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**THE 12<sup>th</sup> CENTURY SWORD OF SAN GALGANO IN THE HERMITAGE  
OF MONTESIEPI IN TUSCANY. A TRANSMISSION OF THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND?**

**Abstract:** The High Middle Ages, when Galgano Guidotti (1148-1181), a Tuscan from Chiusdino lived, was an especially turbulent epoch. In the territory of Tuscany groups of wealthy nobility were active, claiming more political influence. These groups gathered knights who wanted to gain fame and riches in fights. Galgano Guidotti was fighting in defence of interests of local lords and it is highly probable that he committed many villainies. In the course of such activity he experienced several revelations of Archangel Michael with the flaming sword. These revelations caused a complete spiritual transformation of Galgano. He abandoned secular life and withdrew to an initially primitive hermitage on the hill of Montesiepi. In order to actually and symbolically break up with his hitherto life, he thrust his sword into a rock in such a manner that only the upper part of the weapon with the crosspiece and the pommel projected from the stone, standing out as the sign of the cross. After his death, a masonry rotunda with an adjacent chapel was built in the place of the hut-hermitage. Inside the Rotunda, the sword thrust in the rock is kept until today. The authenticity and convergence of the chronology of the weapon with the period of life of Galgano Guidotti were confirmed by recent scientific research by a chemist Luigi Garlaschelli at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. Further interdisciplinary scientific examinations of the sword are planned.

**Keywords:** San Galgano, nobleman, knight, hermit, sword, rock, scholarly research

**Who Galgano Guidotti of Chiusdino was**

A Tuscan Galgano Guidotti, better known as San Galgano, was born in Chiusdino in the province of Siena in 1148. He was the son of Guido and Dionisia, a middle-aged married couple. As the legend says, they lived to see the birth of their offspring after many years, with the intercession of Archangel Michael. Galgano was early orphaned by his father. He dealt with the chivalric craft and lived a very reckless life. He paid no attention to his mother's admonitions and for quite long he was not able to free himself from various addictions and bad habits of the young age. He participated very eagerly in internal wars led by local lords of Gherardesca, Pannocchieschi and others, shedding blood of his neighbours. Such a military-chivalric way of life, in which force, wrong and violence often manifested themselves, was very attractive for him. Analogously to men alike him, in this way he manifested his vitality and strength. Such a way of life, however, was commonly accepted at that time and young Galgano simply followed these bad patterns. Some years before his death (30 November or 3 December 1181, there is no consent concerning the exact date), Galgano fell down from the horse and experienced a private revelation. Then, he converted to virtue and Christian humility. Many legends came into existence concerning the life of Galgano. I will omit them here, sending the reader to selected

literature<sup>1</sup>. Of special significance is the legend which was written down c. 1220 by a Cistercian Rolando of Pisa („Legenda beati Galgano confessoris”)<sup>2</sup>. His resignation from secular life, leaving his fiancée named Polissena, adopting the Cistercian rule and starting a soulful hermitic existence near the hermitage of William of Mareval on Monte Pruno were said to occur after a series of dream visions Galgano had. In their course, Archangel Michael appeared to him. According to one version, the knight was said to go and seek advice from the hermit William, who pointed out the place where the future hermitage was to be erected. This was on a small hill of Montesiepi or on the promontory of Certoli near Chiusdino. According to another version, the Archangel miraculously led Galgano to settle in the hermitage built by Galgano with his own hands. Soon a round hermitage was built, in spite of mockery from his companions of chivalric life and clear indignation of the family of abandoned Polissena, who lived in Civitella Marittima. In response to these insults, Galgano thrust his sword into a rock, as a sign of perpetual liberation from this weapon. The sword, projecting from the rock, with the hermitage built around it, was

<sup>1</sup> Arbessmann 1961, 3-37; Vitti 1977, 229-256; Albergo and Pistolesi 1990; Cardini 1999; Pfister 2001; Rossi 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Mansi (ed.) 1764, 74-76.



Fig. 1. View of the Rotunda and the Romanesque chapel on the hill of Montiesiepi in Tuscany. After Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 14.

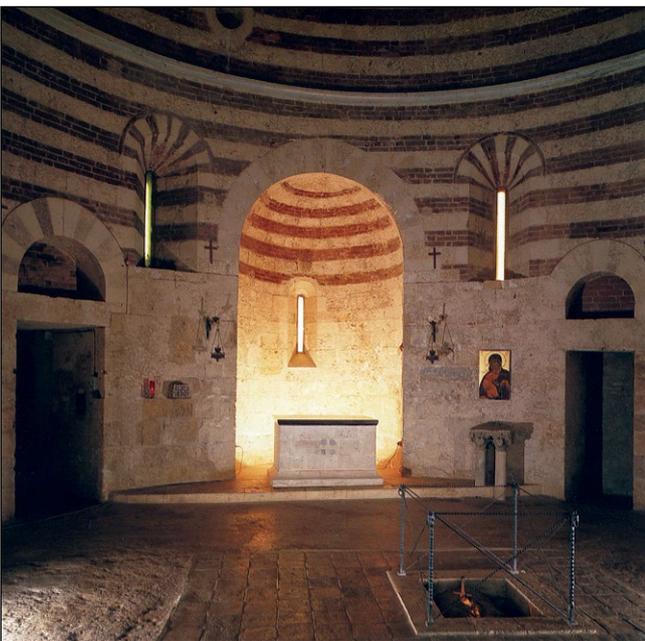


Fig. 2. Interior of the Romanesque Rotunda of Montiesiepi with the sword of San Galgano on display. After Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 8.



Fig. 3. Interior of the ornamental Romanesque cupola in the Rotunda of Montiesiepi. After Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 9.

since then a credible sign of the cross for Galgano. It was in front of this cross that Galgano prayed and mortified himself, staying there until his death at the age of 32 or 33.

In 1180 Galgano obtained a consent from Pope Alexander III<sup>3</sup> to establish a community of hermits, probably according to the Cistercian rule<sup>4</sup>. In 1185 Pope Lucius III<sup>5</sup> initiated the canonisation process, which was completed under Pope Urban III<sup>6</sup>. In the history of the Papacy and the Empire it was a turbulent epoch, dominated by struggles between various parties. In these conflicts there were periods of prevalence of followers of the Hohenstaufens (supported by popes) or representatives of the Roman curia or leading aristocratic families in Rome, who were against the Papacy<sup>7</sup>. During the canonisation process the mother of the dead hermit was the main witness. The hermitage, originally built in all probability of wood, was later extended in the Romanesque style, with the use of bricks and stones. It became known as Rotonda di San Galgano and was soon adapted for the mausoleum with the tomb of the beatified knight already during the rule of Bishop of Volterra Ildebrando Pannocchieschi (Fig. 1). The choice of this architectural form – the rotunda – was a clear reference to Etruscan and Roman grave chambers<sup>8</sup>. In 1196 a ceremonial elevation (*elevatio*) and translation (*translatio*) of the relics of Galgano to the chapel in the Rotonda (?) of Montesiepi took place (Figs. 2 and 3). Below the hill, a few hundred metres away, the construction of the Abbey of San Galgano was commenced in 1220<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander III (Roland Bandinelli of Siena), the pope in 1159-1181, one of the most prominent popes of the Middle Ages.

<sup>4</sup> Some of Galgano's disciples maintained that in 1180 he had taken monastic vows in the Cistercian monastery of Tre Fontane in Rome. Others founded hermitages dedicated to San Galgano in Tuscany after his death. In 1256 these hermitages belonged to the hermitic union of St Augustine. See: Kužmak 1989, col. 816-817.

<sup>5</sup> Lucius III (Ubaldo Allucingoli, a Cistercian and Cardinal Bishop of Ostia), the pope in 1181-1185. He led conciliatory policy towards the Hohenstaufens, and, against the Roman curia, sought for an agreement between the Germans and the Normans.

<sup>6</sup> Urban III (Umberto Crivelli, Archbishop of Milan), the pope in 1088-1095. He was the opponent of the Hohenstaufens.

<sup>7</sup> The most important work of reference is: Gregorovius 1926, 1171-1196 and its Polish translation: Gregorovius 2009, 1073-1097.

<sup>8</sup> A number of examples whose form was close to funerary chambers from the Etruscan period can be mentioned, starting with central tombs with a cupola from Vetulani and Volterra, from the necropolis of Cerveteri, as well as Roman ones, just to mention the famous tomb of Caecilia Metella at Via Apia and the central premise of the monumental mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian (Castel St' Angelo). The funeral chapel of San Galgano was extended in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>9</sup> The Abbey of San Galgano was built since 1218 by a Cistercian architect Simon. It is remarkable for its architecture with considerable artistic values. In 1348 the convent suffered from the plague which ravaged Europe and was known as the Black Death. The abbey was plundered for several times. What was left undestroyed by mercenaries, was devastated by its own abbots, who sold lead plates covering the roof. In 1600 only one monk

In the Cistercian liturgical calendar the feast of Galgano is celebrated on 3 December in the Diocese of Siena and on 5 December in the Diocese of Volterra. The main relic that is venerated is the skull of Galgano, closed in a silver reliquary which is of 14<sup>th</sup> c. date and is kept in the church of San Tuccio in Siena. Before 1340, making use of incomes from the estates of San Pietro di Chiusdino, Vannidei Salimbeni founded a chapel which was built on to the Rotunda. The chapel was constructed of bricks on a stone socle, with stone framings of semicircular window openings and with one cross and rib field inside. In the chapel, on three shield walls, Ambrogio Lorenzetti or students from his school painted the legend of the knight Galgano in the *al fresco* technique<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, in the light of the discovery made by Alison Lundis, who found a charter suggesting that in 1334 A. Lorenzetti was employed at Montesiepi, the date of construction of the chapel may be somehow earlier (Fig. 4). On the main fresco one can see the enthroned Mary with the Child, holding a sceptre in Her right hand. At Her feet there is a reclining figure of Eve, in a pose which is similar to the figure of Peace (PAX) in the „Allegory of Good Government” of this painter, which is now in the Council Room of the Town Hall in Siena (1337-1339). Both in the chapel of Montesiepi and in the Council Room in Siena the figure of Peace is depicted as „una formosa e maestosa gentildonna toscana”<sup>11</sup>. Gestures of folded hands which can be seen in static figures of Siena councillors and praying bishops from the Montesiepi frescos are also remarkable (Fig. 5). We can see adolescent San Galgano with a halo around his head, with a fashionable haircut, dressed in a tunic and a mantle, offering his sword (thrust into the rock) to Archangel Michael. Michael is an intermediary between him and the Enthroned Madonna. It is to Her that San Galgano offers his sword, in the presence of Christ and two bishops of Volterra. Since that moment, the ex-knight, having been liberated from the tool of war and all the worldly passions, commenced a new life. The frescos from the chapel at the Rotonda of Montesiepi are not the only iconographic source for the person of San Galgano<sup>12</sup>.

lived in the monastery and the secularisation took place in 1652. Now the abbey is in ruins. What survived is valuable architectural detail, such as carved capitals in the main nave and the reconstructed chapter house. Andrey Tarkovsky made here parts of his movie „Nostalghia” – Viti 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Mottini 1949, 163.

<sup>12</sup> As a hermit in a Cistercian habit, San Galgano can be seen in a fresco in Palazzo Pubblico (Salado Segretario) in Siena. His images can also be found in the Museo dell'Accademia and the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. In the painting of Guido Ciniatti from c. 1320 (Archivio di Stato in Siena), a scene of Archangel Michael appearing to the knight Galgano was shown. Galgano is depicted in a shining armour and riding a white horse. The Pinacoteca in Siena holds a polyptych painted by Giovanni di Paolo (c. 1470), with a view of the Rotonda of Montesiepi and the sword of Galgano in the rock. In the Museo dell'Opera de Duomo in Siena one can see a painting

Fig. 4. Enthroned Mary with the Child. Fresco on the shield wall of the chapel at the Rotunda of Montesiepi, ascribed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti or his painting school in Siena, 1334. After Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 10.



Fig. 5. San Galgano offering his sword thrust into the rock to Archangel Michael. Fresco of Ambrogio Lorenzetti (?) from 1334 in the chapel at the Rotunda of Montesiepi. After Albergo and Pistolesi 1990, 11.



with the foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of San Galgano. On the silver mount of the surviving reliquary for the head of San Galgano (the 13<sup>th</sup> c.), made by Pace di Valentina, the goldsmith displayed episodes from the life of the saint: Archangel Michael appears to the knight Galgano, Galgano refuses to get married; there is also the episode with thrusting the sword into the rock. On the façade of the family house of Galgano in Chiusdino there is a relief with an image of a knight with a sword (1330). In the oratory of St Sebastian in Chiusdino there is the episode of Archangel Michael appearing to the mounted knight (oil painting by Urbano da Cortona, the 15<sup>th</sup> c.). On the paintings from the Museo San Mateo in Pisa, apart from the already known scene with Archangel Michael, there is an angel leading Galgano to the hermitage, the construction of the hermitage, visits of family and friends of the knight, who try to dissuade him from devoting himself to hermitic life; there is also a scene of punishment of bad monks. The National Gallery in Dublin holds a board painting by Andrea di Bartoldo from the 14<sup>th</sup> c., with the scene of Galgano refusing to marry his fiancée. Furthermore, there is a small painting by the same artist, depicting the death of Galgano. It is dated to c. 1400-1420 (Museo Civico in Pisa).

### The sword in the rock

The sword in the Rotunda of Montesiepi was related to the legend of San Galgano since the beginning of the hermitage's history and was included into the centuries-old tradition of the religious cult in Tuscany (Fig. 6). Local chronicles inform on this sword and, as we already know, it became a subject of iconographic depictions. Since the time when the reliquary for the head of San Galgano was made c. 1270, the sword has preserved its form as we can see it when we visit the hermitage of Montesiepi. The hermitage attracts tourists from entire Europe, who wish to see and take a photo of this unusual relic – the sword which is thrust up to its hilt into the rock – exactly as the legendary Excalibur from Celtic legends of King Arthur, written down by Chrétien de Troyes<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Chrétien de Troyes (1135-1185), French troubadour and court poet of Marie Countess of Champagne. As early as the early 12<sup>th</sup> c. his chivalric romances with motifs from the Arthurian



Fig. 6. Relief of Giovanni di Agostino, dated to 1332-1347, depicting San Galgano thrusting the sword into the rock. Sculpture collection of the National Pinacoteca in Siena. After Wikimedia Commons: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni\\_di\\_agostino,\\_san\\_galgano\\_conficca\\_la\\_spada\\_nella\\_roccia,\\_1332-1347\\_ca.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni_di_agostino,_san_galgano_conficca_la_spada_nella_roccia,_1332-1347_ca.JPG) (accessed on 3 April 2013).

and Wolfram von Eschenbach<sup>14</sup>. The present-day Italian writer Mario Moiraghi in his book *L'enigma di San Galgano. La spada nella roccia tra storia e mito* (The Enigma of San Galgano. The sword in the rock: its history and myth) believes that the origin of one of the versions of the Excalibur legends reaches back to the Tuscan sword in the rock<sup>15</sup>. In the attempt at reconstructing the history of this sword, one should reach back as far as the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. During a pastoral visitation in Montesièpi in 1576 it was recorded that the sword was under a stone altar made of one block, under the vault of the Rotonda, which was built in the

legend were translated and adopted for European literature, including Italian one.

<sup>14</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach (c. 1170-c. 1220), Bavarian minnesinger and the author of the Arthurian-themed epos *Parzival* (*Parsifal*) – it was written in Odenwald and was completed at the court in the service of Hermann I of Thuringia in 1190-1217.

<sup>15</sup> Moiraghi 2005.

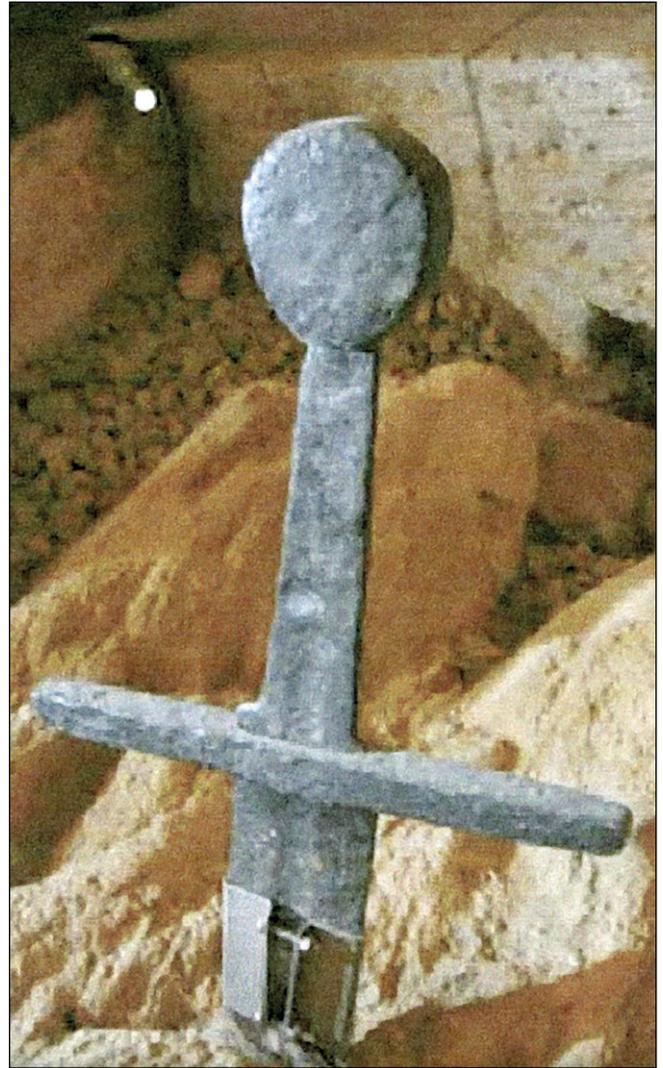


Fig. 7. Present-day way of securing the sword of San Galgano: condition from September 2012. After Platea Medievale: <http://plateamedievale.blogspot.com/2012/09/a-san-galgano-il-cartoonella-spada-nella> (accessed on 3 April 2013).

place of the old hermitage. „In its centre, a simple altar of one stone was built. Under the altar, as people say, the sword of San [Galgano] was miraculously thrust up to its crosspiece into the rock, and could be seen through the fissure.”<sup>16</sup> The next piece of information concerns works which were carried out on 22 July 1694 around the chapel and in its interior. During these works, a lead container was found near the baptismal font. In this container there was a note on the sword<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> *In medio eius simplex Altare ex solo lapide erat erectum, sub quo ensis S. Galgano usque ad elsam in saxo in modum crucis miraculo, ut ferunt, infixus erat foramine conspiciebatur* – Libro dell'Visite Pastorali di Mons Castelli, p. 163 ff. (7 July 1576) after G. Garadini, „Memoriale dell'Abbazis di San Galgano” mss in the collection of the Guarnacci Library in Volterra, unpublished. This note was published in Luigi Garlaschelli, *Indagini Sulla Spada di San Galgano*. A report from research on the sword of San Galgano in the Department of Organic Chemistry of the University of Padua In 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Relazione 2001, 160.

Two hundred years after these events, a report from archaeological excavations in 1915 says that since 1832 and thereafter, Silvio Bartali, a provost (perhaps of the Episcopal curia in Volterra?), carried out more or less regular inspections of the state of preservation of the sword<sup>18</sup>. During the first studies on the architecture of Montesiepi and on the sword itself, an eyewitness Duilio Petricci was found. He confirmed that in this childhood the sword was under a copper cupola with hinged door. After the door had been opened, there was a free access to the sword thrust into the stone. Probably in 1924 Mr Petricci also witnessed the operation of fixing the sword in a cast lead seal in order to block the blade. One of the first reports on acts of vandalism concerning the sword comes from the 1960. During an attempted theft, the blade was broken in its forte. It was at that time that the local parish priest don Cimpi had the blade fixed in place with the use of cement. The next parish priest Vito Albergo secured a professional repair of the destroyed blade and undertook steps towards a further anasthetisation of the sword for exhibition purposes. He ordered the old eroded and crumbling cement to be removed and had a new cement seal fixed. Its colour was similar to the colour of the rock into which the sword was thrust. Actions undertaken by don Vito were mentioned in a poem by Duilio Petricci from 1984, devoted to the „true” sword of San Galgano<sup>19</sup>. In spite of these efforts, the legendary weapon provoked considerable interest, but also desire of various individuals wishing to illegally come into possession of the sword. Therefore, the weapon was still in danger (Figs. 7 and 8). On 21 March 1991 yet another attempt at pulling the sword from the stone was made, and the vandal turned out to be a young man, who was soon caught by the carabinieri. After this event had been voiced by the media, a substantial discussion was launched concerning proper means of securing this precious relic in situ, that is, in the Rotunda, and with regard to permanent fixing of the sword in the rock<sup>20</sup>.

### Scientific examinations of the sword of San Galgano

The sword of San Galgano and its historical and religious context have uninterruptedly existed for several hundreds of years, as the weapon belongs to the Tuscan cultural tradition and is no doubt a tourist attraction (Fig. 9). Increasing

interest of researchers gave an impact for a decision to carry out interdisciplinary research. It was initiated by Luigi Garlaschelli, a famous Italian chemist who has already unmasked some Italian „miracles”<sup>21</sup>. Examinations were started in the Rotunda on 18 May 2001 with assessing the state of preservation of the visible part of the sword, which projected 17 cm above the rock. It was decided to reach the part which was hidden in the rock by means of drilling a small hole of 11 mm in diameter, running in parallel to the cemented fissure, in which the blade was fixed with the lead seal. Dr Vernillo from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Siena (Facoltà di Medicina dell’Università di Siena) entered a fibre-optic endoscope into the hole. The part of the blade which was fixed in the rock was still invisible – however, it was possible to take samples of cement from the bottom of the hole. Then, another hole was drilled, at an angle towards the fissure. The fissure was reached after a few centimetres, when the image of the steel blade could be seen in the endoscope. It was found out that both edges of the point of breaking in the forte of the sword, which originated in the course of the mentioned theft, matched each other. It was therefore assumed that both parts of the sword (the upper one with the crosspiece and the pommel, projecting above the rock, and the invisible lower one) were authentic and belonged to one and the same artefact. Further on, micropolishings were made and they were examined with a PV 9800 X-ray fluorescence spectrometer. In result of the chemical analysis the following composition of the steel was obtained: Cu c. 80.4 ppm, Ni c. 70.5 ppm, Pb c. 39.2 ppm, Cd c. 0.104 ppm. This corresponds to the chemical composition of already examined samples from medieval Tuscan weapons and no admixtures which are typical for present-day steels were found<sup>22</sup>. It must be added that two years before that, the famous sword of El Cid underwent spectrometric examinations<sup>23</sup>. The sword was dated to the

<sup>21</sup> In 1995, Luigi Garlaschelli put in question the „miraculous bloody tears” flowing from the figurine of Madonna in the church of Civitavecchia, proving that the ceramic figurine was made of plaster which absorbs liquids and then was covered with impermeable glazing. The blood, mixed with tears, flowed after scratches had been made near the eyes. He also proposed a hypothesis (facing the Church’s ban on laboratory research) that in the so-called miracle of St Januarius in Naples a mixture of dyes which behaved like liquid blood had been applied since the 16<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>22</sup> Garlaschelli 2007, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Rodrigo Ruy Diaz de Vivar, called Campeador (the Champion) in Spanish, was known in literature as El Cid (c. 1030-1099). He was a Spanish knight, originating from Castilian nobility. He was knighted by Sancho II King of Castile. He was the commander-in-chief in the battle of Golpejera in 1072, where he defeated the troops of Alfonso VI of León. In 1081 he entered the service of Emir of Saragossa, leading his troops and achieving a series of military successes over the Almoravids. After the reconciliation with Alfonso, the ruler of León, since 1094 Rodrigo ruled Valencia until his death. He received an Arab title of sayyid – the lord (El Cid in the Spanish version). Diaz is not his family name, but a patronymic, meaning „the child of Diego”. El Cid was a hero of many legends and ballads, especially „The Song of My Cid”

<sup>18</sup> This manuscript is kept at the presbytery in Chiusdino.

<sup>19</sup> Petricci 2007, 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Criticism was mainly aimed at hitherto keepers of the Rotunda of Montesiepi and it was also mirrored on the pages of the visitors’ book accompanying the sword on exhibition. It was even doubted whether the sword was genuine or „prepared” yet in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. for the sake of pilgrims and tourists, whether the blade under the visible forte part actually survived, etc.: „(...) Tutte queste traversie, rotture e riparazioni avevano dato origine a voci non giustificate, riportate anche in opuscoli turistici o testi di storia dell’arte, che la Spada fosse un falso ottocentesco, che fosse stata sostituita, che la lama non esistesse veramente sotto la roccia, ecc. (...)” – Garlaschelli 2007, 3.

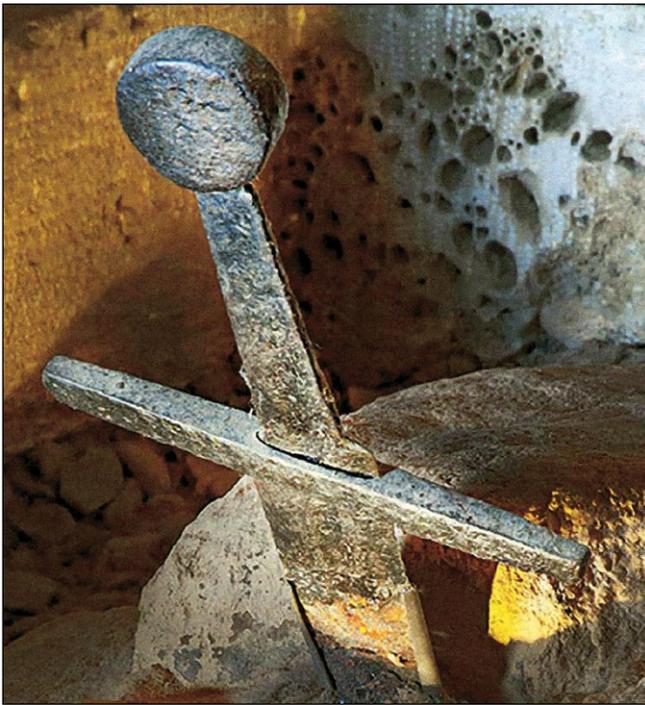


Fig. 8. Present-day means of securing of the sword of San Galgano – view from one side. After Runa Bianca: [http://www.runabianca.it/sites/default/files/GALGANO\\_0.jpg](http://www.runabianca.it/sites/default/files/GALGANO_0.jpg) (accessed on 3 April 2013).

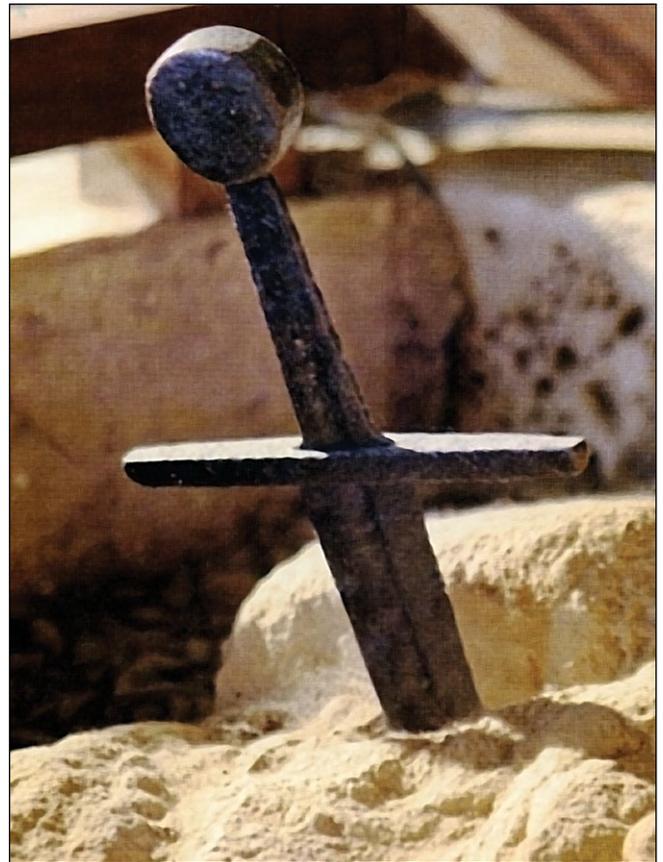


Fig. 10. Sword of San Galgano, the 1170s, in the Rotunda of Montesiepi, Tuscany. Photo Marco Negrini.



Fig. 9. State of preservation of the visible part of the sword of San Galgano – 17 September 2011. Photo Ryszard Węglewski.

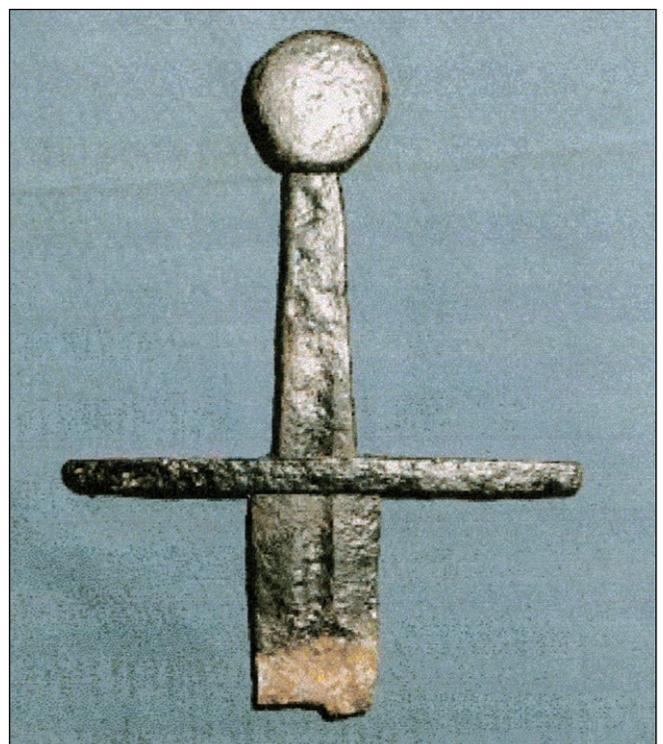


Fig. 11. Broken part of the sword of San Galgano, length 17 cm. Type XI, 1, G, the 1170s according to the typology of R. E. Oakeshott, with additions by M. Głosek. After Luigi Garlaschelli, *Indagini sulla Spada di San Galgano* – documentation of research on the sword at the Dipartimento di Chimica Organica Università di Pavia.

12<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>24</sup>. There are two swords which are identified as El Cid's weapons – Colada and Tizona. The latter, taken from the Moorish leader Malik Buzar, has been extraordinarily valued till today by the Spaniards and it is kept in the collection of the Museo Ejército in Madrid<sup>25</sup>.

The analysis of distribution of trace elements in the metal of a weapon allows for an identification of the geography of provenance of iron. If a comparative database with research results from many artefacts is prepared, it is possible to reconstruct the geography of places of their manufacture. This also concerns swords from the territory of Tuscany. Works on a project of localisation of smithies where weaponry was made are continued at the University of Siena. Further metallographic examinations of the sword of San Galgano are planned, in order to precisely define the composition of steel and the technology of manufacture. Samples will be taken not only from the blade, but also from the crosspiece and the pommel. More accurate X-ray photos can also reveal hitherto illegible marks and inscriptions under the layer of corrosion, all the more since the sword was many years ago covered with a dark layer of varnish, which pseudo-conserved the surface. This varnish should be first removed in laboratory conditions. This operation would allow the researchers to reach the original patina, provided that it was not removed earlier. On the other hand, for the needs of further examinations, the sword would need to leave its present-day place of exhibition in the Rotunda of Montesiepi (Fig. 10). For this, a consent from ecclesiastic authorities is necessary, and it is not easy to obtain.

### The shape and the type of the sword of San Galgano

In 2011 I was in Tuscany during the 24<sup>th</sup> scholarly tour of the Society of Art Historians. On 17 September I visited the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey of San Galgano and the Rotunda of Montesiepi with the chapel, which is decorated with poorly visible frescos of Ambrogio Lorenzetti. I was especially impressed by the circular ceramic decoration of the interior of the cupola, consisting of interchanging layers of red-brownish bricks and bricks covered with white glazing. Under the cupola, but not within its axis, the medieval sword of San Galgano is still exhibited (Fig. 11).

The hitherto typology of the sword: Xa – according to R. E. Oakeshott – is not precise<sup>26</sup>. The shape of the visible part of the blade, its tang, the crosspiece and the pommel

allows for a verification of this incomplete classification. Let us start with the pommel – it is discoid and considerably thick, and according to the typology of medieval pommels by Oakeshott with additions by M. Głosek, it suggests Type G<sup>27</sup>. Similar pommels usually occur with swords dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c. with blades of Types X and XI<sup>28</sup>. The crosspiece retained a very simple form, which occurs in c. 50% of known finds. According to Oakeshott, such a shape of the crosspiece can be seen in swords from the 10<sup>th</sup> c. until the end of the Middle Ages. Its short arms, perpendicular to the blade, are not homogeneously thick throughout their entire length. The entire form corresponds to Type 1<sup>29</sup>. The blade, which is visible only in the upper part of the forte, suggests Type XI, as the fuller is narrower than in Type X. We can clearly see the end of the blade in the tang. This type occurred in the case of 39 swords examined by M. Głosek. This scholar described them in the following manner: „(...) The blade is narrower and longer – it is clearly in contrast with the short blade of Type X. The point is well-pronounced. The fuller is narrow and well-marked. It runs through 4/5 of the blade length. Sometimes (in later specimens) it commences already on the tang [my emphasis – A.R. Ch.]. The hilt is short and one-handed. The tang is less flat than in the previous type (...). According to R. E. Oakeshott this type was the most popular between 1120 and 1220”<sup>30</sup>.

In conclusion, it can be said that the sword of San Galgano, which for centuries has rest in the rock in the Rotunda on the hill of Montesiepi, is a genuine relic and it can be dated to the 1170s. It belongs to a group of medieval knightly swords of Type XI, I, G. It probably comes from an unidentified Tuscan workshop in the province of Siena. The story of the knight Galgano Guidotti, canonised by Pope Urban III and since then known as San Galgano, is inseparably related to this sword. On the other hand, the reception of the Arthurian legend, the transmission of its motifs related to the sword thrust into the stone, its influence on the tale of Galgano from Montesiepi – or, reversely, the influence of the Tuscan legend on motifs from Arthurian romances, which have flourished in European literature since the 12<sup>th</sup> c., require further studies and in-depth analyses.

*Translated by Grzegorz Żabiński*

(*Cantar de Mio Cid*, c. 1207), and a half-fictitious ballad of Pierre Corneille „Le Cid”.

<sup>24</sup> Alonso et al. 1999, 10-15.

<sup>25</sup> The Tizona sword, total length 103 cm, weight 1.1 kg, with a Castilian-Spanish inscription on the blade, saying: „I am la Tizona, made in the year 1040”. The sword was probably manufactured in Cordoba.

<sup>26</sup> *La Spada nella Rocca di San Galgano*, p. 6: [http://www.bluedragon.it/non\\_fantasy/misteri/galgano.htm](http://www.bluedragon.it/non_fantasy/misteri/galgano.htm) (accessed on 3 April 2013). The typology is re-stated after: L. Garlaschelli, *Indagini*, [p. 2].

<sup>27</sup> Głosek 1984, 26, Fig. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Głosek 1984, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Głosek 1984, 27, 38, 39, Fig. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Głosek 1984, 27.

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## Streszczenie

**Miecz z XII w. św. Galgana w pustelni Montesiepi w Toskanii. Transmisja legendy arturiańskiej?**

Czasy pełnego średniowiecza, w których żył Galgano Guidotti (1148-1181), Toskańczyk z Chiusdino były szczególnie niespokojne. Na terenie Toskanii działały grupy zamożnej szlachty domagającej się większych wpływów politycznych, skupiające rycerzy, chcących w walkach zdobyć sławę i pieniądze. Moźni zamieszkiwali ufortyfikowane siedziby na prowincji i wieże w miastach (Florencja, Lukka, Pistoja, Piza, San Gimignano, Siena). Rycerz Galgano Guidotti, jak wielu jemu podobnych, walczył w obronie interesów lokalnych panów, popełniając zapewne wiele niegodziwości. W trakcie takiej działalności dostąpił kilku objawień Michała Archanioła z płomienistym mieczem, które spowodowały jego całkowitą przemianę duchową. Za radą pustelnika z Malewalu, Wilhelma, porzucił życie świeckie i usunął się do prymitywnej pustelni na wzgórzu Montesiepi, nieopodal rodzinnego Chiusdino. Aby faktycznie i symbolicznie zerwać z dotychczasowym życiem, wcisnął miecz swój w skałę w taki sposób, iż wystawała z kamienia tylko górna część broni z jelicem i głowicą, znamionująca krzyż, odtąd stanowiący centrum życia duchowego pustelnika. Po jego śmierci, w miejsce szalasu-pustelni wzniesiono murowaną Rotundę i przylegającą do niej kaplicę (po zakończeniu procesu kanonizacyjnego przez papieża Urbana III z przeniesionymi tam relikwiami Galgana), ozdobioną freskami szkoły sienieńskiej Ambrogio Lorenzettiego, ze scenami z życia rycerza-pustelnika. Poniżej wzgórza, od 1220 r. zaczęto wznosić cysterskie opactwo San Galgano, którego imponujące ruiny zachowały się do dziś.

Wewnątrz Rotundy przechowywany jest do dziś miecz wcisnięty w skałę. Autentyczność i zbieżność czasu powstania broni z okresem życia Galgano Guidottiego potwierdziły ostatnie badania prowadzone przez chemika Ligi Garlaschelliego na początku XXI w. Według typologii R. E. Oakeshotta, z uzupełnieniami M. Głoska, miecz ten powinien być oznaczony

jako typ XI, 1, G, datowany na lata 70. XII w.. Jak wiele podobnie cennych militariów był przedmiotem prób wydobywania ze szczeliny skalnej i ataków złodziei w latach 60. (złamanie głowni w części zastawy) i 90. XX w. Obecnie jest lepiej chroniony pod przezroczystą kopułą wewnątrz Rotundy. Miecz będzie również poddawany dalszym, interdyscyplinarnym badaniom naukowym.

Należy również zwrócić uwagę na zbieżność historyczną i literacką przekazów legendy arturiańskiej wraz z nieodłącznym Excaliburem, także na terenie średniowiecznej Italii, z wydarzeniem jakie miało miejsce przed 1180 r. w Montesiepi.