

FF UJEP v Ústí nad Labem

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*Fang, – the weapon that tells, a contribution to the discussion  
of the Epitaph of John of Jeřeně*

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Miecz – broń która opowiada, głos do dyskusji nad Epitafium Jana z Jeřeně

ABSTRACT

The article extends contemporary discussion about the Epitaph of Jan z Jeřeně and argues that these two male saints who are traditionally referred to as Bartoloměj and Tomáš don't have to be the only interpretation here. Simultaneously it shows us the basic need to deal with the concrete objects displayed. These can essentially influence the narrative potential of the artwork. This study points out the desirable multidisciplinary approach that is being demonstrated here by an example of a type of an object (falchion) in relation to a medieval art of Central Europe.

**Keywords:** history, culture, art, Wenceslas IV., falchion, Epitaph of Jan of Jeřeně, st. Paul, middle ages

INTRODUCTION

History of reality, especially militaria, especially in the second half of the 20th century became a very watched chapter of knowledge of history. The interest in the issue seems to have been sparked by new visual media that, in depicting political history, which has played a major role in the field of history for centuries, still need to visualize it.

In the Czech environment it is possible to observe both professional and lay interest in a topic that is directly focused on filmography, probably from a publi-

cation by Eduard Wagner<sup>1</sup>. The work, to a large extent, already outdated, is still an integral part of the handbooks of those interested in historical film production, or the so-called reenactment. However, the tradition of interest in „history of objects” goes deeper into the past and it is obvious to mention, for example, the work of Čeněk Zibrť<sup>2</sup>; abroad it is possible to follow the issue even earlier, for example in the work of Viollet le Duc, August Demmin or Wendelin Boeheim. The professional and lay<sup>3</sup>.

Of course, professional and lay interest was expanded in the second half of the 20th century. The most important experts in the military sphere of the history of reality are then personalities such as Jan Durdík, Petr Klučina, Ctirad Beneš, Leonid Křížek, and it would be possible to name others<sup>4</sup>. Josef Petráň wrote in bold type in the issue of material culture in the Czech environment<sup>5</sup>.

The study of art objects as secondary sources for realization of the facts is still attended by many experts, but also by the general public<sup>6</sup>. Of course, a considerable number of researchers in the field of art history also contribute to the discussion, since the subjects studied often interfere directly with the combinatorial order of the work and thus have a meaning both in art history and, for example, in understanding the history of thought.

I would like to contribute to this extensive discourse by analyzing the depiction of a particular subject, the so-called fang<sup>7</sup>. And also a hypothesis that puts the weapon into the system of figurative objects used in a wider time horizon with special attention to the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. On the basis of the same hypothesis, I would like to offer an alternative interpretation of the Epitaph

<sup>1</sup> E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj a zbraně doby předhusitské a husitské*, Praha 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Č. Zibrť, *Dějiny kroje v zemích českých od dob nejstarších až po války husitské*, Praha 1892.

<sup>3</sup> E.-E. V. le Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français V*, Paříž 1874, A. Demmin, *Encyklopädie der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1893, W. Boeheim, *Handbuch der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1890.

<sup>4</sup> K diskusi například publikace: E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj a zbraně doby předhusitské a husitské*, Praha 1956; J. Durdík, *Husitské vojenství*, Praha 1953; P. Klučina – A. Romaňák, *Člověk, zbraň a zbroj v obraze doby 5.–17. stol.*, Praha 1983; P. Klučina, *Zbroj a zbraně - Evropa 6.–17. století*, Praha - Litomyšl 2004; C. Beneš – O. Gamber, *Ochráně zbraně: České vydání*, Graz 1972; L. Křížek – J. K. Z. Čech, *Encyklopedie zbraní a zbroje*, Praha 1997

<sup>5</sup> J. Petráň, *Dějiny hmotné kultury I*, Praha 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Výběrově například: P. Voda a kol., Předběžná zpráva o oděvní analýze nástěnných maleb v kostele ve Slavětíně nad Ohří, in: *Sborník semináře historie odívání. Díl druhý*, Zlín 2009, s. 5–10, I. Dubec, Válečné a turnajské erbovní odění v 1. polovině 14. století, in: *Sborník semináře historie odívání*, Zlín 2009, s. 81–104. Patrně by mohlo být použito spíše slovo „falchion“, ale budu se držet literární tradice, kterou dodržuje např. Petr Klučina, který falchion považuje za typ tesáku. Např: P. Klučina, *Zbro*, s. 238.

<sup>7</sup> Výběrově například: P. Voda a kol., Předběžná zpráva o oděvní analýze nástěnných maleb v kostele ve Slavětíně nad Ohří, in: *Sborník semináře historie odívání. Díl druhý*, Zlín 2009, s. 5–10, I. Dubec, Válečné a turnajské erbovní odění v 1. polovině 14. století, in: *Sborník semináře historie odívání*, Zlín 2009, p. 81–104.

of John of Jeřeně and thus try to effectively link the topic of the contribution with the history of reality and art. As already mentioned, the specific element that will be addressed is the weapon, which can be called fang. Identification of the subject is based on the experience with the subject.

#### FANG (?)

Fang as a weapon in the past dealt with a number of already mentioned authors. The most extensive work on the fang issue is currently the dissertation of Petr Žákovský<sup>8</sup>. However, a wider attempt to interpret the meaning of the subject in artistic production has not been published anywhere<sup>9</sup>. First, it is appropriate to define what it is and what cannot be considered a fang<sup>10</sup>.

At first, perhaps to the word itself. It first appeared in 1405, where it is associated with the Latin term otherwise referring to a dagger or knife, that is to say „culltelus dictus fang,”<sup>11</sup> the truth is that some specimens of this weapon are indeed similar to knives, inspired. At least, the one-sided blade and the simple grip without the head and the crossbar correspond to the idea of the knife. Later, however, the fang lost this knife-like character and began to resemble a sword in some aspects. Generally speaking, from the mid-13th century, the fang very often began to appear with a crossbar and warhead, otherwise common for swords. Other fangs are then in the High Middle Ages supplemented with patron thorns.

Other terms associated with the fang are the words falchion, falcione, fauch-art, fauchon, Malchus, Dussack, Düsack, Lang Messer, chisel, saber and more<sup>12</sup>. It should be noted that much of these words appear much later than a similar weapon in an imaginary database of secondary and primary sources. Very often, the fang is de facto labeled with the term combining all long grip weapons - the sword. The

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<sup>8</sup> P. Žákovský, *Tesáky a problematika jednosečných zbraní středověku a raného novověku* (disertační práce), Masarykova univerzita, Filosofická fakulta, Brno 2014.

<sup>9</sup> A brief outline of this issue can be found in the thesis that this paper develops: A. Kadlec, *Weapons and Armor in the panel painting of the reign of Wenceslas IV.* (Master's thesis), Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, Filosofická fakulta, Ústí nad Labem 2013, pp. 49–53.

<sup>10</sup> P. Žákovský, *Tesáky a problematika*.

<sup>11</sup> E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj ...* p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj a zbraně doby předhusitské a husitské*, Praha 1956, s. 71; P. Klučina, *Zbroj a zbraně - Evropa 6.–17. století*, Praha - Litomyšl 2004, s. 238, 406, 407; F. Funcken – L. Funcken, *Historische Waffen und Rüstungen. Ritter und Landsknechte vom 8. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, München 2008, s. 212; A. Demmin, *Encyklopädie der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1893, s. 396; W. Boeheim, *Handbuch der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1890, s. 271; J. Šach, *Chladné zbraně*, Praha 2004, s. 34; P. Žákovský, *Tesáky*; E. Wágner, *Sečné a bodné zbraně*, České Budějovice 1993, s. 31. Eduard Wágner dokonce uvažuje o tesáku jako o tzv. plknu, kterým měl být s'at Závíš z Falkenštejna. Pravdou je, že tesák se velmi často objevuje v rukách katů, nicméně i velice vážených a ctinstných biblických osobností, které nejsou představiteli negativních charakteristik, které jsou Závíšovi přiznávány.

word fang then connects many authors with other terms, and its general description is very simple. Fang is one-side cut, short grip gun<sup>13</sup>. Due to the fact that there are fangs used two-handed, and the inclusion of the short arms must be taken with ease.

The word falchion is known from the English speaking environment and has equivalents in other Western European countries. In the Czech Republic it is very often interconnected with a specifically looking one-sided cut sword, whose blade expands towards the tip. Nonetheless, foreign literature commonly combines it with the Czech word fang without drawing any attention to the shape of the blade<sup>14</sup>. In general, this term can be associated with three types of blades of these special weapons occurring until the beginning of the 15th century<sup>15</sup>.

The first type of blade is massive, and gradually expands towards the tip located on the dorsal side to narrow to the end of the blade in a convex-knife-like manner as in the case of a fang from Hamburg<sup>16</sup> or Durham<sup>17</sup>. In the case of the second type, which is represented, for example, by a fang from Paris, the constriction is very radical, concave and the tip on the dorsal side is thus very sharp. The last type of blade has a tip set on the blade. On the dorsal side arises the so-called short blade, and due to the slight deflection of the weapon resembles a saber<sup>18</sup>.

Frequent connection of the fang with the saber is then appropriate to mention, for example, a saber of Arabic origin, dated to the inscription in 1323, which draws attention to Demmin<sup>19</sup>. The sabers are similar to some fangs from the Bible of Wenceslas IV, and it is worth mentioning the two-handed saber from the gear of George Kastriot, called Skanderbeg, which is almost identical in shape to a two-handed fang, which can be called a saber, from the same manuscript<sup>20</sup>. These long arms, as well as massive fangs from findings abroad, in some way relativize the definition of fangs as short. The German term *säbelföremige Schwert* used by Demmin<sup>21</sup> or Boenheim's apt term *Krummswert* is a very nice term to refer to these curved fangs<sup>22</sup>.

It is also worth pointing out the so-called Czech fang, a simple weapon popular in the 16th century, which Meyers (1570), according to Demmin mistakenly,

<sup>13</sup> E. Wágner, *Sečné a bodné zbraně*, České Budějovice 1993, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> P. Žákovský, *Tesáky a problematika* p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Žákovský defends a different, but also safely applicable classification: P. Žákovský, *Tesáky a problematika* pp.54–95.

<sup>16</sup> Fang from Hamburg, Hamburg, 13. století., Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte, Inv. no. AB.II.176.

<sup>17</sup> Conyers falchion, cca 1260–1270, Durham, Treasury of Durham Cathedral.

<sup>18</sup> Thorpe falchion, late 14. century, Norwich, Norwich Castle Museum.

<sup>19</sup> A. Demmin, *Encyklopädie* p. 377.

<sup>20</sup> E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj....* p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> A. Demmin, *Encyklopädie* s. 396. Volně přeloženo: šavli podobný meč.

<sup>22</sup> W. Boenheim, *Handbuch der Waffenkunde*, Leipzig 1890, p. 271. Volně přeloženo: zahnutý meč.

identifies with the term *düssack*<sup>23</sup>. In younger times, part of the fangs became a popular hunting weapon and in its shorter knife-like form successfully, unlike the sword, continues to play the role of a military instrument, second with a saber.

The term fang itself reveals what the weapon was used for<sup>24</sup>. It was, at least at first, primarily a cutting tool, as revealed by the massive chisels mentioned, for example, from Durham, Hamburg and Poznan. Just as the sword developed in response to increasingly sophisticated protection, which gradually prevented the warrior's body from being damaged by cutting injury, so did the fang. Increasingly, fangs with a sharp point began to appear, which could have penetrated between the plates or tear apart the chain mail armor rather than the relatively blunt-tipped weapons similar to the sword of St. Peter of Poznan<sup>25</sup>. The change of the weapon is thus directly related to the development of quality protection<sup>26</sup>. The change in blade construction was minimal. A special feature is the massive chisels from the so-called Crusader or Macijevisky Bible. Their size corresponds to other types of fangs, but they are already gaining an exotic appearance, which in this case is exacerbated by the complexity of the cutting blade enriched with various hooks and protrusions<sup>27</sup>.

For the purpose of identifying the detail and its interpretation, then it is appropriate to collectively call all these weapons fangs (although it has a number of opponents of opinion), as the older historians did<sup>28</sup>, and focus on the search for unilaterally cut grip weapons. Marking these items as *malchus*, *falchion*, or long knives etc. is then a purely subjective matter, which in my opinion does not have a really solid historical justification.

#### FANG IN ART

From the turn of the 14th and 15 century there is a relatively large number of capture of this weapon. Similarly, there is a rich material material that can be assigned to this broadly defined time horizon with varying degrees of accuracy. At least in our territory, however, these two sets of information do not clash. In other words, at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, fang findings were not

<sup>23</sup> A. Demmin, *Encyklopädie...* p. 370.

<sup>24</sup> Linguistic analysis of the term at work: T. Ptáčková, *Původ názvů středověkých zbraní používaných v Čechách a na Moravě (zbraně chladné – sečné a bodné)* (Bakalářská práce), Masarykova univerzita, Filosofická fakulta, Brno 2010, s. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Sword of st. Peter, Archdiocesan Museum Poznan, Poznan.

<sup>26</sup> See footnot no.2

<sup>27</sup> P. Klučina, *Zbroj a zbraně* . p. 242. Le Duc například název *fauchon*, či *fauchard* přiznává i dlouhým, sečně-bodným nasadovým zbráním, s čepelí podobnou tesákům, v celé řadě variací. E.-E. V. le Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français V*, Paříž 1874, p. 490

<sup>28</sup> I honor the tradition of Peter Klucina, who the weapons we talk about called fangs. For example: P. Klučina, *Zbroj*, p. 239.

similar to their counterparts in art. First, it is worth pointing out that fangs appear in a wide range of visual arts. That is, in panel, book and wall painting, as well as in plastic scenes. Plate painting works with the analyzed object in the following works: The Resurrection of Christ by the Master of the Trebon Altar, Epitaph of John of Jeřeně, The Passion of the Saint<sup>29</sup>, and if we acknowledge the knife-like weapon behind one of the soldiers's fang, *Crucifixion from Saint Barbara*. Handwriting painting on the fang is remembered in several manuscripts from our environment. The largest number of specimens of this weapon is then in the Bible of Wenceslas IV., With a lesser frequency, it also appears in other manuscripts, such as in the Bible Konrad of Vechta, the Bible of Litoměřice-Třeboň or Boskovice. Fang captured on the mural is then the gun kata st. Dorothy from Rakovník.

Furthermore, it can be seen in the paintings in the church. Jakub in Bedřich's saint, church of St. Stephen in Kouřim, or the Church of St. Marketa in Loukov. It is mostly a firing gun. If we want to see a sculpted fang, it is necessary to visit, for example, the Bavarian Nuremberg, where it is held by st. Catherine on the relief of three saints in the church of St. Lawrence.

Except for the aforementioned weapon, which is commonly referred to as a knife, not a fang<sup>30</sup>, most weapons are in the form of an exotic-looking curved sword with a long blade pointed to which a short blade sits alternating with the uncut side of the blade. Except for the fang captured in the Litoměřice-Třeboň Bible, all weapons have a crossbar and a warhead, like swords. Weapons have expanded considerably from the patronage to the beginning of the short blade, combining massive chisels from the mid-13th century and relatively subtle weapons from the Norwich Museum<sup>31</sup>. Another exception is the two-handed, swords or sabers, curved swords captured in the Bible of Wenceslas IV, which lack a short blade, and from the rung slowly taper into the tip<sup>32</sup>. Their appearance is then, as already mentioned, almost identical to the curved sword of the Albanian hero Skanderbega<sup>33</sup>.

Archaeological finds are often very difficult to date and fangs chronologically traditionally included at the beginning of the 15th century are according to new knowledge placed in the younger period<sup>34</sup>. However, this does not change the fact

<sup>29</sup> The painting of the martyrdom of the saint does not come directly from the Czech environment, but its author probably had a close connection with local artists. J. Fajt (ed.), *Karel IV. Císař z boží milosti. Kultura a umění za vlády Lucemburků*, Praha 2006, p. 194.

<sup>30</sup> See: E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj* V, tab. 3, sine pag. a P. Žákovský, *Tesák z holešické tvrže na příbramsku*, [in:] O. Ławrynowicz, J. Maik, P. A. Nowakowski (edd.), *Non sensis-tis gladius. Studia ofiarowane Marianowi Głoskowi w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, Łódź 2011, p. 530.

<sup>31</sup> E. Wagner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj...* V tab. 13, sine pag.

<sup>32</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 1. svazek, 176, Figure: The Israelites were defeated.

<sup>33</sup> W. Boenheim, *Handbuch der Waffenkunde*, p. 272.

<sup>34</sup> See: P. Žákovský, *Tesáky ze sbírek Státního hradu Zvíkova, Castellologica bohémika 11*, Praha 2008, p. 461–472.

that the fangs of different types of artistic production have not survived in the archaeological material in our territory for the period under review and the questionable fangs have a different form. These are primarily straight, knife-like, with a point in the axis of the weapon<sup>35</sup>.

This difference in the displayed and found material is not quite common for older periods. At the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, art was still an intermediary tool. Saint Wenceslas, for example, was dressed in armor that was common at the time of the creation of the work, not at the time in which he actually lived, and his equipment was supplemented with conventional elements, so-called attributes.

The prince's cap no longer reflected the reality of the time, but its experience. Objects that have this narrative function are collectively referred to as figures. However, these may take different forms. Either a reality or a fantasy<sup>36</sup>. The painters probably used the samplers often and the depictions do not necessarily reflect the author's experience with the real subject, but even after the imaginative objects it is necessary to look for a certain share of reality.

Some fangs certainly appear as figures. As an attribute can be seen fang in the hands of st. Catherine<sup>37</sup>, Judith<sup>38</sup>, or characters from the Epitaph of John of Jeřeně<sup>39</sup>. As will be explained later, the fangs of executioners from the Passion of the Saint or the scene of the Execution of St. Dorothy from Rakovník can be considered as figurative objects, which are directly tied to the depicted scene. Other fangs then appear in scenes where they do not play the identification role of the scene. They can be seen in scenes like Murder of the Innocents<sup>40</sup>, Samuel chopping Agaga<sup>41</sup>, Fighting the Amorites<sup>42</sup> and many others. The weapon is in the hands of both the Old Testament Jews<sup>43</sup> and their adversaries<sup>44</sup>; in the New Testament, these weapons are primarily worn by the Romans<sup>45</sup>. In all cases, these are religious scenes. Abroad, however, it is possible to see curved swords in secular depictions.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 461–472; P. Žákovský, *Tesáky s prořezávanými zástitnými trny z moravských sbírek*, Archeologické rozhledy LXIII, Praha 2011, p. 501–516.

<sup>36</sup> About this figure: P. Francastel, *Figura a místo - vizuální řád v italském malířství v 15. století*, Praha 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Catherine from the relief of three saints from the church of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg. (Relief of the three virgins, Barbara, Catherine, Agnes, col. 1410) Another example is St. Catherine of the Altar in Graudenz, who is probably strongly influenced by the Master of the Třeboň Altar (J. Royt, *Mistr Třeboňského oltáře*, Praha 2013, p. 188–189). illustration: Judita cuts off Holoferm's head

<sup>38</sup> Bible boskovská, sign. M III 3, Státní vědecká knihovna Olomouc, Olomouc, fol. 211v, illustration: Judit cuts off Holoferm's head.

<sup>39</sup> Epitaf Jana z Jeřeně, 1395, NG, Praha, i.č. O 1268.

<sup>40</sup> Bible litoměřicko-třeboňská, BIF 3-2, Státní oblastní archiv Litoměřice, Litoměřice, fol. 19r

<sup>41</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 2., fol. 50.

<sup>42</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 1., fol. 177.

<sup>43</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 2., fol. 69.

<sup>44</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 1., 176.

<sup>45</sup> For example: Mistr Třeboňského oltáře, Resurrection (1380) NG, Praha, i.č.: O 477a

Mostly in the scenes of Christian and pagan struggles, a representative example may be the motive of the failed struggle Bela IV. with the Tatars<sup>46</sup>. The scenes from the legend of St. Ladislav, here, however, the Holy Knight is successful in his fight<sup>47</sup>. What connects all these scenes is therefore not a particular confession of faith, but probably a different cultural, chronological and perhaps geographical environment of the origin of the fighting characters. The difference of cultures is evident above all in the secular depictions of the struggle of a Christian and a pagan warrior. In biblical scenes, it is often possible to observe, for example, exotic headgear, which apparently also refers to the different environment in which the events occurred, as well as the unconventional-looking weapons available to the warriors<sup>48</sup>. The fangs in these scenes replace the swords, and this substitution occurs in other illustrations. An important impulse is the replacement of these objects with a fang in the illustrations where the sword is otherwise traditionally used. By the conventional attribute of st. Catherine is undoubtedly a sword. Why is it replaced by a fang in the case of relief from Nuremberg? Catherine was supposed to be beheaded on the basis of contemporary hagiography as well as poetry, similarly to St. Dorota, just and with the sword<sup>49</sup>. „... then the king's breasts (like the poorly out of the body of the sore), / and then the head of the roof / the sword, ...”<sup>50</sup>, / clad in clothes, / carrying a basket of fruit, / three apples and three roses / February moons ....<sup>51</sup> „The depiction of these saints with a sword is quite common in the period under review. Why, then, in these marginal cases, does the „saint” rearmate? Is it possible that the replacement of this weapon with a falchion should again point to the pagan environment, where these events occurred? The depiction thus figuratively explains to its observer that Christianity has nothing to do with the death of the saint, no one but the pagan is responsible for it. However, there is also a depiction of St. Judity wielding a fang. This saint was not a buckwheat, but the weapon with which Holofernes had descended from this world was his own<sup>52</sup>.

The story was also supposed to take place in a culturally different environment, which at the time of the aforementioned pagan artworks, and perhaps this

<sup>46</sup> Chronicon pictum, Marci De Kalt De gestis Hungarorum ab origine gentis ad a. 1330, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, Cod. 404, fol 63.

<sup>47</sup> For example, in the attic of the church in Nepochal.

<sup>48</sup> Bible Václava IV., Cod. 2759–2764, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, 1., fol. 31v.: Laban and Jakob.

<sup>49</sup> The Golden Legend does not specify the executioner's weapon in any of the saints. Jakub de Voragine, *Zlatá legenda*, Praha 2012.

<sup>50</sup> J. Vilikovský, *Legenda o svatě Kateřině*, Praha 1946, p. 139

<sup>51</sup> Jan Gebauer, *Legendový příběh sv. Doroty v literatuře české a staročeská píseň ku sv. Dorotě*, Praha 1878, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> *Pak přistoupila ke sloupu lože u hlavy Holofernovy, sňala z něho jeho meč, přiblížila se k loži, chopila za vlasy jeho hlavu a prosila: „Posilni mne, Hospodine, Bože Izraele, v tento den!“ Potom, co měla síly, dvakrát jej ťala do krku a usekla mu hlavu...“* Kniha Judit: kap. 13, v. 6–8

idea is behind the depiction of fangs instead of the traditional Central European sword. This explanation seems very likely. However, the question arises as to what inspired the individual authors to depict this weapon.

The main interfaces of the Christian and pagan milieu of Europe at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries were the Balkans and Spain<sup>53</sup>. The main interfaces of the Christian and pagan milieu of Europe at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries were the Balkans and Spain. For the period under review, however, there are no analogous findings of weapons from the Turkish or Spanish environment. Found weapons have in most cases a straight blade. During the 13th and 14th centuries, however, Europe saw slightly curved swords in the hands of Mongol invaders, and similar weapons were indeed known in the more distant oriental territories. The unconventional shape of these weapons apparently inspired artists across Europe to use their forms to spread the narrative of their works in this way. However, this form of fang appears to have originated in the European environment, in response to the need to adapt the originally purely cutting weapon to technological advances in the design of fighter protection<sup>54</sup>. However, it is impossible to completely rule out the idea that craftsmen sought some inspiration even in the real exotic weapons of pagan nations penetrating deeper into Europe. For the purpose of this paper, however, it is not necessary to precisely define the origin of the depicted exotic-looking fangs, but to draw attention to their meaning in art.

The very meaning of the fangs has already been suggested, and this hypothesis seems to be applicable to younger works of art. However, it is also important for one work falling within the period under review. That is for the Epitaph of John of Jeřeně. Its central motif is a pair of saints traditionally interpreted as st. Bartholomew and St. Thomas. Previously, however, it was recalled that the weapon of one of the characters is interpreted as a fang. Although it is clear that the whole depiction is considerably damaged, interpret the depicted weapon as a knife, ie the attribute of St. John. Bartholomew is not entirely convincing<sup>55</sup>. In other contemporary images, although in the hands of Bartholomew appears a knife with a blade remotely in the form of “falchionu”<sup>56</sup>, but its size is incomparably smaller, moreover, none of the knives has neither a crossbar nor a head. These details do not coincide with the idea of the knife, but correspond to the

<sup>53</sup> If the last pagan stage of Polish-Lithuanian history is left out.

<sup>54</sup> A slight curvature could have originated during the production of the weapon itself. When creating a one-sided blade, the blade naturally bends slightly, and if it is not straightened, this design affects the final form of the weapon.

<sup>55</sup> In the lower part of the picture apparently missing the entire figure of the donor. A. Matěječek, *Česká malba gotická. Deskové malířství 1350-1450*, Praha 1938, p. 100.

<sup>56</sup> See. *Sv. Bartoloměj* od Mistra Theodoricha na Karlštejně, *Madona se sv. Bartolomějem a Markétou* či *sv. Jakub, Bartoloměj a Filip* from the back *Zmrtvýchvstání Krista* od Mistra Třeboňského oltáře.

hypothesis that works with the fang as a sword-like weapon that can be confused with it for specific reasons. If there is a true hypothesis operating with the idea that a curved fang can replace the sword for narrative reasons, it is easy to try to rethink the identification of this very important image for the beautiful style. If it is refused to merge this particular form of weapon with the word knife, the saint can no longer be considered a saint because of the transformation of the attribute. Bartholomew. The presence of st. So far, Bartholomew has not been explained in the depiction by anything other than the designation of the object as a knife. Here it is appropriate to point out Panofski's first point in his approach to art, the pre-geographical description, ie the need to identify the primary meaning of the objects depicted<sup>57</sup>. This step, however, was probably rushed in 1910 and since then no one has paused<sup>58</sup>. Some historians focusing on the history of reality then correctly identify the weapon as a fang, but perceive it as an object and its symbolic significance throughout the work do not reflect in their work<sup>59</sup>. In this case, however, it is a subject that directly fits into the combinatorial order of the work and its new interpretation may thus contribute to reflection on the identification of the work itself. If the idea that the fang represents the attribute of the sword is accepted, it is possible to think of the male figure from the Epitaph of John of Jesus as St. Pavel<sup>60</sup>. This saint otherwise appears in contemporary art with a sword<sup>61</sup>, but as in the case of other decapitated saints, he is very often shadowed by an oriental-looking weapon in younger periods<sup>62</sup>. Avoiding the term saber is appropriate, but it cannot be ignored. It is a name slightly younger than the word fang<sup>63</sup>, but perhaps the right type of fang is considered to be one of the predecessors of the saber, which in the military equipment will completely replace the sword and

<sup>57</sup> E. Panofski, *Význam ve výtvarném umění*, Praha 1981, p. 42.

<sup>58</sup> The fragment of the work first appeared in the Catalog no. 202 v Dorotheu vídeňském (1910) č. 312. It came into the Czech environment only in the 1920s. A. Matěječek, *Česká malba gotická. Deskové malířství 1350-1450*, Praha 1938, s. 99. From the beginning it is probably misinterpreted up to the present. An example is: J. Fajt (ed.), *Karel IV. Císař z boží milosti.*, p. 478; J. Royt, *Středověké malířství v Čechách*, Praha 2002, p. 104;

<sup>59</sup> E. Wágner, *Sečné a bodné...*, p. 187.

<sup>60</sup> The thesis develops the ideas of the thesis led by Jan Royt: A. Kadlec, *Zbraně a zbroj v deskové malbě doby vlády Václava IV.* (diplomová práce), Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, Filozofická fakulta, Ústí nad Labem 2013, s. 52–53. An alternative designation of the saint is indicated in a monograph dedicated to the Master of the Trebon Altar: J. Royt, *Mistr Třeboňského oltáře*, Praha 2013, p. 199

<sup>61</sup> An example may be St. Pavel from Madonna Svojsínská frame: Madonna Svojsínská, frame, loaned from st. Peter and Paul in Svojsín, NG, Prague, No. VO 4.

<sup>62</sup> For example, Master IW portrays St. Judith, as well as St. Catherine from his work is shadowed by this weapon. Pavel is killed by a fang for example in the painting of Dutch master Pieter Pietersz etc

<sup>63</sup> E. Wágner – Z. Drobná – J. Durdík, *Kroje, zbroj...*, p. 71. Durdík draws attention to the use of the word saber in 1468.

its related weapons. The semantic similarity of the name of the saint and this weapon cannot be ignored. Name sv. Paul, said Saul, has a variety of forms, including the words of Saul and Savel<sup>64</sup>. It is, however, possible to encounter yet another representation of this type of subject with the name of the person. The expanding fang, as mentioned above, is also called „malchus”, the name of the servant, to whom St. Peter cut off his ear in the Garden of Gethsemane<sup>65</sup>. The weapon of the depicted soldier is very often very similar to the fang in the younger periods and, on the contrary, is far from the traditional concept of the sword<sup>66</sup>. For what reason st. Tomáš a sv. Paul, unfortunately, is a mystery, as it was not specified in the past, why st. Bartholomew and St. Thomas<sup>67</sup>. To solve this puzzle, it would be necessary to get more information about the person of John of Jeřeně. Since it is clear that these two saints are not depicted together, their joint depiction may thus be a reflection of the life stories, experiences or ideas of the aforementioned archaeological deacon. An exception worth mentioning is the joint “performance” of St. Thomas and Paul, who come out of the windows of the Old Town Astronomical Clock. Postavička sv. Paul then nods in agreement, while St. Tomas shakes his head in disbelief<sup>68</sup>. Another example of a joint depiction of these two saints is the image of the seven apostles from the Museum of Christian Art in Esztergom, Hungary<sup>69</sup>. These examples illustrate that while Tomáš and Pavel are not a common pair in art, it is not possible to regard their representation as quite unique.

There is little news about Jan of Jeřena. Most of them then document his ecclesiastical career, which he apparently embarked on for reasons of the current period. The firstborn son and heir to secular estates and honors was his brother Heřman of Nečtiny, sometimes spoken of Jeřeno or Hrádek. John was given the best education he went to Padua and Bologna in northern Italy<sup>70</sup>. The well-read

<sup>64</sup> J. Royt, *Slovník biblické ikonografie*, Praha 2007, p. 225

<sup>65</sup> *Tedy Šimon Petr vytasil meč, který měl s sebou, zasáhl veleknězova sluhu a usekl mu pravé ucho. Ten sluha se jmenoval Malchus. „Vrať ten meč do pochvy,“ řekl Ježíš Petrovi...*“ Jan, kap. 18, v. 10–11.

<sup>66</sup> For example, the sword of St. Peter from an alabaster table depicting Christ on the Mount of Olives from the Church of St. Florian in Krásný Březno, but there are many of these pictures.

<sup>67</sup> The only clue is that during the enumeration of the apostles the saints Thomas and Bartholomew are side by side. Other times, however, after st. Bartholomew is followed by the Apostle Philip. Another indication might be the Apostles’ mission to India, where they both found their death. J. Royt, *Dictionary of Biblical Iconography*, Prague 2007, pp. 48, 281–282; See, eg, J. de Voragine, *Golden Legend*.

<sup>68</sup> It should be noted that this is a much later work, the actual form of the astronomical clock from its inception (beginning of the 15th century) is not much known. Briefly to the topic: E. Poche, *Prahou krok za krokem*, Praha-Litomyšl 2001, p. 156.

<sup>69</sup> *Mistr BE z Csegöld, Seven Apostles, 1494, Křesťanské muzeum, Ostřihom, i.č.: 55.65.*

<sup>70</sup> J. Tříška, *Životopisný slovník předhusitské pražské univerzity 1348–1409*, Praha 1981, p. 260. Right in the Bologna Museum is to find a very interesting ivory plate depicting saints and angels. Among the saints there is St. Paul and St. Bartholomew. St. Paul is equipped with a fang, while

young man became a pastor at the Church of Sts. Barbara in Mašťov, where he stayed until 1379. His years at universities, however, did not end with his return from northern Italy. Immediately after his arrival in 1378 he began working at the University of Prague, where he persisted until his death. In 1381 he obtained the title of licenser of canon law<sup>71</sup>. In 1380 it was presented to the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Litice, where he probably did not work for a long time and rented the acquired property<sup>72</sup>. Probably the source of his income was probably prebends in Kbely<sup>73</sup>. John's relationship with his older brother Heřman was apparently very good and probably helped him in his career growth<sup>74</sup>. The culmination of his life in the Church hierarchy was probably the title of canon of the Chapter of Prague and the Archdeacon of Bohemia<sup>75</sup>. The Joint Brothers' Joint Ventures ended with John's death in 1395, which is recalled by the Epitaph, which is the focus of this study. The older brother of Heřman Jan of Jeřená survived by a considerable amount of years and proved to be a capable breeder of the family, who prospered in the following years, side by side during the Hussite Wars of Wenceslas IV. Zikmundovi<sup>76</sup>. Unfortunately, the information available about John is austere and will not help to interpret the reasons for the presence of two particular saints in the central image of the Epitaph from the Church of St. Vitus in Hradčany.

#### CONCLUSION

Although an unusual-looking weapon, which can generally be called a fang or malchus or falchion<sup>77</sup>, is enveloped in a veil of mystery, it can be seen as a specific part of the art of the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Through its specific form it deepens the narrative capacity of the art objects in which it occurs. For example, as in its depiction as an attribute, where the weapon is primarily related to the decapitation of the saint (in the case of Judita, not the saint, but Holofern). In these cases, the hooked fangs seem to point to the pagan origin of the owner of the weapon by which the figure was beheaded. In situations where fangs do not

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St. Bartholomew holds a small knife with a short blade on the otherwise blunt side of the blade. Museo civico medievale, Bologna, inv. 702. (the first half of the 15th century). It should be remembered that this is a slightly younger subject.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>72</sup> O. Schmidt, *Topografie kostelní sítě na území plzeňského děkanátu do doby husitské* (bakalářská práce), Masarykova univerzita, Filosofická fakulta, Brno 2012, p. 42

<sup>73</sup> V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy. Díl V.*, Praha 1905, p. 126

<sup>74</sup> Already John's first, Mašťovská, parish belonged to the sphere of influence of the family of Nečtiny. Vojtěch in Vejprnice, or the Church of St. Trinity in Jezna. O. Schmidt, *Topografie kostelní* p. 35, 61.

<sup>75</sup> J. Tříška, *Životopisný slovník předhusitské pražské univerzity 1348–1409*, Praha 1981, p. 260.

<sup>76</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný* III, Praha 1890, p. 744–745.

<sup>77</sup> P. Klučina, *Zbroj a zbraně - Evropa 6.–17. století*, Praha - Litomyšl 2004, p. 406, 407.

interfere so significantly in the combinatorial order of the work, they symbolically shift the place of action to a culturally and chronologically distant environment. In particular, at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, a curved fang can always be seen as a figurative object with a similar function to that of a face shield<sup>78</sup>. Given the limited number of archaeological evidence of these weapons, it is possible to perceive the discussed figurative object as a material, but especially in our and wider European environment, at least in this period, not quite common. Based on these considerations, it is then possible to offer an alternative interpretation of the iconography of the Epitaph of John of Jesus and to broaden the discourse on works of art in the Czech Republic. Although the characters on one of the fragments of the epitaph are traditionally perceived as st. Bartholomew and St. Thomas, it is possible to think of a figure with a fang as Paul. The arguments for both opinions exist and are not negligible. However, as is well known, the old world art production has left us much and much more of these puzzles, so it is possible to make exciting trips to art and to the ideas of our ancestors.

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<sup>78</sup> F. Šmahel, *Diví Lidé (v imaginaci) pozdního středověku*, Praha 2012, p. 123–124.

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#### STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł odnosi się do współczesnej dyskusji na temat Epitafium Jana z Jeřeně i dowodzi, że dwaj święci mężczyźni których wymienia przekaz, a których tradycyjnie identyfikuje się z Bartłojem i Tomaszem, nie muszą być tak identyfikowani. Jednocześnie pokazuje podstawową potrzebę radzenia sobie ze zwizualizowanymi obiektami. Ich interpretacje mogą zasadniczo wpływać na potencjał narracyjny dzieła. Artykuł wskazuje na konieczność multidyscyplinarnego podejście do tego rodzaju przekazów. Zostało to wykazane na przykładzie pewnego typu miecza (falchion) w kontekście sztuki średniowiecznej Europy Środkowej.

Słowa kluczowe: historia, kultura, sztuka, Václav IV., miecz, Epitafium Jana z Jeřeně, średniowiecze

## APPENDIX



Fig. 1. Epitaph of John of Jeřeně, 1395 (NG, Prague, ID O 1268), 1395.

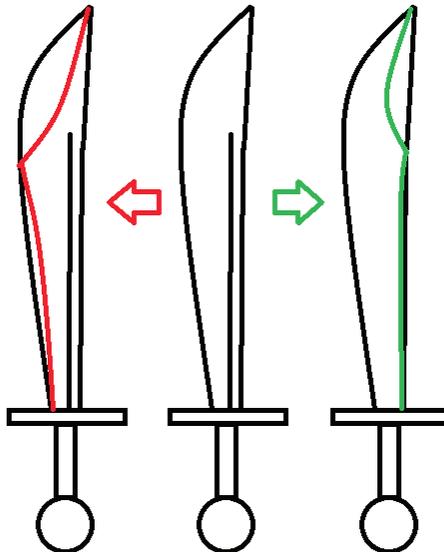


Fig. 2. Transformation of the fang / falchion, A. Kadlec, 2019.



Fig. 3. St. Catherine from the church  
of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg,  
et al. 1410.



Fig. 4. St. Catherine of Graudenz Altar,  
col. 1400.