

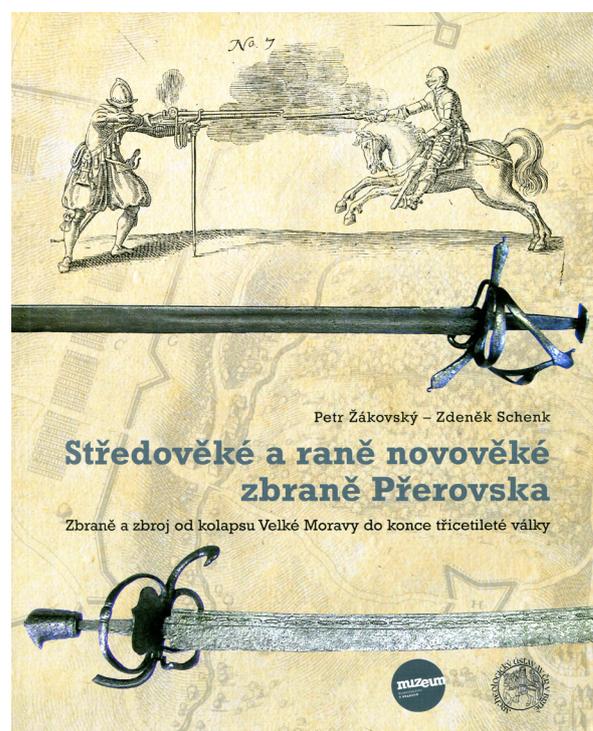
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**A FEW REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK P. ŽÁKOVSKÝ, Z. SCHENK,  
STŘEDOVĚKÉ A RANĚ NOVOVĚKÉ ZBRANĚ PŘEROVSKA. ZBRANĚ A ZBROJ  
OD KOLAPSU VELKÉ MORAVY DO KONCE TŘICETILETÉ VÁLKY.  
PŘEROV, BRNO 2017, PP. 175.**

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The interest in historical weaponry on the territory of the Kingdom of Bohemia has a long tradition. Although classic studies include primarily the works by Jan Durdík<sup>1</sup> or Eduard Wagner, Zoroslava Drobná and Jan Durdík<sup>2</sup> these were written as early as the 1950s and, with time, have become fairly outdated. However, in recent years, Czech archaeologists have undertaken research into medieval weaponry with fresh energy, which has resulted in cataloguing<sup>3</sup> and publishing monographs<sup>4</sup> on different types of weapon. The increased interest in historical weaponry on the territory of the Czech Republic is also related directly to work, begun in 2000, aimed at inventorizing the collection of militaria from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. A representative of the new generation who particularly stands out in these activities is Petr Žákovský, an employee of Archeologický ústav Akademie věd of the Czech Republic in Brno. Although the main scope of his interests is the Medieval and Renaissance cold weapon, he is also studying entire collections of historical weapons in local Czech and Moravian museums. In 2017, a study on



the elements of weaponry and equestrian equipment collected in Muzeum Komenského in Přerov and nearby smaller institutions. In total, it includes 420 finds, dating from the early Middle Ages (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries) to the end of the Thirty Years' War, that is around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first finds of ancient weaponry in Přerov were collected at the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> Durdík 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Wagner et al. 1956.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Šnajdrová 2014.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Brych 2012.

19<sup>th</sup> century, often including older collections. Currently, they include mainly militaria from archaeological studies and metal detector searches.

The entire study is divided classically into chapters corresponding to individual weapon categories. They are preceded by an interesting chapter containing the most important information on political events – primarily of military character – in Přerov, which were crucial for depositing elements of weaponry in battlefields (pp. 12-20). At this location, the most important are military activities related to the Hussite Revolution (1419-1436) as well as the later war between George of Poděbrad and Matthias Corvinus (1467-1471). After these events, there was a peaceful period of more than a century, ending with intense military activity related to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

The analytical part of the work starts with a chapter on cold weapons (*Chladné zbraně*, pp. 21-29), i.e. swords, rapiers and falchions. Altogether, there are 54 finds which correspond to the general development trends of the Western European cold weapon. However, in comparison with the Polish Kingdom for instance, where in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the sword was replaced by the sabre,<sup>5</sup> in the case of Bohemia and Moravia its role is taken over by falchions and rapiers with complex hilts, definitely more typical of the Western-European military.

The next chapter concerns blunt weapons (*Úderné zbraně*, pp. 30-35). Traditionally, this type is represented by numerous axe heads. They are characterised by various shapes, adjusted to different functions, which is clearly visible in axes, for example. There are specimens used for both rough wood processing as well as for more precise carpentry. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century and later, during the Hussite Revolution, another type of blunt weapon became common, referred to as *palcát* in Czech written sources. The name is derived from the Hungarian word *pálca* referring to a stick, upon which a metal head of varied shape was mounted. *Palcát* was used by both foot-, and mounted soldiers. The weapon particularly often accompanies the activities of Jan Žižka, who undoubtedly used it.<sup>6</sup>

In the Medieval Czech Kingdom, an important role was also played by poles (*Dřevcové zbraně*, pp. 36-39) initially represented mostly by spears and lances. However here, similarly to blunt weapon, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries introduced great changes. We saw the appearance of pole weapons with complex heads, the most popular form of which was the halberd. It gained great popularity especially among the Hussite troops at

the time of the revolution, but it remained an important part of military equipment also in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Interesting finds also include spear heads fitted with brass plates with engraved names of their owners, attached to the sockets (e.g. the Silesian nobleman Kašpar Viškota). They may have been used as poles for standards and pennants and they certainly also raised the social status of their owners.

Among ranged weapons (*Střelné zbraně*, pp. 40-44), the majority of finds are related to the use of the crossbow. They include some remains of stocks and release mechanisms and the more numerous (131 pieces) arrowheads and bolts. Among bolts, there are some outstanding specimens with ornamented leaves, which were the signs of archer units or were used in archery contests.<sup>7</sup> The crossbow played an important military role in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly during the Hussite Revolution, when crossbow archers constituted about 25-20% of the strength of a combat wagon. From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, the crossbow started to slowly but gradually make way for the firearms. The great heyday of firearms took place during the Hussite Revolution (1419-1436). At that time, handheld firearms were already found in artillerymen's equipment equally frequently as the crossbow (*Palné zbraně*, pp. 45-52). The militaria found in Přerov also include interesting specimens of handheld firearms from a later period, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The remains of a wheellock pistol (barrel and lock) with some equipment (lock key) were found in a forest near Roštín. A Rudolph II coin found alongside them allows for the find to be dated to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

During the entire studied period, protective armour (*Ochranná zbroj a ochranné prostředky*, pp. 53-59) remained under the influence of Western European trends, which, in the case of early Middle Ages, means common use of chain mail, whereas in late Middle Ages and Renaissance we find gradually improved and modified forms of plate body armour. Among materials collected in the book, it is worth mentioning a set of torso armour from Žeravice. It consists of four cuirasses and two back plates, originally equipped with internal textile lining and hand protection sets, including some unique specimens, specially designed for jousting.

The last part (*Výstroj koně a jezdce*, pp. 60-64) concerns horse tack and horse-riding equipment, represented by spurs, stirrups and bits. A supplement to the

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Żygulski jun. 1975, 191; Nadolski 1984, 78-88.

<sup>6</sup> Wagner et al. 1956, 72, Table V:18; Dolejší and Křížek 2010, 71, 326-327; Šnajdrová 2014, 29, Figs. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Recently Polish author (Marek 2017, 155-157) have indicated that they may have functioned as "love bolts" or that they may have been used during tournaments. However, taking into consideration the scattering of the finds (mostly small centres in Bohemia and Moravia) these interpretations do not seem justified.

analytical part is the catalogue (*Katalog sbírkových předmětů*, pp. 68-163), which contains basic information on the finds, their origin and a concise description. Most of the collected militaria is documented accurately with well selected iconographic representations of the described weaponry forms. Carefully designed, the entire work makes the reader feel they have a book which presents in a professional and exceptionally accessible manner the militaria from Přerov and its vicinity against the background of materials from not only the Czech Kingdom, but also Central and

Western Europe. It remains to hope that the idea of inventorizing the collections of militaria in the Czech Republic will be continued with an equally satisfying result. Here it is worth reminding that work of a similar kind, aimed at creating a sort of corpus of sources for the history of ancient weaponry in Poland, was initiated as early as the 1960s by Andrzej Nadolski with Marian Głosek and Leszek Kajzer.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, for a long time this work has been discontinued, to the great detriment to Polish research into weaponry.

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<sup>8</sup> See Kajzer 2013.