

Long sword in the Highlands Museum (Museum Vysočiny) in Jihlava¹

Długi miecz z Muzeum Vysočiny w Jihlavie

Abstrakt: W Muzeum Vysočiny w Jihlavie, Republika Czeska, przechowywany jest długi miecz odkryty w czasie badań zamku Kámen, okr. Pelhřimov. Zabytek należy do typu XIIIa, T₅, 1 wg R. E. Oakeshotta i może być datowany na koniec XV i początek XVI w.

The collection of the Highlands Museum in Jihlava contains numerous medieval military items, among which

the most precious is a still unidentified, fully preserved long sword, which is currently on loan and displayed at the exhibition at the Kámen Castle in the Pelhřimov region².

The sword is 980 mm in length; it has a 755-mm-long double-edged blade 57 mm wide at the pommel guard and narrowing parabolically toward the point. Similarly, the thickness, which is 5-3 mm, decreases towards the point. The blade is provided with a relatively wide and shallow fuller on both sides, at approximately one third of the length, there are marks inlaid in the fuller in the form of a wolf running to the left with a protruding tongue and a small six-pointed star. On the reverse

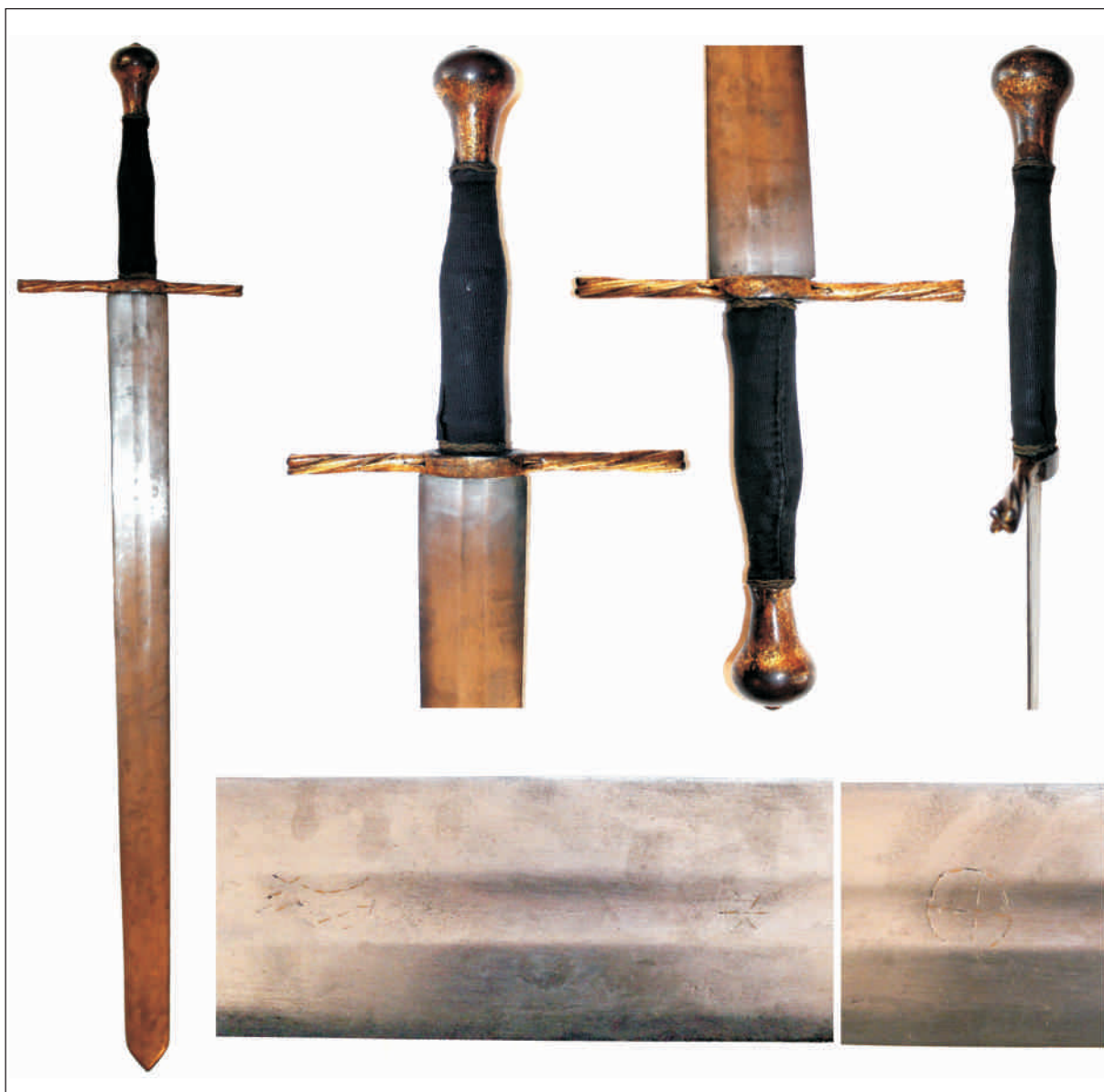


Fig. 1. Long sword from the collection of Highlands Museum in Jihlava. Photo by P. Žákovský.

Ryc. 1. Długi miecz z kolekcji Muzeum Vysočiny w Jihlavie. Fot. P. Žákovský.

¹ The article was prepared with the support of the Czech Science Foundation (Project no. P 405/12/2289 "Swords of Medieval Europe as Technological, Archaeological and Cultural-Historical Source").

² Muzeum Vysočiny Jihlava, inv. č. Ji-9/A/122; JiFS 20 216.

surface, there is a mark made with the same technique in the form of a circle divided into quarter sections. The point is markedly bevelled and the width of the blade at the point of transition into the point, which is 43 mm, suggests that the original blade could be a little longer and its present length could be due to a modification following damage to the weapon. The planned technological research will definitely confirm or refute this hypothesis in the future. On the basis of the morphological characteristics, the blade is likely to be classified as a blade of Type XIIIa (Oakeshott 1964, 42-47). The blade continues to a both-sided 225-mm-long offset grip covered with a 164-mm-long wooden hilt consisting of two slightly profiled separate discs coated with black greige fabric, which is sawn around the middle of the reverse surface of the hilt. The hilt width decreases upwards from the original 33 mm to the final 21 mm. Similarly, the thickness is 22-18 mm. At the cross-guard and the pommel, the hilt is decorated with a turban plaited of three coiled wires of yellow metal.

The cross-guard with arms is 210 mm in total width. The individual arms of the cross-guard are designed with four separate coiled bars with an approximately circular cross-section; the width and thickness of the arms decrease toward the top from 12 to 9 mm. The cross-guard surface is plated with yellow metal, probably gold, in a thick layer. The cross-guard, in spite of its rather original shape and design, can be classified as Type 1 (*ibidem*, 113).

A 61-mm-long pear-shaped pommel is riveted to the grip. The maximum diameter is as much as 45 mm and the minimum diameter at the bottom base is mere 22 mm. In the bottom part, the pommel is cracked. The entire surface, similarly to that of the cross-guard, is massively metal-plated, probably with gold. The

pommel can be clearly classified as the T₅ pommel typical of the late 15th c. (*ibidem*, 106). The total weight of the weapon is 1656 g; its centre of gravity was identified at the blade, ca. 115 mm from the bottom edge of the cross-guard.

In view of its character, it is clearly a long sword, one of those that were made in large numbers at the turn of the 15th and the 16th c. Our piece is of a high quality, both in terms of workmanship and vast metal-plating of the hilt. If it was a battle weapon, originally it was undoubtedly made for a wealthy owner. However, it is very likely that this was a weapon used for executions and therefore it was preserved almost intact. Such swords were preserved at town halls as precious souvenirs of certain rights enjoyed by the towns and following the abolition of such rights they served as documents of the former fame of the towns. After the establishment of museums, these artefacts were donated to the collections where they served as mementos for the public. It is therefore likely that the sword from the Jihlava museum is a precious relic of capital punishments in Jihlava and as such it can be compared with the similar preserved contemporary executioners' or mayors' swords from Broumov (Žákovský 2008) or Passau (Uhlemann 1982). It was in this beautiful Bavarian town that the weapon, classified as long sword of Type XIIIa, T₅, 1, was made by the local master swordmaker at the end of the 15th c., as we can read from the mark on the blade. Swords from the Passau workshops are the most frequent finds of marked swords in the Czech Republic territory in general documenting the lively trade relationship between the Czech lands and this leading swordmaking region in Europe.

Petr Žákovský

Bibliography

- Oakeshott R. E.
1964 *The sword in the age of chivalry*, New York-Washington.
- Uhlemann H. R.
1982 *Die mittelalterlichen Gerichtsschwerter und die späteren Richtschwerter von Passau*, [in:] *Blankwaffen. Festschrift Hugo Schneider zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. K. Stüber, H. Wetter, Zürich, pp. 33-44.
- Žákovský P.
2008 *Značené vrcholně a pozdně středověké dlouhé meče ze sbírek Městského muzea v Broumově*, AH 33, pp. 471-490.