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RAPIERS BY JUAN MARTINEZ THE ELDER – THE ROYAL SWORD-SMITH FROM TOLEDO FOUND IN POLAND

Abstract: The paper deals with the problem of luxury rapiers of the 16th century and their use among representatives of different stratas in the early modern society. One can observe on the example of the two analyzed specimens, manufactured in the workshop of the royal Toledan bladesmith Juan Martinez the Elder, how the increase in wealth and prosperity among burgesses has lead them to copy fashion for luxury weapons and attire from the highest nobility.

Keywords: Juan Martinez, rapier, edged weapons, sword

The generalised point of view on the evolution of swords in the 16th century was presented by E. Oakshott¹. He distinguished four families of weapons, which originated from the medieval sword, namely: 1) the so called bastard swords, with characteristic two-handed grips and long, heavy blades; 2) estocs (or tucks) with narrow thrusting blades, which were meant to pierce mail; 3) swords with complex hilts consisting of quillions, a knuckle guard, several branches, side-guards and *pas d'âne* mounted on blades of a reasonable length, which were meant for thrusting and cutting, and therefore useful in battle; 4) and eventually the rapiers – duelling swords of equally complex hilts, with narrow thrusting blades of a considerable length used mainly as civilian weapons in mundane situations. The rapier most probably originated from the territory of the Iberian Peninsula. The etymology of its name is connected with the term *espada ropera* (literarily – the sword of the robe), which is known from Spanish and French documents dated to the 3rd quarter of the 15th century². The origin of words, in this case, seems to reflect the role of the weapon in the early modern society. In reality however, the 16th-17th century weapon-terminology is far from being consistent. G. Dueñas Beraiz³ argued that the term *espada ropera*⁴ was originally applied to all of the swords used by civilians in war, hunting and duelling, regardless to their blade-forms. The same author claims that terms known from contemporary documents, such as *espada de galán*, *espada de cinta*, *espada de ceñir*

(elegant sword, sword of the scarf, belt-sword – respectively) should be treated as equally relevant as *espada ropera* in reference to early modern swords⁵. In my opinion, however, any attempt to be so strict in terms of 16th or 17th century nomenclature leads to failure. It seems merely impossible to find out what an author of an old document really meant by using a random term to describe a type of weapon or piece of armour. To create a clear, modern nomenclature is essential to make it understandable for the modern students of arms. In my opinion, the term *espada ropera* perfectly reflects the role of the thrusting-sword worn to civilian dress in the 16th-17th century society.

The development of civilian swords could be traced back to the middle ages. We need to have in mind that even in the early medieval period, in certain parts of Europe the carrying of swords was never restricted exclusively to the nobility. In Viking age Norway it was common among free-peasants to possess swords⁶. It must have been a custom not restricted to Norwegian territories as we learn from later documents issued by Frederick Barbarossa in 1152 and 1186⁷. These were special charters in which the monarch repeatedly reminded peasants from his domains, not to carry swords and not to copy the knightly class in this respect. In the late medieval period the emancipation of burgesses, the establishment of fencing schools and the institution of trial by combat had great impact on sword-possession regulations⁸. Soon it was not uncommon to see burgesses walking the streets of their towns with girded swords or daggers.

¹ Oakshott 2000, 126.

² Peláez Valle 1983, 147.

³ Dueñas Beraiz 2004, 214.

⁴ He suggests a French, rather than Spanish origin of the word *espada ropera*.

⁵ Dueñas Beraiz 2004, 214.

⁶ see: Martens 2002.

⁷ Iwańczak 2000, 116.

⁸ see: Anglo 2000, 7-8,14,125.

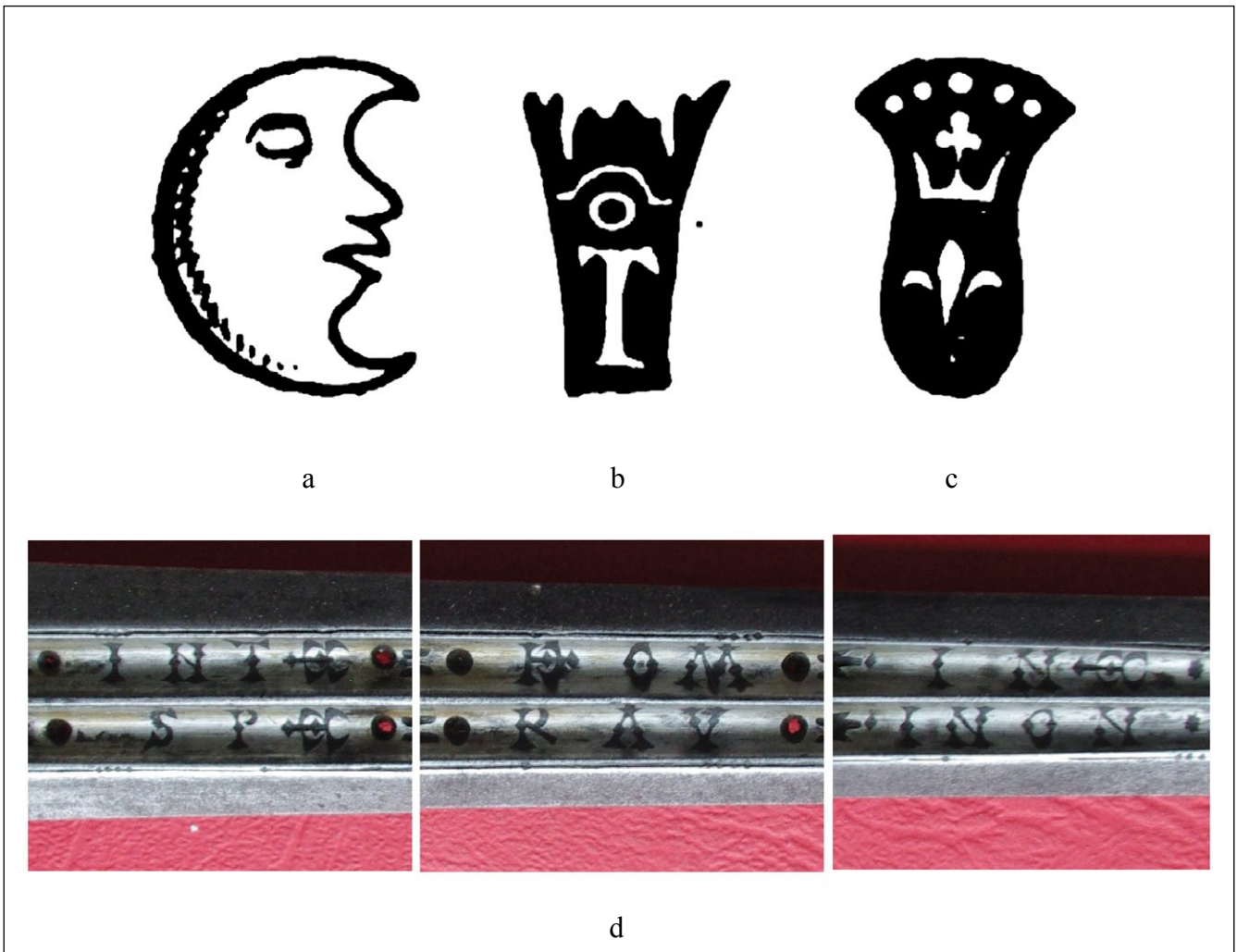


Fig. 1. Marks and inscriptions used by Juan Martinez the Elder from Toledo: a – individual mark; b – Toledan export mark; c – the mark of *Espadero del Rey* (a-c – after W. Boenheim 1897); d – quote from psalm No. 71: IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI NON, rapier 16/17th centuries, Museum of the Silesian Piasts in Brzeg, inv. No. H-512 (d – photo by L. Marek).

The above quoted arguments seem to prove, that civilian swords were not a renaissance invention, as we can often learn from the literature. The evolution of the rapier, with its complex hilt started in the 14th century, in connection with the development of sophisticated fencing techniques⁹. The 16th century rapier, a highly specialized and extreme duelling weapon with its complex hilt forming an iron cage surrounding the hand of the owner, and its thrusting blade was the ultimate stage of this evolution. When rapiers started to be an elegant addition to a gentleman's dress, the decoration of their hilts became an art of its own. Sometimes motifs decorating the hilts remained in accordance with those on sword-belt-buckles and even those adorning dress accessories, such as buttons. We can observe this phenomenon, while studying 16th and 17th century portraits, where the sitters have buttons of their apparel, belt buckles and sword-hilts decorated in the same manner¹⁰. In these circumstances

we could hardly reject the term *espada ropera*, as it is the most suitable word for the entire idea of the rapier. Hilts and blades for rapiers were usually made independently by specialized workshops.

Among the most praised, high quality blades from the turn of the 16th/17th centuries were those from Toledo produced by Juan Martinez the Elder of the Garata Zabala family¹¹. At the beginning of the 1590s this craftsman has achieved the prestigious status of *Espadero del Rey* – the sword-maker of the king¹². Martinez, was active about 1590-1610. His blades are recognized as pieces of very fine craftsmanship, with their surfaces well polished, evenly made fullers, sometimes also provided with very elaborate, pierced ornaments. The master used 3 marks which he stamped upon the blade: the crescent moon (Fig.1a), which was his individual mark; the letter „T” combined with a smaller „o” at the top (Fig.1b), which is the Toledan export

⁹ On the evolution of rapiers see: Seitz 1965; Norman 1980; Oakeshott 2000

¹⁰ Ekstrand 1968, 53.

¹¹ Seitz 1965, 342.

¹² Seitz 1965, 342.

mark¹³; and finally: the crowned *fleur de lis* (Fig.1c) – the mark reserved for blade smiths bearing the title *Espadero del Rey*¹⁴. Sometimes on the false edge of the ricasso, we find the words: *Espadero del Rey*¹⁵. Frequently marks were accompanied by the sentence: IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI. NON (Fig. 1d), which was often inscribed by Juan Martinez upon his blades. Sometimes if, there was enough space the phrase: CONFVNDAR IN AETERNVM was added¹⁶. Both inscriptions are quotes from the biblical psalm No. 71, which starts from the words: ***In thee, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! In thy justice deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me! Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come; you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man***¹⁷. It is more than likely that the motto used by Martinez was not a personal device of the master. It seems to be a talismanic, magical formula invoking divine powers to provide the blade and its owner with supernatural protection instead. The use of similar, talismanic inscriptions on blades originated from the medieval tradition.

Blades by Juan Martinez soon became so famous for their high quality, that even contemporary craftsmen started to forge them. In the 17th century the crescent moon of Martinez was copied by the most illustrious Spanish and German blade smiths of the period. Pedro de Velmonte, the master from Toledo, apart from his individual marks, struck all of the marks of Martinez upon his blades¹⁸. Masters from Solingen, even such prestigious as Mewes Berns and Clemens Horn adapted the device of Martinez and inscribed their blades with it¹⁹. Among gentlemen from the 16th-17th centuries, to possess a blade with the name of Martinez was a hallmark of wealth.

One of the most interesting weapon-finds unearthed during archaeological investigations in the Old Town of Elbląg, Poland was the rapier blade with the name of Martinez, now kept at the Archaeological and Historical Museum in Elbląg (Inv. No. EM.XXII.3516)²⁰. It comes from a medieval latrine

explored by archaeologists in the courtyard of the medieval house at 14 Bednarska St. (Fig.2a). Stratigraphically it could be dated to the 15th-16th centuries. In the fuller, on both sides of the blade, there is a perfectly legible inscription preserved, which reads: IVAN MARTINER (Fig.2b,c). Along the edges of the fuller, narrowing towards the point and ending with the sign of the holy cross, there are groups of dots (Fig.2d). Such traits are characteristic for genuine, Toledan blades. Moreover, the characters used to compose the inscription, and among them, especially the letter E, are very specific for the Toledan edged weapons (Fig.2a-b). The ones encountered on early German forgeries, bearing the name of Juan Martinez, are crude, and differ considerably in outline from their Spanish counterparts²¹. Flaws in spelling, similar to those observed on the specimen excavated in Elbląg are not uncommon among products of Juan Martinez the Elder²². In the case of the Elbląg find there is a letter R instead of Z at the end of the blade-smith's name. The flaw most probably resulted from the fact that the master or one of his apprentices couldn't find the proper punch with letter Z at the moment, so he decided to repeat R in the inscription. The archaeological context of the find was impossible to precisely define. According to dr. Grażyna Nawrołska, who lead the excavation team at the site it is generally dated to the 15th-16th centuries up to the first decades of the 17th century. This suggests that the rapier-blade was deposited in the latrine at 14 Bednarska St. at the end of the 16th or early in the 17th century. Therefore it appears rather to be a genuine product of Juan Martinez, than an early, Spanish forgery of a Martinez-blade. Whether the original hilt mounted on the blade found in Elbląg was plain or ornamented, remains a mystery.

A weapon with the name of Juan Martinez must have been recognized among the Elbląg townsmen as a hallmark of luxury. It is difficult to assert, beyond any doubt, that the 16th or 17th century owners of the plot at 14 Bednarska St. could afford such a blade. It seems however likely, as they are usually described in the tax rolls and other written accounts as citizens of medium wealth²³. On the other hand, the weapon could have originally belonged to one of the 17th century troops fighting or cantoning in the city, in the years 1626-1635²⁴ during the war of Poland and Sweden. In this case it wouldn't have anything to do with the owners of the plot. The blade was found in a latrine converted into a refuse dump, which might have been filled as a result of cleaning actions after a military operation in the city. Rapier blades found in similar contexts connected with town sieges

¹³ It usually was added as a sign, that the quality of the blade was accepted by the council of the elders of the sword-maker's guild. Therefore it could be sent out of Toledo for export.

¹⁴ Boenheim 1897, 126, Figs. a-c.

¹⁵ Schöbel 1973, 91, cat. No. 74a.

¹⁶ Boenheim 1897, 126.

¹⁷ *In te Domine speravi non confundar in aeternum; In iustitia tua libera me et eripe me inclina ad me aurem tuam et salva me; Esto mihi in Deum protectorem et in locum munitum ut salvum me facias quoniam firmamentum meum et refugium meum es tu Deus meus eripe me de manu peccatoris de manu contra legem agentis et iniqui Quoniam tu es patientia mea Domine Domine spes mea a iuventute mea.*

¹⁸ Boenheim 1897, 128.

¹⁹ Boenheim 1897, 128.

²⁰ The dimensions of the blade are: 104,5 cm (total length, the tang is broken off); 104 cm (length of the blade); 15 cm (length

of the fuller); 0,3-0,8 cm (width of the fuller); 2,5 cm (width of the blade), 0,9 cm (thickness of the blade); GGS 0,2 SGS 1,3.

²¹ Geibig 2009, 92-93.

²² Geibig 2009, 126.

²³ APGd, sygnature: 369,1/127, k.8, 31,159; 1/128, k.17v, 255/972, pp. 9,29,47,86,103.

²⁴ Włodarski 1997, 5-26.

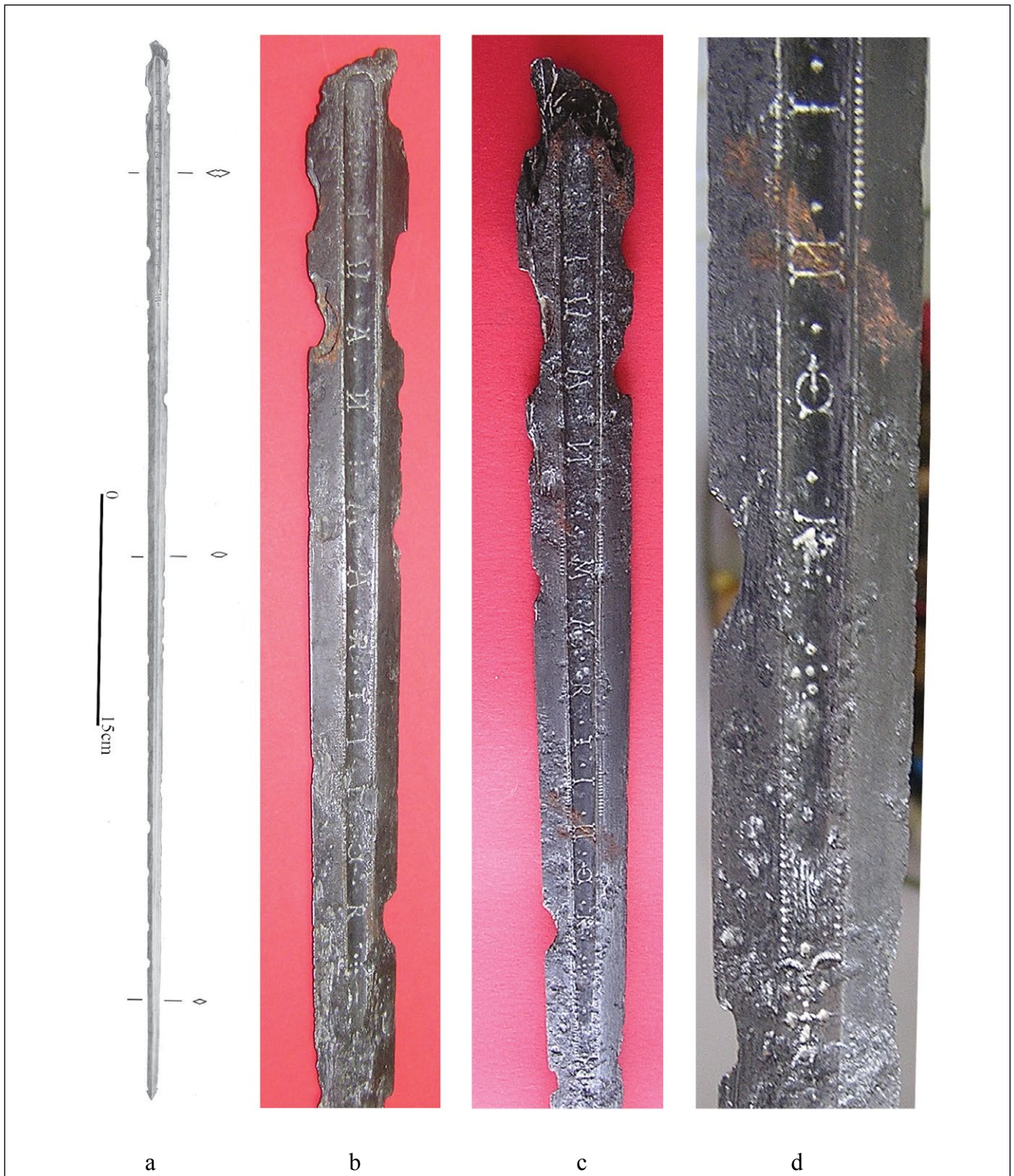


Fig. 2. Rapier blade with the name: JUAN MARTINER (Juan Martinez) late 16th century, Elbląg, 14 Bednarska St. Archeological and Historical Museum, Elbląg (Inv. No. EM.XXII.3516). Drawing by B. Kiliński. Photo by L. Marek.

of the 30 Years War were mentioned in the literature²⁵. On the other hand, the narrow blade from Elbląg must have belonged to a civilian sword, which judging by its extensive length was most suitable for duelling. We cannot however

refute the argument that even such weapons could have been used during a military campaign. If it belonged to a burgess, the question arises, how it found its way into early modern Elbląg? The most plausible explanation for the presence of Spanish luxury goods among archaeological records from this town are strong trade relations of Elbląg to England and, especially to the Netherlands. The fact that at the end of

²⁵ Hohenschwert 1984, 267.



Fig. 3. Rapier belt, 16/17th centuries, Elbląg 6 Rzeźnicka St. Archeological and Historical Museum, Elbląg (Inv. No. EM.XXX.12831). Drawing by B. Kiliński. Photo by L. Marek.

the 16th century Southern Netherlands were still dependant of the Spanish kingdom, makes this hypothesis even more probable. Strong political ties of the mentioned lands must have also facilitated trade. Spanish export-goods travelled easily to the Netherlands where they were loaded on ships heading along the sea-coast towards the eastern Baltic port – towns, such as Elbląg.

Another spectacular find from Elbląg seems to confirm that early modern swords and sword accessories were imported to this town from the Netherlands. It is a very well preserved leather rapier-belt with iron mounts, excavated by archaeologists from an 18th century refuse dump at 6 Rzeźnicka St (Fig.3). The only part missing is a triangular piece of leather usually provided with 4 up to 12 loops



Fig. 4. Rapier late 16th century, blade by Juan Martinez Museum of the Silesian Piasts Brzeg (inv. No. H-512). Photo by L. Marek.

secured by buckle shaped slides to hold the rapier-scabbar. This element, known from contemporary documents under the name *hanger*²⁶ was suspended on the belt by a system of hooks and eyes, which made it easily detachable. Currently, the specimen is kept in the collection of the Archaeological and Historical Museum in Elbląg (Inv. No. EM.XXX.12831)²⁷. Belts with hangers appear for the first time after the mid 16th century and remain popular until

²⁶ see: Norman 1980, 296.

²⁷ An exhausting discussion on the rapier belt from Elbląg the reader will find in the monograph by L. Marek: *Europejski styl. Militaria z Elbląga i okolic* (in press).

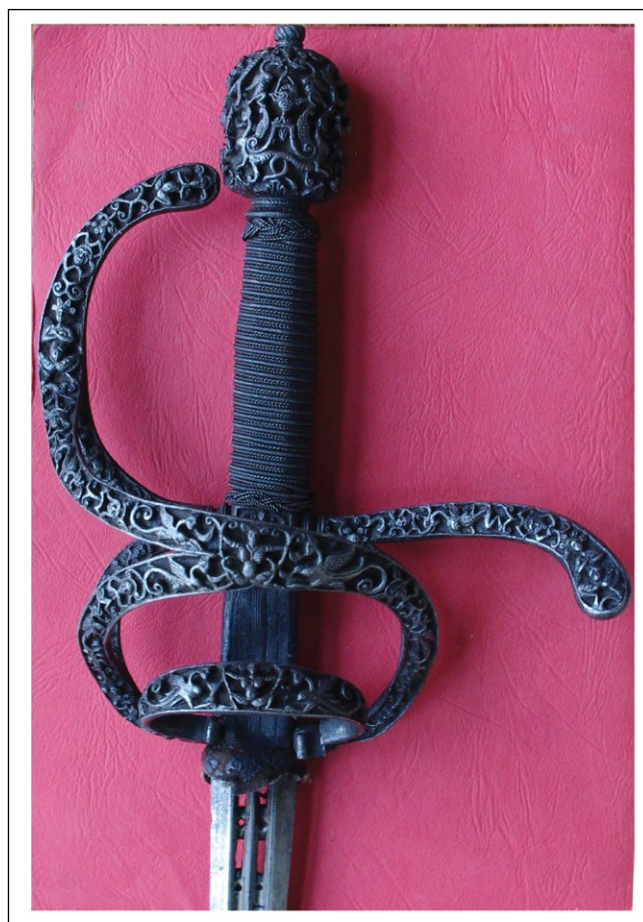


Fig. 5. Chiselled iron hilt of the rapier from Fig. 4. Dutch renaissance style. Photo by L. Marek.

the mid 17th century²⁸. On stylistic grounds and according to the known counterparts, the Elbląg belt should be dated to the early 17th century, in spite of the 18th century context in which it was found. Usually, belts with hangers were decorated to match rapier hilts²⁹ which indicates that the rapier was treated as an element of a gentleman's dress in early modern society. The leather belt found in Elbląg is plain and equipped with modestly decorated iron mounts (Fig.3b). In the place of a waist buckle there are two iron mounts linked by a ring on each, and a double hook terminating with swan's heads (Fig.3c,d). This method of fastening a sword-belt came into fashion about 1540³⁰. Almost identical to the mount from Elbląg is the swan-headed hook and ring mount for a rapier belt found in Amsterdam in a context dated to the last quarter of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries³¹. The only difference between the Polish and the Dutch find is that the latter was cast out of copper-alloy. Archaeological evidence seems to confirm the Dutch provenance of the rapier belt from Elbląg. According to my knowledge, it seems to be the best preserved specimen in an excavated

²⁸ Norman 1980, 296-297.

²⁹ Norman 1980, 296.

³⁰ Norman 1980, 294.

³¹ Baart et al.1977, 162-164, Fig. 193.

condition known to date. Future specialist analysis should determine the kind of leather of which the belt was made³².

One of the finest rapiers with a Martinez blade kept in Polish collections is the specimen from the Museum of the Silesian Piasts in Brzeg (Inv. No. H-512)³³ (Fig.4a). It has a characteristic well polished blade with pierced fullers bearing the inscription: IVAN MARTINEZ EN TOLEDO (obverse) (Fig.4b) and IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI NON (reverse) (Fig.1d). Along the double fuller – edges, which terminate with crosses there are groups of dots. On the flat of the blade below the fullers, on each side we can observe the famous crescent moon – the mark of Juan Martinez. Other marks are most probably concealed under the original leather covering of the ricasso.

Blades made by renown masters, were usually sold in an unmounted condition and hilted by specialized craftsmen in a quality depending on the wealth of the commissioner³⁴. The decoration of hilts reflects the civilian character of the rapier, by corresponding with the changes in fashion. The weapon kept in Brzeg has an elaborately chiselled hilt made of iron. Its renaissance-style decoration, which consists of mythological motifs is incised in deep relief against a blackened background. Great skill was achieved in the art. of chiselling iron sword-hilts by 16th century craftsmen from Brescia and Milan in Italy³⁵. Italian masters gilded blued and plated their reliefs with silver to strengthen their decorative effects³⁶. Learning from their Italian colleagues, masters – engravers active in Southern Germany, such as Ottmar Wetter or Emanuel and Daniel Sadeler became famous for their gilded, blued and chiselled iron hilts³⁷. On the territory of Saxony in the latter half, of the 16th century the production of chiselled iron hilts, which were exclusively blackened to

prevent from corrosion is confirmed. One of the most active centres in the region, where such hilts were manufactured was Torgau³⁸. A series of edged weapons mounted with iron relief hilts commissioned in Torgau by the electors of Saxony is preserved in the Dresden armoury. Their decoration was copied from 16th century works of German printmakers, such as: Virgil Solis, the brothers Barthel and Hans Sebald Beham and Georg Pencz from Nurnberg, as well as Georg Lemberger and Hans Brosamer, who were active in Wittenberg, in Magdeburg and in Leipzig³⁹. Blackening was a technique applied to the most luxurious hilts. Such finish is present on the rapier hilt made by the French royal sculptor – Mathieu Iacquet for Ambrogio Spinola, the commander of Spanish troops in the Netherlands⁴⁰. The weapon, was bequeathed to the latter by Henry IV, king of France in 1605⁴¹. The artistic quality of the relief decorating this specimen is comparable to the best goldsmith-works of the period. It has been estimated that it took one year to finish the hilt by the master and his apprentices⁴².

The less elaborate decoration of the chiselled rapier hilt from the collection in Brzeg is characteristic for the Dutch renaissance⁴³ (Fig.5). It is composed of scrolling tendrils, masks, mythological creatures, Satyrs and other companions of the ancient god Dionysius (Fig.6a-b). Similar motifs one can find on renaissance, embossed shields, and especially on the specimen from Milan, depicting the triumph of Dionysius (Fig.6c)⁴⁴. This seems to confirm, that masters producing iron, chiselled hilts in the Netherlands could have copied scenes known from contemporary prints of Italian or South German origin. Certain motifs on the analysed hilt are almost identical to those embossed upon the mentioned shield, although the latter are of higher artistic quality. On the basis of the presented arguments we could assume that the fine Martinez – blade for the rapier kept in Brzeg was hilted by a Dutch or Flemish master with an equally elaborate hilt. The question remains, how the weapon found its way to Silesia, and who could have been its original owner. In case it belonged to one of the Silesian magnates, the duke John Christian of Brzeg (1591-1639) would be the best candidate. Existing inventories of the castle-armouries from Legnica and Brzeg unfortunately, do not mention such a weapon⁴⁵. Museum files and old catalogues are also lacking any information on the history

³² According to the written accounts the most popular materials to produce leather rapier belts were ox- and goat-hide (Dueñas Beraiz 2004, 247). Wealthier rapier owners could afford belts made of cordovan, sea-lion hide and luxury textiles such as velvet, silk or brocade (Dueñas Beraiz 2004, 247). Most of the specimens preserved in European collections are made of textiles. Several luxury belts with hangers are kept in the Dresden armoury at Zwinger. Sometimes belts made of leather had a fabric lining, as in the case of the specimen kept at the Wallace Collection in London (Mann 1962, 491, Inv. No. 1065). Another example from the Wallace Collection made of tooled leather is similar to the Elbląg find (Mann 1962, 491, Inv. No. 1063), as far as materials used to produce it are concerned.

³³ Dimensions of the rapier are: 122 cm (total length), 99 cm (length of the blade), 2,8 cm (width of the blade), 0,9 cm (thickness of the blade), 24,5 cm (length of the fullers), 0,6 cm (width of the fullers), 6,1 cm (height of the pommel), 4,1 cm (width of the pommel), 9,3 cm (length of the grip), 2,7 cm (width of the grip), 20 cm (length of the quillons), 11,4 cm (height of the knuckle guard).

³⁴ Lieber 1979/1980, 117.

³⁵ Grancsay 1947, 238.

³⁶ Norman 1980, 369; Godoy and Leydi 2003, 114, 423.

³⁷ Lieber 1979/1980, 118. The most famous workshops manufacturing such hilts were located in Nurnberg, Augsburg and Munich.

³⁸ Lieber 1979/1980, 145.

³⁹ Lieber 1979/1980, 119.

⁴⁰ see: Beard 1961, 276.

⁴¹ see: Grancsay 1947; Beard 1961, 277. A fascinating history of this specimen was presented by Ch. Beard (1961, 273-283). According to his investigation until 18th century the weapon was equipped with a flaming sword-type blade (with undulating edges) which has been replaced by an ordinary straight blade from the late 16th century (Beard 1961, 274).

⁴² Grancsay 1947, 236.

⁴³ The expertise was made by dr. Jacek Witkowski from the Institute of the History of Art., University of Wrocław.

⁴⁴ Godoy and Leydi 2003, 431-433, Fig. 25.

⁴⁵ see: Goliński and Žerelik 1993.



a



b



c

Fig. 6. Renaissance motifs in the decoration of arms and armour: a-b – details of the rapier hilt from Fig. 5. Photo by L. Marek; c – detail of an embossed shield from Milan, late 16th century. After Godoy and Leydi 2003.

of the weapon. There remains however a possibility that the rapier was found in the tomb of John Christian at some time and became subsequently included into the armoury of the castle in Brzeg. According to the written accounts the duke's body was transported from the place of his death in Ostróda (Prussia) and buried at St. Hedwigs castle-church in Brzeg⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Prokop 1999, 539.

Searching for a link between the Hispano-Dutch rapier and John Christian, we may draw the reader's attention to Daniel Sadeler a famous master engraver active in Prague and Munich, but originating from Antwerp in Flanders. He was involved in making chiselled reliefs on several high class rapier hilts made of gilt iron. Moreover he was employed at the court of Emperor Rudolf II Habsburg, Johan Christian's sovereign. There is a fine rapier with a blade made by Martinez and a relief hilt of gilt iron by Daniel Sadeler kept

at the Hofjagd Rüstammer, which belonged to Rudolf II⁴⁷. Of course the relief on the hilt of the royal weapon exceeds in quality the one decorating the Silesian rapier. This doesn't mean however that we must exclude the possibility of making the hilt from Brzeg by Daniel Sadeler or someone from his environment. The rapier could have even been commissioned by Rudolf II as a diplomatic gift for the Silesian duke. An occasion for such a bequest arose on October 7th 1609 when John Christian of Brzeg has paid homage to the Emperor in Wrocław⁴⁸. Existing swords, as the one with the hilt made by Daniel Sadeler, bequeathed to the Elector Christian II of Saxony by Rudolf II confirm that the emperor made such presents to his vassals⁴⁹. The mentioned Italian parallels to the selected decorative motifs on the hilt from Brzeg, could also support the presented hypothesis. Daniel Sadeler might have been inspired by Italian art while working at the court of the Habsburgs. So far however the last word on the origins of the remarkable weapon kept in Brzeg cannot be said. According to the present state of art. we don't have any documentation on the history of this fine rapier.

Conclusion

The rapier blade bearing the name of Juan Martinez the Elder from Elbląg was most probably imported from Spain, through the Netherlands or via England. The former possibility seems more likely, as other finds from Elbląg, such as the mentioned rapier belt, were most probably produced in the Netherlands. We must bear in mind that the end of the 16th century was the time of great prosperity for Elbląg, caused by the war of Stefan Batory, king of Poland against the rebellious burgesses of Gdańsk. In this period all far

distant maritime trade routs from England, Rhineland, the Netherlands to the kingdom of Poland lead through the port-town of Elbląg.

The luxury rapier from Brzeg with the blade made by Juan Martinez has a chiselled iron hilt decorated in Dutch renaissance style. Judging from the high quality of the blade and the artistic value of the hilt's decoration it seems that the weapon was commissioned by a person of considerable wealth. Similar side-arms, were most probably regarded by the contemporaries as worthy of a duke. This makes it tempting to attribute the rapier to the Silesian duke John Christian of Brzeg, who might have even received it as a gift from Rudolf II Habsburg. The latter possessed a very similar rapier with a Martinez-blade and a chiselled hilt, made by a master who originated from Flanders. This in turn could be an argument to support the presented hypothesis. On the other hand we don't have firm evidence that the rapier belonged to Silesian dukes whatsoever, and our theory seems still highly speculative according to the present state of art.

Both of the analyzed rapiers bearing the name of the illustrious royal blade-smith from Toledo must have been regarded as a symbol of status, a very fashionable accessory of the gentleman's dress. The best motto to illustrate the role of such weapons in contemporary society could be found on another blade by Juan Martinez, from the old armoury in Berlin (Inv. No. 1088) which reads: VIRTVS ARMORVM ILLVSTRAT HOMINEM (The virtue of weapons reflect the man)⁵⁰. Moreover it seems to correspond well with the title of the volume as it mirrors the times in which rapiers were used.

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APGd – Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku (State Archive in Gdańsk)
HJRKA – Hofjagd Rüstammer Archive (Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna).

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⁴⁷ HJRKA, Inv. No. A 572. The inventory number of the artefact is the same as the number of the file.

⁴⁸ Prokop 1999, 536.

⁴⁹ Norman 1980, 254.

⁵⁰ Boeheim 1897, 127.

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Streszczenie

Dziela królewskiego miecznika z Toledo, Juana Martineza Starszego, przechowywane w zbiorach polskich

Badacze twierdzą, że rapier był przeznaczony zasadniczo do pchnięcia, choć nie należy całkowicie wykluczać możliwości zadawania nim skutecznych cięć. Podkreślany jest również cywilny charakter omawianej broni, której używano przede wszystkim do ochrony osobistej, a ze względu na jej luksusową oprawę często traktowano też jako wytworny dodatek do męskiego ubioru. Słowo *espada ropera* pojawiające się w XV i XVI-wiecznych dokumentach hiszpańskich i francuskich, oznaczające broń do sukni (stroju cywilnego) wydaje się najlepiej odzwierciedlać rolę rapiera we wczesnonowożytnym społeczeństwie.

Do najcenniejszych militariów z badań Starego Miasta w Elblągu należą elementy rapierów. Fragment głowni odkryty w latrynie, na podwórku przy ul. Bednarskiej 14 (EM.XXII.3516), datowany jest na podstawie pozycji stratygraficznej na XV-XVI w. W zbroczu zachowała się inskrypcja z imieniem jednego z najznakomitszych mieczników XVI/XVII w. – Juana Martineza Starszego z rodziny Garata Zabala z Toledo. Bordiurę wokół napisu wykonano charakterystycznym dla tego ośrodka perełkowaniem i zwieńczono krzyżem na końcu szlif. Obustronnie powtórzony napis z powielonym błędem brzmi: IVAN MARTINER. Pomyłki w tym przypadku nie oznaczają, że mamy do czynienia z podrobioną sygnaturą słynnego mistrza, gdyż wiadomo o wyprodukowanych przez niego brzeszczotach z niepoprawną pisownią nazwiska. Martinez, działający w latach ok. 1590-1610 używał zasadniczo 3 punc: księżycy jako indywidualnego znaku; liter: *T* oraz o w zagłębionym polu oznaczających markę ośrodka produkcyjnego oraz znaku w kształcie lilii pod koroną świadczącego o uzyskaniu tytułu *Esperero del Rey* (królewskiego miecznika), którym cieszył się ten rzemieślnik. Puncem często towarzyszyła dewiza IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI. NON. Prawdopodobnie z braku miejsca nie ma zazwyczaj na brzeszczocie dalszej jej części: CONFVNDAR IN AETERNVN. Trudno obecnie spekulować na temat oprawy zabytku znalezionego w Elblągu. Już sama głownia z sygnaturą królewskiego miecznika była manifestacją luksusu. Broń mogła wcale nie należeć do mieszczanina, lecz żołnierza walczącego lub kwaterującego w tym miejscu podczas wojny polsko-szwedzkiej o ujście Wisły, trwającej dla miasta od r. 1626 aż do pokoju w Sztumskiej Wsi w 1635 r. Głownię ze zbiorów elbląskich znaleziono w latrynie zamienionej na śmietnik, co też mogłoby sugerować związek z uprzątnięciem terenu po działaniach wojennych. Z drugiej strony rapier ten prawdopodobnie stanowił raczej broń cywilną niż wojskową, choć i w tym przypadku nie można całkowicie wykluczyć możliwości używania go w czasie działań wojennych.

Jeżeli stanowił jednak broń mieszczkańską, należy spodziewać się, że trafił on do Elbląga przez Niderlandy, których część południowa jeszcze pod koniec XVI w., mimo wojen wyzwoleniczych, pozostawała przy Hiszpanii.

O tym, że rapiery oraz akcesoria do nich docierały do miasta z Niderlandów może świadczyć zachowany w doskonałym stanie, pas główny pendentu ze stalowymi okuciami znaleziony podczas badań przy ulicy Rzeźniczej 6 w Elblągu. Jego charakterystyczną częścią jest esowate ogniwo, którego końcom nadano kształt łabędzich głów. Prawie identyczne do okazu elbląskiego zapięcie od pendentu z motywem wygiętych esowato, dwóch łabędzich głów pochodzi z wykopalisk w Amsterdamie. Omawiane zabytki pochodzą z XVI/XVII w.

Jednym z piękniejszych przykładów kompletnego programu inskrypcji na głowni autorstwa Juana Martineza Starszego w zbiorach polskich jest wysokiej klasy rapier przechowywany w Muzeum Piastów Śląskich w Brzegu (nr inw. H-512). Doskonałą, precyzyjnie wykonaną głownię o dwóch strudzinach zdobionych ażurem zaopatrzone w inskrypcje: IVAN MARTINEZ EN TOLEDO oraz IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI NON. Na płazach, obustronnie umieszczono księżyc – indywidualny znak Martineza.

Głownia rapiera ze zbiorów brzeskich jest oprawiona w kunsztowną, stalową rękojeść, dekorowaną cyzelowanym, głębokim reliefem przedstawiającym motywy mitologiczne, charakterystyczne dla renesansu niderlandzkiego. Czernienie oprawy analogiczne do występującego na okazy brzeskim było sposobem wykończenia nawet najbardziej luksusowych wytworów, których wykonanie zajmowało rzemieślnikom do roku pracy. Pewne przesłanki, mogłyby uprawniać do powiązania tego rapiera z osobą księcia legnicko-brzeskiego Jana Chrystiana. Niderlandzkie wpływy widoczne w zdobieniu rękojeści zdają się wskazywać na rzemieślnika z kręgu Daniela Sadelera, mistrza wywodzącego się z Antwerpii i wykonującego kunsztowne, stalowe oprawy rapierów dla Rudolfa II Habsburga w Pradze. Hołd, który Jan Chrystian złożył Rudolfowi II na zamku we Wrocławiu, mógł być okazją do obdarowania go przez cesarza rapierem, który ze wszech miar godny byłby księcia. Dysponujemy ponadto informacjami, że Rudolf miał w zwyczaju wręczanie takich darów dyplomatycznych, czego dowodem jest rapier z oprawą wykonaną przez Daniela Sadelera, znajdujący się obecnie w Dreźnie, który cesarz sprezentował elektorowi saskiemu.

Holenderskie znaleziska, nie mogą jeszcze przesądzać o proveniencji głowni rapiera z Elbląga jednak stanowią powód do niezwykle interesującej dyskusji na temat kontaktów handlowych tego portowego ośrodka w XVI i XVII w. Na podstawie fragmentów rapierów odkrytych na terenie miasta, można postawić hipotezę, że jeżeli dotarły tutaj w wyniku dalekosiężnej wymiany handlowej, najprawdopodobniej pochodzą z Niderlandów. Tą bowiem drogą, na pokładach statków kupieckich, luksusowe towary hiszpańskie i holenderskie mogły najłatwiej trafić do wschodnich portów hanzeatyckich basenu Morza Bałtyckiego.

