter of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien collection; 3 – carving from the choir stall of Scharnebeck church in Hanover; 4 – *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* scene, Krumlov codex; 5 – miniature with the depiction of personification of the planet Mars from the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien; 6–7 – sea monsters from the misericord of Cathedral Church of Blessed Virgin Mary in Aarschot (1 after D’Amato 2011; 2 after Fingernagel, Roland 1997; 3 after Habicht 1915; 4 after Krása 1974a; 5 after Krása 1974; 6–7 after Bock 2010)

the branch of the National Gallery in Prague)<sup>3</sup> (Matějček 1950, pp. 157–160, obr. 14; Pešina 1982). The faces from shields in these depictions were either smooth (figs. 3:2, 12–13, 15, 4:3) or bearded (figs. 3:1,5–8, 4:2,4–5), and some of them, particularly from the altars from the territory of Czech Republic, were decorated with floral elements (figs. 3:10–11, 14) (Šmahel 2012, pp. 124–125). The faces on these pictures are either almost completely covered by leaves, which were stylised for hair (fig. 3:10–11), or its forehead is crowned with a tangle of branches and leaves (fig. 3:14) (Matějček 1950, obr. 208). The youngest representation in a *Crucifixion* scene, as far as I know, comes from the altar made in *Ecole champenoise* (Unterlinden-Museum zu Colmar in Elsaß), ca. 1522 (Kretzenbecher 1987, p. 25).

There are at least four depictions of shields from the *Crucifixion*, where they are not an attribute of the captain of Roman soldiers but of other persons who participate in the *Passion* scene. On the scene of *Witnesses of the Crucifixion* from the retable with the *Crucifixion* from N. Salvator's church in Brugge (Belgium), made by Master of Brugge ca. 1400 (fig. 4:2) (Stedelijke Musea, Groningemuseum in Brugge) and the *Crucifixion* scene from the Book of Hours (fig. 3:15), by an anonymous writer, created in the French-Burgundian circle ca. 1450, the shield is used by Longinus<sup>4</sup> (Hirsemann 1906, No. 37; Musper 1961). It is worth to notice that the Centurion character (the Roman soldier who is making a dramatic gesture) does not appear in these scenes, and the main figure here is Joseph of Arimathea (Miodońska 2007, p. 103). On the altar of the Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary's parish church in Hallstatt (Austria) (ca. 1450–1460) and triptych made in Limoges (Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York collection, 45.174.50), from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the shield is held by one of common infantrymen from the left side of the scene (fig. 3:6) (Schultes 2005, p. 93f). Likewise, on the depiction of protection from the *Passion* scene from the altar of the Evangelical church in Kleinschwarzenlohe in Bavaria (Germany) (ca. 1475–1485), the shield is in the hands of a crossbowman (fig. 3:7). In the *Christ before Pilate* scene from the retable altar of St. Bartholomew's Cathedral in Frankfurt (Main) (ca. 1489), the shield with such a motif is worn overhang above the shoulder by one of the soldiers holding Jesus (fig. 4:4) (Knüvener 2011, fig. 52). A small shield in a form of a buckler with a mustached human face is worn by a belt together with a falchion by one

<sup>3</sup> In this place I would like to thank Petr Žákovský MA from the Institute of Archaeology of the Masaryk University in Brno for his help with accessing information about Bohemian altars.

<sup>4</sup> Some sources identify Longinus (the soldier with a spear) as the centurion present at the *Crucifixion* (*Lexicon...* 1974, column 410–411).



**Fig. 3.** Depiction of a shields with the face image from *The Crucifixion of the Christ* (1–2, 5–8, 10–15) and other Biblical scenes (3–4, 9): 1 – from the Altar from Schluderns; 2 – from St. John church in Flattnitz; 3 – *The siege of Jericho* from the Bible from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien collection; 4 – *Uriah's Death* from the Hans Vintler work *Blumen der Tugend*; 5 – from St. Catherine's Altar in Chrudim; 6 – from the Rajhrad altar; 7 – from the altar of Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Parish church in Hallstatt; 8 – from the altar in Evangelic church in Kleinschwarzenlohe; 9 – *Road to Calvary* from the icon of Andrei Rublev Central Museum of Oldruss Culture and Art collection; 10 – of the Master of Vyšší Brod cycle; 11 – from John Baptist's Altar of John Baptist's church in Zátonež; 12 – from Skalice; 13 – of St. Barbara's church in Děbolín; 14 – of the Master of Vyšší Brod Madonnas; 15 – from the Book of Hours (1 after Naredi-Reiner, Madersbacher 2007; 2 after *Katalog...* 1970; 3–4, 8 after <http://www.imareal.oeaw.ac.at>; 5 after Pešina 1950; 6 after Bartlová 2002; 7 after Schultes 2005; 9 after Салтыков 1981; 10–14 after Matějček 1950; 15 after Hiersemann 1906)





**Fig. 4.** Depiction of a shields with the face image: 1 – the *Resurrection* scene from the *Retable de la Passion* by Claudio Villa et Gentina Solaro, Museum for Art and History in Brussels collection; 2 – *The Witnesses of the Crucifixion* from the retable with the *Crucifixion* in N. Salvator's church, Brugge, Stedelijke Musea, Groningemuseum in Brugge; 3 – *The Crucifixion of the Christ* from the collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 45.174.50; 4 – *The Christ before Pilate* scene from the retable altar of St. Bartholomew's Cathedral in Frankfurt (Main); 5 – *The Crucifixion of the Christ* from the church in Utsch; 6 – *St. Olaf's vision* from the altar of Länna church; 7 – *King Codrus gave himself to his destruction for his people* from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*; 8 – *The Mamluks defeat the Armenians at the disaster of Mari, in 1266*, from Marco Polo's *Book of Wonders*; 9 – Jacob de Maerlant's *Der naturen bloeme*; 10 – *The Christ stripped of his clothes scene*, from the Karlsruhe altarpiece (1 photo by P. Kottowicz; 2 after Musper 1961; 3 after <http://www.metmuseum.org>; 4 after Knüvener 2011; 5–6 after Kretzenbacher 1987; 7 after Wilson, Joyce 1984; 8 after Marco Polo 1995; 9 after <http://collecties.meermann.nl>; 10 after Franzen 2002)

of the villains unclotting Jesus in the *Christ stripped of his clothes* scene from the Karlsruhe altarpiece (ca. 1440–1450) (fig. 4:10) (Franzen 2002, Abb. 6). In the *Resurrection* scene from the *Retable de la Passion* by Claudio Villa et Gentina Solaro (ca. 1470) (Museum for Art and History in Brussels



collection) a heater-shaped artefact with a human mask is an attribute of one of the guards stroked by the resurrected Christ (fig. 4:1). It would appear that the depiction of shields as an attribute of common soldiers, not in the hand of the Centurion, from the altars in Burgundy, Germany and Austria was most likely caused by the fact that the latter were depicted as horsemen, and in this period a shield was usually the equipment of infantrymen. However, on the Netherlandish rosary pendant with the *Passion of Christ* from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the scene of *Crucifixion*, one of the armoured riders from the right side of the scene wears a shield with a grotesque mask on his back<sup>5</sup>. This was probably a result of pertinence of the symbolic value of the shield itself, not an emphasis on the person to whom it was attributed. It seems that it was not connected with the chronology of these images, because in the youngest depiction of a shield with a human face, known from the *Crucifixion* scenes from St. Catherine's Altar in Chrudim (Czech Republic) from ca. 1500 and an altar made in *Ecole champenoise* (Unterlinden-Museum zu Colmar in Elsaß) from 1522, it is held by the captain of guards (fig. 3:5) (Pešina 1950, obr. 71; Kretzenbecher 1987, fig. 25).

Such a motif placed on shield surfaces appears also on secular images. In a miniatures with the depiction of the personification of the planet Mars, from the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien (cod. 2352, fol. 28r) (ca. 1392–1394) and from another codex of Wenceslaus IV, the mask has enlarged ears and grey beard, which indicate that this image was stylised for the figure of a Satyr (fig. 2:5) (Krása 1974, fig. 155a, d). In both pictures the shield is heater-shaped. In *The Mamluks defeat the Armenians at the disaster of Mari, in 1266* miniature from Marco Polo's *Book of Wonders*, one of the Mamluk knights, the one who killed prince Toros, wears such a shield on his back (fig. 4:8). This image is dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (*Marco Polo...* 1995). In the case of battle scenes, e.g., the illumination of *Battle between Clovis and the Visigoths* from the manuscript stored in the Nationale bibliotheek van Nederland collection (ca. 1325–1335), this kind of an image should also be considered as a heraldic emblem.

Two other depictions of shields with face images which comes from the misericord of the Cathedral church of Blessed Virgin Mary in Aarschot (Belgium) (the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), are held by armed sea monsters – tritons (Bock 2010). The first depiction (shown on the Tartsche type shield) is clearly moustached (fig. 2:6), while the second (the shape of the shield is similar to Adarga type shields) has grotesque, enlarged eyes and nose (fig. 2:7). Cu-

<sup>5</sup> Photo of this piece of art as well as the one from the Museum for Art and History in Brussels collection was kindly given to me by Piotr Kotowicz MA from the Historical Museum in Sanok.

riously, a heater-shield with a face (with stylised ears) is an attribute of a triton (zifiron) also in the illumination of verses dealing with sea monsters in the 14<sup>th</sup> as well as the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries copy of Jacob de Maerlant's *Der naturen bloeme*<sup>6</sup> (fig. 4:9).

To sum up, we can notice that even though heater-shields were mostly depicted, the form of the shield depended on the popularity of the shape in the time when the piece of art was created. The images of faces differ from one another with secondary features. Beside faces with beards (sometimes with leaves stylised for hair), hairless features also appear. We cannot exclude that the convex relief, ascertained in a few depictions, concerns all the above mentioned images, because its three-dimensionality is visible only in case the depiction is shown in profile or half-profile. The shields with the representation of the face are very often depicted as attributes of negative characters (Goliath, Mars, Roman soldiers, knight sent to expel Heliodorus from the temple, David's supporters<sup>7</sup>, the sea monster triton, Mamluk knight). These depictions could have been probably connected with allegorical and dualistic thinking, typical for the Middle Ages (LeRoy, Bridges 1959; Żygulski 1984, p. 94). In the Christian dualism, which assumed the existence of two opposite values: good and evil, a perfect knight was opposed to an anti-knight (Żygulski 1978, p. 598). He had to have some characteristic attributes, easily recognisable for a common viewer, who at first sight could identify *the evil one*. This was made by providing armed men with faces stigmatised by cruelty, deformed with grimace, who wore deformed and untypical body defences. Negative characters were often distinguished by colour of the harness – instead of bright, clear colours of plates, they were depicted in red, brown or even black armour<sup>8</sup> (ibidem, p. 599). In the case of our de-

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<sup>6</sup> Both manuscripts are preserved in the collection of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Hague. Illuminations are available online: <http://collecties.meermann.nl> (no KB, KA 16 111ra and KB, 76 E 4 71ra3).

<sup>7</sup> David on the illumination of *Uriah's Death* is regarded rather as a negative character. Willing to marry Bathsheba – Uriah's wife – David sends him to the place where the battle is the toughest and Uriah is killed by the Ammonites.

<sup>8</sup> One should however be very cautious, which is based on the fact that some armours were painted with different colours, also black (Michalak, Kwaśniewicz, Wawrzyniak 2008, pp. 207–208). As an example we can mention a German Gothic armour from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, No. 29.150.8, which can be dated to ca. 1475–1480 (Grancsay 1955, cat. 1, fig. 1). Negative characters were sometimes depicted, like in the scene of *The Crucifixion of Christ* of the so-called Meister des Wiener Schottenaltars, from ca. 1470–1480, where one of the torturers of Christ wears black harness. However figures of saints were also depicted in the armours of that colour, like in the scene of St. Sebastian and St. Achatius from St. Magdalene's church in Klosterneuburg in Austria (ca. 1456). Equivocation of such division is underlined by a Passion scene from

pictions, this kind of element could have been the image of a face on the surface of the shield.

On the other hand, in most cases the shields with human masks appear in the hands of Centurion-Longinus – the witness of the passion and death of Christ. Even though Longinus – a man born from the spear, according to the legend – was a soldier who pierced Jesus' side, he eventually received salvation. In the face of uncanny events, which were accompanying the death of Christ on the cross, the Centurion made a crucial confession: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Schiller 1968, pp. 165–171; Miodońska 2007, p. 99). This notion tells that we should be prudent to assume the solely negative connotation of this sign.

Surfaces of shields were covered with decoration already in the ancient times. Makers were frequently using depictions of bad eyes, monsters and mythic creatures. The image from the shield increased its apotropaic, protective values. It had to expel, scare and eliminate hostile intentions, actions and forces. It added a supernatural protective layer to the shield itself and hence to its bearer (Dickinson 2005, p. 161). An extremely popular motif was the head of Medusa-Gorgon – a mythical monster with golden wings, copper claws and snakes instead of hair, whose sight turned on-lookers into stone (Harrison 1991, p. 187). According to the mythology she was beheaded by the hero Perseus, who gave the Gorgon's head to Athena. The goddess placed it on her shield, the Aegis. The Greeks attributed some special forces to the Gorgon's image. It had to expel evil powers and scare enemies. It was carved on buildings and altars, painted on shields and vases. According to the Iliad, Agamemnon bore its depiction on his breastplate (ibidem, pp. 186–188). In the Middle Ages the Byzantine Empire which often derived from the Greek tradition also used the Gorgon's image for the decoration of shields. It is clearly visible on the fresco with the depiction of St. George from *Katolikon* from the Vatopedi Monastery, which can be dated to ca. 1312 (fig. 2:1) (D'Amato 2011, fig. 7). Such patterns were also imitated by the Rus', who often used elements of Byzantine culture. In our context a depiction of a shield with a face image from the scene of *The Road to Calvary* from the icon in the collection of the Andrei Rublev Central Museum of Old Russian Culture and Art seems to be extremely interesting. The icon is dated to ca. 1497 (fig. 3:9). In this image we may guess the Medusa mask, although she is deprived of all her most important traits. It appears however as an attribute of a negative character – in this case one of the guards who escort Jesus on his way to Calva-

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St. Gilles Cathedral church (now in the collection of the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz), from ca. 1457, where one of the oppressors of Christ wears a golden shining armour.



ry (Салтыков 1981). In the Cinquecento period, in Italy, where the turn to ancient tradition was made, the Medusa motif was also extremely popular (Springer 2010, p. 55). Even though it was ascribed as feminine, the Gorgon depiction not only ensured apotropaic protection, but also allowed to complete the masculinity of a perfect knight (*ibidem*, p. 56). In parade armours its depiction was a political apotropeion – symbol of the power of the state (Boccia, Coelho 1967, cat. 263–264, 268, 288; Springer 2010, p. 56). Hence Renaissance armourers from the Cinquecento period very willingly used the Medusa motif (Hayward 1979–1980; Pyhrr, Godoy 1998). We should also mention a parade shield from the collection of the Armeria Real in Madrid (inv. D64) made by Filippo and Francesco Negroli for Emperor Charles V (Springer 2010, fig. 11). A terrifying vision of the Gorgon also appears on the rotella shield, dated to 1570–1580, from the collection of the Museum in Florence (BA M 956) (Boccia, Coelho 1967, p. 326, cat. 310/311). Another example of this kind of motif is the Milanese parade shield dated to 1570–1580, from the collection of the Musée de l'Armée in Paris (inv. I 75) (Reverseau 1982, p. 159; Pyhrr, Godoy 1998, pp. 331–335), or from the workshop of Luccio Picinino in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, which can be dated early to ca. 1552 (Laking 1917)<sup>9</sup>. One should however remember that the image of Medusa is limited only to the fully decorated shield boss, very rarely including the area of the whole shield.

Another very popular face motif, which often appears on shields already from the ancient times, was an emblem of a head of the lion. This kind of mask depicted in the Book of Hours, illustrated by Jean Pucelle, and made for Jeanne d'Evreux, was interpreted by Stephen Grancsay (1958, pp. 287–290) as a personal sign of Charles IV, King of France, who ordered to make this work. The lion's face also adorns the surface of the shield which was made for Emperor Charles V in the workshop of Filippo Negroli ca. 1540 (Boccia, Coelho 1967, p. 255). It seems that, besides its clearly apotropaic functional role, this image had to symbolise the imperial power (the lion as the king of animals, the Emperor as the king of kings of Christian Europe).

Some shields were depicted baring images of bearded faces on their surfaces, which could be an adaptation of the motif known from Hector's shield, found on vases from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (Kretzenbecher 1987, fig. 3). Bearded face from the shields also raise associations with these known from Rhenish stoneware (Gaimster 1997, p. 168). According to David Gaimster (1997,

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<sup>9</sup> This motif was also popular in the later period, which is confirmed by a shield made for Louis XIV, dated to ca. 1700, from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Żygulski 1984, fig. 4). The Gorgon's mask is curiously surrounded by serpents, which look like a beard.

pp. 209, 280; see also: von Bock 1966) *Bartmann* graphic theme, from the surface of German stoneware, represent an early migration of the *Wild Man* (Germ. *Wilder Mann*) image as a decorative motif<sup>10</sup> into a domestic physical medium. Face images from the shields depicted in Bohemian altars, V. Denkstein (1965, pp. 42–43) associated with the Wild Man. He was a mythic creature who was thought to live in remote mountainous and forested region of Harz and Saxony. His image was a very popular motif in Northern Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This character was usually depicted as a bearded, hairy man and in this figure human and animal traits are combined (Möller 1963). In the medieval tradition the Wild Man symbolises unharnessed forces of nature, but also professions connected with the forest as well as physical strength (White 1973; von Wilckens 1994). Many scholars believed that in the Christian vision of the world he represented all the traits a good Christian should not have: oddity, vehemence, primitiveness, unpredictability, unruliness, strangeness, lack of education and vulgarity (Bernheimer 1979, p. 20). Hence depictions of Christian knights fighting the Wild Man emerge, like in the *Siegenot* poem from the Codex of works of Ludwig Henfflin, dated to ca. 1470, where Dietrich von Bern's struggle with this beast was depicted (Bartsch 1887, fol. 19v–22r; Šmahel 2012, pp. 92–97). Presented in iconography and literature as a creature living in backwoods, beyond civilisation and the order established by the Catholic Church, the Wild Man was more defined by his intransigence, desire and violence, and was led more by his instinct than will. He was considered as pagan and sinner but also a subconscious incarnation of dark nature of a human, chaos of nature and barbarity (Bernheimer 1979, pp. 4–6; Bartra 1994).

This interpretation of the use of symbols from the depiction may cause some serious doubts. We can notice that in the medieval iconography, already from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Wild Man's attribute was not only a beard, but the hairiness of the whole body (Yamamoto 2000, p. 145). Hence it is difficult to say with certainty, based only on the presence of the beard, that he was depicted there. Additional serious questions may be provoked by the assumption that the Wild Man character brings only negative associations<sup>11</sup>. It seems that this assumption is caused mainly by misunderstand-

<sup>10</sup> These kinds of vessels were also called *Bellarmino jug*, which was created from the name of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), a fierce opponent of Protestantism in the Low Countries and northern Germany. The name was secondary to the German name *Bartmann krug*, because it was used for the first time not earlier than in 1634. A depiction of a bearded face on the neck of the jug might refer to the figure of the man of the cloth and in this way ridicule him (Holmes 1951).

<sup>11</sup> According to many scholars, a negative association of the Wild Man figure changed in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially in regions north from the Alps. It might have

ing the nature of this figure. It brought negative as well as positive emotions. The Wild Man was a temporary state, from which every Christian (they sometimes also became Wild Men – for instance St. John Chrysostom, who came to this state by asceticism, see: Allen, Mayer 2000, p. 6) may be cured and, conversely – become the Wild Man (the Wild Man in medieval understanding also means crazy man). This character also played an important role in the folk culture. Medieval written sources mentioned rituals, in which villagers ritually kidnapped participants dressed as Wild Men to symbolically burn them in order to satisfy demons before the harvest (Veenstra, Laurens 1997, pp. 92–94). The masquerade (*Bal des Ardents*) organised by King Charles VI of France in 1393 should not be treated only as a result of his mental illness (Tuchaman 1978, p. 504; Veenstra, Laurens 1997, pp. 90–91). The range of this phenomenon is also demonstrated by the fact of using Wild Men as heraldic supporters in the *Sigillum secretum* of King Christian I of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, from ca. 1449 (Petersen 1882, p. 9). Positive perceptions of this figure, also by the people of the Church, are confirmed by the illumination from the *Liber viaticus* breviary (ca. 1364) of bishop and chancellor of emperor Charles IV John of Štěpánek, where the Wild Man was depicted fighting, just as St. George did, with a dragon (Šmahel 2012, fig. 47). One of his attributes in this depiction is a heater-shaped shield with a face image.

On the shield from the depiction of the personification of the planet Mars, Passion triptych from the *Ecole champenoise* (Unterlinden-Museum zu Colmar in Elsaß collection) and most likely from the altar of N. Salvator's church in Brugge appears the image of the face with stylised animal (maybe goat's) ears or horns, which creates an association with the figure of mythological Satyr. This character, with regard to its Chthonic (under, or beneath the earth) and unfriendliness towards human nature, in the Christian Middle Ages became an archetype of a devil's depiction, although in its folk form. In

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been caused by the decrease of the authority of the Catholic Church and the Papacy accused of corruption and nepotism, and criticised by Luther and Erasmus. The government of souls over the wide masses of society was to a considerable degree taken over by the state, which had lesser influence on what the philosophers and artists of the Renaissance era created. These processes took place with much more intensity in Germany, where questions about the human identity caused the need of self-definition. Ideas of humanism effected in focusing on the human and his beginnings – the Wild Man. A great popularity was especially earned by Erasmus' ideas, according to whom the happiest are people who live close to the nature and turn against the mind (Russel 1972, p. 514). All these reasons caused the popularity of the Wild Man character, a man who rejected rules and frameworks established by the Catholic Church and lived in harmony with nature. The above mentioned assumption may have also been caused by the need to underline the Renaissance breakthrough, which did not happen in the case of the Wild Man's figure.



this context it appears many times in devotional paintings from this period, e.g., in the scene of the *Temptation of St. Anthony* from the altar of St. George's church in Spisska Sobota (Slovakia) dated to ca. 1503–1505 (Cidlinska 1989, p. 81). Very quickly the motif of Satyr came as a apotropaic symbol to the elements of weaponry. It appears, e.g., on the umbo of the French rotella type shield from the Collezione Odeschalchi (inv. n. 403) dated to ca. 1540 (di Carpegna 1969, pp. 32–33, cat. 181). Analogous motifs can be found on the elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century armours made in Italian (Boccia, Coelho 1967, cat. 291), as well as French (Grancsay 1952; 1959; Nickel 1972; Nickel, Pyhrr, Tarassuk 1982, pp. 57–58; Pyhrr 2003) manufactures of armour. The Satyr image also became a characteristic motif of decoration of armour made in the workshop of Luccio Piccinino, an armourer who was active in Milan ca. 1575–1597 (Grancsay 1964).

We should also briefly mention another possible interpretation. 16<sup>th</sup> century armours were also decorated with images of the personification of the Sun and the Moon. This motif associates with the spread of an opinion (both in Antiquity and the Middle Ages), which treated them as insignia of power, and hence they also serve for glorification of Christ. They were most likely depicted as a face or bust on the round circle, but the Moon was shown as a woman and the Sun as a man (Seibert 2007, p. 296). In this form this motif appears on Italian armours, e.g., made for Prince Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia (Boccia, Coelho 1967, pp. 476–477, cat. 411–413, fig. XXXVIIIa–c). Some references to this motif are visible in the image of the face from the shield of the knight who was sent to banish Heliodorus from the temple (fig. 2:4).

Whoever was depicted on the shield, his image had clearly apotropaic functions. One, however, could ask, why this kind of protection appears in the *Crucifixion* scenes? L. Kretzenbacher (1982; 1987) drew closer attention to the moment of Jesus Christ's death on the cross. It was a limit situation, when the son of god was between death and ascension and needed special protection from evil. Shields in most depictions are turned towards Christ's oppressors (also in the Wichów case). The centurion witnessing the passion of Christ foiled the hateful group of Jews or soldiers using the *apotropaion* from his shield (Kretzenbecher 1982). L. Kretzenbecher thought that the face mask from the shield was supposed to avert evil in the moment of salvation (Kretzenbecher 1987).

To sum up, it seems that depictions of faces known from shields did not represent one character-symbol but most likely several different ones. We can say that depictions showing very hairy faces may be associated with the Wild Man figure, e.g., the scene of *David kills Goliath* from the Psalter of

in the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien, the *Crucifixion* from the Altar from Schluderns and from the scene of *Uriah's death* (figs. 2:2, 3:1, 4). In the case of 3 images from Bohemia (figs. 3:10–11, 14) we probably have to do with the Leafed Mask – a variation of the Wild Man image, which refer to the depiction of the mythological Faun (Kaczmarek 1999, pp. 117, 120; 2007, 359; Šmahel 2012, p. 77). We can notice that the painting from Wichów clearly corresponds to almost hairless depictions of faces from Bohemian altars. It was probably a non-specific evil face (*signa horribilia*), whose image had apotropaic functions.

Where did the motif of the human face on Central European shields originate from? It seems that it may have happened due to the influences from the Byzantine milieu, where the Gorgon's motif was extremely popular and in some images it was depicted without its typical attributes. Although depictions of mask shields are known mainly from Central Europe, the oldest ones come from Austria and Czech Republic. We should however consider also Western European origin of this motif. It is not a coincidence that images from shields are very similar to these known from satire depictions, inter alia the Feudal Lord from misericords from St. Hadelin's Abbey church in Hastière-par-delà (Belgium), which can be dated already to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Block 2010). Carved elements from "mercy seats" were often used to transfer the message of the Christian faith, although it was not only related to religion and religious symbols – they were often telling mythological, humorist or satire stories, depicting the daily life of a human.

Besides protection from the evil attributes, the depiction of a face on the shield may have also been intended to cause fear in enemies. This effect is shown in a scene from the treatise by Paulus Kal from 1460. One of the fighters, who uses the buckler with this kind of image, after the *winden* action, in which he takes his opponent's sword, uses his shield to scare and distract his enemy (Tobler 2006, folio 26r).

The example with the depiction of shields with face images in Biblical scenes is a perfect illustration of a diffusion of elements of Christian beliefs and culture into pagan tradition, which was so remarkable in the Middle Ages (Kowalski 2007, pp. 22–25).

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## STRESZCZENIE

### W ŚWIECIE ŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH SYMBOLI. WYOBRAŻENIE TARCZY NA FRESKU Z KOŚCIOŁA PW. ŚW. MARCINA W WICHOWIE

Już co najmniej od XIX w. w badaniach nad uzbrojeniem wykorzystywane są źródła ikonograficzne. Dzieła sztuki pozwalają nam również wnikać w świat nieoświetlony zazwyczaj przez źródła materialne: mentalności, wiary, przesądów.

Z ilustracją takiej sytuacji mamy prawdopodobnie do czynienia również w wypadku fresków w kościele p.w. św. Marcina w podżagańskim Wichowie. Malowidła z Wichowa mogły powstać na podstawie malarstwa tablicowego, lub pewniej miniaturowego. Kompozycja interesującego nas *Ukrzyżowania* nawiązuje do form znanych z czeskich oraz śląskich rękopisów iluminowanych z przełomu XIV i XV stulecia oraz początków wieku XV. Według poznańskiej badaczki pozwala to uznać je za dzieło miejscowej twórczości cechowej rozwijane na użytek dydaktyki w kościołach parafialnych.

W niniejszym tekście interesować będzie nas przede wszystkim występująca w scenie *Ukrzyżowania Chrystusa* tarcza, którą dzierży wskazujący na Ukrzyżowanego dowódca jego oprawców. Na trójkątnego kształtu zabytku wyobrażono twarz brodatego mężczyzny o satyrycznie powiększonych oczach i nosie. Typologicznie tarcza mieści się w formach trójkątnych, występujących głównie w XIII i XIV w. Ich występowanie w wieku XV nie powinno jednak dziwić, gdyż były one jako tarcze funeralne używane również w tym czasie.

Najstarsze przedstawienie tego typu tarczy z wizerunkiem ludzkiej twarzy z Europy Środkowej znane jest mi ze sceny *Dawid zabija Goliata* z Psalterza ze zbiorów Österreichische Nationalbibliothek w Wiedniu (fig. 2:2). Motyw ten występuje dość często w scenach biblijnych (fig. 2:3–4, 6–7, 3:3–4, 4:6–7). Dużą serię przedstawień tarcz z wizerunkiem twarzy odnajdujemy w scenach pasyjnych, z reguły jako atrybut Centuriona. Najstarsze przedstawienie z tego typu sceny znane jest z *Ukrzyżowania Mistrza Cyklu z Vyššíego Brodu* z ok. 1350 r. (fig. 3:10). Twarze na tych tarczach były gładkie (fig. 3:2, 12–13, 15, 4:3) lub brodate (fig. 3:1, 5–8, 4:2, 4–5), a czasem dodatkowo dekorowane elementami roślinnymi (fig. 3:10–11, 14). Najmłodsze przedstawienie z tego typu motywem pochodzi z ołtarza powstałego w *Ecole champenoise* ok. 1522 r.

W kilku przedstawieniach *Ukrzyżowania Chrystusa* tarcze nie stanowią one atrybutu Centuriona, a innych postaci uczestniczących w tej scenie – Longinusa, pieszego kusznika, szeregowego pieszego lub jeźdźca (fig. 3:6–7). Przedsta-



wienie osłon jako atrybutów prostych zbrojnych, nie w rękach zwierchnika oddziału oprawców Jezusa, związane było zapewne z ważkością symboliki samej tarczy, nie zaś postaci, która ją dzierżyła. Potwierdzeniem tej opinii są wizerunki tego typu tarcz w scenach świeckich (fig. 2:5–7, 4:8–9).

Mimo iż w przedstawieniach tych przeważają okazy trójkątne, to jednak forma tarczy uzależniona była od popularności tego kształtu w okresie, kiedy powstawało dane dzieło. Wizerunki twarzy różnią się od siebie cechami drugorzędnymi. Nie można wykluczyć, że wypukłość reliefu stwierdzona w wypadku kilku przedstawień dotyczy wszystkich omówionych wizerunków, gdyż jego plastyczność widoczna jest tylko w wypadku okazów ukazanych w profilu lub półprofilu. W kilku przypadkach tarcze z interesującym nas motywem wyobrażone jako atrybuty postaci negatywnych. Mogło być to związane z charakterystycznym dla średniowiecza myśleniem alegorycznym i dualistycznym zakładającym istnienie dwóch przeciwstawnych sobie wartości: dobra i zła, ale także rycerza i antyrycerza. Musiał on się charakteryzować cechami lub atrybutami łatwo rozpoznawalnymi dla zwykłego widza. W wypadku naszych przedstawień takim elementem jest wizerunek twarzy na tarczy.

Z drugiej strony tarcze z maskami najczęściej przedstawiane były w rękach Centuriona-Longinusa – świadka męki Chrystusa, który wobec niepokojących wydarzeń towarzyszących śmierci Jezusa na krzyżu, złożył wyznanie wiary i został zbawiony. Nakazuje to ostrożność przed formułowaniem opinii o negatywnej konotacji tego znaku.

Powierzchnie tarcz zdobiono malowaniem już od czasów antycznych. Częstym motywem pojawiającym na ich powierzchni były wizerunki złych oczu, potworów, mitycznych zwierząt. Wyobrażenie z tarczy zwiększało apotropeicznie, ochronne właściwości tarczy. Miało odpędzać, odstraszać bądź eliminować umyślne wrogie zamiary, działania czy siły. Niezwykle popularnym motywem wyobrażonym wtedy była głowa Gorgony-Meduzy, według mitologii zgładzona przez Perseusza, który podarował jej głowę Atenie. Bogini nosiła trofeum na tarczy (Egidzie). Czerpiące z tradycji greckich Bizancjum wykorzystywało również przedstawienie Gorgony do zdobienia swoich tarcz (fig. 2:1). Zapożyczeń dokonywała również czerpiąca z kultury bizantyjskiej Ruś (fig. 3:8). W okresie włoskiego renesansu, gdzie nastąpił zwrot do tradycji antycznych, również w zakresie uzbrojenia, motyw Meduzy był niezwykle popularny. Popularnym motywem twarzy pojawiającym się także na tarczach był emblemat lwiej fizys, czy postaci ze stylizowanymi zwierzęcymi uszami, przywołujące skojarzenie z postacią mitologicznego satyra (diabła?) oraz personifikacji ciał niebieskich: Słońca i Księżycy.

Część przedstawionych tarcz nosi na swojej powierzchni wizerunki brodatych twarzy, będących prawdopodobnie adaptacją motywów znanych z tarczy Hektora. Zdaniem V. Denksteina część przedstawień można łączyć z postacią Dzikiego Męża, niezwykle popularnego w kulturze ludowej Europy Północnej w XIV–XVI w. Postać ta była przedstawiana z reguły jako brodaty, „włochaty”

mężczyzna. W średniowiecznej tradycji Dzikie Męż symbolizował nieujarzmione siły natury, ale także zawody związane z lasem oraz siłą fizyczną. Wielu badaczy uważa, że w chrześcijańskiej wizji świata reprezentował on jednak wszystko, czym dobry chrześcijanin nie powinien być. Przedstawiany w ikonografii i literaturze jako żyjący w ostępach leśnych, poza cywilizacją i ustalonym przez kościół katolicki porządkiem, postrzegany był jako poganin i grzesznik, ale również podświadome wcielenie ciemnej strony człowieka, chaos natury, męskość i barbarzyństwo. Biorąc pod uwagę taką interpretację, wizerunek Dzikiego Męża mógł pełnić funkcję manifestacji (wskazania) osoby znajdującej się w opozycji do cywilizacji, znanego świata wartości barbarzyńcy sprzeciwiającego się ustalonemu porządkowi świata.

Takie odczytanie symboliki przedstawienia może budzić jednak zastrzeżenia. Zwrócić można uwagę, że w ikonografii średniowiecznej już od XII w. atrybutem Dzikiego Męża nie była wyłącznie broda, a owłosienie całego ciała. Trudno więc na podstawie jedynie występującego zarostu twarzy uznać, że chodzi na pewno o tę mityczną postać. Dodatkowe wątpliwości wzbudza również założenie, że postać Dzikiego Męża mogła powodować w okresie powstawania omówionych wyżej przedstawień jedynie negatywne skojarzenia. Wydaje się, że może to wynikać z niezrozumienia tej postaci. Budziła ona bowiem zarówno pozytywne jak i negatywne emocje. Dzikie Męż był stanem przejściowym, z którego każdy chrześcijanin mógł się wyleczyć i odwrotnie – popaść w niego.

Wydaje się, że wizerunki twarzy znane z tarcz nie wyobrażały jednej postaci-symbolu, a prawdopodobnie kilka różnych. Którąkolwiek z istot przedstawiono na tarczy, jej wizerunek miał spełniać funkcje apotropaiczne. Można jednak zapytać, czemu tego typu ochrona pojawia się w scenach ukrzyżowania? L. Kretzenbacher zwrócił baczniejszą uwagę na sam moment śmierci Chrystusa na krzyżu, gdy znajdował się on w zawieszeniu między śmiercią a wniebowstąpieniem i potrzebował specjalnej ochrony przed złem. Tarcza w większości przedstawień, również na wichowskich freskach, skierowana była w stronę oprawców Chrystusa. Centurion jako świadek męki Pańskiej używają *apotropaion* na swojej tarczy powstrzymywał grupę nienawistnych Żydów bądź żołnierzy.

Skąd jednak motyw twarzy ludzkiej pojawił się na tarczach? Wydaje się, że mogło to odbyć się w wyniku oddziaływań kręgu bizantyjskiego, gdzie motyw Gorgony był niezwykle popularny, a w niektórych późnych przedstawieniach wyobrażana była ona bez swoich typowych atrybutów. Pamiętać należy, że wizerunki tarcz z maskami występują głównie na dziełach sztuki powstałych na terenie Europy Środkowej, a te najstarsze pochodzą z Austrii i Republiki Czeskiej. Dopuszczyć należy również zachodnioeuropejską genezę tego motywu. Nieprzypadkowe wydaje się podobieństwo wizerunków znanych z tarcz z satyrycznymi przedstawieniami m.in. pana feudalnego z „ławek miłosierdzia” z kościoła pw. św. Hadelin opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Hastière-par-delà w Belgii, które datować można już na XIII w.

Przykład przedstawień tarcz z wizerunkiem twarzy w scenach biblijnych jest doskonałą ilustracją charakterystycznego dla średniowiecza przenikania się elementów wierzeń i kultury chrześcijańskiej oraz obyczajów pogańskich.