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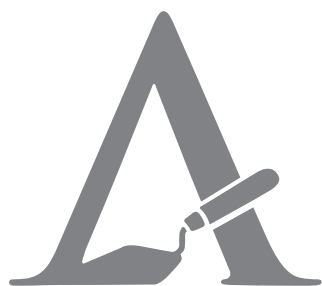
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RZESZÓW 2024



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Marek Florek

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Military Accessories from the “Tursko Castle” Near Połaniec, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. A Contribution to Research on Mongolian and Mongolian-Ruthenian Raids on the Sandomierz Lands in the 13th Century

Abstract

Florek M. 2024. Military Accessories from the “Tursko Castle” Near Połaniec, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. A Contribution to Research on Mongolian and Mongolian-Ruthenian Raids on the Sandomierz Lands in the 13th Century. *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoventia* 19, 131–141

The so-called Tursko Castle near Połaniec is the remnants of earth fortifications from the 17th century erected around an evangelical church. At the end of the 19th century it began to be associated with the Battle of Tursko, which took place during the first Mongolian raid in 1241. It was believed to be remains of a castle or stronghold located near the site of the battle, or the remnants of a Mongolian camp. At that time, no one knew where the clash had taken place. During a search for artefacts conducted within the perimeter of the castle in 2022–2023, a series of medieval military accessories were discovered. They included 12 tanged arrowheads and a fragment of a mace head. These artefacts should be associated with thirteenth-century Mongolian and Mongolian-Ruthenian raids on the Sandomierz lands.

Keywords: Middle Ages, military accessories, raids, Sandomierz lands, Battle of Tursko

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Introduction

The name “Tursko Castle” refers to the remains of earth fortifications located in a forest, ca. 8 km to the NE of Połaniec, at the border of the villages Tursko Małe, Tursko Wielkie, Tursko Kolonia and Strużki (Fig. 1). The discussed fortifications, which were probably never completed, date from the 17th century and were erected around an evangelical church built in ca. 1615 (Fig. 2). In the first half of the 19th century, between 1840 and 1849, the wooden church was dismantled due to its poor state of preservation and lack of worshippers. In the 1870s, the land on which the fortifications stand – together with the adjacent plots of land with residential and farm buildings – were sold by its proprietor, the local evangelical commune. As a result, they became part of the Staszów land as-

sets owned by the Potocki family before subsequently being acquired by the Radziwill family from Sichów. A forest was planted at that time and it is currently known as the “Tursko Castle” natural reserve (Florek 2005; 2023).

As early as at the end of the 19th century, that is 50 years after the dismantling of the evangelical church, the fortifications (Fig. 3, 4) surrounding the building began to be referred to as the “Castle” and associated with the Battle of Tursko. It took place on the 13th February 1241 and was one of the most important events of the first Mongolian raid on Polish territories, albeit little known (Krakowski 1956, 131–133; Florek 2007, 35; 2023, 13). According to Jan Wiśniewski, the author of a monograph on the Sandomierz decanate published in 1915, the fortifications are the remains of a stronghold or castle near which the battle was

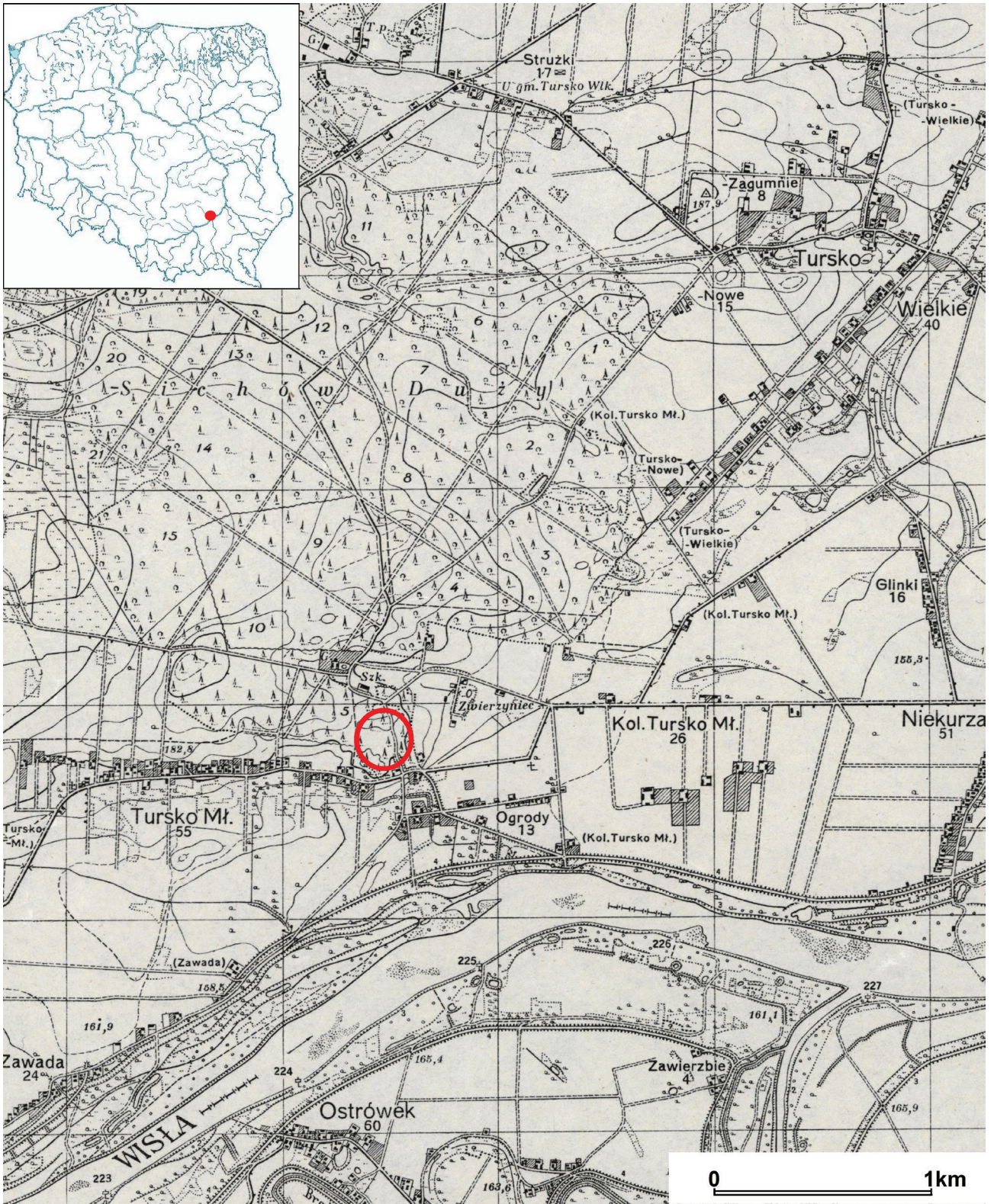


Fig. 1. Tursko Castle. Location on a topographic map of the Military Geographical Institute, Warsaw 1938 (prepared by the author).



Fig. 2. Tursko Castle. Location on Austrian map of West Galicia from 1801–1804 (so-called Hendlfeld's Map) with marked building of the evangelical church (prepared by the author).

fought (Wiśniewski 1915, 95–97). On the other hand, an alleged local tradition written down by the then parish-priest of the Niekrasów congregation (which included Tursko) says that within the perimeter of the castle there was a church dedicated to St. Michael, erected as a votive offering for the victory over the Mongols in 1241. Closed and abandoned after an interdiction was issued for the killing of a local priest, the church fell into ruin and was dismantled at the end of the 18th century (Wiśniewski 1915, 100; Florek 2005, 267). Nevertheless, no written sources mention a St. Michael's church having been built in Tursko or in its surroundings.

In 1955, a surface survey was conducted by Leszek Gajewski and Jan Machnik at the site of the castle and in its surroundings (Machnik 1957, 161–162). It did not lead to the discovery of any artefacts, but it confirmed that the stronghold had been fortified with a rampart. What is more, the scholars collected information on earlier serendipitous finds of weaponry of the "eastern type" at the site of the castle and in the nearby forests. In 1963, another surface survey in the vicinity of the castle was carried out by a team led by Elżbieta Dąbrowska (Ciuraszkiewicz *et al.* 1965;

Dąbrowska 1965, 25). It also did not result in any artefacts being found, and it was acknowledged that the fortifications were remains of an unspecified defensive structure from the Late Middle Ages, possibly built in the place of an earlier stronghold (Dąbrowska 1965, 25). At the same time, some publications started to refer to them as remains of a Mongolian military camp established in February 1241 (Łoziński *et al.* (ed.) 1962, 114).

In his report, J. Machnik presented a fallacious piece of information that the castle is located in Tursko Małe, although J. Wiśniewski had located it earlier in Tursko Wielkie. This mistake was the reason why E. Dąbrowska wrote about two different structures (Dąbrowska 1965, 25). Another duplication of strongholds in the vicinity of Tursko can be found in a paper by Jerzy Gąssowski, who mentioned three constructions of this type (a castle in Tursko Małe – after the publication by J. Machnik; quadrangular fortifications in Tursko Wielkie – based on a description in the Catalogue of Art Monuments; an unspecified rampart of earth in Tursko – a direct reference to the paper by J. Wiśniewski) (Gąssowski 1969, 396–397). These strongholds, together with other supposed earth for-



Fig. 3. Tursko Castle. Moat and rampart from the eastern side (photo by the author).



Fig. 4. Tursko Castle. South-eastern citadel (photo by the author).

tifications (which were in fact dikes left after former ponds or natural forms located in Strużki, Luszyca, Rudniki, Okrągła and Niekrasów) were thought to have comprised a system of defensive structures protecting the border of the Połaniec castellany (Gąsowski 1969, 397).

During the previously mentioned Battle of Tursko, on 13th February 1241, troops of knights from Kraków under the command of the voivode, Włodzimierz, clashed with Mongolian forces – led by Baidar – retreating from the area of Skalbmierz towards Sandomierz. Some sources mention that knights from Sandomierz under the leadership of the voivode Pakosław also participated in the battle. Although the Polish forces had the advantage in the first phase of the battle, it ended in their utter defeat – at least according to Jan Długosz (Labuda 1959, 205). The chronicler mentioned that after the initial triumph of the Polish knights – which led to them capturing the Mongolian camp and releasing the captives – they focused on plundering. This allowed the Mongolians to counterattack and win the battle. Even so, their losses were high enough to make them draw back towards Zawichost and then in the direction of the region of Sieciechów (Krakowski 1956, 131–133; Labuda 1959, 205; Florek 2007, 34–35).

The Mongols appeared for the next time near Tursko during another raid, in 1287–1288 (Krakowski 1956, 216; 1973, 202–203). The Mongolian forces, led by Talabuga and supported by Ruthenian troops of Lev Danyłovych, prince of Halych, Volodymir, prince of Volhynia, and Mstislav, prince of Lutsk, besieged Sandomierz. Having failed to take it, they sacked the surrounding area and headed towards Kraków where they were supposed to join the other group of the Mongolian army, led by Nogai, which had advanced from Przemyśl. However, the two armies never met and the author of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle attributed this failure to the “enmity” between Talabuga and Nogai and the fact that they “feared each other” (*Kronika halicko-wołyńska* 2017, 241). The chronicle says that the troops led by Talabuga initially headed towards Kraków, but they retreated in *Торжку* (*Gali’ko-Volins’kij litopis* 1994, 113). According to some historians, the locality in question is Tarczek near Bodzentyn (Żmudzki 2000, 456; *Kronika halicko-wołyńska* 2017, 240–241), but others claim it is Tursko near Połaniec (Krakowski 1973, 203; *Gali’ko-Volins’kij litopis* 1994, 113).

The description of the raid appears to clearly indicate that *Торжкоу* mentioned in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle should be associated with Tursko,

instead of Tarczek. The aim of both Nogai and Talabuga was to reach Kraków as quickly as possible. This means that Talabuga probably did not choose an indirect route which bypassed the Holy Cross Mountains from the north and west, but rather chose the shortest road from Sandomierz, which led along the Vistula (Tursko was one of the localities situated along this way). When he learned that he had been forestalled by Nogai – which most likely aggravated the mutual hostility between the two leaders – he resigned from moving forward against Kraków. Instead, he turned back near Tursko and focused on plundering the Sandomierz lands.

The written sources do not allow us to determine the precise location of the Battle of Tursko, especially since there have been two localities bearing this name since the Late Middle Ages: Tursko Wielkie and Tursko Małe. According to Długosz, the battle was fought at Tursko Wielkie (Labuda 1959, 205).

Previous discoveries and archaeological research in the vicinity of Tursko Wielkie and Tursko Małe did not contribute much to determining the location of the battle fought in 1241 or the locality reached by the Mongolian-Ruthenian forces during the raid from 1287–1288. Until recently, we did not know of any weapons of nomadic or Ruthenian origin except for some information collected in 1955 on discoveries of weaponry with an “eastern” character which had been found in the forests surrounding Tursko. Interestingly, military accessories that could be linked with the Mongols or Ruthenians were also not found at the site of the stronghold “Okop” in Winnica, located several kilometers from Tursko. This stronghold is associated with the castellan fortress in Połaniec, which according to written sources was destroyed during the raid of 1241 (Chomentowska and Michalski 1994, 90–94). Archaeological research conducted there in the 1960s and 1980s only resulted in finding a dozen or so iron sleeved crossbow boltheads (weapons used by Polish knights rather than by eastern invaders). These artefacts have never been published (cf. Strzyż 2006). They are stored in the Centre of Culture and Art in Połaniec.

Results of research conducted at the site of Tursko Castle in 2022–2023

In 2022–2023, research with the use of metal detectors was conducted on the premises of Tursko Castle. The research team included, among others, the members of the Holy Cross Exploration Group from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. The research was enabled by a permit issued by the Voivodeship Monument Con-

servator. It led to the discovery of a relatively modest yet interesting set of medieval weaponry:

- mace head (Fig. 5): made copper-alloy, fragmentarily preserved (the dimensions are not given because of the poor state of preservation);



Fig. 5. Tursko Castle. Fragment of a bronze mace (photo by the author).

- arrowhead 1 (Fig. 6: 1): tanged, made of iron; tang clearly distinct, square in cross-section; slender leaf, rhomboidal, widest at ca. one third of its length, having a rhomboidal cross-section; dimensions: total length – 100 mm, leaf length – 69 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 3 mm, max. width of the leaf – 12 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 4 mm; weight – 12.38 g;
- arrowhead 2 (Fig. 6: 2): tanged, made of iron; tang clearly distinct, circular in cross-section; slender leaf, rhomboidal, widest at ca. one third of its length and having a rhomboidal cross-section; lower edges of the leaf are slightly trimmed; dimensions: total length – 76 mm, blade length – 42 mm, tang diameter at mid-length – 3 mm, max. width of the leaf – 10 mm, thickness of the blade in the widest part – 4 mm; weight – 8.64 g;
- arrowhead 3 (Fig. 6: 3): tanged, made of iron; short tang, clearly distinct, square in cross-section; slender leaf, with a nearly rhomboidal outline, max. width of the leaf ca. at its mid-length; rhomboidal in cross-section, somewhat flat; dimensions: total length – 76 mm, leaf length – 60 mm, tang thickness at mid-length – 3 mm, max. width of the leaf 15 mm, blade thickness in the widest part – 3 mm; weight – 7.29 g;
- arrowhead 4 (Fig. 6: 4): tanged, made of iron; short tang, slightly distinct, square in cross-section; slender leaf, with a nearly rhomboidal outline, max. width above the middle of its length, rhomboidal in cross-section; dimensions: total length – 67 mm, leaf length – 56 mm, tang thickness – 2 mm, max. width of the leaf – 16 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 4.5 mm; weight – 8.92 g;
- arrowhead 5 (Fig. 6: 5): tanged, made of iron; tang clearly narrowing down towards the end, square in cross-section; lancet-shaped leaf, broken away near the end, rhomboidal in cross-section, somewhat flat; the place where the leaf meets the tang is marked with a type of a ring; dimensions: total length – 70 mm (originally ca. 73 mm), leaf length – 42 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 3.5 mm, max. width of the leaf – 13 mm, blade thickness in the widest part – 4 mm; weight 6.56 g;
- arrowhead 6 (Fig. 6: 6): tanged, made of iron; tang clearly distinct, slightly narrowing down towards the end, cross-section in the shape of a short rectangle; rhomboidal outline of the leaf, with the max. width ca. at mid-length, rhomboidal in cross-section; dimensions: total length – 68 mm, leaf length – 44 mm, tang cross-section at mid-length 3×2.5 mm, max. width of the leaf – 15 mm, leaf thickness in the widest part – 4.5 mm; weight – 8.81 g;
- arrowhead 7 (Fig. 6: 7): tanged, made of iron; clearly distinct tang, narrowing down towards the end, relatively short, square in cross-section; slender leaf, with a nearly rhomboidal outline, with the max. width slightly below its mid-length, rhomboidal in cross-section; dimensions: total length – 58 mm, leaf length – 40 mm, tang thickness – 2.5 mm, max. width of the leaf – 13 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 4 mm; weight – 5.66 g;
- arrowhead 8 (Fig. 6: 8): tanged, made of iron; clearly distinct tang, square in cross-section, narrowing down towards the end; slender, lancet-shaped leaf, rhomboidal in cross-section, somewhat flat; the place where the blade meets the tang is marked with a sort of a ring; dimensions: total length – 56 mm, leaf length – 40 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 3 mm, max. width of the leaf – 12 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 2 mm; weight – 4.46 g;
- arrowhead 9 (Fig. 6: 9): tanged, made of iron; tang slightly distinct, square in cross-section; slender leaf, with a nearly rhomboidal outline, with the max. width at ca. one third of its length, rhomboidal in cross-section; dimensions: total length – 56 mm, leaf length – 37 mm, tang thickness – 3 mm, max. thickness of the leaf – 13 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 3.5 mm; weight – 4.56 g;

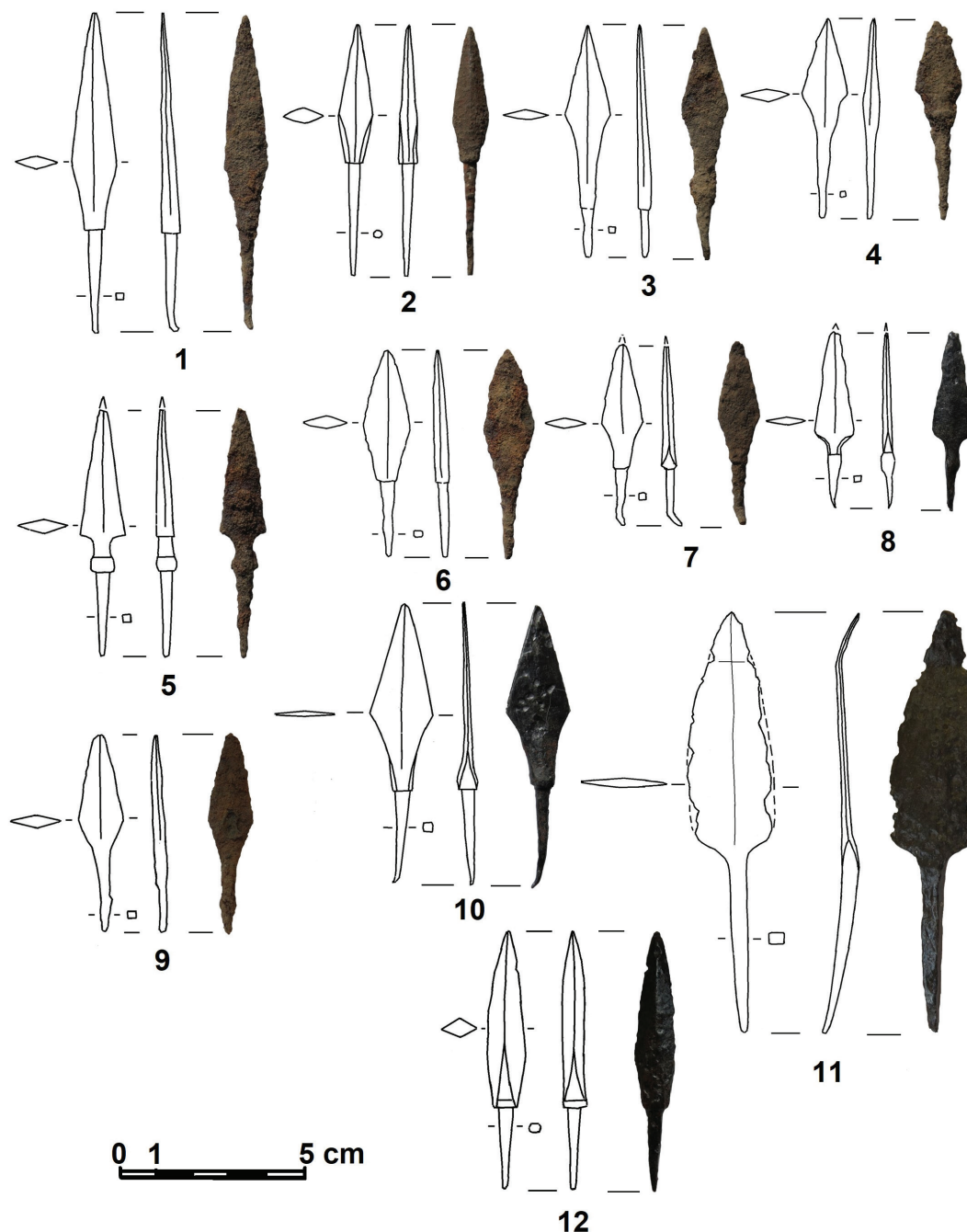


Fig. 6. Tursko Castle. Tanged arrowheads (prepared by the author).

- arrowhead 10 (Fig. 6: 10): tanged, made of iron; tang clearly distinct, square in cross-section; slender leaf, nearly rhomboidal in cross-section, widest ca. at its mid-length, resembling a flat rhombus in cross section, thickened in the place where it meets the tang; dimensions: total length – 86 mm, leaf length – 56 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 3 mm, max. leaf width – 19 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 2 mm; weight – 9.18 g;
- arrowhead 11 (Fig. 6: 11): tanged, made of iron; long tang, rectangular in cross-section, narrowing down towards the end; leaf-shaped leaf, resembling a flat rhombus in cross-section; dimensions: total length – 140 mm, leaf length – 75 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 5 mm, max. width of the leaf – 28 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 2 mm; weight – 27.23 g;
- arrowhead 12 (Fig. 6: 12): made of iron, tanged; clearly distinct tang, oval in cross-section, regularly narrowing down towards the end; slender leaf, with a nearly rhomboidal outline and max. width at ca. one third of its length, rhomboidal in cross-section,

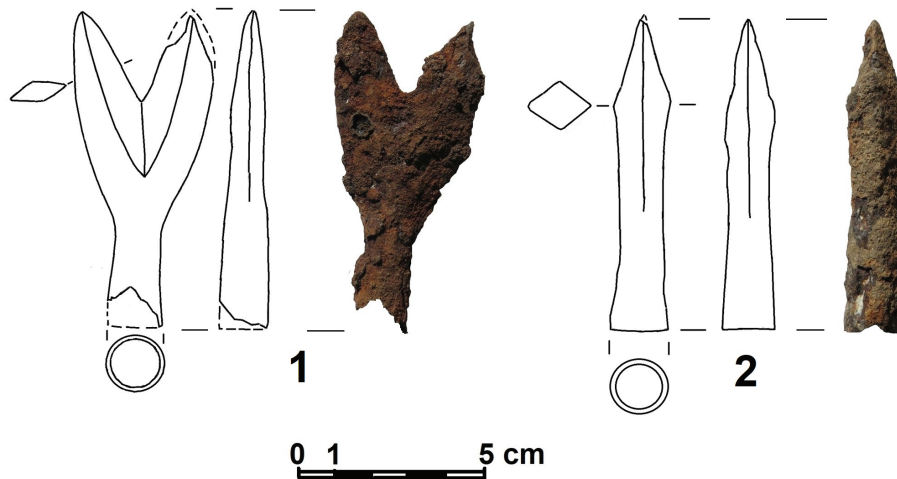


Fig. 7. Tursko Castle. Sleeved projectile heads (prepared by the author).

with a kind of a ring where the leaf meets the tang; dimensions: total length – 68 mm, leaf length – 45 mm, thickness of the tang at mid-length – 2.5 mm, max. width of the leaf – 10 mm, thickness of the leaf in the widest part – 5 mm; weight – 9.30 g;

- arrowhead or bolthead (Fig. 7: 1): made of iron, sleeved; sleeve circular in cross-section; bifurcated leaf (both ends are rhomboidal in cross-section); dimensions: total length – 83 mm, leaf length – 55 mm, sleeve diameter – 15 mm, max. width of the leaf – 35 mm, thickness of the leaf in the place of the bifurcation – 8 mm; weight – 48.54 g;
- bolthead (Fig. 7: 2): made of iron, sleeved; circular sleeve, turns gradually into the leaf, which has a similar thickness and rhomboidal cross-section, the leaf narrows down towards two thirds of its length; dimensions: total length – 83 mm, leaf length – 53 mm, sleeve diameter – 14 mm, cross-section of the leaf in the widest part – 14 × 15 mm; weight – 44.04 g.

Analysis

The fragment of the bronze mace head should be categorised as belonging to type IV (so-called star-shaped maces) of mace heads from medieval Ruthenia according to A. Kirpičnikov's typology (Kirpičnikov 1966, fig. 10). He dates them from the 12th century to the middle of the 13th (Kirpičnikov 1966, 55). According to R. Liwoch, the chronology of the head of type IV maces should be narrowed down to the first half of the 13th century, which may be used slightly longer (Liwoch 2006, 68). A similar mace head found in Veliky Novgorod is dated to the second half of the 13th

century (Artem'ev 1990, 12). However, A. Michalak dates the finds of heads of this type of maces from Polish lands to the period of the 12th–14th centuries (Michalak 2005, 194).

In the Middle Ages, maces were used both as weapons and signs of power (cf.: Nadolski 1954, 70; Żygulski 1982, 51). Mainly maces with heads made of bronze, especially the so-called star-shaped maces, are considered as representing the latter category. The state of preservation of the mace from Tursko Castle indicates that it might have been broken as a result of hitting something hard, possibly in a fight.

Star-shaped maces are known primarily from medieval Russia (Kirpičnikov 1966; Liwoch 2006). The head of the mace found at Turski Castle probably also comes from Russia, although there are similar examples known from neighboring countries, including Hungary (Kovács 1971), Bulgaria (Popov 2015) and other Polish lands (Michalak 2005). Maces were also used by the Mongols (Tatars) but those attributed to them have a different shape (Świętosławski 1996, 38–39).

Tanged arrowheads were especially popular in the Early Middle Ages among nomadic tribes from Eastern Europe, including Ruthenia, who had actually borrowed them from nomads, but they are also found across other territories, e.g., in Scandinavia. (Medvedev 1966; Sedov (ed.) 1987; Świętosławski 1997, 74; 2006, 66–68; Linbom 2009). Copies found in Polish lands are usually interpreted as evidence of the 13th-century Mongol (Tatar) and Mongol-Russian invasions, or earlier ones, primarily of the Pecheneg, Polovtsian, and Hungarian nomads (Świętosławski 1997, 111–115; 2006, 117–124).

The great majority of tanged arrowheads (nos.: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10) from Tursko Castle appear to represent different variants of type 44 according to A. F. Medvedev's classification, dated from the 9th to the 14th century, but most frequently in use in the 12th and 13th centuries (Medvedev 1966, 66). Two arrowheads (nos. 5 and 8) are the closest to variant 3 of type 38 according to A. F. Medvedev's typology, used in the 13th and 14th centuries (Medvedev 1966, 64). W. Świętosławski refers to such caves as group VIII and connects their finds with the Mongol (Tatar) invasions of Central Europe in the 13th century (Świętosławski 1997, 83). Another two arrowheads (nos. 2 and 12) represent different variants of type 97 according to A. F. Medvedev's typology. They are so-called armor-piercing arrowheads, capable of penetrating chain armor, used in the 13th and 14th centuries (Medvedev 1966, 84). The last (and most sizeable) specimen (arrowhead no. 11), is unusual. Similar, but considerably smaller artefacts of this type were categorized by Medvedev as belonging to type 40 according to his typology and they were in use from the 10th to the 14th century (Medvedev 1966, 44–45).

The group of tanged arrowheads from Tursko Castle are the most numerous collection of such artefacts from Sandomierz lands and dating to the Middle Ages. Very similar arrowheads were discovered during excavations conducted in Sandomierz, on the Castle Hill, in layers formed as a result of the destruction of the stronghold during the Mongolian-Ruthenian raid of 1260. Recently they were found at the site of the settlement in Zawichost-Trójca, located near a ford on the Vistula River, where the Battle of Zawichost took place in 1205. Roman, prince of Halych, was killed during the skirmish (Florek 2021; 2022). We should remember that the ford was used by both the Mongolian and Ruthenian forces during their raids on Sandomierz lands from the east (Krakowski 1973; Szambelan 1989; Florek 2007), thus the arrowheads should perhaps be linked with those events.

The mace head and tanged arrowheads discovered at the site of Tursko Castle should probably be associated with the Mongolian and Mongolian-Ruthenian raids on the Sandomierz Land organized in the 13th century. Still, we cannot link them directly with the battle fought on February 13, 1241, although this assumption is highly probable. None of the arrowheads can be confidently identified as Mongolian. The mace head most likely comes from Russia. However, the distribution of finds of maces, including those with star-shaped heads, in Poland (Michalak 2005, fig. 4) indicates that they were also used by Polish knights.

Lack of thirteenth-century military accessories that could be associated with Polish knights (at least at the current state of research) is somewhat puzzling and is the opposite of the situation from the nearby stronghold in Winnica, which was destroyed by the Mongols during the invasion in 1241.

The two other projectile heads, both sleeved, are dated to the Late Middle Ages. Given their sizes and sleeve diameters, they should be both considered as crossbow boltheads. Especially interesting is the massive sleeved projectile head with a bifurcated blade. Such military accessories with bifurcated flat blades (but having tangs), usually smaller and flatter, were used in the medieval times by Eastern European nomads, the Hungarians and Ruthenians (Sebestyén 1932, 194; Medvedev 1966, 72–73; Ruttkay 1976, 327–328; Gáll 2013, 720). On the other hand, sleeved projectile heads with bifurcated blades not only come from later times, but they are also extremely rare. The closest analogies to the artefact from Tursko Castle are specimens dated to the 14th and 15th century, discovered in Zítkov Castle near Choceň and Týřov Castle near Karlova Ves (Czechia) as well as artefacts from Gajary-Posádka (Slovakia) (Durdík 1982, tab. VII; Vích 2017, 101). They are classified as belonging to type A2 according to A. Ruttkay's typology (Ruttkay 1976, 327), which corresponds to type BVa in R. Krajíc's classification (Krajíc 2003, 185). Two practically identical specimens were also discovered in the forests surrounding Ulów near Tomaszów Lubelski. These artefacts, previously unpublished, are kept in the J. Petera Regional Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski. Since they are loose finds, however, it is difficult to date them.

The other specimen should be classified as representing type I of crossbow boltheads according to A. Nadolski's typology, which were used from the 12th to the 16th century (Nadolski 1954, 86).

Summary

The so-called Tursko Castle is the remains of a modern earth fortification erected in the 17th century around an evangelical church. Military accessories discovered at this site (tanged arrowheads and a fragment of a bronze mace head) should be linked with the Mongolian-Ruthenian raids on Sandomierz lands organized in the 13th century. It is highly probable that they are material traces of the Battle of Tursko which was fought in 1241. Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that they should be associated with the Battle of Tursko on February 13, 1241, during the first Mongol invasion of Polish lands. At the same time,

the two sleeved projectile heads which were also discovered at the site of the castle should be linked with unspecified military activities from as late as the 14th or even 15th century.

Translated by Piotr Moskała

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