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THE REPRESENTATIONS OF ARMS AND ARMOUR IN POLISH KNIGHT HERALDRY

In the course of researches on knight armament in medieval Poland the written sources have been studied in every respect and some iconographic sources have also been used. Among the latter works of art: sculptures, paintings, representations on both coins and seals have been subjected to careful analyses. Heraldry, however, has been neglected by the researchers of arms and armour so far and has not been used to enrich our knowledge of medieval armament. In this article I would like to discuss the phenomena of the appearance of arms and armour in Polish knight heraldry. At the same time, I cannot omit some examples of the coats of arms with the same motifs presented coming from other European countries. The narrowing of the discussion to Polish coats of arms only might lead to the conclusion that there existed a specific phenomenon characteristic of Polish heraldry exclusively.

The fragments of court notes providing information about the forms of coats of arms, the text of Długosius' *Insignia seu clenodia*, the graphic representations of coats of arms dispersed in medieval European armorials, collections of heraldic seals and tiny architectural details, as well as paintings have become the source basis of this work. The duality of the source materials should be given special consideration. We have at our disposal the iconographic sources, on the one hand, and their verbal representations on the other. The important phenomena I would like to emphasize are frequent variations in the representations of heraldic badges characteristic of vivid medieval heraldry.

The beautiful pictures of coats of arms known e.g. from Bartosz Paprocki's armorial were not so attractive at the moment of their birth. At first simple schematic drawings, frequently line drawings of heraldic arms, turned into realistic paintings under the influence of the incipient love of the concrete. Consequently, the coats of arms coming from the times distant from the Middle Ages cannot constitute the source basis of our discussion. They may only serve as a starting point for further investigations.

The skilful eye of an arms researcher can distinguish a series of signs, symbols and pieces of information recorded on a colourful graphic composition decorating a knight's shield. These elements are then arranged and

given appropriate names. A coat of arms consists of the escutcheon, the badge, the helmet, the crest, the mantling, and some additional decorative elements, e.g. the supporters and the motto.

Knight armament might sometimes appear in the escutcheon as the crest or helmet resting on the shield.

Heraldic arms were drawn according to some rules of stylization. The aim was to bring into clear relief the characteristic features which in the confusion of a battle made it possible to distinguish an enemy from an ally. A coat of arms was to cover the biggest possible surface of a shield. The constant repetition of some shapes, the arrangement of objects as well as their schematic disposition became rules¹.

The choice of armorial bearings was most probably made according to the wish of their future owner. It was, however, influenced by a range of factors starting with the personal interests of the knight or his convictions and ending with broadly understood chivalric culture and the pressure of his social environment. We may never know with certainty what the motivation of the choice of a given coat of arms was. A remote association, an attempt to render the name or the shortened life story of a prominent relative used to be the reasons of such a choice.

We may state with certainty that the appreciation of arms as a perfect decorative motif of coats of arms was a result of a whole range of circumstances. Among them the acceptance of arms as determinants of social position, the signs of rank and function played in the state may be noticed. The especially beautiful and richly ornamented specimens, because of their magnificence, caused respect and indicated the power of their owner. The importance of arms in our ancestors' everyday life is noticed by Zdzisław Żygulski. He argues that 'arms received a new significance as an expression of material and spiritual culture. Therefore they became a symbol of power and sovereignty, an insignium of authority and judgement. They were considered objects of ceremony, trophies and representations, sometimes magic or ritual

¹ J. S z y m a ń s k i, *Nauki pomocnicze historii*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 682, 693; J. Ł o k a j, *Motywy roślinne w polskiej heraldyce rycerskiej (do końca XVI wieku)*, Łódź 1987, a typewritten copy, p. 20.

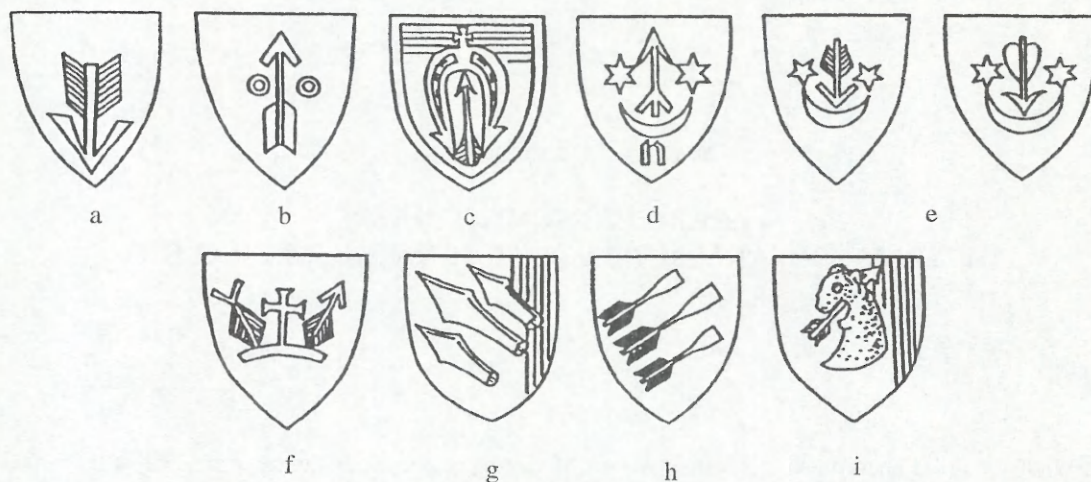


Fig. 1. Arrows: a - Strzała, 1278 A.D., Zbroślaw, the canon of Cracow and Wrocław's seal; b - Strzała ("Biją w łeb"), 1457 A.D., the tomb of Felicja, Mikołaj of Brzezie's wife, St. Catherine's Church, Cracow; c - Dołęga, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*; d - Sas, Jacek Dziedoszycki's seal; e - Sas, 1464 A.D., Herman Swarczykowski's, Jan Hoszowski's, Ilko Steczko Czerkaski's and Jurij Małczycki's seals; f - Łada, the 15th century, Włodko of Rzepiszew's seal; g - Groty, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*, the *Gymnich Armorial*, *Codex Bergshammur*; h - Bolce, circa 1380 A.D., the tomb of Bolko, the Duke of Świdnica, in the Cistercian church in Krzeszów; i - An unknown coat of arms, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*.

ones, connected with religious cults as votives, symbols or even embodiments of supernatural forces². Arms were present in every sphere of life: they defended man at war, brought him fame during tournaments, accompanied him in court and family ceremonies starting with the moment of his birth and baptism till death and burial. Dead knights used to be buried with their arms, which stressed their social status. In the graves of knights' children, who were not able to use swords or ride horses, spurs or weapons are found.

Not all kinds of arms were equally appreciated by the knights. Indirectly, the number of armorial bearings created by particular kinds of weapons may serve as evidence here. On the basis of Stanisław Mieroszowski's specification, related as a matter of fact to the heraldry of the Polish nobility, we may state that arrows (the "rogacina" arrow included) and arrowheads were the most popular kinds of arms. Arrows constituted 8 separate coats of arms and appeared in 82 further variations as additional elements. According to S. Mieroszowski, arrowheads are visible in 7 coats of arms and 11 further variations. Swords formed separately 3 coats of arms and were used in 11 variations. The battle-axe was present in 5 coats of arms and 1 variation. Spears gave 3 coats of arms and one variation³. Certainly, the above numbers cannot be considered conclusive as far as medieval heraldry is concerned. The proportions, however, might have remained unchanged for a long period of time.

It should be stressed that among 137 (139) coats of arms listed in *Insignia seu clenodia* 116 belonged to knights. Among the knight signs the most numerous

ones (34) were connected with the world of animals. The second place is taken by two kinds of coats of arms, 26 specimens each: these with the motif of the cross and those with the motif of arms (the "rogacina" arrow included). Buildings, plants, horseshoes, farm tools were much less frequent (from 10 to 7). The precision of these estimations must evoke justified doubts. In many cases armorial bearings are listed as having various motifs. Therefore the numerical specification of coats of arms would result in a number exceeding 116.

The discussion on arms opens with arrows, most commonly represented in the coats of arms that interest us here. It should be pointed out, however, that two kinds of arrows may be distinguished in Polish knight heraldry, namely the "rogacina" arrow and the arrow, both being the illustrations of really existing objects. The former, e.g. in "Lis" and "Kościęsza" coats of arms, comes from original line signs which were fossilized at a given stage of evolution. They never turned into realistic representations of real arrows⁴. I think that the discussion should be concentrated on these coats of arms only in which the presence of the representations of concrete objects may be stated with certainty.

A representation of an arrow is clearly visible in "Biją w łeb" (fig. 1. b) coat of arms. The picture of it has been preserved on the tomb of Felicja, Mikołaj of Brzezie's wife, which dates back to 1457 and may be seen in St. Catherine's Church in Cracow. The carved escutcheon is filled with a short arrow with an upwards directed broadly obtuse arrowhead. Its feathers form a column and two rings are placed on both sides of the arrow. Zbroślaw, the canon of Cracow and Wrocław's

² Z. Żygułski, *Broń jako dzieło sztuki*, Cracow 1969, p. 3.

³ S. Mieroszowski, *Kilka słów o heraldyce polskiej*, Cracow 1887, pp. 40-42.

⁴ J. Szymański, *Systematyka polskiej heraldyki rycerskiej a budowa języka blazonowania*, "Biuletyn Lubelskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego. Humanistyka", vol. 22, 1989, No. 1, p. 34.

seal of 1278 A.D. (fig. 1. a) represents an arrow with a broadly obtuse, downwards directed arrowhead and "luxuriant feathers" forming a column⁵.

Short feather arrows as well as other objects may be found in the following coats of arms: "Sas" (fig. 1. d, e), "Dołęga" (fig. 1. c), "Łada" (fig. 1. f) and in an unknown one.

The arrow of "Sas" coat of arms is characterized by the words of "Insignia seu clenodia": "... sagitta cuspidate sursum erecta ...". In Herman Swarczykowski's, Jan Hoszowski's, Ilko Steczko Czerkaski's and Jurij Malczycki's seals of 1464 arrows with downwards directed broadly obtuse arrowheads and feathers, most probably made of bird feathers, as well as semicircularly cut thin wooden plates are present⁷.

In "Łada" (fig. 1. f) coat of arms two arrows situated

ve been preserved. Both of them belonged to Mikołaj Lasocki. One of them was pressed by its owner when he was the Chamberlain of Dobrzyń, the other (without any date) when he was the Starost of Łęczyca. In both the coats of arms the arrowhead is directed downwards. The broadly obtuse arrowheads and semicircular feathers are easily noticed¹⁰.

A feather arrow with a clearly marked arrowhead pierces a dragon's or a tiger's head through its mouth in the coat of arms (fig. 1. i) termed as "unknown" here. Franciszek Piekosiński pointed out that this coat of arms was completely alien to Polish heraldry, though it might be found in *The Golden Fleece Armorial*, in its part devoted to Polish knights' coats of arms. Whereas Helena Polaczówna, in her rather free interpretation of the discussed armorial bearings, noticed not a tiger's but a

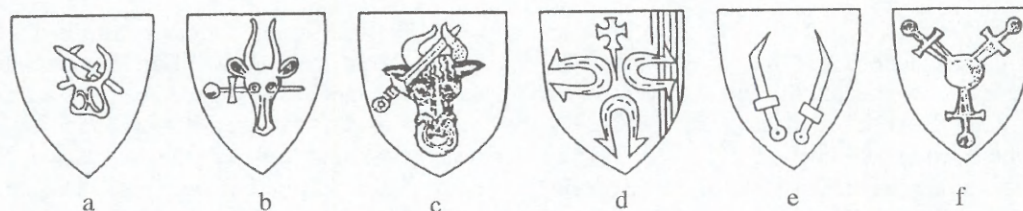


Fig. 2. Swords: a - Pomian, 1306 A.D., Chebda, the castellan of Kruszwica's seal; b - Pomian, 1431 A.D., Piotr Sakowicz's seal; c - Pomian, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*; d - Belina (the cross variation), the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*; e - Borysowie, the middle of the 14th century, the wall painting in the post-Cistercian monastery in Łąd; f - Herburtowa coat of arms.

on both sides of a cross attached to the arch of a horseshoe are present. The author of *Insignia seu clenodia* noticed that one of the arrows had an upwards directed arrowhead, while the other had a downwards directed one. In the 15th century seal belonging to Włodek of Rzepiszew two arrows can be seen: a fork-shaped arrow on the right side and an ordinary one on the left side of the seal. They are both equipped with rhomboidal feathers⁸.

In "Dołęga" (fig. 1. c) coat of arms an arrow with a broadly obtuse arrowhead and sometimes semicircular feathers was placed inside a horseshoe with a cross on its arch⁹. Two medieval seals with this coat of arms ha-

⁵ F. Piekosiński, *Heraldyka polska wieków średnich*, Cracow 1899, pp. 265-266; H. Polaczówna, *Materiały do heraldyki polskiej*, "Archiwum Komisji Historycznej Akademii Umiejętności", vol. 11, Cracow 1909-1913, p. 44, No. 7.

⁶ J. Długosz, *Banderia Prutenorum and Insignia seu clenodia Regni Poloniae*, ed. J. Muczkowski, Cracow 1851, p. 67, No. 105.

⁷ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 98; H. Polaczówna argued that in the oldest representations of "Łada" coat of arms letters instead of arrows appeared (see: H. Polaczówna, *Stemmata Polonica. Manuscript number 1114 of Dlugossius' "Insignia seu clenodia" in the Arsenal Library in Paris*, "Prace Sekcji Historii Sztuki i Kultury Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie", vol. 1, 1929, p. 171).

⁹ *A European Armorial. An Armorial of Knights of the Golden Fleece in 15th Century Europe*, ed. R. Pinches, A. Wood, B. J. Klec-Pilewski, London 1971, p. 153.

¹⁰ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹¹ H. Polaczówna, *Najstarsze źródła heraldyki polskiej*, "Archiwum Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie", Section 2, vol. 2, 1924, p. 364.

¹² H. Polaczówna, *Materiały ...*, p. 45, No. 10.

¹³ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 203-204; J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne herby polskie*, Poznań 1985, p. 94.

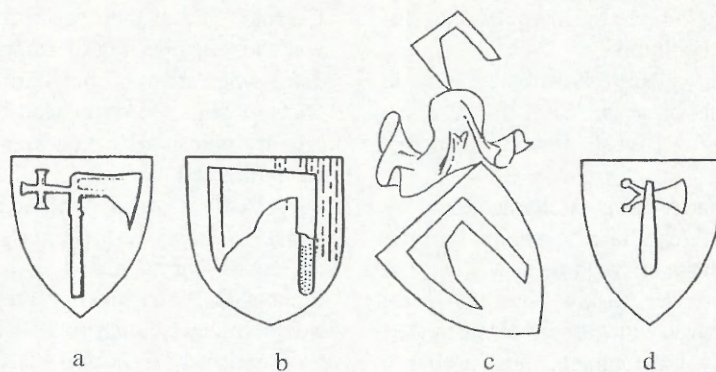


Fig. 3. Battle-Axes: a - The coat of arms of the Pałuks family, 1259 A.D., the seal of Sławnik and his sons: Piotr, Sławnik and Trojan; b - The coat of arms of the Paluks family, 1343 A.D., Zbylut, the castellan of Nakło's seal; c - Topór, 1442 A.D., 1454 A.D., Jan Tęczynski, the voivod of Cracow's seal; d - Topór, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*.

Voulhannus Bawlitze's seal of 1408 with three blunt arrow bolts in the escutcheon was found by Marian Gumowski. The name of the family and the form of its coat of arms come from the founder of this family, Rypert Boltz, who lived in Silesia in 1277¹⁵.

Arrowheads alone become the motifs of "Bogoria" and "Groty" coats of arms. In the case of the former the badge consisted of two broadly obtuse arrowheads with both upwards and downwards directed points and bushes used to fasten them on shafts. There also existed some variations of these armorial bearings, e.g. the coat of arms belonging to Jarosław Bogoria of Skotniki, which was found in the Bible presented by him to the Cathedral Church of Gniezno, where all the arrowheads were fastened to one shaft¹⁶. This form of "Bogoria" always appears in the crest of this coat of arms.

In "Groty" ("Bolts") coat of arms, known from the pages of West-European armorials devoted to the Poles (fig. 1. g), three rhomboidal arrowheads ended with bushes and obliquely arranged one above another are present. According to B. Paprocki, it was "... an ancient Polish coat of arms ... of his numerous descendants in Poland, however, neither any knowledge nor familiarity did I have ..." ¹⁷. In order to prove his thesis about the popularity of "Groty" in Poland, B. Paprocki pointed to the house in Stolarska Street in Cracow where "... this crest was clearly depicted..." ¹⁸. Helena Polaczkówna, on the contrary, considered the discussed heraldic bearings to be alien in our heraldry. She argued that their appearance in the Polish sections of West-European armorials could be explained as an error of the heralds, who had distorted the name "Bolce" ("Bolts") into "Belty" ("Bolts") ¹⁹.

¹⁵ M. Gumowski, *Pieczczę śląskie do końca XIV wieku*, [in:] *Historia Śląska od najdawniejszych czasów do roku 1400*, vol. 3, ed. W. Semkowicz, Cracow 1936, pp. 333, 352; cf.: J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne ...*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁶ J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne ...*, insertion after p. 36.

¹⁷ B. Paprocki, *Herby rycerstwa polskiego*, ed. K. J. Turowski, Cracow 1858, p. 743.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ H. Polaczkówna, *Najstarsze ...*, p. 362.

In Polish heraldry swords constituted a motif a little less frequent than arrows. Heraldic notes providing information about its existence are very laconic, e.g. in the description of "Cholewa-Klamry" coat of arms. In the description of "Kownia" the expression "... tres gladi nudi" ²⁰ can be found. A few more details, related to the description of arms rather, emerge from the note concerning "Równia": "... tres gladi integri concurentes spiculis ad unum punctum ..." ²¹ or "tres gladi evaginati a cupidibus juncti..." ²².

Franciszek Piekosiński considered "Równia" to be a variation of "Kownia". This interpretation seems to be still more probable if we accept the similarity of names as the reason of a scribe's error. The scribe read the first letter in "Kownia" as "R" ²³, hence "Równia". Unfortunately, no medieval seals with representations of this coat of arms have been preserved.

Scarce references draw our attention towards other than the blade parts of the sword. The hilt is mentioned both in the description of "Bylina": "...gladius manubrio sursum elevatus ..." ²⁴ and "Trzaska": "... gladii medii cum manubrio ..." ²⁵ coats of arms.

The oldest preserved seal with a representation of swords belonged to the Moravian functionary at the King's court Herbord of Fullstein. It dates back to 1288. This sign originated in Westphalia. It was then brought to Bohemia, spread in Poland in the 14th century and subsequently appeared on the territory of Russia ²⁶. The Herbutowa seal (fig. 2. f) copied by F. Piekosiński represents three swords with clearly marked round pommels, straight hilt guards slightly broadening at the ends and short wide blades with precisely drawn faces ²⁷.

²⁰ J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, p. 56, No. 66.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 66, No. 103.

²² H. Polaczkówna, *Stemmata ...*, p. 202.

²³ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²⁴ J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, p. 48, No. 24.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 72, No. 126.

²⁶ J. Łokaj, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

²⁷ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

A schematic representation of a sword is found in "Bylina" coat of arms. In some graphic representations of these armorial bearings the sword is replaced by a cross (fig. 2. d). However, in "Insignia seu clenodia" as well as in the seal of Master Mikołaj Bylina of Leszczyzna, the professor of theology and the canon of Cracow, dating from 1474 a schematically represented sword is clearly visible²⁸.

The sword in the badge of "Pomian" coat of arms seen in the stamps of Piotr Sakowicz's (fig. 2. b) seal of 1432 and Dawgierd, the voivode of Vilna's one of 1433 is characterized by its big round pommel and a straight hilt guard. A sword with a short bluntly ended blade and a short hilt with a round pommel appears in the escutcheon of "Pomian" coat of arms known from the heraldic frieze in Łąd as well as the leaves of *The Golden Fleece Armorial* (fig. 2. c). Both the swords were equipped with not too long, slightly curved hilt guards²⁹.

A representation of a sword placed in the escutcheon has been preserved in "Przegina" coat of arms depicted on a cantilever in the church of Gosławice. Its small pommel is attached to the short hilt shaft. The short wide blade protrudes from the straight thick hilt guard³⁰. The stone cutter who carved the coat of arms adjusted the sword's shape to the whole composition of the escutcheon. Therefore he shortened the sword giving it a somewhat squat outline.

The second kind of side arms, the sabre, is represented in "Zagłoba" coat of arms. We have at our disposal only one description of it coming from "Insignia seu clenodia". The weapon present in this coat of arms is concealed by the Latin word "framea". Unfortunately, as a matter of fact, the discussion on the sabre in medieval heraldry should be finished with this statement. In some later representations of these armorial bearings the "ordynka" sabre pierces the arch of a horseshoe from below so that the point and the double-edged lower part of the blade protrude above the horseshoe and the forte, the arch of the point as well as the hilt with the hilt guard remain inside.

An extremely realistic representation of a sabre is visible on the housing and the tunic of the Burgundian knight Ren Pot, depicted in *The Golden Fleece Armorial*. The sabre is sheathed and attached to the leather straps coming from the scabbard. The suspension ring is also marked³¹.

Three curved sabres, bulats, with cut endings are represented in the coats of arms of Essex and Middlesex. According to the English heralds, who completely ignored facts in this respect, they were to symbolize the

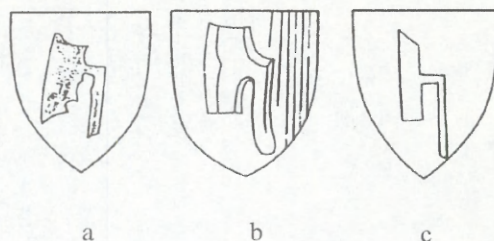


Fig. 4. "Oksza" - Battle-Axes: a - Oksza, 1437 A.D., Jan Rej of Szumsk, the land judge of Cracow's seal; b - Oksza, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*; c - Oksza, 1485 A.D., Jan Wątróbka of Strzelce, the Archbishop of Lvov's seal.

ominous arms of the Saxons, the ones which made their impressive victories possible³².

A picture of a battle-axe is the motif of the heraldic badge and the crest of Topór-Starza coat of arms. In the description of it Latin terminology was used to explain the Polish expression "... thopor sive bipennis ..."³³. The above discussed coat of arms frequently appears in numerous preserved medieval seal stamps, tombstones and in armorials.

In Jan Tęczyński's (fig. 3 c) seals of the years 1442 and 1454 a craftsman cut a representation of an axe with a broad blade and a narrow neck. The same motif was repeated in both the crest and the heraldic badge³⁴. Identical in shape are the axes found in *Saint Christopher's ... Brotherhood Book* and in West-European armorials (fig. 3. b)³⁵.

The weapon in the coat of arms revealed on the tombstone of Klemens Wątróbka of Strzelce, the castellan of Sandomierz, in the Dominican Church in Cracow is equipped with a different blade. The iron part with a narrow neck widening in both directions and creating a broad and high blade is set on the axe handle³⁶. Without considering the fact whether Klemens bore "Topór" ("Axe") or a different sign in his coat of arms, I would like to state that the above presented description seems to fit "Oksza" (fig. 4. a, b, c) coat of arms better. The executioner's hatchet "... securis carnificiana ..."³⁷ constitutes the badge of these armorial bearings. Placing of the executioner's or even butcher's tool in a coat of arms must cause certain astonishment. In medieval society people whose professions were concerned with inflicting suffering and death used to be treated with considerable animosity and hostility³⁸.

³² C. W. Giles, *Romance of heraldry*, London 1967, p. 23.

³³ J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, p. 72, No. 124.

³⁴ F. Piekosinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

³⁵ J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne ...*, p. 25; *Chorągwie grunwaldzkich zwycięzców*, ed. S. K. Kuczyński, Warsaw 1989, No. 33; A. Ilymowski, *Herby polskie w sztokholmskim Codex Bergshamar*, "Studia Źródłoznawcze", vol. 12, 1967, p. 87; *A European ...*, pp. 148-149.

³⁶ L. Kaźmier, *Uzbrojenie i ubiór rycerski w średniowiecznej Małopolsce w świetle źródeł ikonograficznych*, Wrocław 1976, fig. 20.

³⁷ J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 83.

³⁸ H. Zaremska, *Niegodne rzemiosło. Kat w społeczeństwie Polski w XIV-XVI w.*, Warsaw 1986, p. 116.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 26.

²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 127-128; J. Łojko, *Fryz heraldyczny z kaplicy klasztornej św. Jakuba w Łądzie nad Wartą*, "Studia Źródłoznawcze", vol. 22, 1977, p. 133.

³⁰ J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne ...*, p. 125; by the same author, *Idea fundacji kościoła w Gosławicach a dyplomacja polska na początku XV wieku*, "Rocznik Koniński", vol. 6, 1977, pp. 18-19.

³¹ *A European ...*, pp. 192-193.

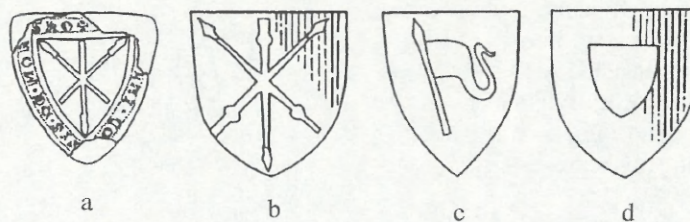


Fig. 5. Lances, Banners and Shields: a - Jelita, 1316 A.D., Tomisław of Mokrsk, the castellan of Sącz's seal; b - Jelita, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*; c - Przerowa, 1500 A.D., the tombstone of Bartłomiej of Bielsk, the dean of St. John's Church in Warsaw; d - Janina, the middle of the 15th century, *The Golden Fleece Armorial*.

Insignia seu clenodia associated the badge of "Oksza" with a crime committed by the representatives of this family, which was a column. Bartosz Paprocki, in his *The Nest of Virtue*, presented those who bore this coat of arms in a more favourable way. Indeed the crime had been committed. Jan Werszowic killed the Prince of Bohemia with a "rohatyna"-spear, which made him immediately escape to Poland. Surrounded by the following Czechs, he won the battle with a hatchet as his weapon³⁹.

The oldest seal with a representation of a lance was pressed in 1316 by Tomisław of Mokrsk, the castellan of Sącz, bearing "Jelita" (fig. 5. a) in his coat of arms⁴⁰. Neither the texts of heraldic notes nor the graphic representations of this coat of arms offer an explicit answer to the question concerning the kind of shaft-weapon presented. In the descriptions of this coat of arms we can read interchangeably: "... tres lanceas ..." or "... tres hastas ..."⁴¹. Therefore we may find information about lances in the first text and about spears in the second. This is only a probable interpretation and I cannot give an explicit answer in this matter. According to the findings of arms researchers, the words "hasta" and "lancea" are not precise. "Lancea" seems to be a universal term used to describe all kinds of shaft-weapons with straight spearheads. Therefore it may refer to both the lance and the spear. The term "hasta" seems to be more precise and it is most commonly used in connection with the fights of spearmen⁴².

Doubts are not removed by the iconographic sources, either. In Tomisław of Mokrsk's seal the outline of a lance with distinct flukes and a bush is clearly seen. Whereas a ball characteristic of the spear appears in the 1/4 of the shaft-length in *The Golden Fleece Armorial* (fig. 5. b)⁴³.

³⁹ M. Cetwiński, *Wokół "Klejnotów"*, [in:] *Genealogia. Studia nad wspólnotami krewniczymi i terytorialnymi w Polsce Średniowiecznej na tle porównawczym*, Toruń 1987, p. 130.

⁴⁰ J. Łojko, *Średniowieczne ...*, p. 35.

⁴¹ J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, p. 54, No. 55; H. Polaczkówna, *Materiały ...*, p. 55, No. 47.

⁴² M. Głosek, *Broń drzewcowa i obuchowa*, [in:] *Uzbrojenie w Polsce średniowiecznej 1350-1450*, ed. A. Nadolski, Łódź 1990, pp. 132-133.

⁴³ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 368; Chorągwie ..., No. 48; A. Heymowski, *Herby polskie w sztokholmskim ...*, p. 86; J. Łojko, *Fryz heraldyczny ...*, pp. 136, 139.

In the badge of "Przerowa-Grotowie" (fig. 5. c) coat of arms an azure lance-pennon attached to the shaft ended with a spearhead is depicted. Its representation decorates the tombstone of Bartłomiej of Bielsk, who died in the year 1500. In the escutcheon the pennon slanting to the right made of cloth of uniform field has been revealed⁴⁴.

Knives, a kind of weapon extremely useful in infighting, are represented in "Borysowie" coat of arms. However, also in this case some doubts arise. A court note from Cracow dating back to 1452 says: "... duo cultelli una ..."⁴⁵. Therefore it may be assumed that the text we have at our disposal refers to a dagger-knife. Franciszek Piekosiński suggests that one of the wall paintings in the post-Cistercian monastery in Łąd should be considered the graphic representation of this coat of arms (fig. 2. e). However, in the badge of the coat of arms copied by him not knives but "small broken swords" with straight hilt guards and large round hilts may be noticed⁴⁶. This discrepancy most probably results from the ambiguity of medieval terminology referring to the kinds of arms and weapons. The word "cultellus" could describe knives, scythe blades, cutlasses or even choppers⁴⁷.

Two straight daggers arranged in a cross with downwards directed blades known from the keystones of the Senior Chamber in the town hall of Wrocław are represented in the coat of arms belonging to the Silesian family the Haunold⁴⁸.

The badges of the above discussed coats of arms undoubtedly direct our attention towards the problems of arms researches. We lack such certainty as far as "Glezyń" coat of arms is concerned. The description of it reads as follows: "... duo cultelli uniti et Ostrew inter cultellos ..." or "... Ostrew et duo cultelli una ..." or finally "... duo cultelli vinei ..."⁴⁹. Only the last expression states explicitly that the mentioned refer to knives used to cut grape-vines. A coat of arms in the badge of

⁴⁴ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁴⁵ H. Polaczkówna, *Materiały ...*, p. 45, No. 12.

⁴⁶ F. Piekosiński, *op. cit.*, p. 207; J. Łojko, *Fryz heraldyczny ...*, pp. 136, 147.

⁴⁷ M. Głosek, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁴⁸ J. Wrzesińska, *Problematyka heraldyczna w gotyckiej architekturze Wrocławia*, [in:] *Z dziejów sztuki śląskiej*, Warsaw 1978, pp. 218, 239.

⁴⁹ H. Polaczkówna, *Materiały ...*, p. 52, No. 38.

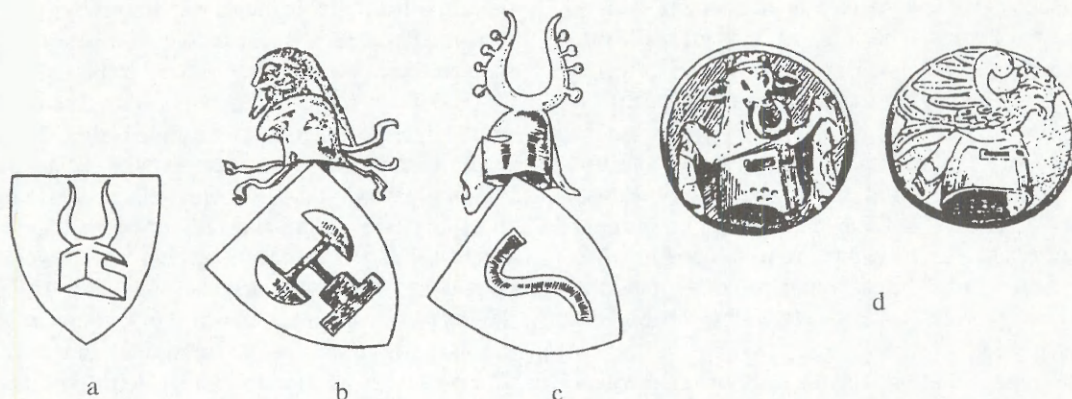


Fig. 6. Helmets: a - Helmet; b - Heraldic helmet placed above the escutcheon of "Kornicz" coat of arms, Michał Laskowski's seal; c - Heraldic helmet placed above the escutcheon of "Drużyna" coat of arms, Janko Kmita of Wiśnicza's seal; d - Heraldic helmets from the hall of the Hetman House, number 17 Main Marketplace (Rynek Główny), Cracow.

which two characteristically curved knives used in vineyard works appear is known in Czech heraldry.

In this way, starting with objects which seem to serve purely military ends, we finally become concerned with farm tools. The Polish knights' coats of arms may also lead us in the opposite direction — from the harmless letter "N" and a branchless tree trunk to a dangerous weapon.

In the description of "Świerczek" coat of arms not a single word that might refer to arms is found. Its Polish representations such as Imisław, the castellan of Michałów's seal of 1306 and the coats of arms seen by B. Paprocki on the tombstones in the churches of Cracow do not awake such associations. Only Josif Pilnaček's studies reveal that the motif of the majuscule letter "N" commonly present in Polish, Czech, Moravian, as well as Silesian heraldries contains some elements which may be of interest to an arms researcher.

The coat of arms belonging to Swierček, King Ottokar's scribe, who died in 1300 A.D., was found by J. Pilnaček in the obituary kept in the Minorites' monastery in Vienna. The picture of the badge represents a silver object resembling a slightly slanting majuscule "N" in changing relief placed on a red field. A small ring is attached to the middle bar. Each of the "letter's" shafts ends with a pointed blade⁵⁰. The ring that the knob on the middle bar of the letter "N" is the relic of was used to hurl or join the spikes into a chain. Such spikes scattered on the foreground of a besieged fortress or in the bottleneck of a road injured the warriors' feet or their stallions' legs with their points.

The account of a situation where such spikes were really used may be found in Master Vincenty's chronicle. The event took place in a mythical past. Three competing successors to the throne were the protagonists here. One of them decided to scatter spikes on the tracks

the other contestants' steeds were to run along and to win the race by deceit. Master Vincenty explains how to avoid wounds inflicted by the protruding points by covering the horses' hooves with a steel net⁵¹.

The spikes hindering free movements of troops had been commonly used since antiquity. Nikias was the first one to apply them in the Peloponesian war⁵². An exact description of the device functioning like the Slavonic "Świerczek" is offered by Procop of Cezarea in *De bello Gothica*. It was made "... of four spikes of equal length ... with the three back ones joined in the shape of a triangle..."⁵³. Further the instruction of use may be found "... They cast it somewhere on the ground. Three of the spikes stand on the ground firmly, with only the other one [the fourth one M. A.] protruding upwards ... whenever someone rolls the spikes the one that has previously protruded rests against the ground and the other one comes to the surface ..." ⁵⁴. "Murices" was the Latin name for this device and it was called "tribuli" in Greek.

The spikes which match Procop of Cezarea's description appear in the badge of the English coat of arms "Caltrap". The corresponding Polish sign was different. The device was made of one properly cut and modelled piece of metal sheet. The disposition of the spikes assured the same advantages of use as in the case of the above discussed one. The name of this coat of arms, "Świerczek" ("Spruce"), suggests that the spikes could have been made of spruce.

The "ostrzew"-spikes found in "Nieczuja"⁵⁵ coat of arms were the second kind of spikes. A tree trunk with the branches cut off so that only the sharp endings of the boughs were left cast skillfully in front of an advan-

⁵¹ S. Witkowski, *Podstęp Leszka z kolcami*, [in:] *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Oswalda Balzera*, vol. 2, Lvov 1925, p. 678.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 680.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 683.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ M. Cetwiński, M. Derwich, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ J. Pilnaček, *Znaczenie figury heraldycznej w herbie Świerczek*, "Miesięcznik Heraldyczny", vol. 9, 1930, No. 6, pp. 120-121.

cing enemy could indeed help to hinder the impetus of the first attack. "Ostrzew"-spikes appear in the badges of Czech coats of arms. The lords of Lichtemburk bore in their escutcheon two black crossed "ostrzew"-spikes just like the ones belonging to the Mronowce knight family of Lip⁵⁶.

The shield of "Janina" opens the survey of the Polish defensive arms present in the badges of Polish knight coats of arms. Its Latin description in *Insignia seu clenodia* reads: "... in campo rubeo clipeum ..."⁵⁷. Whereas in some Polish texts found in court notes the discussed coat of arms is characterized by the expression "shield in shield"⁵⁸.

In all the representations of this coat of arms which are familiar to me i. e. depicted in West-European armorials (fig. 5. d), in Pelka, the land judge of Sandomierz's seal of 1379 or on the keystone of the church in Stopnica⁵⁹, among others, the shield being the badge here is sharply pointed and triangular in shape. A different shield is presented in the badge of the Czech knights of Kanice's coat of arms. Its representation appeared in Gelry's Armorial, coming from the end of the 14th century. It is a shield of an almost tetragonal outline with rounded lower edges and a notch for the spear in the upper right edge⁶⁰. The shield of "Janina" coat of arms represents an older type of weapon replaced in the 15th century by a modernized one similar to the lords of Kanice's sign⁶¹.

In West-European armorials, among other Polish knights' coats of arms, a sign with three small shields with rounded lower edges in its badge may be noticed⁶². According to Adam Heymowski, this coat of arms belonged to the Stretkowski (or Streczkowski) family, well known in the region of Sandomierz in the 16th century⁶³. Whereas H. Polaczówna argues that this coat of arms was used in the 15th century by the Lusatian family the Kolowats⁶⁴.

The helmet is the only constituent part of knight armour which has survived till modern times despite various transformations in the art of war. The idea has remained unchanged and only the shape has been subject to transformations.

The description of "Helm" coat of arms may be found in *Insignia seu clenodia*. It is not mentioned in co-

urt notes. Only one seal with this coat of arms depicted, detached from a document, was found by F. Piekosiński. Bartosz Paprocki's quest of the families who bore helmets in their coats of arms proved to be futile⁶⁵.

The later representations of the discussed coat of arms have the joust-helm as their badge. It may be the frog-mouthed helm or a helmet with a bar face protection and a cow's tail and horns attached to it for decorative purposes. Some variations of this coat of arms where the tail is replaced by two oak leaves or a pentapetalous rose flower are also known⁶⁶. The picture of the coat of arms presented in the seal copied by F. Piekosiński (fig. 6. a) may be interpreted in a different way. The picture represents the Great helm with two pointed bull horns attached.

The appearance of this badge in Polish heraldry may be explained by the story told by King Boleslav III the Wry-Mouthed's equerry, who in the year 1111 A.D. defeated the commander of the Prussians in a duel. The Pole cut off his killed enemy's head protected by a helmet with two aurochs's horns on it. The brave warrior was allowed by the Prince to commemorate this event in his coat of arms⁶⁷.

In the Polish coat of arms "Drogomir-Złotogoleńczyk" a defensive outfit for the legs appears. The blazon represents three armoured legs arranged in a triquestre.

An escutcheon the badge of which seems to correspond exactly to the picture of "Drogomir" may be found on the leaves of Gelry's Armorial devoted to Scottish coats of arms. The only difference lies in the fact that the Scottish coat of arms is additionally decorated with a crest — a leg covered with a chain mail with greaves and a spur⁶⁸.

The metal plates of a tilt armour (a white one) protect the legs in the knight Jean de Roubaix's crest⁶⁹. Plate sabatons with spurs, greaves, poleyns and thigh guards cover Złotogoleńczyk's legs in the coat of arms coming from the 15th century reliquary of the parish church in Golub⁷⁰. A representation of "Drogomir" may be seen in the chapel of Łąd Monastery. However, the picture of the badge is so vague that no discussion upon the elements of the defensive arms presented seems to be possible⁷¹.

In two Polish coats of arms, "Pogonia" and "Wolha", defensive arms for hands and arms appear. Pieces of information coming from the heraldic mentions concerning the elements of armour present here are very laconic. A mention about an armoured arm shaking a sword may be found in a text referring to "Pogonia" coat of arms⁷². From the description of "Wolha" coat of

⁵⁶ J. L a u d a, J. J a n a e k, *Česke erby*, Prague 1974; S. M i k u c k i, *Rycerstwo słowiańskie w Wapenboek Gelrego*, part 2, [in:] *Prace z dziejów Polski feudalnej ofiarowane Romanowi Grodeckiemu w 70-rocznicę urodzin*, Warsaw 1960, p. 194.

⁵⁷ J. D ł u g o s z, *op. cit.*, p. 53, No. 52.

⁵⁸ H. P o l a c z k ó w n a, *Materiały ...*, p. 54, No. 44.

⁵⁹ F. P i e k o s i ń s k i, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62, 376; J. Ł o j k o, *Średniowieczne ...*, p. 107.

⁶⁰ S. M i k u c k i, *Rycerstwo słowiańskie ...*, pp. 199, 201.

⁶¹ L. K a j z e r, *op. cit.*

⁶² A. H e y m o w s k i, *Herby polskie w sztokholmskim ...*, p. 93; by the same author, *Herby polskie w brukselskim Armorial Gymnich recte Lynceich*, "Studia Zródłoznawcze", vol. 29, 1985, p. 109.

⁶³ A. H e y m o w s k i, *Herby polskie w sztokholmskim ...*, p. 93; cf.: S. K r z y ż a n o w s k i, *Słownik heraldyczny dla pomocy w poszukiwaniach archeologicznych*, Cracow 1870, p. 53.

⁶⁴ H. P o l a c z k ó w n a, *Stemmata ...*, p. 234.

⁶⁵ B. P a p r o c k i, *op. cit.*, p. 741.

⁶⁶ F. P i e k o s i ń s k i, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

⁶⁷ M. C e t w i ń s k i, M. D e r w i c h, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶⁸ T. I n n e s, *Scots heraldry*, New York 1978, insertion after p.

84. ⁶⁹ *A European ...*, pp. 194-195.

⁷⁰ K. G ó r s k i, *Z pogranicza heraldyki i historii sztuki. Zakon Krzyżacki a Jaszczurkowcy*, [in:] *Mente et litteris. O kulturze wieków średnich*, Poznań 1984, pp. 219-220.

⁷¹ J. Ł o j k o, *Średniowieczne ...*, p. 118.

⁷² J. D ł u g o s z, *op. cit.*, p. 62, No. 91.

arms no data that could enrich our knowledge of medieval body protections may be obtained. As far as this issue is concerned the above discussed fragment of the description of "Pogonia" recurs. There is only one difference here: the weapon held by the armoured arm is no longer a sword but an arrow.

In some later representations of these coats of arms an armoured arm with the plates of a complete plate arm-defence appears. Therefore the gauntlets, the vambrace, the cower, the rerebrace and the besagew may be noticed.

The heraldic helmet should be treated as an element of knight arms and armour. I would like to stress that the heraldic badge and the heraldic helmet should be treated separately in our discussion. The picture presented in the escutcheon used to be subdued to the rules of heraldic stylization, whereas the representation of the heraldic helmet — to the tastes of the epoch. The representations of the latter complementary to the coats of arms collected in Gelry's *Armorial* (the end of the 14th century), *Saint Christopher of Arlberg's Brotherhood Book* (the beginning of the 15th century), *Codex Bergshammar* (the middle of the 15th century), as well as depicted on small architectural details (fig. 6. d) may be subject to analysis. It must be pointed out that the pictures of the above mentioned armorials are the products of West-European civilization. Therefore the way of thinking and stylization typical of this cultural circle is reflected here. Certainly, in the course of time it will be ready-made absorbed in Poland.

In Gelry's *Wapenboek* Great helms covered with mantlings rest on some escutcheons. In *Saint Christopher's ... Brotherhood Book* as well as in *Codex Bergshammar* joust helms, the so called frog-mouthed ones, used to be depicted above the escutcheons. Therefore the weapons represented in heraldic rolls were not battle arms and armour specimens, but the especially attractive ones stressing the importance of a family.

A tendency to replace the old types of decorative helmets with equally attractive modern ones may be noticed.

The influence exerted by the techniques employed in the production of the representations of coats of arms on the precision, number of details and consequently on the appropriateness of these representations which are the subjects of arms researches is especially visible in the analysis of "Bogoria" coat of arms. The Great helm covered with mantling and crowned with a crest represented in the coat of arms found in Jarosław of Skotniki, the Archbishop of Gniezno's Bible dating back to 1373 is characterized by an unusual precision and care for details. The illuminator marked the joints of steel plates, the places of riveting, the additional steel reinforcement strips, the observational slots — visors — as well as the ventilation openings. The specimen from the Bible has got a dome-modelled upper part of the skull. The representations of heraldic helmets preserved in seals (fig. 6. b, c) and on architectural details (fig. 6. d) sometimes clearly contrast with the above discussed example. Only

the types of them may be established here. The helmets depicted in West-European heraldic rolls occupy an intermediate position. They offer more details than the representations coming from the seal stamps but fewer than the helmet from the Bible⁷³.

During the work upon the above presented text I was considering the question of the advantages the historians of arms and armour may gain by enriching their workshop by the heraldic sources. My doubts relate to the usefulness of medieval coats of arms for the strictly arms and armour researches. Medieval coats of arms were meant for practical use. Therefore the details of a picture were not rendered with great precision and the representations of armorial bearings did not copy real objects. It was only in the 17th and the 19th centuries that the details were given more consideration. Joseph Hopkins of Maryland's coat of arms given to him in 1764 A.D. for his victories in the Indian wars may serve as an example here. The shapes of the flintlock guns, the tomahawk and the Indian scalp (which is said to have been single-handedly torn off by Hopkins from an Indian chief's head) stuck on a lance are rendered with great precision and care for details here⁷⁴.

The heraldry of the Middle Ages, however, constitutes an excellent source for the studies of the function of arms and armour in the knights' consciousness. It may, to a certain extent, substitute the West-European deed-songs and poems glorifying chivalric culture.

Translated by Zuzanna Poklewska-Parra

⁷³ Some rich in details (visors, joints of metal sheets, ventilation openings) beautiful representations of Great helms have been preserved in the armorial bearings on the keystones of the hall of the Hetman House, number 17 Main Marketplace (Rynek Główny), Cracow.

⁷⁴ T. Woodcock, J. M. Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, Oxford 1988, p.161.