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## HUNTSMEN'S WEAPONS ON THE COURT OF PRINCE SIGISMUND JAGIELLON

On the turn of the Middle Ages there were several courts in the area dominated by the Jagiellon dynasty. Each of them had a separate system although the common feature was a political separation and financial state. The latter depended on income much smaller than that of the royal or emperor's courts. The income of the prince's court was supported by the closest area or province which created only a minor part of the agricultural potential of the Polish Crown or the Holy Crown of Hungary. The example of the prince's courts are the courts of Sigismund Jagiellon (Zygmunt Jagiellończyk), later the king of Poland – Sigismund I the Old (of Buda, Głogów and Opava)<sup>1</sup>. The hand-written legacy of each of the Sigismund's courts is exceptional as there are the whole books of bills which are of a huge importance for the studies of weapon<sup>2</sup>. The books of bills have not been published as a complete work except for fragments referring to particular issues<sup>3</sup>.

The road to the reign of Sigismund Jagiellon was facilitated by the cession of the rights to Głogów duchy and other titles to Silesia originated by John I Albert of Poland (Jan Olbracht) for Ladislaus Jagiellon (Władysław Jagiellończyk) in 1498. Sigismund settled in Buda where, close to the royal place of residence, he created his own court<sup>4</sup>. He was 31 when he took over the power in Głogów duchy. In 1501 Sigismund additionally attained Opava duchy, and three years later (1504) he became the governor of Silesia and Lusatia replacing prince Casimir of Cieszyn. It is worth mentioning that he did not immediately start reigning in the

area but he stayed for a while in his Buda court<sup>5</sup>. His reign in Silesia was highly valued even at that time. Nowadays historiographic sources estimate the period of his rule in the same way<sup>6</sup>.

Sigismund I the Old, later the king of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania adored hunting. Therefore he participated in such expeditions often and with a great enthusiasm. Unfortunately sometimes he did not take into consideration the consequences of practising this hobby. A perfect example is Marcin Bielski's story of the hunting expedition in Niepołomice on September 23, 1527. During the quest for the game a big bear brought from Lithuania was let out of a cage and it hurt dogs, a battue, a chamberlain of Ożarów but also Tarło, a man responsible for cutting the king's food, and queen Bona. Escaping Bona fell off the horse and miscarried her second son, Albert. In spite of the fact, the king sneered at a court jester, Stańczyk that running away he acted as a clown not a knight. According to some sources, Stańczyk reposted that a bigger fool is the one who having a bear in a cage releases it to his own disadvantage<sup>7</sup>. During the accident Tarło *wanted to approach it* (the bear – A.B.) *on foot with a gig but the bear tore it out*<sup>8</sup>. The gigs made of big spearshafts and with a massive spearhead were one sort

<sup>5</sup> Z. Wojciechowski, *Zygmunt Stary (1506-1548)*, Warszawa 1946, pp.14-16.

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Decius, *Sigismundi regis tempora*, Kraków 1986 (fotooffset from ed. Kraków 1521), p. LIX; J. L. Decjusz, *Księga o czasach króla Zygmunta*, transl. K. Komaniński et al., Warszawa 1960, p. 23. F. Papee, *Jan Olbracht*, edition II, Kraków 1999, p.26.; S. Nowogrodzki, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, 28-47 (reign in Głogów), pp. 16-17, 48-54 (reign in Opava), pp. 55-89 (domestic policy of the prince and the governor of Silesia); L. Finkel, *Elekcya Zygmunta I. Sprawy dynastji jagiellońskiej i unii polsko litewskiej*, Kraków 1910, p. 21 (the court of Sigismund Jagiellon in Głogów). About the role of Sigismund Jagiellon in the customs duty war of the Crown and Wrocław see J. Wareżak, *Polska polityka handlowo-celna względem Śląska i Wrocławia za Zygmunta Starego*, Warszawa 1930, p. 4; K. Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia*, part 1: to 1526, Katowice 1948, pp.226-227.

<sup>7</sup> M. Bobrzyński, *Szkice i studia historyczne*, vol. II, Kraków 1922, p. 118; Z. Wojciechowski, *op. cit.*, p. 96; M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, Wrocław 1998, p. 137.

<sup>8</sup> M. Bielski, *Kronika polska*, ed. K. J. Turowski, Sanok 1856, p. 1061. The whole event was accidentally placed by the author under the date of 1533.

<sup>1</sup> The most significant courts of this part of Europe see A. Mączak, *Rządzący i rządzeni. Władza i społeczeństwo w Europie nowożytnej*, Warszawa 1986, p. 251, a map "Główne dwory panujących na terenie Rzeszy i krajów sąsiednich w XV-XVIII w."

<sup>2</sup> AGAD, ASK, Detachment I, Royal Bills, sign. 29 (The Bills of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki from the incomes and expenses of the king Sigismund's court, 1500-1504) (later quoted AGAD 29; *ibidem*, Sign. 33 (the Bills of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki from the incomes and expenses of the king Sigismund's court, 1504 – 1507) (later quoted AGAD 33).

<sup>3</sup> Zsigmond lengyel herczeg Budai szamasasai (1500-1502, 1505), ed A. Diveky, Budapest 1914; A. Pawiński, *Młode lata Zygmunta Starego*, Warszawa 1893 (later quoted Zsigmond).

<sup>4</sup> S. Nowogrodzki, *Rządy Zygmunta Jagiellończykana Śląsku i w Łużycach (1499-1506)*, Kraków 1937, pp.11-12.

of hunting weapons (more about it later) used not only on king Sigismund I Old's court but much earlier when Sigismund was a prince in Głogów and Opava.

One of the most universal weapons was still a knife. When in need, all kinds of knives could become a dagger, that is a fighting knife. It is known that between 1500-1506 the prince's knives were either sharpened or repaired (*reformatione*)<sup>9</sup> and once a sheath for a knife was blackened (*denigratioe poszwi*)<sup>10</sup>. As the remarks are very general it is impossible to state what the aim of having the knives was. A sovereign was carrying a knife daily, mostly as an ornament so one can assume that in need it became a weapon for hunting.

The turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is the time when a cross-bow as a military weapon lost its importance to the advantage of hand fire-arms. In Polish mercenary infantry it is visible in a register of the last years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. It was a stable tendency as the registers from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century describe a cross-bow rarely as a piece of an armament but rather as a hand fire-arms<sup>12</sup>. The production of cross-bows slowly disappeared<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile Sigismund Jagiellończyk purchased and repaired regularly his cross-bows therefore it is possible to assume that he used them mainly for entertainment, for instance hunting. In 1504 in Głogów he purchased a holster-sheath for *Tchocha ad ballista* and he paid for it three grosz (three-hundredths of a zloty)<sup>14</sup>. This unidentified object never again appeared in the bills, therefore it is difficult to estimate its function. What is known for sure is the fact that the prince repaired his cross-bow three times. It took place once in 1500<sup>15</sup> and twice in 1501<sup>16</sup>. Frequent repairs of a jack suggest that this element was used very often and, as a result, got broken easily. It was fixed between 1500-1502 three or four times<sup>17</sup>. Such an activity was usually described as *tersione hewar*, although once it was described as *tersione vidlicze de Thul*, and it is common knowledge that *vidlicze*

should be identified with a dual ending of a jack which is directly attached to a bowstring. A case fulfilled the function of a quiver for arrows. It is possible that a jack attached by the case for transport was associated with this element of a rifleman's equipment<sup>18</sup>. In 1505 16 grosz were paid in Opava *a reformatione holste vel bolster a balijsze*<sup>19</sup>. It seems that the author meant pins protruding from a cross-bow stock crosswise just behind the trigger mechanism. If a rifleman used a German lift then he placed flask of crossbow butt in a string noose and pins blocked further slipping of the whole equipment towards crossbow stave. It was another strongly loaded element which was supposed to keep a jack-lift tightening a bowstring<sup>20</sup>. It is also known that in 1501 in Buda 60 Hungarian denarius were paid *Wlgango laicello, qui balistam post dominum principe portat*<sup>21</sup>. The expenditure on usage and preservation of neuroballistic weapon on Sigismund's court were about 2 florins and 12,5 grosz. It is a comparatively small sum of money when compared with other expenditures. Assuming that the king used the cross-bows rarely, their slow destruction is understandable.

The weapon throwing bullets as a result of the energy placed in the springy element was replaced by fire-arms. On the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the weapon with black gunpowder burning down was used. Although this mixture of sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal let down very often because of dampness and carbon deposit was produced in huge quantities, it undoubtedly revolutionized shooting to a big extent. During the process of shooting the black gunpowder enlarged its size about 400 times but the refuse left after burning it down blocked the barrel of a rifle. Therefore such a weapon had to be cleaned with ramrod every several shootings. Another problematic issue was casting of bullets. Their diameter must have been adjusted to a not fully permeable bore of a rifle. In case of shooting from a clean weapon the bullet was wrapped in a greasy piece of cloth, parchment or paper (slut) in order to tighten it. In spite of that owning a fire-arm was the sign of luxury and affluence. It also meant that the owner knew much about technical novelties and followed the latest fashion. Not surprisingly a huge sum of 30 florins and 26 grosz was spent on it on Sigismund Jagiellon's court. In 1501 on Buda court 37 grosz were spent *pro pulveribus ad machinam et pro culki*<sup>22</sup>. The mystery of the *machinam* is explained in a note from 1502 where it is claimed *machine alias rusznycza*<sup>23</sup>. To the harquebus used by the prince (*machina domini principis*) and frequently

<sup>9</sup> AGAD 29, cards 30, 55, 84 v; AGAD 33, card 227; Zsigmond, pp. 43, 66, 111.

<sup>10</sup> AGAD 29, card 118; Zsigmond, p.118.

<sup>11</sup> T. Grabarczyk, *Piechota zaciężna Królestwa Polskiego w XV wieku*, Łódź 2000, pp. 29, 30, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Just like the army unit of Hieronim Nosowski signed in 1533. Among 79 infantrymen 57 had harquebuses and they were all riflemen. No cross-bow is mentioned. There are more of such examples.

<sup>13</sup> J. Szymczak, *Od samostrzelników do grzebieniarzy w Krakowie, czyli rzecz o zmierzchu znaczenia kuszy na przełomie XV. i XVI wieku*, [in:] *Aetas media, aetas moderna. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, (ed.) H. Manikowska, A. Bartoszewicz, W. Fałkowski, Warszawa 2000, pp. 123, 124; A. Bołdyrew, *Produkcja i koszty uzbrojenia w Polsce XVI wieku*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 66-70, 90-91.

<sup>14</sup> AGAD 33, card 22.

<sup>15</sup> AGAD 29, card 42v; Zsigmond, p.49.

<sup>16</sup> AGAD 29, cards 72v, 93v; Zsigmond, pp. 91,124.

<sup>17</sup> AGAD 29, card 3289, 117, 145; Zsigmond, pp. 34, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Z. Stefańska, *Genealogia kuszy*, „Muzealnictwo Wojskowe”, vol. III, 1985, p. 148; L. Krizek, Z.J. Cech, *Encyklopedie zbrani a zbroje*, Praha 1999, pp. 87, 88.

<sup>19</sup> AGAD 33, card 77v.

<sup>20</sup> W. Boeheim, *Handbuch der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1890, p. 414, Fig. 492; A. Bołdyrew, op.cit., il. 15, 16, 16a.

<sup>21</sup> AGAD 29, card 107; Zsigmond, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> AGAD 29, cards 71, 79; Zsigmond, pp. 88, 101.

<sup>23</sup> AGAD 29, card 106; Zsigmond, p. 197.



mentioned hunter Peter (*Petrus Sagittarius, Strzelijecz*) usable materials such as ammunition, gunpowder and *knotha* i.e. fuse<sup>24</sup> were bought in Buda, Głogów, Wrocław, Świdnica and Lubień. The sums paid for the materials were as follows: in 1502 it was 12 grosz<sup>25</sup>, in 1503 it was 17 grosz<sup>26</sup>, in 1504 it was 30 florins and 5 grosz<sup>27</sup>, in 1505 it was 17 florins and 11,4 grosz<sup>28</sup>, and finally, in 1506 it was 31 grosz<sup>29</sup>. Although the shooting from the hand fire-arms was expensive it was compensated with a high reliability of *machin*. The conclusion is drawn on the basis of only one note concerning the repair of a harquebus between 1500-1507 when the Sigismund Jagiellon's register of bills was created<sup>30</sup>. Peter most frequently fulfilled his tasks while travelling and he hunted to satisfy his current needs. In 1505 he was paid a salary *in campum ad sagittandas aves*. *Sagittandas aves* means shooting to birds which was done *in campum*, that is on a field, plain country or in a camp<sup>31</sup>. The already mentioned harquebus is a kind of a long hand fire-arm. A massive rifle with a strengthened by a special ring muzzle was fastened to a wooden stock with a specially isolated butt. Such harquebuses are carried by Polish infantrymen depicted on a Wawel framing painted by Antoni from Wrocław. The weapon had a simple and efficient fuse lock and it had a calibre of 15 mm. Its efficient range was about 100 m<sup>32</sup>.

Except for typical expenditure on offensive weapon and weapon for hunters there was also a special sum of money spent on the cleaning of the prince's weapon, precisely the already mentioned spear (*lancea*) because, as one claimed, *rubigo in ea erat*<sup>33</sup>. One can only guess whether the dried blood was cleaned directly after the hunt or maybe it was rust on a spearhead.

Almost the whole transport on the turn of the Middle Ages was based on horses. They facilitated travelling, the transport of goods, the military activities and hunting. Sigismund's court was exceptionally mobile. Most time was spent on travelling from Buda to Silesian towns and Cracow. The horses were bought in whole groups which was written down in bills in a single line. The court purchased the animals from various merchants which is proved by purchases made on a way in various towns which were under

the control of Sigismund, and obviously in Buda and Cracow. The prices of the horses were between 1 and 11 Polish florins, although some of the horses happened to be more expensive. All in all, between 1500-1507 there were at least 1974 horses bought (the data from the end of 1506 and 1507 was taken into consideration because it was placed in the register of the prince's bills). The entire expenditure on horses was 388387, 2 grosz meaning 12946 florins and 7,2 grosz. Such a big number of animals meant that additional materials like litter or feeding stuff had to be provided, not to mention horseshoeing. The money spent on it was described as *pro babatisatione vel babatisatione, pro ferrum ad wffnale, pro straminibus, pro evena et feno*. Sometimes a medicine for an ill horse or curry-combs were necessary but the sums of money were not meaningful. Such items were purchased in almost all the places visited by the court. It even happened that the horses were shod by accidental blacksmiths on the way. Most of the money was spent in Buda, Cracow, Wrocław, Trenczyn, Nitra, but also in Głogów, Świdnica, Lubień, Głubczyce, Opava or Ząbkowice (*Frankenstein*). The staff of a stable was paid the salary several times, mostly the blacksmiths, stable boys, servants and courtiers. The example of Tarło confirms the fact that the hunters moved also on foot although it was probably an additional attraction intensifying the experiences of the hunters. Sigismund Jagiellon's court used about 2000 horses within the compass of seven years. Obviously a huge number of horses and elements of horseriding equipment were used. Probably the universal sets suitable for riding, fighting or hunting were most popular. Nevertheless, there are no remarks in the sources prescribing any of them purely a hunting purpose. It is worth noticing that between 1500-1506 the court of Sigismund spent on it 23 700 Polish grosz (790 florins).

As it is already known, the hunts were usually an entertainment during a journey. They probably did not take long but allowed to acquire additional food complementing the carried supplies. Mostly the court members hunted for birds<sup>34</sup>. The information with a later date says that big game was also the object of interest. However, this kind of entertainment meant that a bigger battue had to be organized. What is more, frequently game had to be provided to the forest.

Hunting was for the Jagiellons one of the most significant entertainments. Ladislaus II Jagiellon (Władysław II Jagiełło) and his descendants adored that activity. Sigismund I the Old's son continued and cultivated the tradition of organizing such an entertainment. It is enough to say that in 1546 Sigismund II August hunted for 223 days. Accompanied by five other hunters: a chamberlain Grzegorz Chodkiewicz, an equerry Jarosz, a Lord High Stewart Joachim Lubomirski and Wiesiołowski and Węgorzewski plus several members of the court, the young king and a Grand Duke of Lithuania

<sup>24</sup> According to A. Samsonowicz, *Łowiectwo w Polsce Piastów i Jagiellonów*, Wrocław 1991, pp. 201-202 the term *sagittarius* means a hunter (from *sagitta* – an arrow). The term was stayed in use although the tool used by the hunter changed.

<sup>25</sup> AGAD 29, cards 106, 245v; Zsigmond, pp. 173, 197.

<sup>26</sup> AGAD 29, cards 299, 303.

<sup>27</sup> AGAD 29, cards 374v, 377, 379v; AGAD 33, card 24.

<sup>28</sup> AGAD 33, cards 75, 86v, 87, 93v, 100, 106v, 108, 110.

<sup>29</sup> AGAD 33, cards 140v, 183v, 306, 308v, 317, 325, 330v.

<sup>30</sup> [...] *pro filis ad ligandam machinam puskarzowi domini principia et pro corio dedi VII den. hung* – AGAD 29, card 260; Zsigmond, p. 190.

<sup>31</sup> AGAD 33, cards 87, 108, 110.

<sup>32</sup> J. Szymczak, *Początki broni palnej w Polsce (1383-1533)*, Łódź 2004, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> AGAD 29, card 83; Zsigmond, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> A. Samsonowicz, *op.cit.*, pp. 117-146. Peter used a harquebus for bigger individuals weighing several kilos.

crossed the Białowieża Forest but also Bersztańska, Olicka, Wigryńska, Orańska, Olkiennicka and Rudnicka Forests hunting for big game including bears<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless hunting and chasing soon became the entertainment destined for the privileged because of the lack of game and felling of the forests<sup>36</sup>.

### Streszczenie

W późnym średniowieczu w obszarze zdominowanym przez dynastię Jagiellonów funkcjonowało kilka dworów książęcych. Jednym z takich dworów był dwór księcia głogowsko-opawskiego Zygmunta Jagiellończyka, późniejszego króla Polski Zygmunta I Starego. Rękopiśmienna spuścizna książęcego dworu zygmontowskiego jest o tyle ciekawa, że zachowały się pełne księgi rachunków – źródła o podstawowym znaczeniu dla badań bronioznawczych, w tym badań nad uzbrojeniem myśliwskim.

Książę Zygmunta Jagiellończyk, późniejszy król polski i wielki książę litewski lubował się w polowaniach. Wydawał pokaźne sumy na uzbrojenie myśliwskie: włócznie, noże, kusze (które regularnie naprawiano) i inne. W początkach XVI wieku kusze stopniowo zastępowała czarnoprowchowa ręczna broń palna. W książęcych rachunkach odnotowano specjalne sumy na czyszczenie uzbrojenia myśliwskiego, jak na przykład oszczepu (*lancea*).

Dwór zygmontowski był bardzo mobilny. Większość czasu spędzał na podróżach z Budy na Śląsk i do Krakowa. Cały transport wówczas opierał się na koniach. Służyły jako zwierzęta pociągowe oraz jeździeckie do podróży, walki czy polowania. Konie kupowano w dużych grupach, co odnotowywano w rachunkach w jednym ciągu. W latach 1500-1507 zakupiono ponad 1974 konie. Do ich kielznania używano wielu zestawów oporządzenia jeździeckiego, wśród których te o zastosowaniach uniwersalnych zapewne były najpopularniejsze.

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<sup>35</sup> L. Kolankowski, *Zygmunt August, wielki Książę Litwy, do oku 1548*, Lwów, 1913, p. 325.

<sup>36</sup> A. Wyczański, *Kultura polskiego Odrodzenia. Próba określenia historycznego mentalności*, „Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce”, vol. X, 1965, p. 49.