

*Lech Marek*THE BLESSING OF SWORDS.
A NEW LOOK INTO INSCRIPTIONS OF THE *BENEDICTUS* – TYPE

Abstract:

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The presented paper deals with sword-inscriptions and symbols referring to medieval rites of blessing. The latter most probably originated from old Germanic tradition and were subsequently incorporated into Christian liturgy. In my opinion, formulas and quotes from the Bible recited during these rites inspired sword – inscription programs. The best example of such an inspiration is psalm 143 (144) which appears on swords from the 8th-13th c. This text was recited during medieval sword girding ceremonies, such as, initially, the coronation and afterwards, the accolade. Incorporating elements of coronation liturgy into the procedure of the dubbing of a new knight reflects important changes in medieval society. A group of 8th c. sword-hilts with inscribed words of psalm No. 143 (144) seems to support a hypothesis that the recitation of the text already played an important role in the Carolingian sword girding rites.

Key words: blessing, swords, *Benedictus*, psalm 143 (144), medieval, accolade

Among medieval swords preserved in European collections there is a distinctive group of weapons bearing inscriptions with the word: *Benedictus*. Such specimens have drawn attention of scholars since the very beginning of serious research on inscribed swords (Wegeli 1904, 263). Thorough investigations into the matter were undertaken by Polish researchers from the University of Łódź and Poznań (Głosek 1973; Głosek, Kajzer 1977; Głosek, Makiewicz 2007) who, according to the most recent state of art counted, 12 swords of the so-called *Benedictus* type (Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 139). They have stated with right, that the inscription first appeared in the 8th c. and was originally applied to a sword hilt, with the characters engraved upon a band of copper alloy adorning the upper- and lower-guards. The word *Benedictus* was recorded by them on the hilts of the *Mannheim*-type spatha from Hedendorf, Kr. Stade near Hanover (Germany) and on the sword from Elvran, near Trondheim (Norway), of an allegedly 11th c. date (Głosek, Kajzer 1977, 121). Their list of early medieval swords with the analysed inscription should be extended, including the 8th c. Carolingian spatha found in Nebel Amrum, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany (Jankuhn 1939, 159; Müller-Wille 1977, 66-67; Marek 2005, 55) and

a *Mannheim*-type spatha-hilt (Fig. 1) from Musée de l'Armée in Paris (Inv. No PO 2245).

Other swords of the *Benedictus*-type recorded in the literature could be dated to the 12th and 13th c., adding to the list presented by M. Głosek and T. Makiewicz (2007), the 12th c. specimen from the Army Museum in Delft, Netherlands (Puype, Stevens 2010, 106-107) and the 13th c. sword (Fig. 2) found in Seewen, Kt. Schwyz in Switzerland (Schneider 1964, 137-141). On a selected group of swords of the *Benedictus*-type, the inscription was most certainly inspired by the Latin psalm No. 143 (144), starting with the words: *Benedictus, Dominus Deus meus qui docet manus meas ad praelium, et digitos meos ad bellum*. According to my knowledge, the first author to match *Benedictus* inscriptions on medieval swords with this text was H. Schneider (*ibidem*, 139), while dealing with the abovementioned find from Seewen. Later on M. Głosek, L. Kajzer (1977) and M. Głosek, T. Makiewicz (2007), greatly developed our knowledge on the sword-legend-type, and proved beyond any doubt that H. Schneider's hypothesis was correct. We shall focus only on those artefacts, on which the inscription was most probably inspired by the psalm No 143. The list includes the following swords:



Fig. 1. Sword-hilt with the words of psalm No. 143 (144), Mannheim-type, 8th c., find place unknown (France?): a – obverse: lower guard BENEDICTU, upper guard S QUI DOC; b – reverse: lower guard SDS MEU, upper guard ET MAN (collection of Musée de l’Armée in Paris, Inv. No. PO 2245; copyright RNM-Grand Palais/BE&W).

Ryc. 1. Rękojeść miecza ze słowami psalmu nr 143 (144), typ Mannheim, VIII w., miejsce znalezienia nieznane (Francja?): a – awers: jelec BENEDICTU, podstawa głowicy S QUI DOC; b – rewers: jelec SDS MEU, podstawa głowicy ET MAN (zbiory Musée de l’Armée, Paryż, nr inw. PO 2245; copyright RNM-Grand Palais/BE&W).

1. Find place unknown (France?), Musée de l’Armée in Paris (Inv. No PO 2245), 8th c., Mannheim-type (Fig. 1). Reading from the lower guard, as follows: BENEDICTU (lower guard-obverse) ...SDS MEU (lower guard – reverse) S QUI DOC (upper guard – obverse) ET MAN (upper guard – reverse). The inscription on the reverse of the lower guard could be read only when the sword pointed upwards;

2. Hedendorf, Kr. Stade, Germany, 8th c., Mannheim-type (variant) on the obverse of the guard: BENEDICT...I; on the reverse: IFDNSDSN (Jankuhn 1939, 159);

3. Nebel Amrum, Kr. Nordfriesland, Germany, turn of the 8th/9th c., Mannheim-type; on one

side of the guard: SQUIDOC:TMV (Jankuhn 1939, 159);

4. Elvran near Trondheim, Norway, type:?: on the obverse of the guard: BENEDICTUD DN on the reverse: SGS...SQUIDO (Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 140). According to the literature (Głosek, Kajzer 1977, 121) the sword is dated to the 11th c. In my opinion the poor state of preservation makes it difficult to ascribe it to a well defined type. It might as well be earlier, manufactured even in the Carolingian period;

5. Weltliche Schatzkammer, Vienna, Austria. The *Reichschwert* – ceremonial sword of the German emperors, made probably in France for Otto IV, for his coronation in Aachen, in 1198 (Luckhardt 1995,

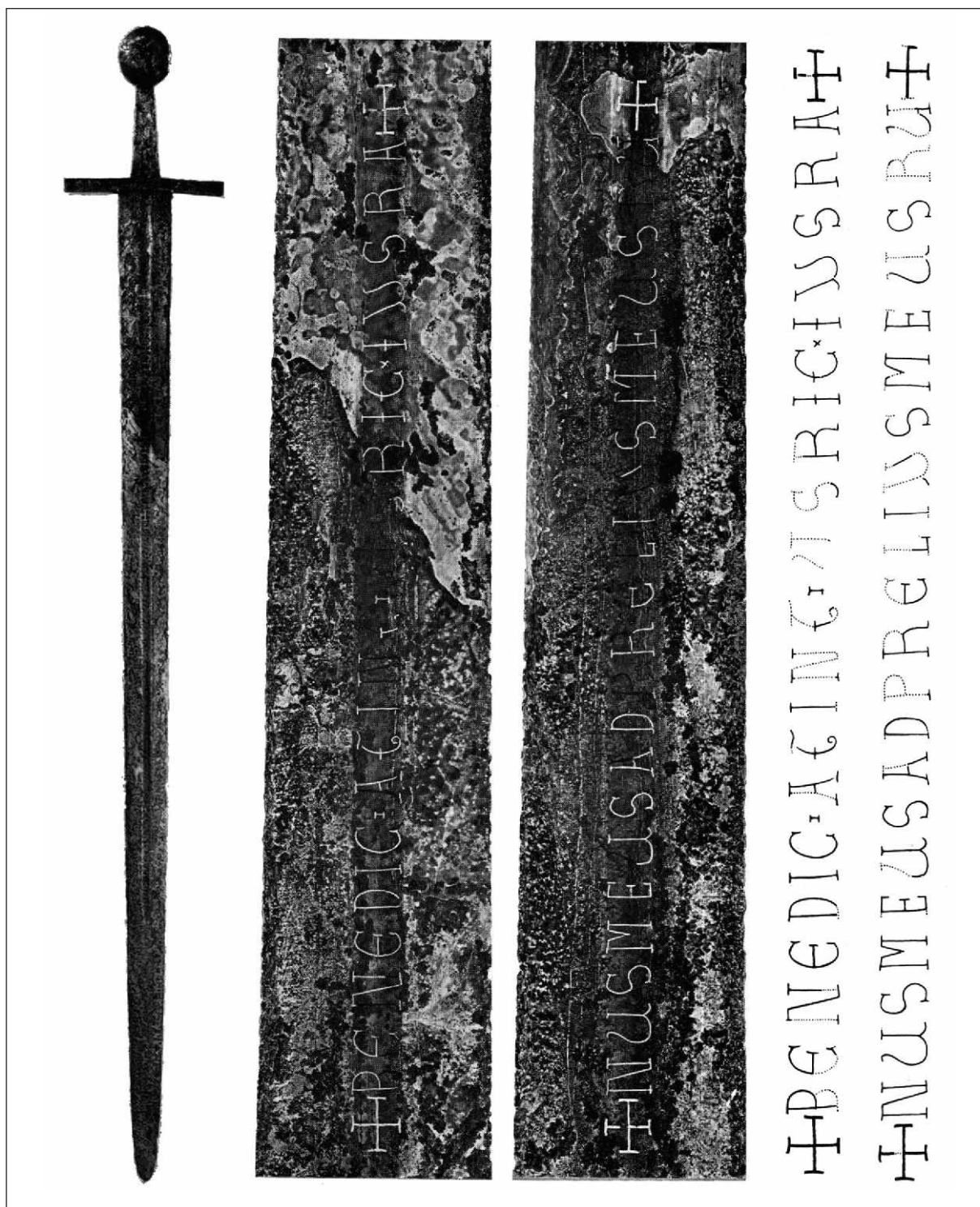


Fig. 2. Sword with the words of psalm No. 143 (144) on the blade, Oakeshott's type XI,I,1; 13th c., found in Seewen, Kt. Schwyz, Switzerland (after Schneider 1964).

Ryc. 2. Miecz z cytatem z psalmu nr 143 (144) na głowni, typ XI,I,1 wg Oakeshotta, XIII w., znaleziony w Seewen, Kt. Schwyz, Szwajcaria (wg Schneider 1964).

344). The scabbard is earlier (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1995, 39-41), and comes from the times of the German king Henry IV (Henry III – as emperor, 1056-1106); Oakeshott's type: XI,B,1. On the pommel the abbreviated inscription reads:

BENEDICTUS DOS (dominus) DES (deus) MEUS QUI. Inscribed upon the cross-guard are words of the Carolingian coronation chant: CRISTVS. VINCIT. CRISTVS REIGNAT. CRIST(VS) INPERAT;

6. Find place unknown. Netherlands' Army Museum in Delft (Inv. No. 11100), 12th c. (Puype, Stevens 2010, 106-107). In the fuller of the blade, on the obverse: BENEDT DNS DSM; on the reverse: AD PLU ET OCTCNES. The inscription becomes legible when an attempt to match the abbreviations with the words of the psalm is made, as follows: **BENED(IC)T(US), D(OMI)N(U)S D(EU)S M(EUS)....and: AD P(RAE)L(I)U(M) ET;**

7. Paczków, Nysa distr., Poland, turn of the 12th/13th c., Oakeshott's type XI,E,7. Inscription in the fuller reads: +BENE[DI]CTUS[DOM]INUS DEVSMEVS...VID..., whereas on the other side of the blade: ADPRELIOSETDIGITOSMEOS... (Głosek 1984, 160; Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 140);

8. Historical Museum in Leipzig, Germany, turn of the 12th/13th c., Oakeshott's type XII,B,3. Inscription in the fuller reads: +BENEDICTUS DEUS MEUS+ (Głosek 1984, 154; Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 140);

9. Seewen, Kt. Schwyz, Switzerland, Oakeshott's type XI,I,1 (Fig. 2), according to H. Schneider (1964) it was made ca. 1300. In my opinion, on the basis of the typological analysis, it should be dated to the 1st half of the 13th or mid 13th c. (see Oakeshott 2002, 31, 96). Inscription in the fuller reads: +BENEDIC ATINT USRIC IUSRA+/+NUSMEUSADPRELIUSMEUSRU+; on the other side of the blade: BENEDIC(TUS)... (DOMI)NUS MEUS AD PRELIUS MEUS.

Fragment of the psalm No. 143 (144) on medieval swords has been identified as an apotropaic and devotional formula, which makes a knight and his weapon the implement of God's will (see Głosek, Kajzer 1977; Ławrynowicz 2005, 107). According to the Masoretic Text of the Jewish Bible, the words were ascribed to king David preparing for duel against Goliath (Schneider 1964, 139). M. Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995, 25) and J. Luckhardt (1995, 344) mentioned that the inscription occurring on the pommel of the *Reichsschwert* was a quote from the official coronation ritual of emperors, as in the case of the cross-guard-legend. It seems that not much more attention was attracted in the literature by the frequent occurrence of the phrase on swords. Seeking an answer to this intriguing problem, the reading of medieval pontificals proved extremely rewarding. Such liturgical texts as, for example, the Romano-German Pontifical (RGP 1963) from

the 10th c. developed until the edition of the Pontifical of Guillaume Durand from 1292-1295 (PWD 1940). The latter was eventually included into the Roman Pontifical, compiled in 1485 (see Palazzo 1998, 210; Contamine 1999, 286). They all contain ecclesiastical procedures, such as rites of ordination, blessing, baptism, celebrations of Mass, and confession. Among blessings, which most probably originated from old Germanic tradition, there were benedictions of new knights and benedictions of royal or knightly weapons (shields, spurs, swords, pennons etc.) (Contamine 1999, 286). According to D. A. Rivard (2009, 161) such blessings of arms reveal important elements of the Christian perspective on military class and the connection of that class to the piety of its age¹. Especially important for our discussion is the text of *De Benedictione Novi Militis* from the Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (PWD 1940, 447-450) and the Pontificale Romanum (1773, 194-198) (see Annex). This rite of the benediction of a new knight (the accolade), appeared for the first time in a complete version in the Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (Bréhier 1942, 170). Its origins could be traced, however, back at least to the 10th c. (Henderson 2003, 7-8). According to this liturgical procedure, after the prayer to God for the blessing of a sword about to be girded, the Celebrant (still standing) had to recite the words of psalm No. 143:1-2 (144:1-2): *Blessed be the Lord my God who trains my hands for prayer and my fingers for war. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me* (Pontificale Romanum 1773, 195; PWD 1940, 448).

In the longest prayer of *The Blessing of a New Knight* from the *Pontifical of Guillaume Durand* (PWD 1940, 448) and the *Pontificale Romanum* (1773, 196) there is another allusion to the exploits of the biblical king David: (...) *as You [God – LM] granted Your servant David the power to overcome Goliath and Judas Maccabeus the power to triumph over the pagans that did not invoke Your Holy Name, grant this servant of Yours, who is about to take up Your yoke and join the Order of Knighthood, the heavenly graces of strength, courage and audacity to defend faith and justice; grant him an increase in faith, hope and charity; grant him respect, love, humility, perseverance, obedience, enduring patience, and other virtues, so that with the sword [...] he does no harm to anyone unjustly.*

¹ Among others, D. A. Rivard (2009, 160-162) lists the following rituals: *a Blessing of a Newly Girded Sword* (RGP 1963, 379 [Ordo: 244]), *Blessing of the Standards of War* (RGP 1963, 378, Ordo 243); *Blessing of a Sword* from the 12th c. pontifical of Besançon, *Concerning the Blessing of Armour* (PWD 1940, 549 [ordo 2.38]), *Concerning the Blessing of New Knights* (PWD 1940, 447-50 [ordo 1.28]).

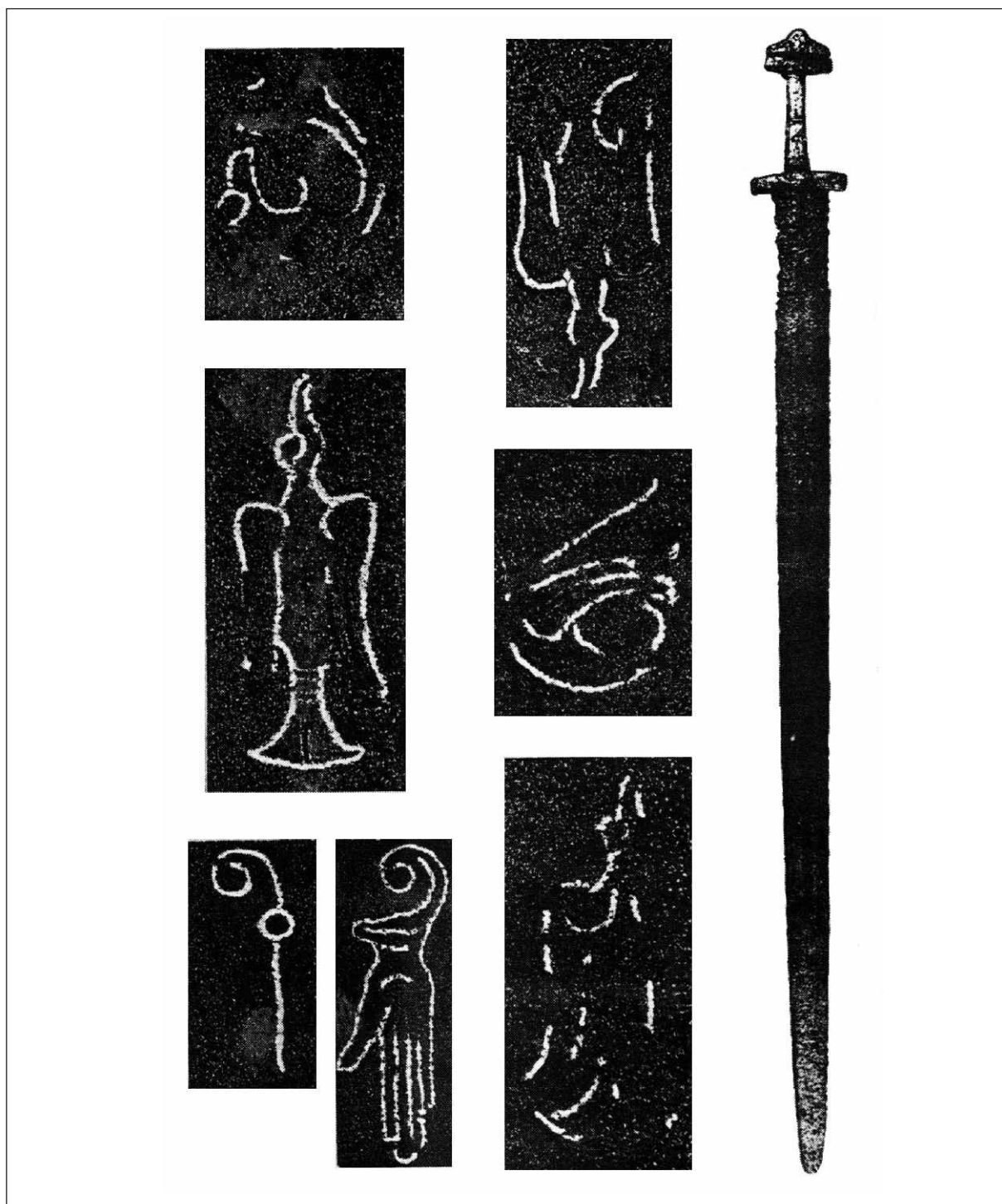


Fig. 3. The blessing „hand of God”, crozier and dove adorning the 11th c. sword of Petersen’s type T, found in Kokemäki, Äimälä, Leikkimäki, Finland (after Leppäaho 1964).

Ryc. 3. Błogosławiąca „ręka Boga”, pastorał i gołąb na głowni XI-wiecznego miecza typu T wg Petersena, Kokemäki, Äimälä, Leikkimäki, Finlandia (wg Leppäaho 1964).

The so-called David’s psalm (No. 143[144]) fits perfectly into the accolade ceremony program and corresponds with other fragments of the pontificals concerning the blessing of arms. In the text of *De Benedictione Armorum (Pontificale Romanum 1773, 379; PWD 1940, 549-550)* it is written: *God*

Almighty, in who’s hand is the complete victory and who granted marvellous powers to David in the battle with Goliath, we humbly ask your favour, to bless the sword with your holy powers, which Your servant is about to gird, to protect our holy Mother – Church, defend widows and orphans against

*all visible and invisible enemies. Let him wield his sword freely and victoriously*². The quoted benedictions indicate that David became the biblical model of a youth bearing a sword in the medieval culture (Henderson 2003, 9). He seized the weapon from his adversary in combat, thus becoming a true warrior. The combat of David with Goliath, in which the former was granted divine powers against the giant oppressor, could be perceived as a form of initiation ritual. In this sense it fits very well into the passage rites of the accolade ceremony. The biblical story also reminded the knight that he will win in every battle, even if odds seem to be in favour of the enemy, as long as he puts his trust in God.

Blessing formulas spoken during rites of dubbing a new knight developed from 9th-10th-c. texts concerning royal coronation ceremonies (Flori 2003, 199). Their origins, must have been even earlier, reaching at least back to the end of the Lombardic period in Italy (Contamine 1999, 186). Initially, the protection of the holy Church, the defending of widows and orphans was one of the most important obligations of a medieval monarch. According to written accounts it became soon a duty of aristocracy and eventually, of lesser nobility – the ordinary knights (*ibidem*, 185-186).

The borrowing of coronation liturgy to incorporate it into the rite of the accolade seems more than likely, as the recitation of David's psalm (No. 143[144])³ in *De Benedictione Novi Militis*, ends with the words worthy of a king: *Thou who subdues peoples under me* (*Pontificale Romanum* 1773, 195). Royal origins of the knightly ritual could be also evidenced by an excerpt from psalm No. 143 (144) on the *Reichsschwert*. A ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, during coronation, was usually girded with the *Reichsschwert* by the pope himself (Luckhardt 1995, 343). After the ceremony, gathered people, used to sing: *Christus Vincit Christus Regnat Christus Imperat* to honour the new monarch. This chant of homage to Jesus Christ, which originated from France, was already known in the Carolingian period. It was sang in coronation liturgy for the first time on Easter 774, after the conquering of Lombardy by Charlemagne (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1995, 27). Therefore, the words of the chant adorning the cross-guard of the *Reichsschwert* were complementary to the other quote from the coronation rite on the pommel.

It has been stated in the literature that most of the Benedictus-type swords were found in Northern Europe (Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 143). In my opinion weapons inscribed with the words of David's psalm, might have originated from the territories of France and the Rhineland. Apart from Carolingian sword finds, this hypothesis could be supported by linguistic analysis of inscriptions on the hilt of the *Reichsschwert*. According to our knowledge the medieval Latin used for the inscription on the cross-guard of this sword, was characteristic for northern or southern France (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1995, 28). It is believed that the sword could have been made in France for Otto's IV coronation in Aachen on the 12th July 1198 (Luckhardt 1995, 344; Schulze-Dörrlamm 1995, 30). The monarch had relations with the English court and before this ceremony he had already borne the title: count of Poitou (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1995, 30). This could explain his ties to the medieval French high-culture.

The relatively large number of preserved Carolingian spathas, inscribed with fragments of David's psalm is remarkable. In connection with the distribution of finds it proves that such swords cannot be treated as royal weapons exclusively. Moreover it seems to support a hypothesis that, as early as in the Carolingian period, there already existed a rite similar to the later accolade, during which the recitation of psalm No. 143 (144) played an important role. Documents confirm that at Charlemagne's court in the 8th c. there was a ceremony of girding a sword, reserved for those who were about to become office bearers (Flori 2003, 199). It seems highly probable that 8th c. spathas inscribed with the words of David's psalm are relics of such a ritual. Later, in the 12th and 13th c., swords with the investigated text inscribed usually in the fuller, were weapons which the new knights girded for the first time. Such swords could have been treated as most treasured possessions of medieval, Christian warriors, commemorating the most important event in the knightly career. This of course does not mean that these swords were purely ceremonial weapons. On the contrary, they appear to be perfectly balanced, serviceable and suitable for battle. The inscriptions reminded the knight following the path of chivalry of his obligations and oaths he had made preceding or during the accolade. The discussed swords are evidence

² Deus omnipotens, in cuius manu victoria plena constitit, quique etiam David ad expugnandum rebellem Goliam vires mirabiles tribuisti, clementiam tuam humili prece deposcimus, ut haec arma almifica pietate bene + dicere digneris; et concede famulo tuo N. eadem gestare cupienti, ut ad munimen, ac defensionem sanctae matris Ecclesiae, pupillorum, et viduarum, contra visibilibus et invisibilium hostium impugnationem, ipsis libere et victorioso utatur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen (*Pontificale Romanum* 1773, 379; PWD 1940, 549-550).

³ Sometimes it is also called a prayer of the king for his subjects.

for copying certain liturgical procedures initially reserved for coronation rituals for the purpose of the accolade ceremony. In this way the swords perfectly reflect the process in which chivalry was created and the seizing of royal responsibilities by the knightly class. At a certain point, representatives of the lesser nobility, became recognized by the clergy as more reliable defenders of the Church, widows and orphans, than the medieval monarchs.

As far as I can recall there seems to be no late 14th or 15th c. sword with the text of psalm No. 143 (144). This phenomenon could be partially explained by the crisis of chivalric ideals, notable from the 14th c. onwards⁴.

Other swords from the *Benedictus* group not bearing the exact quote from psalm, No. 143 (144) could also be connected with the blessing of weapons or the accolade. In such a context we could probably place an intriguing, 12th c. specimen of Oakeshott's type XI,1 (?),2, found in a ditch near Fornham, Suffolk (Oakeshott 1991, 62). The fuller of this sword is inscribed with the word +S+ ...BENEDIC. At the end of the inscription there is a small silver inlaid „hand of God”. A similar hand in combination with the sign interpreted as a Marigold, the symbol of Christ, was recorded on a 11th-12th c. sword of Oakeshott's type X,J, published by E. Oakeshott (*ibidem*, 28-29). Another sword with the motif of the „hand of God” (Fig 3), in combination with a bishops staff and a dove was found in Kokemäki, Äimälä, Leikkimäki, Finland (Leppäaho 1964, 76-77, Pl. 36). The weapon was dated by E. Oakeshott (1991, 51) to the latter half of the 10th c. It seems however on typological grounds that it could be of a later, 11th c. date.

In my opinion the „hand of God” on the listed specimens is the symbol of divine blessing of a sword which was believed to bestow power to the blade. Once again at this point we should make reference to the 10th c. Romano-German Pontifical (RGP, 379), the Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (PWD 1940, 447, 450) and the Pontificale Romanum (1773, 195, 198) where we read the following invocations:

1. *Hear our prayers, we beseech thee O Lord, and deign, with the right hand of your Majesty, to bless + this sword (...) with which your servant, desires to be girded, so that he may be the defender of Churches, of widows, of orphans, and of servants of God, against the barbarity, ferocity and cruelty of pagans and heretics; may it be the terror and fear of traitors and all those who lay snares for him. Through Christ Our Lord.*

R: Amen

2. *Almighty and Eternal God, pour out the grace of your blessing + upon your servant who has been girded with this great sword (...) adorned with the power of Your right hand, and grant that he be protected against every adversity by heavenly assistance so that he may never be afflicted in this world by the tempests of war. Through Christ Our Lord.*

As we read from the quotes, the blessing hand of God, in a symbolic sense adorned the sword with divine powers. In the medieval language of symbols this hand guided people and protected them from evil. It was also a representation of victory or divine punishment (Forstner 2001, 352). Sometimes, the finger of the „hand of God” was identified with the powers of the Holy Spirit (see Forstner 2001, 353; Kirschbaum (ed.) 2004, 214). A representation of the latter as a dove could be found on the mentioned sword from Finland.

Blessing of the divine hand represented on swords could also be a reminder to the knight of his obligation to trust in God who overpowers all weapons, as referred to in the Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (PWD 1940, 449) and the Pontificale Romanum (1773, 197), where we read:

Gird your sword upon your thigh, powerfully, and remember always that the Saints conquered kingdoms through faith and not with the sword.

We can probably find an allusion, to a very similar text of an accolade rite in the 13th c. Arthurian Vulgate Cycle. During one of the most famous adventures of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, when crossing a sword-bridge leading to the Perilous Castle, the hero saw two phantom lions guarding the main gate. When he decided to draw his sword preparing to fight them, a fiery hand emerged from the sky which hit him in the back and a voice has spoken: *Human of poor faith, why do have so little trust in your God? Are you truly convinced that weapons will offer you more help than He* (Boulenger 1987, 361). As soon as the knight made the sign of the cross, the phantom lions disappeared. They were the „illusion of malice” referred to in the liturgy of the accolade, as we read in the pontificals (*Pontificale Romanum* 1773, 198; PWD 1940, 450): *Arise now, new Knight, arise above the illusion of malice, watch with faith in Christ, and maintain a good reputation.*

Apart from the abovementioned inscriptions and symbols, the most popular phrase: IN NOMINE DOMINI (In the name of God) on swords from 11th-13th c. (see Leppäaho 1964, 10-11, Taf. 3:1a-b; Głosek 1984, 115; Geibig 1991, 120,122) could also be interpreted as an allusion to the medieval

⁴ In the knightly literature the crisis is notable even earlier, from about 1250 onwards.

liturgy of dubbing of a new knight. Although this hypothesis requires further investigation and needs to be treated with caution, again we could find arguments to support it in the 10th c. Romano-German Pontifical (RGP 1963, 379), Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (PWD 1940, 448) and the Pontificale Romanum (1773, 195), where it is written: (...) *Bless + this sword, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, through the invocation of Your Holy Name (...)*.

Summary

The presented list of medieval swords with inscriptions and symbols connected to medieval rites of blessing is certainly far from being complete. It seems sufficient, however, to draw proper conclusions and attract the reader's attention to an important problem, which has not been a subject of thorough studies to date. It also questions the recent opinion (Wagner et al. 2009, 12), that there is no firm evidence among medieval blade inscriptions for the old sword girding rituals (the so-called *Schwertleite*) incorporated into Christian liturgy. Moreover, it shows that apart from personal sword inscriptions of talismanic meaning there was a considerable group of standardised medieval blade-legends inspired

by liturgical texts. The presented records reflect changes in medieval society and perfectly explain the context of several formulas encountered on swords. Every single specimen with the quote from David's psalm fits very well into the presented hypothesis that such sword inscriptions were inspired by the liturgy of coronation and conferring of knighthood. The phrase was known at least from the Carolingian period and remained popular until the late 13th c.⁵ The „hand of God” – a sign found on medieval sword blades from the 11th-12th c. – had a strong talismanic meaning. Most probably it corresponded with the blessings of arms known from the pontificals, where it is said that the hand of God „adorns” the weapon with divine powers. The question whether the invocation IN NOMINE DOMINI present on many medieval swords refers to the liturgy of the accolade requires further thorough investigation.

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Annex

Pontificale Romanum 1773, 194-198:

DE BENEDICTIONE NOVI MILITIS.

Miles creari, et benedici potest quacumque die, loco et hora; sed si inter Missarum solemnities creandus est, Pontifex in eo habitu, in quo Missam celebravit, aut illi interfuit, in faldistorio ante medium altaris stans, vel sedens, prout convenit, finita Missa, id peragit. Si autem extra divina, in stola supra rochetum, vel si sit regularis, supra superpelliceum id faciat. Et primo ensem, quem aliquis coram eo genuflexus evaginatum tenet, stans, detecto capite, benedicit, si non sit benedictus, dicens:

V. Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

R. Qui fecit coelum et terram.

V. Domine, exaudi orationem meam.

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

V. Dominus vobiscum. R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus.

Exaudi, quaesumus, Domine, preces nostras, et hunc ensem, quo hic famulus tuus circumcingi desiderat, majestatis tuae dextera dignare bene + dicere, quatenus esse possit defensor Ecclesiarum, viduarum, orphanorum, omniumque Deo servientium, contra saevitiam paganorum, atque haeticorum; aliisque sibi insidiantibus sit terror, et formido. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

Oremus.

Bene + dic, Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeterne Deus, per invocationem sancti nominis tui, et per adventum Jesu Christi Filii tui Domini nostri, et per donum Sancti Spiritus Paracliti, hunc ensem, ut hic famulus tuus, qui hodierna die eo tua pietate praecingitur, visibiles inimicos conculcet, victoriaeque per omnia potitus, semper maneat illaesus. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

⁵ Medieval swords with inscriptions of the BENEDICTUS or BENEDICAT type impossible to identify as fragments of the David's psalm were excluded from the discussion (for further reference on these swords see Głosek, Makiewicz 2007, 138-139, 141).

Deinde dicit, stans ut prius:

Benedictus Dominus Deus meus, qui docet manus meas ad praelium: * et digitos meos ad bellum.

Misericordia mea, et refugium meum: * susceptor meus, et liberator meus.

Protector meus, et in ipso speravi: * qui subdit populum meum sub me.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

V. Salvum fac servum tuum,

R. Deus meus, sperantem in te.

V. Esto ei, Domine, turris fortitudinis.

R. A facie inimici.

V. Domine, exaudi orationem meam.

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

V. Dominus vobiscum.

R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus.

Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeternae Deus, qui cuncta solus ordinas et recte disponis, qui ad coercendam malitiam reprobatorum, et tuendam justitiam, usum gladii in terris hominibus tua salubri dispositione permisisti, et militarem ordinem ad populi protectionem institui voluisti, quique per beatum Joannem militibus ad se in deserto venientibus, ut neminem concuterent, sed propriis contenti essent stipendiis, dici fecisti; clementiam tuam, suppliciter exoramus, ut sicut David puero tuo Goliath superandi largitus es facultatem, et Judam Machabaeum de feritate gentium nomen tuum non invocantium triumphare fecisti ita et huic famulo tuo, qui noviter jugo militiae colla supponit, pietate coelesti vires et audaciam ad fidei et justitiae defensionem tribuas, et praestes ei fidei, spei, et charitatis augmentum: et da tui timorem pariter et amorem, humilitatem, perseverantiam, obedientiam, et patientiam bonam, et cuncta in eo recte disponas, ut neminem cum gladio isto, vel alio, injuste laedat: et omnia cum eo justa et recta defendat: et sicut ipse de minori gradu ad novum militiae promovetur honorem, ita veterem hominem deponens cum actibus suis, novum induat hominem: ut te timeat et recte colat, perfidorum consortia vitet, et suam in proximum charitatem extendat, praeposito suo in omnibus recte obediat, et suum in cunctis juste officium exsequatur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

Tum ense aqua benedicta aspergit.

Si autem ensis sit prius benedictus, omnia praedicta ornantur. Post haec Pontifex sedens, accepta mitra, ense nudum novo Militi ante se genuflexo, in manum dexteram dicens:

Accipe gladium istum in nomine Pa + tris, et Fi + lii, et Spiritus + Sancti, et utaris eo ad defensionem tuam, ac sanctae Dei Ecclesiae, et ad confusionem inimicorum crucis Christi, ac fidei christianae; et quantum humana fragilitas permiserit, cum eo neminem injuste laedas: quod ipse praestare dignetur, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

R. Amen.

Deinde ensis in vaginam reponitur, et Pontifex cingit Militem novum ense, dicens:

Accingere gladio tuo super femur tuum, potentissime; et attende, quod Sancti non in gladio, sed per fidem vicerunt regna.

Ense igitur accinctus Miles novus surgit, et ense de vagina educit, et evaginatum ter viriliter vibrat, et super brachium sinistrum tergit, et in vaginam reponit.

Tunc Pontifex dat novo Militi osculum pacis, dicens: Pax tecum.

Et iterum ense evaginatum in dexteram accipiens, Militem novum ante se genuflexum cum ipso ense evaginato ter super scapulas leviter percutit, interim semel tantum dicens:

Esto miles pacificus, strenuus, fidelis, et Deo devotus.

Deinde reposito ense in vaginam, Pontifex manu dextera dat novo Militi leviter alapam, dicens:

Exciteris a somno malitiae, et vigila in fide Christi, et fama laudabili.

Et Milites adstantes imponunt novo Militi calcaria; et Pontifex sedens cum mitra, dicit Antiphonam:

Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum, accingere gladio tuo super femur tuum, potentissime.

Surgit Pontifex, et versus ad novum Militem stans, et detecto capite, dicit:

V. Dominus vobiscum. R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus.

Omnipotens sempiternae Deus, super famulum tuum, qui hoc eminenti mucrone circumcingi desiderat, gratiam tuae bene + dictionis infunde, et eum dexterae tuae virtute fretum, fac contra cuncta adversantia

coelestibus amari praesidiis, quo nullis in hoc saeculo tempestatibus bellorum turbetur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

His dictis, novus Miles osculatur manum Pontificis; et depositis ense, et calcaribus, vadit in pace.

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BŁOGOSŁAWIEŃSTWO MIECZA. NOWE SPOJRZENIE NA INSKRYPCJE TYPU *BENEDICTUS*

Streszczenie

Od początku poważniejszych badań epigraficznych w kontekście mieczy, szczególne zainteresowanie w literaturze bronioznawczej wzbudzały napisy zawierające słowo *Benedictus*. Część z nich inspirowana była tekstem psalmu 143 (144), zaczynającego się od słów: *Benedictus, Dominus Deus meus qui docet manus meas ad praelium, et digitos meos ad bellum*, na co jako pierwszy zwrócił uwagę H. Schneider (1964, 139). W tekście masoreckim Biblii hebrajskiej słowa psalmu 143 (144) przypisuje się Dawidowi szykującemu się do walki z Goliatem. Problemowi inskrypcji z napisem *Benedictus* osobne artykuły poświęcili M. Głosek i L. Kajzer (1977) oraz M. Głosek i T. Makiewicz (2007), poszerzając znacznie naszą wiedzę na temat omawianych zabytków. Z wniosków tych autorów wynika, że słowa psalmu 143 (144) cieszyły się popularnością w XII i XIII w., lecz pojawiły się na broni już za czasów karolińskich. Listę uwzględnionych przez nich zabytków wczesnośredniowiecznych należałoby jeszcze rozszerzyć o spatnę typu Mannheim z VIII w. z Nebel Amrum na terenie Szlezewiku Holsztynu oraz podobnie datowaną rękojęść miecza typu Mannheim z Musée de l'Armée w Paryżu (nr inw. PO 2245).

Szukając odpowiedzi na pytanie o przyczynę częstego powielania omawianego cytatu na mieczach o zróżnicowanej chronologii, warto zwrócić uwagę na frag-

menty średniowiecznych pontyfikałów. Teksty te, jak np. Pontyfikał Rzymsko-Niemiecki, spisane już w X w. ewoluowały do ukazania się tzw. Pontyfikału Wilhelma Duranda w l. 1292-1295 r., włączonego ostatecznie w 1485 r. do Pontyfikału Rzymskiego. Dotyczą one m.in. ceremonii błogosławieństwa nowych rycerzy oraz poświęcenia oręża. Istotny dla naszej dyskusji jest zwłaszcza tekst: *De Benedictione Novi Militis* z Pontyfikału Wilhelma Duranda. Podczas odprawiania tej ceremonii związanej z pasowaniem na rycerza, po modlitwie o błogosławieństwo miecza, miała miejsce recytacja psalmu Dawidowego (nr 143 [144]). Ważny ponadto wydaje się fragment liturgii wyrażający życzenie, aby Bóg obdarzył nowo pasowanego rycerza cnotami, jakie zesłał na Dawida. Król Dawid, zdobywający swój pierwszy miecz na pokonanym Goliacie, był doskonałym biblijnym przykładem młodzieńca, który stał się pełnoprawnym wojownikiem po przypasaniu broni. Ponadto udało mu się zwyciężyć nie dzięki sile oręża, lecz ufności w Bogu. W liturgii pasowania na rycerza trudno byłoby wykorzystać lepsze biblijne *exemplum*. Przypominało ono rycerzowi, że tylko boże błogosławieństwo może zapewnić zwycięstwo w walce. Błogosławieństwo takie wyraża najprawdopodobniej znak „ręki Boga” współwystępujący czasem z napisem *Benedictus* na głowniach mie-

czy średniowiecznych oraz popularna inwokacja *In Nomine Domini*. Zarówno motyw ręki, jak i wezwanie imienia Boga nawiązują do błogosławieństw ze średniowiecznych tekstów liturgicznych. W błogosławieństwie broni znanym z pontyfikałów odnajdziemy odniesienie do walki Dawida z Goliatem: *Wszchemogący Boże, w którego rękę jest pełne zwycięstwo, który zesłałeś cudowne umiejętności Dawidowi w walce przeciw Goliatowi, pokornie błagamy Cię o łaskę, abys pobłogosławił swoją świętą mocą tę broń, którą sługa Twój pragnie nosić dla umacniania i obrony naszej świętej matki – Kościoła, obrony wdów i sierot przed wszystkimi widzialnymi i niewidzialnymi wrogami, aby posługiwał się nią swobodnie i zwycięsko*. Formuły błogosławieństwa przy wręczaniu broni wywodzą się IX- i X-wiecznej liturgii koronacyjnej. Ich korzenie są jednak jeszcze starsze, sięgające co najmniej schyłku epoki longobardzkiej w Italii. Początkowo obrona kościoła, wdów i sierot była przede wszystkim dome-

na władcy, którą stopniowo przejęło rycerstwo. Na dworze Karola Wielkiego w VIII w. panował zwyczaj wręczania oręża w związku z przyjęciem przez obdarowanego znaczącej funkcji publicznej o charakterze wojskowym, sądowniczym i administracyjnym. Należy liczyć się z możliwością, że wczesnośredniowieczne spathy ze słowami psalmu 143 (144) związane były z rytuałem otrzymywania broni wraz z godnością. Słowa psalmu wypowiedziane podczas tych ceremonii stały się później częścią liturgii pasowania nowych rycerzy. Pamiątkami po uroczystości wstąpienia do stanu rycerskiego były najprawdopodobniej XII- i XIII-wieczne miecze z omawianym cytatem. Fakt, że owe napisy na mieczach przetrwały do XIII w., lecz później tracą popularność, można wytłumaczyć kryzysem wartości rycerskich, który rozpoczął się w XIV w.

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