OSINT4Fun Advent of OSINT 2024: Day 6

*Today is a day of celebration! It's Christmas early!*

*I hope you found a mandarin and sweets in your shoe this morning.*

*We can easily find the original name of the knight who inspired the story of one of Saint Nicholas's companions.*

*In front of his castle, this knight built a tower that acted as an outpost.*

*What is the name of this tower in the original language?*

As a Dutch person, this story seems familiar as it resembles the Dutch celebration of Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas). Leading up to December 5, the Dutch put out one shoe before going to bed, to wake up and find it filled with strooigoed (sweets), gifts, or if you’re unlucky, a mandarin. On December 5, ‘pakjesavond’ is celebrated: an evening of receiving gifts. The story goes that December 6 is the birthday of Sinterklaas. The challenge mentions Saint Nicholas’s companions. The companions of Sinterklaas are called ‘zwarte pieten’ (black Petes): according to the story they are chimney sweepers which makes their skin black, but the blackface tradition has become very controversial in recent years. For this challenge we might be looking for a knight who inspired the story of the zwarte pieten. So, I decided to look at the Dutch Wikipedia page for ‘Zwarte Piet’. However, nowhere on this page can I find anything about a castle or a tower. Recognizing that Saint Nicholas is celebrated across Europe in different variations, I decide to take a step back from my hypothesis of the zwarte pieten. I decide to learn more about Saint Nicholas by reading through his Wikipedia page. Reading this page unfortunately does not reveal much interesting information either. However, at the end of the Wikipedia page, a few other potentially interesting Wikipedia pages are referenced. One about the European folklore of Saint Nicholas, and one about the companions of Saint Nicholas. This latter page might reveal which companion of Saint Nicholas this challenge is referring to. Besides the zwarte pieten, other similar characters are mentioned as companions of Saint Nicholas, including Knecht Ruprecht, Krampus, and Belsnickel. Since the word ‘knecht’ (which means something like companion, henchman, or sidekick) resembles the word ‘knight’ which is referred to in the challenge, Knecht Ruprecht might be a good lead to investigate further. Let’s see if we can find any link between Knecht Ruprecht and a castle or tower. First, I tried this in English, but then I continued in German with the hope of finding better results. So, I Googled for: “Knecht Ruprecht” turm geschichte burg. I try to see any mentions of turm (tower) or burg (castle) in the link descriptions. Unfortunately, I don’t find much again. I do see a Wikipedia page for Hans von Trotha, that mentions some confusion between him and Knecht Ruprecht. Maybe this is a good pivot point. Let’s look at this article and found out more about Hans von Trotha. The English translation of this German Wikipedia page immediately characterizes Hans von Trotha as a knight, which is promising. The article also mentions that he inherited castles. Looking further down the page, I see some pictures of buildings, of which one that looks like a tower but is described as an outpost, called “Little France”. The text below this image explains that Hans von Trotha built this tower in 1484. There seems to exist a separate Wikipedia page for this tower. Now turning off the browser translation, this tower is called **Burg Klein-Frankreich**.

After entering this answer, another question pops up: *On Hans von Trotha’s stone, the names of two saints are engraved. What are the names of these two saints?* To find this out, I Google: “Hans von Trotha” grab. However, I don’t get much results. When I Google for tomb instead of the German grab, I get results that mention the name Hans Trapp as alternative name, which I am able to confirm on the Hans von Trotha Wikipedia page. When searching for “Hans Trapp” grab, I get an interesting image of a headstone. However, this headstone is for a Hans Trapp in a whole different century. Let’s add the death year (1503) to the query. Still, I can’t find anything. Maybe the Wikipedia page of Hans von Trotha holds more clues. And indeed, it mentions that a memorial tablet was placed in a chapel in 1967. The article that is referenced here does not reveal much extra information. The Wikipedia article says that Hans was buried in St. Anne’s Chapel in Niederschlettenbach. Googling for “St. Anna Kapelle” Niederschlettenbach grab gives me a page on westpfalz.wiki that describes the gravestone and crypt slab of Hans von Droth in this chapel. The article explains that Hans von Droth was also known as Hans von Trotha, so we are dealing with the right person. The inscription of the gravestone mentions **Simon** and **Jude** of the Apostles.