LECH MAREK

BOAR- AND BEAR-HUNTING IN POST-MEDIEVAL SILESIA.
ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The origin of spear-heads with two side-wings projecting from the socket, according to a common view, is Frankish. There is a hypothesis suggesting that lugs or wings developed from rivet heads. These were applied, to secure the spear-head, or to fasten the wire binding and the iron langets to the shaft. However, it seems more likely that the investigated weapon derived from antiquity, rather than the early medieval period. The lugged spear was originally used by the Romans for hunting. Such function of the weapon is confirmed by the Bestiarius or Ventator - depiction sculpted on a 2nd century grave stone from Parma (Fig. 1: a). Yet another wingedhafted weapon had been carved in a relief, decorating the Roman sarcophagus kept in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (Fig. 1: b)4. Mosaics from the Roman Villa near Piazza Armerina in Sicily, the Villa Borghese gallery in Rome, and the Roman Villa in Merida, Spain, all dated to the 1st half of the 4th century are abundant in hunting scenes. They clearly indicate that the lugged spear was used for hunting big game, such as the wild boar. Therefore, it is more than probable that Merovingian and Carolingian winged spears originated from Roman hunting weapons. In the light of the presented evidence it seems unlikely that Frankish spears are an independent development, exclusively determined by experience gained from battle, as frequently stated in the literature. Several examples of renaissance boar spears are identical to their 9th century Frankish belligerent counterparts. One such exhibit dated to 1500-1540 comes from the Dresden Amory. Miniatures from medieval illuminated manuscripts provide invaluable information on pig-sticking. The most referred to, is probably the hunting scene from the 14th century Codex Manesse, depicting Hetzbold von Weißensee. One of his retinues has a spear with a cross-guard, which prevented the wounded animal of running down the shaft and attacking the hunter (Fig. 1: c).

In medieval and early modern weapon-inventories, the investigated pole-arms are listed under the names: Boar-spear, Sauspiess, Saufeder, Bärenspiess, Schweinspiess, Federspiess or Fanggeisen. Terms relating to hunting spears suggest, that there was a distinction between weapons engaged against bears and those used for wild-boar hunting. Medieval and early modern hafted weapons remain still a neglected field of research as compared to our knowledge of other arms. The nomenclature of this branch of the history of arms is extremely confusing. According to M. Troso, the names encountered in medieval written accounts, such as: spiedo, spatum latum and lanzaione might have referred to hunting weapons, as well as military winged spears. There are several discrepancies between the names of weapons listed in old arsenal inventories and the actual content of these arsenals. The term Sausspiess (Boar-spear), for instance, often refers to the hunting weapon, as well as partisans and two-handed swords. These inconsistencies, prove that historical documents are less reliable for arms and armor studies, than extant examples or iconographic sources.

A remarkable medieval hunting spear from ca. 1430 is kept at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. It originally belonged to the Austrian duke Frederic IV of Tyrol (1382-1439). The sturdy iron head consist of a lozenge blade, diamond in cross section, a polygonal socket and an engraved cross piece. The socket bears an inscription,
Fig. 1. Hunting spears: a - Bestiarius or Ventator, stone tomb, 2nd cent. A.D. Parma (after Demmin 1891); b – Roman sarcophagus, 2nd cent. A.D. Capitoline Museum Rome (after Diener-Schönberg 1902/05); c - Codex Manesse (after http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/cpg848 ).
Fig. 2. Hunting equipment from castle Chojnik, 16th/17th cents. Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra: a – hunting pitchfork, Inv. No. 1982/4; b, c – bear spear. Inv. No. 1982/5; d,e,f – bear spear, Inv. No. 1982/6; g,h bear spear, Inv. No. 1982/7.
which reads: FEDERIC (US) and DUX AUSTRIE; one can find a very similar spear in the illustrious book of Hours of Duke Jean de Berry, dated to 1412-1416. Unornamented, purely military examples of the same period are referred to as bohemian-ear-spoons, because they became increasingly popular among the Hussites.

A slightly later boar-spear, which belonged to a celebrated person is kept at the Armory of the Moscow Kremlin. This piece was in possession of the Great Prince of Tver Boris Alexandrovich (1425-1461), as one can read on the silver-gilt inlaid socket, chiseled with human figures and with a floral design. The decoration is characteristic for contemporary Russian icon painting. Noteworthy, is the lack of a cross piece, that originally might have been detachable.

In the 16th century hunting spears developed into a distinct form, very different from the hafted weapons used for war. They were provided with a massive, extensively broad blade, usually decorated with inlay, etching, gilding and bluing.

Shafts were commonly made of yew- or ash-wood, which are resilient, relatively light and resistant to breaking. Additionally they were bound with leather thongs to ensure a firm grip and to prevent the wood from warping. In several instances, leather straps were replaced by decorative nail-heads or notches covering the entire surface. A different method to ensure a firm grip was to pick a special kind of wood with twisted fibers or knotty wood.

To acquire sufficient durability entire young stems were selected for wooden parts of the weapon rather than old ones split into four pieces in the process. Sometimes the living stem was incised to obtain a peculiar pattern of knotty wood on the surface of the shaft. A French ‘bear spear’ from the Dresden Armoury, dated to 1590, has a shaft made of a wine stem, which had been incised and shaped while still living. The incisions caused growth distortions, producing a knotty surface effect.

The point of balance is usually at the upper part of the shaft. The latter is tapering towards the lower end. A cross-guard (German: Knebel) in 16th and 17th century examples made of wood, bone antler or iron was fastened to an opening in the socket by means of a leather thong. During combat the cross piece of a military winged spear prevented the opponent’s blade from sliding down the shaft. Antonio Manziolinio in his fencing manual from 1531 strongly recommends to tie up the opponent’s blade with the wings, force it over to the left side, and then thrust into his exposed flank.

Tassels were frequently fastened, under the iron head of a hunting spear. Most often they were dyed in heraldic colors of the owner and bound with nets made of silver or golden wire. Frequently the shafts were inlaid with bone, coated with fabric or fish skin. The rich embellishment of such spears suggests that they were luxury weapons - employed in one of the most popular activities of a nobleman - the hunt.

Plain unornamented hunting equipment was found during conservation works in one of the medieval cisterns at Castle Chojnik in Silesia. The collection of these artifacts, kept at Karkonoskie Museum in Jelenia Góra (Fig. 2), consists of three spear heads and one pitchfork, probably used for boar- or bear hunting (Fig. 2: a).

There are numerous Silesian written accounts referring to hunting with a pitchfork. One of them is the duke’s Louis IV of Legnica arsenal inventory from 1662. Among other weapons listed in his document one can find: Gabelspieße - so auf der Jagt, 29 Schweinspieße and 2 Federspieße.

Two of the spear heads from Castle Chojnik (inv. No MJG-AH-1982/6 i /7) have large, robust and leaf shaped blades with strong central ribs (Fig. 2: d-h). Their hexagonal sockets are provided with triangular openings, to hinge a crossbar by means of a leather thong (now lacking) (19,5-20 cm length, 6,9-8,0 cm width). In well preserved examples, crossbars made of bone or wood are highly decorative. They usually bear engraved monograms of their owners. Detachable, hinged crossbars appear with boar or bear- spears at the end of the 16th century. They were replaced several times, due to intensive ware. A Saxonian bear-spear from the 16th/17th cents. kept in the Dresden Armoury, for instance, is provided with a later crossbar made of bone and engraved with the date 1727 (Fig. 3).

Specimens, No 1982/6 and 1982/7, due to the large dimensions, could be regarded as weapons for bear hunting. The spear head, No MJG – AH - 1982/5, with a socket of a circular cross-section (Fig. 2: b; c) is less robust, than the above mentioned. Therefore, it could be interpreted

---

13 Ibidem, p. 84
14 Y. Miller, Russian Arms and Armour, Leningrad 1982, pp. 10-11, 175; figs. 2-5.
15 Ibidem, p. 10-11, 175; Fig. 2-5.
18 A. Diener-Schönberg, op. cit., p. 345.
19 Ibidem, p. 345.
20 G. Quasigroch, op. cit., p. 261.
22 G. Quasigroch, op. cit., p. 261.
26 M. Golinski, R. Zerelik, op. cit., p. 65.
28 J. Schöbel, op. cit., p. 84.
as a boar-spear (blade - dimensions 5,3 width; 22,5 cm length) (Fig. 2: b; c). Analogous spear heads from Central and Western Europe, are dated to the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries in the literature. These may be gilded or etched.

Despite of being relatively well preserved, no traces of additional decoration have been identified on the surfaces of the objects found in Chojnik.

On the basis of the archeological context, it is difficult to date artifacts analyzed in this paper. Unfortunately, the conservation works at Castle Chojnik were conducted without the supervision of a professional archeologist. Chronology of the spear heads (end of the 16th – 1st half of the 17th century) is based on analogous specimens known to date.

It is more than likely that the excavated pieces found their way into the cistern, after the castle was struck by a lightning

---

*Fig. 3. Hunting spears (after Schöbel 1990).*

---


and set afire on 31 August 1675\textsuperscript{32}. The artifacts bear traces of high temperature and are coated with thick fire patina.

The abundance of big game in the vicinity of Chojnik is confirmed by local tradition. One of the written accounts informs us that in 1292 the castle was raised in the place of earlier hunter’s manor\textsuperscript{33}.

The boar spear, unlike the so-called boar sword used by horsemen, was wielded by dismounted hunters in a battue hunt. The latter always had to be carried out with a pack of hounds to hold and exhaust the game enough, so that the hunter could deliver a final blow to the beast, usually thrusting with the spear from behind to the left side\textsuperscript{34}. On this occasion dogs were equipped with armor consisting of scales and mail with a leather lining. The best known example of such a defense is kept at Real Armeria in Madrid\textsuperscript{35}. In old hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that a single spear-man is no match for the enraged wild boar unless it is held by a pack of hounds. One of the practitioners, described an incident with a wild boar. When hunting armed with spear he had encountered the wild animal; and in the blink of an eye (He ‘didn’t even have time enough to say amen’) had been knocked over and trampled by the beast while lying on his back\textsuperscript{36}.

Due to extensive hunting, the big game became almost extinct at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Therefore, the boar spears gradually went out of use. Weapons for bear hunting, even earlier, found their way in the increasingly popular hunting manuals (quoated by Qasigroch) it is stressed that such a defense is kept at Real Armeria in Madrid\textsuperscript{35}. In old hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that a single spear-man is no match for the enraged wild boar unless it is held by a pack of hounds. One of the practitioners, described an incident with a wild boar. When hunting armed with spear he had encountered the wild animal; and in the blink of an eye (He ‘didn’t even have time enough to say amen’) had been knocked over and trampled by the beast while lying on his back\textsuperscript{36}.

The abundance of big game in the vicinity of Chojnik is confirmed by local tradition. One of the written accounts informs us that in 1292 the castle was raised in the place of an earlier hunter’s manor\textsuperscript{33}.

The boar spear, unlike the so-called boar sword used by horsemen, was wielded by dismounted hunters in a battue hunt. The latter always had to be carried out with a pack of hounds to hold and exhaust the game enough, so that the hunter could deliver a final blow to the beast, usually thrusting with the spear from behind to the left side\textsuperscript{34}. On this occasion dogs were equipped with armor consisting of scales and mail with a leather lining. The best known example of such a defense is kept at Real Armeria in Madrid\textsuperscript{35}. In old hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that a single spear-man is no match for the enraged wild boar unless it is held by a pack of hounds. One of the practitioners, described an incident with a wild boar. When hunting armed with spear he had encountered the wild animal; and in the blink of an eye (He ‘didn’t even have time enough to say amen’) had been knocked over and trampled by the beast while lying on his back\textsuperscript{36}.

Due to extensive hunting, the big game became almost extinct at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Therefore, the boar spears gradually went out of use. Weapons for bear hunting, even earlier, found their way in the increasingly popular hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that such a defense is kept at Real Armeria in Madrid\textsuperscript{35}. In old hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that a single spear-man is no match for the enraged wild boar unless it is held by a pack of hounds. One of the practitioners, described an incident with a wild boar. When hunting armed with spear he had encountered the wild animal; and in the blink of an eye (He ‘didn’t even have time enough to say amen’) had been knocked over and trampled by the beast while lying on his back\textsuperscript{36}.

Due to extensive hunting, the big game became almost extinct at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Therefore, the boar spears gradually went out of use. Weapons for bear hunting, even earlier, found their way in the increasingly popular hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that such a defense is kept at Real Armeria in Madrid\textsuperscript{35}. In old hunting manuals (quoted by Qasigroch) it is stressed that a single spear-man is no match for the enraged wild boar unless it is held by a pack of hounds. One of the practitioners, described an incident with a wild boar. When hunting armed with spear he had encountered the wild animal; and in the blink of an eye (He ‘didn’t even have time enough to say amen’) had been knocked over and trampled by the beast while lying on his back\textsuperscript{36}.

Conclusions:

Early modern boar spears from archeological sites are still extremely rare, as compared to the extant well preserved examples in European Museum collections. This disproportion could be explained by the state of art on the subject. The early modern times were never thoroughly studied by archeologists until the mid 60’s of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Unique finds from Chojnik provide invaluable evidence on activities and lifestyle of nobility in early modern Silesia. Hunting was strongly recommended to land owners by Niccolo Machiavelli\textsuperscript{39} in his most celebrated treatise The Prince. According to this author hunting gave the lord an invaluable opportunity to study his estate in every detail; knowing well his own land was of great importance in the case of war.

Catalogue of hunting equipment from castle Chojnik; 16\textsuperscript{th}/17\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra:

Abbreviations:

TL – total lenght
BL – blade lenght
BW – blade width
BT – blade thickness
SW – socket width (at the top)
SMD – socket mouth diameter
SOD – socket opening diameter (at the side of the socket; meant to hinge a cross piece)
RHD – rivet hole diameter

(Dimensions in centimeters)

1. Inv. No. MJG-AH 1982/4
Hunting pitchfork:
TL – 33,5; prong’s lenght – 10,5; prong’s thickness – 0,9; width - 8
SW – 2,2;

2. Inv. No. MJG-AH 1982/5
Boar spear:
TL – 33,15; BL – 22,5; BW – 5,3; BT – 1,3; SW – 2,1; SMD – 3,7; SOD – 1,2; RHD – 0,5;

3. Inv. No. MJG-AH 1982/6
Bear spear:
TL - 33; BL – 19,5; BW – 8; BT – 1,7; SW – 2,6; SMD – 4,7; SOD – 1; RHD – 0,4;

4. Inv. No. MJG-AH 1982/7
Bear spear:
TL – 32,3; BL – 20; BW – 6,9; BT - 1,5; SMD - 3,9; SW - 2,6; SOD - 1,3; RHD – 0,4;

---

\textsuperscript{34} See A. Diener-Schönberg, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 351.
\textsuperscript{35} G. Quasigroch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibidem, p. 259.
\textsuperscript{37} A. Diener-Schönberg, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 348.

\textsuperscript{39} N. Machiavelli, \textit{Książę}, Warszawa 1987, p. 78.
Streszczenie


Interesujące przedmioty związane z uzbrojeniem myśliwskim odkryto podczas oczyszczania cysterny do magazynowania wody na zamku Chojnik. Są to trzy żeleźce włóczni oraz widły o tordowanym trzonie, najprawdopodobniej służące także do polowania na „grubego zwierza”.

Omawiane zabytki przechowywane są obecnie w Muzeum Karkonoskim w Jeleniej Górze. Dwa żeleźce (nr inw. MJG-AH 1982/6 i /7) należą do form o masywnych, krępych i obosiecznych grotach oraz wielokątnych tulejach zaopatrzonych z jednej strony w trójkątny otwór służący do przewlekania rzemienia mocującego poprzeczny element, wykonany często z kości i zaopatrzone w monogram właściciela. Ruchoma poprzeczka wiązana na rzemieniu, przy włóczniach myśliwskich pojawiała się na przełomie XVI/XVII w.