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“Turning Points. European Arms and Armour from the Migration Period to the Early Modern Period”. International Conference in Sanok, Poland

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On 27th-29th September 2019, Historical Museum in Sanok hosted the conference “Turning Points. European Arms and Armour from the Migration Period to the Early Modern Period”, organised together with Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Archaeology of Łódź University and The Archaeological Museum of the Middle Odra River Area (Fig. 1). The conference was the 14th edition of the Professor Andrzej Nadolski International Arms and Armour Colloquium. The conference was organised under the patronage of the Mayor of Sanok, Mr Tomasz Matuszewski and the Starost of Sanok, Mr Stanisław

Chęć. The chambers of the castle in Sanok, which combine the historical value of the building with all necessary modern appliances, were suitable environment for the subject of the conference (Fig. 2).

The introductory speeches were given by Mr Matuszewski, the Mayor of Sanok, Dr. Piotr N. Kotowicz from Historical Museum of Sanok, Dr. Arkadiusz Michalak the director of The Archaeological Museum of the Middle Odra River Area. The introductory speech emphasised involvement of the local authorities in the matters of culture and research, clear evidence of which was excellent condition of the castle interiors of the



Fig. 1. Participants of the conference before the castle in Sanok. *Photo by D. Szuwalski.*

Ryc. 1. Uczestnicy konferencji przed sanockim zamkiem. *Fot. D. Szuwalski.*

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Fig. 2. Proceedings. Photo by D. Szuwalski.

Ryc. 2. W trakcie obrad. Fot. D. Szuwalski.

museum. Dr. Kotowicz and Dr. Michalak highlighted the tradition of arms and armour colloquiums dedicated to the memory of Professor Nadolski which constitute an institution of their own, important not only to Polish arms and armour studies but creating an all-European panel for discussions of the history of weapons. The entry speeches were followed by the conference presentations. Regretfully some of the participants who declared their presence were unable to arrive with a loss for the audience.¹ Another rather negative aspect was the fact that despite international character of the conference and presence of the scholars from several countries, not all the presentations were given in conference languages, under excuse that the majority of the speakers were Polish. The Author had an opportunity to participate in a conference in Leiden, in a gap of two weeks, where no communication was made in Dutch.

The first lecturer was Bartosz Kontny, representing Institute of Archaeology, of Warsaw University, with the presentation “Roman Period military deposits from bogs and lakes in the territory of Poland” which discussed the sacrificial deposits of weapons and tools in bogs of the Pre-Roman Period until the Early Migration Period (late 5th century). Kontny emphasised the importance of the finds from Czaszkowo (abundant finds of militaria including pattern-welded swords, mails and horse harness) in NE Poland and Lubanowo (NW Poland where elements of weapons and horse tack were found). The weapons resemble the specimens of Przeworsk culture and artifacts from Scandinavia. Most probably, the weaponry was used by local inhabitants, i.e., the population of the Lubusz group. The speaker expressed his expectation to find more lake deposits of the discussed period in Poland because of geographical and cultural conditions.

Next came Maciej Majewski from Regional Museum in Toruń who discussed some aspects of innovative technology introduced by the Teutonic Order, based on analyze of the spur from Starogród in the Land of Chełmno, discovered in 2018. In Speaker’s opinion the spur combines utilitarian advantages with the cultural influence.

Daniel Gosk from Castle Museum in Malbork, gave a presentation “Ancient helmets with brims as forerunners of medieval kettle-hats” in which he illustrated several types of brimmed helmets in antiquity and came to, rather unsurprising, conclusion that these had no genetic connection with mediaeval kettle-hats, which is, apparently, an opinion expressed in literature. The Speaker, working on the daily terms with mediaeval material, entered seemingly novel area of ancient arms and armour, boldly leaving his comfort zone.

Next speaker was Valeri Īotov from Archaeological Museum in Varna who spoke about the western weaponry from the 7th-12th centuries found in the territory of Bulgaria. He has also briefly highlighted the possible routes which allowed transfer of the weapons to Bulgaria, namely through the contacts with the Frankish Empire and later with the Holy Roman Empire, but also with Scandinavian mercenaries in Byzantium.

Following came a speech of Nad’a Profantová and Jan Hasil, both representing Institute of Archaeology, Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague, who discussed the new finds of the single edged weapons: langseaxes, sabre and a sabre cross-guard from the 8th-10th centuries, from the territory of the Czech Republic. The majority of the discussed artefacts come from settlements or are stray finds which were related to communication routes. The weapons typical for the East and the West of Europe appear in the territory of the Czech Republic at the same time. However, the 9th century brought complete domination by the western swords types.

Related subject was Bertalan Zágorhidi Czigány representing Institute of Archaeology of Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and Balázs Tompa from “Nyugati Gyepűk Pajzsa” Association for Medieval Combat, Szombathely, who discussed the topic of so-called sabre hilted swords which appeared in the mid-10th century in the Carpathian Basin and combined straight blades of the western swords with the handles of the eastern sabre. In opinion of the Authors the Hungarian examples represent rather an early stage of the hybridization of the palash or single edged broadsword and not a failed attempt at hybridization.

The presentation of Thomas Salmon from Orient & Méditerranée Department of Sorbonne “Notes on the paramerion of the Byzantine katafraktoi” resulted in fervent discussion between the Speakers. Salmon reviewed the sources of Byzantine heavy cavalry and attacked, somehow established opinion of Timothy Dawson who identifies the “paramerion” with the second, single edged and curved sword of heavy armoured riders. Salmon argues that the word does not describe a specific type of weapon but the functionality. The study, although linguistic in its core, was illustrated by iconography. This novel approach, despite raising numerous well-aimed doubts towards current identification of “paramerion”, found enthusiastic proponents and some unconvinced opponents.

Martin Husár from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia and Silviu Oța from

¹ D. Dymitriuk, M. Holeščák, T. Kurasiński, F. Mărginean, A. E. Negin, A. Nițoi, A. Ruttkay, A. Strel’chenko, S. Terskyi, M. Verhoturova and G. Żabiński.

National Museum of Romanian History, Department of Archaeology, Bucharest, presented the results of their co-operation on the Middle-Byzantine weapons from the Collection of the National Museum of Romanian History in Bucharest. The authors offered brief catalogue of these less known specimens, together with the typological analysis and an attempt of illustrating the provenance of the discussed weapons. In these terms, the presentation was a kind of opposition of the paper of Iotov who presented the western weapons in the lands of Bulgaria, while Husár and Oța focused on the flow of the arms and armour out of Byzantium.

Jakub Puźniak, from Department of Archaeology of the Middle Ages and the Modern Period of Archaeological Museum in Cracow, focused his study on a type of battle-mace illustrated several times in “The Maciejowski Bible”. He introduced the book thoroughly, somehow unnecessarily among the students of arms and armour, mainly the mediaevalists, and identified a type of mace which he supposed might have carried symbolic significance of power. The hypothesis was received rather skeptically among the audience.

The host of the conference, Historical Museum in Sanok was represented by Piotr N. Kotowicz and Paweł Skowronski who discussed evolution of the war-gear in the Sanok Land between the 13th and 14th centuries. They convincingly illustrated the shift from eastern panoply combining influence of Rus’ and steppe nomads, to West European models. The shift stemmed from transfer of the land from periphery of the Halych and Volodymyr Principality to Kingdom of Poland with all the cultural and economic changes which followed.

The assemblage of weapons found in the so-called House of Vassals located nearby Bohemian Křivoklát castle, together with thorough description of the site, in its historical context, were presented by Josef Hložek from Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague, Archaeological Department of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and Olgierd Ławrynowicz representing Institute of Archaeology, Łódź University, Łódź.

Arkadiusz Michalak, one of the hosts, from The Archaeological Museum of the Middle Odra River Area in Zielona Góra, Świdnica, Poland studied the social and ideological change in late mediaeval / early renaissance warfare in the borderland of Silesia, Brandenburg, Lusatia and Poland as reflected in adoption of the modern arms and armour. The process, in the discussed region, was slow and followed the west European developed lands of the time.

Protective gear from Western Pomerania, with special highlight on the helmets, was the topic of the presentation given by Andrzej Janowski from Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Science, Szczecin branch. He discussed, in details, his research of two mediaeval helmets from museum collections, where he convincingly managed to link the finds to the territory of Western Pomerania. His study allowed to locate the actual finding spots of the objects but also illustrated richness of the mediaeval military gear of the region.

Purely iconographic character had the presentation of Patryk N. Skupniewicz from Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities who confronted Folio 228r of the “Codex Manesse” depicting Heinrich Hetzbold von Weißensee slaying a boar from horseback with the objects of Sasanian and ancient Great Steppe, nomadic art. Striking resemblance of the motifs allowed the speaker suggesting three ways of transition – through later Iranian art where the motifs remained alive, through unknown narratives of ancient Steppe embedded in mediaeval culture with Hunnic transition, or brought in during the Mongol invasion. The Speaker did not reject possibility of complete coincidence.

The aspects of late mediaeval mounted lance combat were discussed by Volodymyr Hutsul from Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine. In his presentation, the Speaker pointed out the precision and efficiency of the lance techniques employed mostly by the knights. He also advocated that the introduction of *arret de lance/faucré* (lance rest) to the plate armour further enhanced accuracy and power of knightly shock attack. The presentation was well-rooted in literary sources which were ultimately convincing, supported by the iconography examples.

Novel view on development of the sallet was presented by an independent scholar from Łódź – Wojciech Wasiak. His study of this type of helmet, popular in late Middle Ages and Renaissance, proves that it was of Italian origin and went through various changes and modifications, including intermingling with developmental processes of other types of helmets which further blurs the picture. The Speaker convincingly put the development of the sallet in terms of rather organic model of varied interactions rather simple and mechanic transition from one evolutionary step to another.

The weaponry of the Cossack cavalry in the service of the last Jagiellonians was presented by Aleksander Budyrew from Institute of History, Łódź University, Łódź. His study placed the development of the Jagiellonian cossack cavalry in frames of larger, geopolitical shift eastward and following necessity to confront other numerous light horse. The dynamic growth of the cossack troops in numbers found its reflection in adoption of specific armament demonstrated by the Speaker.

Adam L. Kubik from Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities presented new finds of late antique / early mediaeval helmets from Caucasian Petra and Tatarstan, which allow for a reassessment of dating of the currently known, although not present in wide circulation, pieces from the Perm Governorate and the Tomsk Oblast, and consequently including them in the evolution of the origin of early medieval, Oriental, one-piece helmets.

The little known and very interesting topic of development of Yatvingian weaponry and equestrian equipment between the 10th and 13th centuries was the topic of the following presentation given by Marcin Engel from State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. After reviewing the literary sources on the military institutions of Yatvingians, the Speaker, presented



Fig. 4. Dr Marcin Engel. State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. Photo by D. Szuwalski.

Ryc. 3. Dr Marcin Engel, Państwowe Muzeum Archeologiczne w Warszawie. Fot. D. Szuwalski.

assemblage of arms, armour and horse tack belonging to the tribe, from the 10th to 13th century. What was found surprising, was relative popularity of horse harness among the people dwelling in an environment full of marshes, lakes and dense forests. The important historical points which influenced Yotvingian war-kit were the contacts with the nomadic peoples and Rus and finally the conquest by the Teutonic Knights (Fig. 3).

Jarosław Ościłowski from Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology PAS, Warsaw, devoted his speech on the remnants of the crossbows found on the territory of Masovia, focusing on the technological aspects of the “arma diaboli” use.

Zeno Karl Pinter from The Institute of Socio-Human Research of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romanian Academy in Sibiu, Romania, discussed the influence of the western colonists and Teutonic Knights on military strategies in Transylvania and accompanying changes in weaponry in the 12th-13th centuries. This, somehow created an addendum to the presentation of Husár and Oța who were focused on an earlier period and much wider territory, but both presentations illustrated the variety of influences on weaponry in mediaeval Romania however Pinter’s main context were the defensive campaigns against Cuman invasions. Pinter added the observations on employment of natural defences and obstacles as well as strategic and socio-ethnic factors in evolution of the arms and armour.

The strategies employed in Mediaeval Transylvania, outlined by Pinter were considered from perspective of ethnic and social competition by Zsolt Csók from National Museum of Transylvania’s History, Cluj. The Speaker abandoned archaeological or iconographical approach of majority of the presentation and spoke from purely historical perspective as if reversing von Clausewitz’s statement to “politics (and social/ethnic competition) is a war carried without weapons”. The perspective especially vague in light of recent phenomena of hybrid war, and information war, however somehow distant from traditional understanding of arms and armour studies carried by Professor Nadolski.

Kateryna Valentyrova from Taras Shevchenko National University, Kyiv, reviewed the techniques and methodologies applied by her team in treatment of weapons. Considering the fact that majority of the Speakers were the veterans of arms and armour archaeology with years long field experience, the presentation might act as the reminder or could be directed to historians and art historians with lesser experience.

The coexistence of older, torsion or balance artillery and “modern” gunpowder artillery in late mediaeval Poland and Bohemia was researched by Piotr Strzyż from Institute of Archaeology, Łódź University, Łódź. The Speaker pointed that initially older forms of artillery outperformed early guns and the process of introduction of the new military technology was slow and total abandonment of the older artillery was predated by the period of their simultaneous employment.

Christoph Krauskopf from The State Office for the Protection of Monuments and the State Archaeological Museum in Brandenburg, Wünsdorf, Germany and Peter Purton continued the topic of early development of canons and their influence on defensive architecture from the 14th century, as well as relation to general social and political changes.

As much as Krauskopf and Purton presented wide perspective of relations between artillery, architecture and social institutions, Claudia Urduzia from Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu, Romania, illustrated the process by a “case study” of development of defensive architecture in Southern Transylvania with specific focus on the fortress in Landskrone.

Tadeusz Grabarczyk from Institute of History, Łódź University, Łódź, remained in the topics concerning the early firearms but moved from artillery to handguns. His presentation aimed in establishing the “turning point” when the handguns became the true force within Polish army. Grabarczyk noticed that in 1490s the gunners were already well-established units so he assumed rather rapid adoption of this novel form of arms in Jagiellonian Poland.

After several presentations dedicated to missile weapons, Lech Marek, from Institute of Archaeology, University of Wrocław, initiated the series of speeches about “armes blanches”. Starting from a case-study of the actual archaeological finds of sword pommels excavated in the Old Town of Wrocław, dated to the 12th century, the Speaker analysed their typology and concluded with the remark of the possible utilitarian, combat function of the design of the pommels in Oakeshott’s Types B and E/Geibig’s Types 15 and 19 types. The proposal was received with a dose of skepticism as the employment of the pommels in combat remains indisputable, they were not designed specifically for that function neither earlier nor later.

The subject of the sword pommels was continued by Irakli Bakradze, from Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, who presented a Byzantine pommel of complicated shape and a unique image of twisted serpents, from the 9th-10th centuries, from Martvili Museum of Local

Lore (Georgia). His attribution was convincingly supported by archaeological material from Eastern Europe and iconography.

The cold steel weapons trait was continued by Denys Toichkin from Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, who presented a thorough study of the unique 17th century sabre, kept in the Mirhorod Local Lore Museum (Ukraine). Although the blade is Polish, the weapon with its hilt and decoration represents a unique combination of Ottoman and Eastern European weaponry traditions of the Early Modern Era. The Speaker related inscriptions on the blade with actual historical persons and events, known from written sources.

Rafaele D'Amato from University of Ferrara – Laboratorio Antiche Province Danubiane (Lad), Ferrara, presented several unpublished examples of Eastern and Western European helmets proposed for sale in the Timeline Auctions of 2018/2019. Although of great importance for knowledge of arms and armour, the items traded on the auctions come, usually, from not recorded excavations, therefore they are deprived of actual context and sometimes might be suspected being forgeries. Despite that, their scholarly value is indisputable and their attribution based on stylistic and technological features is an important research challenge.

Daniel Tereszczuk from Museum of the Biłgoraj Region, Biłgoraj, presented several new artefacts from the museums in Tomaszów Lubelski and Biłgoraj, originating from the Borowiec, Hamernia, Osuchy and Panasówka. The newly found weapons allow better insight into medieval weaponry in the Polish-Rus borderland in the southern part of the Land of Lublin.

At the close of the first day of the conference, the Hosts organised a banquet combined with the presentation of the collection of arms from antiquity till modern times from Robert Fedyk's collection. The artefacts were available to touch and examine by the participants and were displayed in the Museum hall dedicated to arms and armour which only emphasised the effect. Mr. Fedyk is a businessman from Sanok whose impressive collection of imported artefacts must attract interest of every student of arms and armour, which was clearly proven by the enthusiastic reactions of the participants of the conference.

The banquet and the exhibition were an occasion to display the poster session with following participants: Kalina Skóra and Piotr Strzyż from Institute of Archaeology, Łódź University, who presented the results of the archaeological excavations in Wysoka Górka in Chełm which include remains of edged weapons, blunt weapons and projectiles or rarely found mail fragments, but also equestrian equipment



Fig. 4. Participants of the conference before the medieval church in Haczów. *Photo by K. Skóra.*

Ryc. 4. Uczestnicy konferencji przed średniowiecznym kościołem w Haczowie. *Fot. K. Skóra.*

and horse harness of several strata. Yuliia Oliinyk from Lviv Historical Museum presented assemblage of West European daggers from the museum's collection. Her colleague Taras Protsak presented the assemblage of the "two handed swords" or longswords from the same collection.

In the third day the Hosts organised an excursion to the historical places of interest in vicinity of Sanok which was an excellent opportunity for further discussions of specific subjects in more private and less formal way (Fig. 4).

The presentations varied as much as the topics were different. Generally, academic quality of the presentations was very high which was expressed by fervent discussions or the silence signifying that the Speaker definitely closed the subject which, often, might have proved too specific to find a contesteer. Then, the value of the lecture was in education rather than discussion.

The conference offered an excellent opportunity to exchange the ideas and learn the directions of the research of arms and armour of various scholars, through the presentations, posters and the discussions, but also in direct communication between the researchers out of the frames of the event. The Hosts were successful in gathering the scholars of the topic and enabling direct exchange of thought which cannot be entirely replaced even by the most sophisticated means of modern communication. The exchange of contacts during the conference allows to expect further development of international co-operation in research of arms and armour.