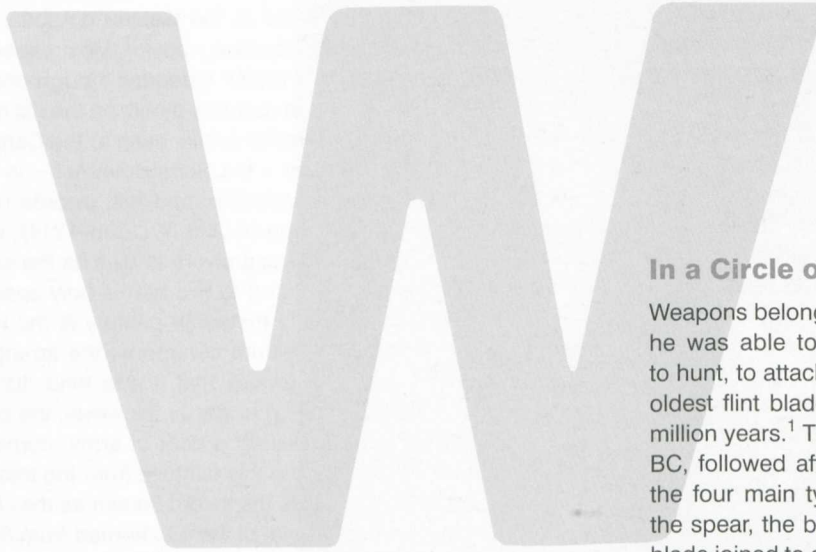


Zdzisław Żygulski Jr.

The Szczerbiec.
The Polish Coronation Sword

*Sometimes there is more meaning in
a single letter than in hundreds of words*

Anonymous



In a Circle of Myths

Weapons belong to the oldest artefacts of man, thanks to which he was able to survive and develop. They have been used to hunt, to attack and for defence. It seems improbable, but the oldest flint blades come from an epoch reaching back half-a-million years.¹ The Bronze Age, lasting from about 2500 to 1000 BC, followed after the Stone Age. It was during this time that the four main types of weapons were established: the mace, the spear, the bow and the sword. Swords consisted of a long blade joined to a hilt. The making of a sword necessitated highly developed skills in metallurgy. His sword was the warrior's most personal weapon; it was an elongation of his arm. Swords were carried in a scabbard on a belt and were used for the most part in close combat. The importance of a sword was emphasized by the decoration in gold on the hilt. From a genetic point of view swords developed from an earlier form of the knife or dagger. During the time of the Sumerians and the Egyptians a sword with a curved blade was developed, a prototype of what would later become the sabre. Amongst the treasures of Tutankhamen found in his tomb at the Valley of the Kings, a collection of bows – apparently the pharaoh's favourite weapon – has survived as well as a dagger made of gold. The weapons of the Greek Hoplites and Roman Legionaries were both the spear and the sword. The Roman sword *gladius* was produced in the thousands in state-owned workshops. It achieved an excellence

and effectiveness in hand-to-hand combat that was unheard of. Already in ancient times swords were used as a symbol of power and as an attribute of the gods. Pallas Athena-Minerva appeared with a spear, Artemis-Diana and her brother Apollo were fond of the bow, but the sword was the attribute of Ares, that is to say, Mars. In late antiquity, horse units in Rome – as well as Germanic mercenaries – made use of a long-bladed sword called a *spatha*. Such swords are carried by the Tetrarchs in the Venetian sculpture group. The *spatha* was the precursor of all the knights' swords used in medieval times. In the Roman Empire there was a cult of the spear. The piece chosen to be situated in the Senate meeting hall symbolized the Roman state. When declaring war, a spear was hurled onto enemy territory. The cult of the spear was later resurrected in Europe, in medieval times, in the Holy Roman Empire. One of the imperial insignias was the so-called Spear of St Maurice, in whose blade was enshrined a nail used for the Crucifixion. Roman emperors would offer duplicate copies of the holy spear to allied rulers. Just such a spear was offered by Emperor Otto III to Bolesław Chrobry (Boleslaus the Brave), Duke of Poland, in the year 1000 during Otto's pilgrimage to Gniezno to visit the tomb of St Adalbert.² The most vivid legends associated with swords developed in northern Europe, in the circle of Britons associated with King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. It is almost certain that King Arthur was the leader of the Britons, who at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries had already been baptized, defending England against raids by Germanic Angles and Saxons. The cult of the sword was particularly strong amongst Celtic Britons, who embellished their weapons with sophisticated decoration which could be anthropomorphous as well.³ Similarly to their enemies the Germans, they bestowed upon their swords a personality, giving the swords names and burying them together with the warrior in his grave. According to the Arthurian legends, the king was entitled, at first, to a sword pulled out from a large stone; upon that sword breaking he received a new sword, of shining steel, which carried the name *Excalibur*. A mysterious Lady of the Lake handed it over to him. This might have had a connection with the offering by the Celts of their best weapon to the gods ruling over the waters. The name of this sword indicated that it could easily cut through iron. It could only be used to serve a noble purpose. Another famous sword was *Durandal*, the property of the knight Roland, a baron in the service of Charlemagne. *The Song of Roland* contains a description of the hero's death, in the Roncesvalles Gorge, in the Pyrenees, while protecting the retreat of the emperor's armies returning from Spain. In this song Roland talks to *Durandal*. We learn that the sword contains relics: a tooth of St Peter, blood of St Basil, hair of St Denis and a shred of the raiment of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Roland says farewell to *Durandal* and wants to destroy his sword in order to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. He tries to break the sword by striking it against a rock, but

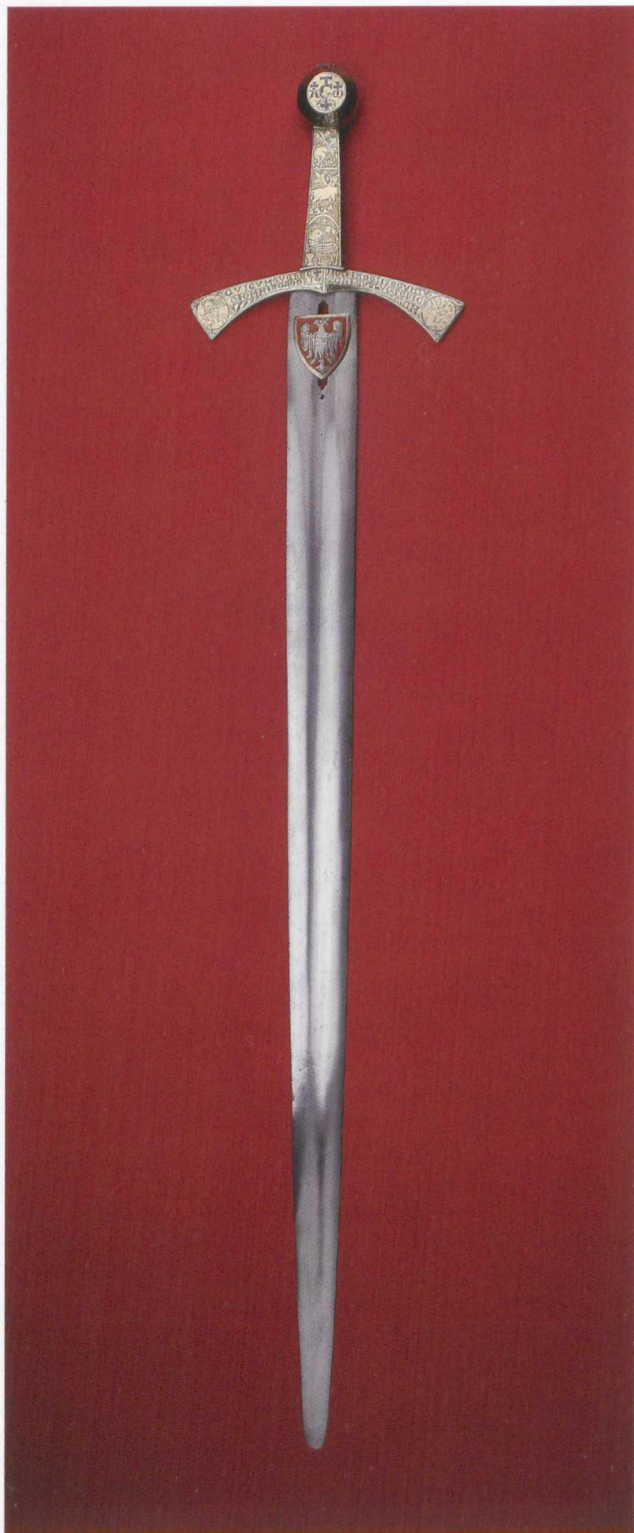
with the result that the rock crumbles and the sword remains unscathed. To this day one can see these rocks of Roland called *Brèche de Roland*. This would be a legend with opposite overtones to the Polish Szczerbiec, the sword of King Boleslaus the Brave [Fig. 1] who chipped it in 1018 by striking it against the gate of the captured Ruthenian castle-city of Kiev. This symbolic capturing of the city was the same as if the daughter of a city's ruling prince had been taken by force.⁴

In the rich Arthurian and Carolingian iconography the way holy swords looked is determined by a sense of historicism, but even more often by artists' imagination. Some outstanding swords have, however, survived in a few European museums and treasuries. Their authenticity leaves no room for doubt and the reservations raised by researchers only concern such things as the swords' date and ownership as well as the degree to which elements of these swords are missing or have been altered. A sword that is traditionally associated with Charlemagne is exhibited in the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre; it carries the name *Joyeuse – Joyful*. Most experts date this piece to the eleventh or twelfth centuries though one could argue that the Celtic knot and monster motifs on the hilt made of solid gold date back to an earlier origin, even to the Carolingian Era. In the Imperial Treasury – the Schatzkammer – in Vienna one can find a number of valuable medieval swords used as insignia.⁵ Dating from the time of Otto IV (1208–1214), with his coat of arms on the pommel, is a sword known as the sword of St Maurice, almost certainly tied to this hero's holy spear. Also having its origins in the early thirteenth century is the imperial sword used during the investiture ceremony; the arrangement of the coats of arms on it proves that it was held during the ceremony with the point facing upwards. However, the pommel of this same sword, also bearing a coat of arms, comes from the fifteenth century. Also from this century, from the treasury of the Burgundy princes, comes the sword known as the *Unicorn*. It owes its name to the material of the hilt, formed from the horn of this mythical animal, a symbol of purity in medieval times. In fact, it is made of the tooth of a narwhal. Its enamelled gold, pearls and large ruby add splendour to this Burgundian sword, though its beauty is no less a result of its excellent proportioning. In 1948 at the cathedral in Toledo the tomb was opened of King Sancho IV El Bravo (The Brave), who ruled in Castile and León in 1284–1295. The king's body was found under a valuable shroud, his head resting on a pillow embroidered with a coat of arms; also found were the king's crown, spurs and a sword. This sword has a spherical, lenticular pommel with inscriptions in Latin etched into it as well as plaques with coats of arms on the hilt and a quillons arched downwards. A similarly shaped sword also having its origins in the thirteenth century is the Szczerbiec, the sword with which we are here concerned.⁶

The sword as a symbol of victory over enemy forces first appeared in religious cults. It is a sign of judgement. In repre-



1. Szczerbiec, hilt and a part of the blade, front side (after bringing back the shield with the White Eagle emblem, 2008). Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle



sentations of the Last Judgement Christ appears with a sword symbolizing justice. Mohammed, proclaiming holy war in the Quran as a way of spreading Islam, had nine swords, the most important of which was the bifurcated Zulfiqar, later inherited by Ali, the husband of the Prophet's daughter and the patron of the Shiites. In the second half of the fifteenth century, in fear of the threat of Islam, the popes consecrated a symbolic sword on Christmas which they then sent, along with a papal hat, to Christian kings and rulers who had distinguished themselves in defence of the faith. Three Polish kings were given such a sword: Stefan Batory, Władysław IV and Jan III Sobieski. These swords were kept in the Crown Treasury at Wawel Royal Castle along with the Szczerbiec [Figs 2–3].

The History of the Szczerbiec

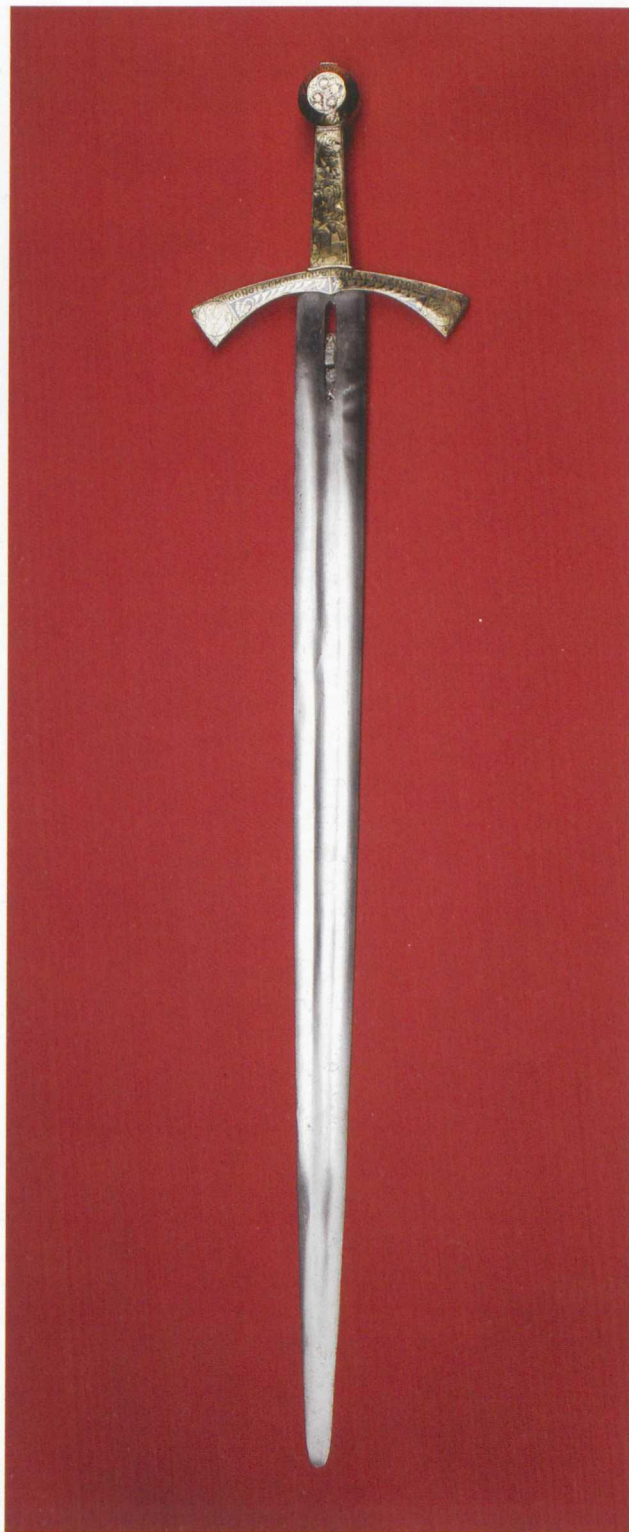
In the year 966 Mieszko, Duke of the Polanians tribe, took for his wife the Czech princess Dobrawa and accepted, along with all of his subjects, Christianity from Rome. It was his son Boleslaus the Brave who, on being crowned in 1025, accepted the crown from the Pope. Poland had entered into the circle of Western, Latin civilization and had become the most eastward Catholic country at the same time as the lands dominated by Ruthenian tribes converted to Christianity from Constantinople, thereby accepting Greek traditions and the Orthodox name. Poland, while developing its statehood, had as partners not only the Bohemians, but also the Hungarians and most importantly the Holy Roman Empire. An enormous and sometimes decisive role was played by the popes, who had the privilege of anointing Christian rulers and settling arguments between them; their plenipotentiaries were bishops as well as the priors of large religious orders, both of the Benedictines and Cistercians, and later the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Though the Piast Dynasty, begun by Mieszko, ruled over Poland, it was unable to hold on to the crown. One of the extraordinary Piast princes, Bolesław Krzywousty (Boleslaus the Wry-Mouthed), having had numerous sons, before his death in 1138 divided the country into provinces – sovereign principalities – which he allotted to his sons. The Seniorate Province of Cracow was to be ruled by the oldest son who also represented the entire state in the most important matters, particularly those related to war. This system, however, was ineffective as it only caused continual feuding and battles between the Piast dukes. One of them, Duke Konrad of Masovia, brought, in 1229, Teutonic Knights to Poland, that is to say, the Knights of the Holy Hospital of St Mary of the Germans

2–3. Szczerbiec, front and back side of the sword, present state, Crown Treasury, Wawel Royal Castle. Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle

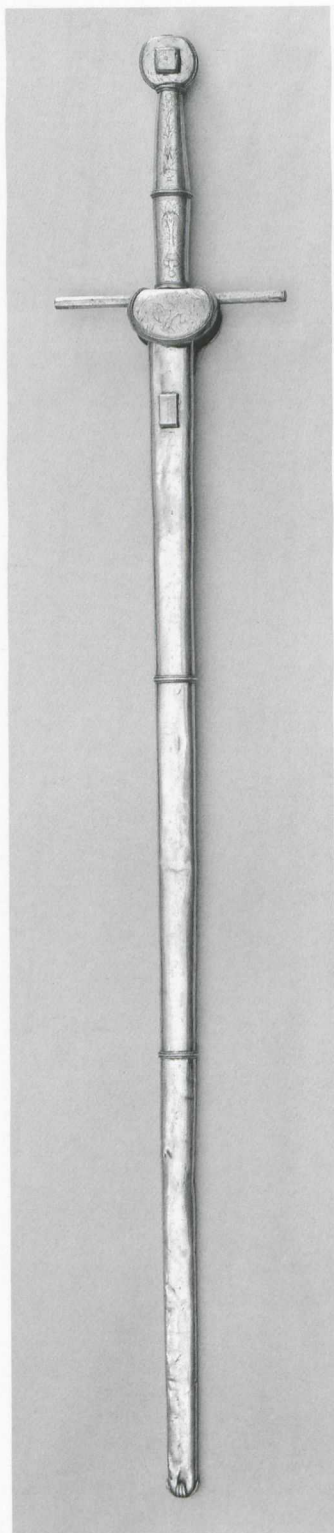
in Jerusalem, granting them land in the north and obliging them to fight against the heathen Prussians and Lithuanians. The Teutonic Knights, having left the Holy Land and intending to create their own state in Europe, caused a whole host of problems to Poland. At the same time, the Knights Templar were also brought to Poland from the Holy Land; their headquarters, however, were mainly in France and Spain. Both of these orders stood in defence of Poland during the destructive invasions of the Mongols in the year 1241. Despite numerous misfortunes, Poland grew in strength, the evidence of which was the rebuilding of Cracow in 1257 after the Mongolian invasion. The Piast dukes rigorously attempted to unite the nation, this eventually occurring due to the strivings of the duke of Cracow, Władysław Łokietek (Ladislav the Ell-High).

On January 20, 1320 in the Romanesque cathedral on Wawel Hill, Ladislav the Ell-High was crowned by Archbishop Janisław of Gniezno, this being the first time that the sword called the Szczerbiec was used by a king in a coronation ceremony.⁷ Following this king's coronation, Cracow established its position as the capital. The Crown Treasury was located, at first, in the Wawel Cathedral Treasury and later in certain chambers in the royal castle. The crown of Boleslaus the Brave was called the original or the privileged one. With this crown, the successor of Ladislav the Ell-High, Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great), was crowned king in 1333. The same is true of the next king, Ludwik Węgierski (Louis of Hungary, Louis of Anjou), the nephew of Casimir, crowned in 1370. He, however, decided to rule Poland through assistants and quickly returned to Buda, taking with him the Polish insignia as well as the Szczerbiec. After Louis' death the Polish throne was inherited in 1384 by his ten-year-old daughter Jadwiga, who two years later was wed to Władysław Jagiełło (Ladislav Jagiełło), Grand Duke of Lithuania, who was then crowned in Cracow. At both of these ceremonies new crowns were used and the Szczerbiec was replaced by another sword. The original insignia were not returned to Poland until 1412 by King Sigismund of Luxembourg. The ceremony in Cracow celebrating the return of the insignia was vividly described by the great contemporary Polish historian Jan Długosz in his chronicles in which he also mentions the Szczerbiec. It is also known that during the coronation of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (Casimir the Jagiellonian) – Jagiełło's son – in 1447, Jan Głowacz from Oleśnica, the voivode of Sandomierz, "held the sword called the Szczerbiec". This name can also be found in the oldest preserved inventory of the Crown Treasury from 1475 under its Latin entry: *item gladius Styrbec*.⁸

The order of the coronation – *Ordo Coronandi* – set in medieval times in the Christian West and adopted by Poland, had a canonical character. Over the centuries it had changed only in its details. And so it was that during the mass liturgy the anointed knelt before the archbishop, who handed him the



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4. The "koncerz" sword of King Sigismund the Old, back-side view, in the sheath, Crown Treasury, Wawel Royal Castle. Photo: A. Wierzba, Wawel Royal Castle

5. The "koncerz" sword of King Sigismund the Old, front-side view, bare, with the sheath on the left, Crown Treasury, Wawel Royal Castle. Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle

Szczerbiec lying on the altar, the king then using the sword to make the sign of the cross three times. It was only at this point that the sacred act occurred: the placing of the crown on the head as well as the handing over of the sceptre and the orb. The original crown used by Ladislas the Ell-High was soon connected with Boleslaus the Brave. It was believed that Emperor Otto III, during his pilgrimage to the tomb of St Adalbert, brought it to Duke Boleslaus, also handing him a replica of St Maurice's spear. Needless to say, the coronation sword used by Ladislas the Ell-High also became associated with the Szczerbiec used by Boleslaus the Brave: the sword that was chipped on the gate of Kiev in the year 1018. This tale was repeated by successive chroniclers who strove to embellish the event. It was written that an angel from Heaven brought Boleslaus the Brave his sword, thereby making him invincible.

The Crown Treasury presented itself most splendidly during the years in which the Jagiellons and the first Vasa kings reigned. It was located in the chambers of Wawel Royal Castle along with the national archives. Here, King Ladislas Jagiełło set up the victory trophy from the Battle of Grunwald, in which he achieved victory over the Teutonic Knights. Among the trophy were two swords which had been sent before the battle to Jagiełło and Witold, Grand Duke of Lithuania, by the Grand Master of the Order.⁹ In the treasury was where King Zygmunt Stary (Sigismund the Old) kept the sword which he used for dubbing knights [Figs 4–5]. Kept in a silver-gilt sheath, it carried the inscription *Sigismundus Rex Justus* and had an etched likeness of the king in full figure.¹⁰ It was with this sword of Sigismund's that the Szczerbiec was kept in a large iron trunk locked with seven padlocks. Inside was a wooden leather-upholstered box holding the crown, the sceptre and the orb. Over the centuries the number of insignias increased as kings treated themselves to their own crowns with other intents in mind than as a sacred item to be used at the coronation ceremony; they also treated their wives to crowns. The Sigismund sword was usually laid at the bottom of the trunk while the Szczerbiec was kept on top of the box. Other objects in the treasury were kept in smaller trunks and on the shelves. The sturdy, iron door to the treasury was fastened with a bolt. Over the door was the inscription *Thesaurus Regni*. As of the Jagiellons, the treasury was no longer the property of the kings but rather belonged to the nation as represented by the Diet and the Senate. Constitutions – in other words, parliamentary bills ratified by the king – resolved any issues affecting the treasury. The direct guardian and protector of the treasury was the treasurer of the Crown while the keys to the seven locks of the large trunk as well as the right to seal them belonged to the seven most important senators. Periodically, usually in the case of the treasurer's death, an inventory was compiled.¹¹

The first serious crisis affecting the treasury took place during the Swedish invasion of Poland in 1655. Rightly predicting

that Cracow would be captured by the armies of King Charles X Gustav, the insignia were carried away to Lubovla Castle in Spiš.

During the reign of Jan III Sobieski an unusual thing happened which ended up causing a great amount of confusion in the history of the Szczerbiec. The king, dreaming of the Polish throne for his son Jakub, ordered his goldsmiths to create a faithful replica of the Szczerbiec in order to prepare the youngster for the sword. The Poles did not, however, want Jakub to be crowned and the replica of the Szczerbiec ended up in the Sobieski treasure vault in Zolkiew. From there, along with other trophy of the king, it was passed, after his death, to the Radziwiłł family and ended up in their castle in Nesvizh (present-day Byelorussia). The collection at Nesvizh was plundered by the Russians towards the end of the eighteenth century and then again after Napoleon's defeat in 1812. The replica disappeared, though an accurate description has been preserved in the archives of the Radziwiłł family in Nieborów.¹²

As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a result of another invasion of Poland by the Swedes during the Great Northern War, elements of the Crown Treasury were carried away to Silesia and to Częstochowa though they were later returned. The insignia became an important element in the fight for the throne between Stanisław Leszczyński and Augustus III of Saxony. Both these kings used new insignia created *ad hoc*.¹³

The last monarch of Poland, King Stanisław August Poniatowski (reigned 1764–1795), attached great significance to the traditional Polish coronation insignia and it is to him that we owe their reliable visual representation, both of the "privileged" crown and of the Szczerbiec.¹⁴ The monarch-elect decided to be crowned in Warsaw at St John's Collegiate Church next to the Royal Castle, on St Catherine's Day, on November 25, 1764. The crown said to belong to Boleslaus the Brave was brought from Cracow along with the Szczerbiec and other objects necessary for the coronation ceremony.

The crimson cloth-covered wagon caravan carrying the insignia was escorted by a unit of the national cavalry. The king, delighted with the insignia, ordered the court painter Krzysztof Józef Werner from Dresden to paint a coronation portrait in full figure; the king wore the crown associated with Boleslaus the Brave, though without the Szczerbiec [Fig. 6]. Werner also compiled an extremely accurate set of drawings showing all the objects made use of during the coronation. These include the throne and garb of the king as well as – of most interest to us here – a precise representation of the Szczerbiec from both sides, in addition to the symbolic marks and inscriptions depicted on the sword [Fig. 7]. Werner provided the drawing with detailed explanations in German. This fundamental source of information shows the state of the sword 444 years after it was placed in the Crown Treasury.¹⁵ We have before us, therefore, an analytical, multi-faceted representation of the hilt of



6. Krzysztof Józef Werner II, «Portrait of Stanisław August Poniatowski Wearing the "Privileged" Crown», National Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. 5155, on long-term loan in the Royal Castle, Warsaw. Photo: Maciej Bronarski, Royal Castle, Warsaw

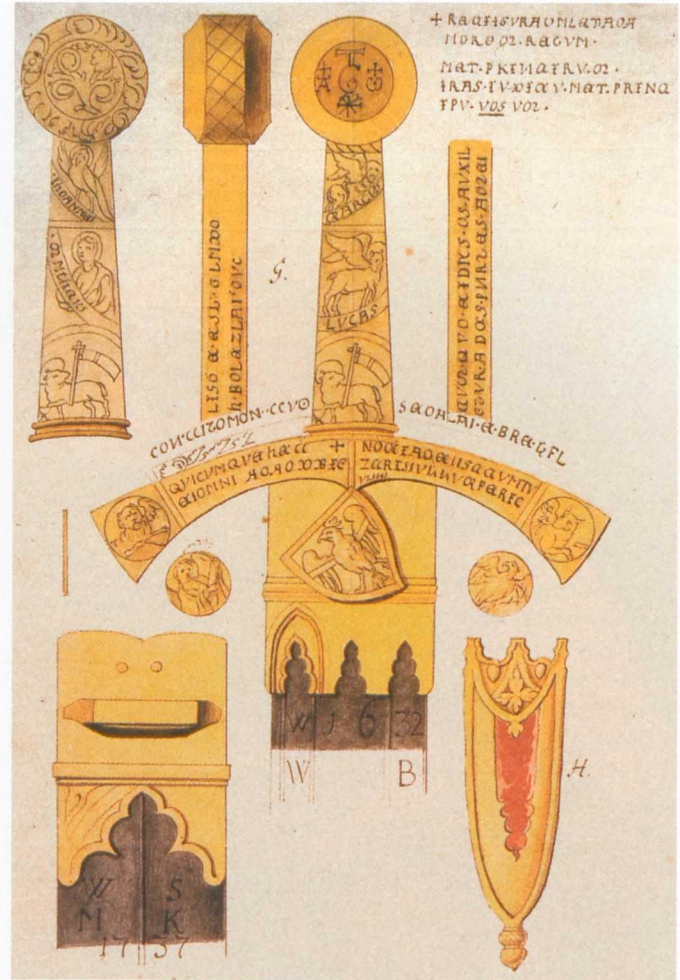
7. Krzysztof Józef Werner II, record drawings of the Szczerbiec, commissioned by Stanisław August Poniatowski, 1764, Warsaw, Print Room of the Warsaw University Library. Photo: Warsaw University Library

8-9. Decoration of the grip: front- and back-side views. Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle

6.

the sword and the upper part of the scabbard in which it was sheathed. The hilt is yellow and bears black marks, figures and inscriptions. The obverse side dominates the composition. Four marks can be seen on the spherical pommel: arranged horizontally, the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* surmounted with small crosses; arranged vertically, a large letter T with a curlicue underneath. Some researchers have interpreted the curlicue as a letter G. Below this is a Greek cross on a rosette with twelve petals. Around the edge runs an inscription beginning with the words: *Haec figura valet* [...]. On the reverse side of the rosette, the pommel is decorated with a foliate ornament. Within the rim, the ornament suggests a blossoming tree surrounded by three half-palmettes. Three palmettes and five leaves decorate the rim. The motifs on the obverse side of the pommel are in black on a gold background, whereas on the reverse side they are in gold on a black background. The grip is tetrahedral, while the cross-section is rectangular. The front and rear sides are wider than the lateral sides. The symbols of the Evangelists, black on a gold background, can be seen on the front side: from the top, a winged lion with the inscription *Marcus*; under that, a winged ox with the inscription *Lucas*, while, from the bottom, an Evangelical lamb with a pennant from whose breast blood is gushing into a chalice [Figs 8–9]. Also on the obverse side of the sword, on the arched quillons, one can read a Latin inscription starting with the words: *Quicumquae haec* [...], while in the corners, medallions with images of the Evangelists can be found; on the right-hand side a lion, on the left an ox. The other side of the grip of the sword is decorated from the top with the eagle of St John; then the angel of St Matthew, while, at the bottom, the mystical lamb is repeated. On this side of the quillons there is an inscription which begins with the words: *Cono cit omon* [...] as well as medallions in the corners with the symbols of the eagle of St John and the angel of St Matthew. The lateral sides of the hilt were covered with an inscription in Latin, on which could be seen the name *Boleslai* (Boleslaus). The scabbard was drawn in Werner's documentation; it was almost certainly of black leather with a gold ferrule in a Gothic arcade pattern. On the obverse side of the sword, on the throat of the scabbard, one can see a slanted metal heraldic shield bearing a white eagle with a crown on a gold field and not on a red one. The artist also showed, on a somewhat smaller scale, the gilded chape of the scabbard as well as a shoe ending with an acorn. On the obverse side of the scabbard the date 1632 can be seen surmounted by the letters WB; on the reverse side the letters WS/MK can be seen surmounting the date 1737. These are probably the years in which the sword was repaired, particularly the scabbard. On the reverse side, a clamp for the belt can be seen on the ferrule of the scabbard.

The following comment can be found in the inventory of 1739: "The sword known as the Szczyrbicz [sic], in a new scabbard, freshly hollowed out, because the old one was eaten by





10. Marcello Bacciarelli, «Portrait of Boleslaus the Brave Holding the Szczerbiec», Warsaw, Royal Castle. Photo: Royal Castle, Warsaw

rust". The damp chambers of the Wawel treasury were certainly not friendly towards antique weapons and little can be said about the conditions in which these treasures were kept during the years they spent apart from the treasury. Jerzy Lileyko held that it was an original Gothic scabbard from the time of Ladislas

the Ell-High, affixed with his coat of arms and that in 1739 it was only renovated.¹⁶ Additionally, in Werner's documentation one can see a drawing of a sword with a hilt topped with the White Eagle and numerous symbolic marks. This sword was used by the king in his coronation garb, notwithstanding the Szczerbiec. This privately-owned sword together with the sceptre – itself made from aquamarine set in gold – can now be found in the collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.¹⁷

King Stanisław August once again brought certain coronation insignia along with the Szczerbiec back to Warsaw over the years 1768–1771, at the same time commissioning the court painter Marcello Bacciarelli to paint a gallery of portraits of the Polish monarchs for the Marble Room in the castle in Warsaw. In his portrait of Boleslaus the Brave – a figment of the painter's imagination [Fig. 10] – Boleslaus is wearing the privileged crown – the most important one – and in his right hand he wields the Szczerbiec, its design being dictated by King Stanisław August himself. The sword has an enormous blade resting on its axis as well as a clearly visible chip on its edge. This time around the legend has been confirmed by the painting.

The rule of King Stanisław August was not fortuitous for Poland. The state was inevitably heading towards a catastrophe. The attempts to save the situation through constitutional reforms of the political system were ineffective. The goal of Catherine the Great, the empress of Russia – who was assisted by the Prussian king and the emperor of Austria – was the destruction of Poland and the annihilation of its right to independence. The empress was able to bring about war in May of 1792, the effect of which was the end of the Republic of Poland and its second partition. Immediately preceding the war, in April of 1792, an inventory of the Crown Treasury was taken for the last time. To this end, members of parliamentary commissions –

led by Tadeusz Czacki, the starost from Nowogródek – arrived at Wawel. Described in detail were five crowns, including the privileged crown, of which it was written that it was a gift "from Emperor Otto III, given to Boleslaus called the Brave, King of Poland", as well as four staves – that is to say, sceptres – five orbs,

four swords and a number of other valuables and mementoes. Next to the coronation sword was written: "The Szczerbiec, perhaps so called because of the holes in its blade". The inventory was made out in three copies: one for the Crown Treasury, one for the Revenue Commission of the Republic of Both Nations (Poland and Lithuania) and one for the Cracow land register.¹⁸ On April 18, as a result of a proposal submitted by Tadeusz Czacki, a public showing of items from the treasury was organized in the Presence Chamber at Wawel, the objects being laid out on three tables covered with Turkish carpets. For three days and for the price of an entry ticket, the people in Cracow had an opportunity to see, for the first time, the contents of the legendary treasury. What is more, while the commission was at work, Jacek Przybylski, a librarian at Cracow Academy, made a drawing of the Szczerbiec, attempting to decipher and copy down the inscriptions located on the sword. Unlike Werner, he was, however, lacking in talent and both the drawing and the inscriptions turned out to be imprecise. Years later his work was published in the Cracow journal *Czas*.¹⁹ It was later found in the collections of the National Library but burned down, along with the library, in 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising.

The political events which determined the fate of the Polish coronation insignia and, of course, the Szczerbiec as well now proceeded at a quick pace. In 1794, Tadeusz Kościuszko, a hero in the War of American Independence and a participant in the struggle with Russia in 1792, declared a Polish national uprising on the Market Square in Cracow. With just a small number of regular army units and scythe-bearing peasant recruits called to arms from around Cracow, Kościuszko managed to defeat the Russians at Raclawice. The significance of this victory was more moral than strategic. Despite the fact that the uprising was directed against Russia, the Prussian armies joined the fight, and Kościuszko lost two battles and was taken prisoner by the Russians. The Prussian king, Frederick Wilhelm II, the nephew and heir to Frederick II, himself a fierce enemy of Poland, ordered Cracow to be occupied. The city was taken on June 15, and Count Ludwig Anton von Hoym was made its governor. The occupation lasted until January 5, 1796; the main goal of the Prussians was the pillaging of Cracow, especially of the Crown Treasury. This was what the Prussian king was most interested in, but he had to hurry, as Prussia was in stiff competition with Austria, its partner in the partition of Poland. Austria's army was stationed just across the Vistula River in Podgórze. The Prussian plan was carried out in a precise fashion, in secret. On October 8 Prussian general von Rütz informed his king: "I report, most humbly, that the Polish state insignia were sent from here to Breslau on October 4 [...]. In keeping with His Most High Lordship's orders, we set about performing our duties with the utmost care [...] the greatest difficulty was had in the breaking down of six doors set up with iron fittings and elaborate locks as well as the breaking apart of the iron trunk in which

the insignia were kept. To this end an assistant locksmith from Breslau was engaged. Previously sworn in, he will be sent back immediately".²⁰

The entire operation was personally supervised by Governor von Hoym, his personal carriage having transported the spoils at the crucial moment to his residence. No doubt the point here was not that these were the symbols of Polish royalty but rather that the gold was worth a fortune. The Prussians were not interested in the objects in the Crown Treasury that did not shine with gold and precious stones, though both the Szczerbiec and the sword belonging to Sigismund the Old were definitely taken along with the aforementioned trunk and its regalia.

The Polish insignia, which were transported from Breslau to Berlin, were hidden in the utmost secrecy in the treasury of the Prussian king, and it was only in 1811, in the face of the disastrous situation of the state – oppressed by the French emperor, Napoleon – that they were melted down to obtain gold for coins. The precious stones and pearls were offered to Prussian princesses or sold off. Sigismund's sword remained in the Hohenzollern collection, whereas the Szczerbiec was sold.

The Poles could not believe in the loss of their dearest national symbols. A legend arose in which the insignia and the Szczerbiec were hidden in a secret place just before the Prussian invasion. This belief lasted for a long time. It was passed on by word of mouth, through literature and even by way of specific search missions undertaken while Poland was an independent state ruled by Marshal Józef Piłsudski. This was the case even though Lucjan Siemieński, as early as 1879, published the memoirs, as mentioned earlier, of the cantor of Cracow Cathedral, Franciszek Xawery Kratzer.²¹

The destruction of the Polish insignia constituted the symbolic act of extermination of the Polish kingdom. It was, simultaneously, a barbaric act of greed for gold and precious stones. It was also an expression of extreme hatred, kindled mainly by Frederick II, one of the agents behind the partitions of Poland. The destruction of the regalia, tied to Holy Roman Emperor Otto III and enshrined in a cult with an almost religious air, was also an act of suicide as it was directed against the immemorial mystique of the European crowns, of which the Prussians were also followers. On January 5, 1796, on the strength of the last partition treaty, the Prussians handed Cracow over to the Austrians. The Austrian troops, led by Baron Foulon, entered the city three days later. Foulon immediately asked for the keys to the Crown Treasury and for the insignia to be handed over to him. The Municipal Council, led by Mayor Matias Bayer, selected a deputation for the opening of the treasury by commission. It was the first time that the city government entered into the competence of the no longer extant Diet and government of the Republic of Poland, acting as the legal representative of a Polish society stripped of its statehood. In this respect the role of the city government would grow continually for the

duration of the Partitions, and it was in this way that the city took charge of its historical mementoes, the end result of which would be the founding of the National Museum.

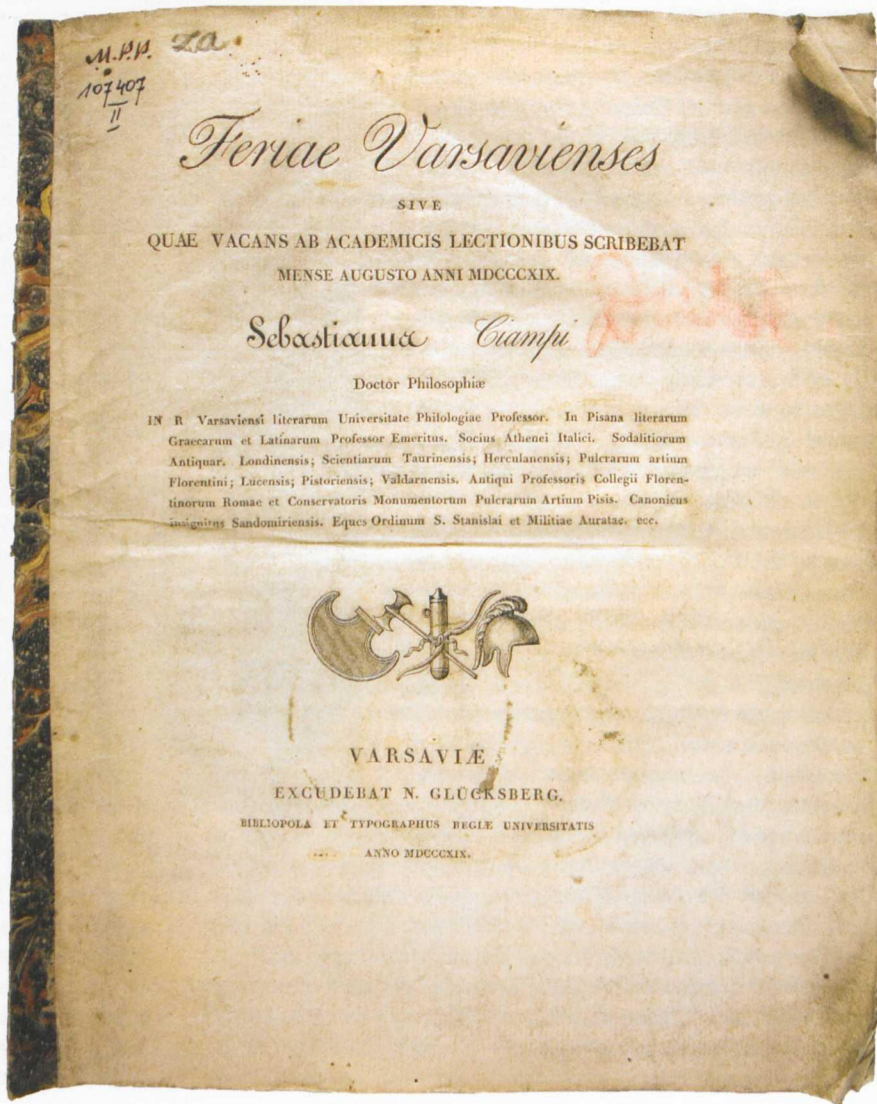
Participants in the commission made a very detailed inspection of the three chambers of the treasury and in an extensive report described the extent of the devastation – the coffers which had been opened and emptied – and confirmed the presence of various objects which had been left behind. Tadeusz Czacki appeared in Cracow soon afterwards, no doubt alarmed by the news of the dramatic events. He then attempted to gain the permission of Emperor Francis II for the removal of the abandoned objects from the treasury. They later made their way to the Temple of Sibyl in Puławy where Princess Izabela Czartoryska put them in the place of honour.²² These pieces consisted of, among other things, the two original swords which had been sent by the grand master of the Teutonic Knights before the Battle of Grunwald, and the blade of a consecrated sword, offered to King Stefan Batory by Pope Gregory XIII.

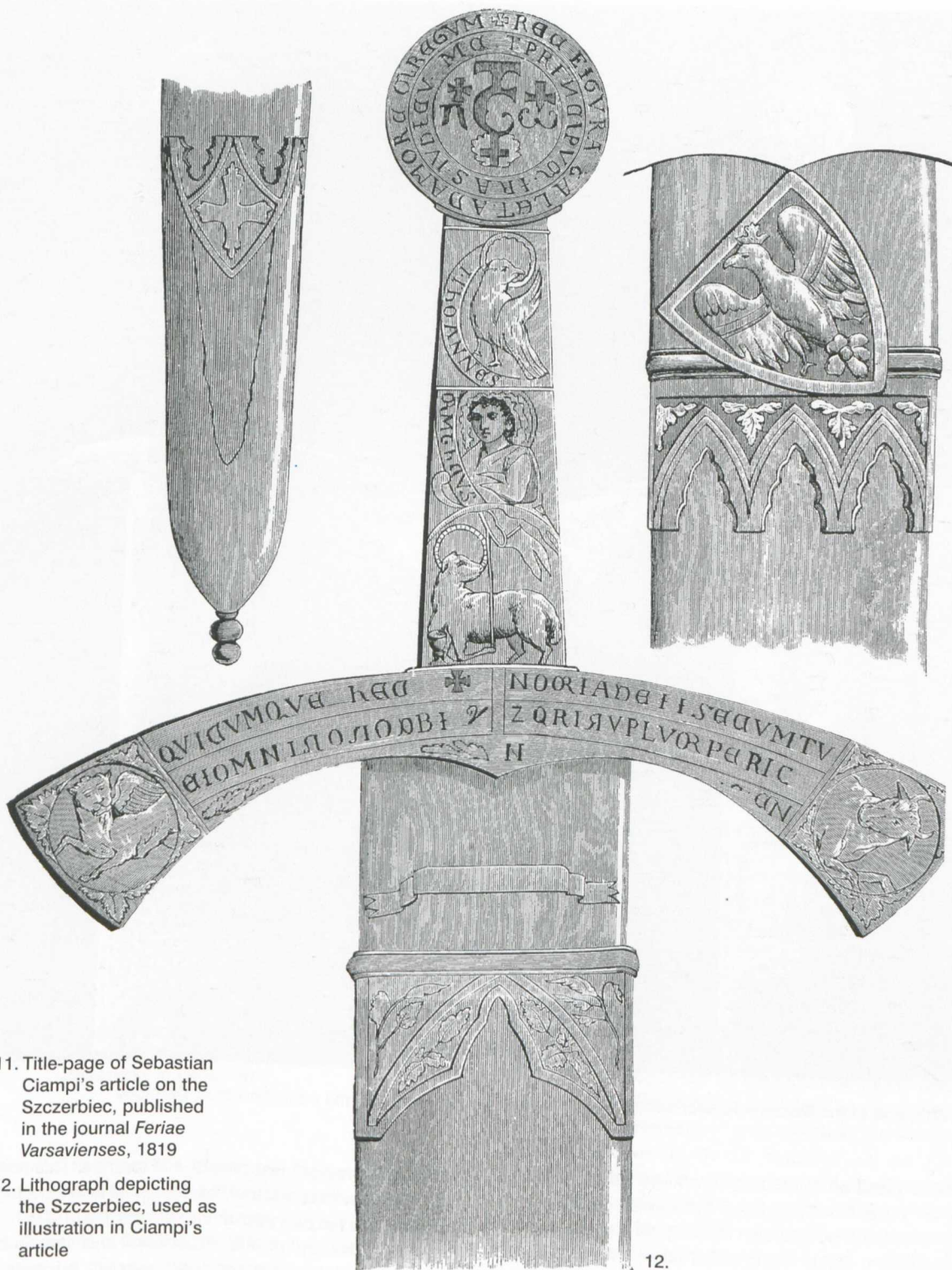
The Szczerbiec appeared again in 1819 as the property of the Russian aristocrat Duke Dmitry Lobanov-Rostovsky – the Minister of Justice and a confidant of Czars Alexander I and Nicholas I – who paid frequent visits to the court in Berlin. Lobanov showed the sword to General Wincenty Krasiński in Warsaw, offering it up for sale. He declared that he had come into possession of the sword in Moscow, for 4000 rubles, from a certain Armenian who had apparently found the sword during a campaign in Serbia in the years 1811–1812 in a trench just outside Rusçuk, a fortress on the Danube River in present-day Ruse in Bulgaria. This story seemed highly suspicious to the general, a vintage weapons collector. He kept the sword to run some tests and ordered a likeness to be made out in the military's lithographic institute. Owing to the number of Latin inscriptions on the hilt, the general showed the prints to a professor at the University of Warsaw, the eminent classical philologist Sebastian Ciampi. It was in this way that the first academic treatise in Latin appeared on the Szczerbiec. Entitled *Gladius Antiqui Operis Illustratur*, it was published in Warsaw and later in Milan [Figs 11–12].²³

Ciampi mostly dealt with commenting on the marks and inscriptions on the sword. In comparison with the documentation provided by Werner, some changes had been made to the plates on the hilt: the symbols of the Evangelists John and Matthew appeared on

the obverse side of the sword, and of Mark and Luke on the reverse side. Ciampi could not distinguish the Szczerbiec from other swords, but in the conclusion he mentioned the Orders of the Knights Templar, the Knights of St John of Jerusalem and the Teutonic Knights. Most of his commentary was devoted to the White Eagle as a symbol of the Polish people. He ruled out the possibility of this being the royal sword.

Krasiński, having gained renown in the time of Napoleon as the commander of a regiment of light cavalrymen in the Polish Imperial Guard, was now cooperating with the Russians during the existence of the Congress Kingdom and had received the Order of St Anne as well as the function of adjutant to the czar. In addition to hosting a well-known literary salon in Warsaw, he was a member of the Society of Friends of Learning, the founder

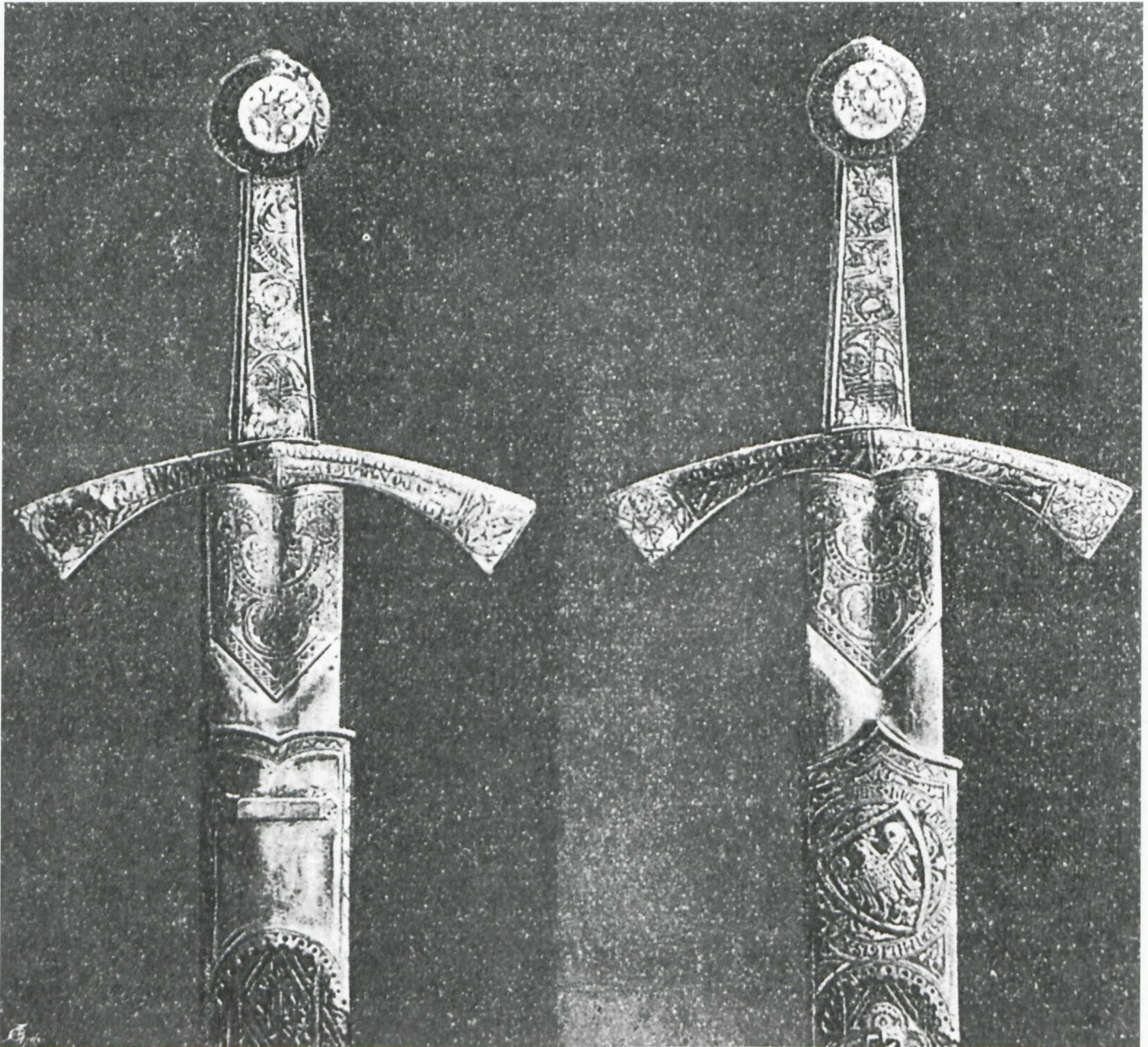




11. Title-page of Sebastian Ciampi's article on the Szczerbiec, published in the journal *Feriae Varsavienses*, 1819

12. Lithograph depicting the Szczerbiec, used as illustration in Ciampi's article

12.



13. The first photograph of the Szczerbiec after some alterations made to the sword in the collection of A. Demidov

of a splendid library and an aficionado of vintage weapons. Not trusting Lobanov, he did not purchase the sword. In the end, Lobanov, after a some time (before 1840), sold the sword to his fellow countryman, Duke Anatole Demidov, the owner of an artistic collection with an excellent gallery of paintings in the

San Donato region, just outside of Florence. This collection was begun by Anatole's father, Nicholas, whose advisor was Jean Tastou, an art expert and archaeologist [Fig. 13].²⁴

In the hands of the Prussians and the Russians, the Szczerbiec underwent serious changes, successive owners



14. Colour lithograph of the Szczerbiec in the catalogue of the Collection Basilevsky in Paris, 1874

having attempted to erase the identity of the sword. Hence, above all, they removed from the hilt the plate with the name of Duke Boleslaus and covered the characteristic slit in the blade. What is odd, however, is that the shield with the Piast eagle was retained – either on the scabbard or on the blade – ultimate-

ly giving away the forgers. It is almost certain that the blade, upon leaving Wawel, was covered in rust but now it was to create a sensation amongst collectors. The initial efforts aimed at changing and adorning the sword were performed by an anonymous goldsmith in Dresden. It was he who removed the Boleslaus-inscribed side plates on the hilt and replaced them with plates with a geometric ornament. He thoroughly removed the corrosion and covered the slit in the blade with a damask plate. While he was at it he made, as a source of revenue, a dagger with a bone hilt that was a slightly altered replica of the hilt of the Szczerbiec. This dagger was purchased in 1869 in Dresden by Edward Rastawiecki and handed over to the collections of the Archaeological Cabinet at the Jagiellonian University. This replica of the Szczerbiec, or rather its handle, proves that the Szczerbiec had been altered in Dresden, either before it made its way into Lobanov's hands or at his command.²⁵

Demidov's advisor, the above-mentioned archaeologist Tastou, was tremendously interested in this latest addition to the gallery and wrote an opinion on it. He was deeply critical of the transformations that the sword had undergone. As for the sword itself, he first placed it with the Knights Templar, then with the Teutonic Knights. The current "Gothic" scabbard he found to be inappropriate for a "Romanesque" sword dating back to the thirteenth century. The new scabbard, according to a project by M. Gerente, was made by the famous goldsmith M. Morel. Along the throat of the scabbard he obliquely placed the shield with the White Eagle, around which ran an inscription similar in style to the inscriptions on the hilt: *Hic est gladius fortissimi militis Christi, sicut gladius Saulis* (Behold the sword of the most courageous of Christ's knights, just as the sword of Saul). This motto was taken from a tradition of the Teutonic Knights.²⁶

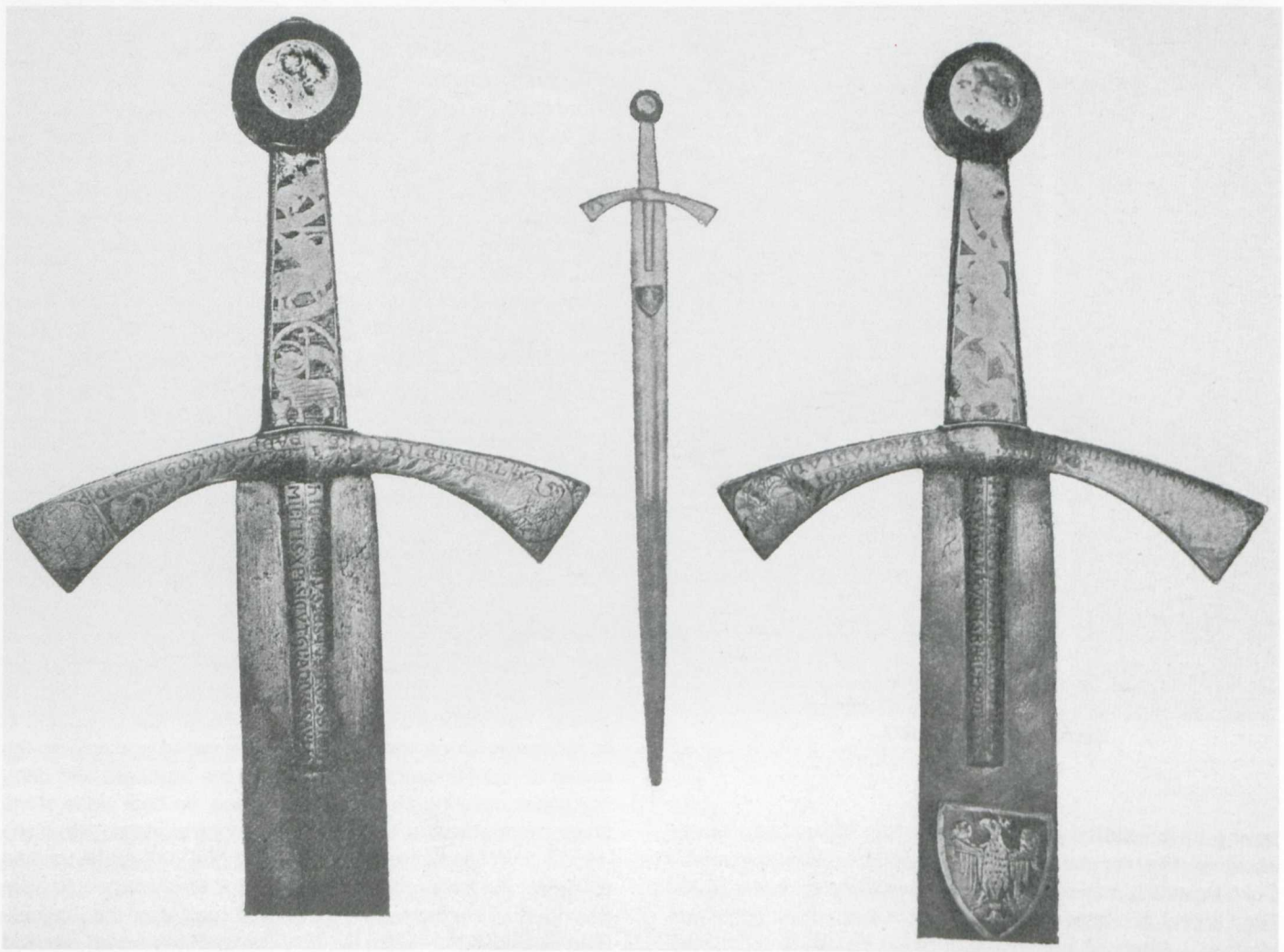
Anatole Demidov died in 1870 and his collection was put up for auction in Paris. A catalogue was provided, in which photographs of the Szczerbiec made by Goupil & Co. in Paris were reproduced. The sword was shown from both sides, while the scabbard, pulled downwards, revealed the upper part of the blade, including the hole covered with a damask plate. The sword was obtained for a high price, the Russian collector Alexander J. Basilevsky having paid 20,200 francs. Being a seasoned buyer on the French art market, he was aware of how valuable an item he had come across. He was not, however, satisfied with the form that the sword had taken thanks to Tastou. The scabbard as designed by Morel was off-putting in its modernity. Once again, therefore, the sword was put into the hands of "conservators" who removed the scabbard and damask plates covering the slit. In their place, on both sides of the blade, were attached elongated, gilded silver plates with niello inscriptions styled after those on the hilt [Fig. 14]. As Tastou had ultimately put forward the hypothesis that the sword could have belonged to Herman von Salz, grand master of the Teutonic Knights from 1210–1229, the new owner of the sword decided

to take advantage of Tastou's opinion and, once again, the mottoes of the Teutonic Knights were made use of, these mottoes coming from the same source as the inscription on the rejected scabbard. And so the following was inscribed on the metal plate on the obverse side of the sword: *Hic gladius est fortissimi militis XRI sicut gladius Saulis*, just as above this, on the reverse side of the sword: *Iste est gladius, quo ludas castra filiorum Israel protegebat* (Behold the sword with which Judas defended the fortress of Israel). Here reference is made to Judas Maccabeus, who had fought against the Romans.

Despite these changes, the shield with the White Eagle was kept, it being attached to the blade "on a wire". It was in this form that the Szczerbiec was displayed at an exhibition of Basilevsky's collection at Trocadéro in 1878. This is one of the crucial dates in the history of the Szczerbiec. Poles visiting the exhibit in Paris

immediately noticed the sword with its White Eagle and, associating it with the Szczerbiec, relayed the message to magazines in Warsaw.²⁷ The exhibit was accompanied by a beautifully printed catalogue²⁸, and articles about the sword also appeared in the Parisian press, for example, the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* [Fig. 15].

Shortly after the success of the Parisian exhibit, in 1884, Basilevsky's collection, along with the Szczerbiec, was purchased by the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, where the sword remained until the great repossession of Polish property that had been seized by the Russians since 1772. Following the Polish-Soviet War of 1920 a Polish delegation operating in Russia was occupied with seeking out and repossessing thousands of objects. The Szczerbiec, found in the Hermitage Museum (and regarded by the Russians as inauthentic²⁹), had not, however, found its way into Russia as plunder. Recovering



the sword became complicated, though in the end the Russians handed it over, accepting in exchange a painting by Fragonard, *The Stolen Kiss*, from the collection of King Stanisław August [Fig. 16]. Once again, this time from inside the tomb, the king rendered a service to the famous sword.

The photographs taken after the sword's repossession have survived [Fig. 17]. Here, the Szczerbiec looks just as it did in the Basilevsky catalogue. There is no scabbard, but the metal plate with the Piast coat of arms, originally belonging to the scabbard, is attached by wire to the blade. The Szczerbiec was transferred to Wawel and underwent conservation. It was at this point that the metal plates with the Teutonic-Knight inscriptions were removed and the metal coat of arms placed in the slit in the upper part of the blade – unfortunately, on the reverse side of the blade.³⁰ The Szczerbiec was placed in a supine position

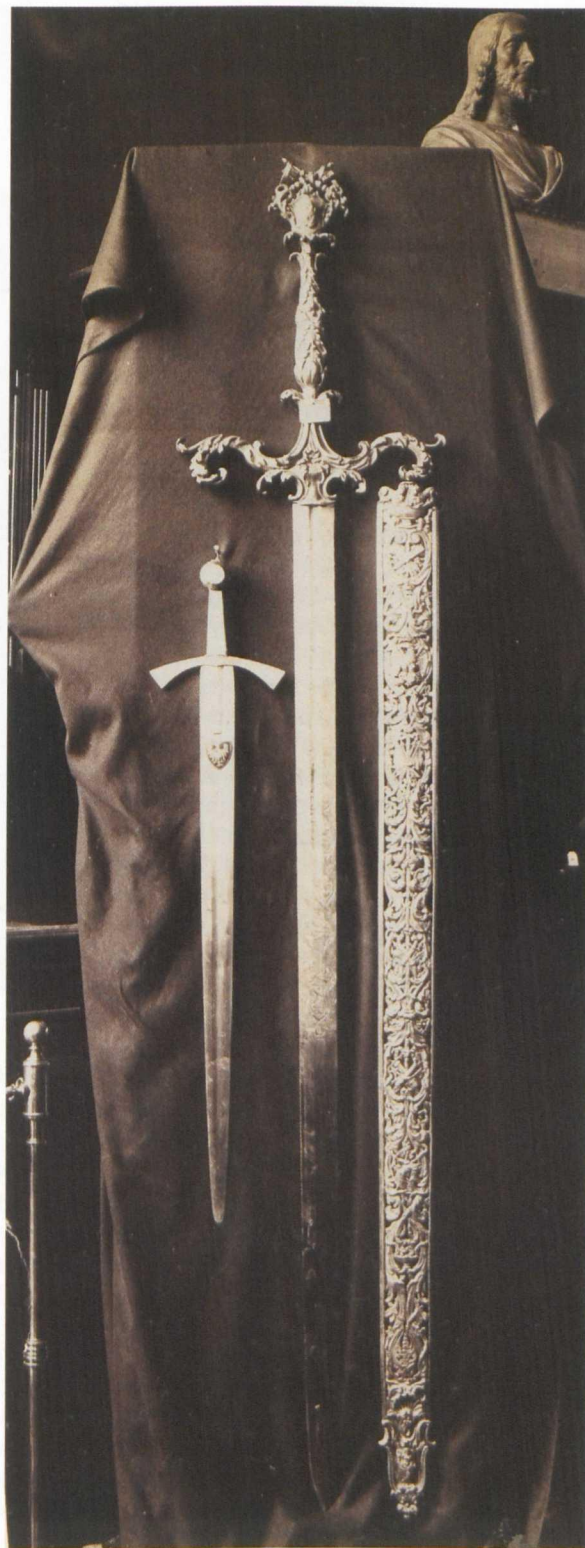
15. Photograph of the Szczerbiec taken when it was displayed at the exhibition of Basilevsky's collection at Trocadéro in Paris, 1878

16. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, «The Stolen Kiss», from the collection of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, exchanged for the Szczerbiec

17. Photographs of the Szczerbiec taken after its repossession



16.



17.

in the Gothic Hall of the former Crown Treasury, in an oblong display case. It became an important element in its newly furnished chambers and a pilgrimage site for citizens after the rebirth of their state.

When it looked as if there was going to be a war, Wawel was prepared for an evacuation of its most precious works, hence the Szczerbiec as well. Boxes were made for collection pieces and metal tubes for tapestries. However, the outbreak of war took Poles by surprise. Transportation vehicles could not be assured. In panic, transportation by water, down the Vistula River, was tried, as was, later, transportation by horse-drawn vehicles and finally transportation by public buses from Warsaw, accompanied by waves of refugees, in the direction of the Romanian border. And so began the dramatic odyssey of the Polish national treasures, including the Szczerbiec, which, as a national symbol, was given special attention. The convoy made its way from a port in Romania on the Black Sea in the direction of France, as that was where the Polish government of General Władysław Sikorski had established itself and where a new army was being readied to fight against the Germans. These treasures were taken, with the knowledge of the French government, to the region of Aubusson, in the south of France. This was where the famous Gobelins factory was located. In 1940 the national treasures were once again under threat when Germany attacked France and quickly broke the French resistance, occupying Paris. General Sikorski appointed Karol Estreicher, an art historian from Cracow who had stood out for his courage and determination, in charge of saving the national treasures. Despite the chaos, he succeeded in obtaining the trucks necessary to transport the priceless load to Bordeaux, where, luckily, the Polish ship "Chorzów" was standing in port. On June 18, 1940 it set sail for London. It was an extremely dangerous voyage due to the threat of German airplanes and submarines. The Szczerbiec was taken out of its box, packed up and tied to a plank. A bottle with a message inside was attached to it in case of a catastrophe. Fortunately, the ship made it to England. A further evacuation to Canada was decided on using the Polish ship "Batory", which was accompanied by an allied convoy. The Canadian government took care of the Polish treasures, which survived the war. Troubles arose later when Poland found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence and it seemed as though the treasures could fall into enemy hands. After long negotiations, the box carrying the Szczerbiec finally returned in January 1959,



18.

18. The Szczerbiec, brought back to Warsaw from Canada in 1959, examined by art historians and conservators

19. Replica of the Szczerbiec, Cracow, The Jagiellonian University Museum

being personally escorted by Prof. Jerzy Szablowski – the director at the time of the collection at Wawel Royal Castle – on the ship "Krynica" [Fig. 18].³¹

In 2008 an unexpected thing occurred: friends from America returned a replica of the Szczerbiec, made on the basis of the dagger that Edward Rastawiecki purchased in 1873, to the Jagiellonian University Museum [Fig. 19]. My in-depth article appeared that same year in *Urbs Celeberrima*, the commemorative book in honour of the 750th anniversary of the new founding of Cracow. The aim then was to place the metal plate



19.

with the Piast coat of arms on the correct, obverse side of the sword. Prof. Jan Ostrowski, director of Wawel Royal Castle, called a commission of conservators to examine the sword. The research results were sensational. Among other things, the blade type was established and the hilt was found to have been altered, particularly the sword's grip.

Interpretations

Since the 1870s, an enormous literature on the Szczerbiec has come into existence. It would not be sensible to quote here all the meandering thoughts that have arisen both in the minds of scholars as well as amateurs. They can roughly be divided into two camps: the works of authors who have accepted the authenticity of the Szczerbiec kept at Wawel Royal Castle and the publications of those who have doubts or are decidedly in favour of its inauthenticity and who believe that it is the so-called Radziwiłł replica, having first been located in the treasury in Zolkiew and then later in Nesvizh. Amongst those in the first group the study by Jan Niepomucen Sadowski (d. 1897)³², a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow, leads the field. In terms of methodology and substance, it was an exemplary work that came about as the result of an insightful interpretation of the written and iconographic sources.

Sadowski never had an opportunity to examine the sword directly and was not aware of Werner's fundamental drawing – still hidden in the storerooms of St Petersburg – nor did he describe the sword as a hopologist; weapons simply weren't his field of expertise. His whole attention was focused on the emblems and inscriptions that were located on the sword, and it was in them that he sought the secrets of the Szczerbiec, which he had wanted, at all costs, to resolve. He examined, above all, the marks on the pommel, on the obverse side of the sword. He came to the conclusion that the most important was the mark of the T – turning at the bottom into a large letter G – taking this monogram to be the mark for St Anthony the Hermit. Here, the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* obviously denoted Christ as according to the Apocalypse of St John. At the bottom, the fourth mark is the Greek cross on a rose, used by the Teutonic Knights. Around the edge of the pommel runs a Latin inscription: *Haec figura valet ad amorem regum et principum iras iudicum* (Thanks to this mark one wins over the love of kings and princes and restrains the anger of judges). The fact that judges are mentioned here induced some successive researchers to recognize the Szczerbiec as a typical sword of justice. Sadowski related the message in this inscription to the feud between the Teutonic Knights, who were searching for a place for themselves in Hungary after having left Palestine in the years 1199–1219, and King Andrew II, with whom they had entered into a dispute. For Sadowski, the year 1219 was the date *terminus ad quem* of



20.



21.

20. Pommel, front view.
Photo: S. Michta,
Wawel Royal Castle

21. Pommel, back view.
Photo: S. Michta,
Wawel Royal Castle

the creation of the sword. Not less of a problem than the mysterious figures on the pommel [Figs 20–21] were the inscriptions on the quillons [Figs 22–23]. Sadowski ultimately interpreted them as being a mixture of Latin words as well as corrupted Hebrew in Latin script, representing the secret names – reserved only for Him – given to God and written down in the Old Testament. He also suggested a cabalistic secrecy in the words, and in order to discover it he made use of original Hebrew texts. On the obverse side of the sword [Fig. 22] he deciphered the following inscription on the quillons: *Quicumque haec* [here, a small cross] *nomina Dei I secum tulerit, nullum periculum ei omnino nocebit* (Whoever will carry these names of God with him, no danger will harm him). According to Sadowski, the phrase *nomina Dei I* refers to Jehovah as this “I” is the first letter of the *Tetragrammaton* YHWH (Yahweh). This name, shrouded in the deepest secrecy, was not uttered by Jews reading the books of the Old Testament; in its place, the words *Adonai* or *Elohim* were used. It must be emphasized – something that Sadowski paid no heed to – that in the word “deii” in the quoted inscription both “i”s are next to one another.

On the quillons, on the reverse side of the sword [Fig. 23], the following words can be seen: *Con cit omon Eeve Sedalai Ebrebel* (in fact *Ebrehel*). The first three words can be read in two different ways: either as the shortened and twisted words *Conor citare nomina*, which means: “I dare to utter the name”, or

in Hebrew in Latin script as *Kone zitu omon*, which means: “an ardent faith they awaken”. Three divine names are then listed: *Eeve*, which in Hebrew is *eyr asher eye* [...] *wa eye* (*I am that I am* or *I am*), as well as the remaining names: *Sedalai* (*Shadi Elhoi*) and *Ebrehel* (*Ad Radi El*).

Having investigated the history of the sword, Sadowski suggested that it came into Duke Konrad Mazowiecki’s possession from the Teutonic Knights, after which it was handed down to Mazowiecki’s son Boleslaus (hence the record on the lost metal plate of the handle, noted down by Przybylski) before it finally became the property of his nephew, Ladislas the Ell-High, and was used by him during the coronation ceremony in 1320.

The crucial point in Sadowski’s treatise concerned the reading of the word “Deii” as “Dei I”, in other words, God Yahweh – if the letter “I” was regarded as the first sound of the *Tetragrammaton* Yahweh. However, since the word “Deii” was simply an orthographic mistake – as interpreted in Darcel and Basilevsky’s catalogue – Sadowski’s entire conception of the *Tetragrammaton* would collapse. It was, however, enticing. In keeping with neoromanticism, then still prevailing in European culture, Sadowski’s reading introduced an aura of secrecy and cabalism to the Szczerbiec which was difficult to resist. Successive researchers who, either in whole or only in part, rejected Sadowski’s theses left his concept of the *Tetragrammaton* alone, as a result of a misunderstanding applying it to the emblems located on the



22. Quillons, front view. Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle

23. Quillons, back view. Photo: S. Michta, Wawel Royal Castle



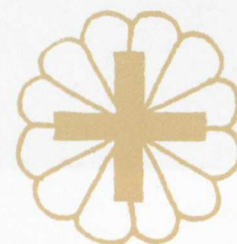
obverse side of the pommel. Everyone repeated it unquestioningly, including the author of this text in a commentary to the *Szczerbiec* printed in a hoplology textbook from 1975.³³

Generally speaking, Poles were not thrilled with Sadowski's treatise. How could one concur with a thesis in which the *Szczerbiec*, the national palladium, was a sword belonging to the Teutonic Knights with – to make matters worse – Jewish inscriptions on it. Things now took on a political aspect. People started to concentrate on the information from the inventory description of the Radziwiłł replica, which read: *Iste est gladius Principis et haeredis Boleslai Ducis Poloniae et Masoviae Lanciciae* (This is the sword of the prince and heir Boleslaus, Duke of Poland, Masovia and Łęczyca). A Piast duke with just such a title did not, however, exist. Therefore, attempts were made to determine who that Piast owner of the sword might have been. This question fascinates researchers of the *Szczerbiec* to this day. Interest in the sword always increased whenever it was returned to Wawel. First after it had been taken back out of the hands of the Bolsheviks in 1924 and then later, after World War II, when it was torn away from Canada. Historians, heraldists, palaeographers have all been unable to deal with the problem.

Finally, hoplologists started to make their voices heard, among them the eminent medievalist Andrzej Nadolski, who, unlike many of his predecessors, actually had an opportunity to examine the sword directly at Wawel.³⁴ He pointed out that the sword was of relatively small size: its entire length was 98.4 cm, the length of the blade was 82 cm and the width of the blade, at its widest point, was 5 cm. He was of the belief that the blade had been subject to intensive cleaning and that the slit in the upper part of the blade was the result of corrosion. He declared himself in favour of the authenticity of the *Szczerbiec* and classified it according to sword typology in use. He compared it to royal swords from around the thirteenth century taken from tombs in Spain. He connected the sword with Boleslaus, the son of Konrad Mazowiecki, and did not see a problem with accepting a local, Polish origin for the *Szczerbiec*. In his next article, in 1992, he pointed, however, to Bolesław Pobożny (Boleslaus the Pious), Duke of Greater Poland, as the original holder of the sword.³⁵ It was his daughter Jadwiga whom Ladislas the Ill-High wed, and it is highly probable that it was Ladislas father-in-law from whom he received the

sword, which he then used at his coronation. Not only Nadolski but also other researchers of this era, describing the symbols on the handle, have kept to the term *Tetragrammaton* first proposed by Sadowski. This is also true of the author Jerzy Lileyko.³⁶ I proposed a new look at this issue in the aforementioned treatise on the *Szczerbiec*.

I received a copy of the *Journal of Rosicrucian Studies* from Igo Feldblum from Haifa in which R. T. Prinke proves a connection between the symbols on the *Szczerbiec* and the emblems used by the Knights Templar and the Rosicrucians.³⁷ It was their symbol that was a Greek cross on a rose blossom [Fig. 24]. Another piece of evidence was the ring with the seal of the Knights Templar with the mark of both an *alpha* and an *omega* with crosses, as printed by Piotr Stanisławski [Fig. 25].³⁸ We have come full circle; we return to the opinion of Jean Tastou,



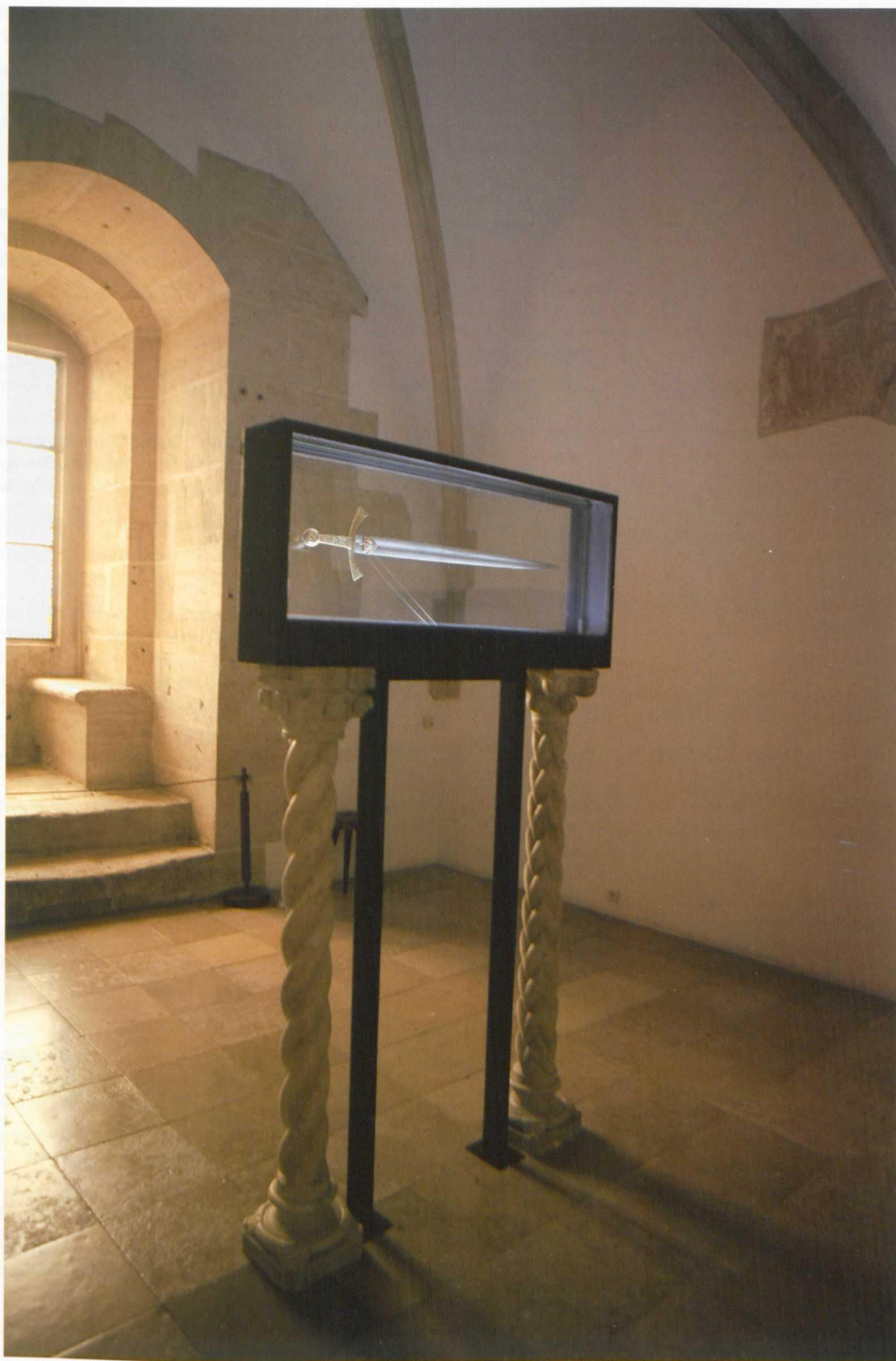
24.

24. Cross of the Knights Templar (after Prinke)

25. Ring with the seal of the Knights Templar

the archaeologist working in the service of Demidov, one of the owners of the *Szczerbiec*. In the thirteenth century besides the Teutonic Knights, the Knights Templar also had their holdings of land in Poland, and it was they who defended their new country against attack by the Mongols in 1241. They had close relations to the Piast dukes and it is highly probable that, after being put down in dramatic fashion³⁹, as a result of interference on the part of King Philip the Fair, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, they handed their ceremonial sword over to Duke Boleslaus.

26. The Szczerbiec on display at Crown Treasury, Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle



Translator's Note: The Szczerbiec (pronounced: Shtcherbyets) has been variously translated into English as the "Jagged Sword", "Notched Sword" or simply "Polish Coronation Sword". In this article, the Polish name for the sword will be used.

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- 9 Z. Żygulski, "Pamiętki wawelskie w zbiorach puławskich [Wawel Mementoes in the Puławy Collection]", *Studia do Dziejów Wawelu*, vol. II, 1960, pp. 377–413.
- 10 This sword, looted by the Prussians in 1795, was later added to the Hohenzollern Museum in Berlin. It was salvaged in 1945 after the Red Army captured Berlin and was later found in the antique trade market in Hamburg. There it was noticed by John Hayward, an outstanding expert on militaria and artistic crafts and the curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He recognized the item without difficulty and sold it back to the Poles concentrated around the Sikorski Institute in the capital of England. The sword was returned to Wawel.
- 11 F. Kopera, *Dzieje Skarbcza Koronnego, czyli insygniów i klejnotów koronnych Polski* [The History of the Crown Treasury: the Insignia and Polish Crown Jewels], Cracow, 1904; O. Balzer, *Skarbiec i archiwum koronne w dobie przed Jagiellońską* [The Treasury and the Royal Archives in the Era Preceding the Jagiellons], Lvov, 1917.
- 12 The actual copy of the Szczerbiec as ordered by Jan III is not documented and the only evidence of the replica's existence is its description in the aforementioned inventory, currently located in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.
- 13 *Pod jedną koroną. Kultura i sztuka w czasach unii polsko-saskiej* [Under One Crown. Culture and Art during the Polish-Saxon Union], exh. cat. Royal Castle in Warsaw, Warsaw, 1999.
- 14 The documentation of the regalia made by K. J. Werner including the faithful representation of the Szczerbiec, along with the king's archives were taken to Saint Petersburg and returned only after the Treaty of Riga. They are kept in the Print Room of Warsaw University Library and were made available to the author of this study, for which he would like to express his thanks to Dr. Jolanta Talbierska.
- 15 This drawing was published for the first time in Lileyko, *op. cit.*, p. 67, fig. 59.
- 16 Lileyko, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
- 17 *Ibidem*, p. 115. The author of the present article was the curator of the millennial exhibit "Treasures from Poland" in Chicago in 1966, at which the sceptre of King Stanisław was on display. An American physicist, intrigued by this antique piece, came forward to comment on the exceptionally rare spiral cracks in the stone.
- 18 M. Morełowski, "Losy Skarbcza Koronnego od czasu rozbiorów [The Fate of the Crown Treasury since the Partitions]", *Sprawozdania Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie*, vol. 9, Lvov, 1930; K. Estreicher, "Zniszczenie polskich insygniów koronacyjnych [The Destruction of the Polish Coronation Insignia]", *Przegląd Współczesny*, vol. 52, 1935; *idem*, *The Mystery of the Polish Crown Jewels*, London, 1944. A thorough report on the results of this research: Rożek, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
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- 21 Cf. n. 20.
- 22 Z. Żygulski Jr., *Dzieje zbiorów puławskich. Świątynia Sybilli i Dom Gotycki* [The History of the Puławy Collection. The Temple of Sibyl and the Gothic House], Cracow, 2009.
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