

Stanisław  
Mossakowski

# Antique and Renaissance Models of the *Porta Triumphalis* in the King Sigismund Chapel in Cracow

The sumptuous framing of the entrance arcade to the King Sigismund Chapel at the Cracow Cathedral on the Wawel hill, whose sculptural details have been obscured by the loss of decaying sandstone, hidden behind a thickly mullioned bronze grating, has failed so far to become a subject of systematic scholarly research (figs. 1–3, 7, 10, 11)<sup>1</sup>. The architectural scheme of the framing, which consists of a pair of pilasters of the unorthodox “composite” order, placed on high socles and supporting the Corinthian entablature was associated by Lech Kalinowski with a triumphal arch with one passage<sup>2</sup>, whereas Jerzy Kowalczyk, who studied the triumphal motifs in the decoration of the chapel, referring to the Kalinowski’s observation concluded: “The entrance portal shaped after a triumphal arch anticipates the mausoleum of an emperor-ruler, a king who is «the emperor of his own kingdom» [...]. The spandrels were filled with glorying *genii* holding torches after the fashion of the triumphal arches of Titus, Trajan or Septimus Severus in Rome”, and “the pilasters are [...] decorated with a vast repertoire of sacrificial instruments and vessels used for ancient triumphal rites [...]: trophies, pateras, pitchers, gorgoneia, cornucopias and heads of sacrificial rams in capitels”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For a description of the decoration see: S. Cercha and F. Kopera, *Nadworny rzeźbiarz króla Zygmunta Starego Giovanni Cini z Sieny i jego dzieła w Polsce (A Sculptor in Ordinary of King Sigismund the Old, Giovanni Cini from Siena and his Works in Poland)*, Kraków, 1916, p. 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup> L. Kalinowski, *Treści artystyczne i ideowe kaplicy Zygmuntońskiej. Studia do dziejów Wawelu (The Artistic and Ideological Contents of Sigismund Chapel. Studies on Wawel's History)*, vol. 2, 1960, p. 56, note I. The composite order of the portal is discussed by S. Mossakowski, *Proweniencja artystyczna twórczości Bartłomieja Berecciego w świetle dekoracji kaplicy Zygmuntońskiej (Artistic Provenience of Bartholomeo Berecci's Work in the light of King Sigismund Chapel Interior Decorations)*, “Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, vol. 48, 1986 [in print].

<sup>3</sup> J. Kowalczyk, *Triumf i sława wojenna all antica w Polsce XVI w., [in:] Renesans, Sztuka i ideologia (The Triumph and the War Glory all antica in Poland of XVI-th Century)*, [in:] *Renaissance, Art and Ideology*, Warszawa, 1976, p. 305–307. The definition of a king as “the emperor in his own kingdom” refers to A. Gieysztor’s work, *Non habemus ceasarem nisi regem*.

The problem of meanings which were attributed to the work by the founder-king and the executive artists deserves a separate study. In the present paper I should like only to investigate the origin of motifs that appeared in rich decorations of the Cracow portal, and particularly to recognize those which apparently drew upon actual works of ancient art.

If we assumed that the creators of the chapel intended to repeat here the antique forms of a triumphal arch, their simplified rendering of its one-passage scheme with pilasters in place of the columns and filled with reliefs would be very loosely connected with Roman triumphal arches, the only analogy being the pilastered arch of Septimus Severus, known as l'Arco degli Argentari in the Forum Boarium<sup>4</sup>. The Cracow portal, however, is representative of a certain type of Renaissance doorway, already popular at that time.

As far as decorations are concerned, the relatively most distant resemblance to the antique models can be found in the ornamental candelabra reliefs which fill the small-sized panels in the jambs of the arcade. The same pertains to the carved socles of the pilasters with figures of winged *genii* holding oval shields with coats of arms of Poland and Lithuania (figs. 1, 7). This motif evidently refers to the tradition which developed in architectural framing especially of Roman tombs at the end of the 15th and in the beginning of the 16th centuries<sup>5</sup>. The pose of *genii*, who stand astride with raised wings as well as their physiognomy evoke the image of one of the two *putti* with coats of arms, sculpted in the Florentine workshop of Benedetto da Rovezzano, and originally destined for the mausoleum of St. Giovanni Gualberto at Badia di Passignano (fig. 8)<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, their fanciful curls, modelled realistically in stone, seem to combine the elements of hairdressing, characteristic of the ancient Roman statues of young 'Octavian'

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*Korona zamknięta królów polskich w końcu XV wieku i w wieku XVI, [in:] Muzeum i twórca. Studia z historii sztuki i kultury ku czci Prof. dr. Stanisława Lorentza, (The Museum and the Creator. Studies in the History of Art and Culture. In Honour to Prof. Dr Stanislaw Lorentz), Warszawa 1969, pp. 277–292. When mentioning the Arch of Trajan the author probably meant the one at Benevento.*

<sup>4</sup> M. Pallotino, *L'Arco degli Argentari*, Roma, 1946; P. Pray Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture. Handbook of Sources*, London, 1986, p. 213, 214 (No 180).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the tombs of: Bartolomeo Roverello (d. 1476) in S. Clemente; Pietro Riario in SS. Apostoli; Antonio Rido in S. Francesca Romana, and though with shielded boys not on the socle, of Filippo della Valle in S. Maria in Aracoeli. The Roman origin of the presentation of this motif was first noticed by A. Misiąg-Bocheńska, *Bernardinus-Zanobi de Gianotis Romanus i refleksy dekoracji rzymskiej w kilku dziełach krakowskich Berecciego, (Bernardinus Zanobi de Gianotis Romanus and the Influences of Roman Decoration in some Cracovian Berecci's Works.) "Sprawozdanie Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Nauk 1. (58), 1960, p. 63, 64. Other representations of shielded putti, limited in number outside Rome, are mostly wingless and free-standing figures (cf. the tombs of: Carlo Marsuppini in S. Croce in Florence, executed by Desiderio de Settignano in 1455, and Antonio Reselli in the basilica of S. Antonio at Padua by Pietro Lombardo, from ca. 1467), with the exception of small shielded angels on the socles of the retable of the Corpus Christi altar in the cathedral at Gesena, the work of Pietro Lombardo, ca. 1481.*

<sup>6</sup> E. Luporini, *Benedetto da Rovezzano*, Milano, 1964, p. 128, pl. 211, 212; A. Luchs, *A relief by Benedetto da Rovezzano in the National Gallery of Art in Washington*, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, vol. 18, 1974, p. 365, pl. 3.

and Antinous, stored at that time in Florence<sup>7</sup>. It is also the blown up drapery at their backs that betrays the sculptors' acquaintance with similarly arranged attires of figures represented to antique reliefs, which were studied carefully by the Renaissance artists. I especially mean the personification of Summer from the socle of the candelabrum (fig. 9)<sup>8</sup> now in Musée Condé at Chantilly (I BC).

The ancient Roman genesis can also be discerned in the pair of capitals decorated with heads of rams on whose horns garlands of fruits are suspended and adorned with bands on both sides. As I have already remarked elsewhere their rare form results from the combination of patterns, copied from a certain type of capital dating back to the early Roman empire, with motifs which were frequently found on the socles of candelabra or in antique altars, retraced among others by Giuliano da Sangallo<sup>9</sup>.

Antiquity provided the Cracow artists not only with the motif of winged figures in the spandrels of the arcade (figs 2, 3), repeated with utmost accuracy on the entrance wall inside the chapel, but it also offered models for their peculiar stylization, whose provenance Jan Bołoz Antoniewicz saw in Paduan Renaissance sculpture, while Julian Pagaczewski derived it from the reliefs by Agostino di Duccio at Perugia and Rimini<sup>10</sup>. The overall composition of the left-hand figure, repeated less dexterously in the figure on the right side, was borrowed from the relief in the left spandrel of the northern elevation of the Arch of Constantine in Rome, which can be noticed in the arrangement of attire as well as in the representation of the head and the choice of hairdress (fig. 4)<sup>11</sup>. Even the oval shape of loose sleeves, which have no equivalent in the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine (their resemblance to the sashes wrapped round the torsos of shield-bearing youths on the tomb of the doge Angrea Vendramin, executed by the Lombardi brothers ca. 1495, led Włodzimierz Załoziecki to seek stylistic inspiration for the Cracow reliefs in Venice<sup>12</sup>) was the modification of analogous sleeves of figures in the spandrels of the portico from the so-called Crypta Balbi, known as Portico dei Caccabarii. The ruins of this ancient edifice, which no longer exist, are known from the drawings by, among others Giuliano da Sangallo, and their

<sup>7</sup> G. A. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi. Le sculture*, part 2, Roma, 1961, p. 51 (No 39), p. 90, 91 (No 98); K. Fittschen, *Sul ruolo del ritratto antico nell'arte*, [in:] *Memoria dell' antico nell'arte italiana*, vol. 2, Torino, 1985, p. 395, 396, pl. 363; Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 163 (No 128).

<sup>8</sup> Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 94 (No 57). Cf. also the relief, known as "Borghese Dancers", now at Louvre (*Ibid.*, p. 95, No 59-B).

<sup>9</sup> Mossakowski, *op. cit.*, pl. 15, 16.

<sup>10</sup> J. Bołoz Antoniewicz, *O rzeźbie figuralnej kaplicy Zyguntowskiej na Wawelu (On the Sculptures in King Sigismund Chapel in the Wawel Castle)*, *Prace Komisji Historii Sztuki*, vol. 1 1919, p. XXIII; J. Pagaczewski, *Jan Michałowicz z Urzędowa (Jan Michałowicz from Urzędów)*, "Rocznik Krakowski", vol. 28, 1937, p. 67, note 1. Pagaczewski's view has been adopted by A. Bochnak, *Kaplica Zyguntowska (King Sigismund Chapel)*, Warszawa, 1953, p. 16; and recently by L. Kalinowski, *Die Sigismundkapelle im Waweldom zu Krakau*, in the catalogue from the exhibition: "Polen im Zeitalter der Jagiellonen 1386–1572", Schallaburg 1986, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mossakowski, *op. cit.*, pl. 63, 64.

<sup>12</sup> W. R. Załoziecki, *Studie zur figuralen Ausschmückung der Jagiellonenkapelle (Sigismundkapelle) in Krakau*, "Belvedere", vol. 5, 1924, p. 167.

structure and decoration exerted a considerable impact on the art of the Italian Renaissance, reflected, among the others, in the works by Bramante and Raphael<sup>13</sup>.

The figures represented in Roman triumphal arches and in the portico of the Crypta Balbi are the personification of Victory (Nike). They carry their war trophies, such as banners, laurel wreaths, palms or garlands on long poles. Such a representation of trophies in the hands of Victory, following the antique models, filled the spandrels of Porta Capuana in Naples, one of the most magnificent triumphal arches of the Renaissance, erected by Giuliano da Maiano (ca. 1484) by order of King Ferrante I of Aragon. The architectural scheme of Porta Capuana provides a close parallel for the portal from the Sigismund Chapel (fig. 6)<sup>14</sup>, the only difference being that the Cracow figures, instead of war trophies, hold burning torches. The presence of this element, however, can be attributed for the influence of antique art. I mean here not so much the boyish figures of the Genius of Dream (*Somnus*) or the Death with an upturned torch, met frequently on Roman sarcophagi, as a winged female personification of *Aeternitas*, represented in the relief with the apotheosis of the empress Sabina, Hadrian's wife. Up to 1662 the relief decorated the late antique arch in Via Lata in Rome, called l'Arco di Portogallo, and is now in the collection of the Palazzo dei Conservatori (fig. 5)<sup>15</sup>.

As has been already mentioned the pilasters in the Cracow *porta triumphalis* were filled with reliefs, which represented arms suspended on the bands (figs 10, 11). The choice of the above motifs by the decorator of the Sigismund Chapel may have been influenced not so much by the modest trophy pilasters of Roman l'Arco degli Argentari, as by the examples of contemporary architecture such as the three portals in the apartments of the ducal palace at Urbino (ca. 1472–1482, attributed to Ambroggio Barocci) or the aforementioned Porta Capuana in Naples. Special mention should be made of two portals in the chapels of Naples, both of them having trophy pilasters, which makes them closely linked with the type of decoration in the Sigismund Chapel: one in the chapel of the Carafa di San Severine family in S. Domenico Maggiore (1508, 1512–1516, Romolo di Antonio da Sontignano), the other one — of the Teodosi family in the cathedral (the beginning of the 16th century)<sup>16</sup>. Last but not least it should be remembered that similar

<sup>13</sup> S. Borsi, *Giuliano da Sangallo. I disegni di architettura e dell'antico*, Roma, 1985, p. 53, 59; P. N. Pagliara, [in:] *Rafaello architetto*, Milano, 1984, p. 417 (entry 3.2.3).

<sup>14</sup> It is worth reminding that the founder of the gate, king Ferrante, was a great-great grandfather of the Polish queen Bona Sforza, whose impressive wedding ceremony *per procura* with Sigismund I took place on December 6, 1517 in a neighbouring Castel Capuano (see W. Pocięcha, *Królowa Bona (The Queen Bona)*, vol. 1, Poznań, 1949, p. 53, 205–211).

<sup>15</sup> Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 227, 228 (No 195 A). Cf. *ibid.*, p. 69, 88, 144. See also A. Markham Schulz, *Antonio Rizzo. Sculptor and Architect*, Princeton, 1983, p. 109, 110, pl. 199, 200 on the figures of Victories holding torches in a similar way in the reliefs of Scala dei Giganti in the Venetian Palazzo Ducale (Andrea Rizzo, 1487–1501).

<sup>16</sup> See P. Rotondi, *The Ducal Palace of Urbino*, London, 1969, p. 74–76, pl. 110–115, 266–270, 287–290; *Napoli e dintorni. Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano*, Milano, 1976, p. 248, 143, 242. In addition to gates and portals as well as the stairs Scala dei Giganti of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice (Markham Schulz, *op. cit.*, p. 98–113, pl. 166, 174–184), this type

panoplied decorations had been already known in Cracow, as introduced by Francesco Florentino, who used them in the niche of king Jan Olbracht's tomb and in the window frame in the so-called Queen's House in the Wawel Castle (1502–1505)<sup>17</sup>.

In all the above mentioned works panoplies consist of the elements of ancient Roman arms (rendered more or less faithfully) most frequently, however, these are combined with the contemporary Renaissance motifs (such as founder's eschuteons). In the light of the above it becomes understandable why those Renaissance works could not provide any direct model for the trophies on the portal in the Sigismund Chapel, which are characterized by most accurate rendering of ancient details and reveal a profound archeological knowledge of the artists.

It was already Jerzy Kowalczyk, who called for attention to the medallion on the left pilaster (fig. 10b), with the triumph of the emperor sitting in a chariot drawn by a pair of horses, and acknowledged the existence of links between the medallion and analogical representations on Roman coins. Any further analysis is hardly possible as the advanced process of destruction has significantly blurred the relief<sup>18</sup>. Kowalczyk also mentioned a richly ornamented patera and a pitcher, placed at the same level on the right pilaster (fig. 11a), which bear resemblance to the representations of Roman sacrificial vessels sculpted on the metopes of the Basilica Aemilia in the Forum Romanum, whose ruins, no longer existing, were studied among others by Giuliano da Sangallo<sup>19</sup>, and on the sarcophagus from I BC, once in the collection of the Roman Palazzo Cafarelli (now in Berlin), which were the subject of a drawing in the *Codex Escorialensis*<sup>20</sup>.

The ancient models of the motifs of military character are more easily identifiable. Both pilasters are differentiated by the fact that among the panoplies on the left pilaster are represented playful *putti*, who support the ends of flowing bands, not introduced on the right pilaster. Despite this differences the decorations on both pilasters maintain compositional balance and can be subdivided into seven almost equal parts<sup>21</sup>. They are linked by

of decoration appeared occasionally on the pilasters of tombs and retables. As far as the former are concerned, mention may be made of the tomb of Hector Carafa (d. 1511) in S. Domenico Maggiore at Naples, whereas the latter include marble altars of: St. Jerome in the above mentioned church (des. by Tomaso Malvito, 1515) as well as the main altar of di Fontegiusta church at Siena (Lorenzo Marrina and Simone di Michele Ciloi da Settignano, 1509–1517; with pilasters placed against the background of free, standing columns), frequently referred to as the analogy for the decorations of the Sigismund Chapel after the work of M. Sokołowski has been published (*Die italienischen Künstler der Renaissance in Krakau, Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 8, 1885, p. 416, 417).

<sup>17</sup> A. Fischinger, *Nagrobek Jana Olbrachta i początek rzeźby renesansowej w Polsce (The Tombstone of Jan Olbracht and the Beginnings of the Renaissance Sculpture in Poland)*, [in:] *Renesans, Sztuka i ideologia (Renaissance, Art and Ideology)*, Warszawa, 1976, p. 457.

<sup>18</sup> Kowalczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 307, pl. 21, 22.

<sup>19</sup> E. Nash, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Rom*, Tübingen, 1961, vol. 1, p. 178, pl. 195, 196; Borsi, *op. cit.*, p. 144–146.

<sup>20</sup> D. E. Strong, *Roman Imperial Sculpture*, London, 1961, p. 92, pl. 43; H. Egger, *Codex Escorialensis. Ein Skizzenbuch aus der Werkstatt Domenico Ghirlandaios*, Wien, 1905–1906, p. 105 (fol. 36 verso).

<sup>21</sup> They will be marked with combinations of letters (L – left, R – right) with numbers in order of the appearance from the top.

ornamental bands, which on the left pilaster are held by a leafy mascarón (characteristic not only the Renaissance decorations of the type which flourished under the influence of Roman art, particularly, of the ornaments on the interior cornices of the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum Romanum)<sup>22</sup>, whereas on the right one they are suspended on the shell held by a pair of dolphins.

The recognition of antique prototypes for the Cracow panoplies is facilitated by the apparently limited number of works of Roman art studied in detail by the artists at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. Here mention should be made of a pair of quadrilateral pillars, dating back to the times of the emperor Domitian, which seem to have originally belonged to the so-called Armilustrium on the Aventine, a building used by the Romans to store sacrificed arms (fig. 12). Those pillars, now in the Uffizi at the end of the 15th century were sited in or near the church of S. Sabina on the Aventine Hill. Their sides are filled with reliefs representing approximately 800 trophies: pieces of armour, weapons, helmets and shields, which can be divided into 106 different types. Those reliefs were very familiar to numerous Renaissance artists<sup>23</sup> and certain fragments of their decorations were reproduced, among others, on the pages of the so-called *Codex Escorialensis*, a pattern-book used in the workshop of Giuliano da Sangallo, and (as a mirror reflection) in the copperplates by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (fig. 13)<sup>24</sup>.

Among the set of weapons piled up in the Uffizi pillars it is possible to distinguish a number of items, which in a slightly stylized form were repeated on the pilasters of the Cracow *porta triumphalis*. These include: breastplates with a characteristically knotted sack (L-3, R-7), whose form is also known from the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, dating back to the times of Trajan, as well as from the relief which originally decorated the no longer existing Arch of Marcus Aurelius and in 1515 was transferred by Leon X from S. Martin's church to the Capitol<sup>25</sup>; oval shields embellished with palmettes and with a rosette or the Sun's head in the middle (L-5, R-5)<sup>26</sup>;

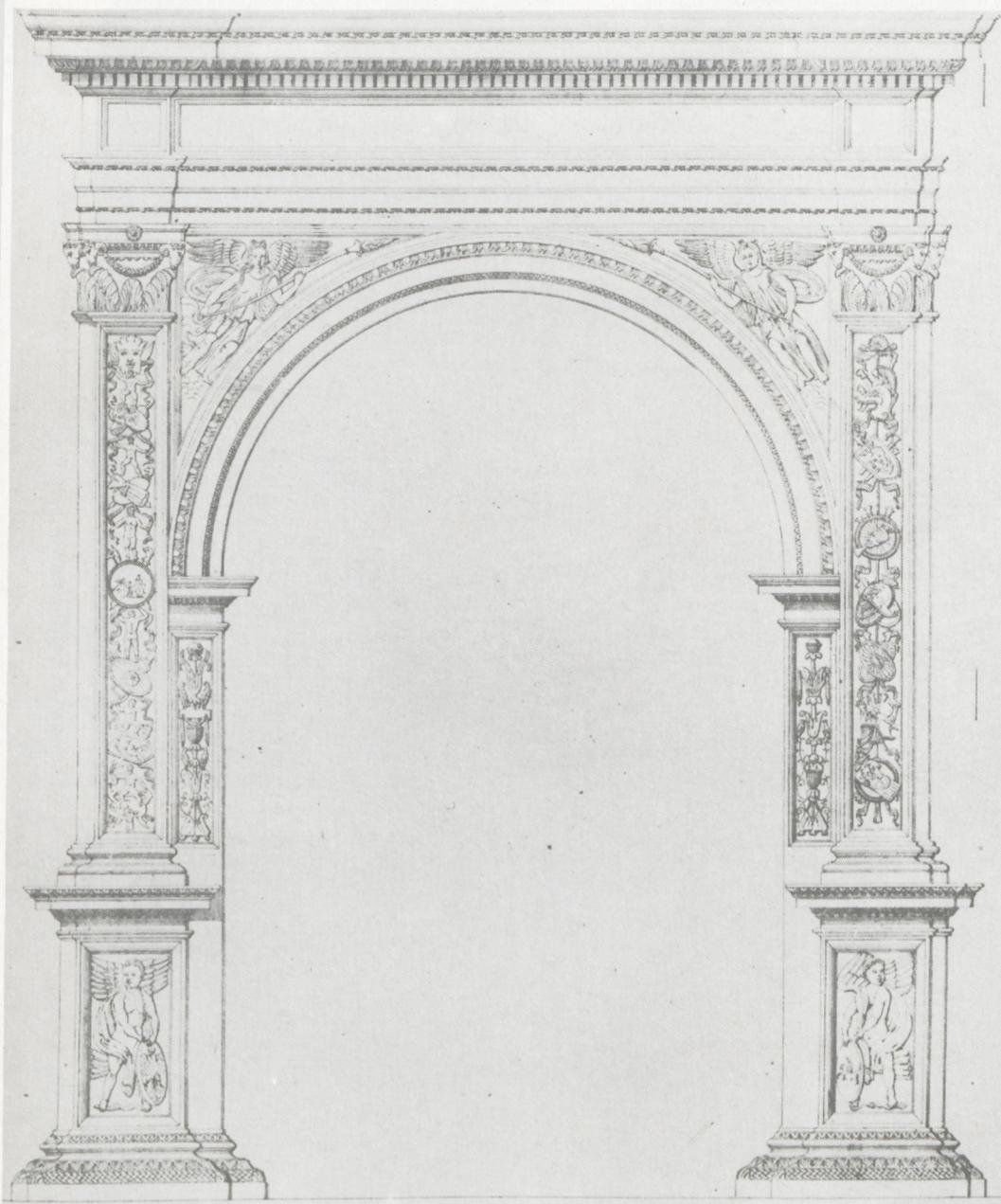
<sup>22</sup> R. Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus In the Roman Forum*, Roma, 1967, p. 80–82, pl. 25-b (the so-called motif of Silvanus' head). On the duration of this motif in post-antique art see M. Wegner, *Blattmasken*, [in:] *Adolph Goldschmidt zu seinen siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 15. Januar 1933*, Berlin, 1935, p. 45–50.

<sup>23</sup> J. W. Crous, *Florentiner Waffenspeiler und Armilustrium*, *Mitteilungen des Deutsches Archaeologischen Instituts. Römische Abteilung*, vol. 48, 1933, p. 1–119; G. Ch. Picard, *Les Trophées romains, contribution a l'art triomphal de Rome*, Paris, 1957, p. 353, 354; Mansuelli, *op. cit.*, part 1, Roma, 1958, p. 25–27, pl. 2, 3; Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 206 (No 175).

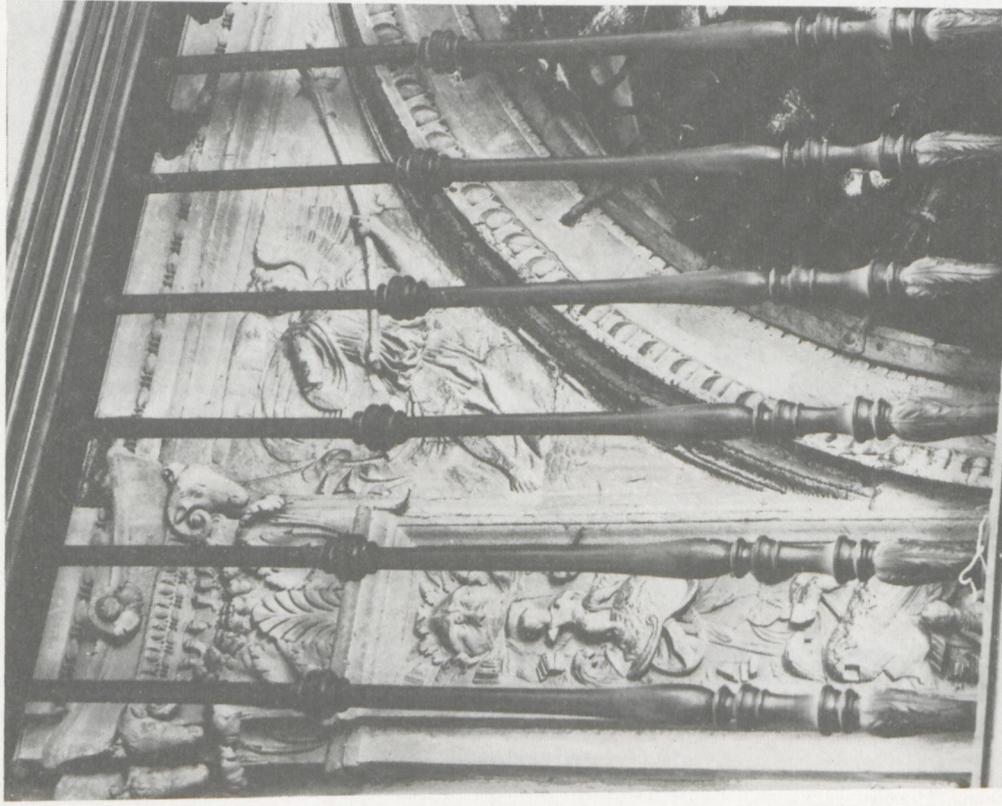
<sup>24</sup> Egger, *op. cit.*, p. 72, 73 (fol. 12 recto); A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, London, 1938–1948, vol. 5, p. 50, vol. 6, pl. 554 (No. 42, 43).

<sup>25</sup> Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 191, 192 (No 158-1), p. 196, 197 (No 163). The Renaissance contribution were brassards in the shape of heads of lions, an element which is frequently met in other works of antica executed at that time, such as Filarete's Vatican doors (cf. Fittschen, *op. cit.*, p. 391, pl. 347).

<sup>26</sup> For the decorations of oval shields, though slightly altered, the Renaissance artists also drew upon the reliefs from the socle of the column of Trajan and on the now lost ornaments from the triumphal arch of Diocletian, called Arcus Novus, by Via Lata (destroyed in 1491); see



1. Portal of the Sigismund Chapel. Measured by F. Pokutyński in 1865



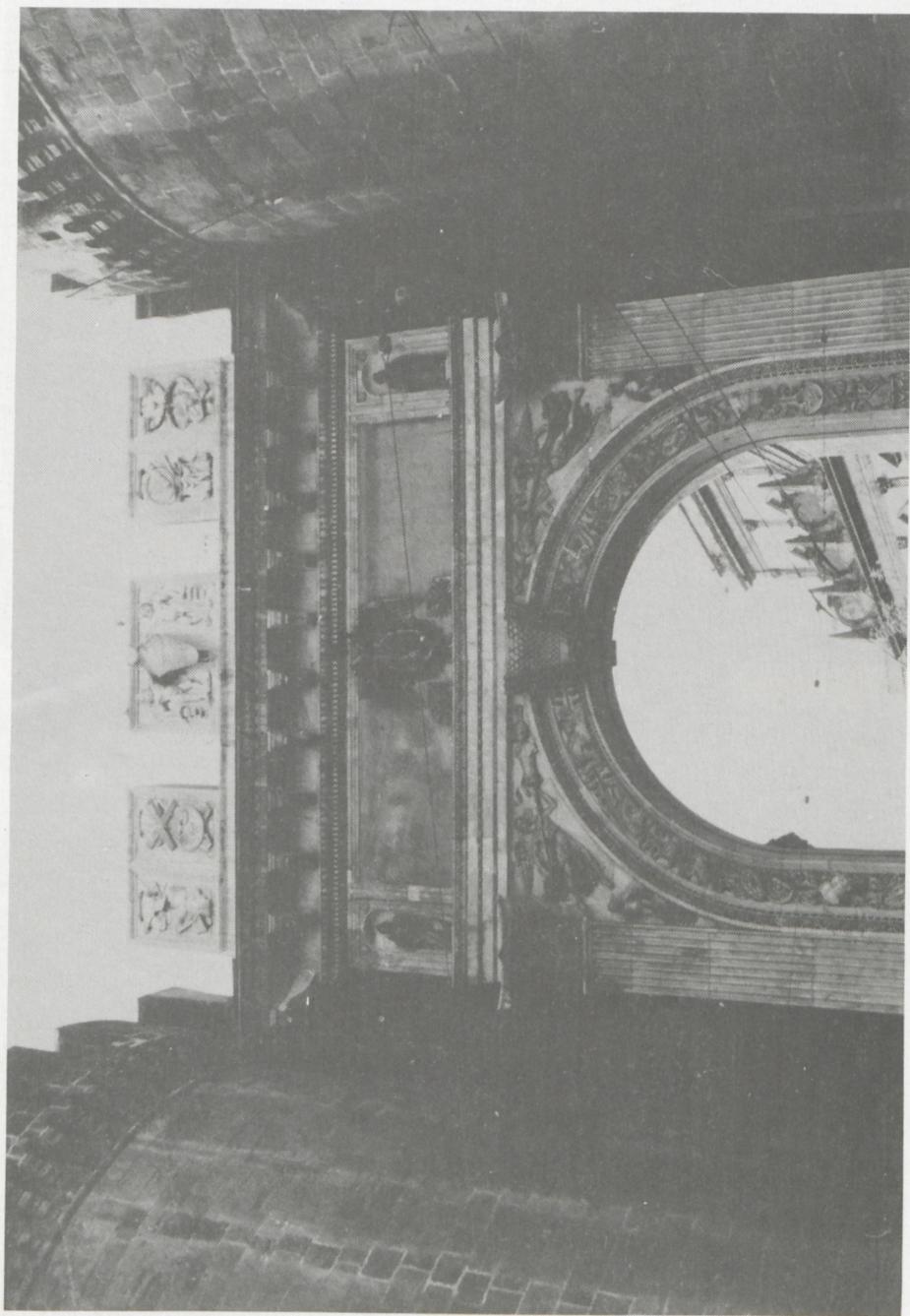
2. Portal of the Sigmund Chapel, fragment of its left side



3. Portal of the Sigmund Chapel, fragment of its right side

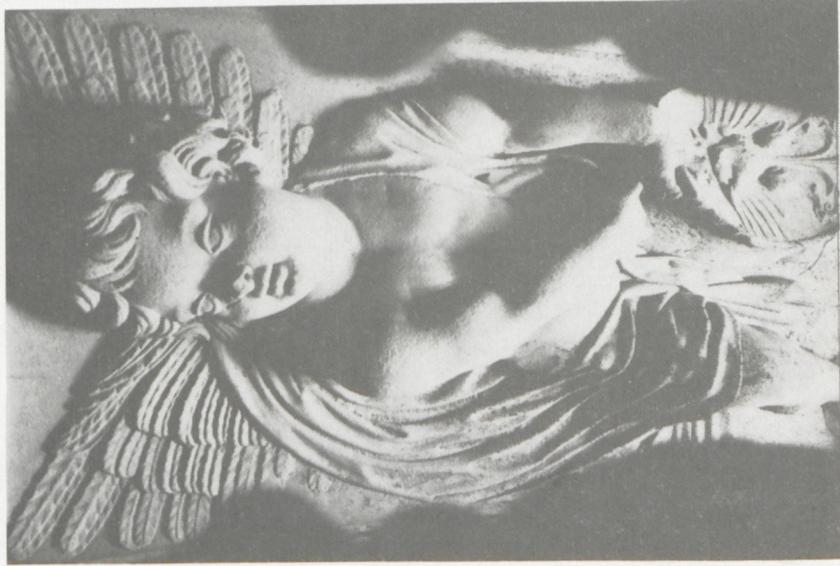
4. *Victory*. Relief from the Arch of Constantine in Rome  
Apotheosis of the empress Sabina from l'Arco di Portogallo in Rome





6. G. da Maiano, Porta Capuana at Naples

7. Cupid from the left soke of the portal of the Sigismund Chapel
8. B. da Rovezzano, shielded cupid from the church at Badia di Passignano
9. Personification of Summer from the soke of the candelabrum in Musée Condé at Chantilly.  
Drawing from *Codex Coburgensis* (fol. 134), fragment



10. Reliefs from  
the left pilaster  
in the Sigismund Chapel:  
a — motives L-1, L-2, L-3;  
b — motives L-4, L-5;  
c — motives L-5, L-6





11. Reliefs from  
the right pilaster  
in the Sigismund Chapel:  
a — motives R-1, R-2, R-3;  
b — motives R-4, R-5, R-6;  
c — motives R-6, R-7

13. Relief from the pillar of Armilustrum in Rome, fragments:

a — drawing from

*Codex Escorialensis* (fol. 12 recto, fragment);

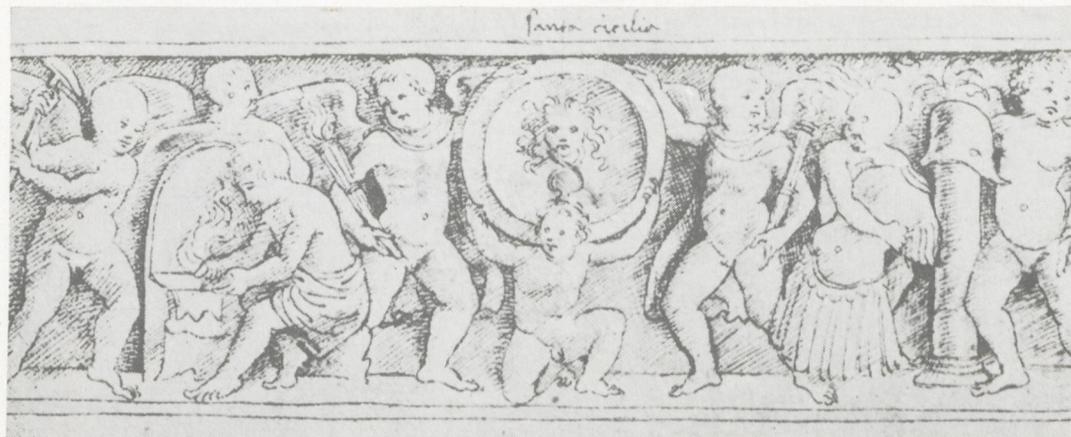
b — engravings of Antonio da Brescia

14. Relief from the socle of the column of Antonius Pius in Rome



12. Relief from the pillar of Armilustrum, fragment





17. Relief from the antique sarcophagus in the church S. Cecilia in Rome, drawing from *Codex Escorialensis* (fol. 44 verso), fragment

18. B. da Rovezzano, fragment of pilasters from the mausoleum of S. Giovanni Gualberto



19. Pilaster inside the tambour of the Sigismund Chapel (No 8) and spandrels of the windows (Nos 7 and 9)

20. Reliefs in spandrels of the arcades in the Sigismund Chapel:  
 a — left one on the tomb wall; b — left one on the altar wall;  
 c — right one on the entrance wall; d — right one on the throne wall



21. B. da Rovizzano, fireplace from the Palazzo Borgherini in Florence, fragment



circular shields decorated with laurel wreath (R-7)<sup>27</sup>; shields with Medusa's head (L-6, R-2), but less sharply topped than those in the Cracow portal<sup>28</sup>; bent rectangular shields (*scutum*; L-5)<sup>29</sup>; helmets of semicircular shapes with narrow cheek plates and a bent protection of the nape, occasionally decorated with wings of birds (L-7, R-4, R-6); and lastly, rectangular arrow filled quivers (i.a. L-3) and short gala swords with zoomorphic handles (apparently one of most frequent elements in the decoration of the Wawel pilasters) as well as curved cutlasses and axes (L-4).

Less obvious is the provenance of helmets with a bent protection of the nape, whose front is screened with an anthropomorphic mask. It is not improbable that the Cracow helmet assumed its form as a result of the overstylization of a magnificent helmet represented in the famous relief from a Roman sarcophagus depicting a scene from Achille's life, which was once installed in the side part of the stairs of the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli in Rome (now at Woburn Abbey) and was a subject of frequent studies by the Renaissance artist<sup>30</sup>. Some special attention should be drawn to another helmet of a related type, whose protection is decorated with the head of a ram and which is crowned with sumptuous crest, supported by the figure of a female sphinx (R-1). Such a crest is generally known to have derived from the statue of Athena Parthenos by Fidiias (Pausanias I, 24, 5) and it was imitated, among the others, in the helmet of Mars Ultor, whose sculpture, originally located in the temple in the Roman Forum of Augustus, became known at the end of the 15th century from the replica (now on the Capitol), which was then considered a likeness of Pyrrhus<sup>31</sup>. It is worth noting that the crests on a sphinx were at the same time frequently used by the Romans to decorate helmets of the other shape (without masks), which became the attribute personifying Rome. Such a shape was given to helmets of the goddess Roma, seen in the reliefs from the times of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, installed later in the Arch of Constantine<sup>32</sup>, and the same shape is

Borsi, *op. cit.*, p. 112–116; Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 192–194 (No 159); Egger, *op. cit.*, p. 78 (fol. 18).

<sup>27</sup> The unusually sumptuous circular shield surrounded by a laurel wreath is represented on the socle of the column of Antoninus Pius, now on the Vatican (see below: note 33).

<sup>28</sup> This motif, whose origin is linked with the protectorate of Athena-Minerva, is very popular. Cf. The relief on the already mentioned Arcus Novus, now in Giardino dei Boboli in Florence (Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 197, No 164).

<sup>29</sup> They are also known from the lower reliefs on the column of Trajan (*ibid.*, p. 192–194, No 159).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151 (No 121). Cf. *ibid.*, p. 205, 206 (No 174-B, the so-called *Trofei di Mario*).

<sup>31</sup> P. Zanker, *Il Foro di Augusto*, Roma, 1984, p. 18, pl. 48, 49; Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 66, 67 (No 24).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191, 192 (No 158), p. 214–217 (No 182 D). It was from this arch that a helmet with a sphinx, sometimes without a crest, was further reproduced in certain works of the Renaissance art from the end of the 15th century, as can be seen, e.g., in the trophies on the portal of Sala della Jole of the ducal palace at Urbino and the framing of the central arcade of the entrance of Scala dei Giganti of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice. Cf. Rotondi, *op. cit.*, p. 76, pl. 110, 112, 114; P. Paoletti, *L'Architettura e la scultura del Rinascimento in Venezia*, Venezia, 1893, vol. 2, p. 155, 156, pl. 82, containing the suggestion of late dating (1554–1556) of the Venetian reliefs, adopted in the literature on the subject (Markham Schulz, *op. cit.*, p. 89, 146), though not supported by the sources (cf. the remarks by P. L. Rambaldi, *La Scala dei Giganti nel Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, "L'Ateneo veneto", vol. 33-2, 1910, p. 26).

present in a masterly relief on the socle of the column of Antoninus Pius, which must have been known at that time, for it provided a model for the anonymous engraver "I. B.", active in the years of 1500–1506 (figs 14, 15)<sup>33</sup>. The personification of Roma, represented in his engraving is wearing a helmet, which bears significant resemblance to the Cracow one, as its front is decorated with a mask and the protection of the nape with the head of a ram. It is possible that this engraving served as a model for the Cracow artist.

However, it must be remembered that a helmet with a crest on a sphinx was represented in yet another work of antique art, which also aroused considerable interest among the Renaissance artists. I refer to the renowned pair of colossal sculptures dating back to the times of the emperor Domitian and representing anthropomorphic trophies, which were later utilized by Alexander Severus to decorate Nymphaeum Aquae Iuliae on the Esquilin hill. Known as "Trofei di Mario", in 1590 they were installed on the balustrade above the Capitoline ramp<sup>34</sup>.

Though now in a state of advanced decay, in the beginning of the 16th century "Trofei di Mario" still contained the elements which have been attractive for the decorators of our chapel. I mean the *putti*, hardly recognizable now but visible on older drawings, who bustle joyfully among weapons (fig. 16)<sup>35</sup>. These figures may have inspired the Cracow artist with the idea unique in decorative Renaissance sculpture, idea of introducing playful *putti* into the panoplies on the left pilaster. An additional factor may have been the influence of the reliefs on certain ancient Roman sarcophagi, like the one reproduced in the *Codex Escorialensis* (fol. 44 verso), at the time in the church of Santa Cecilia in Rome (now in the British Museum), which represents a group of cupids playing with pieces of arms to emphasize that even Mars himself must submit to the power of love (fig. 17)<sup>36</sup>.

The majority of the panoply motifs represented on the pilasters of the portal were repeated in parts of the exterior and interior decorations of the chapel, which reverted to the ideas initiated by the *porta triumphalis*<sup>37</sup>. On

<sup>33</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 255, vol. 7, pl. 834(4). The relief under discussion is generally believed to have been discovered as late as 1703. See W. Amelung, *Die Skulpturen des vaticanischen Museums*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1903, p. 883–893 (No. 223); C. Vermeule, *The Goddess Roma in the Art of the Roman Empire*, Cambridge Mass., 1959, p. 89, pl. X-3; Nash, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 270–275, pl. 322.

<sup>34</sup> Picard, *op. cit.*, p. 349–352; G. Tedeschi Grisanti, *I "Trofei di Mario". Il ninfeo dell'Acqua Giulia sull'Esquilino*, Roma, 1977, especially p. 49–60.

<sup>35</sup> Bober and Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 205, 206 (No 174-b-c).

<sup>36</sup> Egger, *op. cit.*, p. 117, 118 (fol. 44 verso). That was the reason for the introduction of cupids playing with Mars' arms in the frieze of the temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Caesar in Rome (R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, *Roma, L'arte romana nel centro del potere*, Milano, 1969, p. 409, pl. 290). On other antique representations of cupids with arms see M. de Vos, *La ricezione della pittura antica fino alla scoperta di Ercolano e Pompei*, [in:] *Memoria dell'antico*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 355, and on the symbolism of this type of representations in the Renaissance art see E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, New York, 1968, p. 89–91.

<sup>37</sup> Another problem is the relation of these motifs with the trophies on the canopy of the tomb of Władysław Jagiełło in the Cracow Cathedral (1519–1524). See K. Estreicher, *Grobowiec Władysława Jagielly (The Tombstone of Wladyslaw Jagiello)*, "Rocznik Krakowski", vol. 33, No 1, p. 41–45, pl. 65, 78–82, 85–86, 89–90; Kowalczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 298–305.

the outside these motifs can be found in the frames of the tambour windows, where they constitute the main inside ornamental element in four reliefs of the socle area<sup>38</sup>, in all the pairs of narrow panels on the arcades, on four small pilasters<sup>39</sup> and six window frames on the tambour (figs 18–20)<sup>40</sup>.

In the case of socles and pilasters panoply motifs are most frequently suspended between bunches of fruits, derived from antique sources<sup>41</sup>, not to mention analogous representations in contemporary Renaissance decorative sculpture, such as the entrance wall of the Piccolomini library in the Siena Cathedral (ca. 1515, attributed to Lorenzo Marrina)<sup>42</sup>. The repertoire of panoplies used to decorate the chapel is closely related to the one on the portal. Not infrequently the elements of antique armour are simplified and overstylized, especially on the outside of the chapel. New elements are scarce and they include a crested helmet of the praetorian type, occasionally shown *en face*<sup>43</sup>, a helmet adorned with the horns of a ram — an attribute of the god Amon, associated also with Alexander the Great<sup>44</sup>, a rectangular shield with cut corners<sup>45</sup> and the so-called Amazons' shield<sup>46</sup>; all of them borrowed from antiquity as well.

On the whole if the repertoire of panoply motifs employed in the Sigismund Chapel is compared with analogical decorations in the Renaissance art one is struck by the unusual faithfulness in the rendering archeological details, rarely encountered at that time. Among the works from the beginning of the 16th century decorated with the same type of ornamentation a comparable richness in antique armoury can be found in only one case.

<sup>38</sup> The reliefs, I mean, are significantly impaired and have been restored many times; they are: the second one from the left to the entrance wall, the first one from the left and the last one on the right on the tomb wall as well as the first one from the left on the altar wall. The last one may be a product of total "reconstruction" at the end of the 18th century, see S. Mossakowski, *Zmiany w kamiennej dekoracji kaplicy Zygmuntońskiej w XVIII i XIX wieku (The Changes of King Sigismund Chapel Stone Decoration in the XVIII-th and XIX-th Century)*, "Kwartalnik Urbanistyki i Architektury", vol. 31, Nos 3–4, 1986, p. 245, pl. 9.

<sup>39</sup> These are the pilasters, which according to the rules adopted in the above quoted work will be marked with the following numbers: 2, 4, 8, 12.

<sup>40</sup> The spandrels of windows (by the above numbering): 3 (the lower right one), 7 (the upper left and the lower right ones), 9 (the lower left and the upper right ones), 15 (the upper right one).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the relief up supposedly Roman origin in Museo Chiaramonti on the Vatican, Amelung, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 725 (No 613-D), pl. 77.

<sup>42</sup> Z. Hornung, *Mauzoleum króla Zygmunta I w Katedrze Krakowskiej (The King's Sigismund I Mausoleum in the Cathedral of Cracow)*, "Rozprawy Komisji Historii Kultury i Sztuki Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego", vol. 1, 1949 p. 84, pl. 10. Bunches of fruits among the trophies may also be found in the above mentioned decorations of Scala dei Giganti in Venice.

<sup>43</sup> The panels in the arcade of the throne wall; inside the tambour: the pilaster No 8 and the frame of the window No 9.

<sup>44</sup> The panels in the arcade of the altar and tomb walls as well as the socle on the entrance wall, the second one from the left. In such a helmet and antique *lorica squamata* was represented king Sigismund in the medallion at the bottom of the left panel of the tomb arcade. See Kowalczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 309–312; by the same author, *Polskie portrety all'antica w plastyce renesansowej, (The Polish Portraits all'antica in the Fine Arts of Renaissance, [in:] Treści dzieła sztuki <The Contents of the Work of Art>)*. Warszawa, 1969, p. 122–128.

<sup>45</sup> The left panel in the arcade on the throne wall and the pilaster No 4 in the tambour.

<sup>46</sup> Inside the tambour the window frame No. 9.

I mean here two panels and a frieze from the entablature of a magnificent fireplace from the Palazzo Borgherini in Florence (now at Museo Nazionale del Bargello), executed by Benedetto da Rovezzano, a sculptor from Giuliano da Sangallo's school and a collaborator of Andrea Sansovino (before 1514, figs 22, 23)<sup>47</sup>. Though in form they are rather distant from the detailed modelling of the Cracow reliefs with crowded trophies (after the fashion of previously mentioned Roman pillars from the Aventine), they contain almost all the elements of armour present in the Polish chapel. It may have been a coincidence either, that in the unfinished mausoleum of S. Giovanni Gualberto<sup>48</sup>, another oeuvre of Rovezzano's workshop, decorated supposedly among the others by the artist who was later employed to design the Sigismund Chapel, that the heads of lions and small angels were used as catches for the ornaments on the pilasters in the same way as in all panoplied reliefs in our chapel (fig. 21)<sup>49</sup>.

The above analysis of the entrance portal against the background of the other elements of the decoration of the royal chapel employing panoply motifs corroborates the thesis of the artistic origins of Berecci and his Cracow workshop from the Florentine-Roman school of Sangallo and Rovezzano<sup>50</sup>. In the first place, however, it testifies to their thorough acquaintance with the motifs characteristic of ancient Roman sculpture, which were the hallmark of that circle. It also proves that the founder of the chapel, king Sigismund, intended to revive the beauty and grandeur of ancient Roman art in his Cracow mausoleum on the Wawel hill.

Translated by Edyta Wyżyńska

<sup>47</sup> Luporini, *op. cit.*, p. 116, 117, pl. 69–77. It is worth noting that among the trophies decorating another famous Florentine fireplace in the Palazzo Gondi, the work of Giuliano da Sangallo (between 1497 and 1501), the presence of the elements of the Renaissance armoury is more prominent and the dominant position (occupied by the patron's escutcheons. See A. Tönnemann, *Der Palazzo Gondi in Florenz*, Worms, 1983, p. 60–62, pl. 80, 83–84).

<sup>48</sup> See Mossakowski, *Proweniencja*, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> S. Padovani, S. Meloni Trkulja, *Il Cenacolo di Andrea del Sarto a San Salvi. Guida del Museo*, Firenze, 1982, p. 44, 45, pl. 20. In the motif of the head of a lion *all'antica* analogous way is also present in the decoration of Scala dei Giganti in Venice and on the pilasters in the altar of di Fontequista church in Siena. On the unusual popularity of the motif in the works connected with pope Leon X see N. Dacos, *Le logge di Raffaello*, Roma, 1977, p. 56; H. Burns, *Raffaello e quell'antiqua architettura*, [in:] *Raffaello architetto*, *op. cit.*, p. 384; Borst, *op. cit.*, p. 482–485.

<sup>50</sup> Mossakowski, *Proweniencja*, *op. cit.*, p. 165–191.