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New Findings of Bayonet-Pointed Kords within Ukraine

Key words: kords, combat knives, medieval arms, Late Middle Ages, Ukraine, Central and Eastern Europe

The Ukrainian Late Middle Ages are Terra Incognita from the standpoint of history and archaeology. The limited number of studied cultural sites along with the lack of professional interest to this period among researchers has brought about an informational void, and its consequences can be seen in today's scientific articles. A good example of such trends is a survey of P. Žákovský featuring a map of kord prevalence in Central and Eastern Europe¹. The prevalence area of those combat knives is shown as a rounded cloud with a white wedge, which corresponds to the territory of Ukraine. This is due to the fact that the number of published kords found in Ukraine is insignificant compared to the total number of eventual findings that are still awaiting their discoverers. The above example emphasises the importance of searching and introducing new historical artefacts into the scientific circulation, which will allow us to further expand our knowledge of this historical period in the future².

Late Middle Ages combat knives are known under different names in various regions of Europe; they are messer, dussack, tesak³. They are known as kords in the lands of modern Ukraine which were part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland⁴. This name covered blades of various lengths, either straight or curved ones. But this paper specifically focuses on the kind of kords that can be described as combat knives.

The article is the second study of its authors within the research exercise of the history of kords within Ukraine⁵ and introduces three new bayonet-pointed kords into the scientific circulation. Combined in this publication on the basis of a specific structure of the blade, they are quite peculiar and extraordinary specimens. All of them are accidental finds.

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¹ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 34.

² It should be noted that the number of such publications has begun to increase in recent years. See: KOSAREV et al. 2017: 50-53; SYCHEVS'KYY et al. 2017: 125-133.

³ MICHALAK 2004: 332-346; ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 13-42.

⁴ BOCHAN 2008: 159.

⁵ SYCHEVS'KYY et al. 2017: 125-133.

Kord No. 1 from the museum collection of the National Museum of Ukrainian History (inv. no. TKB - 19445/2) (Fig. 2) was probably found in the Volyn region. According to P. Žákovský's classification, it can be attributed to Type A₃, Ia5, -, -, t₅⁶. Geometric dimensions and cross-section of the kord are shown in the figure (Fig. 1a). Its weight is 396 g. The total length is 500 mm, of which the blade is 385 mm, its shape may be referred to as parabolic⁷ (type A₃)⁸. The cross-section has a flat left side⁹ and a triangular rib on the right side extending along the entire length of the blade and forming a bayonet tip. The width of the blade near the nagel is 39 mm, the height of the stiffener varies from 7-7.5 mm near the nagel to 4 mm at the tip. The transition from the spine to the handle is made with a "step" (Type I)¹⁰ with the handle slightly expanding (Version a)¹¹ from the nagel (26 mm) to the flat back part (33 mm) (Version 5)¹² and having a massive spine that ranges from 6 to 9 mm. On its right side, there is a depression extending almost throughout the entire length; on the surface, there are remains of four rivets that used to hold wooden side plates. The kord has a protective stop, or a "nagel" of a fairly simple structure, its shape being almost round (33x28x4.8 mm in size) (version t₅)¹³. The existing corrosion does not allow us to more accurately estimate the shape and decoration elements of the nagel.

Kord No. 2 from Ye. Gredunov's private collection (Fig. 3). The location of discovery is unknown. According to P. Žákovský's classification, it can be attributed to Type A₃, Ia5, -, -, t₆. Geometric dimensions and cross-section of the kord are shown in the figure (Fig. 1b). Its weight is 294 g. The total length is 505 mm, of which 390 mm is a parabolic blade (type A₃). The blade width at the nagel is 34 mm, and the spine thickness varies from 7 mm near the nagel to 5 mm at the starting point of the bayonet edge on the right side of the blade, extending to 211 mm up to the tip. The transition from the spine to the handle is made with a "step" (type I), with the handle slightly expanding (Version a) from the nagel (20 mm) to the flat back part (24 mm) (Version 5) and having a 5-7 mm thick spine. On its right side, there is a depression extending almost throughout the entire length; on its surface, only one of the rivets, which held the side plates, can be identified¹⁴. The kord has an almost round nagel (25x23x4 mm in size) and two decorative holes (Version t₆)¹⁵. The existing corrosion does not allow us to more accurately estimate the shape and decoration elements of the nagel.

Kord No. 3 from the museum collection of the National Museum of Ukrainian History (inv. no. TKB - 19445/1) (Fig. 4) was found, according to the discoverer, on the bank of the Zbruch River, in the Husyatyn district of the Ternopil region. According to

⁶ Here and thereafter, Žákovský's typology of *kord* elements will be used (2014: 179-451).

⁷ This term relating to the shape of the blade, was first used by P. Žákovský when describing the blade with a steady convergence of the blade and the spine towards the tip on the horizontal axis of the weapon.

⁸ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 208.

⁹ The left side of the *kord* is assumed to be the side that is located on the left with the horizontal position of the *kord* with the sharp edge of the blade facing down.

¹⁰ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 263-264.

¹¹ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 264-265.

¹² ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 266-267.

¹³ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 422-425.

¹⁴ The handle was deformed and lost a significant area of its inner surface due to the corrosion.

¹⁵ ŽÁKOVSKÝ 2014: 427-431.

P. Žákovský's classification, it can be attributed to Type A₂, Ia₄, -, -, t₆. Geometric dimensions and cross-section of the kord are shown in the figure (Fig. 1, c). Its weight is 238 g (9 g without the nagel weight). The total length is 357 mm, of which the blade is 250 mm, being knife-shaped with a wedge-shaped cross-section (type A₂). The blade width at the nagel is 32 mm, and the spine thickness varies from 9 mm near the nagel to 5.5 mm at the tip. A bayonet edge begins at 148 mm from the tip on the left side of the blade, which, however, does not extend up to the end and disappears after 114 mm of its length. The transition from the spine to the handle is made with a “step” (type D), with the handle slightly expanding (Version a) from the nagel (21 mm) to the rounded back part (28 mm) (Version 4) and having a 7-8 mm thick spine. On its right side, there is a depression extending almost throughout the entire length, where remains of the rivets should be located; the location of the rivets, however, has not been found. The kord has an almost round nagel (28x22x4 mm in size) and two decorative holes (Version t₆). On its surface, straight radial lines can be discerned, which are typical for wavy-edged nagels.

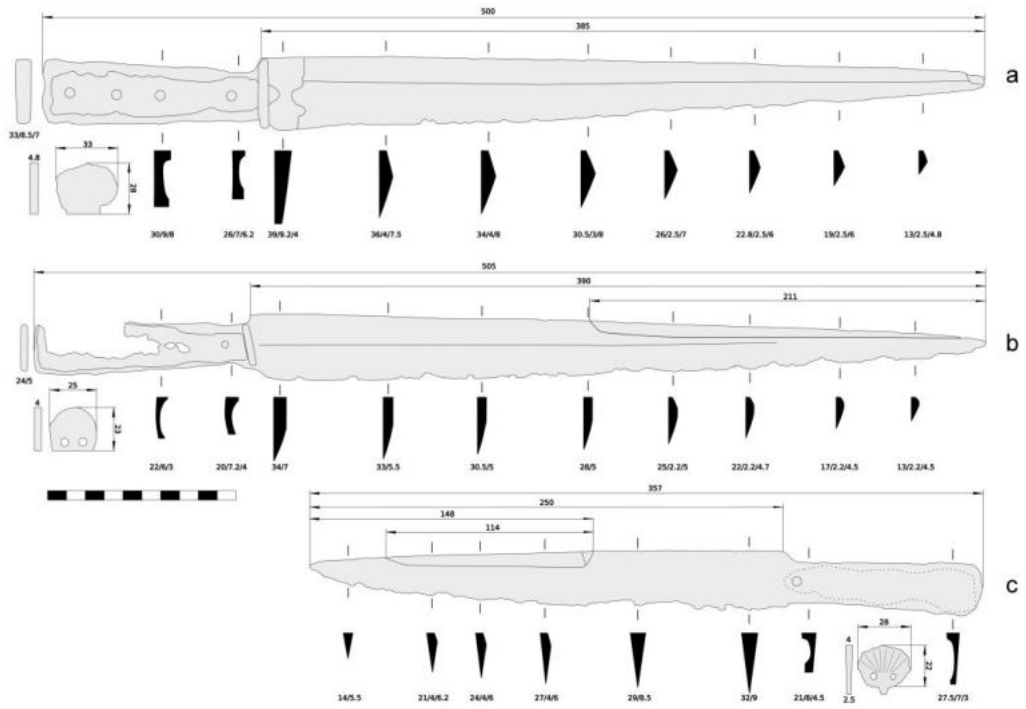


Fig. 1. General view and basic geometric parameters of the kords I (a), II (b) and III (c).

Having studied reference materials to search for close analogies of the kords described above, we have been able to find only a close analogue of **Kord No. 2**. It was found in the ruins of the Radkov castle near Moravska Třebova in the Czech Moravia¹⁶. Its dating varies widely from the late 14th to the early 16th centuries. According to P. Žákovský's classification: A₃, Ia₄, -, -, t_{12a}. The lack of direct

¹⁶ KOURIL 2014: 52-59.

analogues with a clear dating complicates the chronological placement of the kords described; however, we can date them from the period between the 15th to the early 16th century in the first approximation.



Fig. 2. General view of Kord No. 1 (inv. no. TKB - 19445/2).

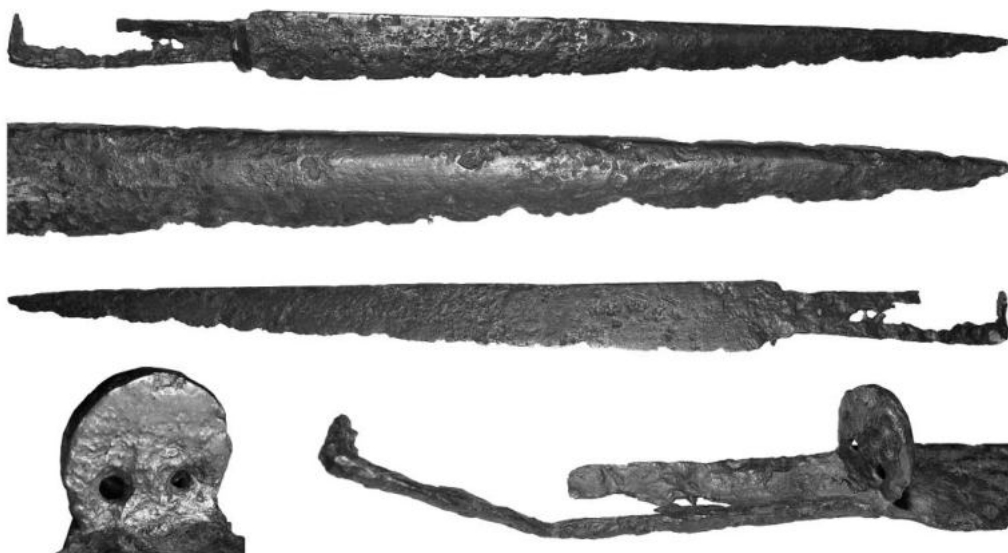


Fig. 3. General view of Kord No. 2 (Ye. Gredunov's private collection).



Fig. 4. General view of Kord No. 3 (inv. no. TKB - 19445/1).

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Summary

New Findings of Bayonet-Pointed Kords within Ukraine

This article continues the authors' preliminary research in the history of weapons within the territory of modern Ukraine and is dedicated to the introduction of three kords with a bayonet-shaped blade into the scientific circulation. Combined in this publication on the basis of a specific structure of the blade, they are quite peculiar and extraordinary specimens of combat knives dating from the period between the 15th and the early 16th centuries.

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