

A long sword in the Highlands Museum
(Museum Vysočiny) in Jihlava, Telč branch¹

Długi miecz z Muzeum Vysočiny w Jihlavie,
oddział w Telči

Abstrakt: W Muzeum w Telči, oddziale Muzeum
Vysočiny w Jihlavie, Republika Czeska, przechowywany
jest długi miecz, używany zapewne w egzekucjach.

Zabytek ten, wykonany w jednym z warsztatów passaw-
skich, należy do typu XIIIa, Z, 12 wg R. E. Oakeshotta
i może być datowany na 2. połowę XV w.

The Telč Museum collection contains, among other
things, a completely preserved, thus far unpublished long
sword which is being connected with the privilege to
execute capital punishment².

The sword is 1190 mm long with a 885 mm
long blade whose width narrows from 56 mm to the

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² Muzeum Vysočiny Jihlava, pobočka Telč, inv. č. Te-9/A/B; TE-FS 64.



Fig. 1. Long sword from the collection of museum in Telč. Photo by P. Žákovský.

Ryc. 1. Długi miecz z kolekcji w muzeum w Telč. Fot. P. Žákovský.

insignificant and rounded point. Its thickness also decreases from 7 mm to 2 mm. The blade is equipped with a rather narrow and shallow fuller on both sides which ends in about one third of the blade length. On one side of the blade an engraved and inlaid mark is situated. It depicts an animal running to the left, placed, rather unusually, in a circle. On the other side we can see a mark in the shape of an engraved and inlaid two-barred, so-called patriarchal cross. Based on the morphological characteristics we can classify the blade as Type XIIIa (Oakshott 1964, 42-47). The blade continues to a 305 mm long grip, offset on both sides on which an original hilt survived; its length is 259 mm. The width of the hilt decreases toward the pommel from 33 mm to 24 mm. Its thickness decreases from 29 mm to 23 mm. The hilt is made of two separate wood plates around the grip which are twined around with hemp

rope and are covered in blackened leather sawn on the side of the hilt. The hemp rope forms typical bulges ensuring a safer grip of the weapon and preventing slippage while wielding the sword. The hilt is decorated with three decorative rivets of gold metal at the upper and bottom base on both sides. A massive cross-guard is placed on the grip with the arm length of 240 mm. The slightly horizontally s-shaped arms are made of an iron bar. Its thickness increases from 14 mm to 24 mm toward the tips. Its thickness decreases in the same direction from 11 mm to 5 mm. The cross-guard can be classified as Type 12 (*ibidem*, 118). A massive, almost oblong pommel is riveted to the grip, 46 mm long and 61 mm wide, with a diamond profile on the cross section. Its thickness decreases from approximately the centre to the edges from 24 mm to 11 mm. The surface of the pommel is blackened. The pommel can be probably

classified as one of Type Z variants (Głosek 1984, 26). The total weight of the weapon is 2021 g, its centre of gravity was identified at the blade, ca. 145 mm from the cross-guard lower edge.

This long sword is a rare example of a very well preserved weapon of this kind. This is probably due to the assumed original purpose of it. In the late 15th c. where the origin of the subject weapon can be reliably placed, special executioners' swords were not yet made. These we can encounter only in later centuries. The morphology of these weapons was based on the battle weapon design and in some cases it was differentiated only with the weight and shift of the centre of gravity toward to point. This resulted in a better impact of the weapon and an increased efficiency of the cut which was, without any doubt, desirable during the executions. The subject sword that can be classified as Type XIIIa, Z, 12 was probably made in the 2nd half of the 15th c.

in one of Passau workshops, as documented by the marks on the blade. The mark of a wolf was traditionally and rightfully used in this town in Bavaria. However, in some periods it was also being forged. The fact that this mark was made by one of Passau masters can be documented by the mark depicting the wolf which is unusually placed in a circle and on the discussed sword it is accompanied with the two-barred cross mark which has been associated with the bishopric until the present day. Hypothetically, this could be the mark of a workshop operated by the local bishopric. However, the combination of marks probably points to the fact that the weapon was made by a swordmaker in Passau. Therefore it is a similar issue as in the case of weapons marked with the bishop's crosier (e.g. Žákovský 2012).

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