

## THE ADVERSARY AND ITS WEAPON. THE LATE MEDIEVAL DEPICTIONS OF THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN

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Starting in the spring of 1997 and up to the end of 2000, the Probota monastery (Suceava County) has been the subject of intense and continuous research and restoration efforts, managed by UNESCO<sup>2</sup>. One of the somewhat obscure secondary products of restoration of the magnificent interior paintings of the monastery church is the inventory and typological classification of edged weapons depicted in 16<sup>th</sup> century murals uncovered, reinforced and restored by the multinational team of project specialists.

Carried out as an exercise of style and therefore without a probable scientific finality, the edged weapons typology inventory ignored on purpose any method of art history, simply pursuing the visual identification of edged weapons, especially swords and swords as instruments of martyrdom in the scenes of the Painted Menologium in the Pronaos and the Burial Chamber and, to a lesser extent, of the equipment of the military saints, as an attribute of the archangels or as a canonical accessory in the *Judas' Treason* or the *Assumption of the Virgin*. Once identified, white guns were framed as swords or swords, and swiftly graded swords in one or

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<sup>2</sup> The entire history of the Probota Monastery project can be recovered from the volume (currently rarissim) published by the project management team at its completion: *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery. 1996-2001*, Publications de l'UNESCO, Paris, 2001. Although it may be accused of partiality, the volume is the only testimony (ten years after the completion of the restoration) of the magnitude and the real weight of the international effort (knowingly demeaned in the Romanian literature after 2000).

other of the typological families established by Oakeshott<sup>3</sup> (medieval) or Norman<sup>4</sup> (early modern), depending on the shape and relative dimensions of the guard, the handle and the pommel. This research was completed as an exercise in futility, with the vast majority of entries revealing "precious" information such as "a possible F family handle with an exotic guard and an atypical discoid pommel with button", any chronological, historical or statistics proving to be illusory.

This sterile research became, providentially, the basis of certain interesting findings towards an archeology of the medieval individual mentality, which findings utilize the inventory of the pictorial "arsenal", ignoring the detailed typology that proved to be irrelevant, and employing the resources and methods provided by art history, which were ignored ten years earlier. The fundamental premise of these findings is that the sword possess an object/ symbol duality, and its forceful presence in the medieval mindset oscillates constantly between daily familiarity and messianic quasi-sacredness, being for the medieval individual an entity whose value and substance can occupy any point between the familiar and sacred, in a quantum indeterminism that makes the familiar and sacred inseparable within the representation of the sword. As exaggerated as it may be<sup>5</sup>, the context of relevance is not the one of the *sword owner* (and implicit of the warrior mystique), but the context of the *sword as a cultural object*<sup>6</sup>. Paraphrasing Jean Guilaine, the sword is the most sophisticated object created by prehistoric metallurgy, comprising, up to the end of Renaissance, the most advanced technology of the time<sup>7</sup>. The force of such object is so great that it becomes, in Catholic patrology, the message vehicle for the Lord's Peace, as a variant of the concept of *the two swords* (secular authority and spiritual authority) which at Allain de Lille (*Ad Milites*, the end of 13<sup>th</sup> century) becomes a material sword, carried by the *miles*, a sword of

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<sup>3</sup> Ewart Oakeshott, *Records of Medieval Sword*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> A. V. B. Norman, *The Rapier and Small-Sword, 1460-1820*, Arms and Armour Press, Londra, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most expressive *caveat* in this regard was issued by the very same Ewart Oakeshott, in the preamble of his popular volume *Sword in Hand*: "Unhappily, it has become fashionable, at certain times, to add to the mystique of the sword elements which were very unlikely ever to have occurred to the men to whom it was familiar and sanctified. At times scholars, as well as popular writers, have declared that a sword's outstanding appeal to its owner was other than its value as a weapon and symbol of aggressive power and of his dedication to the faith, a code, a cause, or an ideal. It is surely not incumbent upon us to accept that any pre-Freudian warrior had other ideas than these".

<sup>6</sup> The famous traveler, adventurer and translator of the *Kamasutra*, Sir Richard Burton, is the author of a book not less famous about the cultural history of the sword, *The Book of Swords*, which contains the axiom, frequently cited also: "... the history of the sword is the history mankind".

<sup>7</sup> Jean Guilaine, Jean Zammit, *Le Sentier de la Guerre: Visages de la violence préhistorique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 197.

violence for securing secular peace, against a spiritual sword that a Christian carries with his soul, a sword of God-inspired soul peace, and which serves the knight as a righteousness standard for his actions. While the sword is an instrument of order, the opposite is not less true. The villains take possession of the sword and use it for their wicked ends, explains John of Salisbury, while Alain de Lille depicts such reversal with an emotion that verges on horror: "... they [the wicked knights] sharpen their swords in the very womb of their mother, the Church"<sup>8</sup>. The sword of justice can at the same time be a sword of the revolution, without being a contradiction *per se*: during the months leading to the beginning of the anti-Hussite crusades, one of the leaders of the Moderate party of the Hussites, Vaclav Koranda of Plzen, declared in September 1419: "the time of wandering with the pilgrim staff in hand has passed. Now we will have to march with sword in hand"<sup>9</sup> as the non-radical Hussite rhetoric employed the metaphor of the sword exclusively in the sense of a spiritual weapon. The duality of the *material sword-spiritual sword* is consciously used as a plea against sinful bloodshed, by both the crusaders of Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg and the Taborite radicals<sup>10</sup>, in the form of *arma carnalia-arma spiritualia* by Jakoubek of Střbor, the ideologist of moderate Hussitism and the main successor of Jan Hus<sup>11</sup>. Thus, we find that the sword as a multiple meaning cultural image is present as vividly during the Crusades as during the Pre-Reformation, both in the religious milieus and in the vernacular literate ones, in the West as well as at the periphery (geographic and theological) of Catholic Europe.

If the references of Western scholasticism may seem inadequate for assessing the cultural landscape of the Moldavian public in prince Petru Rares' time, the Scriptural text is a very suitable reference, as its message is virtually identical in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, the image of the sword in the Old Testament<sup>12</sup> is the representation of divine immanence and justice, or the divine

<sup>8</sup> Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536*, Oxford University Press, Londra, 2002, p. 36, who quotes with gusto from Kaminsky's 1968 *History of the Hussite Revolution*, which remains the reference work on the issue of Hussitism.

<sup>10</sup> The millenarian enthusiasm of 1419-1420 was accompanied by unprecedented fratricide violence in the Hussite Czech state. The Taborite and Orebite Radicals preachers urge, in the spirit and letter of the Old Testament, to smite the "enemies of the Lord's Law": „Any one of the faithful is accursed who holds his sword back from the blood of the adversaries of Christ's Law, from personally pouring it out. Rather, each of the faithful ought to wash his hands in the blood of Christ's enemies, because blessed are all who return vengeance to the woeful daughter, just as she has done to us" (Norman Housley, *op. cit.*, p. 39).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45-46.

<sup>12</sup> Henceforth, all references to biblical text refer to the New King James Bible (1982), rendered

punishment administered by men, or even directly by God (either to the Israelites or to their enemies):

- The flaming sword guarding the entrance to Paradise (*Gen. 3:24*).
- The Lord shall kill with the sword any who oppress the poor, the widows and the orphans (*Exod. 22:23-24*).
- The Angel of the Lord with a raised sword, who blocks the road in the *History of Balaam* (*Num. 22:23, 31*).
- "... And when the Lord your God delivers it [i.e. the fortress] into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword..." (*Deut. 20:13*).
- In the same book, "... The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within... [for the Israelites who have forsaken the Lord]" (*Deut. 32:25*), as well as "– As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me ...", *The Song of Moses* (*Deut. 32:40-41*).

There are numerous such Old Testament examples, and we select here only those that might have been more popular to a 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> century public<sup>13</sup>. We believe that the ultimate and fatal character of the sword is beyond disputation, as an instrument of judicial, divine and human violence, an *exemplum* of the Last Judgment. Simultaneously, the sword is the familiar war tool, which was forbidden to the Israelites under Philistine occupation (1 *Sam. 13:19*) and about which David, the still-hidden King of Israel, admonishes Goliath: "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'" (1 *Sam. 17:45*) and "... the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands (1 *Sam. 17:47*). The sword is also the familiar instrument that serves as an accessory to Solomonic justice, in the well-known episode of the two mothers who disputed the child (1 *Kings 3:24-27*), where, through the brutality the simple presence of the sword imparts to the scene, the shocking immanence and ultimate, irremediable character of royal justice is revealed, which is, in fact, the real intention of the wise king. Moreover, the sword also appears not only as a positive instrument for executing the divine will (the killing of Amalekite King Agag by Samuel (1 *Sam. 15:33*), but also a negative one, of the human will (the suicide of King Saul, who throws himself on his sword (1 *Sam. 31:4*), or the swords of the Ammonites, which are the instrument for the unlawful execution of Uriah, at the command of King David: "You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife

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in online edition, retrieved from <https://www.bible.com/bible/>.

<sup>13</sup> The word *sword* appears 404 times in the Holy Scripture.

to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon" (2 *Sam.* 12:9).

In the New Testament, the sword does not lose any of its spiritual and profane roles, being equally in both its roles familiar and impressive for the medieval audience. In the form of a spiritual sword, it is an instrument of separating believers from skeptics, as final weapon with which Jesus cuts off by sword the parents from their children and the spouses from each other: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (*Matt.* 10:34). Simultaneously, the sword is a purely material object, a weapon of attack and defense, employed by the mob who seize Jesus in the Gethsemane Garden ("Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?" *Matt.* 26:55), and by the apprentice who takes up the sword to the Savior's defense and who is admonished by Him with: "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (*Matt.* 26:52). The material sword as an *exemplum* of executive justice is perfectly illustrated in the apostle Paul's discourse: "... Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (*Rom.* 13:4). In the evangelical discourse, the sword is the preferred metaphor for emphasizing certain extraordinary trials ("Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed'", *Luke* 2:35; and "... he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'", *Luke* 22:36-37). Such stylistic usage can be seamlessly joined (conceptually) with the image of the sword as an instrument of martyrdom, first in the scenes depicting the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, (although it does not appear literally in the source text, is implicitly introduced by the iconographer's vision), then in the martyrdom by the sword of the apostle James (the brother of John) by King Herod Agrippa I (*Acts* 12:2). The force of the sword as a cultural image in the New Testament reaches, however, its maximum intensity in the Apocalypse of St. John, where it designates the lethal force of the voice and the word of the Lord who pronounces sentences at the end of the world ("... out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword", *Rev.* 1:16) and its power to kill, granted to the apocalyptic riders ("Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword", *Acts* 6:4).

The sword-bearing characters from the mural paintings of Probota monastery (or Voroneț, or Arbore, or Bălinești, or Moldovița, or Moldovita and the list can continue), can be divided into four categories:

- I. Instances of divine majesty, power and immanence<sup>14</sup>: the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, in scenes of the nave and the narthex, the angel escorting the avatar of the Old Testament (the Synagogue) from the Crucifixion, or the angel severing the hands of the “spiteful” Jew in the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin;
- II. military saints, in the nave scenes: Procopius, Theodore Tiro and Theodore Stratelates, Demetrius, George, Artemius;
- III. secondary characters, actors in the Passion cycle in the nave, or background characters in depictions of the Ecumenical Councils in the narthex;
- IV. torturers and executioners in the martyrdom scenes of the Menology, in the narthex and the burial chamber.

The incidence of “civilian” sword-bearing characters is zero, as none of the male characters in the group of founders in the votive painting is wearing weapons whatsoever, and little prince John does not bear a sword in his funeral portrait on the southern wall of the burial chamber. The weapons seem to be instruments of violence exclusively reserved for characters, while the real people represented in mural painting are prevented to be tainted by such violence, whether this is judicial or not, divinely sanctioned or discretionary.

Having established that the sword is a culturally multiple-meaning, morally ambiguous and extremely powerful cultural image, we must accept a second premise, that for such an image, the speciation of its representations is not a random development, but the result of a rather semi-conscious process that selects, separates and unifies meanings, out of the contextual “cloud” that is, in fact, the cultural image accrued around the object “sword”. Actually, the process of representation “sets” materially that sword which is closest to the contemporary reality, out of the multitude of quantum possibilities that coexist within the cultural image. Specifically, the painter sets the shape of the sword within the scene he is currently painting, using both a material pattern (a real weapon, seen, understood and memorized), and a mental model, and these two models interact dynamically. The result of this constructive process is the depiction of a sword that

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<sup>14</sup> “[W]hen our Lord established law and order on the earth, He set them in the sword. The rule that was over the laity must come from a layman, and must be by the sword, and the sword was, at the beginning of the three orders, entrusted to knighthood to safeguard Holy Church and uphold true law and order”, as the Archbishop explains in the *History of Merlin*, such literature explaining that the Archangels and the Heavenly Hosts that defeated Lucifer’s rebellion are the highest rank of the Christian chivalry (Richard W. Kaeuper, *op. cit.*, p. 202).

is *appropriate, from the point of view of the individual who is painting*, to the scene, character and narrative message, as well as to the moral message the above suppose to convey. Consequently, the specific differences of representation are direct reflections of the painter's attitude towards the scene he is rendering, expressed through the cultural "furniture" convenient to him.

In general, this feedback process results in personal touches, innocent licenses that insert elephants and gorillas into the plethora of "beasts of the Earth" in the scenes of the Last Judgment, radishes on the Table of the Last Supper, or goats sheep ruminating their way through the Nativity scene. While such tiny interventions in very important areas, cycles, scenes or icons (in the altar, nave and tower, where the canon is very strict and the execution is reserved for the masters) are inconsequential from the point of view of the iconographic canon, they acquires sufficient freedom to manifest throughout scenes and areas of lesser importance, which are less noticeable and less canonically strict (in the Menology on the vault of the burial chamber, or on the walls of the narthex, which is a cycle with an iconographic program that emerged only in the middle of the fourteenth century, and was set structurally towards the end of the century, remaining though relatively fluid in shape<sup>15</sup>). In such areas of relative artistic freedom, the lines are more sketched, the touches are faster, and the tones are flatter, while the representations are species and not individuals. In the Menology scenes we find those depictions of the sword that illustrate in the highest degree the attitudes and cultural "furniture" of the church painters during Petru Rareș' times.

The table below summarizes, very briefly, the statistics of the presence of swords and sabers in the wall paintings of Probota:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Suzy Dufrenne, *Problèmes iconographiques dans la peinture monumentale du début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in *L'art byzantin au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Beograd, 1978, p. 29-38.

<sup>16</sup> All iconographic and iconological references follow the scheme outlined in *Probota ...*, p. 54 et seq., including the photographic reliefs and iconographic plates.

Chamber	total number	Sword	Scharfrichtschwert*	saber	karabela**
Sanctuary	0	-	-	-	-
Tower	6	6	0	0	0
Nave	13	12	0	1	1
Burial chamber	60	35	7	25	14
Narthex	46	30	1	16	13
Exonarthex	0	-	-	-	-
Total	125	83	8	42	28
<p>* Straight and relatively short two-handed swords, without point; the characters who handle such swords do not seem to also wear a scabbard. By analogy with the execution swords used in Central Europe, including Transylvania, starting with the 15<sup>th</sup> century.</p> <p>** A generic name for curve-edged sabers with short back-edges (between ¼ and ½ from the tip down). Karabela is the name of a particular type of saber, in usage with the Venetians and their Dalmatian mercenaries throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, without a clear etymology, although clearly originating in the curved saber of the Late Medieval (Ottoman-Persian) Islam (14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century), the nimcha or shamshir (the origin of French cimeterre and English scimitar).</p>					

The first finding is the sword's absence in scenes inside the Sanctuary. This absence is natural, due to the particular iconography thematic, as the only scene in which the presence of edged weapons would have been justified (i.e. the Holy women at the Tomb), depicts the guards sleeping at the entrance of Jesus' Tomb armed only with spears.

In the scenes located within the tower above the nave, only the second upper registry, below the Pantocrator, is of interest to our research. Among the angelic representations of the Heavenly Hierarchy, the *Powers* and the *Dominions* are armed with swords, the former with sheathed weapons, and the latter with swords in their hands. A very rapid typological overview reveals that all the swords depicted here fall within the typology illustrated by the *Menologion* of Emperor Basil II (11<sup>th</sup> century), schematized by Timothy Dawson<sup>17</sup>. Within the timeframe of the interior painting of Probota, the cross-guard and pommel shapes depicted on the swords carried by the Powers and dominions have long been out of use in Europe.

In the nave of the church, the painting contains relatively few representations of edged weapons, mainly in the equipment of the military saints in the lower registry of the lateral apses: Saints Artemios, Niketas and Agathonas in the southern apse, James the Persian, Procopius and Mercurius on the northeast wall, Saints Theodore (both Tiro and Stratelates), Demetrius, Nestorius, George,

<sup>17</sup> Timothy Dawson, Angus McBride, *Byzantine Infantryman. Eastern Roman Empire, 900-1204*, Osprey Publishing, 2007, p. 28.

together with Archangel Michael, in the northern apse. Of these, only Artemius, Agathonas, Procopius, Theodore Tiro and Theodore Stratelates and St. George bear swords, with both saints Theodore sharing a single sword between their shields. The military saints, mimicking Archangel Michael, bear only swords with handles (cross-guards, grips and pommels) fall somewhat in the same typological series illustrated by the *Menologion* of Basil II. The upper registry of the Military Saints contains the Passion Cycle, where edged weapons appear only infrequently, as part of the equipment of Pilate's Roman guards and the Sanhedrin Guard. With one exception, all the characters armed thus bear sword and not sabers. In addition to the military saints, the archangel associated with them, and the Roman and Judean guards, the sword is also borne by the angel in the Crucifixion scene, located on the vault of the northern apse, who escorts the avatar of the Old Testament (the Synagogue) and by the angel in the scene of Assumption of the Virgin, located on the western wall, who cuts off the hands of the Jew who grabbed the Virgin's bier. One oddity in representing the Passion appears in the scene of Jesus' arrest in the Gethsemane Garden, where, although the four Gospels mentions that *one of the followers* (*Matt. 26:52, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:49-50*), probably Peter (*John 18:10*), draws the sword in the defense of the Lord, the murals of Probota (in the southern apse) depicts this character holding a knife with a slightly curved blade, cutting the ear of "the servant of the high priest", and who grabs the servant's hair in a manner strikingly similar to one of the pagan torturers in the Painted Menology of the burial chamber or narthex. One noteworthy feature of the iconographic program is that the sole character who is armed with a saber, deeply curved and with a back-edge, is one of the Sanhedrin guards, who raises the sword upon the Lord in an extreme interpretation of Jesus' admonition towards the mob sent by the Sanhedrin: "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?" (*Matt. 26:55, Mark 14:48, Luke 22:52*)<sup>18</sup>.

In the burial chamber, the depictions of swords and sabers appear only in the scenes of the Menology (*synaxarion*), which covers the calendar between September 1<sup>st</sup> (St. Simeon Stylites) and February 29<sup>th</sup> (St. Cassian). Of the 181 scenes of the burial chamber *synaxarion*, 133 are martyrdoms, and in 54 of these scenes, the instrument of martyrdom is the sword or saber. In some other scenes, the military kit of the torturers includes swords or swords, while the instruments of martyrdom are spears, stones, cudgels, axes, saws, wild horses or wild animals.

Since the Menology is the only cycle with a sufficient number of scenes depicting swords and sabers justifying a statistic analysis, the distribution of

<sup>18</sup> The same scene, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Palaeologan paintings, contains only standard depictions of guards armed with swords, cf. *Judas' Kiss*, in the exonarthex of the catholicon of Vatopedi monastery (1312) (E. Tzagaridas, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του καθολικού της μονής Βατοπεδίου*, in *Byzantium and Serbia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century*, ed. N. Oikonomides, pl. 190).

occurrences, including the ones from the sanctuary, the tower and the nave, follows the Menology model. The edged weapons appearing in these scenes are assigned to one of the two categories (see above, Table 1), i.e. swords (straight blade, apparently double-edged, with cross-guard and disc pommel) and sabers (curved blade, apparently single-edged). Within these categories we discriminate a separate group each: likenesses of execution swords, and sabers showing the clear depiction of a back-edge.

The inventory of edged weapon depictions from the narthex murals follows the same procedure as in the burial chamber. The painted *synaxarion* in the narthex covers the period between March 1<sup>st</sup> (St. Evdokia) and August 31<sup>st</sup> (Placing of the Honorable Cincture of the Most Holy Theotokos). Of the 185 scenes, 91 are scenes of martyrdom, and 51 of these have as instruments of martyrdom a sword or a saber. Outside the Menology, depictions of swords appear also in the icon of Archangel Michael, on the left of the western portal, as well as in the equipment of some Ecumenical Councilors painted on the six *tympana* of the narthex.

From the point of view of our research, the only depictions of the swords/saber that are relevant are those that show the weapon in action, in those scenes in which its presence is part of the message or bestows a special significance unto the scene. As a result, we can leave aside scenes and icons where the sword is an accessory of a background character, such as guards or soldiers in the Passion cycle. Taking into consideration the Heavenly Hierarchy, the Archangels, the Military Saints, and the active characters in the Passion, as well as in the Assumption and the Menology scenes, we can not fail to notice an important fact: all the positive characters who are depicted armed are sword bearers, without exception. As for the saber, the fact that the para-canonical representation of the Jewish Sanhedrin servant who raises the sword upon the Lord is the only image in the “master-reserved” and canonical paintings of the nave, in which a character actively uses a **saber**, leads us to believe that this discrimination between the positive-sword and the negative-saber is not accidental. In fact, this conclusion is not new. Based on the martyrdom scenes in the Menology painted in 16<sup>th</sup> century Moldavian churches, art historians have intuitively indicated a connection between the paganism of the executioners and their curved sabers, a sure visual indicator of the connection anti-Christian persecutor – Agarenes (Ottoman or Tatar Muslim), pertaining to the theory of a so-called “anti-Ottoman manifesto” included in church murals during Petru Rareș’ reign. In fact, the causality should be reversed: not the persecutors and the torturers are associated with the Ottomans, and individualized therefore by their curved sabers, but the persecutors and torturers have the attributes of curved sabers and become, consequently and over time, associated with the Ottomans (including by art historians). The Jew who raises the sword on the Lord is as non-Muslim as possible, without any ambiguity or interpretation. Without being a manifestation of a certain anti-Semite attitude, the

depiction is that of the archetypal persecutor, an anonymous pre-conversion Saul of Tarsus, who sees Christians as outlaws and “robbers”. To distinguish this persecutor from the rest of Jesus’ contemporaries, the master painter portrays him by raising his **saber**.

As for the association between the saber as weapon of choice and a certain way of life (with negative, anti-civilization, connotations), its history is as long in Eastern Europe is as long as the history of the Byzantine Empire itself<sup>19</sup>.

Contemporary to the timeframe of Probota wall painting, the curved, single-edged saber, with or without back-edge, was already known and used in this region for centuries. Taking into account the theoretical and methodological foundation the iconography of Moldavian medieval churches is based upon, i.e. the iconography and painting of Byzantine Palaeologan art, we believe is necessary to start the investigation into the visual sources of the range of edged weapons depicted in the murals of Moldavian churches, from the same Byzantine origins. A short and slightly curved sword (*drepanon*)<sup>20</sup> was used in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by sailors as a boarding sword/ cutlass, and it is not unlikely that such weapon would have passed in the following period in the kit of light infantry, archers and sappers. The utilitarian origin of the *drepanon* allows for a connection, in shape and function, to the Early Middle Ages *seax* of Atlantic Europe, as well as to the (concave blade though) *kopis*/ *machaira* of the Ancient eastern Mediterranean and the *falcata* used in Celtic and then Roman Iberia.

A single-edged sword about 94 cm long, probably curved, *paramerion*<sup>21</sup>, was by the 10<sup>th</sup> century already in use with the Byzantine light cavalry and then adopted, by mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, also by the heavy cavalry (*kleibanophoroi*)<sup>22</sup>, as well as by the line infantry (*skutatoi*) and archers (*psiloi*)<sup>23</sup>. *Parameria* are certainly a

<sup>19</sup> Like the history of mankind, see above, footnote 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Drepana* were, originally, humble sickles used by peasants. In military context such weapons appear as boarding swords/cutlasses in *Naumachika*, 5.5, in the chapter that describes the kit of naval infantry. Since the *Naumachika* is most likely a post 959 compilation, one can include the *drepanon* in the military equipment of the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>21</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Alexander Kazhdan ch. ed.), Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 2192; *para-merion* translates literally “near thigh”.

<sup>22</sup> The military treatise *Σύλλογὴ Τακτικῶν*, a compilation of writings on tactics attributable to Constantine Porphyrogenites mentions, in Book 39, which describes the kit of cavalymen, that this type of saber is recently adopted by the byzantine army *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 190, *sub voce* SYLLOGE TACTICORUM, cf. also John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204*, UCL Press, London, 1999, p. 131, 132.

<sup>23</sup> As depicted in the decoration of an ivory casket, reproduced in Ian Heath, Angus McBride, *Byzantine Armies, 886-1118*, Osprey Publishing, London, 1992, p. 31, although the *Taktikon* of Emperor Leo the Sixth mentions only the hatchet (*tzikourion*) as side weapon of archers.

Byzantine adaptation of the equipment of Asian cavalymen and horse archers<sup>24</sup>, with whom the Byzantines clashed frequently, and some of whom have found since the 11<sup>th</sup> century employment among the mercenaries in the service of Byzantium. Historically, the exact shape of the *paramerion* is still undefined. We know from *Euloge Taktikon* that it was a new type of edged weapon, used by the cavalry, suspended along the thigh in a horizontal position, from a belt or a scarf/ baldric. It is worth noting that the illustration of Ioannes Skilitzes' *Σύνοψις Ιστοριῶν*, in the form of the *Skyllitzes Matritensis*<sup>25</sup>, does not include swords in the equipment of the Byzantine soldiers and officers, neither among the weapons of Avars, Bulgars or Arabs, except for the scene of siege and conquest of Aleppo by Nikeforos Focas, in which Byzantine horsemen and pedestrians wave their swords (which seem to be *parameria*) (Fig. 25). In fact, this illustration evokes the description of a heavy cavalry assault given in Nikeforos Ouranos' *Taktika*<sup>26</sup>: "... the *kataphraktoi* will strike the heads and bodies of the enemies with their iron maces and sabers (*parameria*) ... and thus they will completely destroy them". The portrait of Emperor Nikeforos Focas in a 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript portrays him with a curved saber, unsheathed and raised on his shoulder (Fig. 26), an image inherited in modern times in the form of the bronze statue of martyred Emperor Constantine XI Dragases Palaiologos in Mystras (Fig. 27). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries however the saber is omnipresent in the Balkans, being equally used by Serbs, Bulgars, Byzantines and Turks.

The contact of the Europeans with the cavalry saber is effected through the Central Asian nomads (Turkish, Iranian and Ugric tribes) as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Most pictographic sources make us believe that the arsenal of the Central Asian Turkic tribes did not include, until the middle of 9<sup>th</sup> century, sabers or curved-bladed swords. At best, the contemporary local iconographic sources (Fig. 21) do not allow the visual identification of this type of weapons<sup>27</sup>. One cannot exclude the possibility, however, that straight bladed, single-edged swords (*pallasch* type) may be present in significant numbers, as the level of detail of the respective sources, does not allow to discriminate the two-edged swords,

<sup>24</sup> John Haldon, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>25</sup> The manuscript, preserved in the National Library of Madrid, was probably written during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the *milieu* of the Norman kingdom of Sicily, where the particularities of military equipment, at least of the Arabs, were well known (*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1914, *sub voce* SKYLITZES).

<sup>26</sup> Writer and general, favorite of Emperor Basil II, ambassador to Baghdad, protector of the Great Lavra of Mount Athos and artisan of the decisive victory of Spercheios against Tsar Samuel (996/7), Nikeforos Ouranos is the last of the strategists of classical inspiration in Byzantine literature, equally compiler of Leon VI and Nikeforos Focas, as well as original author (Eric McGeer, *Tradition and Reality in the Taktika of Nikephoros Ouranos*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 45, 1991, p. 130-131.

<sup>27</sup> David Nicolle, *Attila and the Nomad Hordes*, Osprey Publishing, 1990, p. 26, 27.

originating deep in the European La Tene. At the eastern limit of Central Asia, the association between the material culture of a nomadic and pastoral way of life and the sword with one edge (blade more or less curved) as a weapon of choice, is proven since the Late Bronze Age, in the region of Inner (Chinese) Mongolia in the area of Upper Xia-chia-tien culture<sup>28</sup>.

In the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, the Central Asian mercenaries already formed the majority of the Empire's cavalry, preserving their traditional equipment, from which the saber, more or less curved, or the single-edged sword of Iranian origin is the weapon of choice for the well-off mercenaries from the ranks of Hungarian, Bulgar, Alan, Georgian or Petcheneg auxiliaries. This structure of cavalymen and horse archers equipment remains almost unchanged throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, although the ethnic composition of the Byzantine army is changing<sup>29</sup>. It is not difficult to believe that, for the author or copyist of a *Menologion* at the times of the Fall of Constantinople, the curved saber is a distinctive visual feature of various groups of mercenary horsemen, who turn to full-time banditry whenever they are unpaid<sup>30</sup>, as well as of the Turks, whether Selgiukids or Ottomans, the new Scourge of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies: the Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 46. One can assert, without erring much, that the proto-Xiongnu sword of the end of the Bronze Age is at the origin of all similar edged weapons throughout the Middle East and Eastern Europe, from the late antiquity and to the Middle Ages, as well as the Dao swords that are part of the arsenal imperial China since the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and up to 1911. However, a commentary on the skeptical caveat issued by Khazanov is necessary here (*Nomads in the History of Sedentary World*, in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, A. M. Khazanov (ed.), Curzon Press, Richmond, UK, 2001, p. 2): Is irrelevant that certain components of the kit appear as originating in non-pastoral and nomadic contexts, which is used as an argument for the partial dissociation of Asian cavalry equipment (recurved composite bow, saddle with stirrups and saber) from the pastoral nomadism. If the iron stirrups appear among the funerary goods in southern Manchuria and Northern Korea (Sungarya basin) cemeteries three centuries earlier than in Central Asia populated by Turkic tribes, then such protochrony disprove the above partial dissociation, as all the cited finds originate in the hinterland of the border with the "Northern Barbarians", which is a cultural picture covering the successive threats of the various Turkic-Siberian nomad tribes such as Shan Jung and Tung Hu (Nicola Di Cosmo, *op. cit.*, map 2, p. 60-61, map 4, p. 191 and *passim* Chapters 7 and 8, p. 255-311).

<sup>29</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1343, *sub voce* MERCENARIES.

<sup>30</sup> The most significant episode is the revolt of the Paristran Petchenegs, recruited by Emperor Constantine IX in 1048, to fight the Selgiukids' invasion, revolt joined by Petchenegs led by Kegen, from outside the Empire, at a time when the defensive strategy of the Anatolian border changes radically, as the military service is replaced by a cash contribution, intended for recruitment of mercenaries, providing the perfect opportunity for the Selgiukid invasion (Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 91-92; John Haldon, *op. cit.*, p. 125).

Having accepted the hypothetical association between the single-edged blade (curved or not) and the pastoral nomadism and therefore the warrior horsemen, the presence of *parameria* in both cavalry and infantry equipment is seemingly paradoxical. This, however, may be explained, again, through of the concept of cultural image: The iconographic sources showing short, slightly curved and probably single-edged swords/ sabers (see above, footnote 19) used by *psilos* and sometimes by *skutatoï*, most likely depict the *drepanon* or a similar weapon, originating, like the *seax*, in the *kopis-falcata* of the Classical Antiquity Mediterranean<sup>31</sup>, a short, curved sword-knife, with a more or less concave edge, used by light infantry. The association between soldiers of low social station (irregulars, auxiliaries and barbarian or semi-barbarian mercenaries), which make up such troops, and the Asian invaders, emerges and evolves within the register of traditional culture, as a result of their common aspect, acutely perceived by a more or less urbanized agrarian civilization, which is that of chaotic and violent behavior of such armed groups of people, whether they are Imperial irregulars (recruited from the proletariat, most often of non-Greek origin, of the Byzantine periphery), auxiliaries or temporary allies recruited from among the semi-nomadic pastoral tribes of the Asian world, or invaders proper.

The association between the curved saber and the negative characters is at its strongest, however, outside the universe of the Byzantine Commonwealth. Most of the visual sources come from Western Europe, the earliest ones being related to the Crusades, while the most semantically penetrating ones date from the late Renaissance, i.e. the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>. In this context, we can only conclude that the negative meanings borne by the sword originate in the cultural association between hostile, non-Christian Asia (that includes the schismatic Byzance, at least on the level of the popular-soldiery perception) and this weapon of choice of the Asian and Muslim light cavalry, opposing the crusaders in the Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia. The transfer of this negative cultural image into the mural painting of the Moldavian churches of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which image, as shown above, is not found in the rest of the Palaeologan and post-Palaeologan art imagery, emphasizes, once more, the cultural (if not artistic) attachment of Early Modern Moldavia to the European Renaissance.

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Connolly *et alii*, *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, Weinfield & Nicholson, New York, 1989, p. 22. The origin of the *seax* in the ancient *falcata* is argued by Ewart Oakeshott, *Archaeology of Weapons*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1999, p. 50, cf. also Idem, *European Weapons and Armour. From the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution*, Lutterworth Press, London, 1980, p. 152.

*ADVERSARUL ȘI ARMELE SALE. REPREZENTĂRI ALE  
ANTI-CREȘTINISMULUI ÎN EVUL MEDIU TÂRZIU*

**(Rezumat)**

*Evul Mediu este un timp al vizualului și, în Moldova, ca și în restul Europei de Est, pereții pictați ai bisericilor ilustrează curenții puternici ai credințelor lumești ale oamenilor. În ceea ce privește imaginile culturale, amprenta credinței contemporane asupra imaginii sacre este una dintre cele mai bune surse disponibile, deoarece modificarea minoră, personalizată, a scenei canonice dezvăluie modul în care persoana obișnuită (pictorul) a perceput un anumit comportament, obiect, persoană sau fenomen. Am constatat că este foarte convingător modul în care, pe pereții „ilustrați” ai bisericii din secolul al XVI-lea a mănăstirii Probota, călăii, persecutorii și, în general, personajele „rele”, sunt reprezentați purtând și fluturând săbii curbate „turcești”, în opoziție cu sfinții militari, arhanghelii și restul personajelor „bune”, care poartă spade drepte. Asociația dintre sabia curbă și „dușmanii lui Hristos” se dovedește a fi, după analiza noastră, un element străin tradiției bizantine, de vreme ce întregul fenomen și canoanele picturii sacre din regiunea noastră demonstrează această origine. De fapt, pictura Paleologă și cea anterioară prezintă o imagine mai realistă a omului de arme, adică personajele „rele” și „bune” poartă săbii curbate, în timp ce sabia dreaptă este, atât de rar pe cât apare, asociată cu „frâncii” (Occidentali catolici cu reputație rea în lumea bizantină). Faptul că majoritatea imaginilor medievale și renascentiste din Europa occidentală și centrală europeană dețin asociația sabia = rău este semnificativă pentru ponderea pe care stratul cultural european de secol o are în mentalul colectiv al Moldovei aceste perioade sau, cel puțin pentru pictorii bisericii Sf. Nicolae din mănăstirea Probota și cei ai altor câteva biserici pictate ale Moldovei.*

**Lista ilustrațiilor:**

- Fig. 1. M-rea Probota. Imagine de ansamblu a bolții gropniței, cu scene din Menolog. Distribuția spadă-sabie în echipamentul torționarilor reflectă media generală a reprezentărilor din interiorul bisericii. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 106.
- Fig. 2. M-rea Probota. Imagine de ansamblu a zidului sudic al gropniței, cu scene din Menolog. Distribuția spadă-sabie în echipamentul torționarilor reflectă media generală a reprezentărilor din interiorul bisericii. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 41.
- Fig. 3. M-rea Humor. Scene de martiriu din Menolog, pe peretele estic al pronaosului. Col. autorului.
- Fig. 4. M-rea Voroneț. Scene de martiriu din Menolog, pe bolta pridvorului. Col. autorului.
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- Fig. 6. Biserica Sf. Gheorghe a Arhiepiscopiei Sucevei. Scenă de martiriu de pe peretele vestic al pronaosului. Col. autorului.
- Fig. 7. M-reă Probota. *Ierarhia Cerească*, în tamburul turlei. *Puterile*, ca și *Domniile*, sunt îngeri împlătoși și înarmați cu spade, reprezentări ale omnipotenței divine în planul autorității materiale. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 44, 57.
- Fig. 8. M-reă Probota. *Sărutul lui Iuda* și Prinderea lui Isus în Grădina Getsimani, în absida sudică a naosului. Sabia ridicată de servitorul Sanhedrinului este o *karabela* de formă clasică, așa cum apare aceasta în pictura renașcentistă occidentală a sfârșitului de secol XV (v. infra, Memling, Carpaccio). *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 87.
- Fig. 9. *Sărutul lui Iuda* din exonartexul catoliconului m-rii Vatoped (1312). Gărzile trimise să îl aresteze pe Isus poartă spade. E. Τσιγαρίδας, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του καθολικού της μονής Βατοπέδιου* în *Byzantium and Serbia in the 14th century*, ed. N. Oikonomides, pl. 190.
- Fig. 10. M-reă Probota. Sf. Gheorghe și Arhanghelul Mihail în absida nordică a naosului. Cei doi sfinți majori sunt echipați cu spade. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 102.
- Fig. 11. M-reă Probota. Scene de martiriu din Menolog, peretele nordic al gropniței, registrul al III-lea. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 110.
- Fig. 12. M-reă Probota. Martiriul Sf. Longin (16 octombrie), pe latura vestică a bolții gropniței. Arma soldatului care face oficiul de călău este identică cu sabia regelui safavid Shah Tamasp (1524-1576) (Peter Connoly *et alii*, *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, Weinfield & Nicholson, New York, 1989, p. 140). *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 111.
- Fig. 13. M-reă Probota. Martiriul celor 33 de mucenici din Rait și a celor 38 de mucenici din Sinai (14 ianuarie), în nișa ferestrei sudice a gropniței. Persecutorii sunt înfățișați ca mauri iar săbiile lor au un contra-tăiș foarte pronunțat. *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 113.
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- Fig. 17. M-reă Probota. Martiriul Sf. Luchian (3 iunie), pe peretele vestic al pronaosului. Instrumentul martiriului este o sabie cu lama dreaptă, doar ușor curbată spre vârf (*pallasch*?). *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 33.
- Fig. 18. Spade cu un singur tăiș, cu lama dreaptă (tip *pallasch*), din Persia sasanidă, secolul VI-VII. Hugh Kennedy, *Mongols, Huns and Vikings. Nomads at War*, Cassel, Londra, 2002, p. 107.
- Fig. 19. Săbiile califului Khalid bin Al-Walid, cuceritorul Siriei, păstrate în muzeul Topkapı din Istanbul (sec. VII). Hugh Kennedy, *Mongols, Huns and Vikings. Nomads at War*, Cassel, Londra, 2002, p. 62.
- Fig. 20. Săbii utilizate de triburile nomade de păstori iranieni, ugieni și turcici (secolele IV-XI): **a**-bazinul fluviului Ural, aprox. sec. V (*apud* Hudyakov), **b**-sabia hunică de la Altlussheim, sec. IV, **c**-turcică descoperită în regiunea Altai, sec. VII-IX (*apud* Pletniova), **d**-provenind din stepele nord-pontice, sec. VI-VII (*apud* Pletniova), **e**-în stil alan, descoperită într-un mormânt avar de la Törökbálint, sec. VII (*apud* Kovrig), **f**-proveniență avară, sec. VII (Muzeul Militar din Budapesta), **g**-de proveniență kirkiză, sec. VI-IX (*apud* Hudyakov), **h**-ugrică din Siberia de vest, sec. VI-VII (*apud* Soloviev), **i**-din teritoriul Bulgariei de pe Volga sec. VIII-X (*apud* Pletniova), **j**-turcică sau iraniană, descoperită la Nishapur, sec. IX-X (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY), **l**-kimakă, sec. IX-X (*apud* Hudyakov), **m**-din Caucazul de Nord, sec. X (*apud* Pletniova), **n**-nimakă sau carlukă, sec. IX-X (*apud* Pletniova), **o-p**-kirkize, sec. X-XII (*apud* Hudyakov). David Nicolle, *Attila and the Nomad Hordes*, Osprey Publishing, Londra, 1995, p. 48.
- Fig. 21. Imaginea unui călăreț turcic echipat cu o sabie dreaptă de tip sasanid de pe o învelitoare de scut, descoperită în săpăturile de la fortăreața Mugh, care a fost demantelată de persani în secolul VIII. David Nicolle, Angus McBride, *The Armies of Islam 7th-11th Centuries*, Osprey Publishing, Londra, 1995, p. 14.
- Fig. 22. Ruloul intitulat „Generalul Guo Zuyi încheind pacea cu emisarii uiguri”, al pictorului chinez Li Gonglin (1049-1106). Uigurii poartă îmbrăcăminte „barbară”, iar emisarul prosternat în fața generalului poartă o sabie a cărei formă stilizată este foarte apropiată de exemplarele descoperite în arealul turcic și al Asiei Centrale. Peter Connolly *et alii*, *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, Weinfield & Nicholson, New York, 1989, p. 178.
- Fig. 23. Lame de *scramasax* (*seax* scurt), datate în secolul al XI-lea, descoperite în timpul lucrărilor de amenajare a cheiurilor Tamisei (Londra). David Edge, John Miles Paddock, *Arms & Armor of the Medieval Knight*, Crescent Books, NY, 1991, p. 36.
- Fig. 24. Săbii descoperite în Transilvania (sec. X-XI), în morminte maghiare (grupul Cluj). Zeno-Karl Pinter, *Spada și sabia medievală în Transilvania și Banat (secolele IX-XIV)*, ed. a II-a, Brukenthal, Sibiu, 2007, p. 104-105, pl. 47 (p. 213).

- Fig. 25. Trupele lui Nikephoros Focas iau cu asalt Alepul (Berrhoia), miniatură în *Cronica* lui Ioan Skylitzes, manuscrisul madrilen (sec. XII). Armele soldaților bizantini sunt posibile reprezentări de *parameria*. Vasiliki Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid*, Alexandros Press, Leiden, NL, 2002.
- Fig. 26. Portretul împăratului Nikephoros II Focas, într-un manuscris de la jumătatea secolului al XIV-lea.
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- Fig. 29. Plăci ceramice decorative înfățișând duelul legendar dintre Richard Inimă de Leu și Saladin (Chertsey, Anglia, aprox. 1250-1260). Saladin poartă o sabie cu lama lată, curbată spre vârf. Nicholas Hooper, Matthew Bennet, *The Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare - The Middle Ages 768-1487*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 95.
- Fig. 30. Cruciații regelui Ludovic cel Sfânt sunt prinși în ambuscadă de sarazini la asediul Tunisului (1270), într-un manuscris al *Chroniques de Saint Denis* din prima jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea. Thomas F. Madden (ed.), *Crusades, the Illustrated History*, U. Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2004 p. 166.
- Fig. 31. Regele Ludovic de Anjou al Ungariei înconjurat de vasalii săi, miniatură din *Chronicon Pictum Vindobodense* (aprox. 1370), grupul din stânga regelui având trăsăturile fizice, costumația și armamentul specific orientale (cumani?). David Nicolle, *Hungary and the Fall of Eastern Europe 1000-1568*, Osprey Publishing, Londra, 1991, p. 13.
- Fig. 32. Bătălia de la Crecy, ilustrată de *Cronica Beauchamp* (cca. 1485). Arbaletierii genovezi ai Delfinului (dreapta) sunt o pradă ușoară pentru arcașii englezi. Unul dintre mercenarii francezilor este echipat cu o sabie *karabela*. David Edge, John Miles Paddock, *Arms & Armor of the Medieval Knight*, Crescent Books, NY, 1991, p. 131.
- Fig. 33. *Tăierea Capului Sf. Ioan Botezătorul*, panou al unei predele pictate de Sano di Pietro (1448). Sabia călăului este recurbată, cu două tășuri, o licență artistică în reprezentarea probabilă a unui iatagan (cu tășul pe latura concavă), o intenție clară de a marca vizual alteritatea personajului persecutor. Muzeul Pușkin, Moscova; Judith Steinhoff, *Siene Painting after the Black Death: Artistic Pluralism, Politics, and the New Art Market*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 136.
- Fig. 34. *Tăierea Capului Sf. Ioan Botezătorul*, panoul sudic al tripticului Sf. Ioan al lui Roger van der Weyden (1455-1460). Călăul folosește o sabie care combină elementele unei

*Scharfrichtschwert* (lamă scurtă și grea, mânerul lung, de două mâini) cu cele ale unui *seax*, rezultând o armă similară cu sabia sultanului Mehmet al II-lea (Cuceritorul), păstrată la muzeul Topkapı din Istanbul. Staatliche Museen, Berlin; J. Snyder, L. Silver, H. Luttikhuisen, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, Londra, 2004, p. 123-124.

- Fig. 35. *Învierea* de Giovanni Bellini (1475-1479). Unul dintre paznicii mormântului poartă o sabie a cărei teacă evocă o armă balcanică tipică de secol XVII. Staatliche Museen, Berlin; Oskar Batschmann, *Giovanni Bellini*, Reaktion Books, Berlin, 2008, p. 117.
- Fig. 36. *Adorația magilor*, panoul central al tripticului abatelui Jan Crabbe de Hans Memling (aprox. 1470). Balthasar este înfățișat cu trăsăturile fizice și costumele unui maur, inclusiv *karabela* cu mâner și gardă tipic venețiene. Museo del Prado, Madrid; Franz Bock, *Hans Memling*, Parkstone Press, 2008, p. 106-108.
- Fig. 37. *Martiriul Sf. Ursula*, scena a VI-a de pe relicvariul pictat de Hans Memling (aprox. 1489). Regele hun Atila ale cărei avansuri sfânta le refuză, decise să rămână virgină, o ucide străpungând-o cu o săgeată. Deși armura și restul îmbrăcăminteii regelui este occidentală, la șold poartă o *karabela*. Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges; Franz Bock, *Hans Memling*, Parkstone Press, 2008, p. 209-213.
- Fig. 38. Detaliu din *Martiriul Sf. Ursula* (1490-1495, scena VIII, „Masacrul pelerinilor”) de Vittorio Carpacci. Pedestrușul hun din centrul scenei este înarmat cu sabie similară cu cele din echipamentul *stradiotti*-lor. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Veneția; Stefania Mason (Andrew Ellis trad.), *Carpaccio: Major Pictorial Cycles*, Skira, Roma, 2000, p. 87-89.
- Fig. 39. *Întoarcerea Juditei în Betulia*, de Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510). Sabia Juditei este cea atârnată în cortul lui Holofern (în *LXX* arma apare ca *akinakes* iar nu *xiphos*). Gallerie degli Uffizzi; Catalogul expoziției *Rinascimento. Capolavori dei musei italiani* (Tokyo - Roma), Skira, Roma, 2001, p. 97.
- Fig. 40. *Tăierea Capului Sf. Ioan Botezătorul*, atribuită lui Amico Aspertini (1475-1552). Călăul folosește o sabie cu curbura accentuată, o licență artistică, arma neavând analogii reale în epocă. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; J. W. Goodison, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Italian School*, Cambridge University Press, 1967 p. 5.
- Fig. 41. Cavaleria ușoară *stradiotti* a venețienilor angajată în bătălia de la Fornovo (6 iulie 1495). *Stradiotti* sunt înarmați cu *karabela* și poartă pălăriile caracteristice, imortalizate într-una din panopliile lui Dürer. Gravură executată în Franța în 1501. David Nicolle, *The Venetian Empire, 1200-1670*, Osprey Publishing, Londra, 1995, p. 16.
- Fig. 42. *Storta* venețiană, o variantă elaborată a *karabelei*, decorată aproape pe întreaga suprafață (sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea). Peter Connolly et alii, *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, Weinfield & Nicholson, New York, 1989, p. 48.

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- Fig. 43. Sabia sultanului Mehmet al II-lea Cuceritorului, păstrată la Muzeul Topkapı din Istanbul. Lama lată și grea a armei, puțin curbată, cu contra-tăiș pe treimea superioară, are un profil aproape poligonal, mediana aplatizată fiind acoperită cu invocații și binecuvântări. Peter Connolly *et alii*, *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, Weinfield & Nicholson, New York, 1989, p. 140.
- Fig. 44. O hărțuială de frontieră între cavaleria austriacă și cea turcă în viziunea gravorului german (1540). Ambii comandanți sunt echipați cu săbii curbate. Thomas Arnold, *The Renaissance at War*, Cassel, Londra, 2001, p. 119.
- Fig. 45. Victoria Confederației helvetice asupra burgunzilor la Grandson (1469), ilustrată în *Cronica Helvetică Ilustrată* a lui Diebold Schilling cel Bătrân (Berner Schilling). În mijlocul grupului de pedestrași burgunzi, unul dintre ei flutură deasupra capului o sabie încovoiată. Nicholas Hooper, Matthew Bennet, *The Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare - The Middle Ages 768-1487*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 148.
- Fig. 46. Bătălia de la St. Denis (1567), dintre hughenoți și Liga Catolică, ilustrată de o tapiserie omagială a familiei de Montmorency (comandantul Ligii, căzut în luptă). Cavaleria hughenotă, cu cape albe, este înarmată și cu săbii curbate, spre deosebire de catolici, în haine colorate, care sunt înarmați doar cu spade. Thomas Arnold, *The Renaissance at War*, Cassel, Londra, 2001, p. 194.



Fig. 1. Probota Monastery. Overall image of the vault of the burial chamber, with scenes from the Menology. The sword/saber ratio in the torture equipment reflects the overall average of the representations inside the church (*The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001, p. 106)

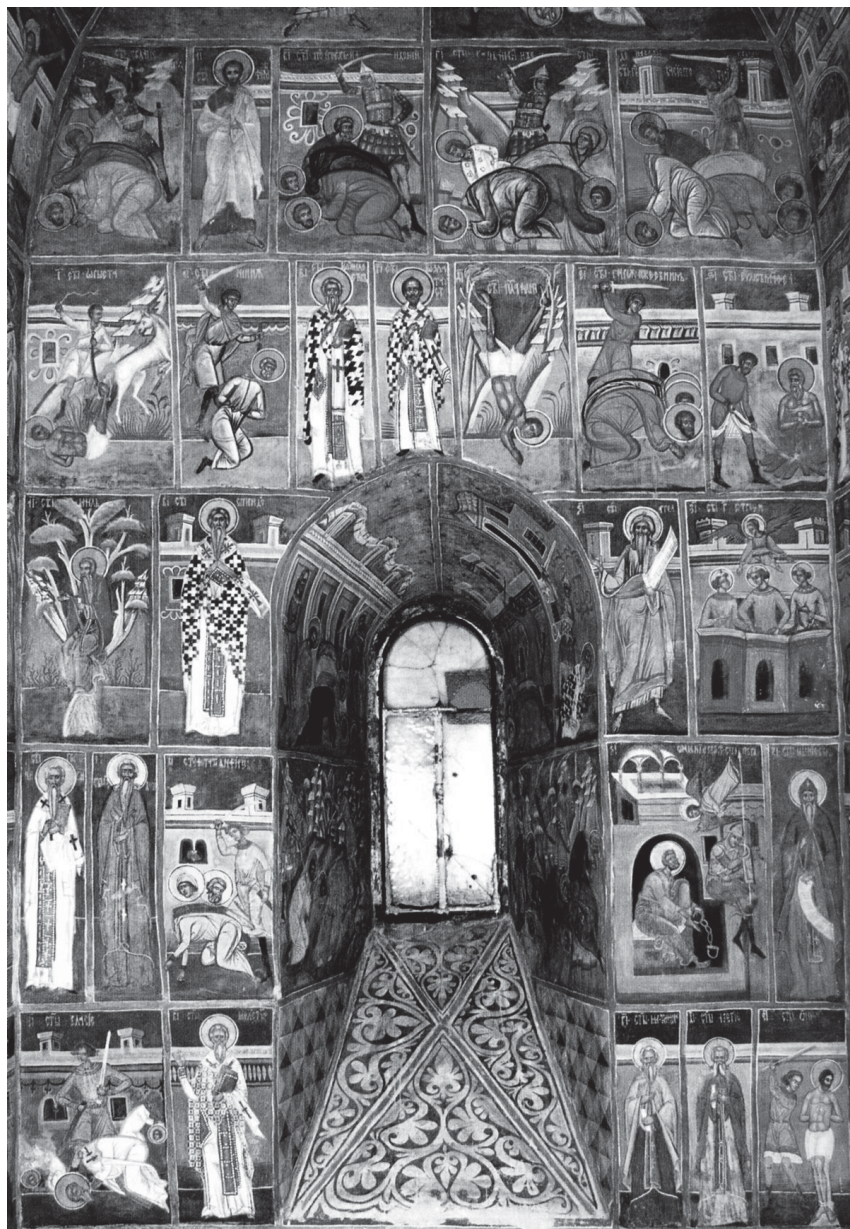


Fig. 2. Probota Monastery. Overall image of the burial chamber south wall, with scenes from the Menology. The sword/saber ratio in the torture equipment reflects the overall average of the representations inside the church (*Probota ...*, p. 41)



Fig. 3. Humor Monastery. Scenes of martyrdom in the Menology, on the eastern wall of the narthex



Fig. 4. Voroneț Monastery. Scenes of martyrdom in the Menology, on the vault of the exonarthex



Fig. 5. Sucevița Monastery. Scene in cycle of *The Miracles of Archangel Michael*, on the northern wall of the exonarthex



Fig. 6. Sf. George church of the Archbishopric of Suceava. Scene of martyrdom on the western wall of the narthex



Fig. 7. Probota Monastery. *The Heavenly Hierarchy*, on the drum of the Tower. The *Powers*, as well as the *Dominions*, are angels armored with breastplates and armed with swords, representations of the divine omnipotence on the plane of physical authority (*Probota ...*, p. 44, 57)



Fig. 8. Probota Monastery. *Judas' Kiss* and the capture of Jesus in the Gethsemane Garden, in the southern apse of the nave. The saber raised by the Servant of the Sanhedrin is a *karabela* of classic shape, as depicted in the western European Renaissance art at the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century (see below: Memling, Carpaccio) (*Probota ...*, p. 87)



Fig. 9. *Judas' Kiss* in the exonarthex of the catholicon of Vatoped Monastery (1312). The guards sent to arrest Jesus are armed with swords (E. Tzigaridas, *op. cit.*, pl. 190)



Fig. 10. Probota Monastery. St. George and Archangel Michael in the northern apse of the nave. The two are equipped with swords (*Probota ...*, p. 102)

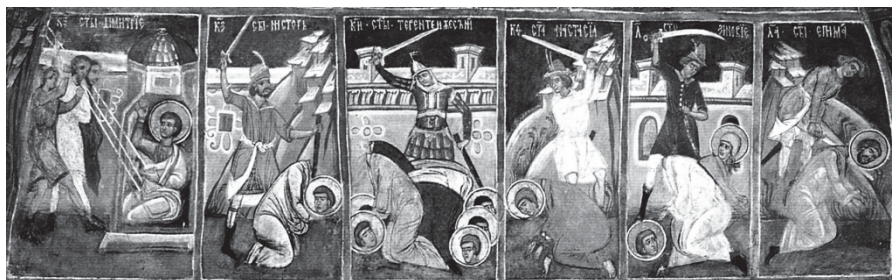


Fig. 11. Probota Monastery. Scenes of martyrdom in the Menology, on the north wall of the burial chamber, the 3<sup>rd</sup> registry (*Probota ...*, p. 110)

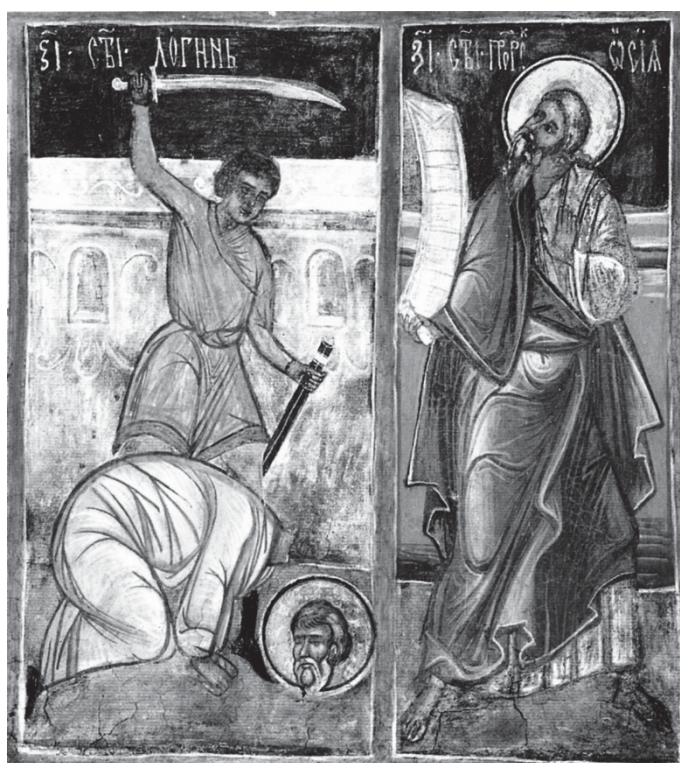


Fig. 12. Probota Monastery. The martyrdom of St. Longinus (October 16<sup>th</sup>), on the western side of the burial chamber vault. The executioner's weapon is very similar to the sword of Safavid king Shah Tamasp (1524-1576) (Peter Connolly *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 140) (*Probota ...*, p. 111)



Fig. 13. Probota Monastery. The martyrdom of the 33 martyrs of Rait and the 38 martyrs of Sinai (January 14<sup>th</sup>), in the niche of the southern window of the burial chamber. The persecutors are depicted as Moors and their swords have a very pronounced back-edge (*Probota ....*, p. 113)



Fig. 14. The martyrdom of St. Carp and his wife and children (October 13<sup>th</sup>), on the south wall of the burial chamber. The same analogy for the executioner's sword as above (St. Longin's martyrdom, see Fig. 12 above) (*Probota ....*, p. 109)



Fig. 15. Probota Monastery. The depiction of Archangel Michael on the eastern wall of the narthex, armed with a sword  
(*Probota ....*, p. 131)



Fig. 16. Probota Monastery. Detail in the scene of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, on the tympanon of the western wall of the narthex. One of the courtiers of Emperor Constantine VI is armed with a pommel-less hilted saber (similar to an early *shamshir*) (*Probota ....*, p. 129)



Fig. 17. Probota Monastery. The martyrdom of St. Lucian (June 3<sup>rd</sup>), on the western wall of the narthex. The instrument of martyrdom is a straight-bladed sword with curved tip (*pallasch?*) (*Probota ...*, p. 33)

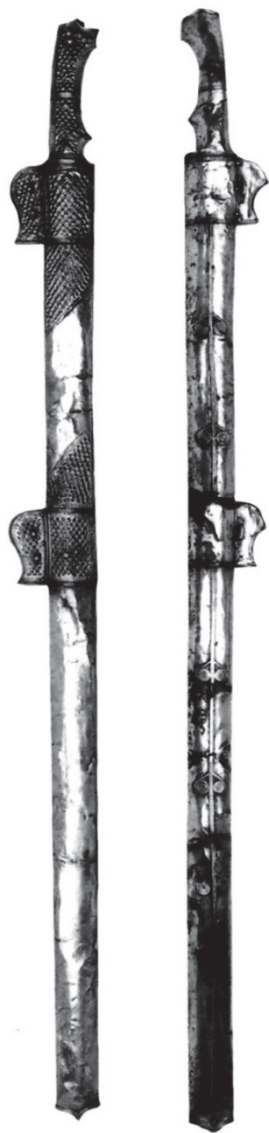


Fig. 18. Single-edged, straight blade swords (*pallasch* type), Sassanid Persia, 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> century (after Hugh Kennedy, *Mongols, Huns and Vikings. Nomads at War*, Cassel, Londra, 2002, p. 107)

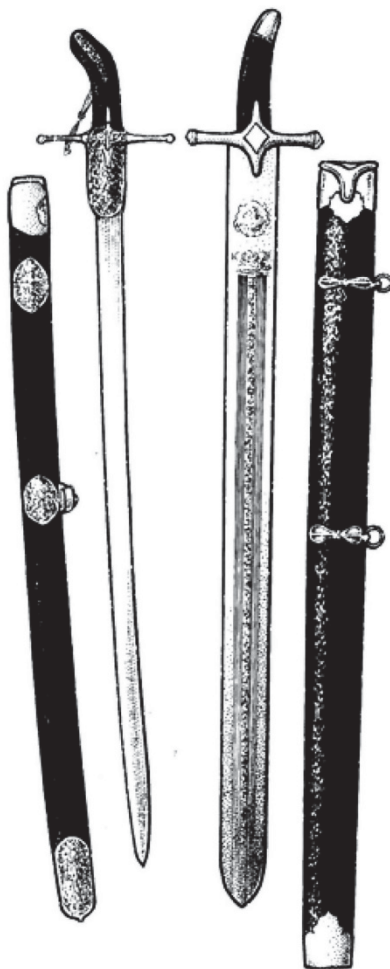


Fig. 19. The swords of caliph Khalid bin Al-Walid, the conqueror of Syria, preserved in the Topkapı Museum of Istanbul (7<sup>th</sup> century) (after Hugh Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 62)

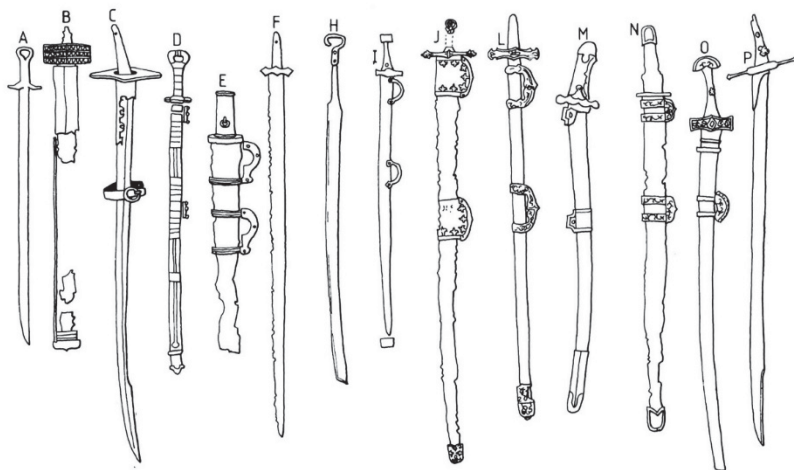


Fig. 20. Sabers used by Iranian, Ugrian and Turkic nomad pastoralists (4<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century):  
**a** - Ural basin, approx. 5<sup>th</sup> century; **b** - the Altusheim Sword (Hunic, 4<sup>th</sup> century),  
**c** - Turkic, uncovered in the Altai; 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century, **d** - saber uncovered in steppe region  
 north of Black Sea, 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> century; **e** - saber of Alan style, uncovered in an Avar grave in  
 Törökbalint, 7<sup>th</sup> century; **f** - saber of Avar origin, 7<sup>th</sup> century (Military Museum, Budapest);  
**g** - saber of Kirgiz origin, 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century; **h** - Western Siberia (Ugrian, 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> century);  
**i** - Volga Bulghar (8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century), **j** - Turkic or Iranian, uncovered in Nishapur (9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>  
 century); **l** - saber of Kimek origin (9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century); **m** - Northern Caucasus (10<sup>th</sup>  
 century); **n** - saber of Nimak or Karluk origin (9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century), **o-p** - sabers of Kirgiz  
 origin (10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century) (after David Nicolle, *op. cit.*, p. 48)



Fig. 21. The image of a Turkic horseman equipped with a straight saber of Sassanian style,  
 on shield sheathing uncovered during the archaeological excavation in the fortress of Mugh,  
 razed by Persians in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (after David Nicolle, Angus McBride, *The Armies of  
 Islam 7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Osprey Publishing, Londra, 1995, p. 14)



Fig. 22. *General Guo Zuyi concluding the peace with Uighur envoys*, painted scroll by Li Gonglin (1049-1106). The Uighurs wear “barbarian” clothing, and the envoy kneeling before the Chinese general is armed with a saber which stylized shape bear close resemblance to archaeological finds of the Turkic area and the rest of Central Asia (after Peter Connolly *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 178)



Fig. 23. *Scramasax* (short *seax*) blades, dated in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, unearthed during the Thames banks reconstruction works of the (London) (after David Edge, John Miles Paddock, *Arms & Armor of the Medieval Knight*, Crescent Books, NY, 1991, p. 36)



Fig. 24. Sabers uncovered in Transylvania (10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century), in Hungarian graves (the Cluj cultural group) (after Zeno-Karl Pinter, *Spada și sabie medievală în Transilvania și Banat (secolele IX-XIV)*, ed. a II-a, Brukenthal, Sibiu, 2007, p. 104-105, pl. 47 p. 213)



Fig. 25. The army of Nikephoros II Focas take the walls of Aleppo (Berrhoia), miniature in the *Chronicle* of John Skylitzes (the 12<sup>th</sup> century *Skylitzes Matritensis*). The swords of the Byzantine soldiers might be depictions of the *paramerion* (after Vasiliki Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid*, Alexandros Press, Leiden, NL, 2002)



Fig. 26. The portrait of Emperor Nikephoros II Focas, in a mid-14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript



Fig. 27. The statue erected in Mystra to honor the martyr Emperor Constantine XI. The emperor is depicted with a saber identical to the one held by Emperor Nikeforos II Focas, in a well-known 14<sup>th</sup> portrait (see Fig. 26 above)



Fig. 28. A clash between crusaders and Saracens during the second siege of Antioch (the 1<sup>st</sup> Crusade), in a 13<sup>th</sup> century copy of the *History* of William of Tyre (after Thomas F. Madden (ed.), *Crusades, the Illustrated History*, U. Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2004 p. 43)



Fig. 29. Decorative tiles depicting the legendary single combat between Richard Lionheart and Saladin (Chertsey, Anglia, around 1250-1260). Saladin is armed with a wide-bladed, single-edged sword with a curved tip (after Nicholas Hooper, Matthew Bennet, *The Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare - The Middle Ages 768-1487*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 95)



Fig. 30. The crusaders of St. Louis are ambushed by Saracens during the Siege of Tunis (1270), in a manuscript of *Chroniques de Saint Denis* written in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (after Thomas F. Madden (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 166)



Fig. 31. King Louis (of Anjou) of Hungary surrounded by his vassals, miniature in the *Chronicon Pictum Vindobodense* (around 1370), the group standing on the left side of the king have specific Oriental facial features, clothing and weaponry (Cumans?) (after David Nicolle, *Hungary and the Fall of Eastern Europe 1000-1568*, Osprey Publishing, London, 1991, p. 13)



Fig. 32. The Battle of Crecy, illustrated in the *Beauchamp Chronicle*, (around 1485).

The Genoese crossbowmen of the Dauphin (on the right side) are easy targets for the English longbowmen. One of the mercenaries in French employ is armed with a *karabela* (after David Edge, John Miles Paddock, *op. cit.*, p. 131)



Fig. 33. *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, altar panel painted by Sano di Pietro (1448). The executioner's weapon is double-edged, double-curved sword, an artistic license that probably depicts a *yataghan* (Ottoman/Balkan/Caucasian saber with concave edge), a clear intention to emphasize visually the otherness of the persecutor (after Judith Steinhoff, *Sienese Painting after the Black Death: Artistic Pluralism, Politics, and the New Art Market*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 136)



Fig. 34. *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, the southern panel of the *Triptych of St. John* by Roger van der Weyden (1455-1460). The executioner holds a weapon that combines the features of a 15<sup>th</sup> century execution sword (*Scharfrichtschwert*) (short, heavy blade, long, two-handed hilt) with the shape of a *seax*, resulting a weapon similar to the sword of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (see Fig. 43 below) (after J. Snyder, L. Silver, H. Luttikhuizen, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Prentice Hall, London, 2004, p. 123-124)

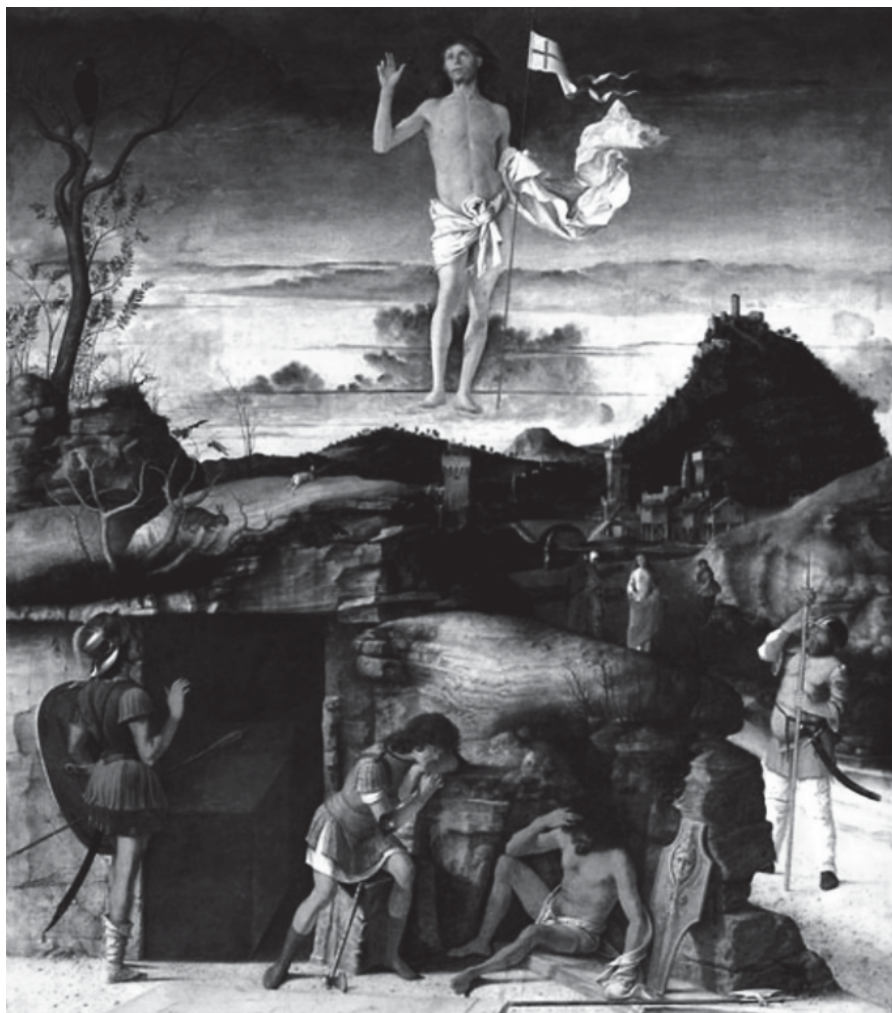


Fig. 35. *The Resurrection* of Giovanni Bellini (1475-1479).

One of the guards at the Tomb bears a saber which scabbard is strikingly similar to the pommel-less nomadic sabers of Avar and Hungarian tradition (after Oskar Batschmann, *Giovanni Bellini*, Reaktion Books, Berlin, 2008, p. 117)



Fig. 36. *The Adoration of the Magi*, the central panel of the votive triptych of Abbot Jan Crabbe, by Hans Memling (around 1470). Balthasar is depicted with the particular physical features and clothing of a Moor, including a *karabela* with Venetian cross-guard and handle and the Crescent flag. Museo del Prado, Madrid (after Franz Bock, *Hans Memling*, Parkstone Press, 2008, p. 106-108)



Fig. 37. *Martyrdom of St. Ursula*, 6<sup>th</sup> scene, Hans Memling's painted reliquary (around 1489). King Attila of the Huns kills Ursula with an arrow, after the virgin saint rejected his propositions. Although the clothing and armor of the king are European in style, he bears a *karabela* sheathed at his hip. Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges (after Franz Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 209-213)

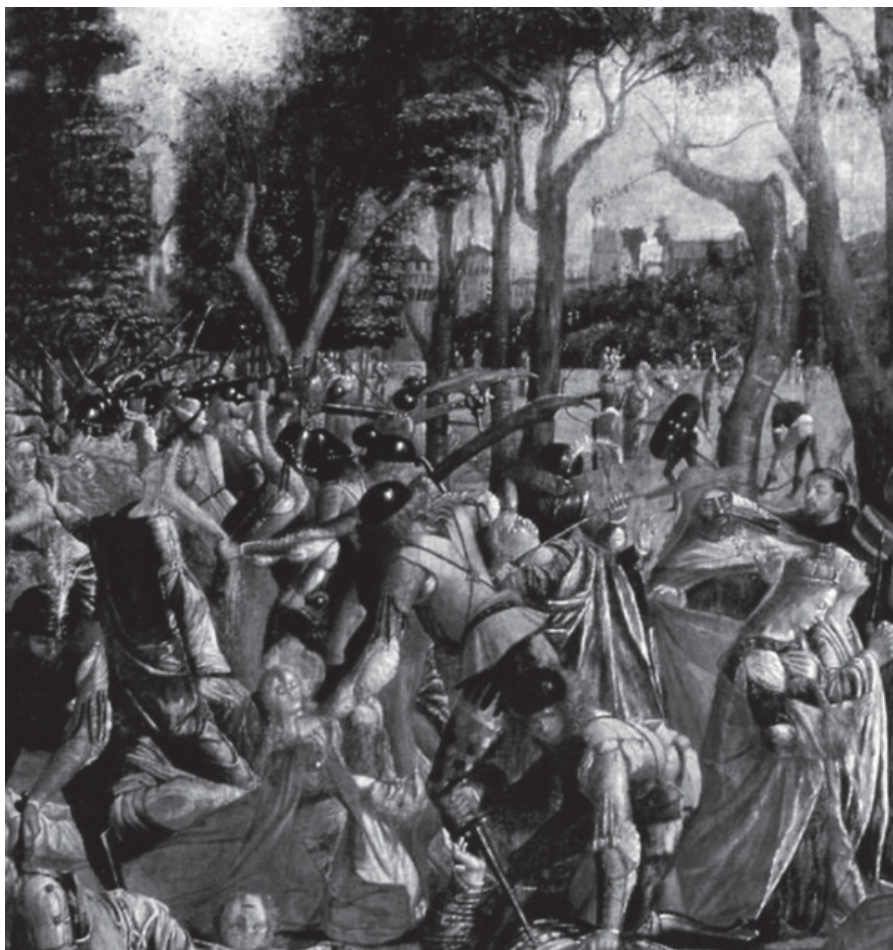


Fig. 38. Detail from Vittorio Carpacci's *Martyrdom of St. Ursula* (1490-1495, 8<sup>th</sup> scene, *The massacre of the pilgrims*). The Hun foot soldier in the center of the scene is armed with a saber similar to the ones used by Venetian *stradiotti*. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (after Stefania Mason, (Andrew Ellis trad.), *Carpaccio: Major Pictorial Cycles*, Skira, Roma, 2000, p. 87-89)



Fig. 39. *The Return of Judith in Betulia*, by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510). The saber Judith holds is the one taken from Holophernes' tent (in *Septuaginta* this particular weapon is an *akinakes* and not a *xiphos*; the 16<sup>th</sup> century martial arts aficionado Paulus Hector Mair of Augsburg translates "akinakes" as "dussak", i.e. a short, curved sword, and not a dagger, which is the modern meaning of the word) Gallerie degli Uffizzi (after *Rinascimento. Capolavori dei musei italiani (Tokyo - Roma)*, *Exhibition Catalogue*, Skira, Roma, 2001, p. 97)



Fig. 40. *The beheading of St. John the Baptist*, attributed to Amico Aspertini (1475-1552).

The executioner employs a saber with a deeply curved sabre. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (after J. W. Goodison, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Italian School*, Cambridge University Press, 1967 p. 5)



Fig. 41. The *stradiotti* light cavalry of the Venetians engaged in fighting in the Battle of Fornovo (July the 6<sup>th</sup> 1495). The *stradiotti* are armed with *karabelas* and wear specific hats, depicted in one of Dürer's *Panoplies*. Engraving made in France, 1501 (after David Nicolle, *The Venetian Empire, 1200-1670*, Osprey Publishing, London, 1995, p. 16)

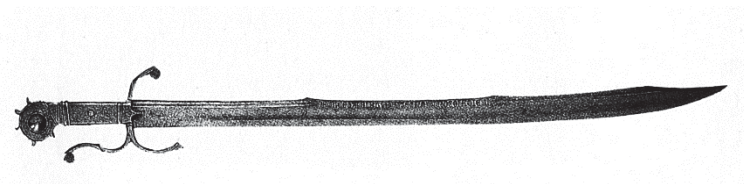


Fig. 42. Venetian *Storta*, a more refined version of *karabela*, decorated on almost its entire surface (end of 15<sup>th</sup> century) (after Peter Connoly *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 48)



Fig. 43. The sword of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror, preserved in the Topkapı Museum of Istanbul. The wide and heavy slightly curved blade of the weapon, with a back-edge on its upper third, has an almost polygonal cross-section, and its flattened central area is covered with invocations and blessings (after Peter Connoly *et alii*, *op. cit.*, p. 140)



Fig. 44. A border skirmish between Austrian and Ottoman cavalry, depicted by the German Master P. S. (1540). Both combatants are equipped with curved sabers (after Thomas Arnold, *The Renaissance at War*, Cassel, London, 2001, p. 119)



Fig. 45. The victory of the Helvetic Confederation troops over the Burgundians at Grandson (1469), illustrated in the *Swiss Illustrated Chronicle* of Diebold Schilling the Elder (the *Berner Schilling*). In the middle of a group of Burgundian infantry one of the soldiers raises a scimitar (after Nicholas Hooper, Matthew Bennet, *op. cit.*, p. 148)



Fig. 46. The Battle of St. Denis (1567), between Huguenots and the Catholic League, illustrated by a commemorative tapestry made for the Montmorency family (of Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, who was mortally wounded in this battle). The scene illustrates the counterattack of the Huguenot cavalry, with white cloaks and some armed with scimitars, against the Leaguers, who bear white crosses on their cloaks and armed with straight swords (after Thomas Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 194)