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NOTES ON A TYPE XXII.1 SWORD: THE TWILIGHT OF THE BASELARD

Abstract: A baselard sword sold by Hermann Historica in 2004 is a rare piece of evidence for a typology that has gone almost unnoticed. Though in the past decades studies on medieval swords have flourished, this interesting and somehow “strange” weapon seems to have been tucked away in the shade thanks to scarce iconography and poor documentation (albeit with a few tantalising examples and a few sneak peeks in auction catalogues). The example of a single sword, therefore, provides a good opportunity to conduct a preliminary review of matching specimens, while a few close-ups from well dated pictorial cycles can help to contextualize its origin and suggest a more precise dating. Finally, handling the sword has shed some light on the advantages and disadvantages of such an extreme weapon, the balance of which was affected by the lack of a pommel.

Keywords: baselard, sword, Middle Ages, Italy.

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Introduction¹

Few medieval weapons have attained such an iconic status as the so called “baselard” and rivers of ink have been consumed over the topic in the past decades. Following the trend, I also ventured into the study of this typology, so common in 14th century Italy, and suggested a classification according to their blade type and construction (Vignola 2016).

Recently, a thorough investigation was also performed in a paper about a 14th century baselard from lake Ostrowite in northern Poland (Michalak et al. 2017, 165-180). This is in my opinion the most extensive and bibliographically accurate survey attempted so far, but nevertheless it could not entirely dissipate the veil of uncertainty that still lingers on the subject. The very definition of the “baselard” as a field of investigation is somehow prone to debate, though there is a general consensus on the fact that any blade with a hilt shaped like a capital letter ‘I’ could be included in this category (ibidem, 170). As far as its origins are concerned, they can be traced back to the second half of the 13th century at least, as archaeological and iconographical evidence clearly indicate (Vignola

2016, 42-43). I also agree with the statement that this broad category could be divided in at least two distinct forms, the first including daggers from one piece of metal, with slender I-shaped hilts and riveted scales, possibly originating in Italy; the second with metal plates covering the upper and lower faces of the I-shaped grip, probably Swiss (Michalak et al. 2017, 171).

Though I totally concur with Keith Downen’s statement that *attempting to define everything by rigid modern classifications obscures the ‘organic’ nature of arms and armour* (Downen 2015, 186), it is also true that a loose typological schematization has some perks. Its utility for modern scholars is undeniable, because it provides a useful layout for the description of ancient items: secondly (but most important) it reveals the existence of common patterns followed by craftsmen in the making of their products. While it is true that variations are almost endless and finding two identical weapons is arduous, it is also true that most of them can usually be organized into groups of specimens that share some morphological features: these are what we usually call “types”.

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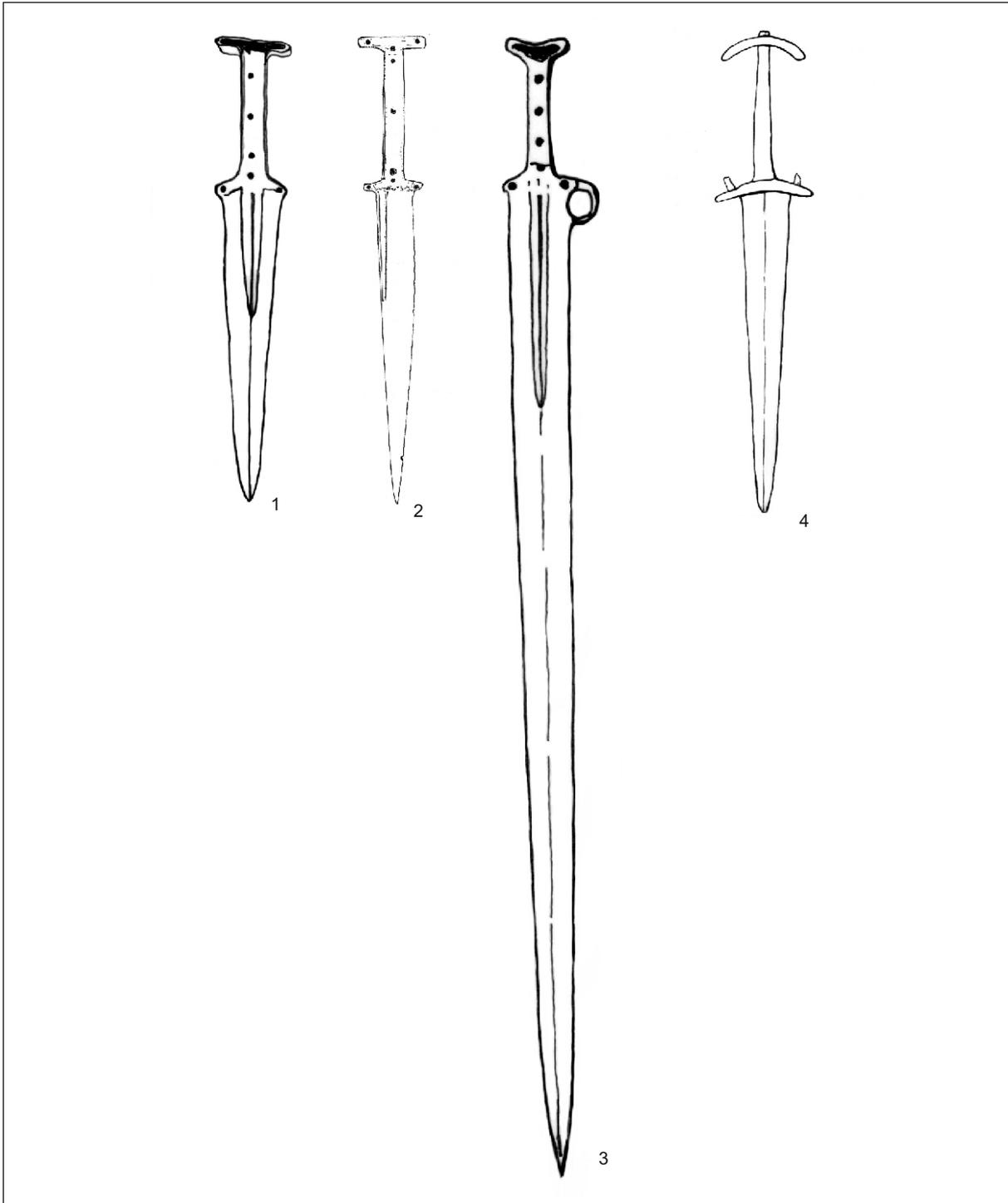


Fig. 1 Types of baselards: 1 – Type I; 2 – Type II; 3 – Type III; 4 – Type IV. *Drawing by M. Vignola.*

Ryc. 1. Typy basilarców: 1 – typ I; 2 – typ II; 3 – typ III; 4 – typ IV. *Rys. M. Vignola.*

Therefore, though I am fully aware of its limits, I formulated a classification of baselards according to their blade type, with a preliminary subdivision in four classes:

– Type I: (Fig. 1:1) two edged triangular blades with a fuller running down the blade for

a portion of its length, usually divided in two by a central ridge, sometimes with very long blades (Vignola 2016, 19);

– Type II: (Fig. 1:2) stiff, single edged triangular blade, usually with a simple fuller on the “forte”. Though shaped like regular knives,



Fig. 2. Swords of Frederick III and the Order of the Dragon, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Wien (Austria), Inv. Nos. A 49 and A 142 (after Thomas, Gamber 1976, Fig. 15).

Ryc. 2. Miecze Fryderyka III i Zakonu Smoka, Kunsthistorisches Museum w Wiedniu (Austria), nr inw. A 49 i A 142 (wg Thomas, Gamber 1976, Fig. 15).



Fig. 3. "Münich Sword" with scabbard, Bayerische Nationalmuseum, München (Germany), Inv. No. W 202. Photo by Bildarchiv Marburg.

Ryc. 3. „Miecz monachijski” z pochwą, Bayerische Nationalmuseum, Monachium (Niemcy), nr inw. W202. Fot. Bildarchiv Marburg.

baselards of this kind can be also very effective thrusting weapons (ibidem, 19);

– Type III: (Fig. 1:3) this is by far the rarest type and includes baselards whose size is comparable to a full length sword, with large, flat blades designed for slashing and fullers sometimes (but not always) in the shape of a Type I (ibidem, 20-21). As far as I can recollect, only five swords of this kind are known so far, but others could be in private hands or stored in museums and therefore remain unpublished;

– Type IV: (Fig. 1:4) this large family embraces all the variations on the "Swiss-type basler", whose I-shaped hilt is not an integral part of the blade, but rather is formed by two separate metal plates or bars, acting as guards, through which the tang is passed and secured by being hammered over the upper one (ibidem, 21-22).

The deficiencies of such a classification are fairly obvious, especially in the case of the so called "Type IV", which is a rather generic tag covering a wide array of subtypes. This approach also turns a blind eye to the variety of hilt subtypes, with a focus on the technical side of the blades and on the presence of a tang.

As far as "Type III" is concerned, identifying these weapons as baselards may be something of a stretch since they are full size swords rather than daggers. This fact notwithstanding, this type shares so many features with their shorter relatives that a connection cannot be easily dismissed.

Because of the very different hilt, this connection was not obvious to Ewart Oakeshott when he published a sword which had a blade strikingly similar to the subject of this paper. Instead it was catalogued as a "Type XXII.1" (Oakeshott 1991, 219). Oakeshott suggested a possible Italian origin for the blade and as will be seen in the following pages of this article, this theory will be supported.

Type XXII.1 sword with baselard hilt: datation and comparisons

In his "Records of the Medieval Sword", Oakeshott described the Type XXII as having *a broad, flat blade, the edges tapering in elegant curves to an acute point, and a pair of short, very narrow fullers below the hilt*. According to him, surviving specimens from this type were also among *the most lavish parade of swords of*



Fig. 4. “Czerny’s Sword” (after Czerny’s 2009, lot 907).

Ryc. 4. „Miecz z aukcji Czernego” (wg Czerny’s 2009, lot 907).

the 15th century (ibidem, 214). His remark was clearly inspired by the luxurious sword of Frederick III (which he himself described a few pages later) and by the equally magnificent ceremonial sword of the Order of the Dragon (Fig. 2), both in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (respectively A142 and A49; Thomas, Gamber 1976, 74-76). The latter dates to about 1433 and shows a very pronounced tapering to the blade, which starts about half way between the hilt and the point, but its double fuller is very reminiscent of Frederick III’s sword (1440-1452).

In Oakeshott’s extensive survey, however, no “baselard-like weapons” were included, though our sword’s blade is extremely close to the aforementioned examples in Vienna and can be

easily ascribed to the same Type XXII.1. The typology is missing also in Scalini’s “A Bon Droyt” (Scalini 2007) and in Aleksić’s exceptional catalogue of 412 medieval specimens from Southeastern Europe; both of which stand as a testament to the rarity of the type (Aleksić 2007).

The sword itself had been published a couple of years before Oakeshott released his book in 1991, but curiously enough, it was dated to the 8th-10th centuries and was described in the catalogue as a “Barbarian Age sword” (Mauro 1989, 35).³ Despite this Oakeshott did not reference the sword in his last work, “Sword in Hand” (Oakeshott 2001), nor another baselard-sword from the Bayerische Nationalmuseum (Fig. 3), generically dated to the second half of the 14th century (Lhoste 1997, 79).⁴ The similarities between these specimens, however, extend well beyond the typology of the blade, since both are provided with a finger-ring and a baselard shaped hilt, though the Munich sword looks to be in almost pristine conditions (like those in Vienna).

Given the almost identical blade sections and the geometry of the fullers, it could be cautiously suggested that the two swords in Vienna might have originated from a similar pattern and had possibly been refitted as ceremonial swords, since their imposing proportions made them especially suitable for the task. This theory, however, could be validated only through the removal of their hilts and a direct inspection of the tangs, or possibly through X-Ray analysis.

Although only two of these four weapons still have a baselard-shaped hilts, the close similarities of their Type XXII.1 blades proves the existence of a small cluster of examples whose kinship could hardly be described as a mere coincidence. Nevertheless, things are never as simple as they seem and a direct connection between this particular blade pattern and baselard hilts should not be assumed, as not every single surviving baselard-sword is furnished with a XXII.1 type blade. This is the case of a lot sold by Czerny’s in 2009 (Czerny’s 2009, lot 907) and now in private hands whose blade incorporates a single, large fuller running for almost 2/3 of its length, resembling an Oakeshott type XIII, but with a slightly sharper point (Oakeshott 1991, 95). This weapon is also

² I had a chance to see this sword a couple of times and I would cautiously suggest that the point section might have been ground and re-shaped after its construction. Actually, it shows a slight asymmetry which is not to be found towards the hilt, where the edges look even and gently tapering to the point, like in Frederick’s ceremonial sword.

³ The sword was finally auctioned by Hermann Historica in 2004 (Hermann Historica 2004, lot 477), after Oakeshott’s death in 2002. Since then, it had been preserved in the same private collection.

⁴ The sketch of this sword in the book, however, is somehow inaccurate. The only other picture I could find of this very important weapon in almost pristine condition (whose blade is a perfect example of Type XXII.1), portrays the sword beside a famous cloth-covered breastplate that is currently in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich (Paggiarino 2019, 46-53). The sword too is still in the Bayerisches’ collection, but not on display (inv. No. W202).



Fig. 5. Baselard-sword without finger ring, private collection. *Photo by kind permission of the owner.*

Ryc. 5. Basilar z głowią mieczową bez „palucha”, kolekcja prywatna. *Fot. dzięki uprzejmości właściciela.*

equipped with a finger-ring, like the Munich sword and the subject of this paper (Fig. 4).

Another baselard-sword (so far unpublished and in a private collection) also belongs to this sub-type, but has no ring on the hilt and is perfectly symmetrical (Fig. 5), while a fifth specimen has a finger-ring and shows an apparently flat blade without fullers: however, part of the blade is still covered by a leather scabbard and I had no chance of a direct examination⁵ (Fig. 6).

While baselards, knives and daggers are relatively common both in excavations and iconography, as far as I know there's no evidence of basilar shaped swords from scientifically excavated archaeological *strata*, and so their dating mostly relies on very few iconographical representations. However, though rare, the quality of these iconographical sources is excellent and provides some useful clues on both the origin of the baselard-sword and their possible dating.

⁵ This sword also is in private hands and is so far unpublished, so will be presented in this paper for the first time. The upper bar is very arched (a bit more than the Czerny's one) and almost resembles a couple of short antennas, though its general "baselard" shape is still quite clear. The scales on the grip are still partially preserved and embellished by a dotted decoration.



Fig. 6. Baselard-sword with leather scabbard, private collection. Photo by kind permission of the owner.

Ryc. 6. Basilar z głownią mieczową w skórzanej pochwie, kolekcja prywatna. Fot. dzięki uprzejmości właściciela.

In the “Oratorio di San Giorgio” (“St. George’s Oratory”) in Padova, completed in 1384, Altichiero da Zevio left one of the most outstanding depictions of late 14th century clothing and weaponry, with such a wealth of details that his work ranks among the best “photographic portrayals” of Late Medieval life. Luckily enough, in this pageant of arms and armour his brush also indulged in the depiction of a couple of baselard hilts hanging diagonally on the left side of the body, both without finger-rings, along with an entire baselard-sword in its scabbard (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, the left arm of the warrior partially covers the lower hilt of the latter, but its structure is nevertheless absolutely clear. Even though the tip of the scabbard is also concealed by the cloak of a standing figure, it’s still possible to argue that its blade had almost parallel edges, gently tapering to the point. Regardless, we can be in no doubt that the depiction is that of a sword and not a large sharp-pointed dagger, like those drawn by Andrea Orcagna in Church of Santa Croce in Florence from the half of the 14th century (Fig. 8).

Finally, another valuable pictorial reference was painted by Master Venceslaus in St. Charles’ church in Pergine Valsugana (TN) and dates to the first years of the 15th century (before 1407). A portion of baselard-type hilt hanging diagonally from the left side of a soldier is clearly visible, but unfortunately once more the blade is concealed (Fig. 9).

Interestingly, the upper bar over the grip of every example noted so far is gently curved (the Valsugana one being almost fish-tailed) and one of the hilts in Padova reveals a typical “3 × 3” design, with three rivets on the upper bar, three on the grip and three on the lower bar towards the blade: a feature that is also found on our sword. Furthermore, all of these examples are carried by footsoldiers rather than knights.⁷

Both these fresco cycles are located in north-eastern Italy and span a period of little more than two decades. It is therefore tempting to suggest that this sword type might date to the last quarter of the 14th century (or at the latest to the first decade of the 15th) and was developed in this region. However, one could argue that this evidence is too limited to draw any firm conclusions. Nevertheless, what really stands out is the scarcity of these images compared to the frequency of short bladed baselards in iconography. As Oakeshott pointed

⁶ The curvature of the upper bar is already perceivable in the frescoes of St. Abbondio (Como), dating between 1310 and 1330 (Fig. 10; Vignola 2016, 13). However, in later iconography we find plenty of straight upper bars (see for instance Orcagna’s “Inferno”) so it’s actually hard to tell if this feature can have some chrono-typological value.

⁷ It’s to be noted that in the “Oratorio di San Giorgio”, Altichiero depicted also a significant number of fully armoured knights kneeling in prayer, and they all have “regular” swords with pommels.



out, in *fourteenth-century Italy* it seems to have been almost the only kind in use: hardly a picture painted between about 1300 and 1420 is without one visible somewhere (Oakeshott 1960, 336). As far as I know, an extensive survey of this abundant iconography has never been attempted, but it would probably be a task of encyclopedic proportions. However, in this ocean of daggers, sword-sized baselards are so scarce in the pictorial sources that their low number, in my opinion, may reflect their rarity in real life. Whether this is a consequence of this type only being in use for a short time or of a local trend is hard to tell. Perhaps these large, slashing blades marked the twilight of the baselard, or the “swan song” of a typology in use for such a long time that it finally became a sort of fashionable pattern for swords too.

The outcome was an “extreme” weapon, in which its design followed the baselard, but whose handling was deeply affected by the lack of a pommel to counterbalance the heftiness of the blade. Therefore, it is not surprising that all the surviving swords with a baselard-like hilt were designed for slashing rather than thrusting. A stiff and thick blade like that of an estoc would have been totally unwieldable without a substantial pommel. However, this lack of balance must also have affected the manoeuvrability of these slashing swords and taken its toll on the user. Indeed these handling problems could have been an important factor in the development of the finger ring, as we shall see below.⁸

The sword itself: technical aspects and periodization

Excavated ferrous-alloy artefacts usually show some degree of corrosion and only in few, lucky cases a rich and thick patina of goethite maintained the surface of the metal in almost pristine condition (Oakeshott 1991, 8). Therefore, the first question which arises is how close these items are to their original size, weight and mechanical properties. An empirical but effective method to ascertain the preservation of a blade is checking its flexibility:

Fig. 7. Altichiero da Zevio, “St. George’s Oratory”, ca. 1384, Padova (Italy). Photo by M. Vignola.

Ryc. 7. Altichiero da Zevio, „Oratorium św. Jerzego”, ok. 1384, Padwa (Włochy). Fot. M. Vignola.

⁸ A scientific study of sword dynamics, grounded in physics and calculations, was presented by George L. Turner in 2002 (Turner 2002). This groundbreaking work proves better than any the complexity of the topic. However, any user from the past was obviously unaware of the physics behind his weapon and would have expressed the handling characteristics “verbally” rather than “mathematically”.



Fig. 8. Fresco of Andrea Orcagna, Santa Croce church, mid-14th century, Florence (Italy) (after *Vignola 2016, Fig. 13*).

Ryc. 8. Fresk Andrei Orcagna, kościół Santa Croce, połowa XIV w., Florencja (Włochy) (wg *Vignola 2016, Fig. 13*).

if a gentle tapping triggers a vibration, it is proof that the metal is not entirely mineralized.⁹

The context of the baselard-sword from Hermann Historica is unknown (although almost certainly an Italian river), but fortunately the metal is still springy and can be cautiously flexed in both directions. Any percussion produces quite large vibrations, and this combined with a shallow pitting on most of its surface might suggest that the technical data here below (weight aside) could be fairly close to the original statistics.

- Overall length: 103 cm
- Blade length: 90 cm
- Blade width (maximum): 5.6 cm
- Blade thickness (maximum): 0.4 cm
- Maximum width of the hilt: 6.5 cm (without ring)
- Handle rivets, maximum height: 1.6 cm
- Point of balance: 64 cm from the point
- Weight: 800 g

Sections:

- 3 cm from the point: width 1.3 cm, thickness 0.2 cm
- 50 cm from the point: width 4.8 cm, thickness 0.32 cm
- 80 cm from the point: width 5.5 cm, thickness 0.35 cm (fuller's width 1.2 cm)
- Marks: struck four times in the fuller with a gothic T.

⁹ Here I am refraining from discussing forgeries, which plague the field of ancient swords studies. The existence of many extremely talented modern sword makers, as proved by Mansfield's Appendix A in "Records of the Medieval Sword" (Mansfield 1991, 245-252), should always inspire a cautious approach. While many of them strike every replica with their own mark, we should always be aware that a few may set out to deceive experts and scholars (for example the long dispute about the so called "King Edward III Sword"; Oakeshott 1991, 284-305). At the same time, this cautious approach could lead to the dismissal of original items as "fakes", simply because they do not follow a well known pattern. Regarding apparently archaeological pieces, the find spot and the nature of corrosion can provide good guidance. A very corroded, aesthetically unpleasant sword, with cracks and missing elements, is certainly less valuable on the market than a good specimen and it's generally "not worth the effort" of a counterfeit.

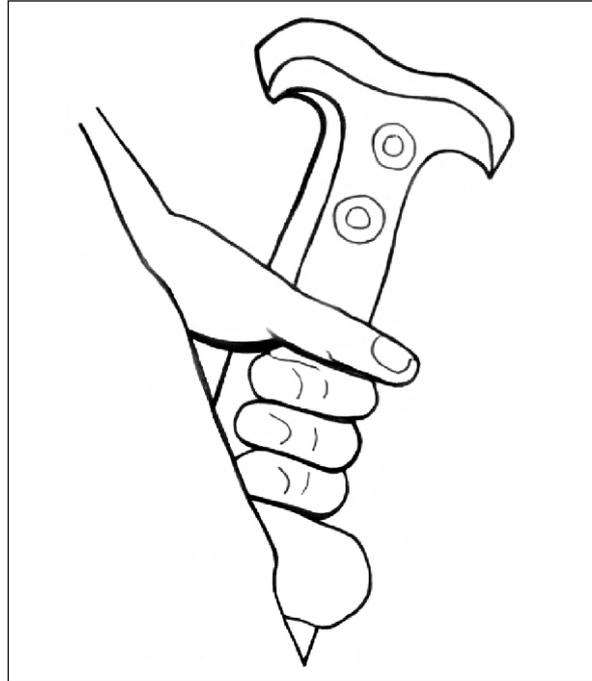


Fig. 9. Master Venceslaus, detail, St. Charles' church, early 15th century (before 1407), Pergine Valsugana (Italy). *Drawing by M. Vignola*.

Fig. 10. Mistrz Wincenty, szczegół, kościół św. Karola, początek XV w. (przed 1407 r.), Pergine Valsugana (Włochy). *Rys. M. Vignola*.

Despite the corrosion and the lack of a grip which has caused a modest but unquantifiable weight loss, 800 grams is perhaps surprising for a weapon of this size, considering the proportions are quite impressive, especially for a one-handed sword (Fig. 11:1). However, the lack of a pommel to counterbalance the blade is largely responsible for this and its remarkable handling heftiness. In sharp contrast with its scale weight, the point of balance is about 26 cm from the grip towards the tip, thus facilitating a strong slashing action and resulting in some forward dragging when thrusting.

While the point of the blade is still sharp and very capable of piercing (Fig. 11:2), the extreme springiness of the blade (largely preserved) would have made this sword unsuitable for any penetration through mail and multi-layered cloth defences. The flat rhombic blade's cross-section (Fig. 11:3) conveys the impression of an instrument whose primary purpose was that of slashing rather than piercing, with a razor-like edge capability.

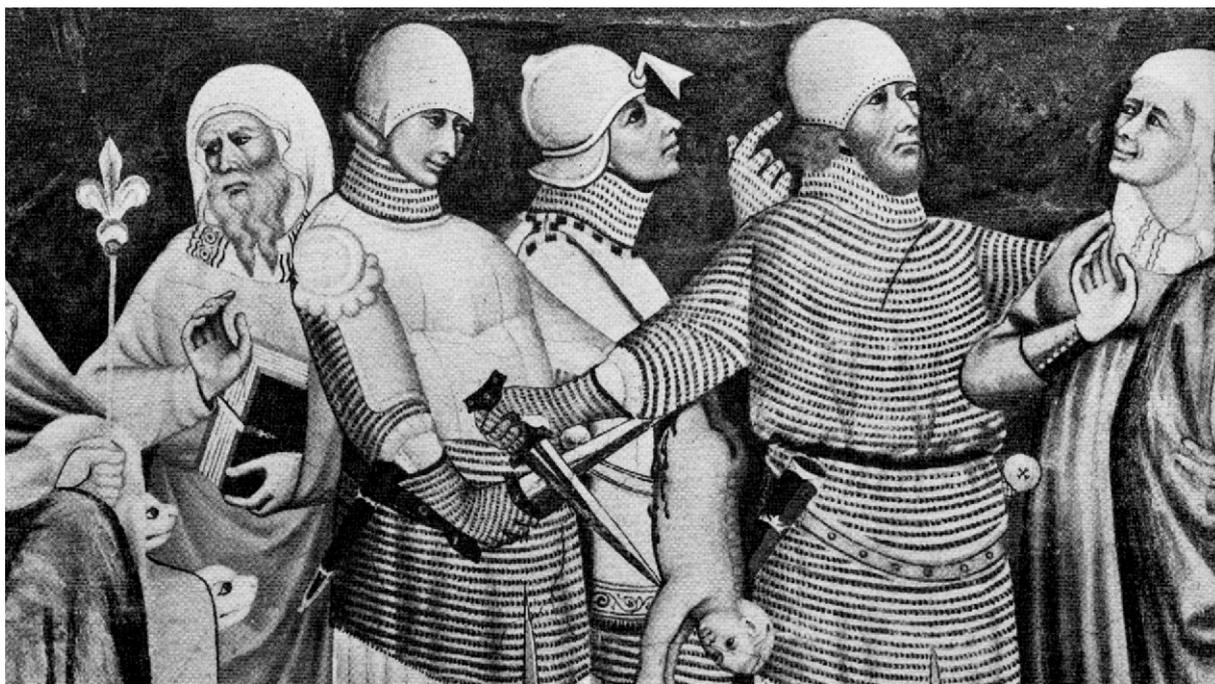


Fig. 10. Unknown artist, ca. 1310-1330, St. Abbondio's church, Como (Italy) (after *Vignola 2016, Fig. 4*).

Ryc. 10. Artysta nieznan, ok. 1310-1330, kościół św. Abundiusza, Como (Włochy) (wg *Vignola 2016, Fig. 4*).

In other words, this weapon would have been largely ineffective against heavily armoured opponents, but extremely effective on exposed areas, even without the energy of a full-swing. Nevertheless, its iconographical association with foot soldiers, like in Padova, suggests that this type of sword was probably more military than civilian.

The heftiness of the sword had probably been perceived during its working life, since one owner opted to reshape the guard (Fig. 11:4-5). In fact a close examination shows that the finger-ring has been welded to the blade and thus the sword was probably intended to be symmetrical with a regular boxed 'I' shaped baselard hilt, typically wrapped in a sheet of precious metal.¹⁰ A small ricasso was also ground in the forte of the blade, in order to accommodate the index finger of the wielder (Fig. 11:6). This apparently small modification, however, improved control and eased the "dragging effect" caused by the point of balance being placed so far from the hand. Therefore, its original design must have been very close to the pictorial representations in Padova (in those instances where the entire hilt is visible and there is no trace

of applied finger-rings) and to the symmetrical specimen in private hands.

The shallow double fuller, so reminiscent of Type I baselard daggers, does not seem to have an actual function and in my opinion is merely decorative. With a length of about 21 cm and a maximum width of 1.4 cm, the weight saving effect is quite negligible, as well as any influence on the flexibility of the blade.

The weapon's stylistical connection with a typical baselard pattern, though, is undisputable. Inside the fuller, the maker's mark (a gothic T) is struck four times in a row (Fig. 11:7), oriented with its base towards the hand of the wielder. Unfortunately, I could not find any comparable examples, nor any obvious reason for such a repetition, although on the sword of the Order of the Dragon the mark is repeated four times in groups of two and beside the fuller.¹¹

Bringing all the information together, it is possible to determine something of the history of the object.

Phase 1: Manufacture (late 14th – first decade of the 15th century). Conceived as a symmetrical,

¹⁰ This feature is common in baselard daggers (*Vignola 2016, 24, 33*). However, I was unable to determine the nature of the sheet. This lamina has a dark patina, scratched in a few, tiny spots revealing a silverish colour. These areas are too few and small to undisputedly assess the nature of the metal without further analysis, but their colour doesn't seem to fit a copper-alloy. Therefore, an educated guess is that it might actually be silver, which is not unknown on high-quality baselards (*Czerny's 2003, lot 688*).

¹¹ The marks were included in the decoration as a sort of floral motif: however, they look way deeper than the surrounding engraved gilded volutes and inscriptions. These being the actual marks of this sword is also confirmed in the catalogue of the Kunsthistorisches Museum (*Thomas, Gamber 1976, 74-75*).

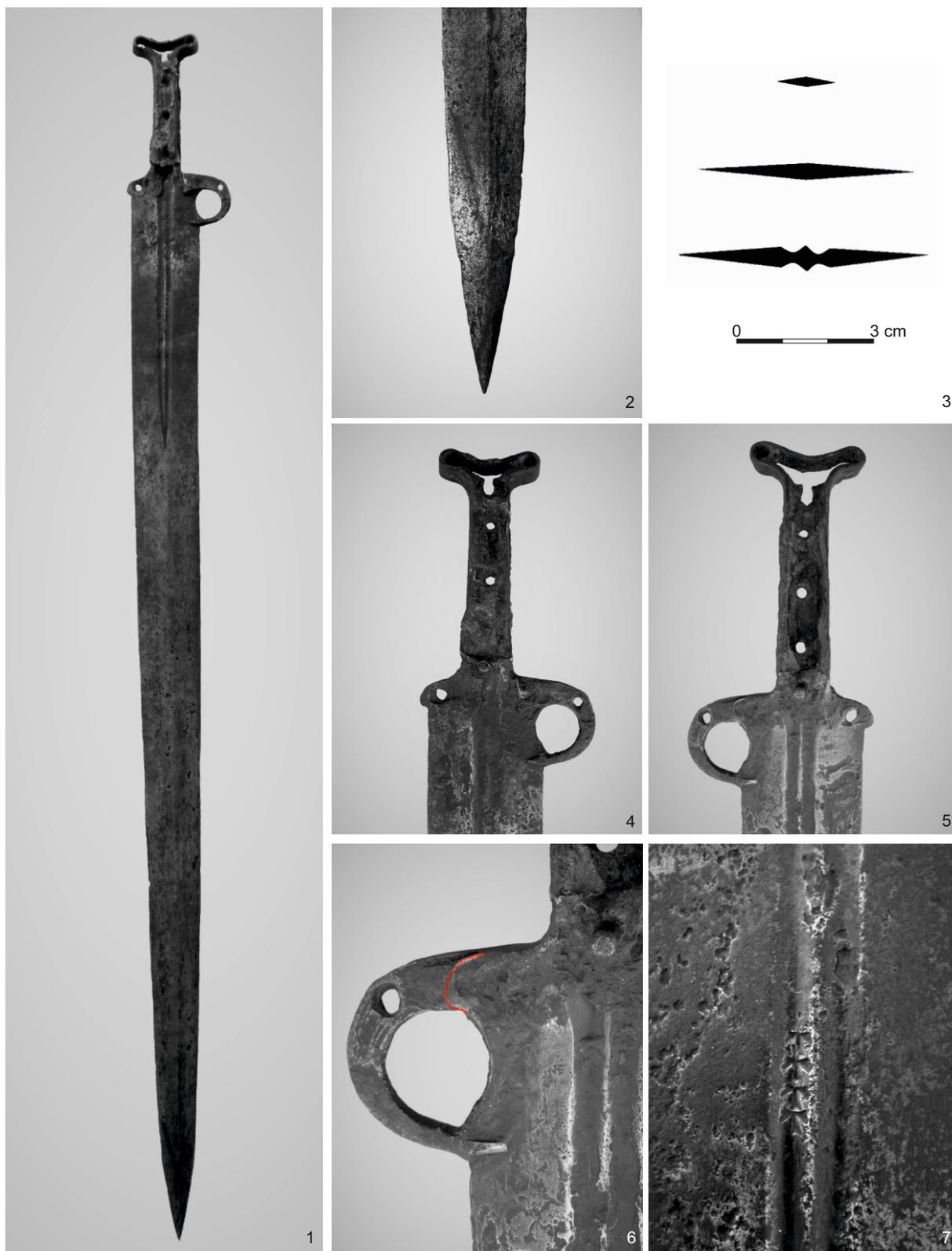


Fig. 11. Baselard-sword, private collection: 1 – full length; 2 – detail of the point; 3 – sections of the blade (upper to lower: 3, 50 and 80 cm from the tip); 4 – closeup of the hilt, front; 5 – closeup of the hilt, back; 6 – welding line (marked in red); 7 – marks (1-2, 4-7 – photo by M. Vignola; 3 – drawing by M. Vignola).

Ryc. 11. Basilarz z głownią mieczową, kolekcja prywatna: 1 – zabytek w całości; 2 – szczegół sztychu; 3 – przekroje głowni (od sztychu do rękojeści: 3, 50 i 80 cm od sztychu); 4 – zbliżenie na rękojeść, strona przednia; 5 – zbliżenie na rękojeść, strona tylna; 6 – linia zgrzewu (oznaczona na czerwono); 7 – marki miecznicze (1-2, 4-7 – fot. M. Vignola; 3 – rys. M. Vignola).



Fig 12. Baselard-sword before restoration: detail of the crevice (after Mauro 1989, 120).

Ryc. 12. Basilar z głownią mieczową przed konserwacją; fragment z widocznym pęknięciem (wg Mauro 1989, 120).

double edged weapon and struck 4 times with a gothic T.

Phase 2: Working life (late 14th – 15th century). Finger ring added and scales probably replaced; two nicks on the blade, possibly resulting from impacts. It's unclear how long the sword was in use, but it would have been considered outdated by the half of the 15th century at the latest.

Phase 3: Post working life (15th century – 19th or 20th century). A large crevice was produced about 14 cm from the hilt, which nevertheless didn't split the blade (Fig. 12). It is impossible to

determine if this damage resulted in the sword being discarded or whether the damage occurred during or after deposition. The deposition resulted in areas of pitting with some loss of metal, deeper on one side and closer to the hilt. Find date and place unknown: certainly before 1989, but probably much older (possibly 19th century).

Phase 4: Restoration (1989-2004). A picture in the 1989 catalogue shows the sword before its restoration. After this date and before 2004 the old patina was removed, the crevice welded (thus renewing the structural integrity of the blade) and the whole item stabilized.

Conclusions

At least five double-edged swords with baselard-type hilts have survived¹² (a small group compared to other sword types) and appear to have evolved in the late 14th century Italy, when the “baselard pattern” had been customary for decades. Although the precise developmental chronology of this type of sword is not altogether clear it is possible that swordsmiths simply enlogated the blade of a common form of dagger (the baselard), turning them into weapons designed primarily for cutting, whilst preserving their typical boxed hilt and occasional double fuller.

The scarce iconographical representations of such weapons and their rarity today, especially compared to baselard daggers and knives, may indicate they were either not widely used or were in use in a specific confined region (probably the north-east of Italy) for only a short time. Therefore, it is very likely that these swords existed as a specific “type” and represent a ‘twilight’ of the baselard fashion, before its popularity faded away, swept from the scene by new designs.

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¹² In the “Cantigas and the Libro de los Juegos” (usually dated to the late 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries) there are representations of baselard hilted falchions, extremely specialized slashing weapons dated to the very “dawn” of the baselard fashion, but the similitude is limited to the shape of their hilts. The chronological and geographical distance would suggest to treat these instances as distinct episodes (Soler del Campo 1993, 22, Figs. 73, 75).

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UWAGI O MIECZU TYPU XXII.1: ZMIERZCH BASILARDA

Streszczenie

Miecz basilaradowy to rodzaj rzadkiej i "ekstremalnie" broni, której forma naśladowała wzór zwykłego sztyletu typu basilard, ale na której używanie wpływ miał brak głowicy, równoważący ciężar głowni. Zachowało się kilka interesujących przykładów tej broni – niektóre w rękach prywatnych, a inne w zbiorach publicznych, jak np. doskonały jej przykład z Monachium, w niemal idealnym stanie.

Co najmniej pięć mieczy dwusiecznych z rękojeściami basilaradowymi zostało dotychczas przebadanych, co stanowi nieliczną grupę w porównaniu do innych typów mieczy. Jednakże, w odróżnieniu od hiszpańskich kordów basilaradowych, których początki można zapewne datować na koniec XIII – początek XIV w., ten typ prawdopodobnie powstał we Włoszech w końcu XIV w., gdzie „wzór basilaradowy” był rozpowszechniony od dziesięcioleci. Teza ta mogłaby zostać wsparta szczególnie świadectwami ikonograficznymi z Padwy, gdzie w „Oratorium św. Jerzego” (1384) wyraźnie przedstawiono liczne takie miecze. Aczkolwiek pewne etapy rozwoju takich mieczy są ciągle niejasne, możliwym jest, iż kujący miecze kowale po prostu przedłużyli

głównie zwykłych sztyletów (basilardów), przekształcając je w broń przeznaczoną przede wszystkim do cięcia, ale z pewną możliwością zadawania sztychów. Zachowała ona natomiast swoją typową pudełkowatą rękojeść i występujące czasami podwójne zbrocze.

Nieliczne przedstawienia ikonograficzne takiej broni oraz jej rzadkość dzisiaj, szczególnie w porównaniu do sztyletów i noży basilaradowych, mogą wskazywać, iż nie cieszyła się ona uznaniem bądź jej popularność była ograniczona do niewielkiego obszaru (zapewne północno-wschodnie Włochy) i nie trwała ona długo. Z drugiej strony, bardzo możliwym jest, że takie miecze funkcjonowały jako szczególny „typ”, reprezentując tym samym „zmierzch” mody basilaradowej, zanim jej popularność przeminęła, usunięta w cień przez nowe wzorce.

Artykuł przedstawia wreszcie dokładną analizę jednego z takich mieczy z kolekcji prywatnej. Przeanalizowano archeologicznie fazy funkcjonowania tego oręża, wraz ze szczegółowymi informacjami o posługiwaniu się nim oraz ze specyfikacją techniczną.

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