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Late Medieval Bone Saddles

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I. BONE SADDLES: A RESEARCH QUESTION

I.1. Introduction

In 2006, the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest hosted the grandiose “Sigismundus Rex et Imperator” exhibition, which celebrated the illustrious reign of Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund. In one of the exhibition halls, a particularly intriguing group of objects stood out from the other artifacts: horse saddles adorned with intricately carved bone plates (Figure I.1). The display of these unusual items were striking for an audience accustomed to see more traditional art objects in a medieval art exhibition. The exhibition was split between two European cities: seven saddles were exhibited in Budapest and five saddles in Luxemburg. The saddles exhibited in 2006 are only part of an object group that consists of thirty-seven items altogether, currently dispersed in museums of all over the world from Budapest to New York. To date, the largest number of bone saddles were exhibited in one place in these two 2006 exhibitions.¹

The visitors’ first question probably corresponds to the most frequently asked research question regarding these items: Why is an equestrian object, intended for horse riding, adorned with elaborately carved bone panels, depicting scenes of courtly love? In the absence of written sources, there is no definite answer for this justifiable question. Additionally, no information survived about the original owners of the saddles, the date and time of their production, and the workshops where they were made. Dating and location has been only approximate in previous scholarship. These defined the bone saddles as products from early fifteenth-century Central Europe—connected to the reign and court of Sigismund—which explains their display in the 2006 exhibition dedicated to his reign.

I.2. Significant milestones and main directions in the historiography of bone saddles

Bone saddles have always occupied a relatively marginal position in historiography. From the late nineteenth century onwards, contributions have been

¹ Budapest: Budapest-1; Budapest-2; Budapest-3; London-3; Braunschweig-1; Florence-1; Vienna-2; Luxemburg: Budapest-2-3, London-3, Florence-1, New York-4. I am grateful for Zsombor Jékely’s information.

limited to articles and catalog entries, usually from the field of art history, focusing on one or two saddles at most. To date, only a couple of attempts have been undertaken a comprehensive study of more saddles. The rarity of the topic in previous scholarship can be easily explained with the nature object type: the interest and scholarly discussion of secular objects had for long held a marginal position, and gained a greater focus only in the previous decades.

The primary questions and approaches of the scholars discussing bone saddles are relatively similar, including the interpretation of the iconographical program, the possible origin and workshop, and the original function of the saddles.

1.2.1. Beginnings of the Bone Saddle Historiography in the Nineteenth Century

Scholarly interest in bone saddles emerged only at the end of the nineteenth century. These were mainly written by Hungarian scholars in connection with the three bone saddles of the Hungarian National Museum.² These works usually discuss the iconography and provenance, and pose questions of the origin and time of production of the saddles. The first reports on the three saddles in Budapest were written by Flóris Rómer in 1865,³ then by Leó Kárász in 1894. The admiration towards these saddles is well reflected in his study:

There is no other public or private collection in Europe like the armor collection of the Hungarian National Museum, in which three saddles are preserved, and they are such saddles that are equal both in artistic quality and in their state of preservation to most of the other examples.⁴

Besides the Hungarian scholars, in 1883, Émile Molinier published his short paper entitled “Notes sur quelques selles de fabrication Italienne.” In this, he discussed seven bone saddles concentrating mainly on the iconography, provenance, and possible place and time of origin.⁵

² Budapest 1; Budapest-2; Budapest-3. See: I.3.2. Nomenclature

³ Flóris Rómer, “Prunksättel im National-Museum zu Pest,” *Mittheilungen der K.K. Central-Commission* 10 (1865): 2.

⁴ “nincs több olyan köz- vagy magángyűjtemény Európában, melyben, miként a n. múzeum fegyvertárában, három példány együtt léteznék és pedig három oly nyereg, mely úgy a művészi kivitel, mint fönntartásuk dolgában a legtöbb felsorolt analogiával kiállja a versenyt.” Leó Kárász, “Elefántcsontnyergek a N. Múzeumban” [Ivory saddles in the National Museum], *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 14 (1894): 51.

⁵ Émile Molinier, “Notes sur quelques selles de fabrication italienne,” *L’Art* 34 (s.a.): 31–32.

These early works discussing bone saddles all have in common an admiration for these objects. The initial interest towards these objects can be explained by their active participation in the art market during this period, before they were taken to their current location, the museums. It is, therefore, not surprising that the first dissertation, listing and interpreting all the known bone saddles of the period, was published soon thereafter by none other than the influential Viennese art historian of the time, Julius von Schlosser.

Julius von Schlosser's dissertation, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," was published in 1894, in the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*.⁶ The starting point and main focus of the study is one of the bone saddles kept in the armor collection of the Imperial House of Vienna, now housed in the Hofjagd und Rüstkammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.⁷ The detailed discussion of the Viennese saddle is followed by the enumeration and brief description of all other bone saddles known to him. The catalog is accompanied by a study, discussing written sources that may refer to bone saddles, as well as a specific iconographic grouping distinguishing four main motifs typical for bone saddle depictions. Additionally, he discusses the inscriptions on the bone saddles and attempts to identify their origins. The dissertation closes with a stylistic analysis, distinguishing three main types.

Schlosser returned to the bone saddles once again in 1899 when he conducted research on the Embriachi workshop in his study. Here he attributes the bone saddles to this workshop, claiming that all bone saddles could have been made in one workshop by different masters. Additionally, he attempts to determine the dialect of the inscriptions.⁸ While his claims identifying workshops and stylistic comparisons have been surpassed since then, Schlosser's study is an important milestone in the historiography of bone saddles.

⁶ Julius von Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 15 (1894): 260–94.

⁷ Vienna-2.

⁸ Julius von Schlosser, "Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 20 (1899): 220–82.

I.2.2. Bone Saddles and Sigismund: Scholarship in the Twentieth Century

Schlosser's work on bone saddles initially attracted little attention in academic circles. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only a few essays were published on the subject, such as the multi-volume dissertation by Sir Guy Francis Laking entitled *A Record of European Armour and Arms through Seven Centuries*, published in 1920. In this work, Laking listed eight bone saddles and provided a brief analysis of them.⁹ Other writings were published mainly by Hungarian scholars. While the main questions regarding the bone saddles remained the same, a hypothetical connection with Sigismund appeared in connection with the origin and ownership of the bone saddles in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In 1910, Géza Nagy proposed that the bone saddles were made as gifts for the members of Sigismund's Order of the Dragon.¹⁰ The basis of the hypothesis was the emblem of the Order of the Dragon on the Budapest-3, based on which Nagy claimed that it was a gift from Sigismund to Vlad Dracul, voivode of Wallachia in 1431, when he was admitted to the Order of the Dragon.¹¹ Nagy's hypothesis was accepted by other scholars, such as Kornél Divald,¹² and Henrik Horváth.¹³ The theory was first criticized by István Genthon in 1970,¹⁴ then by János Eisler in 1977 and 1979,¹⁵ who assumed a more distant relationship between the emperor and the bone saddles.¹⁶

In 1987 and 2006, new works were published by Hungarian scholars, both in connection with Sigismund of Luxemburg exhibitions, which clearly reflects that bone saddles by that time were intertwined with the name of the Holy Roman emperor. In the 1987 catalog, Éva Kovács argued for a French origin for the bone saddles in Budapest,

⁹ Guy Francis Laking, Charles Alexander Cosson, and Francis Henry Cripps-Day, *A Record of European Armour and Arms through Seven Centuries*, vol. 3 (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1920), 170–76.

¹⁰ Géza Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban: Első közlemény" [Military relics in the Hungarian National Museum: First report], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 11 (1910): 232.

¹¹ Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék."

¹² Kornél Divald, *A magyar iparművészet története* [The history of Hungarian applied arts] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1929), 47–48.

¹³ Henrik Horváth, *Zsigmond király és kora* [King Sigismund and his era], Budapest székesfőváros várostörténeti monográfiái 8 (Budapest: Székesfőváros, 1937), 183–84.

¹⁴ István Genthon, "Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero," *Acta Historiae Artium* 16 (1970): 8–10.

¹⁵ János Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I," *Folia Archaeologica* 28 (1977): 194–96; János Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II," *Folia Archaeologica* 30 (1979): 240.

¹⁶ See: IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon.

suggesting that Sigismund probably brought bone carvers from Paris. She also claimed that the Budapest-3 was probably made for the old emperor before his death.¹⁷ In the exhibition catalog of *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator* in 2006, Mária Verő contextualized them in the extended imperial territory of Sigismund ranging from the Carpathian Basin to the Lake Constance.¹⁸

1.2.3. New Interpretations and Directions in the Twenty-First Century

In the past decade, bone saddles have attracted increasing scholarly attention, leading to new approaches in their interpretation.¹⁹ The growing popularity of bone saddles is reflected in their appearance in recent temporary exhibitions in Europe, especially the bone saddles preserved in Italian collections. In 2014, the Musée de Cluny in Paris organized the exhibition *Voyager au Moyen Age*, in which the two saddles from the Museo Nazionale del Bargello of Florence were exhibited.²⁰

In the Bargello's ivory catalog, published in 2018, Benedetta Chiesi offers the most detailed description of the two saddles in the collection.²¹ In another paper published in 2019, Maria Schröder also discussed the saddles of the Bargello, with a primary focus on animal depictions.²² In 2016, the Modena-1, another bone saddle from an Italian

¹⁷ Éva Kovács, "Dísznyereg Sárkányrenddel" [Parade saddle with the emblem of Order of the Dragon], in *Művészet Zsigmond király korában 1387-1437* [Art in the time of King Sigismund], vol. 2 (Budapest: Budapesti Történelmi Múzeum 1987), 83–85.

¹⁸ Mária Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 276.

¹⁹ In a few instances, they have been the subject of MA theses. See: Ditta Krivarics, "A Zsigmond-kori csontnyergék ikonográfiai programja: A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum három csontnyergének vizsgálata" [The Iconographic Program of Sigismund-Era Bone Saddles: A Study of Three Bone Saddles in the Hungarian National Museum] (MA thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, 2009); Robyn Dora Radway, "In the Name of Saint George: Ivory Saddles from the Fifteenth Century" (MA thesis, University of Central Florida, 2009).

²⁰ Florence-1 and Florence-2. Benedetta Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," in *Voyager au Moyen Age*, ed. Benedetta Chiesi et al. (Paris: Musée de Cluny - Réunion des musées nationaux, 2014), 100–1.

²¹ Benedetta Chiesi, "VIII. 66: Sella da Parata," in *Gli avori del Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, ed. Ilaria Ciseri (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2018), 324–28; Benedetta Chiesi, "VIII. 67: Sella da Parata," in *Gli avori del Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, ed. Ilaria Ciseri (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2018), 328–32.

²² Maria Schröder, "Animals and the Medieval Art of Love: Carvings on Fifteenth-Century Bone-Saddles," in *Animals in Text and Textile: Storytelling in the Medieval World*, ed. Evelin Wetter and Kathryn Starkey, Riggisberger Berichte 23 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2019), 227–38.

collection, was exhibited at the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara as part of the exhibition celebrating 500 years of the first edition of *Orlando Furioso*.²³

Concerning the two saddles at the Bargello, Benedetta Chiesi suggests that these saddles may have been used in marriage processions.²⁴ In my MA thesis of 2017, I examined this new marriage theory, and sought an answer to the question whether the fifteenth-century bone saddles were made for wedding purposes.²⁵

In October 2024, Maria Schröder published her monograph entitled *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts: Reitzeuge als Sinnbilder ritterlich-höfischer Ideale*. As indicated by the title, the scope of the research extends beyond the fifteenth-century examples and includes 37 objects dating from the thirteen to the seventeen century. The book pays particular attention to contextualizing the bone saddles within the framework of medieval courtly epics. The second part, which forms the main body of the publication, consists of a detailed catalogue of the objects.²⁶

Bone saddles are featured in the Courtauld Institute of Art's online ivory database, known as the *Gothic Ivories Project*. This database, which primarily focuses on ivory art objects but also includes bone artifacts, lists a total of 21 bone saddles.²⁷ The main importance of the database is that it contains information about the technical data, provenance, bibliography, and high-quality photos.²⁸

Bone saddles are becoming increasingly popular not only in academic, but in historical reenactment circles as well. In 2022, a reproduction of the London-3 was manufactured as part of an international cooperation, and currently, three additional reconstructions are underway.²⁹

²³ Paolo Parmiggiani, "13. Artista dell'Italia settentrionale (Friuli o Tirolo): Sella da parata con le armi di Ercole I d'Este, dopo il 1474," in Guido Beltramini, Adolfo Tura, and Palazzo dei Diamanti, *Orlando furioso 500 anni: cosa vedeva Ariosto quando chiudeva gli occhi* (Ferrara: Ferrara arte, 2016), 58.

²⁴ Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," 100–1.

²⁵ Virág Somogyvári, "The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles" (MA thesis, Central European University, 2017), accessed December 18, 2023, https://libsearch.ceu.edu/permalink/43CEU_INST/179qfpk/alma991003607628108861.

²⁶ The book is based on Schröder's PhD dissertation, submitted in 2021 at the University of Leipzig. Maria Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts: Reitzeuge als Sinnbilder ritterlich-höfischer Ideale, Neue Forschungen zur deutschen Kunst XV* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2024).

²⁷ Courtauld Institute of Art, *Gothic Ivories Project* [GIP], accessed October 5, 2023, <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk>

²⁸ However, it is important to note that in some cases, this information is outdated and in some cases only archival photos are available. See: Berlin-1: "Saddle (selle)," *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/739e77ed_7299f3d8.html

²⁹ See: V.2. Bone Saddles today.

I.3. The object group

Schlosser's aforementioned 1894 dissertation listed 21 bone saddles.³⁰ In his work, he points out, that his list is not complete, as there may be several other pieces in private collections. Schlosser's compilation is of particularly great value for provenance research, as many of the saddles he lists were still in private collections at the time.³¹ In the twentieth century, the number of known bone saddles hardly changed, and the list compiled by Schlosser was adapted by other scholars as well.³² In 2006, Mária Verő, in the catalogue of *Sigismundus Rex et imperator*, augmented Schlosser's list and assembled a comprehensive and critically reviewed catalogue of 28 saddles.³³ In this, she also classified two fragments of uncertain origin, one from the Louvre and one from New York.³⁴

Although, the object group seems to have remained unchanged in the twentieth century, its immutability has been disrupted and new items did appear recently. In my two MA theses in 2016 and 2017,³⁵ I have complemented this list with new, previously unknown pieces, increasing the catalog to 33 saddles.³⁶ In 2023, Kinga Tarcsay also published a list of bone saddles, primarily based on Verő's catalogue, but with some new pieces added, resulting in a total of 32 pieces altogether.³⁷ Schröder's recent catalogue consists of 37 pieces, including objects from the thirteenth–fourteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries as well.³⁸

³⁰ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 260–94.

³¹ Such as the Boston-1, New York-2 and the New York-4. Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 267 (no. 10); 272 (no. 15, 16).

³² Genthon, "Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero," 6.

³³ Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," 270–78.

³⁴ These fragments are not identical with the fragments of my database (Tata-fr-1 and Vienna-fr-1). Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," 278 (no. 26, I-III.)

³⁵ Virág Somogyvári, "Zsigmond-kori csontnyergek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban" [Fifteenth-century bone Saddles in the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest], MA thesis, Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, 2016, 45–50; Somogyvári, "The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles," 102–150.

³⁶ Chicago-1 (Cat. 21); Unknown Location-2 (Cat. 29); New York-4-C1 (Cat. 30); New York-2-C3 = Wallace copy (Cat. 27); New York-2-C4 = ex-Sporting copy (Cat. 28).

³⁷ Kinga Tarcsay, "Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels aus Wien 1., Herrengasse 10," in *Rösser in Wien*, ed. Gottfried Brem (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2023), 37–38.

³⁸ Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 129–222.

I.3.1. The database

All the known bone saddles are included in the database of this dissertation.³⁹ The main aspects of the selection was the manufacturing technology. Accordingly, I included the objects composed of a saddle tree which are decorated with thin bone plates – or items imitating this manufacturing method. Therefore, due to differences in manufacturing, I omitted some pieces which were included by earlier scholarship, such as the ivory saddle fragments of the Louvre and The Met, listed by both Veró, Tarcsay and Schröder.⁴⁰ The database currently consists of 37 items.⁴¹

The items are divided into three main groups: Late Medieval Bone Saddles, Nineteenth-Century Copies, and Fragments. In the late medieval group, altogether 29 pieces, I list all the known saddles covered by bone plates, manufactured between the early fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in Europe. This group contains items which were previously unknown or lesser known in scholarship, such as the bone saddle in Chicago,⁴² two in Stockholm,⁴³ and two currently at an unknown location.⁴⁴

The group of nineteenth-century copies includes 6 artifacts that were made after two late medieval saddles: the New York-2 and the New York-4. This group indicates that the boundaries of the object group is broader than we first thought.

Lastly, the Fragments encompass 2 archaeological discoveries of fragmented bone plates, unearthed in separate excavations: one in Vienna in 2007 and another in Tata in 2016. These fragments likely belonged to two late medieval bone saddles.

In the database, each item is accompanied by a datasheet containing information on its current location, material composition, and physical dimensions. Where applicable, inscriptions and initials are transcribed.⁴⁵ Each datasheet is complemented with

³⁹ *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/> See: Appendices – The Database.

⁴⁰ Veró, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” 278 (no. 26, I-III.); Somogyvári, “Zsigmond-kori csontnyergek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban,” 49–50 (no. 28–30); Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 150 (no. 31–33); Tarcsay, “Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels,” 38; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 129–31 (no. 1–2).

⁴¹ However, these items do not match the 37 catalogue entries listed by Schröder.

⁴² Chicago-1.

⁴³ Stockholm-1 and Stockholm-2.

⁴⁴ Unknown Location-2 and Unknown Location-3.

⁴⁵ The compilation of the bibliography for each saddle is still ongoing and is expected to be completed following the submission of the present dissertation.

photographs of the saddles. For easy access to the image of the saddles from all angles, three-dimensional models are included for 4 saddles.⁴⁶

1.3.2. Nomenclature

Previous scholarship has made efforts to assign names to the saddles to facilitate their discussion (Table I). In some cases, they refer to saddles by their traditional appellations referring to former owners (e.g. Jankovich Saddle, Rhédey Saddle). However, others have no specific names, and they have been simply referenced by the museums where they are kept. This approach poses challenges, particularly when multiple saddles are preserved in the same museum (e.g., three saddles in the Wallace Collection, four in The Met), making it difficult to distinguish them clearly. In my previous works, I followed the earlier logic and used names referencing either former owners or the current museum (e.g. Bargello Saddle).⁴⁷

In this dissertation, I use a clearer nomenclature for the saddles, using the name of the city where they are currently preserved, followed by a number, which also indicates the number of saddles in that location (e.g., Berlin-1, Berlin-2 – Table II). In the case of the two fragments (Tata-fr-1, Vienna-fr-1), the name reflects the excavation site and the fact that they are fragments.

I followed a different method in the naming of the nineteenth-century copies. As these copies are replicas of existing late medieval bone saddles, their name reflects the “original” piece. Therefore, these pieces are named accordingly, as New York-2-C1, New York-4-C1, etc. However, in the chapter on copies, I opted to use simpler appellations based on their current or recent collections for easier reading (e.g., Wallace Copy, ex-Sporting Copy).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Glasgow-1, London-1, London-2 and London-3. The 3D models of the Vienna-1, Vienna-2, and Tata-fr-1 are available in separate PDF files attached as appendices to the dissertation. The 3D models were created between 2021 and 2023 using photogrammetry. For a detailed description of the 3D model creation workflow, see “Three-Dimensional Digitization of Late Medieval Bone Saddles through Photogrammetry” in the appendix.

⁴⁷ Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 8.

⁴⁸ See: V.1. Bone saddles in collections and the art market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

I.4. Approaches, research questions and methodology

In previous scholarship, the most typical questions about the bone saddles included their place and time of origin, as well as the interpretation of the elaborate iconographical program, such as the identification of the workshop. This reflects well, that the bone saddles were mainly studied from an art historical perspective. However, bone saddles are inherently complex artifacts that extend beyond their carved decorations. Because of this complexity, comprehensive interdisciplinary research is necessary. This dissertation, thus, offers a complex interpretation of these objects, examining the bone saddles from disparate perspectives, including equestrian, art historical, and cultural historical aspects.

Following this introductory section, Part II, *Late Medieval Bone Saddles as Horse Equipment*, examines the bone saddles as horse equipment. For this, I examine the technical aspects of the saddles and reconstruct their construction on the basis of late medieval written and pictorial sources as well as surviving late medieval saddles. Apart from the use of these sources, I also use experimental archeology using the knowledge gained from historical saddle masters.

Part III, *Late Medieval Bone Saddles as Works of Art*, follows a traditional art historian approach, concentrating on the carvings and offering new ways of interpretation for their program. For this, I use traditional stylistic criticism and analogous artworks from the late medieval period. The main research questions concern the identification of workshops, as well as the interpretation of the motifs and finding a coherent iconographical program on the saddles. Additionally, I also interpret and contextualize the inscriptions adorning the bone saddles in late medieval literary tradition.

Part IV, *Bone Saddles in Cultural History*, examines the bone saddles as cultural artifacts and integral components of material culture. In this part, I look at the saddles from a late medieval perspective, aiming to contextualize and interpret them within their original environment in late medieval history. Additionally, I aim to establish the topographical and chronological framework within which the bone saddles can be situated. Finally, I discuss the original use and function of the bone saddles as well as their potential use in late medieval ceremonies.

Finally, Part V, *The Reception History of Bone Saddles*, discusses the nineteenth-century history of the bone saddles with a specific emphasis on their participation in the art market. In addition, it also focuses on a marginal part of the group of copies. The methodology of this part of the dissertation is significantly different from the earlier

chapters, since the period is rich in written sources containing ample amount of data. The dissertation concludes with an Appendix that includes an additional chapter introducing a new research method: the integration of photogrammetry in the study of bone saddles. In addition, the appendix includes a glossary of specific terms related to horse equipment, 14 tables that support and enhance the interpretation of the dissertation, and a printed version of the online database.

Because of their elaborate and complicated shape, discussing the details of different parts of bone saddles can be challenging. Thus, for the ease of discussion, I divided the surface of the bone saddles into nine fields (Figures I.2–3.). Due to their different shape, in the case of Florence-2, Modena-1 and Vienna-1, this was not feasible, so I employed a different approach, naming the different parts of the items accordingly (Figure I.4).

In discussing these complex, multi-faceted objects, interdisciplinarity is not only desirable but also indispensable. It is critical for providing well-founded answers to questions that have been frequently addressed in historiography. Throughout the dissertation, I use these approaches and methods to clarify traditional lines of thought in historiography while also introducing new directions.

II. LATE MEDIEVAL BONE SADDLES AS HORSE EQUIPMENT

In historiography, bone saddles are primarily interpreted from an art historical perspective, solely focusing on the carvings of the bone panels. Although these are indeed the most decorative parts of bone saddles, these objects are much more complex than their most visible layer. Still, studying them in the context of the history of equestrian equipment and armor is seldom found in scholarly literature.

This part of the dissertation aims to fill this gap, focusing on late medieval bone saddles from the angle of the history of armor and horse equipment.⁴⁹ This chapter not only serves to present a more complex picture, but it also seeks answers to questions that art history has never considered. First, I will address issues with the prevalent classification system of Eastern versus Western saddles, and *Bocksättel* versus *Krippensättel*, as distinguished in modern scholarship. These are misleading categories for medieval saddles, including bone saddles.

This critical overview is followed by introducing new directions of interpretation with the help of diverse sources including depictions, written sources, and surviving saddles from the late medieval period. The second chapter examines the technical construction of the bone saddles which also enables to reconstruct them in the context of late medieval horse equipment. This includes an analytical examination of the layers and technical elements of bone saddles using both written and pictorial sources. Finally, I contextualize the bone saddles in the late medieval workshop and guild system to reconstruct their production background.

II.1. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval saddles

Most of the surviving saddles from the late medieval period are bone saddles. This can be explained by the fact that they were not produced for everyday use and were mounted only in exceptional circumstances. Since only a few other pieces survive, most of them in a fragmented state, it is not easy to contextualize bone saddles in the medieval history of equestrian equipment. The most useful means of contextualization are pictorial

⁴⁹ This part focuses mainly on the late medieval pieces and does not deal with the nineteenth-century copies, except for one instance (New York-4-C1) in: II.2.1. Layers of the bone saddles - The Saddle Tree – Raw material.

sources. However, in most cases, the saddles depicted are only partially visible because they are obscured by the clothes of people mounted on them. In some exceptional instances, the horse is depicted without a rider and the saddle is more visible. Nevertheless, even in these cases, the depictions do not reveal much about the construction of the saddle. Our knowledge gleaned from visual sources can be augmented by a handful of late medieval and early modern written sources. However, texts often contain scanty information and sometimes contradict the visual evidence.

II.1.1. Classification of late medieval saddles in historiography

Scholarship often classifies bone saddles according to their shape and describes them under a specific name of a saddle type. This practice, typical for the twentieth-century literature, resulted in a rigid classification system in which most bone saddles are categorized as *Bocksättel* and/or Eastern type, with a few identified as *Krippensättel*/Western type. This classification system is not exclusive to bone saddles, it also appears in other works within the field of medieval saddle history, distinguishing Eastern and Western saddles of the medieval period.

Eastern vs Western types

The classification of medieval saddle types as Eastern and Western appears in many studies on saddle history, especially by Hungarian scholars. This distinction, mainly based on technical differences, was first discussed in detail by Gyula László in 1943, then by Ferenc Temesváry, János Kalmár, and Imre Gráfik.⁵⁰ The two types are described similarly in all cases. Imre Gráfik, for example, distinguishes these two types as pommel-sole/panel type (Eastern) and fork-side/panel bar type (Western).⁵¹ The Eastern types are described as lighter constructions, featuring two horizontally running parallel wooden

⁵⁰ Gyula László, *Kolozsvári Márton és György Szent-György szobrának lószerszámja* [The saddlery of the Saint George statue by Martin and George of Kolozsvár] (Kolozsvár: n. p., 1943), 96–97; Temesváry, *Díszes nyergek, lószerszámok*, 7–8; János Kalmár, *Régi magyar fegyverek* [Old Hungarian weapons] (Budapest: Natura, 1971), 335; Imre Gráfik, *A nyereg* [The saddle], *A Néprajzi Múzeum tárgykatalógusai* 6 (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 2012), 133. The distinction of Eastern and Western saddles was recently discussed in Polish literature as well. Piotr Nowakowski, “Remarks on the Construction, Evolution, and Use of the War Saddle in Late Medieval Poland,” *Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae* 21 (2008): 3.

⁵¹ Gráfik, *A Nyereg*, 133.

bars, to which the cantle is fastened at the rear while the pommel is at the front.⁵² Eastern types are defined as more practical for light cavalry, which enables more flexibility, for example, for archery.⁵³ As opposed to this, the Western types are defined as much heavier and feature a fork-structure, mounted perpendicularly to the horse's spine. They have higher chairback-like cantles at the rear and forks at the front, both designed to encompass the body of the rider. According to the literature subscribing to this classification system, the latter structure is more suitable for knights with heavy armor since the wide pommel plates at the front protect the legs, and the cantles support the back of the rider.⁵⁴ The evolution and the technical construction of both types are illustrated in detail in the monography of Gráfik (Figure II.1).⁵⁵

Although this sharp division of two saddle types seems to offer a satisfying system for medieval saddles, it results in problematic identifications. Firstly, none of the above-mentioned authors writing about Eastern and Western saddles of the medieval period, provide concrete examples for the two types from surviving examples or depictions. Secondly, since only a few medieval saddles survive (most of them bone saddles), much of our information comes from pictorial sources, typically mural paintings and manuscript illuminations. In many cases, these contain hardly anything about the construction of the depicted saddles or the layers which cover them.⁵⁶ In these cases, the construction can be inferred only from the shape of the saddle.

Another problematic factor is that the Eastern and Western types assume a topographical designation, which imply that they originated and/or were used in different parts of Europe. However, both the saddles with high, chairback-like cantles and saddles with low cantles appear in depictions from different parts of Europe, sometimes side by side.⁵⁷

⁵² Gráfik, *A Nyereg*, 17; Nowakowski, "Remarks on the Construction, Evolution, and Use of the War Saddle in Late Medieval Poland," 3.

⁵³ László, Kolozsvári Márton és György Szent-György szobrának lószerszámja, 96–97.

⁵⁴ Gráfik, *A Nyereg*, 17–26; Ferenc Temesváry, *Díszes nyergek, lószerszámok* [Ornamental saddles, harnesses] (Budapest: Dunakönyv Kiadó, 1995), 8; Nowakowski, "Remarks on the Construction, Evolution, and Use of the War Saddle in Late Medieval Poland," 3.

⁵⁵ Gráfik, *A Nyereg*, 18.

⁵⁶ See: II.2. The construction of bone saddles.

⁵⁷ Some examples by countries: Germany: Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken: *Herpin*, UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 152. Stuttgart (?) - Werkstatt Ludwig Henfflin, 1470, fol. 158v, 162v; *Lohengrin*, UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 345, Stuttgart (?) - Werkstatt Ludwig Henfflin, 1470, fol. 107v; Hungary: Several miniatures in the *Chronica Picta*, Budapest, National Széchényi Library Clmae 404, Hungary, c. 1360; Italy: *Guiron le Courtois*, Paris, BnF, NAF 5243, 1370–1380, Milan fol. 69r; Transylvania: Battle scene of the Saint Ladislaus legend on a wall painting (fresco) in the Lutheran church of Somogyom (Șmig, Romania), late 14th century-early 15th century.

The “two types” appearing in the same depiction is explained by certain scholars by their use. As Piersergio Allevi points out, these two different types—along their different shapes and characteristics—may be the result of the function of the saddles.⁵⁸ A fourteenth-century Italian manuscript illustration of the *Guiron le Courtois* shows two mounted riders side by side. The rider in the front is a knight in armor, sitting in a saddle with wide pommel plates, and chairback-like cantles (Figure II.2), the other man does not wear armor but regular clothes, except for the iron *sallet* on his head. He is sitting on a low saddle with a low pommel and cantles. Allevi states that the illustration shows how the two types of saddles were used on different occasions, requiring different shapes. The armored knight rides in a high saddle designed with defense features, while the other man is riding in a low saddle which provides a less rigid and more flexible and comfortable riding position.⁵⁹ Gyula László offers a similar explanation in connection with the illustrations of the Hungarian *Chronica Picta* (c. 1360). He points out that soldiers are shown in Western saddles, while hunters, and falconers, and other such people are depicted taking the long journey seated in Hungarian (Eastern) saddles.⁶⁰

Much as this argumentation of functional distinction seems convincing, other pictorial sources can be found showing the opposite: knights in full armor are depicted riding in both types, sometimes even in the same illustration. This is the case in the illustration of Folio 18 of the *Chronica Picta*, depicting the duel between Chief Botond and a Greek soldier (Figure II.3). In this, different saddles can be seen on the horses of two Hungarian leaders: in the foreground, the horse of Chief Botond has a saddle with high cantles, while Chief Apor rides beside it in a saddle with low cantle and pommel.⁶¹ In the illustrations of two fifteenth-century Schwabian manuscripts, fully armored soldiers can be seen riding in saddles with both high cantles and low cantles (Figures II.4–5). Moreover, in these manuscripts, many saddles are depicted as having characteristics of both saddle types, for example, the cantle is chairback-like but the front

⁵⁸ Piersergio Allevi, “Montare a cavallo nella Lombardia di fine Trecento: Note iconografiche su selle e finimenti equestri,” *Nuova Antologia Militare: Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare* 2 (2021): 137–38.

⁵⁹ Allevi, “Montare a cavallo nella Lombardia di fine Trecento,” 138–39.

⁶⁰ László, Kolozsvári Márton és György Szent-György szobrának lószerszámja, 97.

⁶¹ *Chronica Picta*, fol. 18. For the analysis of “orientalism” of the *Chronica Picta*, see: Ernő Marosi, “Zur Frage des Quellenwertes mittelalterlicher Darstellungen: ‘Orientalismus’ in der Ungarischen Bilderchronik,” in *Alltag und materielle Kultur im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, ed. András Kubinyi and József Laszlovszky, *Medium aevum quotidianum* 22 (Krems, 1991), 74–107.

has a pommel instead of a fork.⁶² In many other examples, it is either hard to categorize the saddle in the prevalent system, or it features elements of both types. For example, in the Saint Ladislaus frescos of Székelyderzs⁶³, the cantles and pommels are in an almost vertical position which makes them chairback-like, similarly to the Western-types (Figure II.6). Gyula László describes these kinds of saddles as transitional types of Western and Eastern (Hungarian) saddles.⁶⁴

Appellation of Bone Saddles in Historiography: Bocksättel and Krippensättel

This sharp, dichotomous classification system shows up in the historiography of the bone saddles as well, classifying them as Eastern and Western saddles, or as *Bocksättel* and *Krippensättel*.⁶⁵ This categorization of bone saddles first appears in Schlosser's work.⁶⁶ In this, he classifies 16 saddles as *Bocksättel* (trestle saddles) and 3 saddles as *Krippensättel* (crib saddles).⁶⁷ He gives a similar definition for these two types as the Western and Eastern saddles mentioned above: the *Krippensattel* is similar to an armchair and practical for heavy armor, while the *Bocksattel* is a light saddle, typical for nomadic riding. The latter are also called Hussar and Uhlan saddles.⁶⁸ In August Demmin's work, the *Bocksattel* is described as a Hussar or Hungarian type of saddle.⁶⁹ Demmin and Boenheim define the *Krippensattel* as having both fore- and backrest.⁷⁰

⁶² See for example: UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 152, 28v; fol. 39. v; fol. 48. v; UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 345, fol. 97 r; fol. 101r; fol. 271r.

⁶³ Dârjiu in Romania.

⁶⁴ László, Kolozsvári Márton és György Szent-György szobrának lószerszámja, 97.

⁶⁵ According to Ortwin Gamber, the *Krippensattel* was developed between the 4th and 6th centuries, in East Asia, and was brought to Europe by the Avars in the 6th century. Gamber, "Sattel," Lexikon des Mittelalters, vol. 7 (Munich; Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1977), 1400.

⁶⁶ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 260–94; Schlosser, "Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig," 254.

⁶⁷ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 263–76. He does not classify the **London-3**, because he did not see that one. 264. He also includes in the list but not classify a bone saddle fragment, currently in the Louvre, Département des Object d'Art, which I also did not include in my list. See: I.3. The object group; Table I.

⁶⁸ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 263.

⁶⁹ Auguste Demmin, Die Kriegswaffen in ihrer historischen Entwicklung von der Steinzeit bis zur Erfindung des Zündnadelgewehrs: ein Handbuch der Waffenkunde (Leipzig: Verlag von E.A. Seemann, 1869), 637.

⁷⁰ Demmin, Die Kriegswaffen in ihrer historischen Entwicklung, 640, note 1; Boenheim, Wendelin. Handbuch der Waffenkunde: das Waffenwesen in seiner historischen Entwicklung vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts (Leipzig: Verlag von E.A. Seemann, 1890), 199.

In the exhibition catalog of *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator* of 2006, Mária Verő follows this classification system, identifying the *Bocksattel* as Eastern type, and the *Krippensattel* as Western type.⁷¹ In this, she augments the already existing list by Schlosser, classifying 22 bone saddles as *Bocksättel*, and 3 saddles as *Krippensättel*.⁷² I followed this classification system in my MA thesis of 2017, classifying 21 saddles as *Bocksättel* / Eastern types, and 3 saddles as *Krippensättel* / Western types.⁷³ Maria Schröder also adopts this system in her recently published monograph, referring to each late medieval bone saddle as either a *Bocksättel* or a *Krippensättel*.⁷⁴

Apart from the examples mentioned above, this division system also appears in other literature about bone saddles.⁷⁵ However, as this overview suggests too, there is no full consensus in the classification system. This is also reflected by the fact that neither Imre Temesváry nor Imre Gráfik classify the bone saddles to the above-discussed categories but refer to them as transitional types instead.⁷⁶

II.1.2. Saddle types in medieval written sources

One of the most important problems with the prevailing classification system is that the terminology operates with modern constructs since medieval sources speak about neither Eastern/Western saddles, nor about *Bocksättel* and *Krippensättel*. However, some texts have preserved a few specific appellations used for certain types of saddles. Some of these refer to their origin. In the regulations for the jousts staged in Milan in May 1465 on the occasion of the marriage of Ippolita Sforza Visconti and Alfonso of Aragon, it is ordered that low German saddles must be used.⁷⁷ A 1470 source about a robbery near Skrobotno (today in Bosnia and Herzegovina), mentions a bone saddle made in the

⁷¹ Mária Verő, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” 270–71.

⁷² Verő, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” 277–78. As was noted in the first part of the dissertation, among the *Krippensättel*, she also includes three ivory fragments under no. 26, therefore there are six items in this group. See: Table I.

⁷³ Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 103–48.

⁷⁴ Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*.

⁷⁵ The description of the Braunschweig-1 in the Gothic Ivories Project defines the saddle as one of the 21 saddles in the form of the so-called *Bocksattel*. “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/6CED8E65_130c6003.html. Annika Singelmann, “Der Prunksattel des Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museums: Eine Objektbeschreibung,” *Studienarbeit* (Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig Historisches Seminar, 2008), 3–4.

⁷⁶ Temesváry, *Díszes nyergek, lószerszámok*, 9; Gráfik, *A Nyereg*, 27.

⁷⁷ Joachim K. Rühl, “Regulations for the Joust in Fifteenth-Century Europe: Francesco Sforza Visconti (1465) and John Tiptoft (1466),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 18:2 (2010): 195–96, DOI: 10.1080/714001557. The original Italian source is unpublished, and currently preserved in the Archivio di Stato Milano. I am grateful to Augusto Boer Bront for drawing my attention to this source.

“Slavic style.”⁷⁸ Another fifteenth-century source speaks simply about low saddles in Hungary: in his travel description from 1432, Bertrandon de la Brocquière reports a tournament in Buda Castle, noting that men ride low saddles on small horses “à la guise de pays,” which clearly shows who is the best knight among them all.⁷⁹

Some written sources mention specific saddle types, but instead of describing their construction, they reveal more about the riding technique of these saddles. In the book of horsemanship by Duarte I of Portugal, the term *Brabant saddle* (*bravante*) appears.⁸⁰ It describes neither the construction nor the shape of this saddle. Instead, it describes the mounting position, the use of the stirrups, and the weight distribution.⁸¹ In Pietro Monte’s fifteenth-century treatise about armor and fighting techniques, *jineta saddles* (*selle ginette*) are described as saddles for light riding in the Spanish manner, whereby cantles do not encompass the body, so the rider can be easily thrown to the ground.⁸²

These written sources contain nothing beyond the main characteristic elements of the described saddles. Instead, they focus on the different types of saddles that were required for different riding manners. This suggests that the manner of riding is as – or maybe even more – important and is described in more detail than the shape and construction of the saddle. Consequently, correlating the terminology with either depictions or existing saddles from the same period can be problematic.

⁷⁸ “unam cabalam cum una barda et unam selam de osso ab sclauinam.” Esad Kurtović, *Konj u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [The horse in medieval Bosnia] (Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2014), 669.

⁷⁹ “Et jousta le filz dudit grant conte en basses selles sur petis chevaux à la guise du pays, qui est belle chose à

veoir et congnoist on bien ceulx qui sesçavent bien tenir sur la selle.” Charles Schefer, ed., *Le voyage d'outremer de Bertrandon de la Brocquière: Premier conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne* (Paris: Leroux, 1892), 238.

⁸⁰ Duarte Ier, roi du Portugal, Leal Conselheiro, *Livro da enssynança de bem cavalgar toda sela*. Paris, BnF Département des Manuscrits. Portugais 5, 1401–1450, fol. 102r. Accessed January 23, 2024, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b60004002>

⁸¹ Jeffrey L. Forgeng, trans., *The Book of Horsemanship by Duarte I of Portugal* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 59.

⁸² Pietro Del Monte, *Exercitiorum atque artis militaris collectanea in tris libros distincta* (Milan: Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzeler, 1509), [e]5v, Accessed January 23, 2024, <https://bibnum.institutdefrance.fr/ark:/61562/mz2503>; Jeffrey L. Forgeng, trans., *Pietro Monte’s Collectanea: The Arms, Armour and Fighting Techniques of a Fifteenth-Century Soldier* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 159.

II.1.3. Bone saddles in medieval written sources

Although there are no securely identifiable references to bone saddles in medieval written sources, there are some traces that refer to saddles covered partially or entirely with bone or ivory.

In previous scholarship, saddles decorated with ivory in French epic works were often interpreted as textual evidence for bone saddles.⁸³ Examples of such works include *Athis et Prophelias* and *Erec et Enide*.⁸⁴ In these texts, ivory is just one of several decorative elements on the saddles, alongside precious stones and expensive fur therefore their identification with the bone saddle is tenuous.⁸⁵ Moreover, as Jean C. Campbell points out, in chivalric literature the appearance of the saddles was probably the product of the poet's imagination, which makes the depictions of saddles decorated with ivory in this source type unreliable.⁸⁶

Two other – more objective - French sources also speak about saddles decorated with ivory. A source from 1396 reports on two saddles sent to Sultan Bajazit for the release of the Count of Nevers, which had pommels and cantles (*arçon*) decorated with ivory.⁸⁷ Another French source is an invoice by the court saddler Geffroy le Breton to the

⁸³ Alwin Schulz, *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger I* (Leipzig, 1879), 384–85; Maria Schröder, “Animals and the Medieval Art of Love,” 227.

⁸⁴ “D’ivoire furent li arçon / Bordé de pierres environ. / Par liens furent d’or adouhé / Et a florètes oiselé.” (*Atis et Prophelias*, ms. 7191/ Français 793, f 114 r. 1280-1300, North-France) Victor Gay, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*, vol 1 (Paris: A. Picard, 1928), 53; Victor Gay, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Picard, 1928), 12, 341; “la sele fu d’autre meniere, / coverte d’une porpre chiere; / li arçon estoient / d’ivoire.” (5287-5289) Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. Pierre Kunstmann (Ottawa and Nancy: Université d’Ottawa, Laboratoire de Français Ancien, ATILF, 2009), 109-10.

⁸⁵ In her work, Schröder states that my 2016 MA thesis argues that Chrétien de Troyes’ *Erec et Enide* and Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* serve as evidence for the historical existence of the *realia*. However, the thesis actually argues that ivory is presented as one of several decorative elements on the saddles, alongside precious stones and expensive fur. See: Somogyvári, “Zsigmond-kori csontnyergek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban,” 9; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 13–14.

⁸⁶ Jean C. Campbell, “Courting, Harlotry and the Art of Gothic Ivory Carving”, in *Gesta* 34, no. 1 (1995): 11-19. As opposed to this, Schröder argues that the carvings on fifteenth-century bone saddles were inspired by French and German courtly epic poetry and thus indirectly referenced literary descriptions. She proposes that epics mentioning ivory saddles offer insights into the typical owners, origins, and contexts of use for bone saddles, noting that the themes found in the carvings of the fifteenth-century examples closely align with those in the literary sources. Schröder also maintains that twelfth-century courtly epics continued to exert influence into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and that bone saddles were deliberately crafted with these narratives in mind. According to her, this connection tied the saddles to courtly ideals and positioned them as a medium of aristocratic self-representation. She further suggests that the decline of bone saddles in the sixteenth century is linked to the waning popularity of courtly epics during that period. See: Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 82–94.

⁸⁷ “A Jehan de Troyes, sellier du roy nostre sire, pour pluseurs parties de son mestier tant selles que autres choses par lui delivrées pour les chevaux que mon dit seigneur a ordonez de envoyer et presenter a l’empereur Bazat en Turquie pour le fait de la redemption et delivrance de monseigneur le conte de Nevers,

constable of France, Raoul Comte d'Eu (1336-1339) for a saddle partially decorated with ivory.⁸⁸ Notably, similarly to the the literary sources above, these refer to ivory instead of bone, and the saddles are only partially decorated with it.

Bone appears only as a bordering decoration on the saddle tree in other sources. A French source from 1399 speaks about several saddles made by Jehan de Troyes, bordered with bone (“bordez d’oz”).⁸⁹ A 1412 inventory from Lille mentions two saddles made by Jehan Rapine, the saddler of the king, which was decorated likewise (“deux selles entaillées et bordées d’os”).⁹⁰ Similarly, an Italian source, the accounts of Francesco Datini’s merchant agency, speaking about Florentine saddles from 1368 reports about three prelates’ saddles bordered with black bone.⁹¹ This kind of border decoration these sources describe is very similar to that found in a French manuscript containing Gaston Phébus’s *Livre de la chasse*, and therefore it is outside the remit of this dissertation.⁹²

prisonnier dudit Bazat et aussi pour mondit seigneurle duc, c’est assavoir pour deux arçons deivoire a ymageries, cloez a cloux d’argent et semez pardessus de pierrerie de voirre et aussi garnics de veluiaux vermeil et par dessus rubannées de rubans d’or et frangiés de franges de soye tout autour, garnies par les quarrefours et par les pendans embas de roses decuyvre dorées de fin orde la façon de Lombardie, achetées pour mondit seigneur, par marchiéfait, chascune selle 1. fr. valent cfr.” Chrétien Dehaisnes, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l’histoire de l’art dans la Flandre, l’Artois & le Hainaut avant le XVe siècle*, vol. 2 (Lille: Impr. L. Danel, 1886), 738; Kovács, “Disznyereg Sárkányrenddel,” 84; Lisa Monnas, “Textiles and the Language of Diplomacy: Venice and Ottoman Turkey,” in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, Riggisberger Berichte 21 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 329, n. 2.

⁸⁸ “Pour Monseigneur, une selle de coursier à parer: les arçonnières devant et derrière de pillevilles d’argent fêrus en tas en manière de tuyaux, et sur les carrefours des dictes pillevilles, chastons; et ou milieu des dictes arçonnières, un dieu d’amours vestu de drap de soie, après le vif, les mains et la teste d’yvoire, et les ailles d’orfaverie, et tient un rouleau d’esmail, assis sur une terrasse de veluel; et à chascun costé du dieu d’amours, à l’un un bergier et à l’autre une bergière, vestus de drap de soie, les testes et les mains d’yvoire, et sur la dicte terrasse, moutons d’yvoire qui paissent, et de lez la bergière, un chien d’yvoire; et la terrasse estincele au ieux que en peut après le vif... xlv¹ p.” G. Demay, *Le Costume au Moyen-Âge d’après les Sceaux* (Paris: D. Dumoulin et Cie, 1880), 177–78.

⁸⁹ “A Marie, femme feu Jehan de Troies, sellier, pour deux selles pour le roy, les arçons devant et derrière bordez d’oz blanc (...) 40 l. t.”; “Pour deux selles, l’une de baquenee, l’autre de roncin, les arçons de l’une couvers et bordez de noir, et de l’autre l’arçon devant et derrière, bordez d’oz (...) 12 l.t.”; “Pour trois selles bordées d’oz, (...) 12 l. 1.” Gay, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*, vol. 2, 338–39.

⁹⁰ “A Jehan Rapine, sellier du roy nostre S, demourant à Paris, la somme de xxviii escus monnoie royal et vin s. p. qui deus lui estoient pour la vendue et délivrance de deux selles entaillées et bordées d’os faictes à ymages couronnez, garnies de tasses de Hongrie, de estriers et d’estririères, avec la façon et estoffes, sans drap (...).” Léon de Laborde, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne: Études sur les lettres, les arts et l’industrie pendant le XVe siècle*, vol. 1 (Paris: Plon frères, 1849), 92.

⁹¹ “selle da parlato choperte di panno acholorate, orlate d’osso nero e chanali, senza istafé e senza altro fornimento salvo ch’anno loro coverte di panno rosso e di chuoio bianco di montone, l’una in panni ischarlato e l’altra chardinalescho e l’atra violata, frangiate a seta, 3 fiorini una.” Luciana Frangioni, “Mercerie non metalliche fiorentine per Avignone, 1363-1410,” *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato* 52 (1992): 275.

⁹² “Gaston Phébus: *Livre de la chasse*,” Paris, BnF, Français 616, France, 14th–15th century, fol. 57v, accessed May 1, 2024,

More relevant references to bone saddles can be found in the regulations of saddle guilds. Two sources spell out the use of bone on saddles as the prescribed masterwork. In the Statutes of Hamburg, for example, a fifteenth-century addition stipulates that saddle makers must produce two saddles; one with brass and the other with bone.⁹³ Both the Statutes of Lübeck,⁹⁴ and the Statutes of Prague state that one of the three obligatory masterpieces had to be covered with bone.⁹⁵ However, since the sources do not mention any carvings on these creations, they may refer to uncarved bone saddles, such as the Chicago-1.

Apart from these, there are two additional sources that contain certifiable references to bone saddles.⁹⁶ In the testament of 1447 of Jacobi de Benegnuda, the Italian nobleman declares that he leaves his “sella de l’osso” to his son Dragoye.⁹⁷ Another source from 1470 reports that “unam selam de osso”, the property of Jacobus Galouich, was stolen in a robbery near Skrobotno.⁹⁸

II.1.4. Appellation of bone saddles in written sources

Although the term “bone saddle” appears in some late medieval written sources (as shown in II.1.3. above), these are not all certifiably identical with the subject of this dissertation. Since one of the earliest written source positively referring to bone saddles comes from the seventeenth century, there are also no known sources specifying the names for these types from the late Middle Ages.⁹⁹ The earliest mention of the Florence-

https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52505055c/f118.item?fbclid=IwAR1hDBN8PLrkKXR0zSsHalx_OHLMKshmlzCh2FgUp28ByfLHlBN_OhRcWbk#. I thank Augusto Boer Bront for drawing my attention to this possible pictorial analogue.

⁹³ “Item de sedelere scolen maken twee sedele, eenen myt myssinghe unde enen myt beenen.” “Statutes of Hamburg,” 94.

⁹⁴ “Int erste schall he maken enen benenen sadel al over vorbenet, unde enen kussadel myd Russchen leddere myd messinghe beslaghen, unde enen pelegrinen sadel.” “Statutes of Lübeck,” 404.

⁹⁵ “potom aby řemeslo svú rukú udělané okázal mezi mistry, zejména tři sedla, jedno s kostmi, druhé pošíté všecho, třetí povlečené z sucha, na jich pochválení” (then to show the work made by his own hand to the masters, particularly three saddles, one with bones, the other all sewn, the third dry-coated, for their approval) “Statutes of Prague,” 460. English translation by Martin Zdražil.

⁹⁶ I am grateful to Augusto Boer Bront for drawing my attention to these sources.

⁹⁷ “Item lasso la mia sella de l’osso a mio fiol Dragoye.” Michael J. Dinic, *Documenta res Belgradi mediae aetatis illustrantia*, vol. 2 (Belgrade, 1958), 54–55.

⁹⁸ See: note 78.

⁹⁹ The earliest written source that likely refers to a bone saddle still preserved today appears in the 1494 inventory of the Este family. However, it does not provide any information about the specific type of saddle. “Due selle da cavallo lavorate cu’ figure dosso arzonate” (Two Horse Saddles worked in figures of bone arzonate) *Inventario di guardaroba Estense 1494*, Modena, Archivio di Stato, Camera ducale, Amministrazione della Casa, Guardaroba, registri, note 117, fol. 115r, No. 63; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des*

1 and Florence-2, which used to be in the Medici Collections, comes from inventories from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the inventory from 1639, two saddles are mentioned as “selle d’osso all’Unghera,” of one of them is probably the Florence-1.¹⁰⁰ In 1736 and 1768 both Florence-1 and Florence-2 are described as “selle alla turca.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, the Vienna-2 is found in a 1731 inventory as “Ein hölzerner Moscovitischer sattl.” According to Schlosser, this term does not refer to its origin but to its shape and type.¹⁰² These appellations clearly assume the eastern origin of these saddle types and this may be one reason why most of the bone saddles are called Eastern saddles or *Bocksättel*.

II.1.5. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval saddles

As demonstrated above, classifying medieval saddles according to the traditional system poses many problems. Late medieval sources simply do not confirm this arbitrary division. While written sources contain other appellations which cannot be identified, visual sources indicate the existence of more saddle types than Eastern and Western, and the characteristics assigned to these artificially constructed groups often overlap. Using a contrived classification system which yields more exceptions than regularity can only produce false interpretations. Although I have previously adapted and used this traditional division, in the present work I will sidestep this classification for all bone saddles.

Examining the bone saddles reveals that most of them have analogous shapes with low cantles and pommels. However, three saddles (Florence-2; Modena-1 and Vienna-1) are markedly different, featuring high chairback-like cantles at the back, and forks at the front with wide pommel plates. These pieces differ from the rest of the bone saddles in other aspects as well. For example, the inscriptions on the Modena-1 and the Florence-2

13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts, 179. Schröder attempts to link a greater number of inventories to surviving bone saddles. See: Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 54.

¹⁰⁰ “Inv. 1639 (ASF, GM, 539, 539, c. IIr), Seconda stanza dell’Armeria: «Due selle d’osso all’Unghera, bianco intarsiate e storiato.» Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 328.

¹⁰¹ “Inv. 1736 (ASF, GM, 1450, c. 25v), Seconda stanza dell’Armeria: «Tre selle alla turchesca tutte impiallacciate d’osso bianco, lavorate a bassorilievo, una a fogliami e due a figure, et uomini a cavallo, e parole tedesche, n. 417»”; “Inv. 1768 (ASF, CC, 79, c. 25), Armeria: «258. Tre selle alla turca impiallacciate d’osso bianco lavorate a basso rilievo, una a fogliami e due a figure, uomini a cavallo, e parole tedesche.» Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 328, 331.

¹⁰² Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 263.

are written in Latin (Italian), as opposed to the other saddles, which bear German inscriptions.

Analogs in Pictorial Sources

There are many saddle depictions in pictorial sources which have the same shape as the bone saddles. Analogous examples include the aforementioned Schwabian manuscript illustrations, which features saddles with low cantles that are very similar to the bone saddles.¹⁰³ Another good parallel is a detail of the fresco in the Cathedral of Maria Saal (Figure II.7).¹⁰⁴ In this, the shape of the saddle is exceptionally visible due to the fact that no one is sitting in it. Similarly to most bone saddles, it has heart-shaped cantles at the rear and a pommel ending in a volute at the front. Other notable parallels can be seen in the German version of Guido de Columnis: *The Trojan War*, illustrated by Martinus Opifex around 1450, probably in Regensburg.¹⁰⁵

There are also many analogs for the Florence-2, Modena-1, and Vienna-1 in depictions. In a 1464 manuscript illumination depicting noblemen riding in parade saddles in the vicinity of an Italian city, the shape of the saddles is similar to the Florence-2, with chairback-like cantles encompassing the hips of the riders, and flat plate-like pommels (Figure II.8). The latter is also a characteristic element of the Modena-1. Interestingly, the analog of Vienna-1 can be found in the carving of another bone saddle: Saint George's saddle as depicted on the Florence-1 (Figure II.9). Here, similarly to the Florence-2 and Vienna-1, the cantle encompasses the hip but unlike the Florence-2, it ends in a slightly voluted pommel in the front.

Some pictorial sources depict artifacts that appear to be bone saddles. Two panels with scenes from the life of St. George, made by Bernart Martorell, appear to be similar to bone saddles, both in shape and bone color.¹⁰⁶ This is also the case with the altarpiece depicting the Adoration of the Magi by Masaccio (Figure II.10). On this, the material of the cantle and the pommel looks like carved bone. However, as most parts of the saddle

¹⁰³ UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 152; UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 345.

¹⁰⁴ Adoration of the Magi. Wall painting in the Dom- und Wallfahrtskirche Maria Himmelfahrt, Austria, 1435.

¹⁰⁵ Guido de Columnis: *Historia destructionis Troiae*, Wien, ÖNB, Cod. 2773, Regensburg - Illuminator Martinus Opifex, 1448–1455.

¹⁰⁶ Bernart Martorell: "*La Décapitation de saint Georges*", Paris, Louvre, RF 1573, School of Spain Catalonia, 1425 / 1450, *Louvre - collections*, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010063046>.

are covered with cloth, it is not possible to tell whether they have the same bone-like character. Even if these two examples seem like convincing parallels, it is crucial to remember that bone saddles were originally colorful while the saddles depicted in these images are monochrome, bone-colored. Thus, these pictorial sources cannot be definitively regarded as visual evidence for bone saddles.¹⁰⁷

These are only a few analogs of the bone saddles found in pictorial sources. Similarly to the bone saddles themselves, the characteristic elements appear in different variations in late medieval saddle depictions.

Analogues of Surviving Saddles

Although only a handful of saddles survived from this period, they need to be considered in the analysis of the bone saddles. Most of the bone saddles show similarities to the fifteenth-century pieces kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Wien. The KHM tournament saddles have similar character and construction: they have low cantles and pommels (Figure II.11). The Maximilian's Hussar Saddle with its heart-shaped cantles and pommel is the most similar to the bone saddles (Figure II.12).

The shape of the Firenze-2, Modena-1, and Vienna-1 can also be found in analogous examples of surviving saddles. A saddle in the Military Museum of Bucharest, for example, is almost the same shape as the Vienna-1 with its wide pommel plates and the shape of the front of the saddle with a slightly voluted pommel (Figure II.13). Another surviving example of c. 1480–1490 is a horse armor in the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, with a rounded pommel similar to the shape of the Florence-2 and Modena-1 (Figure II.14).

These pictorial depictions and surviving saddles correspond to the shapes of the bone saddles. They come from different parts of Central Europe and depict diverse use: battle, journeying, parades, and even everyday use. This strongly suggests that bone saddles are luxury versions of these saddles used for all occasions, which I revisit in Part IV. This also explains how they survived more than five hundred years: being special parade objects used only for festive occasions, they were protected from everyday wear

¹⁰⁷ Schröder analyses the paintings of Martorell and Masaccio in more detail in the context of bone saddles. In both cases, she identifies the depicted saddles as bone saddles—interpreting the one in Masaccio's painting as a royal attribute, and the one in Martorell's painting as a symbol of aristocracy, power, and authoritative violence. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 69–74.

and tear. Therefore, they are not only precious in their own right, but are also invaluable for preserving the shape of the commonly used saddles of the period.

II.1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I contextualized the bone saddles in pictorial and written sources, as well as surviving saddles from the period. These findings were used to demonstrate that the sources do not correspond to the classification system artificially created in scholarship, which, in turn, is misleading in typifying medieval saddles, including bone saddles. The variety of saddle shapes can be explained by their intended use, although the depictions do not always support this theory. Even though specific saddle types are mentioned in written sources, it is not always possible to identify them with late medieval saddles, especially bone saddles, whose earliest written sources lack detailed descriptions. Pictorial analogs and surviving saddles show that the characteristic elements of the bone saddles were widespread in the period. In the following chapter, I concentrate on the construction of the bone saddles, including associated horse equipment, in greater detail.

II.2. The construction of bone saddles

This chapter offers an analytical examination of the layers and technical elements of bone saddles. For this, I dismantle – theoretically – the various layers of the saddles. The aim is to understand the technical construction of these objects, which also allows to reconstruct them in the context of late medieval horse equipment. To date, this kind of structural analysis and the interpretation of the original manufacturing and technical details have been absent from the historiography of bone saddles.

I have used different types of sources for this theoretical dismantling, in order to understand how the different details and layers of the saddles were compiled. The primary sources are the objects themselves. Since bone saddles are closely guarded in exhibition cases and museum repositories, the most accessible way to examine them is visual, while revealing their various layers physically remains a rare opportunity. The saddles most useful for visual examination, thus, are the ones where the bone plates are in such fragmented condition that the core of the saddle—the saddle tree—and its layers are visible, such as the Chicago-1 and the Stockholm-1.

The information collected through autopsy can be augmented by findings of the scientific examination of these objects produced in the past few decades.¹⁰⁸ The most valuable of these is a dissertation by Wolfgang Schwarzkogler, the restorer of the Vienna-2 in 2000. Besides the detailed report of the restoration of the saddle, this publication also contains a meticulous analysis of the raw material and the layers of the bone saddle.¹⁰⁹

Further sources about the technique of the bone saddles include other existing saddles from the medieval and early modern periods. The examples most similar in shape and construction and closest in time are the saddles from the court of Maximilian I, preserved in the KHM of Vienna (Maximilian's Hussar Saddle and KHM tournament saddles, late fifteenth century- Figures II.11–12). Although different in shape and time of production, the discussion of other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century saddles is also pertinent, since the production techniques were similar. Especially useful are the saddles found in excavations, since their structure could be examined during the cleansing and restoration. These include the saddle excavated in Wieluń (Wieluń Saddle, fourteenth-fifteenth century),¹¹⁰ a war saddle from the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Rennes (Rennes Saddle, c. 1535)¹¹¹, as well as the saddle found in the Unicorn Passage of Southwark (Southwark Saddle, end of sixteenth century).¹¹²

A handful of relevant late medieval written sources regulating saddle-making techniques can also be used in the research. Unfortunately, detailed sources discussing the making of bone saddles have not come down to us. However, there are surviving French, German, and Czech sources from medieval guild regulations which do contain information about the construction of medieval saddles.¹¹³ The earliest example is the

¹⁰⁸ To my knowledge, documented scientific analysis of the raw materials was carried out in the following cases: Boston-1 (pigment analysis, 1988); New York-2 (X-radiography, 1991); Vienna-2 (detailed analysis, restoration, 2000); Tata-fr-1 (ZooMS analysis, 2021); New York-4 (LC-MS/MS (proteomics) results, August 2022).

¹⁰⁹ Wolfgang Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels aus dem Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien, um 1440." (Ph.D. diss., Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien, Institut für Konservierungswissenschaften, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Marcin Ruda, "Saddle from Wieluń circa 1400," *Renaissance Riding 16th-17th Century* (blog), accessed November 8, 2024, <https://renaissancehorse.blogspot.com/2020/11/saddle-from-wielun.html>.

¹¹¹ Marina Viallon, "An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism: The Materials, Making, and Use of a c. 1535 War Saddle from the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Rennes," in *The Horse in Premodern European Culture*, ed. Anastasija Ropa and Timothy Dawson (Berlin–Boston: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020), 193–202.

¹¹² Hazel Forsyth, "The Saddle from Unicorn Passage, Southwark," in *In the Saddle: An Exploration of the Saddle through History*, ed. Lauren Gilmour (London: Achetype, 2004), 53–57.

¹¹³ I am grateful for Augusto Boer Bront, Wouter Nicolai and Martin Zdražil for informing me about these sources and helping me with the translations.

thirteenth-century *Le Livre des métiers*, whose rich material, although much earlier than the rest, is particularly useful for the interpretation of medieval saddle making practices.¹¹⁴ Another French source closer in time is the *Statuts des maîtres selliers de la ville de Limoges* (Statutes of Limoges), from 1403.¹¹⁵

The German *Liber officiorum mechanicorum* from 1375 also mentions the saddlers along other guilds and crafts of Hamburg (Statutes of Hamburg).¹¹⁶ The regulations of the Lübeck saddle workshop from 1429 and 1502 are a similarly useful source for the examination of saddle making (Statutes of Lübeck).¹¹⁷ Finally, Czech guild regulations from 1451 regulating the work of the saddlers in the New Town of Prague (Statutes of Prague) are also pertinent in the present research.¹¹⁸

In a few instances, pictorial sources of late medieval saddle depictions can also be used to better understand certain elements of bone saddles. Lastly, historical saddle makers and their reproductions may fill the remaining gaps in understanding the construction of the bone saddles.

II.2.1. Layers of the bone saddles

The Saddle tree

Raw material

The core of the bone saddles, as was the general practice in the period, is the saddle tree. This part of the saddle was covered with a number of other layers, rendering it the least visible one during autopsy. Unfortunately, there are no surviving written sources about the material of the saddle trees of bone saddles. Practicality suggests that it was made of strong hardwood that could bear the weight of the rider. Recently, the

¹¹⁴ René de Lespinasse and Françoise Bonnardot, eds., *Les Métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris XIII siècle: Le livre des métiers d'Étienne Boileau*, Histoire générale de Paris (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1879).

¹¹⁵ "Statuts des maîtres selliers de la ville de Limoges," in *Le Limousin historique, recueil de toutes les pièces manuscrites pouvant servir à l'histoire de l'ancienne province de Limousin*, ed. Achille Leymarie, vol. 1 (Paris: Achille Leymarie, 1837), 23–34.

¹¹⁶ "Glaser, Maler, Sattler etc.," in *Die ältesten Hamburgischen Zunftrollen und Brüderschaftsstatuten*, ed. Otto Rüdiger (Hamburg: Lucas Gräfe, 1874), 90–96.

¹¹⁷ "Sadelmaker," in *Die älteren Lübeckischen Zunftrollen*, ed. Carl Friedrich Wehrmann (Lübeck: Asschenfeldt, 1864), 401–4.

¹¹⁸ "Konšelé Novoměstští potvrzují artikule sedlářů.1451, 9. ledna," in *Archiv český, čili, Staré písemné památky české i moravské, sebrané z archivů domácích i cizích* [Czech Archive, i.e., Old Czech and Moravian written monuments, collected from domestic and foreign archives] ed. Josef Kalousek, vol. 14 (Prague, 1895), 459–62.

identification of raw materials was carried out in a few cases. These analyses identified three kinds of wood as raw materials for the saddle trees of bone saddles: beechwood, birchwood, and limewood.

Beechwood was found as the material of two bone saddles. Sándor Bökönyi, archaeologist of the Hungarian National Museum, determined the saddle tree of the Budapest-3 as beech.¹¹⁹ Wolfgang Schwarzkogler identified the material of the Vienna-2 as beechwood, noting that no scientific examination was carried out in this respect.¹²⁰ The saddle tree of the early-modern Southwark Saddle was also made of this kind of hardwood.¹²¹

The use of beechwood is justified by its characteristics. Firstly, it is known to be one of the lightest, and at the same time most durable, hardwoods in Europe.¹²² It is strong, flexible, and adsorbs moisture very slowly.¹²³ This is especially important in preventing the sweat of the horse from damaging the saddle. Apart from this, its flexibility is important for the execution of the curved details. Thus, it is hardly surprising that beechwood was a traditionally used material for saddle trees.¹²⁴

Another type of hardwood, namely birchwood, was identified as the material of the Bologna-1,¹²⁵ the Glasgow-1,¹²⁶ and the New York-3.¹²⁷ As opposed to beech, birchwood is a lighter material. The saddle trees of the KHM tournament saddles were

¹¹⁹ This was published in the catalog entry written by Éva Kovács, in 1955. I was not able to find the original report or documentation of the material analysis conducted by Bökönyi. Kovács Éva, “Disznyereg Sárkányrenddel” [Parade saddle with the emblem of Order of the Dragon], in *Művészet Zsigmond király korában 1387-1437* [Art in the time of King Sigismund] [Exhibition catalog], vol. 2 (Budapest: Budapesti Történelmi Múzeum 1987), 83.

¹²⁰ Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 18.

¹²¹ Forsyth, “The Saddle from Unicorn Passage, Southwark,” 56.

¹²² Viallon, “An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism,” 195; Forsyth, “The Saddle from Unicorn Passage,” 54.

¹²³ Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 18.

¹²⁴ Viallon, “An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism,” 195; Forsyth, “The Saddle from Unicorn Passage,” 54

¹²⁵ “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/80095F06_2049f0b3.html.

¹²⁶ “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/256B836E_23475714.html.

¹²⁷ “Saddle,” *The Met Collection*, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/29624>.

made of birchwood, because their purpose was to be as light as possible.¹²⁸ Historical saddle makers today also prefer it for saddle trees.¹²⁹

Finally, a much lighter type, limewood, was identified in three cases: the Chicago-1,¹³⁰ the New York-4,¹³¹ and its nineteenth-century copy, the New York-4-C1. The latter is the only case when the identification was confirmed by scientific analysis. According to a 1979 report, the main structure of the saddle indicates that the saddle tree was made of limewood.¹³² Although limewood was a popular raw material for late medieval and renaissance sculptures in Germany, it seems unusual and impractical for saddle trees. It was not only rarer but also much lighter and more expensive than beechwood and birchwood.¹³³ As Baxandall points out, it was “not base material but one to be respected.”¹³⁴ This and the magical character associated with it in medieval popular culture make it an odd material choice for saddle trees.¹³⁵

Construction

How many pieces of wood comprised the saddle trees of the bone saddles? As noted above, in most cases it is not possible to answer this question, since bone saddles are entirely covered with other layers, and the saddle tree is not visible. Although the Vienna-2 was x-rayed in 2000, it did not provide further insights into the construction of the saddle tree because the denser bone material obscures the wood in the image.¹³⁶ According to the restorer, the saddle tree was probably carved out of one or two pieces, and the cantles and the volute were most probably mounted on the base with glue and

¹²⁸ “Turniersattel, vom Turnierhof Maximilians I. (1459-1519),” Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, *KHM Wien - Online Sammlung*, accessed May 30, 2024, www.khm.at/de/object/373451/.

¹²⁹ According to Marcin Ruda (personal communication, May 5, 2024), the strength of birch makes it ideal for the raw material of the saddle tree. Peter Spätling also used birchwood for the saddle tree of the reconstruction based on the Braunschweig-1 (personal communication, April 5, 2023).

¹³⁰ Jonathan Tavares, email message to author, October 4, 2023.

¹³¹ “Saddle,” *The Met Collection*, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467691>

¹³² “Examination of a Wooden Saddle by The Forestry Studies Centre (Swiss Federal Institute of Forestry Research), Birmensdorf, Switzerland: 20th August 1979.” I found this document in the Curatorial File of the Wallace Collection.

¹³³ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 27–31.

¹³⁴ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 31.

¹³⁵ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 31; Hieronymus Bock, *Kreuter Buch* (Straßburg: Rihel), 1546, 891–892.

¹³⁶ Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 18.

iron rivets (Figure II.15).¹³⁷ More deductions can be drawn from the bone saddles such as the Chicago-1 and Stockholm-1, which survived in a more fragmented condition allowing better insights into the core structure.

Chicago-1 is visibly made up of a small number of pieces.¹³⁸ As opposed to this, at a glance, the Stockholm-1 looks as it was made of several pieces that are stapled together. In this case, however, it is likely that the saddle tree was once made of one or two greater pieces, which broke later. The irregular edges of the parts, as well as the use of big iron straps and iron rivets all support this hypothesis (Figure II.16).

Other surviving saddles are also informative in this matter. While the Rennes Saddle was made of two pieces of wood,¹³⁹ the saddle trees of the Southwark Saddle and the Wieluń Saddle were made of five.¹⁴⁰ As Marina Viallon points out, a saddle tree consisting of a small number of pieces suggests a skilled craftsman.¹⁴¹ This claim is underpinned by a regulation in the 1409 Statutes of Limoges stipulating that the saddle tree must be made up of two parts.¹⁴²

Joining techniques

In the late Middle Ages, the wooden parts of saddle trees were typically held together by natural glue and iron rivets. The latter can be seen in a fragmented detail of the Boston-1 (Figure II.17). The Statutes of Hamburg regulate that the saddle tree must be bound with strong straps and secured with glued rivets.¹⁴³ According to the Statutes of Limoges, the saddle tree has to be dry, sealed at the joints, glued with a good quality adhesive, and reinforced with iron wedges.¹⁴⁴

Apart from glue and riveting, sinew was also used as extra binding material in some saddle trees. Sinew was glued to pre-grooved wood, which is well visible on the

¹³⁷ Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels," 18.

¹³⁸ I did not have the opportunity to perform autopsy in this case.

¹³⁹ Viallon, "An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism," 194.

¹⁴⁰ Forsyth, "The Saddle from Unicorn Passage," 54; Marcin Ruda, "Saddle from Wieluń circa 1400."

¹⁴¹ Viallon, "An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism," 194.

¹⁴² See: note 144 below.

¹⁴³ "Vortmer de zadelere scolen gut werk maken unde scolen ere zadelbome vaste binden mit starken remen edder vaste mit pluggen an den lym slaan." "Statutes of Hamburg," 91.

¹⁴⁴ "que l'arsou de lo sello, que se metro en oubrage nyou sia be sec et sia be fermat en las jouncturas la quaux sian be encouladas de boune colle, entre lous doux jutz, et afermadas en bous claveaux de fer, et afermat que sian et sechat puey sia be eymendat au mieyth que lou pourra." "Statutes of Limoges," 25.

Stockholm-1,¹⁴⁵ and on the Berlin-1 (Figure II.18). Using sinew as extra reinforcement is mentioned in both the Statutes of Hamburg and the Statutes of Limoges.¹⁴⁶ The latter stipulates that sinew must be applied both above and below in a manner that prevents it from being soaked by the horse's sweat.¹⁴⁷ This kind of reinforcement is justified by another quality of beechwood, namely that it is brittle and breaks easily. However, the sinew tightens the wooden components and strengthens the saddle tree.¹⁴⁸

The Statutes of Hamburg clearly indicate that the construction and joining of the saddle tree was an important phase of the saddle-making process, so much so that the master had to check every piece before additional layers were added. The statutes stipulate that the saddle should not be covered with any other layers until it has been inspected by the master, and anyone who disregards this, would be subject to a fine of 6 *penningen* and 10 *schellingen*.¹⁴⁹

Leather and parchment

The first layer on the saddle tree of bone saddles is the leather which covers their internal and external surfaces. This layer, which can be identified on the external side of all bone saddles, is exceptionally discernible on the Florence-3, thanks to the fragmented condition of the bone plates. It is also visible in this case, how the carved bone plates, now lost, left their traces on the leather surface.

The material of the leather layer was identified in a few cases. For example, both the New York-4¹⁵⁰ and the Chicago-1 are described as made of pigskin,¹⁵¹ while the

¹⁴⁵ Viallon, "An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism," 196. I am grateful for Marcin Ruda for identifying the sinew traces on the saddle.

¹⁴⁶ See: notes 147 and 149 below.

¹⁴⁷ "Appres sia be nerayat dessus et dessous ainsin com' s'apparte, et dessous sia cubert soubre lous neroys afi que lo suour deux chavaux ne deytrempe lous neroys, (...) qu'Il soit bien garni des nervures afin que la sueur des chevaux ne detrempe pas les nervures, (...) "Statutes of Limoges," 25.

¹⁴⁸ Viallon, "An Autopsy of Renaissance Equestrianism," 196.

¹⁴⁹ "Ok scolen se de bome mit aderen unde mit lyme wol bewaren, unde wanne se dat ghedan hebbet, so en scolen se der bome nicht decken mit leddere edder undere mit daveren, de mestere en hebben se erst bezeen. We dat brikt, de scal beteren mit 6 penningen und 10 schillingen vor jewelk stucke." "Statutes of Hamburg," 91.

¹⁵⁰ "Saddle", *The Met Collection*, accessed October 5, 2023. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467691>

¹⁵¹ "Parade Saddle," Art Institute Chicago, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/106328?search_id=54. The curator of Chicago-1 however did not confirm this.

Budapest-3 is red Cordovan.¹⁵² The same materials are found in the written sources as well. The Statutes of Limoges stipulate that saddles can be made of pig, cattle, sheepskin, or Cordovan.¹⁵³ With regard to pigskin, the Statutes of Prague include an interesting detail specifying that anyone who covers a saddle tree with pigskin should refrain from nailing bone to it, except around the pommel.¹⁵⁴

The leather of the internal side of the Vienna-2 has visible traces of white pigments. According to Schwarzkogler, these traces may suggest that the leather was once tanned with alum on both sides (Figure II.19).¹⁵⁵ He also points out that this leather layer makes the delicate wood structure stronger, while preserving its flexibility at the same time. Moreover, white leather provides a good base for the paint layers and serves as a flexible layer between the saddle tree and the paint. Finally, it helps avoid cracks in the paint layer caused by the movement of the wood.¹⁵⁶

Some bone saddles have a parchment layer for extra reinforcement. In the Vienna-2, a thick parchment layer was glued and fastened with iron rivets.¹⁵⁷ Parchment layers were identified in Florence-1 and Florence-2 as well.¹⁵⁸

Birchbark

The final layer of the internal side of the bone saddles is birchbark. It can be found in all the bone saddles, except those covered with an extra textile layer.¹⁵⁹ For example, a birchbark layer can be identified on the Wieluń Saddle.¹⁶⁰ Birchbark was used because

¹⁵² Mária Verő, “4.65 Beinsattel (Jankovich-Sattel),” in: *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 356.

¹⁵³ The passage also emphasizes that the best leather for the seat comes from sows. “Statutes of Limoges,” 25–26. Cordovan, the finest leather in the Middle Ages, was made of tanned goatskin and originated in Cordoba, Spain. “Le Livre des métiers,” 206–7.

¹⁵⁴ “Také kderýž by luk povlekl svinskú koží, aby naň nebil kosti nikdiež více kromě okolo hlavy.” (Also, whoever covers a saddle tree with pigskin shall not nail bones to it except around the head (pommel).) “Statutes of Prague,” 460. English translation by Martin Zdražil.

¹⁵⁵ Schwarzkogler, “Restauration und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 19.

¹⁵⁶ Schwarzkogler, “Restauration und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 19.

¹⁵⁷ Schwarzkogler, “Restauration und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 19.

¹⁵⁸ Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” and “VIII. 67: Sella da Parata,” 324 and 328.

¹⁵⁹ Berlin-2; New York-2. In these, the extra fabric layer was undoubtedly added later (maybe in the nineteenth century), probably in order to protect the object from further abrasion. Two nineteenth-century copies are also covered this way on the internal side (New York-2-C3 and the New York-2-C4.)

¹⁶⁰ Marcin Ruda, “Saddle from Wieluń circa 1400.”

of its absorbent nature, which prevents the horse's sweat from seeping into the wooden structure thanks to its high betulin content.¹⁶¹

The thin, rectangular pieces of birchbark were glued onto the surface of the internal side of the saddles (Figure II.20).¹⁶² The examination of the nineteenth-century New York-4-C1 revealed that this layer was applied onto a gesso base directly on the saddle tree.¹⁶³ The use of birchbark is also noted in the previously cited passage of the Statutes of Hamburg, stipulating that the saddle should not be overlaid with leather or birchbark until it has been inspected by the master.¹⁶⁴ The Statutes of Prague also order the use of birchbark.¹⁶⁵

The bone panels

Raw material

The outermost layer on the external side of a bone saddle is the most visible surface consisting of thin bone plates. Beginning with Schlosser's work, the historiography of bone saddles has long referred to these plates as ivory.¹⁶⁶ In fact, the material of the bone plates is still described as ivory in the official descriptions of some of the saddles.¹⁶⁷ This is not necessarily a mistake: the term *ivory* is used as a generalized term for bone objects in many languages.¹⁶⁸ The terminological ambiguity is, however, at the root of much misunderstanding. Ivory differs from animal bone not only in value but also because it is not bone: it is, in fact, the modified incisor, the tusk, of the elephant.¹⁶⁹ Accordingly, its structure is different than bone and reacts differently to environmental effects. While tusk is heavier and denser, bone is lighter and more porous. In most cases, ivory can be

¹⁶¹ Marcin Ruda, "Saddle from Wieluń circa 1400."

¹⁶² According to Marcin Ruda (personal communication, May 5, 2024), the birchbark pieces were probably be glued with the help of bone glue, applied warm. The adhesion is very strong because birch bark takes over the heat of the warm glue.

¹⁶³ "Examination of a Wooden Saddle by The Forestry Studies."

¹⁶⁴ See: note 149 above.

¹⁶⁵ "Item sedlo každé má býti dekováno březdú pod pokutú svrchupsanú." (Every saddle should be covered with birch bark on pain of the aforesaid fine.) "Statutes of Prague," 460. English translation by Martin Zadražil.

¹⁶⁶ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 260–94; Julius von Schlosser, "Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig," 220–82.

¹⁶⁷ Berlin-1: "Saddle (selle)," *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/739e77ed_7299f3d8.html; Bologna-1: "Saddle (selle)," *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/80095F06_2049f0b3.html

¹⁶⁸ See: *GIP*, which contains the datasheet of 21 bone saddles as well as of other bone objects.

¹⁶⁹ Mária Szabóné Szilágyi, "Az elefántagyar faragások kiegészítése" [Complementing the elephant carvings] (diss., Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem, Budapest 2014), 4.

visually distinguished from bone. On the one hand, ivory and other dental materials have a marble-like pattern, which is never found on bone. On the other hand, bone has easily recognizable holes on the surface that allow nerves and blood vessels pass through.¹⁷⁰ The species can be inferred from bone size: most bone saddles discussed here have thin, larger bone plates mounted on the saddle tree. This suggests a large mammal—either cattle or horse. This is further confirmed by the analysis carried out by Sonia O’Connor and T. P. Connor during the restoration of the London-3 in 2006. The restorers identified that the bone panels probably came from the pelvis of a horse or cattle, while the edges are made of deer antler.¹⁷¹ In the spring of 2021, the scientific examination of the fragment excavated in Tata in 2016 (Tata-fr-1) was undertaken in the framework of the ZooMS project (Zooarchaeology by Mass Spectrometry) at the University of York. The findings confirmed that the bone fragments came from cattle.¹⁷² The most recent examination was conducted in August 2022 on the New York-4, the project was carried out through the ARCHE partnership between the University of Bordeaux and The Met. The examination, similarly to the ZooMS project, was performed by Mass Spectrometry. The result of this examination confirmed the previous ones, identifying the sample from the plates as *bos* (cattle) and the edges as coming from *cervus* (deer).¹⁷³

In written sources of guild regulations, bone used on saddles appears occasionally, typically noted as decoration. These strictly regulated material of the bone. The Statutes of Hamburg, for example, prohibit saddlers from using horse bone to cover the saddle tree, adding that anyone fails to comply shall be tried in the town hall as a forger.¹⁷⁴ The Statutes of Prague state that no craftsman may use anything other than deer antlers for the bone covering of saddles.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, as cited earlier, it also states that whoever covers a saddle tree with a pigskin shall not nail bones to it except on the pommel.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Mária Szabóné Szilágyi, “Az elefántagyar faragások kiegészítése,” 42. Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 34.

¹⁷¹ “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/4F3DB733_cb45869b.html; Sonia O’ Connor, email message to author, August 4, 2021.

¹⁷² I thank Bianka Kovács, who conducted the excavation in 2016, and for her contribution in the project.

¹⁷³ LC-MS/MS (proteomics) results. Catherine Gilbert et al., “Species Identification of Ivory and Bone Museum Objects Using Minimally Invasive Proteomics,” *Science Advances* 10 (2024):3.

¹⁷⁴ “Ok en scal neyn zadelere bome beslaan mit perdesbene. We dat brikt, dat scal men richten up deme radhus vor valsch.” “Statutes of Hamburg,” 91.

¹⁷⁵ “také žádný mistr aby žádnými kostmi sedla vuokol neobkládal” (also that no craftsman shall cover the saddle with bones other than deer antlers). “Statutes of Prague” 460. English translation by Martin Zdražil.

¹⁷⁶ See: note 154 above.

These details in written sources often appear contradictory with actual surviving bone saddles, which raises the question whether they concern the same object type.¹⁷⁷

Application

The bone plates adorning the saddles are relatively thin pieces. This is especially discernible in the two archeological findings, Tata-fr-1 and Vienna-fr-1. The thickness of the Tata-fr-1, for example, is around 1-1,5 millimeters.

The extent of the bone plates covering the saddle tree varies. As shown in Table III, the plates cover almost the entire surface of the saddle tree in most cases, except for the supporting components of the cantles (Group 1). These saddles have differently shaped bone plates symmetrically positioned on either side. The joints of the bone pieces are easy to identify during autopsy (Figure II.21).¹⁷⁸ In other instances, the bone plates are applied in a similar manner but do not cover the whole surface of the saddle tree. In these, parts of the leather remain visible, rendering the character of the saddle less homogeneous (Group 2). The plural character of Modena-1 and Vienna-1 is mixed with practicality, as the seat of the saddles are not—or only partially—covered with bone plates. In the remaining cases, the bone is applied to the saddle tree in a different way: the figures are not carved on uniformly shaped bone plates, instead they are independent pieces carved separately in the shape of the given motif and applied to the saddle tree and leather accordingly (Group 3).

The edges of the bone saddles are covered with thin and long pieces, which suggest the use of antler. According to Sonia O'Connor, the length of these longitudinal edgings of the London-3 indicates that they come from red deer, which was confirmed by the above-mentioned scientific analysis of the New York-4.¹⁷⁹ The thickness and character of the antler edges are well visible in the pieces of the Vienna-fr-1.

The bone panels and antler edges were glued and pinned with small bone rivets to the saddle tree. The application of one of these bone rivets is well visible on a detail of the left side of the Vienna-2, where the other layers are damaged (Figure II.22). The underside of the bone panels was scratched for better adhesion as can be seen on the surface of the Vienna-fr-1 (Figure II.23).

¹⁷⁷ I revisit this problem in: II.3. Bone saddles as products of guild and workshop cooperations?

¹⁷⁸ However, in some cases the bone plates are cracked, which makes the joints hard to identify.

¹⁷⁹ Sonia O'Connor, email message to author, August 4, 2021.

Pigments

Although the bone saddles seem monochrome and bone-colored at first, most of them carry remains of pigments which indicate that they were originally painted. It is probably thanks to the nineteenth-century restoration practice that many of them are left only with traces of pigments. The bone saddles that remained the most colorful are the Stresa-1, Bologna-1, London-3, and Vienna-2. Pigments can be identified on the bone panels, on the antler edges, and on the leather parts as well.

As shown in Table IV, the most frequent color traces of the saddles are red, green, and blue. Black (dark) pigments are also frequently identified and there are traces of gilding in some instances.

The colors vary in every saddle, with no discernible common pattern. However, some similarities can be identified. Often when there are figural representations, the background (either bone or leather) is painted in a dark color.¹⁸⁰ The most striking example for this is the blue background of the Vienna-2. Ornamental motifs such as plants are usually painted green (e.g. Florence-2), but the leaves on the Vienna-2 are painted in three different colors: red, green, and blue. The pigments of the Vienna-1 survived in such good condition that their original coloration can be easily reconstructed (Figure II.24).

In most cases, the inscriptions are in black,¹⁸¹ while on the Florence-3 and Stresa-1 traces of red pigment suggest their original color. The most colorful inscriptions are found on the Bologna-1, where red, blue, and gold pigments can be identified. The same colors appear in chess patterns too: the Bologna-1, Florence-1, New York-4, and Stresa-1 have black/dark checkered stripes, while those on the Vienna-1 are red.

Red, green, blue, gold, and black are the most frequently used colors on medieval ivory products as well.¹⁸² As Bernard Guineau points out, no recipes of the painting materials of the ivory objects have come down to us, however, it is quite likely that they did not differ from pigments used for other media such as parchment and paper, and they were probably produced using the tempera technique.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ This is found on the Budapest-1, Budapest-3, Florence-1, New York-4; Vienna-2.

¹⁸¹ Black (or darkened blue) Boston-1, Florence-1, Florence-2, Glasgow-1, London-2, Modena-1, New York-1; Vienna-fr-1.

¹⁸² See : Bernard Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," in *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1996, 1999), 190.

¹⁸³ Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," 190–1

The technical examination of the pigments revealed the raw material of the pigments used for some of these saddles. The pigment analysis of the leather and bone of the Boston-1 and the bone of the New York-2 concluded that the raw material of the red pigments are *vermillion/cinnabar*.¹⁸⁴ Mercury vermillion was frequently used for medieval ivory sculptures, too.¹⁸⁵ On the New York-2, *malachite* was identified as the material of the green.¹⁸⁶ As for the blue pigments, those found on the New York-2 were identified as natural ultramarine (*lapis lazuli*).¹⁸⁷ However, it is important to emphasize in this case, that this saddle was heavily restored in the nineteenth century, as will be shown in a later chapter.¹⁸⁸ The dark blue background on the New York-4 was identified as a mineral blue, probably *azurite*. The blue pigments of the Vienna-2 are perhaps the most problematic. During its restoration in 1860, the original blue background was repainted in ultramarine. Under this, *azurite* was identified as a possible original layer, and *smalte* was also revealed as a possible later addition.¹⁸⁹ The ultramarine layer from the nineteenth century was removed in 2000.¹⁹⁰

Importantly, throughout the centuries these pigments could be altered by external circumstances and intervention such as light exposure and undocumented restoration.¹⁹¹ For example, *azurite*, when exposed to a combination of temperature and humidity, often turns bluish-green or even green.¹⁹² The chemical analysis by the restorer of the London-3 found that some dark colored elements were once painted a vibrant green.¹⁹³

Some preparation was probably undertaken before the painting of the bone and leather surfaces, for example, the bone plates were scratched to provide better color

¹⁸⁴ The reports state that it cannot be decided which parts were restored. "Examination Report and Treatment Proposal. Research Laboratory Conservation Record, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, May 20, 1988." Curatorial file, inv. 69.944, Boston, MFA; "Examination Report, Department of Objects Conversation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, December 1990." Curatorial file, inv. 04.3.250, New York, The Met, Armes and Armor.

¹⁸⁵ Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," 195.

¹⁸⁶ "Examination Report, New York, The Met"

¹⁸⁷ "Examination Report, New York, The Met"

¹⁸⁸ See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2

¹⁸⁹ Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels," 49.

¹⁹⁰ Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels," 49–51.

¹⁹¹ This is true for all ivory and bone objects in general. See Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," 189.

¹⁹² Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," 200.

¹⁹³ Karen Watts, "Une selle médiévale d'Europe centrale au Royal Armouries," in *Armes et cultures de guerre en Europe centrale XVe siècle - XIXe siècle*, ed. Jean-Marie Haussadis, CERMA 6. (Paris, 2006–2006), 50.

adhesion. This can be well seen in the Tata-fr-1. On the Florence-1 remains of pigments survived between the scratches.¹⁹⁴ During the restoration of the Vienna-2, a base layer of lead white primer was found under the pigments.¹⁹⁵

Other traces of materials on the pigments suggest not only preparation works but various finishes too, which also applied after the painting layer. On the London-1 and Vienna-2, an extra wax layer was identified, probably used for extra protection of the pigments. This layer of the Vienna-2 was removed in 2000.¹⁹⁶

II.2.2. Other technical additions, details

In addition to the construction layers, the surviving bone saddles present additional technical details that confirm their use as horse equipment. These details include various types of slots cut into the saddle trees, as well as additional elements, such as straps and buckles.

Rectangular slots

Most late medieval bone saddles have rectangular cutouts on the two sides. Eighteen saddles have two slots in Fields R5 and L5: a wider one around the middle of the side, and a smaller one in the bottom towards the rear of the saddle. Five of the saddles have only one rectangular slot, and two have no rectangular slots at all (Table V).

The practical use of these slots can be sought in pictorial sources, which clearly suggest that the rectangular slots could be used for attaching both the girth and the stirrup leathers. However, although the attachment of the stirrup leathers seems obvious, it is less clear how the girth was fastened. Examples of use can be seen in a fifteenth-century illustration of *Die Hausbücher der Nürnberger Zwölfbüderstiftungen* which portrays saddle makers. The portrait of Eberhart Hermann from 1496, for example, depicts the act of threading a stirrup leather through a rectangular slot (Figure II.25). The girth is applied in a similar manner in the same picture, however, since the saddle tree is covered with some black material (probably leather), the slot of the girth is not visible. In a saddle depicted in a fifteenth-century manuscript of the Morgan Library & Museum, the stirrup

¹⁹⁴ Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 324.

¹⁹⁵ Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 47.

¹⁹⁶ Schwarzkogler, “Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 49–51.

leathers also hang from a rectangular slot (Figure II.26). Similarly to the Nuremberg portrait, the girth is visible underneath but the way in which it is attached to the saddle remains unknown because of the black leather covering.

One possible solution may be that, similarly to the stirrup leather of the KHM tournament saddles, the girth was threaded through the slot from the internal side through to the outer side and then threaded back under (Figure II.11). In a reconstruction of the London-3 made in 2021, the girth was applied in a similar manner, with the girth threaded through the wider, and the stirrup leather through the smaller slot (Figure II.27).¹⁹⁷ Another way of fastening the girth can be seen on a medieval saddle reconstruction based on the Braunschweig-1 by Peter Spätling.¹⁹⁸ In this case, similarly to the previous examples, the girth goes in the larger slot, and the cantle in the smaller one, but threaded in the opposite direction (Figure II.28). These are possible reconstructions for all the saddles with two slots.¹⁹⁹

What if there is no indication of slots for the girth—as found in two of the bone saddles?²⁰⁰ A possible solution for this can be seen in a sixteenth-century fresco from Venafro, Italy, in which, the girth is pulled over the saddle (Figure II.29). Although this practice may seem unusual at first, it is still in use for certain Asian saddles today,²⁰¹ and may have been used for bone saddles with one or no slot at all. Another way of fastening the girth will be discussed in the next chapter, in connection with the Vienna-1.

There are also two special cases of rectangular slots. Although one slot of the Budapest-3 is marked, it was never cut out. While this may suggest that the saddle remained unfinished and unused, as will be shown below, it has other technical

¹⁹⁷ Marcin Ruda, email message to author, September 14, 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Peter Spätling, email message to author, September 14, 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Schröder claims that the girthing technique can be inferred from the deliberate omission of carvings below the lower strap openings on the London-3, as well as from damage observed on the Budapest-1 and Chicago-1. Although her argument regarding the London-3 seems convincing, the bone plates of the Chicago-1 are fragmented in several other areas as well, making her claim less conclusive. Similarly, the missing rectangular part of the bone plate on the Budapest-1 does not sufficiently support her conclusion. Furthermore, Schröder argues that fractures above the strap openings on the Vienna-1 may indicate a girthing technique executed from above the saddle. However, the slight fractures she references do not provide strong enough evidence to convincingly support this theory. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 18–19.

²⁰⁰ Modena-1; Unknown-1.

²⁰¹ A textual reference for it can be found in a fifteenth-century Mamluk manuscript, mentioning girth that goes around the saddle and the horse. “Kitāb al-makhzūn jāmi‘ al-funūn” [The treasure that combines all arts], Washington, Library of Congress, MS. Arabe 2824, Egypt, 1470-71, fol. 41v. Translation was made by the HAMA Association in the framework of The Mamluk Project. Accessed February 3, 2024, <https://hamaassociation.wordpress.com/research/the-mamluk-project/?fbclid=IwAR0b00FKbkvLX84uoJsgKUYz0iQrJW8SWMK1SvFRxz6EwVF89peWi-GzIN8>. I thank Andrew Ó Donnghaile for this information.

attachments that suggest actual use. On the Glasgow-1 one of the slots was cut but filled later.

Round slots

Apart from the rectangular slots, the saddles also have smaller round slots, most often in pairs. As shown in Table VI, they can be located in five fields, most often in Fields L-R2, L-R3, and L-R7. The most typical arrangement of these round slots is found on the London-1, which has pairs of holes in Fields L-R2 and L-R3. In Fields L-R7, it has double slots in the upper corner, in the bottom, and around the middle of the field.

These round slots may have served a number of purposes. Many were probably used for fastening the padding under the saddle tree for the protection of the horse. This can be seen in modern reconstructions (Figure II.30). The round slots could also be used for the attachment of the saddle flap, such as on the reconstruction of the London-3 (Figure II.31).²⁰² Moreover, the slots of the front and the rear of the saddles could also be used for fastening the breast collar and the crupper, as seen on the equestrian figure found on a fifteenth-century aquamanile from the Cloisters (Figure II.32).

Straps and buckles

In some cases, fragmented straps of different sizes are found on various parts of the saddles, some complete with buckles. These elements are usually located in the front and the rear of the saddles. Most saddles feature these on the internal side, with some cases on the external side, and a few instances on both sides. The straps are usually attached to the saddle with iron rivets, as can be seen in the detail of the Vienna-1 (Figure II.33), where it is pinned through the saddle tree.

The straps and buckles were probably used for attaching the breast collar at the front and the crupper at the rear of the saddles. The fastening method varied depending on the location of the buckles and straps. The fragmented straps of the Vienna-1, for example, are found on the internal side, on both sides of the rear, and one on the front left, complete with a buckle (Figure II.34). A similar crupper can be seen in the collection of the KHM (Figure II.35). Since it is likely that another buckle was originally attached to the front right as well, the harnesses may have been arranged similarly to the equestrian

²⁰² See: note 197.

figure adorning the aquamanile mentioned above (Figure II.32). The same reconstruction is justifiable for the Chicago-1 too, except that on this saddle the straps and buckles are on the external side. The three buckles of the Glasgow-1 were probably arranged slightly differently. The two buckles on the internal side, on the front right and left, may have been used for attaching the breast collar. The buckle between the two cantles in the middle of the rear, on the other hand, may have served for attaching the crupper.

Other types of straps also survived, which are likely to have served different functions on the bone saddles (see the “Other” column in Table VII). For example, the Vienna-1 has additional fragmented straps on the left side of the saddle’s external side, which may have served as another way of attaching the girth. As seen in a replica of a fifteenth-century saddle recreated by Marcin Ruda, in this case, two girths could have been attached to the saddle (Figure II.36). Similar double-girths are preserved in the collection of the Hofjagd uns Rüstkammer, KHM (Figure II.37).

Fragmented straps of white and black leather survived on the internal side of the Florence-2. These straps, particularly the white and brown leather fragments in the center of the tree, may have once been part of the stirrup leathers, which are now missing (Figure II.38).²⁰³

Three saddles have another kind of strap at the front, one that forms a loop connecting the two sides of the saddle.²⁰⁴ Its purpose was likely simple and practical: it was used for hanging the saddle on the wall, a practice that continues to this day. The Budapest-3 has interesting additions: rectangular iron clips in Fields L-R2. Similarly to the previously discussed additions, this detail may have served the purpose of attaching the breast collar. However, the absence of other technical details (rounded holes, cut-out rectangular slots, buckles, etc.), indicating that this saddle was never used, makes this obviously practical feature particularly interesting.

II.2.3. Conclusion

This chapter offered an analytical breakdown of the various layers of bone saddles. Contrary to their name, bone is only one of the layers—albeit the most visible—of bone saddles (Figure II.39). The different layers are well visible in saddles surviving in poorer conditions, for instance, in the detail of the Berlin-1 (Figure II.18). Apart from the saddle

²⁰³ According to Marcin Ruda (personal communication, May 5, 2024), these could be used interchangeably.

²⁰⁴ Braunschweig-1; Stockholm-1; Vienna-1.

tree, the analysis of saddles also considers other technical details, cutouts, and attachments. The presence of these elements is particularly important in establishing the original use of the bone saddles. As shown above, even in seemingly completely unused saddles (e.g. the Budapest-3) the presence of such technical details suggests the contrary, which is a question I shall revisit in the fourth part of the present dissertation. The exercise of theoretical dismantling and the analysis of the different layers not only serves to understand the construction of bone saddles but may also serve as a good starting point for their theoretical – or even physical – reconstruction. To gain an even clearer picture of the construction of the saddles, the next chapter aims to examine the question of the workshop(s) in which bone saddles were manufactured.

II.3. Bone saddles as products of guild and workshop cooperations?

The use of diverse materials in bone saddles presumes different crafts and workshops as well. Therefore, it is valuable to explore both the possible framework of the production of bone saddles and the number of workshops and guilds that may have been involved in their manufacture. Although, as noted above, some statutes regulated the use of bone on saddles, it is hard to tell whether they speak about carved bone saddles, or those in which bones was used for small decorative elements.²⁰⁵ However, some statutes speak explicitly about bone saddles. These sources mention bone saddles as obligatory parts of the apprentice saddlers' masterpiece. In the Statutes of Hamburg, for example, a fifteenth-century addition stipulates that saddle makers must produce two saddles; one with brass and the other with bone.²⁰⁶ Both the Statutes of Lübeck,²⁰⁷ and the Statutes of Prague state that one of the three obligatory masterpieces had to be covered with bone.²⁰⁸

Since no known sources reveal in detail how bone saddles were made, deductions must rely on the sources examined above as well as some other factors. The fine quality of most bone saddles' carvings suggests that they were crafted by masters other than the ones who constructed the saddle trees, layers, and practical additions.

²⁰⁵ See: notes 174 and 175.

²⁰⁶ See: note 93.

²⁰⁷ See: note 94.

²⁰⁸ See: note 95.

II.3.1. Saddlers vs carvers

As shown in the previous chapter, late medieval guild regulations and the cooperation of workshops varied from one town to another regarding the scope of their guilds and workshops.²⁰⁹ Most of the sources indicate that the layers were constructed by the saddlers.²¹⁰ In addition, the Statutes of Lübeck suggest that the saddlers produced all kinds of parts related to the saddles, including the additional leather straps such as stirrup leathers and girth.²¹¹ In other instances, different guilds were involved in the making of the straps. The Statutes of Prague and the Statutes of Lübeck distinguish the rights of the saddle makers and bridle makers.²¹² The *Livre des métiers* and the Statutes of Lübeck distinguish the saddler and the saddle tree maker (*chapuisier*²¹³ and *bomhouwer*²¹⁴) whose only job was to carve the tree to shape.

Beside the masters who manufactured the saddle tree and its layers, bone carvers worked on the bone panels and edges of the saddles. Carvers are rarely mentioned as a separate guild, since they probably belonged to the box makers or carpenters,²¹⁵ who were usually integrated into greater guilds such as the Krämerzunft in Ulm.²¹⁶ In the *Livre des métiers*, carvers are called *ymagiers tailleurs* (image-makers), who were allowed to work with bone, ivory, wood, and so on.²¹⁷ These professional distinctions imply that whoever worked with bone was trained to work with ivory and wood as well. As Michael Baxandall points out, sculpture was a specialized craft, and high-quality sculptures were made by specialized craftsmen from big centers.²¹⁸

II.3.2. Teamwork(?)

As concluded above, bone saddles were certainly the products of the cooperation of at least two workshops: those who made the saddles (which could involve various

²⁰⁹ See: Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 112–13; Hans Klaiber, “Über die zünftige Arbeitsteilung in der spätgotischen Plastik,” *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 3, No. 3 (1910): 91–96.

²¹⁰ “Statutes of Hamburg,” 91, “Statutes of Lübeck,” 402; “Statutes of Limoges,” 25–28.

²¹¹ “Statutes of Limoges,” 26.

²¹² “Statutes of Prague,” 438; “Statutes of Lübeck,” 374.

²¹³ “Le Livre des Métiers” 215–18.

²¹⁴ “Statutes of Lübeck,” 403.

²¹⁵ Hans Huth, *Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 8.

²¹⁶ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 107.

²¹⁷ “Le Livre des métiers,” 155. Norbert Jopek–Marjorie Trusted, “Ivory and Bone,” in *The Making of Sculpture: The Materials and Techniques of European Sculpture*, ed. Marjorie Trusted (London: V&A Publications, 2007), 118–19.

²¹⁸ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 97.

guilds and workshops), and the carvers. However, this presumed cooperation raises other questions: what was the sequence of the work stages of the different workshops and how closely did they collaborate? Regarding bone saddles, no unified practice can be found in this matter. Examining bone saddles shows that most rectangular and rounded slots fail to correspond to the carvings, and it seems as though they were cut afterwards. The technical additions and openings ignore the decoration, sometimes drastically defacing them. This is the case of New York-1 where the two rectangular slots are bored through the center of the ornamental decoration, and almost cover the inscription (Figure II.40). This saddle, thus, does not suggest a close cooperation between the saddler(s) and carver. In other instances, however, the functional features and the carvings are in harmony. For example, the rectangular slots can be highlighted by a carved border, such as in the case of the New York-4 where they are surrounded by a checkquered stripe (Figure II.41). The cutout slots of Budapest-2 form part of the composition (Figure III.48). In one case the carvings also complement the rounded slots: some of them on the Vienna-2 have a nice bone border (Figure II.42). In these cases, the saddler and carver presumably worked closely and respected each other's contribution to the objects. This suggests the following sequence: first the saddle tree and layers were made, then the carved pieces were applied to this base, and finally the other accessories were added, such as the girth, stirrup leathers, etc.

Late medieval guild practices contain references to pieces made collaboratively by different workshops. A good parallel for such collaboration can be seen the polychrome retables which required the combined efforts of joiners, carvers, and painters working together.²¹⁹ Another example of collaborative work is the making of knives, which are complex items, and their manufacturing requires cooperation not just between blade makers and handle makers but in the cases of luxurious products, even with goldsmiths and enamellers.²²⁰

The cooperation of different master craftsmen, a practice reminiscent of the Middle Ages, was similarly employed in the case of the 2021 reconstruction of the London-3, with three different historical master craftsmen working together. What is more, the modern cooperation was international: the saddle tree was constructed by Joram van

²¹⁹ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, 112.

²²⁰ Elisabeth Sears, "Ivory and Ivory Workers in Medieval Paris," in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. Peter Barnet (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 28.

Essen in the Netherlands, the paintings imitating bone panels were made by Markéta Poskočilová (*margaritae.ars*) in the Czech Republic, and the leather parts by Marcin Ruda, saddle maker from Poland (Figure II.31).²²¹

II.3.3. Conclusion

The sources examined above reveal that there was probably no standard workshop practice and cooperation in creating bone saddles, the statutes of different towns especially suggest diverse practices. This is confirmed by the traces of varied methods employed by different masters, which in some cases improved the saddle's appearance by mutual complementation, in other cases disregarded, and even destroyed each other's contributions. Understanding bone saddles as a result of complex workshop production helps interpret many details that seem illogical at first sight, and provides an insight into how a complex object was manufactured in the period.

II.4. Conclusion

Interpreting bone saddles as horse equipment not only supplements art historians' knowledge about them but also helps to find answers for problems that are seldom raised in art history. Instead of dividing them into two artificially created groups, one way of contextualizing them in late medieval saddle history is to find analogous saddle depictions and surviving examples from the period. The high number of these examples confirms that the characteristic features found in bone saddles were widespread in Central Europe in the period.

The detailed examination of the layers and technical elements of the bone saddles in written sources of workshops and guilds not only reveal the raw materials and manufacturing process, but helps in the physical reconstruction of these complex objects too.

Approaching bone saddles as horse equipment can serve as a foundational layer that other approaches can build upon and enhance. Thus, the present examination of this "saddle base" will be followed by a closer look at the most visible layer, the carvings;

²²¹ The reconstruction is published on the website of *Margaritae ars*, accessed February 5, 2024, <https://margaritaears.com/zakazkova-tvorba/dalsi-repliky/> and on the website of *Marcin Ruda Saddlery*, accessed February 5, 2024, <https://mrleather.org/reconstruction-saddles-1400-1550>.

and the next chapter proceeds with an art historian's perspective, interpreting the bone saddles as works of art.

III. LATE MEDIEVAL BONE SADDLES AS WORKS OF ART

This chapter discusses the bone saddles from an art historian's perspective, interpreting them as works of art. The research focus of this chapter is on the twenty-nine late medieval bone saddles decorated with carved bone plates, thus sidestepping Chicago-1, which lacks carvings, and the Florence-3, whose bone plates are largely fragmented. Additionally, I only cursorily note the three unknown pieces (Unknown Location-1, -2, -3), as only archival photos (or in the case of Unknown Location-3, none) are available for analysis.²²²

Aside from these exceptions, the remaining saddles vary in quality, style, and iconography. Consequently, certain examples (e.g., Budapest 1-3, Florence 1, 2) receive more attention, while others (Glasgow-1, Stresa-1) are of lesser interest. Since this chapter does not aim to be fully comprehensive, this discrepancy is natural and does not lessen the validity of the findings.

In the first section, I focus on the stylistic relations between the bone saddles and other art objects. Then, I discuss the most common iconographic motifs and heraldic symbols found on the bone saddles. Next, I examine the inscriptions and initials within the context of medieval literary tradition. Finally, the concluding chapter discusses whether these disparate motifs form a unified and coherent iconographic program.

III.1. Style, relations, sources

There have been only a few scholarly attempts to identify the workshops responsible for the bone saddles' carvings. Schlosser suggest that all the bone saddles

²²² I discovered new photographs of the heavily restored version of the Unknown Location-2 from a 2021 auction catalogue, shortly before the submission of this dissertation. See: "Unknown Location-2," *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/20>; "1136, Vollverbeinter gotischer Sattel im Stil des 15. Jhdts., Italien, 19. Jhdts.," in *Antike Waffen und Rüstungen aus aller Welt / Antique Arms and Armour from All Over the World*, Präsenzauktion 89 (Munich: Hermann Historica GmbH, 27 May 2021), 100–101; "Los 1136 - Voll verbeinter gotischer Sattel im Stil des 15. Jhdts., Italien, 19. Jhdts.," Hermann Historica, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.hermann-historica.de/de/auctions/lot/id/270036>.

were made in Embriachi workshop of Venice, or in this circle, by different masters.²²³ Only a few other suggestions have been put forward since then, for example, Rhineland, Tirol, Bohemia and Hungary.²²⁴

Schlosser's theory of a single workshop and area, the Embriachi workshop, has many contradictions. Firstly, the identification with the Embriachi carvings is problematic in the sense that there are no stylistic similarities between those and the bone saddles: the Embriachi carvings feature much softer draperies and differently shaped faces. The only similarity between them is their raw material (ivory and bone), which probably was one of the reasons that led Schlosser to his theory. Secondly, there are many differences in the quality of the carvings between the bone saddles themselves, which makes the single-workshop theory unrealistic. For example, the higher quality carvings of the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 are unlikely to have been made by the same workshop as the distorted figures of the Berlin-1 and the significantly different style of the Stockholm-1 and Stockholm-2. In some cases, there are also technical differences. As already discussed, the extent of the bone plates covering the saddle tree varies.²²⁵ The bone plates cover almost the entire surface of the saddle tree in most cases, while in other instances independent pieces were carved separately in the shape of the motif applied to the saddle tree. Of the latter, Vienna-2 stands out. Moreover, the depth of the reliefs differs from one artifact to another, some of the saddles are decorated by plainer carving (Boston-1, London1, London-2), while others are more plastic (Budapest-1, Budapest-3, Vienna-2).

As discussed in a subsequent chapter, there are many identical or similar motifs on the bone saddles.²²⁶ However, their workmanship varies in the different pieces. A good example for these differences is the motif of the hand reaching out from the clouds and holding an inscription roll, which appear on seven saddles but depicted in different style

²²³ Schlosser, "Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig" 220–82. In line with this, the Stresa-1 is still described as coming from the Embriachi workshop. Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," 278.

²²⁴ Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban," 227; Temesváry, *Fegyverkincsek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban*, 23; Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Age* (Freiburg: Office du livre, 1978), 213; Kovács "Dísznyereg Sárkányrenddel," 85; Genthon, "Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero," 5–10; Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I," 189–210; Eric Ramírez-Weaver, "No. 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV," in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437*, ed. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jirí Fajt (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Prague, 2005–2006), 236.

²²⁵ See: II.2.1. Layers of the bone saddles –Application; Table III.

²²⁶ See: III.2. Motifs.

in nearly all cases (Figure III.83).²²⁷ This varied execution suggest that the carvings on most of the bone saddles were made by different masters.

These differences do not mean that there is no relation between some of the saddles. In fact, similarities can be also identified in the style of some carvings, which suggest a connection between the saddles. In the following, I present stylistic features which can be found on different saddles and identify either potential stylistic relationships suggesting the work of the same workshop, or any other kind of relationship suggesting some connection between them. These similarities are best examined through three features: the folding of the drapery, the faces, and the floral ornaments, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

III.1.1. Style

When examining the carvings on bone saddles, a variety of artistic approaches becomes immediately apparent. At first glance, some general patterns can be identified, especially in the way figures are depicted. In contrast to the delicate, flowing, and elegant figures typical of the International Gothic style, the figures on bone saddles appear heavy and robust.²²⁸ This stylistic shift is not limited to saddle carvings but reflects a broader artistic transition taking place in the mid-fifteenth century. Similar developments can be observed in both sculpture and painting, where the refined elegance of the Gothic style gradually gives way to more solid and weighty forms.²²⁹ This shift may reflect a move toward a more naturalistic or expressive style, aligning with artistic trends emerging during the period that would later influence late medieval and early Renaissance art.

Drapery

The depiction of drapery is a good example for the differences between stylistic elements in the bone saddle carvings. In most cases, the long dresses of the ladies hang in dense parallel folds, with the hem forming repeated heart-like shapes (Figure III.1), such as in Field L4 of the London-2, and Fields R6 and L7 of the New York-4. This

²²⁷ See: III.2.6. Ornamental and other motifs – “Cloud” and hand.

²²⁸ Gerhard Schmidt, “The Beautiful Style,” in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347–1437*, ed. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 105.

²²⁹ Daniel Hess, “Der sogenannte Staufener Altar und seine Nachfolge: Zur oberrheinischen Malerei um 1450,” in *Begegnungen mit alten Meistern: Altdeutsche Tafelmalerei auf dem Prüfstand*, ed. Frank Matthias Kammel and Carola Bettina Gries (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2000), 83.

repetitive heart-shaped pleating hangs quite unnaturally in Fields L-R7 of the Berlin-1; in three other cases, the hem is less regular, but more dynamic and particular. In Field L4 of Bologna-1 and of Unknown Location-1, the folds are arranged in opposite directions, while in Field L4 of Braunschweig-1, it is depicted as if the wind lifted it. The heart-shaped pleats of the hem evoke the princess figure in the Saint George engraving of the mid-fifteenth-century Master of the Nuremberg Passion (Figure III.2).

The most unnaturally hanging hems can be seen in Vienna-2, New York-2, Berlin-1, and Stockholm-1 (Figure III.3). In Vienna-2 the hem forms regular loops above and below. The long hem of the dress in Field L3 of the New York-2 also ends in repeated, angular pleats that look foreign to soft matter and make the image less life-like. The less well executed examples of drapery include the long sleeves in Fields L7 and R4 of the Berlin-1 and Field L4 of the Stockholm-1. In these, the drapery falls in extremely unnatural waves and folds, which clearly show that the carvers were not skilled in carving drapery. The differences in craftsmanship aptly illustrate the diversity of these examples.

Sitting figures often present an opportunity for the carver to demonstrate their skills by arranging drapery in more dynamic and interesting folds. These are executed in various ways (Figure III.4). The hem of the dress of the sitting woman in Field L4 of the London-2 is arranged in three main symmetrical folds forming heart shapes in the bottom. The dresses of the sitting women on the Budapest-2, the figure in Field L4 and Phyllis in Field L6, is arranged in symmetrical, regular folds which renders them static and statue-like. In Field L4 of the New York-2, the pleats are less symmetrical, however, the dense folds ending in different angles look unnatural.

The draperies of the sitting/kneeling women on the Budapest 1, Budapest-3 and Florence-1 (Figure III.5) appear both more natural and more dynamic. The dresses of the kneeling princesses in Field R4 of both the Budapest-3 and Florence-1 hang similarly, however, in the former, the folds are more angular. On the Budapest-3, these angular folds are also found in other fields, especially L7, where the carver filled almost half of the field with the decoratively folded drapery of the organ-playing woman.

The drapery on these three examples not only stands out in quality among the others, but also show similarities to one another. These angular pleats of drapery are typical in fifteenth-century artworks, especially from the middle of the century.²³⁰ Even

²³⁰ Arthur Mayger Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut: with a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1963), 97, note 1.

more densely folded and angular drapery can be seen on the dresses of the sitting *Junckfraws* of the Courtly Household Cards (Figure III.6).

Dynamic drapery folds can also appear in the sleeves of some dresses. On most saddles, the baggy sleeves of the dresses are arranged in parallel, regular folds. However, some saddles feature sleeves that are richly and irregularly arranged, for example, some of the figures on Budapest-3 (Fields L2, L5 and R7), and in Field R2 of the New York-1 (Figure III.7). Some of the Courtly Household Cards, for example the *VIII France Hofmeistryn*, the woman's sleeve is similarly arranged in irregular folds (Figure III.8). Another parallel can be found in a late fifteenth-century Upper Rhenish stove tile, which also features a hairstyle similar to that in the bone saddles (Figure III.9).

There are also many instances with wind-blown draperies, for example, the Saint George of the Budapest-1, Budapest-3 and the Berlin-1 (Figure III.34 and Figure III.36). This kind of dynamic, wind-blown drapery also appears in other artworks from the mid- and late fifteenth century, including figures of the Courtly Household Cards, depictions of Saint George, e.g. the altar of Almakerék (Mălâncrav - Figure III.33), and engravings by Master E. S. and Israhel von Meckenem (Figure III.67).²³¹

Faces

Most of the saddles feature figures with rather schematic faces, lacking individual character. The facial features are roughly carved, with a long straight nose, unnaturally big eyes, and straight, closed mouth, which in many cases curves downwards. The hair of the figures is also generic, usually mid-length arranged in smooth waves or curls, in some cases in braids. Because of the schematic character, it is hard to find a connection between them. However, two saddles, Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 (Figure III.10), feature much more elaborated and individual faces. In both, the faces are life-like, with round cheeks and downward-curving, thin mouth. Even individual facial features and expressions can be found, such the man in Field L7 of the Budapest-3, whose expression reflects agony and melancholy as he stares into the distance (Figure III.7). Besides the finely carved faces, the figures are also more well-proportioned on these two saddles, especially finely executed is the figure of Saint George on the Budapest-1, with a proportionate body shape and hair arranged in beautiful curls (Figure III.11).

²³¹ See: note 353.

On one hand, the elaborately carved, in some cases even individualized faces on these two saddles show that they are made by more skilled craftsmen than the rest, on the other hand, the similarities between the facial features strongly suggest a close connection between them.

Ornamentation

As for the vegetal ornamentation on the saddles, certain motifs appear differently, while some cases display stylistic similarities. The unusual artichoke-like trees on the Boston-1, Budapest-3, Florence-1, New York-2 and New York-4 aptly illustrate the different craftsmanship of the same motif (Figure III.12). In this case, no two identical depictions can be found, which also confirms that they were manufactured in different workshops. Artichoke-like trees were popular motifs in the fifteenth century, analogs can be found from the entire century, for example, similar trees can be seen in a Nuremberg tapestry from 1420/30, and a stove tile from Bern from the second half of the fifteenth century (Figures III.13–14).

Stylistic connections can be identified on the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3, in the twisting leaves which curl back at the end (Figure III.15). The motif is almost identical in Field L5 of the Budapest-1 and Field R2 of the Budapest-3: in both, the similarly styled leaves appear under a falcon sitting on a tree branch. This similarity in motifs and style confirms the proposed connection between the two saddles. Similarly shaped twisted leaves can be also seen as decorative elements in the background of the Courtly Household Cards, especially the Hungarian and French Queens, where similarly styled leaves adorn the thrones of the queens (Figure III.16).

A similar, albeit more distant, connection can be found in the twisting leaves of the carvings of the Berlin-2, Boston-1 and Modena-1 (Figure III.17). Their shape and twisting seem similar to those on the Budapest-1 and Budapest-2. At the same time, these examples are different in the style, which suggest a more distant relationship and only a formal similarity to the aforementioned examples.

Another stylistic connection can be identified in the plant wrapping around a tree branch (Figure III.18). This motif is found on the edges of two bone saddles—almost identical on the Budapest-1 and Budapest-2—both on the narrow top edge between the two sides of the saddles (Fields L-R5), and the narrow edge between Fields L-R2 and L-R4. The similarity in craftsmanship and the fact that the decoration appears in the same

fields both imply a connection between these two objects. The same motif can be seen as a border element on a tapestry from Nuremberg from around 1450 (Figure III.19).

The motif appears on two other bone saddles as well, however, the craftsmanship and their place on the saddles differ (Figure III.20). Similarly to the Budapest-1 and Budapest-2, on the Vienna-2, the motif appears on the thin edge between Fields L-R2 and L-R4, but also between Fields L7 and R7, where it serves to separate additional fields. Here the craftsmanship, similarly to other elements of the saddle, is of a lower quality and detail. Apart from the thin top edge, the Florence-2 features the motif also on the back of the cantle as a space filler. The shape of this particular carving is more similar to the Budapest-1 and Budapest-2, than the Vienna-2.

Although more minor, another stylistic similarity in the vegetal ornamentation is the three-lobed leaf appearing in Fields L-R7 of the New York-1 and the Tata-fr-1 (Figure III.21). However, since the Tata-fr-1 is a small fragment, it may provide additional information about the fragment, but no further deductions can be made about the connection between the two pieces.

III.1.2. Relations between the saddles

As the examples show, the stylistic differences between the bone saddles clearly contradict Schlosser's single workshop theory and suggest that they were carved by different masters. However, the stylistic similarities presented above do suggest connections between some of the surviving saddles. Most of the stylistic similarities can be found on the Budapest-1, Budapest-3, primarily in the similarly shaped faces and the style of the twisting leaves. These two examples also stand out from the rest of the bone saddles in quality.

The relationship between the Budapest 1 and Budapest-2 is more complicated. As shown above, the plant wrapped around a tree branch looks almost identical. However, other parts of the carvings, especially the craftsmanship of the figures, are very different in style and quality: the figures and faces of the Budapest-2 are less refined than on the other saddle. This suggests the possibility that the carvings on the saddle were the work of different carvers. For example, the ornamental decoration of Budapest-1 and Budapest-2 was made by the same hand but the figures were executed by different carvers. It also raises the possibility that not only the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 was made in the same workshop, but also the Budapest-2.

The Florence-1 also shows similarities with this group, although they are mostly compositional, in a different style. There are three features in which the composition evokes the Budapest-3: the figure of the falconer, Saint George, and the princess. These three motifs are depicted in the same fields on both saddles (Figure III.22). The most similar ones are the falconer figures, both wearing the same side-slit gown and pot-like hats over their long, wavy hair. They sit in a similar posture with the falcon resting on their right hand, and holding out two middle fingers on their left hand. Although their hair and face are similar, the falconer of the Budapest-3 has more rounded facial features and a more elaborated nose, while the falconer of the Florence-1, similarly to the other figures on the same saddle, has linear facial traits, shaped by rougher carving. The shape of the falcon is also similar, although that on the Budapest-3 is more elaborately hewn with the feathers individually carved, while the body of the falcon on the Florence-1 is plain – although, this can be a result of abrasion. The one major difference between the two figures is the different background of the seated falconers: composed of twisting leaves on the Budapest-3, homogenous background with four trees on the Florence-1. Although the composition of the falconer scenes on both saddles is identical, clearly suggesting a connection between motifs, the carving of the Florence-1 is rougher than the Budapest-3 which suggests different masters.

In sum, the Budapest-1, Budapest-2, Budapest-3 may have been made in the same workshop, Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 even by the same hand (Figure III.23).²³² The identification of the carver of the Florence-1 is much more problematic. The use of the same compositional motifs suggest that he worked from the same source, not excluding the possibility of the same workshop as well.

Two bone saddles have carvings significantly different from the rest of the group: the Stockholm-1 and Stockholm-2 (Figure III.24).²³³ They also share some stylistic similarities, for example, the unique dotting on the dress of the woman in Field L4 of the

²³² Schröder also identifies the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 saddles as products of the same workshop, likely carved by the same hand. She further notes that their style shows influences from Netherlandish art. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 25, 149, 152.

²³³ Additionally, the Unknown Location-2 differs significantly from the rest of the group. However, since only an archival photograph of the object was available until recently—and I identified images of its heavily restored version from a 2021 auction shortly before the completion of this dissertation—I was unable to include a detailed analysis of the piece. See: note 222. Schröder identifies the bone saddle in her monograph as originating from the sixteenth century and provides a detailed analysis of it. However, her examination relies solely on the archival photograph and some written sources, as she was not aware of the images from the 2021 auction. See: Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 206–208.

Stockholm-1 and on the bird in the same field of the Stockholm-2. This significantly different carving style indicate that they were made in a different place and time than the others, which I will revisit in a later chapter.²³⁴ It is much harder to identify such stylistic relationships between the rest of the saddles, besides a few compositional and motivic similarities to be discussed in the next chapter.²³⁵ However, before delving into these similarities, in the following, I will identify pictorial sources which the carvers may have worked from.

III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings?

Do the motifs and compositions found on bone saddles come from direct sources, such as engravings, pattern books, or are they only part of the typical late-Gothic formal language as late as the 1450s?²³⁶

There are instances where prints can be identified as direct sources for other media. Woodcuts and engravings are known to have served as direct models for stove tiles, caskets and ivory carvings.²³⁷ For example, a print depicting the *Dormition* in the *Hours for the Use of Rome* was identified as the model for an ivory pax in Amsterdam (Figures III.25–26).²³⁸ Here, it is quite evident that the facial features and the drapery folds seen in the print are rendered in a similar manner on the carving.

Unfortunately, no such direct model survives for the images of the bone saddles. Identifiable indirect relationships between the different media include the depiction of the Wild Man fighting against the lion on the Budapest-3 (Figure III.27). As pointed out by János Eisler, a similar composition can be seen on an engraving by the Master of the

²³⁴ See: IV.1.2. Place and time of production.

²³⁵ See: III.2. Motifs.

²³⁶ The question is raised on the basis of Eva Roth Kaufmann opinion on stove tiles. She rejects the idea that the stove tiles derive from engravings, and suggests instead the prevalence of typical late-Gothic formal language as late as 1450. Eva Roth Kaufmann, Rene Buschor, and Daniel Gutscher, *Spätmittelalterliche reliefierte Ofenkeramik in Bern: Herstellung und Motive*, Schriftenreihe der Erziehungsdirektion des Kantons Bern, ed. Archäologischer Dienst des Kantons Bern (Bern: Staatlicher Lehrmittelverlag, 1994), 84.

²³⁷ Stove tiles: Max Lehrs, *Geschichte und kritischer Katalog des deutschen, niederländischen und französischen Kupferstichs im XV. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1910); Rosemarie Franz-Berdau, “Graphische Vorlagen zu den Kachelreliefs des Ofens auf der Hohensalzburg,” *Keramos* 5 (1961): 3–12; Sophie Stelzle-Hüglin, “Spätmittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Ofenkacheln aus der Talvogtei,” in *Die Kirchartener Talvogtei*, ed. Frank T. Leusch, Hartmann Manfred Schärf, Sophie Stelzle-Hüglin, and Ilse Fingerlin, 1st ed. (Lindenberg, 2000), 103–121. Caskets: Jürgen Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe: Das Münchner Minnekästchen und andere mittelalterliche Minnekästchen aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum” (Phd Diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2005), 248–51.

²³⁸ Yvard, “Translated Images: From Print to Ivory in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century,” 57–58.

Nuremberg Passion (Figure III.28).²³⁹ However, there are many differences between the two depictions, which clearly suggest only an indirect relation between them.²⁴⁰ As opposed to this, a direct relationship can be seen between the engraving and a Viennese *Minnekästchen* (Figure III.29).

The kneeling princess depicted in New York-2 seems to be another connection to an engraving, which closely resembles the previously mentioned mid-fifteenth century engraving by the Master of the Nuremberg Passion (Figures III.30–31). The princess in the engraving wears a similar dress to that of the princess on the saddle—a gown with puffy sleeves and a loose sleeveless outer garment over it. The two dresses differ only in their folding, which is lighter on the engraving than the angular folds on the saddle, and it shows similarities to the other examples discussed above.²⁴¹ The two princesses share the same facial features: a long, straight nose and similar eyes and lips.

These similarities do suggest a relationship between the engraving and the carving. The fact that the engraving is dated to 1446–1455 and the 2012 radiocarbon analysis of the New York-2 dates it to 1440–1450,²⁴² also supports a connection between the two works. However, other parts of the engraving, such as the figure of Saint George and the appearance of the castle, are different from the rest of the bone saddles' carvings, which bears out that the carvers may have used elements of different engravings and probably varied them freely.

These observations suggest that the bone saddle carvers borrowed motifs and compositions from engravings and woodcuts. The different style and quality of their work may be explained by the possibility that different engravings were known to workshops and the carvers adapted their motifs according to their abilities and in their own style.

III.1.4. Conclusion

As shown above, only a few elements can be identified to infer connections between workshops and carving styles. The precise identification of the workshops where the bone saddles were manufactured is problematic. However, some general statement can be inferred regarding the saddles, for example, the quality of the bone carvings in most cases suggest less skilled craftsmen, probably minor masters. In addition, most of

²³⁹ Eisler, “Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II.,” 222.

²⁴⁰ See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures – Wild men.

²⁴¹ See: III.1.1. Style - Drapery.

²⁴² Curatorial File of inv. 04.3.250, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

the parallel examples come from the mid- or late fifteenth century. The heavy massive figures, so different from the soft, beautiful style of the international Gothic in the first decades of the century, were more likely later productions, typical for southern Germany and Austria.²⁴³ For example, as demonstrated above, many details of the figures on the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3 show similarities to those in the Courtly Household Cards which are either Upper Rhenish or Austrian. The dating and place of manufacture of the saddles will be examined in Part IV of the present dissertation.²⁴⁴

III.2. Motifs

This chapter presents the main motifs found on bone saddles, primarily focusing on those that appear on multiple saddles and a few which only appear one or two saddles. The analysis will provide an interpretation of meaning of the motifs in context. Since scenes depicted on late medieval objects are never entirely independent but often act as reflections of medieval literary texts,²⁴⁵ I also contextualize them in both late medieval pictorial tradition and in medieval literature.

The iconography of motifs on the bone saddles can be challenging to interpret. As noted by scholars specializing in secular iconography, such as Jürgen Wurst, Debra Higgs Strickland, and Malcolm Jones, elements can be interpreted only in context and there are always multiple possible interpretations. This is especially true for animal motifs. Another difficulty arises from the fact that many motifs of the bone saddles seem arbitrary and independent from one another. It is possible that some of them served purely as ornamental space fillers, without any deeper symbolic meaning.

The chapter is structured in order from the most typical and frequent representations towards the less frequent motifs, thus, it begins with one of the most popular and, at the same time, most traditional iconographical motif: Saint George and the dragon. This is followed by other frequent typical depictions: the courtly figures, primarily lovers. The depictions of human figures, are followed by the animals, beasts and other creatures. The chapter is concluded by the discussion of other non-figural and ornamental motifs.

²⁴³ Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), and Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Nuremberg), *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg, 1300-1550* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 69.

²⁴⁴ See: IV.1.2. Place and time of production.

²⁴⁵ Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London: Laurence King, 1998), 7.

III.2.1. Saint George and the Dragon

One of the most dominant iconographical subject on the carved surface of bone saddles is Saint George slaying the dragon. The saint appears on eighteen late medieval bone saddles in various ways: in illustrations, inscriptions or only symbolically (Table VIII). Typically, in seven cases altogether, the motif is found in Field L4.

For a full interpretation of these Saint George depictions, a short overview of the legend is in order, as well as of the birth of its popular imagery. Saint George was one of the most popular saints represented in medieval artworks. He appears on numerous wall paintings, sculpture, and other works of art throughout the whole of Europe during the Middle Ages. The present chapter places the Saint George figures found on bone saddles within both the broader context of the written legend and the narrower frame of other artistic depictions from Central Europe. In spite of the relatively large number of depictions of Saint George on bone saddles, the chapter is not a comprehensive catalogue, but rather aims to highlight the most relevant ones that can be contextualized in the period.

Saint George in the Golden Legend

Saint George died as a martyr in the beginning of the fourth century in Lydda, Palestine. The dragon scene was originally not included in the legend; it was probably added by a Byzantine hagiographer.²⁴⁶ The legend of dragon-slaying only began to spread in both literature and art from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁴⁷ According to Christopher Walter, the earliest certain depiction of Saint George killing the dragon is in the church of Saint Barbara in Soğanlı, Cappadocia from the early eleventh century.²⁴⁸ The first Latin version of the dragon slaying is in a Regensburg manuscript, dating from the twelfth or early thirteenth century.²⁴⁹ The story spread throughout Europe via the

²⁴⁶ Ana Maria Gruia, “Religious Representations on Stove Tiles from the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary” (PhD diss., Central European University, 2009), 120. <https://sierra.ceu.edu/record=b1138386>. (accessed December 20, 2020)

²⁴⁷ Johannes B. Aufhauser, *Das Drachenwunder des heiligen George in der griechischen und lateinischen Überlieferung* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1911), 237.

²⁴⁸ “Saint George and the Dragon: the origins of the legend,” *Folia magazine* (blog), accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.foliamagazine.it/en/saint-george-dragon/>; Christopher Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” *Revue des études byzantines* 53 (1995):320.

²⁴⁹ Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek (CIm 14473). However, it does not appear in the 1250 epic *Der heilige Georg* by Reinbot von Durne. Reinbot von Durne, *Der Heilige Georg*, ed. Christian Buhr, Astrid Lembke, and Michael R. Ott (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 12; Aufhauser, *Das Drachenwunder des heiligen George in der griechischen und lateinischen Überlieferung*, 195.

detailed version of the Saint George legend found in the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine. This work came to be the main source of the iconography of the dragon-slaying scene.²⁵⁰

The *Golden Legend* describes the dragon-slaying episode vividly and in full detail. In the story, George, a tribune from Cappadocia, travels to Silena in Lybia, where a dragon terrorizes the people. The dragon demands daily sacrifices, initially two sheep, then one sheep and one person chosen by lot, ending the lives of many young people. Eventually, the king's daughter is chosen and taken to be sacrificed for the dragon. George, passing by, hears her story and promises to help her in the name of Christ.²⁵¹

While they were talking, the dragon reared his head out of the lake. ... George, mounting his horse and arming himself with the sign of the cross, set bravely upon the approaching dragon and, commending himself to God, brandished his lance, dealt the beast a grievous wound, and forced him to the ground. Then he called to the maiden: "Have no fear, child! Throw your girdle around the dragon's neck! Don't hesitate!" When she had done this, the dragon rose and followed her like a little dog on a leash. She led him toward the city; ... Then the king and all the people were baptized, and George, drawing his sword, put an end to the beast and ordered him to be moved out of the city ...²⁵²

At the end of the story, Jacobus notes that there is a shorter version of the legend, which relates that "at the very moment when the dragon was about to swallow the girl alive, George, making the sign of the cross, rode upon him and killed him."²⁵³

Pictorial representations depict two passages of the *Golden Legend*, sometimes compressed into one scene. The moment when George injures the dragon and when he kills it with his sword. By the fifteenth century, a relatively specific iconography of the dragon-slaying episode was established in European art, containing some obligatory

²⁵⁰ Gruia, "Religious Representations on Stove Tiles from the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary," 120.

²⁵¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 238–40; Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, vol. 1 (Firenze: SISMELE – Edizioni del Galluzzo; Milano: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 2007), 440–44.

²⁵² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 239–240; "⁵⁴Dum hec loquerentur, ecce, draco ueniens caput de lacu leuauit. ... ⁵⁷Tunc Georgius equum ascendens et cruce se muniens draconem contra se uenientem audacter aggreditur et lanceam fortiter uibrans et se deo commendans ipsum grauiter uulnerauit et ad terram deiecit. ⁵⁸Dixitque puelle: ⁵⁹ "Proice zonam tuam in collum draconis nihil dubitans, filia". ⁶⁰Quod cum fecisset, sequebatur eam uelut mansuetissimus canis. ⁶¹Cum ergo eum in ciuitatem ducerent, ... ⁶⁶Tunc rex et omnes populi baptizati sunt. ⁶⁷Beatus autem Georgius euaginato gladio draconem occidit et ipsum extra ciuitatem efferri precepit. ..." Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, 442.

²⁵³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 240; "⁷⁵In aliquibus tamen libris legitur quod dum draco ad deuorandum puellam pergeret, Georgius se cruce muniuit et draconem aggrediens interfecit." Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, 444.

elements. These include Saint George in central position, normally on horseback, while a praying princess can be seen on her knees in the background. She is often accompanied by a lamb. A castle is visible at the very back, with the royal couple looking out of the window. In most cases, the scene is set in a natural environment.

Saint George slaying the dragon in late medieval images

The depictions of Saint George slaying the dragon had become widespread in Europe by the end of the Middle Ages. It was extremely popular in the Central European region, from Western Germany to Transylvania. Depictions can be found in various genres: wall and panel paintings, manuscript illuminations, wood and ivory carvings, architectural carvings, bronze statues, stove tiles, and bone saddle carvings. Furthermore, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the scene had become a common element on winged altarpieces, especially in Upper Hungary.

In fifteenth-century Western and Central European art, the figure of Saint George in the dragon-slaying episode is represented either on horseback or on foot. The two types can be easily identified on bone saddle carvings. George is seen on horseback on altogether five saddles, and he is depicted to fight on foot on seven saddles.²⁵⁴ Apart from these two image types, a further classification can be made according to the way George kills the dragon. In some depictions, he stabs a lance into the dragon with both hands, in others, he kills it with a lance in one hand, and raising a sword for a final blow with the other. These types were all widespread from West German areas to Transylvania.

Due to the wide dissemination of these types, it is hard to attribute them to defined regions. Nevertheless, Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, in his 1917 dissertation, attempted to do just that. He tried to locate some specific gestures within the German areas (such as Swabia, Bavaria, Rhineland etc.),²⁵⁵ however, despite his hypothesis, these motifs and types of gestures can be found almost everywhere in Central and even in Eastern Europe—although sometimes from different decades. For instance, a wall painting in Tyrol made in the first half of the fifteenth century (1420–1430) and an altarpiece from Almakerék (Transylvania) dated to the second half of the century (after 1460) (Figures

²⁵⁴ On the New York-4, he appears two times, on foot in both cases.

²⁵⁵ Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *Die Darstellung des Heiligen Georg zu Pferd in der deutschen Kunst des Mittelalters*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 199 (Strassburg: Heitz, 1917).

III.32–33).²⁵⁶ Although the different types of armor depicted attests to the different period in time, the hairstyle and the gesture of the saint are similar in both examples, and so is the way the saint is depicted in relation to the dragon.

Saint George on horseback

As noted, five saddles depict Saint George mounted on horseback (Figure III.34, Table IX). In three of these images, George jabs a lance into the throat of the dragon with his left hand, while swinging a sword in the other.²⁵⁷ In the images on the other two saddles, he stabs the lance with both hands vertically into the dragon.²⁵⁸ Not all of them contain the aforementioned complementary motifs used in this period, such as the praying princess, the natural scenery, and the castle in the background. In those that do, these elements appear in different fields of the decorated surface. Since the decorated surface is usually covered with other, mostly love-related, scenes, it is not always clear whether a motif is a part of the Saint George episode or of another. Identifying the princess can also be problematic. On the Budapest-3, the dragon-slaying George is located in Field L4, while the castle is in the narrow Field L2. The princess with the lamb, on the other hand, is found on the other side of the saddle, in Field R4. On the Berlin-1 and the Florence-1, the princess is harder to find, since there are crowned figures that can be interpreted as other characters.²⁵⁹ On these saddles, the castle does not appear at all.

The only saddle where the scene is compressed into a single field like other depictions from the period, is Field L7 in the New York-2 (Figure III.35). On the carving, Saint George is sitting on his horse, with his torso turning back. He stabs the dragon in the jaw with a lance held in his left hand, and, while he is swinging a sword in his right. The composition is strongly affected by the shape of this part of the saddle. Accordingly, Saint George and the dragon fill the main (lower) part of the field almost entirely, while the princess can be found in the narrow upper right field, kneeling in front of the royal castle.

²⁵⁶ According to the recent dendrochronological examination of the altar, it was made after 1460. Boglárka Tóth, “Az Almakeréki Szárnyasoltár Dendrokronológiai Kormeghatározása [The Dendrochronological Dating of the Winged Altar of Almakerék],” *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 66, no. 2 (2017): 356.

²⁵⁷ Budapest-3; Florence-1; New York-2.

²⁵⁸ Berlin-1 and Vienna-2.

²⁵⁹ See: III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles - Love, sexual and wedding symbols.

Compositions similar to the New York-2 can also be found in other works from this period. Regarding St. George's posture and figure, a relief from Nuremberg (1480) displays distinct similarities.²⁶⁰ The previously discussed engraving by the Master of the Nuremberg Passion is a good compositional and even stylistic parallel for the kneeling princess on the saddle (Figures III.30–31). However, this part of the saddle, as will be shown in Part V of the present dissertation, was heavily restored at the turn of the nineteenth century, which affected the figure of the dragon, while the rest of the composition seems original.²⁶¹

Saint George on foot

The image of Saint George standing appears more frequently on saddle carvings. Altogether seven saddles feature George as a standing figure, as a separate motif, isolated from his surroundings, (Figure III.36, Table X). This can be explained by the simple fact that this type requires less space. However, it also means that the standing saint is more isolated than the mounted version, since in most cases, additional elements, such as the castle and the natural environment are missing, and the identification of the princess is also problematic.

The standing Saint George figures seem more static than the mounted ones, and they strongly resemble three-dimensional wood statues, which normally have no background.²⁶² The standing figure also appears on wall and panel paintings, and is a frequent element of late medieval *pavises* (Figure III. 37).²⁶³ The comparison of standing figures of Saint George on the known bone saddles reveals the similarity between the

²⁶⁰ "Saint George slaying the dragon," painted and gilded relief made of pine wood, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Inv.-Nr. Pl.O.55!, Upper Franconia; Bamberg, c. 1480.

See: Cosima-Kristina Kristahn "Von Sante Georgio einem rittere - eine Studie zum hl. Georg in der deutschen Bildkunst von 1450 bis um 1530 und den thematischen Kontexten" (PhD diss., Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2016), 412, Fig. A 23, accessed December 8, 2023, <http://digital.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/urn/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:4-19893>

²⁶¹ I discuss the problem in detail in: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the Art Market - Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2.

²⁶² See: Volbach, "Die Darstellung des Heiligen Georg zu Pferd in der deutschen Kunst des Mittelalters," Tables VI-VIII.

²⁶³ See: Volbach, "Die Darstellung des Heiligen Georg zu Pferd in der deutschen Kunst des Mittelalters," Tables I-VIII. For the *pavises*, see: Vladimír Denkstein, "Pavézy českého typu. Studie k dějinám husitské vojenské tradice, jejího rozšíření a vlivu v 15. století [Pavises of the Bohemian Type: Contribution to the history of the Hussite military tradition, its dissemination, and influence in the 15th century]," *Sborník Národního muzea v Praze. Řada A - Historie = Acta Musei Nationalis Pragae, Series A - Historia* 16, no. 4-5 (1962): Tables 35–39.

Budapest-2 and the Boston-1. Both figures stab the lance into the dragon's mouth horizontally, with both hands, and the tail of the dragon encircles the left leg of the saint. The carving of the Budapest-2 is more finely detailed, while the other Saint George is less deeply carved, with rougher lines. The composition of the London-1 also follows this pattern; however, the outfit of the saint is more courtly than military-style.

Neither the Budapest-2 nor the Boston-1 features the princess or other story-related motifs. The saint merges with the crowd of the images of lovers which almost entirely fills the surface of the Budapest-2. Conversely, only two figures are depicted on the London-1: Saint George on the left side, and, a courtly lady's figure on the other side, in the corresponding field (Field R4). Since couples are usually placed in the same field of the two sides of the saddle, and, on the Budapest-3, Saint George and the princess are paired in the same way, the lady on the London-1 can be identified as the princess and placed in the context of the iconography of romantic couples.²⁶⁴

A composition similar to the carvings of the Budapest-2, Boston-1, and London-2 can be found on the aforementioned Almakerék altarpiece and Tyrolean wall paintings (Figures III.32–33). The position of George and the dragon is identical on the three saddles and the altarpiece: the saint is standing with both legs on a two-legged winged dragon, which lies on its back with its tail entwines his leg. In contrast, on the Tyrolean wall painting, George stands in front of the dragon, the tail of which does not twist around the leg. The identical position, as well as the similar armor to the Transylvanian depiction, suggest that the carvings are closer to this altarpiece than to the Tyrolean painting. Another similar Saint George can be seen in a *pavise* from around 1480–1490 (Figure III.37).

Saint George also appears on the bone saddles in other forms: through symbols and inscriptions. I will revisit the Saint George Cross,²⁶⁵ and inscriptions related to Saint George²⁶⁶ in later chapters of Part III below. Additionally, Part IV will provide a more detailed interpretation of Saint George's appearance on the bone saddles.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ See: III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs.

²⁶⁵ See: III.3.1. Emblems.

²⁶⁶ See: III.4.1. Saint George Inscriptions.

²⁶⁷ See: IV.2. Interpretation of Saint George on bone saddles in the context of his cult in fifteenth-century Central Europe.

III.2.2. Courtly figures

Romantic couples

Courtly figures are depicted in some manner on twenty saddles.²⁶⁸ The most popular types of them are undoubtedly couples in love. Romantic couples appear in several different forms on bone saddles. Some saddles feature only one couple (e.g., London-1 and London-2), while in others the entire surface of the saddle is filled with courtly figures of men and women courting (Budapest-2). At a glance, their placement on the saddle surface seems arbitrary. However, there is a detectable pattern regarding their locations in the fields, which will be discussed in a later chapter.²⁶⁹

The couples are always depicted in some kind of interaction. Many of them are shown gesticulating in conversation with each other: typically raising one hand. Other even have inscription banderols, showing their dialogue, which will be discussed below.²⁷⁰ The motif of a couple communicating with expressive gestures, known as *gallant conversation* in art history, has roots in thirteenth century French art.²⁷¹

A kissing couple can be seen on the front left pommel plate of the Modena-1 and an embracing couple in Field L4 of the New York-4 (Figures III.38–39). Other couples offer flowers or presents to each other. On two saddles, a lady offers a heart to her male companion: in Field R6 of the New York-4, as well as on the front view of the pommel and the right rear fork of the Florence-2 (Figure III.40). This motif appears in a fifteenth-century literary source, Clara Hätzerlin's songbook. In one of the songs, a man presents his heart to his distant lover as a New Year's gift—a gesture that recurs in several other compositions associated with the turn of the year.²⁷² A similar composition appears in a Flemish tapestry from 1400/1410, in the Louvre, where it is also the man who is offering the heart to the woman (Figure III.41).²⁷³

²⁶⁸ Berlin-1, Boston-1; Bologna-1; Braunschweig-1; Budapest-1; Budapest-2; Budapest-3; Florence-1; Florence-2; London-1; London-2; Modena-1; New York-1; New York-2; New York-3; New York-4; Stockholm-1; Stresa-1; Vienna-1; Vienna-2.

²⁶⁹ See: III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs.

²⁷⁰ See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs.

²⁷¹ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 265.

²⁷² Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 270, note 705; "Mein liebste fraw, in lieber gir / Sennd ich mein hertz allain zu dir" ("My dearest lady, in loving desire / I send my heart to you alone."). Karl Ferdinand Haltaus, *Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin: Aus der Handschrift des Böhmischen Museums zu Prag* (Quedlinburg, Leipzig: G. Basse, 1840), 54 (no. 57).

²⁷³ The motif appears in the mystical literature of the period. In an ecstatic state, Catherine of Siena gave her heart to Christ, who in return gave her his, as described in "The Life of St. Catherine of Siena," of Rajmund of Capua, in Book II, Chapter VI. See: Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. Mother Regis Hamilton (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1862). This mystical exchange of hearts has been

Analyzing all the romantic images on saddle carvings would exceed the limits of this dissertation. Instead, in the following, I will focus on three selected motifs of the couples in more detail.

Dextrarum iunctio

Two bone saddles feature couples clasping each other's right hands. In Field R5 of the Budapest-3 a couple is sitting on a bench, holding hands (Figure III.42). They are escorted by a guard armed with sword, separated from the outside world by a curtain, which makes the scene even more intimate. The woman wears a headgear, the man has shoulder-length curls. There is another figure next to the woman: a man with his head in his right hand, his face expressing sorrow and agony.²⁷⁴

Field L2 of the New York-4 also shows a couple holding each other's right hands (Figure III.43). The couple is shown in a standing position; the woman's left hand rests on the man's shoulder. In this depiction, the woman is not wearing a headdress, her hair is braided, while the man, similarly to the other saddle's depiction has long, curly hair. This couple is also separated from the other characters, but since this field of the saddle is not as isolated as the previous case, it is hard to tell whether other figures belong to their scene.

The joining of the right hands is known as *dextrarum iunctio*, an imagery that goes back to Roman Period art.²⁷⁵ From the earliest times, it signified close relationship including fidelity between man and wife, as well as between parents and their children. In Christian iconography, the *dextrarum iunctio* is considered as the visual evidence of marriage.²⁷⁶

a subject of artistic representation as well, such as on Giovanni di Paolo's painting, at the Met. Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine of Siena Exchanging Her Heart with Christ*, painting, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1997.117.3, Italy, Siena, 1398–1482, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438022>.

²⁷⁴ See: III.1.1. Style – Faces.

²⁷⁵ The term is a modern invention and does not appear in any ancient or medieval text. Edwin Hall, *The Arnolfini Betrothal: Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of van Eyck's Double Portrait*, Discovery Series (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 18; Sabine Müller, "Dextrarum iunctio," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (2012), accessed March 25, 2024, DOI: 10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah22079.

²⁷⁶ Sabine Müller, "Dextrarum iunctio," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (2012), accessed March 25, 2024, DOI: 10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah22079. The historical term is a modern construct and it does not appear in any ancient or medieval text. Edwin Hall: *The Arnolfini Betrothal: Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of van Eyck's double portrait*, Discovery Series (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 18.

The depiction of the *dextrarum iunctio* appears in a fifteenth-century illustration of *Der Welsche Gast* (Figure III.44). Thomasin von Zirclaria's book, *The Italian Guest*, was a handbook written at the turn of the twelfth century. Written for the instruction of noble young men and girls, it was a guide to preserving chastity and an example of how members of both sexes should behave towards each other.²⁷⁷ The text accompanying the illustration of the *dextrarum iunctio* is a moral instruction: "und daz weder wîp noch man / niht enliege den andern an" (lines 223–224; and neither man nor woman should lie to the other).²⁷⁸ The illustration is augmented by inscription banderols containing the exchange between the couple: [Man:] "Se des minn treue." (Be true to me); [Woman:] "Ich gelobe du/dir wol." (I promise to be good to you).²⁷⁹ The strips thus extend the interpretation of the original text: the couple's promises of fidelity which may also refer to a marriage vow. In several versions, this symbol is emphasized by showing two small separate hands. Just as this part of the handbook encourages young readers to be faithful to their (future) spouses, the appearance of the *dextrarum iunctio* on the two bone saddles may refer to a similar, strong union of a man and woman.

The power of women

Aristotle and Phyllis

Budapest-2 features a romantic couple that can be easily identified with a popular topos, the story of Aristotle and Phyllis (Figure III.45). Probably rooted in the antiquity, it is actually a medieval tale. According to the story, during his invasion in India, Alexander the Great met a princess, Phyllis, and fell in love with her. His teacher, Aristotle, warned him not to neglect his duties because of her, so he ended up staying away from her. In revenge, Phyllis promised Aristotle sexual favors only if he allowed her to ride him like a horse. Alexander the Great witnessed the old philosopher's humiliation. The moral of the parable is that even the wisest can be fooled by love. The story has survived in two versions: the French version by the Norman poet Henri d'Andeli

²⁷⁷ Thomasin von Zirclaria, *Der Welsche Gast (The Italian Guest)*, ed. and trans. Marion Gibbs and Winder McConnell, TEAMS: Medieval German texts in bilingual editions, 4 (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University - Medieval Institute publications, 2009), 7–8.

²⁷⁸ Heinrich Rückert, *Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirclaria* (Berlin, 1852), 7; Thomasin von Zirclaria, *Der Welsche Gast*, 58.

²⁷⁹ *Welscher Gast Digital*, accessed May 4, 2024, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg320?template=wgd>

from the thirteenth century, and a German version from the fourteenth century.²⁸⁰ The Aristotle and Phyllis story is one of the most popular representation of the Power of Women topos.²⁸¹

The carving of the Budapest-2 shows Aristotle, the philosopher, with a beard, Phyllis is riding him, wearing a veil over her hair, holding a whip in her left hand and a banderol in her right, with the inscription “lach lieb lach” (laugh, my love, laugh).²⁸² The inscription clearly emphasizes the mockery of the scene, which is further confirmed by the monkey – a symbol of mockery – carved under the strange couple.²⁸³ The reason for decorating the saddle with this story can be explained in multiple ways. Firstly, the riding scene fits the primary function of its medium, the saddle. Secondly, seen in the context of the other depictions of the Budapest-2, filled with scenes of lovers of all kinds, it can be considered as the allegory of foolish love.

The story of Aristotle and Phyllis became popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, also shown by the fact that it can be found on various kinds of artefacts, such as caskets, tapestries, stove tiles, etc. From the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, its growing popularity was due to woodcuts across Europe. In depictions from this period, Phyllis is usually seen holding the philosopher on a rope, as in a woodcut by the Master of the Housebook from c. 1470–1500 (Figure III.46). In this image, Phyllis is sitting casually astride, half turned, while on the saddle the woman is more static, depicted frontally as she is sitting on the philosopher’s back. The lid of an early fifteenth-century Upper Rhenish *Minnekästchen* features a similar frontally depicted, man-riding woman.²⁸⁴ Here, a half-naked, winged woman sits on a man, as if on a throne (Figure III.47). This figure is identified in scientific literature as the topos of *Frau Minne*, originating in Middle High German courtly literature and frequently found on late

²⁸⁰ Paula Mae Carns, “Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum,” *Gesta* 44, no. 2 (2005): 71. In the French version, she does not have a name, later versions call her Campaspe or Roxane. Paul Boesch, “Aristoteles und Phyllis auf Glasgemälden,” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 9 (1947): 22.

²⁸¹ Other stories of the Power of Women topos include the Virgil in the basket, Delilah cutting Samson’s hair, etc. Malcolm Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages: Discovering the Real Medieval World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 236, 242.

²⁸² See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs.

²⁸³ See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts, and fantastic creatures - Monkeys.

²⁸⁴ *Minnekästchen*, Berlin, Museum für Kunstgewerbe, Inv.-Nr. K 2794745, Upper Rhine, early 15th century.

medieval German and Swiss coffrets.²⁸⁵ In this particular *Minnekästchen*, she appears as a judge or advisor for the lovers kneeling before her.²⁸⁶ Despite the similarity, the “lach lieb lach” inscription, the man’s beard, and the presence of the monkey confirm that that the saddle’s scene is indeed that of the humiliation of Aristotle.²⁸⁷

The man as a woman’s slave

The Budapest-2 also features a scene of a dominant woman and a dominated male figure (Figure III.48). In Field L5, above the rectangular slot for the girth, a woman is shown in a semi-kneeling position, holding a plant-like instrument in her right hand. There is a man sitting in front of her, carved in such a way that his hand appears to be “holding” the slot, making it part of the composition. The positioning of the woman and the man shows a clear relationship of superiority and inferiority.

A similar posture appears in late medieval illustrations of *Der Welsche Gast* (Figure III.49). In a North Bavarian illustration, dated around 1450–1470, there is an image of a woman sitting on a throne with a whip raised in her right hand.²⁸⁸ There is a man kneeling in front of her—in other illustrations, he can be seen holding her leg. This image illustrates an exemplum, in which the man appears as the servant of the woman, and the author asks how a man can be free if he cannot live without the woman, has no power, accepts her authority, and obeys her every command.²⁸⁹ In the illustration, the scene is completed by a dialogue on the sentence strips, in which the woman asks the man to stroke her leg: “Klewbel mich an dem pain” (Stroke my leg), which he readily does: “Fraw das tuu ich allzeit gern” (Woman, I always like to do that).²⁹⁰ The couple on the

²⁸⁵ Naomi Reed Kline, “The Proverbial Role of Frau Minne: ‘Liebe macht Blind’ - or Does It?” in *The Profane Arts: Norms and Transgressions*, ed. Naomi Reed Kline and Paul Hardwick (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 79.

²⁸⁶ Kline, “The Proverbial Role of Frau Minne,” 86–87.

²⁸⁷ For a broader discussion of comic representations of female dominance over men, see: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 125–51. (Chapter 5, Women on top).

²⁸⁸ Thomasin von Zirclaria: *Der Welsche Gast*, Dresden, SLUB, Mscr.Dresd.M.67, Nordbayern (Eichstätt?), 1450–70, fol. 9 v. *Welscher Gast Digital*, accessed May 4, 2024, http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/slub_m67?page_query=35r&action=pagesearch&template=wgd.

²⁸⁹ “sol aver der vrî wesen, / der ân ein wîp niht kan genesen / und der niht hât sô vil kraft, / ern müeze ir meisterschaft / dulden und gar ir gebot? / der machet ûz im selben spot, / der alle wege ligen muoz / under eines wîbes vuoz. / wie wil mir dan gebieten der / der durch ein wîp hât sô sêr / sinen muot nider lâzen?” (4301-4311) Rückert, *Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirclaria*, 117. “but is a man supposed to be free who cannot survive without a woman and who is so lacking in strength that he must submit to her authority and follow all her commands? He is making a mockery of himself, if he must remain under the thumb of a woman in everything he does. How can a man lord it over me, when he has allowed his spirit to be broken by a woman?” Thomasin von Zirclaria, *Der Welsche Gast*, 106.

²⁹⁰ I am grateful to Péter Molnár for his help in transcribing and interpreting the inscriptions.

Budapest-2 is positioned in an arrangement similar to these illustrations. The man's subordination is illustrated by the semi-seated position of the woman above the slot, holding up the instrument in her right hand as if holding a whip, and looking down on the man. The man is half sitting below her and looks up at her. Although he is folding the slot, not her leg, this gesture gives their interaction a similar character to the book illustration.

Musicians

Apart from the romantic couples, other courtly figures also appear on bone saddles. Altogether, twelve figures playing musical instruments can be seen on seven saddles (Figure III.50). Most of them are dressed in courtly attire, but there are two angels playing music as well (Budapest-3, New York-2). The instruments vary: five figures are playing lutes, three figures are playing the trumpet, two figures are playing drums. Finally, there is a woman playing the organ, and an angel playing the violin.

These figures appear in various fields of the bone saddles. The two angel musicians both appear on the Field L1, completely separated from the other compositions on the saddles. On the Budapest-3, the angel is playing the lute, next to him, there is a rolling banderol with an inscription: "da pacem domine."²⁹¹ The angel playing on the violin of the New York-2, is also found in Field L1. According to Susan Boynton, images of angels playing musical instruments became popular from the late fourteenth century onwards.²⁹² Emanuel Winternitz explains the popularity of musical angels by the growing cult of the Virgin Mary.²⁹³

The courtly musicians are more involved in other scenes of the saddle carvings. In most cases, they appear as supplementary figures for romantic couples. Both in Field L7 of the Budapest-2 and Field R7 of the New York-4, a drummer is playing below a couple. In two other cases, the couples themselves play music for one another: in Field R5 of the Berlin-1 and the front right pommel plate of the Vienna-1, men can be seen playing the

²⁹¹ Schröder transcribes the inscription as "da padrin domnit". See: Table XI, note 35; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 147–49.

²⁹² Susan Boynton, "The Visual Representation of Music and Sound," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 481.

²⁹³ Emanuel Winternitz, "VII. Music and Musical Instruments: Secular Practice in Sacred Art," in *The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Dutton, 1975), 229.

lute for their ladies. In Field L7 of the Budapest-3, a chamber orchestra is depicted next to a falconer: a man is playing the lute, while a woman is playing a small portable organ.

Depictions of musical figures appear in many other types of artworks in the late Middle Ages, including paintings, sculptures, tapestries, stained glass, etc.²⁹⁴ For example, a stove tile from Zürich is an analogue for the motif of the organ-playing woman of the Budapest-3 (Figures III.51–52).²⁹⁵ The woman on the tile also wears a headgear and is seated in a position similar to the carving of the Budapest-3. Another analogue is found on equestrian equipment – although only a written source survives in evidence. In the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*, a series of fictitious letters with sarcastic content, first published in 1515, the author writes about the Lenten festivities in Leipzig:

the Prince himself rode in the Platz, and he had a fine horse, and a fine saddlecloth too, upon which was painted a woman in brave attire, and near her sitting a youth, with curly locks, who played an organ to her as saith the Psalmist ...²⁹⁶

The most obvious interpretation of couples playing music is that they depict a part of courtship – for instance, the images in which the lovers play for each other. Musicians playing for couples or couples playing for each other also appear on engagement and wedding caskets, such as on the lid of a bridal box from c. 1400, currently in Boston, decorated with the image of various musicians.²⁹⁷

Playing music in these images also has sexual and erotic symbolism. A late medieval biscuit mould, for example, features a similar composition to the lutist and the organist woman of the Budapest-3. On the mould, a fully clothed man is playing the lute while the organ-playing woman is completely naked (Figure III.53). According to Malcolm Jones, this depiction is the pictorial representation of the verbal innuendo “playing the organ,” which was a relatively common metaphor for sexual intercourse.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Boynton, “The Visual Representation of Music and Sound,” 479.

²⁹⁵ I thank Emese M. Isó for drawing my attention to this example.

²⁹⁶ “et princeps met equitavit in foro, et habuit pulchrum equum, et pulchrum andallum desuper, in quo fuit picta una mulier cum magnó ornatu, et iuxta ipsam sedit quidam iuvenis in crispis crinibus, qui organizavit ei secundam psalmistam...” (I. XIII) Ulrich von Hutten, *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum: The Latin Text with an English Rendering, Notes, and Historical Introduction*, ed. and trans. Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1909), 40, 316; Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 265.

²⁹⁷ Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 255 (no 251).

²⁹⁸ Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 4, 265.

On the saddle the organ-playing woman is fully clothed, so this interpretation is less obvious and only one of many possible alternatives.

There are other possible interpretations for decorating bone saddles with the image of musicians. In the late Middle Ages, music was an essential part of festive occasions, banquets and processions – both religious and secular.²⁹⁹ For example, in the image of the Pentecost procession in a C initial of the Matthias Graduale, musicians can be seen to lead the march.³⁰⁰ Musicians also accompany a marriage procession on Francesco Pesellino's mid-fifteenth-century painting of Griselda's wedding march.³⁰¹ Musicians on saddle carvings, thus, can also be seen as the visual imprint of their ceremonial use in the late Middle Ages, which will be discussed in more detail in Part IV below.³⁰²

Hunters

Six bone saddles feature courtly figures engaged in hunting activities (Figure III.54). Five of them are falconers: Field L7 of the Budapest-3, Field L7 of the Florence-1, next to the cantles of the Florence-2, Field L4 on the New York-1, and on the rear left fork of the Modena-1. There is an archer in both Field R7 on the Florence-1 and the front right pommel plate of the Modena-1. Field L5 of the Budapest-1 features a bear hunting scene. The archer of the Florence-1 and the bear hunter of the Budapest-3 are depicted more or less separate from the other scenes. On the Florence-2, a lion and a dragon is attacked by one hunter each. On the Modena-1, a female archer aiming her bow at a man below is part of a love-related narrative scene.

The hunting scene of the Budapest-1 depicts a hunter thrusting his spear into a bear's face.³⁰³ A similar composition can be seen on an illustration of *Der Welsche Gast* from 1460–1470 (Figure III.55), as the illustration of the text about an imaginary bear hunt. The story follows a man who dreams of the respect and authority he lacks in reality.

²⁹⁹ Martine Clouzot, *Images de musiciens (1350-1500): Typologie, figurations et pratiques sociales* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 211–12.

³⁰⁰ *Matthias Graduale*, Budapest, OSZK, Cod. Lat. 424, Buda, c. 1480, fol 69v.

³⁰¹ Francesco Pesellino: Brautzug der Griselda, Florence, Serristori Collection. See: Max Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 38, no. 1 (1994): 24.

³⁰² See: IV.3.2 Bone saddles in the context of late medieval marriages: Bone saddles in marriage processions?

³⁰³ Mária Verő describes the scene as a wild boar hunt, but this interpretation is contradicted by the absence of tusks or hooves on the depicted animal, supporting the argument for a bear interpretation. Mária Verő, "4.67 Beinsattel (Batthyány-Sattel)," in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 360.

In his imagination, he is a powerful hunter leading hunts, however, when he wakes, he realizes that such fantasies only make him feel more powerless. The moral is about the dangers of seeking validation through unrealistic fantasies.³⁰⁴ Whether the carving on the bone saddle is merely a compositional analogue for the illustration, a pictorial representation of this detail of *Der Welsche Gast*, or a widely known tale in which the bear hunting scene was a commonly recognized representation of this story, the two depictions are very similar.

Hunting had several functions in the Middle Ages. Apart from the original purpose of obtaining food and animal skin, it also served as a leisure activity for noblemen, and was even considered as a form of art.³⁰⁵ With the exception of the female archer, whose image is clearly part of a romantic scene, hunting scenes, therefore, can also be interpreted as a representation of nobility.³⁰⁶

Angels

Angels are also popular motifs of the bone saddles' carvings: they appear on eight saddles altogether (Figure III.56). They most typically appear in or around the field L1 and R1. This is the case for the Berlin-1, Budapest-1, Budapest-2, Budapest-3, Florence-1, New York-2 and Vienna-2 as well.³⁰⁷ Their placement around the highest fields of the bone saddles may symbolize their place in celestial spheres.³⁰⁸

The angels in the fields are engaged in different activities. Angels in Field L2 of the Berlin-1, Field L1 of the Budapest-1, Field R1 of the Budapest-3, Field R1 of the Florence-1, as well as the two angels on the pommel plates of the Florence-2, are all

³⁰⁴ “Ob in lüst ze jagen liht, / sô sint in vil kurzer zît / die hunde bereit, die jeger sint / alle komen und ir wind. / dâ vâhents hasen alsô vil / daz ir ze tragen ist ze vil. / ein eber kumbert vast die hunde, / der in zuo kumt zuo der stunde. / er bringt die hunde in grôze nôt, / doch wirt ouch er ze jungest tôt. / dâ wirt mit sînen hornen langen / mit gedanke ein hirz gevangen. / ze jungest sticht der selbe herr / einn pern ze tôd mit sînem sper. / hei wie küene er danne ist, / unz im wert der gedanke vrist!” (3247-3262) Rückert, *Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirclaria*, 89; Zirclaria, *Der Welsche Gast*, 94-95.

³⁰⁵ Marina Mitsch, “Tiere im Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin” (MA thesis, Universität Wien, 2018), 11; Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 217.

³⁰⁶ Mira Friedman, “The Falcon and the Hunt: Symbolic Love Imagery in Medieval and Renaissance Art,” in *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Moshé Lazar and Norris J. Lacy (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press; Lanham, 1989), 157.

³⁰⁷ In the case of the Budapest-2, apart from the two angels of Fields L1 and R1, two other angels appear in Fields L7 and R7. On the Berlin-1, apart from the angel of the R1, two angels adorn the narrow fields, L2 and R2. On the Florence-2, the angels are in the bottom part of the two pommel plates. Additionally, in Field L2 of Stresa-1, there is a depiction of a winged figure stabbing a dragon. This figure is likely Saint Michael, a detail that is not included in this chapter. See: IV.2. Interpretation of Saint George on bone saddles in the context of his cult in fifteenth-century Central Europe.

³⁰⁸ See: III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs.

holding banderols. The banderols have inscriptions only in the two latter cases: on the Florence-1 the banderol says: “dich libt got,” on the Florence-2, one angel holds the banderol “laus” while the other “deo.”³⁰⁹ On the Budapest-3 and New York-2 they play a musical instrument.³¹⁰ The angels in Field R2 of the Berlin-1 and Field R1 of Budapest-1 are holding books. In Field R2 of the Vienna-2 an angel is holding a ring, while two angels on the inner side of the pommel are seen in a different role from the others: they are holding up a coat of arms.³¹¹

Angels depicted on bone saddles can be interpreted as ornamental elements. Their appearance on the bone saddles is an example for mixing holy and profane on late medieval secular objects.

III.2.3. Nudes

Naked figures are also frequently used elements of the saddle carvings. They appear on six bone saddles altogether (Figure III.57). These figures are either completely naked such as the females in Field R2 of the Budapest-2 and New York-2, or they wear some underwear or are partially covered with a veil or other objects, such as the figures in Fields L-R2 of the Budapest-2, Field R2 of the Budapest-3, and Field L7 of the Vienna-2. In most cases, these nudes seem to lack any context, appearing alone or as a couple. One exception is the nude figure on the back of the cantle of the Modena-1, where the naked man is part of a narrative scene. However, he can be clearly identified with Hercules fighting the lion, and his nudity is a marker of being a hero of Antiquity.³¹² There are some other nudes that can also be interpreted more specifically. Those of the Budapest-2 and the Vienna-2 are bathing nudes, while the sitting figure of the Budapest-1 can be identified as a river god.

Bathing nudes

At a glance, the naked figures on the Budapest-2 and Vienna-2 seem to be without context. On the Budapest-2, men and women can be seen on both sides in the narrow Fields L-R2. The woman in Field R2 is entirely naked, the other woman in Field L2 covers herself with a translucent veil, while the men wear short pants. In contrast, the

³⁰⁹ See: Table XI.

³¹⁰ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Musicians.

³¹¹ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms.

³¹² See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Lions.

nudes of the Vienna-2 are totally naked, only the woman covers her genitals with an oval shaped object. A closer look reveals that all these figures hold differently shaped objects in their hands. The woman in Field R2 of the Budapest-2 holds the handle of an object, the man seems to hold scissors. On the Vienna-2, the man seems to hold a leaf, the woman carries a little basket. The interpretation of the objects can be explained with the help of the marginal figures of bathing nudes in the Bible of Wenceslas IV. These figures, mostly young women, are found on the margins of the book. Wearing undergarments, a translucent veil or completely naked, they either accompany courtiers or the king himself. Many of them hold similar objects as the nudes of the Budapest-2 and Vienna-2. For example, a woman in the margin of fol. 160r., is holding the same objects as the nudes of the Vienna-2: a basket in one hand, and a leafy branch to scratch backs in the other. (Figure III.58).³¹³ Leafy branches similar to the bathing nudes of the Vienna-2 and the Bible of Wenceslas can also be found in an illustration in a 1477 bible from Stuttgart, in which Adam and Eve cover themselves with similar branches in the scene where they are banished from Paradise by an angel.³¹⁴

As Diane Wolfthal points it out, the nude was a complex signifier that the medieval audience interpreted on multiple levels.³¹⁵ Firstly, it can be integrated into a narrative such as the case of the Hercules figure of the Modena-1.³¹⁶ It can also serve as the representation of Venus, the embodiment of lust, where the concept of bathing nudes originated.³¹⁷ In the late fourteenth century, *De deorum imaginibus libellus*, a Latin mythological manual and part of the *Ovidius moralizatus* by Albricus Philosophus, Venus appears in a bathing scene (“nuda et in mare natans”), holding a shell in her right hand.³¹⁸ In an illustration from the *Liber Physiognomiae* from 1430, Venus appears as a young naked girl with long hair, looking at herself in a mirror (Figure III.59).³¹⁹ Naked young

³¹³ Paula Nuttal, “Reconsidering the Nude: Northern Tradition and Venetian Innovation,” in *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, edited by Sherry C. M. Lindquist (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 303.

³¹⁴ UH, Cod. Pal. germ. 16 Bibel AT, Stuttgart (?) - Werkstatt Ludwig Henfflin, 1477, fol 12v, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg16/0032/image.info>

³¹⁵ Diane Bette Wolfthal, “Sin or Sexual Pleasure?: A Little-Known Nude Bather in a Flemish Book of Hours,” in *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, ed. Sherry C. M. Lindquist (Farnham: 2012), 279.

³¹⁶ Cristelle L. Baskins, “Griselda, or the Renaissance Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors in Tuscan Cassone Painting,” *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 153–75.

³¹⁷ H. David Brumble, “Venus,” in *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meaning* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998), 342.

³¹⁸ “Albricus Philosophus,” in *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Gray Douglas (2003); Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), 199.

³¹⁹ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 199; “Venus,” *Liber physiognomiae*, Modena, Biblioteca Estense, ms. DCXCVII, fol. 11.

women bathing or preparing to bathe, are found not only in the margins of illuminated manuscripts but on individual pages, especially in the late fifteenth century.³²⁰ As Wolfthall and Nuttal claims, images of bathing women have been connected with eroticism for a long time.³²¹ According to Hana Hlaváčková, the bath-maidens of the Bible of Wenceslas can be identified with Venus herself, and are symbols of earthly love and fertility.³²² Hlaváčková also points out that the goddess is known to have acquired the form of a bath-maiden in connection with the Roman feast of Venus Verticordia, held on 1 April every year, when women ritually bathed to ensure their fertility.³²³ Decorating a Bible with bathing women, which may strike one as strange, is justified by the fact that the book was intended as a wedding Bible produced on the occasion of the king's second marriage to Euphemia-Žophie.³²⁴

The interpretation of nudes as fertility symbols on this two saddles will be examined in more detail in Part IV of the dissertation.³²⁵

River god (?) on the Budapest-1

In Field L5 of the Budapest-1 two naked figures form a unique composition among the nudes (Figure III.60). Above the rectangular slot, a long-haired figure can be seen in a half-reclined position. The figure is partially covered with a veil, and he holds a circular banderol in his left hand. The other end of the banderol is held by another naked man who covers himself with it.

In 1977, János Eisler identified the long-haired figure as a river god, related to a drawing from Pisanello's circle (Figure III.61).³²⁶ Both the posture and the position of the veil are similar in both depictions. However, there are also significant differences between them. On the drawing, for example, the river god holds a *cornucopia*, while on the saddle, he is holding the banderol. Moreover, the river god in the drawing is presented

³²⁰ See: Wolfthal, "Sin or Sexual Pleasure?" 279–97.

³²¹ See: Wolfthal, "Sin or Sexual Pleasure?" 283; Nuttal, "Reconsidering the Nude: Northern Tradition and Venetian Innovation," 303.

³²² Hana Hlaváčková, "Courtly Body in the Bible of Wenceslas IV," in *Künstlerischer Austausch - Artistic Exchange, Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte*, vol 2, ed. Thomas W. Gaehrens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 371.

³²³ Nuttal, "Reconsidering the Nude: Northern Tradition and Venetian Innovation," 303.

³²⁴ Hlaváčková, "Courtly Body in the Bible of Wenceslas IV," 374.

³²⁵ IV.2.2. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval marriages – Bone saddles in marriage processions?

³²⁶ Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I.," 203.

as a bearded older man, the saddle's depiction shows a young god, with long, wavy hair and a beardless face.

Whether the saddle is decorated with a river god or it is just a compositional adaptation is hard to tell. Until the ninth century, the antique form of river gods (naked torso, reclining posture) had retained their original interpretation as river gods.³²⁷ By the twelfth century, however, these figures lost their original meaning, and only the composition remained. Medieval mythographic literature gave it a new meaning: the half-naked, half-reclining figure was identified with Saturn.³²⁸ This is probably due to the fact that the god appears in the texts as an old, cloaked man, a figure easily related to the ancient gods.³²⁹ However, the figure on the bone saddle is a young man. There are two fifteenth-century manuscript illustrations on astrology which depict young river gods in reclining positions similar to the bone saddle. (Figure III.62).³³⁰ These contain references that suggest that they are personified astrological constellations. However, no traces for or references to such interpretation can be detected on the bone saddle. The blank banderol was probably intended to carry some sign or inscription to explain his symbolism on the saddle. Unfortunately, without this, the figure's original meaning will remain shrouded in mystery.

III.2.4. Animals, beasts, and fantastic creatures

Animals and beasts were popular motifs in the late Middle Ages in all kinds of artworks, especially caskets, manuscript illuminations, wall paintings, and so on. The interpretation of these elements is often unclear and largely depend on their context. As Malcolm Jones writes, "Sometimes a dog is just a dog. Not a symbol of anything else, just a dog going about its doggy business."³³¹ In other cases, however, animals had

³²⁷ Veronika Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlicher Zeitgenossen*, Marburger Studien zur vor- und Frühgeschichte 7 (Weimar: VDG, 2004), 24.

³²⁸ Such works include the *Etimologies* (7th century) and the *Mirabilia urbis Romae* (12th century) by Isidore of Seville, in which the medieval author identifies the two statues located in the Piazza del Campidoglio, within the former temple of Palatium Constantini, as representations of Saturn and Bacchus. Francis Morgan Nichols, *Mirabilia Urbis Romae = The Marvels of Rome: Or a Picture of the Golden City* (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1889), 109; Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlicher Zeitgenossen*, 83.

³²⁹ Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlicher Zeitgenossen*, 83.

³³⁰ "Eridanus as a reclining river god," Rufius Festus Avienus: *Carmina* (and other texts, including the illustrated Germanicus Aratea, GW 3131). Venetiis (de Strata), Venice, 1488, fol. 16r, accessed, May 25, 2024, <https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk/object-wpc-wid-dfxr>.

³³¹ Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 34.

symbolical meanings. According to Debra Higgs Strickland, the symbolical meaning of animals was quite flexible in the Middle Ages: the same animal could signify different things on different levels and therefore it was never fixed or absolute, and it depended on many factors, including historical circumstances, context, patronage, and so on.³³² For example, griffins, lions, dragons, monkeys, and unicorns are the most frequent in love-related depictions, and their exact meaning always depended on the context.³³³

In the late Middle Ages, mythical creatures and real animals were regarded as equal and often appear together—including those on the bone saddles. They were part of everyday life for medieval people, and they appear diverse media in private and public spaces alike.³³⁴

Falcons

There are a number of different birds on the bone saddles, including pelicans,³³⁵ owls,³³⁶ and falcons. Falcons can be identified with certainty when they are perched on a falconer's arm, such as on the Budapest-3, the Florence-1, and the Modena-1.³³⁷ In other instances, their identification is more problematic, as they may well be other birds of prey. I identify the birds as falcons on the Budapest-1, the Budapest-2, the Budapest-3, and the New York-1 (Figure III.63).

In the three cases in which the falcons are perched on the arm of falconers, their meaning seems obvious: they are part of hunting scenes.³³⁸ In other cases, they appear in love scenes, in the context of romantic couples, especially on the Budapest-2. Falcons are known to have been used in a complex love symbolism. The falcon as a symbol of love appears in Middle German courtly poetry, in the poems of both Der von Kurenberg and Oswald von Wolkenstein.³³⁹ In these works, the falcon represents the object of their love.

³³² Debra Higgs Strickland, "Animal Iconography," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 504.

³³³ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 301.

³³⁴ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 301.

³³⁵ Pommel of the Vienna-1, Field L7 of the Vienna-2.

³³⁶ Field L7 of the Vienna 2.

³³⁷ Various species of hawks and falcons were used in hunting. As many medieval depictions do not clearly define the species, they can be described as "falcon" as an umbrella term. Friedman, "The Falcon and the Hunt," 157-58.

³³⁸ See: III.2.2 Courtly figures - Hunters.

³³⁹ Der von Kurenberg (c.1150-1170): "Ich zoch mir einen valken / mere danne ein jar. / do ich in gezamete / als ich in wolte han / und ich im sin gevidere / mit golde wol bewant, / er huop sich uf vil hohe / und floug in anderiu lant. / Sit sach ich den valken / schone fliegen: / er fuorte an sinem fuoze / sidine riemen, / und was im sin gevidere / alrot guldin. / got sende si zesamene / die gerne geliep wellen" *Mittelhochdeutsche*

It can also serve as a messenger between two lovers and the embodiment of independence and free spirit, therefore, it also stands as a symbol for a woman, whom the man wants to tame.³⁴⁰

On the Budapest-1 and Budapest-2, the falcon is clearly related to love scenes. The bird appears several times on the latter. In one scene, the man of the couple presents a flower to the woman, with the falcon sitting on his other hand. In another, the falcon sits on a branch held by the female member of the couple. In this scene, the young woman is catching a bird with lime-twigs, which was a common allegory for the hunt for men at the time.³⁴¹ On the New York-1, one of the carvings is of a hawk sitting on the arm of a woman, a motif that Camille suggests to be a symbol of the lady keeping her lover under her thumb.³⁴²

In one detail of the Budapest-2, the bird connects two pairs of lovers (Figure III.64), one of which is the scene discussed in a previous chapter, where the man is depicted as the woman's servant.³⁴³ The female member of one couple and the male member of the other are positioned with their backs to each other, but both holding up the two ends of the same branch on which a falcon is descending—at least, that is what the bird's wings suggest. The falcon connecting a man and a woman from two couples may be interpreted as a mediating figure in a scene of infidelity. This assumption is underpinned by the fact that the woman on the right is treading on a dragon, similar to depictions of Tristan and Isolde on chests, whereby it is usually crouched under Isolde's feet, symbolizing her deceitfulness.

Originaltexte, accessed 30 April, 2023, <http://www.saelde-und-ere.at/Hauptseite/Arbeitsgruppen/Mhdt/Falkenlied/Falke.html>. I raised myself a falcon / for more than a year. / After I had tamed him, / as I wanted him to be, / and his feathers were adorned / with gold, / he rose high into the air / and flew off to a foreign land. / Since then I have seen the falcon / fly beautifully. / He carried at his foot / silken straps, / and his plumage / was all red and gold. / God send them together, / who wish to be loved." Oswald von Wolkenstein (c. 1377-1445): "ei, minnikliches falckenterz / wie süess ist dir dein snäblin wolgevar!" (46. Du ausserweltes schöns mein herz) Karl Kurt Klein, ed., Burghart Wachinger, rev., *Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein*, Altdeutsche textbibliothek 55, 4th, revised edition, (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 146. "Oh, beloved falcon lady, how beautiful is your pretty little beak!" Albrecht Classen, *The Poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein: An English Translation of the Complete Works (1376/77–1445)*, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 131.

³⁴⁰ John Cummins, *The Hound and The Hawk. The Art of Medieval Hunting* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 227.

³⁴¹ Jürgen Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love and Bourgeois Marriage: Some Notes on the So-called 'Minnekästchen'," *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Isabel Davis, et al. Jones International Medieval Research, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 111.

³⁴² Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, 96.

³⁴³ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Romantic couples - The Power of women - The man as a woman's slave.

Falcons are usually depicted in scenes with couples in other artworks as well. Similarly to the New York-1, the bird can be seen perched on the arm of the lady in the tapestry *L'offrande du Coeur*, depicting a couple in love, from around 1400–1410 (Figure III.41). Falcons are also frequently used motifs in love-related scenes on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century ivory betrothal and wedding caskets.³⁴⁴

Lions

Lions appear nine times on seven saddles altogether (Figure III.65).³⁴⁵ On four saddles, such as in Field L5 of the Boston-1, Field R5 of the Budapest-2, and Field L6 of the Budapest-3, it is an individual motif, unrelated to other figures or scenes. On the others, it appears in different contexts, either in interaction with another character or as part of a narrative scene. In Field L5 of the Budapest-3, the lion is fighting the wild man,³⁴⁶ on the Florence-2, a knight. There are two lions on the Vienna-2. In Field R7, it is licking its cubs. This representation has its roots in the *Physiologus* which existed in Latin and various other translations and was used for well-known bestiaries, for example, the Aberdeen Bestiary (c. 1200) and Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'amour* (c. 1250). In these, the lion is described as having three natures, the third being that lion cubs remain lifeless for three days, after which their father gives them life again by his breath and roar.³⁴⁷

In the other depiction of the Vienna-2, in Field L7, the lion seems to have an interaction with a dog which appears in front of the lion, looking back at it. Similar compositions can be seen in surviving manuscripts of Giovanni Marcanova's *Collectio antiquitatum*, a richly illustrated treatise and one of the most important fifteenth-century

³⁴⁴ See: Friedman, "The Falcon and the Hunt," figure 7, 19; Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 443, Plate LXVI.

³⁴⁵ It appears twice on both the Vienna-2 and Budapest-3.

³⁴⁶ See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings? III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Wild men.

³⁴⁷ This was interpreted as a symbol of the resurrection, where the text says that the lion's bringing his cub to life after three days, is like God the Father raising the Son on the third day. Michael J. Curley, *Physiologus* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 4; Célestin Hippeau ed., *Richard Fournival: Le bestiaire d'amour et la Réponse de la dame* (Paris: A. Aubry, 1860), 12–13; Robert Favreau, "Le thème iconographique du lion dans les inscriptions médiévales," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 135, no. 3 (1991): 622; Nigel Harris, "The Lion on Medieval Western Europe: Toward an Interpretative History," *Traditio* 76 (2021): 196.

epigraphy collection.³⁴⁸ In the manuscripts currently in Modena³⁴⁹ and Princeton,³⁵⁰ the composition of the lion and a dog yielding before it illustrates the epigram “Iratu recole quod nobilis ira leonis / in sibi prostratis se negat esse feram” (The anger of the noble lion does not allow himself to be wild against those who lie before him) (Figure III.66).³⁵¹ The inscription and representation decorated the gate of the Capitolium and was popular in the Middle Ages.³⁵² In the Princeton manuscript, the lion is depicted in a similar position as on the bone saddle with its tail curling upwards. However, the dog is yielding before the lion, with its head turning back as in the saddle carving. Since the saddle does not feature the inscription, direct connection is uncertain and the image may be regarded as a loose adaptation of the composition.

On both the Modena-1 and the New York-2, the lion is part of a narrative scene where a man is forcing the lion’s jaws open. In Field R7 of the New York-2, the scene appears next to another combat, a man fighting against a beast. The man fighting the lion is depicted in a position half kneeling on the beast whose mouth he is forcing open. He wears a courtly attire, the long sleeves of his outer garment are depicted flailing in the wind. A similar composition can be seen in the engraving by Israhel van Meckenem from c. 1475³⁵³, and Master E. S. from 1450–1467, depicting the fight of Samson and the Lion (Figure III.67). Samson killing the lion was a popular biblical subject in the Middle Ages, especially from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, when it became one of the most frequent Old Testament theme represented in art.³⁵⁴ In the engraving of the Master E. S., similarly to the bone saddle, the courtly garment of the man is blown in the wind

³⁴⁸ Dániel Pócs, “Egy corvina története: Battista Spagnoli Mantovano: Parthenice Mariana—Pontosításokkal a Pierpont Morgan Library M496 és M497 jelzetű corvináinak provenienciájához [The story of a Corvina: Battista Spagnoli Mantovano’s Parthenice Mariana—clarifying the provenance of Corvina M496 and M497 in the Pierpont Morgan Library],” *Ars Hungarica* 43, no. 3 (2017): 334.

³⁴⁹ Iohannes Marcanova: *Collectio antiquitatum*, Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Estense, Lat. 992 = alfa.L.5.15, 1462, fol 84 r.

³⁵⁰ Giovanni Marcanova: *Collectio antiquitatum*, Princeton University Library. Garrett MS. 158, Bologna, 1471 (?), fol 77 v.

³⁵¹ Dániel Pócs: “‘Nobilis ira leonis’: Római és firenzei oroszlánokról – újra [About lions of Rome and Florence - again” (conference presentation, Art History Conference, Budapest, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, March 13, 2024.) I thank Iván Kis for his help in the translation.

³⁵² Favreau, “Le thème iconographique du lion dans les inscriptions médiévales,” 624–25; In some depictions, the yielding prey is a different animal such as a rabbit. See: Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, “Jacopo Antonio Marcello Holdszarló- és Sárkányrendje” [Order of the Moon Crescent and of the Dragon in Jacopo Antonio Marcello], in *Kutak: Tanulmányok a XV-XVI. századi magyarországi művelődés köréből: Humanizmus és reformáció* (Budapest: Balassi, 2012), 49–58.

³⁵³ Israhel van Meckenem: *Samson and the Lion*, engraving, Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. 1943.3.100, c. 1475, accessed June 2, 2024, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.3312.html>.

³⁵⁴ Georg Swarzenski, “Samson Killing the Lion: a Mediaeval Bronze Group,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 38, no. 229 (1940): 68.

and the conquered lion's posture with its upturned jaw is similarly depicted. The rending of the jaws is a relatively fixed motif of German and Netherlandish engravings.³⁵⁵ Samson tearing apart the lion with his bare hands is the expression of his strength.³⁵⁶

Thanks to engravings, the subject was widespread in the later Middle Ages. It appears, for example, on an oven tile based on the composition of the Master E. S.³⁵⁷ as well as on a casket now in the Kunstgewerbemuseum of Berlin.³⁵⁸ Therefore, it is likely that the carving of the New York-2 depicts this particular scene too.

On the back of the left cantle of the Modena-1, the lion-fighting hero is in a similar posture but in a completely different formulation. The hero is naked, only a veil is thrown back over his left shoulder. He is opening the mouth of the lion in a half standing position: his left leg is bent and rests on his right knee. In a drawing depicting Samson fighting the lion by Raphael in the Gallerie dell'Academia, Venice (Figure III.68), Samson appears naked and in a similar position, kneeling with one leg on the back of the animal while forcing open its jaws. However, the Modena-1 probably depicts another story. Since this saddle is known to have belonged to Ercole I d'Este,³⁵⁹ it is probable, that this hero is his eponym, Hercules, and not Samson.³⁶⁰ Since Samson and Hercules were both regarded as ancient heroes and both were known to have fought lions, similar compositions may have been used by late medieval and early modern artists to depict both, for example, the engraving by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (c.1460–c.1520).³⁶¹ The carving carries the inscription “deus furtitudo mea,” Ercole's motto, and it is positioned next to the scene of Saint George slaying the dragon.³⁶²

³⁵⁵ According to the story, Samson, a strong and mighty man chosen by God to lead the Israelites, encountered a lion while traveling to Timnah. The lion attacked him but by the strength given to him by God, Samson was able to tear the lion apart with his bare hands. Later, when he returned to the same spot, he found that bees had made a hive in the skull of the lion, and honey was inside. Samson scooped out some honey and ate it, but did not tell anyone where it came from, keeping it a secret. Book of Judges, 14,5-6. Peter Arms Wick, “Samson Slaying the Lion by Israhel van Meckenem,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 51, no. 286 (1953): 88.

³⁵⁶ Favreau, “Le thème iconographique du lion dans les inscriptions médiévales,” 614-15.

³⁵⁷ *Samson and the Lion*, oven tile, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 469944, Austria, probably South Tyrol, c. 1490, accessed June 2, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.18587205>.

³⁵⁸ *Samson with Lion*, casket, Berlin, Kustgewerbemuseum, 1419, accessed June 2, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.13582032>.

³⁵⁹ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms; III.4.3. Mottos; IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

³⁶⁰ In the myth of Hercules and the Nemean Lion, as told in Pseudo Apollodorus 2.5, Hercules, a demigod known for his incredible strength, is tasked with defeating the Nemean Lion as one of his twelve labors. See: Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 1, trans. James G. Frazer, Loeb Classical Library 121 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 185–87.

³⁶¹ Giovanni Antonio da Brescia: *Hercules and the Nemean Lion*, engraving, Italy, accessed, June 2, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.12394055>.

³⁶² See: III.3.2. Coat of Arms; III.4.3. Mottos; IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

Dogs

Dogs and/or wolves appear on five bone saddles (Figure III.69). However, no two bone saddles feature them in the same context. On the Budapest-1 and New York-2 they are connected to another motif or figure: on the former, the dog appears below the foot of an older woman in Field L6, on the latter, in Field L7, above Saint George slaying the dragon. In Field L4 of the Budapest-3, wrestling dogs are depicted, and on the rear left fork of the Florence-2, two wolves are mauling their prey. The dog of Field L7 of the Vienna-2 is part of the image of the lion discussed above.

Interpreting the dog on the bone saddles requires a nuanced approach especially because they are depicted in very different contexts. As cited from Malcolm Jones, “Sometimes a dog is just a dog,”³⁶³ however, they often have symbolic meanings that vary from context to context. Dogs can represent loyalty, fidelity, love, but also masculine desire, even infidelity.³⁶⁴ The dog resting under the feet of a lady on the Budapest-1, for example, is probably her pet, similar to female effigies, where they appear as symbols of fidelity.³⁶⁵ Alternatively it may be regarded purely as a motif separating Fields L6 and L5. Dogs, as symbols of fidelity appear on marriage caskets as well, for instance, that on the front side of a casket from the early fifteenth century, formerly in the Böhler collection of München (Figure III.70). On this, the dog appears between two couples who express fidelity for each other in inscription banderols. Since this saddle features many romantic couples, the dog can be interpreted in a love-related context.

On the Florence-2, two wolves are mauling some kind of prey. According to Benedetta Chiesi, this detail of the bone saddle comes from a different object, from a later period, perhaps a hunting knife case.³⁶⁶ Indeed, it does not fit the shape of the saddle since the fork of the saddle divides the field into two main fields and on the other side a couple is split into these two fields. Since there is a man on the left field on this side as well, it is probable that originally a woman was carved in this field.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 34.

³⁶⁴ See: Wurst, “Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love,” 109.

³⁶⁵ Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 35.

³⁶⁶ Benedetta Chiesi, “VIII. 67: Sella da Parata,” in *Gli Avori del Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, edited by Ilaria Ciseri, 328–32 (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2018), 329.

³⁶⁷ Chiesi, “VIII. 67: Sella da Parata,” 329.

Monkeys

Monkeys appear on four saddles (Figure III.71): around Field L1 on both the Boston-1 and New York-2, a monkey appears as a figure associated with the inscription banderol. In the Boston-1 it holds the end of the banderol inscribed with “gedenckh”, while in the New York-2, it points at the *m m* initials. In these cases, they are purely ornamental figures. On the Budapest-2, there are two monkeys, appearing in relation with couples in both cases. In Field L6 it is next to a couple who hold a banderol saying “mit lieb.” In the other case it appears between the Fields L5 and L6, under the scene of Aristotle and Phyllis. The monkey here holds the hand of a woman belonging to another couple.

The monkey in medieval iconography can represent the fall of Adam, the symbol of lust, foolish love, and so on.³⁶⁸ Monkeys depicted next to couples on the bone saddles are probably symbols of lust. The monkey is an erotic symbol in the poem of Clara Hätzlerin who, comparing human behaviors to animals, says that a person should be a monkey in bed.³⁶⁹ Moreover, the monkey appearing close to Aristotle and Phyllis may also symbolize foolishness, mocking the situation in which the philosopher made a fool of himself for love.³⁷⁰ The monkey as a symbol for foolishness also appear in Hätzerlin’s songbook: “Ich bin ir narr, ir gâch, ir aff, In efels weis ich fy angaff” (I am her fool, her clown, her monkey, I gape at her like a donkey).³⁷¹ The ape, as the image of fool became a common symbol for the late middle ages’ artworks.³⁷² A late fifteenth-century casket, now in the Kunstgewerbemuseum of Cologne, is decorated with an archer monkey enclosed within a circle, surrounded by floral ornament. The accompanying inscription reads: “ich spa wit un trif nut” (I aim far but hit nothing).³⁷³

In the Vienna-2, two apes appear between a griffin and the bathing nudes in Field L7, one offering a round mirror to the other. Monkeys holding mirrors can be interpreted

³⁶⁸ For the various symbols and interpretation of the monkey (ape), see: H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Studies of the Warburg Institute, ed. H. Frankfort, vol. 20 (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952).

³⁶⁹ “No: du solt sein / Ob dem tisch ain Adler / Uf dem veld ain leo / Uf der gassen ain pfaw / In der kirchen ain lamb / In dem pett ain Aff.“ Haltaus, *Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin*, LXVII (no. 3.); Mitsch, “Tiere im Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin,” 73.

³⁷⁰ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Romantic couples - The Power of women - Aristotle and Phyllis.

³⁷¹ Haltaus, *Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin*, LXXIV (56); Mitsch, “Tiere im Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin,” 30.

³⁷² Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 199.

³⁷³ *Minnekästchen*, Cologne, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Alsace (?), second half of the 15th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 223–24, Plate LXIX. See: notes 432, 493, 591.

as symbols of foolishness, as well as of vanity.³⁷⁴ These themes became popular in the late Middle Ages, they appear even as individual themes in engravings such as the sixteenth-century engraving *Vanitas* after Israel van Meckenem.³⁷⁵ A monkey holding a mirror appears in the background of an amorous couple in a German engraving from c. 1480.³⁷⁶ In this depiction, the monkey indicates a foolish, even false couple. The man is touching the woman's breast, while she secretly reaches into the man's purse. A monkey with a mirror appears also on the front of a casket, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, along with a figure of a lady (Figure III.72).³⁷⁷ The inscription under the monkey says "ich har" for which the lady's inscription answers "als narr" (I wait - as a fool).³⁷⁸

Unicorns

The mythical animal appears on four bone saddles (Figure III.73). It is hard to tell whether they are parts of other images or can be interpreted as separate decorative motifs. On the Berlin-1, a unicorn appears in Field R7 next to a female figure wearing a crown and a basket on her right arm. On the Budapest-3, the unicorn is depicted in Field L4, under Saint George slaying the dragon, and above the wild man. On the Vienna-2, it appears next to an owl and the phoenix. On the latter two, the unicorns are carved in a similar posture, with their hind legs on the ground and its forelegs slightly raised, resembling a cantering horse. On the New York-2, the unicorn, led by a maiden, is found in Field L5.³⁷⁹

The unicorn was a popular theme of the late Middle Ages. The explanation of its complex allegory can be found in medieval bestiaries. In the *Physiologus*, the unicorn is a symbol of purity, pursued by hunters, only to be tamed in the lap of a virgin. This has

³⁷⁴ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 307.

³⁷⁵ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 215, fig. 12.

³⁷⁶ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 263, fig. 20.

³⁷⁷ In the 1980s, Horst Appuhn identified this object as a forgery. However, as Jürgen Wurst notes, Appuhn's theory often lacks a solid scientific foundation. His arguments are primarily hypothetical and are seldom backed by concrete evidence. Cf. Horst Appuhn, "Die schönsten Minnekästchen aus Basel: Fälschungen aus der Zeit der Romantik," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 41, no. 3 (1984): 149–60 and Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 22–23.

³⁷⁸ See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs. A similar round mirror is held by a woman in Field R5 of the New York-4, which can also be interpreted as a symbol of vanity.

³⁷⁹ The unicorn appears in the copies of the New York-2 as well, See: V.1.3. The Unicorn Group: The nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2.

a Christological meaning: the unicorn and the virgin stand for Christ and Mary.³⁸⁰ In Richard Fournival's *Bestiary*, the killing of the unicorn is given a new, amorous content: the poet compares the scene to his own amorous suffering. The hunters lure the unicorn into the arms of a virgin, where they can easily kill the slumbering animal. In Fournival's work, the clever hunter symbolizes Love, and compares himself to the unicorn dying in the throes of love.³⁸¹ In a similar way, in the thirteenth century, Burkart von Hohenfels compares himself to a unicorn: being trapped by a lady from whom he can no longer escape. In a different interpretation, Wolfram von Eschenbach uses the unicorn as a symbol of loyalty.³⁸²

On the Budapest-3, New York-2 and Vienna-2, unicorns look similar to horses, with the exception that they are depicted as artiodactyls and have smaller tails. The Berlin-1, however, is significantly different from the rest of the unicorns depicted on the saddles. The mythical beast is shown upside down in Field R5, and looks more like a goat than a horse. It has goat horns, and it has a tail like that of a bull. An even more goat-like woolly unicorn can be seen on Pisanello's portrait medal of Cecilia Gonzaga from 1447 (Figure III.74). Margaret B. Freeman explains the origin of the goat-unicorn variant with the description of the *Physiologus*, where the unicorn is described as being as small as a child.³⁸³

Schlosser explains the appearance of the unicorn on the Vienna-1 as just another animal from the *Physiologus*, represented next to the owl and phoenix.³⁸⁴ Thus, on this saddle, it may simply be a decorative element, similar to that on the Budapest-3, where it also does not seem to have any connection with other motifs. In contrast with these, the unicorn on the New York-2 is shown with the maiden, holding the end of a string tied around its neck. The motif of the unicorn and maiden was a popular theme in fourteenth-fifteenth-century depictions on almost any medium, including miniature paintings, tapestries, and coffrets. Most of these depict the scene of the unicorn resting in the

³⁸⁰ Raimond van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance et la décoration des demeures*. Vol. I, *La vie quotidienne* (La Haye: 1931), 448.

³⁸¹ Hippeau, *Richard Fournival*, 23–24; Margaret B. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), 30.

³⁸² Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, 30. For a deeper interpretation of the unicorn and a discussion of its significance in the medieval imagination, see: Jacques Le Goff, *Héros et merveilles du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), 155–66.

³⁸³ Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, 34; Curley, *Physiologus*, 51.

³⁸⁴ As it is emphasised by Schlosser, they are also parts of the *Physiologus*. Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 262.

virgin's lap while the hunter is about to kill it. On a painted panel of an Italian *cassone*, the virgin appears as a rich lady with the unicorn on her lap, with the cord around its neck tied to a tree, symbolizing her capture.³⁸⁵ There is also a possibility that the crowned lady depicted next to the unicorn on the Berlin-1 can be interpreted similarly, however, this case is more ambiguous.

Wild men

The mythical creature appears twice on two saddles, the Budapest-3 and the Vienna-2 (Figure III.75). On the latter, both Fields L5 and R5 depict a hairy savage holding a tree in one hand and a club in the other. They are positioned in a strip, next to other figures on both sides: between a lady and a bird-like creature. No connection can be established among these figures, they appear isolated and unconnected. Similarly to other figures on the saddle, the shape and workmanship of the wild men are rather rough. Their bodies are covered with clumps of hair. The savages on the Budapest-3 are much more elaborate: in Field L3, the wild man is holding a long-handled axe in his hand, located under the unicorn. In Field R5, he is fighting a lion. With a human-faced shield in his left hand and a club in the other, he is ready to assault his enemy. The hair that covers their bodies is also thick in clumps, but falling in gentle waves, with their hair and beard twisted into delicate coils.

The wild man is a common character in medieval literature and art, especially in German regions. They also appear on the margins of the Bible of Wenceslas IV. At the bottom of one page, for example, a wild man can be seen in a scene similar to the one in Field R5 of the Budapest-3. He is wrestling with a heraldic Bohemian lion, ready to strike with his club (Figure III.76). Apart from this illustration, wild men appear as ornamental elements several times in the margins as well.

The interpretation of the wild man in late medieval art is complex, and the symbolic meanings of this odd character are diverse.³⁸⁶ As pointed out by Timothy Husband, the wild man was a literary and artistic inspiration of the medieval imagination.³⁸⁷ In literary works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he appears as a

³⁸⁵ Painting on a *cassone*, formerly in Paris, Florence, 15th century. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, 52.

³⁸⁶ For a detailed discussion of the artistic, emotional, and demonological aspects of the medieval wild man, see: Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

³⁸⁷ Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 1.

bear-like hairy monster. Renaud de Montauban, for example, describes it as “noir et velu com ours enchainé.” In artworks until the fourteenth century, the wild man is depicted as a negative, brutal, godless monster who kidnaps virgins and fights noble knights. Such character is found on the right narrow side of a casket from Hamburg, where the wild man can be seen kidnapping a lady on his horse.³⁸⁸ However, both its depiction and symbolic meaning have changed dramatically over time. By the end of the fifteenth century, the negative monster transformed into a positive character. Instead of fighting knights and kidnapping virgins, the wild man is often depicted with his family, in a small community outside an idyllic society—a family man fighting lions and other beasts and monsters to protect his family.³⁸⁹ This is the image reflected in the depictions of the wild man on the Viennese *Minnekästchen* discussed above (Figure III.29). The casket is carved on all four sides, showing the various activities of the wild man in his natural environment, the forest. On one side of the box, the wild man is fighting a lion. The model for the composition, an engraving by the Master of the Nuremberg Passion, also survived (Figure III.28).³⁹⁰ According to Jürgen Wurst, this new interpretation may reflect a new and changing attitude towards marriage, especially among the middle class, the bourgeoisie, which was growing more influential at this time. The new zeitgeist interpreted marriage as a strong family unit, and savages were also apt representatives of these new values.³⁹¹ As discussed above,³⁹² the composition of the *Minnekästchen* and the engraving is very similar to the depiction of Budapest-3: the wild man is about to strike the lion with a club, while he defends himself with a human-faced shield in his other hand.³⁹³ However, there are also differences. Both the carved chest and the engraving feature a wild man whose appearance is much more human, wearing clothes and with a less hairy body. His wife stands behind him holding their child. In contrast, on the saddle, the wild man is fighting without clothes, and his family is not shown. The illumination of the Bible of Wenceslas is also similar to these compositions, and the family of the wild man is not shown in it either. This suggests that it may have been a common compositional motif, which was adapted in the bone saddle as well.

³⁸⁸ *Minnekästchen*, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv.-Nr. 1877.380, Cologne region (?), 2nd half of the 14th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” Plate XIX.

³⁸⁹ Wurst, “Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love,” 238–39; Husband, *The Wild Man*, 114.

³⁹⁰ See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings? Husband, *The Wild Man*, 115–16.

³⁹¹ Wurst, “Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love,” 238–39; Husband, *The Wild Man*, 114.

³⁹² See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings?

³⁹³ The peculiar human-headed shield that appears in all three examples was a popular depiction, particularly in Czech areas, especially on fifteenth-century altarpieces. See: Somogyvári, *The Art of Love on Late Medieval Bone Saddles*, 33, note 83.

Dragons, drolleries, and other beasts

There are several other beasts, hybrids, and animals depicted on the bone saddles in different fields, especially in the marginal parts. (Figure III.77). The enumeration and discussion of these various creatures exceed the scope of this dissertation; therefore, I will highlight only selected motifs.

Many of them are dragons, which are not parts of the previously discussed Saint George images,³⁹⁴ but rather ornamental elements. Such ornamental dragons adorn Fields L-R1 of the Braunschweig-1, and Field L1 of the Vienna-2. Decorative, ornamental dragons fill almost the whole surface of the London-3, whose fire-breath is depicted as tendril-like ornamental motifs.

Apart from dragons, bone saddles also feature hybrid creatures and grotesque figures, which are similar to drolleries and illuminated manuscript marginalia. The largest number of hybrids can be found on the New York-4, for example, creatures with even-toed animal bodies and human heads. Similar hybrid creatures appear on a casket from Basel, from the second half of the fourteenth century (Figure III.78).³⁹⁵

The New York-2 features two beasts which are similar in appearance. In Field R2, the creature seems ready to bite a mermaid-like figure, in Field R7 it is biting a man's leg. It has a human face but dog-like ears and a reptile-like crest running along its spine. A similar creature can be found in the late medieval master book of Stephan Schriber from 1494 (Figure III.79). Another similar beast appears in a woodcut from the end of the fifteenth century, as a book illustration from the *Reysen und Wanderschaften durch das gelobte land* (Travels and Wanderings through the Holy Land).³⁹⁶ These diverse creatures can be interpreted similarly to the marginalia of illuminated manuscripts: they are decorative elements and space-fillers.

III.2.5. Ornamental and other motifs

Apart from the motifs discussed above, the carvings of the bone saddles are also decorated by various non-figural elements and decorations. Two bone saddles have only

³⁹⁴ See: III.2.1. Saint George and the dragon.

³⁹⁵ Similarly to the casket in the V&A (Figure III.72), Appuhn also identified this object as a forgery. See: note 377.

³⁹⁶ "They Eat Their Enemies in the Manner of Dogs," *Reysen und Wanderschaften durch das gelobte Land*, 1483, accessed, June 2, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.12388808>

ornamental decoration: the Berlin-2 and the Glasgow-1. On the former, twisting and winding leaf-like banderols cover the entire surface; the latter has an ornamental motif similar to banderols. This is formed symmetrically in volutes on the two sides of the saddle, covering almost all fields, with the exception of R1-2 and around the L1-2, where a plain banderol displays the *m n* initials. The carvings of the London-3 also lack figural motifs. This is the saddle on which ornamental dragons breath tendril-like flames.

Floral ornaments

Most of the saddles have twisting leaves as the background for the figural motifs or as space filling elements in fields with no other figural motif. (Figure III.80). The twiners are more or less similar on most of the saddles with some exceptions.³⁹⁷ As discussed above, the style of these leaves on some bone saddles is so similar that it suggests a close connection—perhaps the same workshop.³⁹⁸

Similar tendrils and twisting leaves can be found in depictions from the end of the fourteenth century, such as on the margins of the Bible of Wenceslas, until the second half of the fifteenth century, for example, on the engravings of Martin Schongauer and the Master E. S. (Figure III.81)³⁹⁹ Long, twisting leaf-ornaments can also be seen in the Viennese *Minnekästchen* discussed above, depicting the combat between the wild man and a lion; as well as its pictorial source, the woodcut by the Master of the Nuremberg Passion (Figures III.28–29).⁴⁰⁰ Such woodcuts, along with pattern books may have served as sources for these ornamental decorations, for example, the *The Göttingen Model Book* from the mid-fifteenth century (Figure III.82).

In some exceptional cases, the color of the vegetal ornamentation is preserved, such as the plumes coming from the dragons' mouths on London-3, which turn into green and red twiners. Thanks to the surviving red, green, and blue pigments of the Vienna-1, the colors of the leaves in lower part of the front left pommel plate can be reconstructed (Figure II.24). The reconstruction clearly shows what vivid colors adorned the saddle. Similar multicolored leaves can be seen on a page of the *Göttingen Model Book*, which

³⁹⁷ E.g., the floral ornamentation of the Unknown Location-2 and Stockholm-1.

³⁹⁸ See: III.1.1. Style: Ornamentation.

³⁹⁹ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 220.

⁴⁰⁰ See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings? III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Lions, -Wild men.

suggest that painting leaves in different colors may have been common practice in late medieval artworks (Figure III.82).

In addition to the twisting leaf ornaments, the bone saddles also feature a variety of other plants, vegetation, and flowers. Their diversity is so extensive that their presentation and analysis are beyond the scope of this dissertation.⁴⁰¹

“Cloud” and hand

Nine bone saddle feature a particular ornamental motif: a decorative line forming a loop above and below repeatedly (Figure III.83). In some cases, this motif seems purely an ornamental separator between two scenes such as on the Florence-1 where it divides the motifs of Fields L1 and L4, as well as the inner side of the pommel of the Florence-2 where it is a decorative space filler. Elsewhere, this decorative line is joined by another motif: a hand with baggy sleeves holding a scroll, reaching out from the ornamentation.⁴⁰² This hand motif is typically found on the upper part of Field L-R2, right under L-R1; on the Florence-3 it appears in Field R1.⁴⁰³ However, in some cases there is a second hand too, such as on the Bologna-1, in Field L-R7, and on the Braunschweig-1, in R5.

Although I have not found other pictorial sources with the baggy-sleeved hand, there are analogues for the loop-like decoration. On a fifteenth-century *pavise*, now in The Met, it borders the side and top border of a shield (Figure III.84). It appears on other illustrations as a dividing line between the heavenly and earthly worlds: typically, angels, saints appear above them, or other heavenly figures descend from them. Examples include the relief of angels playing music in the Pfarrkirche of Deutschnofen by Hans von Judenburg, active between 1411 and 1424 (Figure III.85), and a tapestry of Nuremberg, depicting the Virgin and child along with Saint Peter and Paul, where this particular ornament as background clearly represents heaven.⁴⁰⁴ In an Austrian/Bavarian miniature from the middle of the century, the function of this ornament becomes clear: rain pours out of it, so it can be interpreted as clouds (Figure III.86). Therefore, the complex motif of the cloud and hand can be interpreted as the manifestation of a

⁴⁰¹ Schröder interpretes the presence of the flowers on the saddles as it evokes the profane love garden representations. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 39.

⁴⁰² On the Stresa-1, the hand does not hold the banderol but reaches the head of the figure underneath.

⁴⁰³ The carved bone plates of the other side, as well as the majority of carvings of the saddle did not survive.

⁴⁰⁴ Tapestry with Mary in a halo and the apostles Peter and Paul, Cologne, Museum Schnütgen, Nuremberg (Dominican Convent of Saint Catherine), 1450–1470.

heavenly, supernatural phenomenon, which is confirmed by its placement, typically in the highest fields on the bone saddles.⁴⁰⁵

Other motifs

Apart from the motifs discussed above, there are some additional ornamental elements which appear on multiple bone saddles. Checkered stripes as longitudinal decoration appears on eight saddles (Figure III.87). This kind of decoration is usually applied on the thin edges of the bone saddles such as the top edge connecting the left and right sides and the edge appearing between Fields L-R2 and L-R4. These longitudinal edges were probably made of antler.⁴⁰⁶ The pattern appears in other fields as well: on the Vienna-1, it acts as a narrow border of the leather seat of the saddle, and on the New York-4 it borders two slots. The Stresa-1 has the most generous checkerboard pattern, bordering the inscription banderol which covers most of the top view of the saddle.

Some of the bone saddles feature wickerwork, a pattern representing wicker woven around perpendicular sticks (Figure III.88). With four occurrences, this motif appears most often on the Florence-1. Wickerwork seems to serve as space separating elements such as that on the Braunschweig-1 where it separates the image of a woman and a hand, or in Fields R4-R5 of the Florence-1, where it divides the figure of the crowned princess and a courtly lady below. Apart from this bordering function, the motif is incorporated into a scene in one example: on the front view of the pommel on the Florence-2, a couple is depicted behind this decoration. This example also provides a reasonable answer for the function of this element: a fence.⁴⁰⁷ A similar wicker fence can be seen on the engraving of the Master of the Nuremberg Passion depicting the Birth of Christ from around 1446–1455 (Figure III.89).

III.2.6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to uncover the most typical and frequent motifs found in the carvings of bone saddles, while also highlighting some specific elements. Beyond the more traditional iconographical themes, such as Saint George and the Dragon, most

⁴⁰⁵ See: III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs. Schröder claims that the motif on the Braunschweig-1 serves as a divine warning not to enter into a love affair prematurely. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 34–35.

⁴⁰⁶ See: II.2.1. Layers of the bone saddles - The bone panels – Application.

⁴⁰⁷ Schröder interprets the wickerwork motif as a reference to the garden, a common setting for lovers' encounters in courtly literature. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 39.

of the carvings can be situated within the pictorial language of late medieval secular objects.

The analysis reveals multiple interpretative possibilities for the motifs. While I have suggested some avenues for interpretation, the meanings of these elements often remain ambiguous, especially in cases where there is no clear contextual framework.

The diversity of the motifs on the bone saddles may be construed as a sign of arbitrary decoration and lack of consistency. In a subsequent chapter, I will revisit this issue, examining whether these carvings can be interpreted as part of a unified program.⁴⁰⁸

III.3. Heraldic symbols

Beyond the various iconographic motifs found in the carvings, there are other elements that may hold more specific symbolic significance. In this chapter, I will examine the heraldic motifs that appear on the bone saddles and attempt to interpret their meanings.

III.3.1. Emblems

On some saddles, specific motifs can be identified as emblems: the dragon with its tail around the neck in Field L8 of the Budapest-3, red crosses appearing on five saddles, and two stylized flowers appearing in various fields of the Berlin-2 and London-2. Apart from these, a bow-like motif in a circular garland once decorated the pre-restored version of the New York-2 which also appears on most of the copies made after this saddle.

Of these, only one can be identified: the dragon depicted on the Budapest-3 roughly corresponds to the badge of the Order of the Dragon (Figure III.90).⁴⁰⁹ This emblem gave rise to the theory of connecting Sigismund and the Order of the Dragon with the bone saddles.⁴¹⁰ The tail around its neck follows the description of the founding document of the order, but the red cross specified in the same document does not appear

⁴⁰⁸ See: III.6. Program of the carvings.

⁴⁰⁹ There is one saddle which features a dragon similar to the order's badge: Field L1 on the Vienna-2. However, in this case the tail does not curve around the neck of the dragon, so it may be assumed purely ornamental.

⁴¹⁰ See: I.2.2. Bone Saddles and Sigismund - Scholarship in the twentieth century; IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon.

on this carving.⁴¹¹ One of the best-known analogues for the emblem of the order is the textile badge from the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum of München (Figure III.91). About the connection of the Order of the Dragon and the bone saddles I write more in the Part IV of the dissertation.⁴¹²

A cross on a light base can be identified in Field 9 of three late medieval bone saddles, Boston-1, London-3 and New York-2. (Figure III.92). This emblem survived in color only on the London-3: a red cross on a white base. Since these crosses appear mainly on the bone saddles which have Saint George-related content,⁴¹³ they can also be attributed to him confirming their identification as Saint George cross.⁴¹⁴ Similar red crosses on white shields appear on other Saint George representations as well, such as a sculpture from 1410 of Maasland.⁴¹⁵ Although much smaller and without color, the cross also appears on the copies of the New York-2: the Paris Copy and the ex-Sporting Copy.

Stylized floral motifs, all resembling one another, appear in Fields L-R4 and L-R8 of the Berlin-2, and in Field L-R6 of the London-2 (Figures III.93–94). This floral motif is composed of a central disc surrounded by five petals in three rows on the Berlin-2, and in two rows on the London-2. Similar stylized flowers can be found in medieval heraldry, where roses are usually depicted with five rounded petals, often slightly curled inwards at the edges.⁴¹⁶ Heraldic roses can be composed of one row of petals but often contain additional rows.⁴¹⁷

Similar multi-rowed petals are typical for the heraldic badge of the House of York and House of Tudor. An example for the heraldic rose of York can be found in an English

⁴¹¹ “signum seu effigiem draconis incurvati per modum circuli cauda sua collum circum gyrantis divisi per medium dorsi ad longitudinem a summitate capitis et nasi usque ad extremum caudae effluente sanguine in interiore rima scissurae alba, et sanguine intacta per longitudinem rubeam crucem, sicuti et quemadmodum sub ipsius gloriosi martyris Georgii vexillo militantes crucem rubeam in albo campo ferre solent.” Fejérpataky László, “A Chap-czímer és a Sárkányrend [The Chap-Emblem and the Order of the Dragon],” *Turul* 3 (1883): 117.

⁴¹² IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund’s Order of the Dragon.

⁴¹³ On the Boston-1 and New York-2 it appears as a figural carving, on the London-3 it appears in the inscription. See: Table VIII.

⁴¹⁴ In the fifteenth-century German collection of legends *Der Heiligen Leben*, Saint George receives a banner bearing a red cross from an angel, which from then on adorned his coat of arms. *Der Heiligen Leben und Leiden, anders genannt das Passional*, ed. Severin Rüttgers, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1913), 20; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 46.

⁴¹⁵ *Saint George*, oakwood statue, Nuremberg, Germanisches National museum, Pl.O. 3417, Maasland, 1410.

⁴¹⁶ Peter Bernhard, “Die heraldische Rose,” *Heraldik - die Welt der Wappen*, accessed May 30, 2024, <http://www.welt-der-wappen.de/Heraldik//seiten/rose.htm>.

⁴¹⁷ Hans J. Van Miegroet, “The Sign of the Rose: A Fifteenth-Century Flemish Passion Scene,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 27 (1992): 77.

genealogy manuscript from 1475 (Figure III.95), while a Tudor rose is used on Sir Thomas More's chain in his portrait by Hans Holbein the Younger (Figure III.96). However, the roses on the bone saddles and the York Rose and Tudor Rose are slightly different. The York Rose in the English genealogy consists of a yellow central disc surrounded by five slightly concave petals and an outer five-petal row and the Tudor rose on the Holbein painting has two outer petal rows.⁴¹⁸ A significant difference between the roses on the saddles and the York and Tudor Roses is that the former has convex petals. Another difference is the color. As opposed to the white York Rose and red Tudor Rose, surviving pigment remains on the London-2 are the same green and red as those found on the rest of the saddles, except on the Berlin-2, where colors did not survive.

Because of these differences, the York and Tudor Roses are only distant analogues of the rose found on bone saddles. The frequent occurrence and diverse appearance of this motif in different places and coats of arms show that it was a popular heraldic emblem.⁴¹⁹ Moreover, apart from the heraldic interpretation, the roses on the bone saddles can also be interpreted as symbols of the Virgin Mary. The *Rosa Mystica*, one of Mary's symbols in the Middle Ages originally comes from Isaiah 11:1 ("a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse / and from his roots a bud shall blossom").⁴²⁰ Since, as will be shown in a later chapter, this is not the only possible Marian symbol on the bone saddles, so it is not unlikely that the stylized roses served as an invocation for her as well.⁴²¹

Before its restoration at the turn of the nineteenth century, an emblem had once decorated the central area connecting the two rounded cantles on the New York-2: a bow-like motif in a vegetal garland. Since no reproductions of the earlier top view of the saddle

⁴¹⁸ One or two outer five-petal rows in the later Middle Ages were often added to the rose of York. Marcin Kudla, "A Multimodal View of Late Medieval Rhetoric: The Case of the White Rose of York," *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric* 61 (2020): 131.

⁴¹⁹ A heraldic rose was the main element of the coat of arms of the famous Bohemian noble family, the Rosenbergs. However, their rose is not double-layered.

⁴²⁰ "Rosa Mystica," *University of Dayton*, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/r/rosa-mystica.php>. The Marian hymn and Christmas Carol "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" had German origins coming from an author before the 17th century, and has the same origin of the Book of Isaiah. Michael Fischer, "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen," *Populäre und traditionelle Lieder. Historisch-kritisches Liederlexikon* (2007, accessed May 29, 2024, http://www.liederlexikon.de/lieder/es_ist_ein_ros_entsprungen. I thank Martin Zdražil for drawing my attention to this source.

⁴²¹ See: III.5. Initials.

have survived, its original appearance can be inferred from the copies, especially the New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy), so this emblem will be discussed in Part V below.⁴²²

III.3.2. Coat of arms

Apart from the emblems, even more specific heraldic motifs can be found on the saddles: coat of arms. All are hitherto unidentified, except the one on the front of the pommel of the Modena-1, featuring Ercole I d'Este's coat of arms in a vegetal garland (Figure III.97). The duke's coat of arms survived on buildings and artworks as well, for example, it is painted on the wall of the loggia at the Casa Romei in Ferrara (Figure III.98), on the Campanile of the cathedral of Ferrara and it appears in the Breviary of Ercole I d'Este.⁴²³ Because of the presence of Ercole I d'Este's coat of arms and personal motto, this is the only bone saddle where the original owner is known.⁴²⁴

In other cases, the coats of arms are much less meaningful. The Vienna-2 has four heraldic motifs (Figure III.99): two occurrences of a coat of arms divided by two bars, a coat of arms depicting a heraldic eagle, and an empty escutcheon. The barry coat of arms appear in both Field L7 among the outer tendril ornament, held by two hands, and in Field L1, in the rounded core of the volute. According to Schlosser, only the one in Field L7 can be original, and the restorer of the saddle in 1860 copied this one to Field L1. Because of this, he interprets it as an ornamental element and does not attribute any heraldic meaning to it.⁴²⁵ Schwarzkogler, who restored the saddle in 2000, raises the possibility that it is the Hungarian coat of arms – although that is although that is a field barry of eight.⁴²⁶ The coat of arms depicting a heraldic eagle is held by two angels on the other, inner side of the volute of Field L1. This was identified as the German imperial coat of arms by Schlosser and Schwarzkogler.⁴²⁷

⁴²² See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2 - The bow-like emblem on the cantles; V.1.3. The Unicorn Group: The nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2 – The relationship between the copies.

⁴²³ Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Ms. Lat. 324 (Ms.V.G.11). I was not able to consult this book but the detail with the coat of arms is visible in a facsimile version. "Breviary of Ercole d'Este," *Ziereis facsimiles*, accessed, 2024, June 15, <https://www.facsimiles.com/facsimiles/breviary-of-ercole-deste#&gid=1&pid=15>.

⁴²⁴ See: IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁴²⁵ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 262.

⁴²⁶ Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels," 20.

⁴²⁷ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 262; Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels," 20.

Apart from these, below the fragmented lettering in the upper part of Field R2, there is a smooth, empty escutcheon, with a veil or cloth attached at the left top corner. Schlosser claims that it was also added in 1860 during the restoration of the saddle,⁴²⁸ and Schwarzkogler adds that originally this may have been a pot helm with a crest.⁴²⁹

There are three places where heraldic motifs (or the intention to include one) can be found on the New York-4 (Figure III.100). Similarly to the Vienna-2, Field R8 of this saddle is decorated by a heraldic eagle, which Erik Ramírez-Weaver identifies it as that of the Holy Roman Empire and attributes to the king of the Romans, Wenceslas IV.⁴³⁰ The problem of the interpretation of the one-headed eagle will be revisited in a later chapter.⁴³¹

Empty coats of arms can be seen in Field L8, held by a couple who both hold an empty coat of arms, and in Field L9, held by a bust. Similar empty coats of arms appear on other medieval artworks, such as on the Alsatian casket from Cologne.⁴³² The absence of any decoration on the coat of arms could indicate that they were not carved but originally painted. This also suggests the possibility that it was left empty for practical reasons, such as repainting it over time for customizing it.

On the back side of the cantle of the Florence-2, we can also see an empty coat of arms (Figure III.101) It is surrounded by a vegetal garland held by two dragons with long tails. According to Benedetta Chiesi, the heraldic shield must have been once painted on parchment.⁴³³

III.3.3. Conclusion

The presence of emblems and coats of arms on these bone saddles probably served to personalize these objects, providing valuable information about their original owners. Although these symbols would have been meaningful to a medieval audience, containing details about the owner, their exact meanings are now largely lost. While the interpretation of their original meaning is difficult, however, their placement and other attributes clearly indicate their significance.

⁴²⁸ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 260.

⁴²⁹ Schwarzkogler, “Restauration und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels,” 24;

⁴³⁰ Ramírez-Weaver, “No. 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV,” 236.

⁴³¹ See: IV.1.1. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁴³² *Minnekästchen*, Cologne, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Alsace (?), second half of the 15th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 223–24, Plate LXVIII. See: notes 373, 493, 591.

⁴³³ Chiesi, “VIII. 67: Sella da Parata,” 329.

III.4. Inscriptions

Altogether fifteen bone saddles feature inscriptions: twelve are in German and three in Latin (Italian) inscriptions. These inscriptions vary in length and meaning, and include prayers to Saint George, amorous dialogues, shorter mottos and proverbs. In this chapter, I identify four distinct types of inscriptions and place them within their original literary contexts. Given the scarcity of previous scholarly research on saddle inscriptions, this approach is particularly significant, especially regarding the most important inscriptions, from which meaningful deductions can be made.⁴³⁴ Since a comprehensive discussion of all inscriptions is not possible, Table XI presents critically reviewed transcriptions and translations of all the inscriptions found on the saddles.

III.4.1. Saint George inscriptions

One subject of the bone saddles' inscriptions is related to Saint George. On four saddles the saint does not appear visually, but only through inscriptions.⁴³⁵ The name of Saint George also typically appears in the exchanges by the couples. On the London-2, the name of the saint appears in the context of a romantic dialogue, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.⁴³⁶ In a long inscription scroll held by the man on the right, the text reads: "ich var ich har ye lenger ich har me gresser nar / dein ewichleich in sand ierigen nam" (I go, I wait, the longer I wait the more rescue/salvation I have / yours forever in the name of Saint George). In this context, the couple is taking an oath in the name of Saint George.

⁴³⁴ I have previously published two papers on the topic: "'Laugh, My Love, Laugh.' Mottos, Proverbs and Love Inscriptions on Late Medieval Bone Saddles," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 25 (2018): 113–28; Virág Somogyvári, "'Neveš, szerelmem, neveš': Mottók, szólások és szerelmi feliratok a későközépkori csontnyergeken" ["Laugh, My Love, Laugh": Mottos, Proverbs, and Love Inscriptions on Late Medieval Bone Saddles], in *Opus Mixtum VI: A CentrArt Egyesület évkönyve 2020*, ed. Emese M. Isó, Kristóf Kelecsényi, Ágnes Anna Sebestyén, and Gabriella Juhász (Budapest: CentrArt Egyesület, 2020), 11–22. Maria Schröder discusses the inscriptions in her monograph in Chapter 2, within the context of the pictorial program. See: Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 33–52. The inscriptions are also catalogued by literary scholar Stefan Matter, who links them to the tradition of *Minne* literature. However, I did not have the opportunity to consult his work. See: Stefan Matter, *Reden von der Minne: Untersuchungen zu Spielformen literarischer Bildung zwischen verbaler und visueller Vergegenwärtigung anhand von Minnereden und Minnebildern des deutschsprachigen Spätmittelalters*, Bibliotheca Germanica 59 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2013), 435–40 (Nr. 3–17).

⁴³⁵ Florence-1; London-1; London-3; New York-3. See: Table VIII and XI.

⁴³⁶ See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and Proverbs.

On two saddles, Saint George appears as a patron, to whom the man or woman prays for success. Field L2 of the London-3 contains the following inscription: “hilf got wol auf sand jorgen nam” (with God’s help well then, in the name of Saint George). In Fields R2 and L2 of the New York-3: “hilf bol auf sand [jo]rgen nam [h]ilf ritte sand jorig” (well then, in the name of Saint George, help knight Saint George).⁴³⁷ Interestingly, on the London-3, this prayer inscription is complemented with a rather vulgar proverb on the back of the two cantles (Fields L8 and R8): “im arse / is vinster.” The coexistence of a Saint George prayer and a vulgar proverb may seem peculiar to us, but medieval audiences were probably familiar with this kind of juxtaposition on artful objects.⁴³⁸

Similar prayer inscriptions can be read on fifteenth-century Bohemian pavises. On the Saint George pavise of Veste, Coburg, made before the middle of the fifteenth century, a Czech inscription runs along the edge: “mily, swaty. girzy.racz.my.byty. wssec. n. blaze. pro. twu. muku...ranu. racz my bity.” (beloved Saint George be pleased to be me...for your pain and wound...).⁴³⁹

III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs

As Table XI suggests, most of the inscriptions have some kind of love-related content. They include short sentences as well as rhymed dialogues between the men and women depicted on the saddles.

The longest dialogue between the man and woman can be found on the London-2.⁴⁴⁰ There are two inscriptions on each side. The long inscription is on a banderol starting on the cantle (Fields L6 and R6), then running along the borders of the saddle, rising up the volute in Fields L2 and R2, and finishing in the hands of both the woman in Field L4 on the left and the man in Field R4 on the right. The shorter inscription runs around the field, under the cantles on each side (Fields L7 and R7), and is held by a man on the left and by a woman on the right. The long inscription held by the woman on the left says: “ich pin hie ich ways nit wie / ich var von dann ich ways nit wan / nu wol auf mit willen unvergessen” (I am here, I don’t know how / I am leaving, I don’t know when / Now

⁴³⁷ In the case of the New York-3, it is important to note that about three quarters of the surface are not carved, therefore this item is an unfinished or fragmented saddle, consequently, the inscription should also be interpreted as a fragment.

⁴³⁸ See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and Proverbs; III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs.

⁴³⁹ “Pavise with Saint George,” Veste Coburg, Bohemia, before the middle of the 15th century. Denkstein, “Pavises of the Bohemian Type,” 218 (no. 27).

⁴⁴⁰ See: 3D model in: “Bone Saddle, The Wallace Collection (A 408),” Sketchfab, accessed, May 1, 2024, <https://skfb.ly/oJoZD>.

then, willingly unforgotten). The long inscription held by the man on the right replies: “ich var ich har ye lenger ich har me gresser nar / dein ewichleich in sand ierigen nam” (I go, I wait, the longer I wait the more rescue/salvation I have / yours forever in the name of Saint George). The short inscription, held by a man on the left says: “ich frei mich all zeit dein” (I always rejoice you), and the woman on the right replies: “we den k[...] rat” (?).⁴⁴¹

The inscriptions show similarities with two genres of medieval German lyric. Its dialogic form connects it with Middle High German poems written in the form of *Wechsel*, which are characterized by their special, indirect dialogues. Their uniqueness lies in their indirect nature, which allows them to be interpreted as verses referring to each other, rather than direct dialogues. The *Wechsel* was a popular genre in the poems used by Der von Kürenberg, Dietmar von Aist and Albrecht von Johansdorf.⁴⁴² In the poem of Dietmar von Aist the form of *Wechsel* reflects this indirect dialogue form:

*Uf der linden obene dâ sanc ein kleinez vogellîn.
vor dem walde wart ez lût. dô huop sich aber daz herze mîn
an eine stat da'z ê dâ was. ich sach die rôsebluomen stân,
die manent mich der gedanke vil, die ich hin zeiner frouwen hân.*

(High up in the linden tree a little bird was singing,
making its noise at the edge of the forest. Then did my heart go back
again
to where it previously had been. I saw the roses blooming there,
reminding me of the many thoughts which I have of a lady.)

*Ez dunket mich wol tûsent jâr, daz ich an liebes arme lac.
sunder âne mîne schulde vremedet er mich menegen tac.
sît ich bluomen niht ensach noch enhôrte der vogel sanc,
sît was mir mîn vröide kurz und ouch der jâmer alzelanc.*

(It seems to me a thousand years at least since I was lying in the arms
of my beloved.
Now without any fault of mine he has been estranging me from him
for many a day.

⁴⁴¹ Due to the unresolved abbreviation after the k[...], the meaning of the sentence is not clear.

⁴⁴² Marion-Johnson Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson, *Medieval German Literature: A Companion* (New York-London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 235; Albrecht Classen, “Courtly Love Lyric,” in *A Companion to Middle High German Literature to the 14th Century*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill, 2002), 143; Hubert Heinen, “Thwarted Expectations: Medieval and Modern Views of Genre in Germany,” in *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context*, ed. William D. Paden Evanston, Illinois Medieval Studies 7 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 334.

Since then I have not seen the flowers nor heard the song of the
birds; since then my joy has been short-lived, and my grief all too
long.)⁴⁴³

Apart from the similarity with the *Wechsel*, the hesitant character of the inscription (“ich var, ich har...”) connect it to another lyric type: the *Tagelied* (dawn song).⁴⁴⁴ The *Tagelied* describes the couple waking up together in the early morning when they are warned by either birdsong or a guard that it is time to separate.⁴⁴⁵ These two poetic genres usually appear together in medieval German lyric, such as in the poem of Dietmar von Aist.⁴⁴⁶

*‘Slâfst du, friedel ziere?
man weckt uns leider schiere;
ein vogellîn sô wol getân
daz ist der linden an daz zwî gegân.’*

(‘Are you asleep, my lovely love?
They will soon be waking us.
A splendid little bird has hopped
on to the branch of the linden tree.’)

*‘ich was vil sanfte entslâfen:
nu rüefstu, kint, Wâfen.
liep âne leit mac niht sîn.
swaz du gebiutest, daz leiste ich, vriundin mîn.’*

(‘I had fallen asleep very gently,
but now, my child, you have given the call to arms.
Joy without sorrow may not be.
Whatever you command,
my beloved, that I shall do.’)

*Diu frouwe begunde weinen:
‘du rîtest hinnen und lâst mich eine,
wenne wilt du wider her zuo mir?
owê du vüerest mîne vröide sant dir!’*

⁴⁴³ Gibbs and Johnson, *Medieval German Literature*, 242.

⁴⁴⁴ The “ich har” inscription appears in a completely different context on a casket depicting a lady and a monkey, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This inscription is much shorter and concise: the monkey says “ich har” for which the lady’s inscription answers “als narr” (I wait - as a fool). See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures: Monkeys, Figure III.72.

⁴⁴⁵ The *Tagelied* is the only type of love lyric that insinuates the physical union of the lovers. Classen, “Courtly Love Lyric,” 136–7.

⁴⁴⁶ In general, the different types of medieval German lyric usually overlap. Heinen, “Thwarted Expectations: Medieval and Modern Views of Genre in Germany,” 334.

(The lady began to weep:
 ‘You are riding away and leaving me alone.
 When will you come back to me?
 Alas, you take my joy away with you!’)⁴⁴⁷

Another lovers’ exchange is found on the New York-1. On the left side of the saddle, in Field L2 a man says: “wol mich wart” (wait for me). The woman standing in Field L4 with a falcon on her arm, her answer can be read on the banderols running through Fields L5, L6, and L7: “ich hof - der liben somerzeit” (I am hoping - for dear summertime), “lach lib lach” (laugh, (my) love, laugh). On the other side of the saddle, in Field R2, the man says “wol mich nu wart” (just wait for me) – “in dem ars is vincer” (it is black/dark in the arse) – frei dich (rejoice/free yourself). The woman in Field R2 says: “mit gantzem willen ” (with full/whole will).

The “ich hof - der liben somerzeit” reflects the popular theme of medieval German poems where nature is in tune with love, and couples are waiting for the end of winter, for example, in the poem of Dietmar von Aist:

*Ahî nu kumet uns diu zît, der kleinen vogellîne sanc,
 ez grüenet wol diu linde breit, zergangen ist der winter lanc,
 nu siht man bluomen wol getân, an der heide üebent sie ir schîn.
 des wirt vil manic herze frô, des selben troestet sich daz mîn.*

(Ah, now the time is coming for the singing of the little birds.
 The lovely broad linden tree is turning green; the long winter has passed.
 Now we can see the beautiful flowers, showing themselves on the heath.
 Many a heart rejoices at this and my own finds consolation.)⁴⁴⁸

The continuation of the inscription, “lach li[e]b lach” (laugh, my love, laugh – Figure III.102), is also present on the Budapest-2 (Figure III.45),⁴⁴⁹ situated above the scene of *Aristotle and Phyllis*, to emphasize the mockery in the image.⁴⁵⁰ The phrase “lach lieb lach” can also be found in a contemporaneous literary source as well, the *Lobriser Handschrift*, which includes *Buch von den Falken, Habichten, Sperbern,*

⁴⁴⁷ Gibbs and Johnson, *Medieval German Literature*, 243.

⁴⁴⁸ Gibbs and Johnson, *Medieval German Literature*, 241–42.

⁴⁴⁹ “Lieb” can also convey the imperative mood, therefore, the inscription can be translated as a command: “laugh, love, laugh.”

⁴⁵⁰ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Romantic couples - The power of women - Aristotle and Phyllis.

Pferden und Hunden by Heinrich Münsinger.⁴⁵¹ The book is the German translation and variation of chapters 22 and 23 in Albert the Great's zoological work, *De animalibus libri*.⁴⁵² Münsinger's translation in the *Lobriser Handschrift* can be dated to around 1450.⁴⁵³ In the third part of the book, which discusses horses, the scribe concludes with the following line: "...und damit hat das drittail dißs buchs ain end. Got unß sin hayligen frid send. Laus Deo! Lach. Lieb. Lach." (...and with this the third part of the book ends. God send his holy peace to us. Praise to God! Laugh, [my] love, laugh).⁴⁵⁴

Another part of the New York-1's inscription is the "in dem ars is vinster" (it is black/ dark in the arse – Figure III.103). The proverb also appears on the London-3 as "im ars is vinster" (Figure III.104). While on the New York-1, the inscription is part of the already mentioned inscription, the man's response to the woman; on the London-3, it is presented in an isolated position, divided between the back of the two cantles, in Fields L8 and R8: "im ars / is vinster."

This expression can also be found in contemporaneous German literature, specifically in a manuscript of the Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf, now in the Biblioteca Batthyaniana of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia).⁴⁵⁵ The original Latin dialogue, featuring the Old Testament king and a medieval peasant, was probably conceived around the eleventh century, and both its Latin and German vernacular versions were widespread and extremely popular in German lands from the fifteenth century onwards.⁴⁵⁶ Accordingly, the extant manuscripts from that time were all copied in southern Germany

⁴⁵¹ Heinrich, Münsinger: *Buch von den falcken, hebchen, sperbern, pferden und hunden*, Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod.cam.et.oec.qt./oct.52, South Germany, c. 1450, fol. 95r, *Württembergische Landesbibliothek*, accessed, 2024, June 15, <http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/purl/bsz493409173>. Heinrich Meisner, "Die Lobriser Handschrift von Heinrich Münsinger," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 11 (1880): 480–82; Kurt Lindner, ed., *Von Falken, Hunden und Pferden: Deutsche Albertus-Magnus-Übersetzungen aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Jagd 7–8. (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1962), 83.

⁴⁵² Irven M. Resnick, ed., *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 730.

⁴⁵³ See: note 451.

⁴⁵⁴ Lindner, *Von Falken, Hunden und Pferden*, 83.

⁴⁵⁵ *Moralia Germanica*, Gyulafehérvár, Biblioteca Batthyaniana Ms I. 54, Germany, 1469, fol. 59 v–fol 60 r; Róbert Szentiványi, *Catalogus concinnus librorum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Batthyányanae: Albae in Transsilvania* (Szeged: Ablaka, 1947), 35–36; Sabine Griese, *Salomon und Markolf: Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation* (Berlin, Boston: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2013), 283.

⁴⁵⁶ Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury, eds., introduction to *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf: A Dual-Language Edition from Latin and Middle English Printed Editions*, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012), accessed, May 1, 2024, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/bradbury-solomon-and-marcolf-intro>.

and Austria.⁴⁵⁷ The work is composed of five verbal contests, each using different rhetorical forms: genealogies, proverbs, riddles, arguable propositions, and arguments on both sides of an issue. As part of the proverb contest, Solomon quotes a moral statement from the Old Testament Wisdom Books, to which Marcolf adapts Solomon's statement in a vulgar language, mocking it. He degrades Solomon's wisdom by twisting his words to refer to the functions of the lower body.⁴⁵⁸

In the manuscript preserved in Gyulafehérvár, the proverb as the part of the dialogue is as follows.

Solomon: "Ain schöns weib ist ain zier jrm mann" (A beautiful woman is an ornament for her husband.)

Marcolf: "Auff dem Hals ist sy weis als ain tawben, jm ars vinsten als ein scher" (In the neck she is white as a dove, in the asshole⁴⁵⁹ black as a mole.)⁴⁶⁰

The proverb also appears another German source from 1471, in love context, although in a slightly different way. The songbook of Clara Hätzerlin contains the following passage: "mein lieb ist in dem arsz Schwarz / das davor hangt yst zech als harz" (My love's ass/asshole is black, what hangs in front of it is sticky like resin).⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ For the German versions of the dialogue, see Walter Benary ed., *Salomon et Marcolfus: Kritischer Text mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen, Übersicht über die Sprüche, Namen- und Wörterverzeichnis*, Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 8 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1914); Michael Curschmann, "Marcolfus deutsch: Mit einem Faksimile des Prosa-Drucks von M. Ayser (1487)," *Kleinere Erzählformen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger, Fortuna vitrea 8 (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 1993), 151–255; Griese, *Salomon und Markolf: Ein literarischer Komplex*.

⁴⁵⁸ Bradbury and Bradbury, introduction to *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf: A Dual-Language Edition from Latin and Middle English Printed Editions*.

⁴⁵⁹ In the Latin version, Ziolkowski translates the "culo" as "asshole." Solomon: "Mulier pulchra ornamentum est viro suo." Marcolf: "In collo alba est ut columba, in culo nigra est ut talpa." (118a, b) Jan M. Ziolkowski, transl., *Solomon and Marcolf*, Harvard Studies in Medieval Latin 1 (Cambridge, MA: Department of the Classics, Harvard University, 2008), 71.

⁴⁶⁰ Griese, *Salomon und Markolf: Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit; Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation*, 289 (verse 210). In other German versions of the dialogue, this line slightly differs. See: *Priamelsammlungen. Sprüche. Mären. Minnereden u.a.* Hans Rosenplüt, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BSB Cgm 713, Nuremberg/Bamberg, c. 1460-1480, fol. 211v; and the first printed version: "An irem halß ist sy weiß als ein taub. Im arß ist sy ich maub als ein maulwerff" (210) M. Ayser, Nuremberg, 1482 (?) Michael Curschmann, "Marcolfus deutsch: Mit einem Faksimile des Prosa-Drucks von M. Ayser (1487)," in *Wort, Bild, Text: Studien zur Medialität des Literarischen in Hochmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, vols. 1-2, ed. Michael Curschmann (Baden-Baden, 2007), appendix. Ziolkowsky, *Solomon and Marcolf*, 71.

⁴⁶¹ Haltaus, *Liederbuch der Clara Hätzerlin*, LXXVI (no. 88); Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 227.

The analogues of the inscription in these late medieval German literary sources either suggest that they could be the literary source of the inscription or point to a less direct connection, using phrases that were popular and idiomatic at the time. Juxtaposed to the rest of saddles' inscriptions and illustrations the vulgarity of the proverb seems strange. For example, on the London-3, the other parts of the inscription pray to God and Saint George for success. Also, on the New York-1, lovers wait for each other and for the summertime. Neither of these contexts are reasonable places for a vulgar proverb about the darkness in arses. However, this passage underpins that this proverb appears in other strongly vulgar and erotic context as well.⁴⁶²

The peculiar coexistence of obscenity and courtly love has already been discussed in literature, such as by Huizinga.⁴⁶³ As Jürgen Wurst claims, we do not know what medieval women and men thought when they saw the—sometimes vulgar—motifs on secular objects.⁴⁶⁴ The ambiguous character of these literary examples, as well as the inscriptions of the saddles, may seem out of place to us, but their medieval audience was probably well-acquainted with them and their meaning.⁴⁶⁵

Analogues can be found for another detail of the inscription of the New York-1: the “mit ganzem willen” on a banderol in Field R1. The phrase also appears under the lid of an Upper Rhenish Casket, from the first quarter of the fifteenth century (Figure III.105). On this, a man and woman can be seen in conversation, their words are carved on the inscription rolls wrapped around them with the following inscription:

Man: “mit ganzē willē gar eigē dī mī aller liebsts fr^owli dez se hin die trūve min.” (With whole will, completely my own, my most beloved lady, this is my fidelity.)

Woman: “dine wort sīnt zemaal gūt stūnde dir ouch also hertz syne vnd ôch mūt.” (Your words are entirely good; may heart and courage also be yours.)⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² Schröder interprets the term “*im ars is vinster*” on a different level: according to her, it symbolizes the inner shadows of the human psyche. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 46.

⁴⁶³ See: Chapter 4, (The Forms of Love), in: Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 126–56.

⁴⁶⁴ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 11.

⁴⁶⁵ Medieval forms of popular humor, such as the carnivalesque, parody, and blasphemy, are discussed in detail in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, with an emphasis on Rabelais's style and vision of the world, as well as the social and philosophical significance of laughter in the Renaissance. See: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

⁴⁶⁶ Kohlhaussen, *Minnekästchen im Mittelalter*, 84 (no. 58).

The same proverb appears in the verse of the *Kloster der Minne* as well: “Mit gantzem willen wol gan ob du stätti trii wilt han.”⁴⁶⁷ (With whole will I will gladly go, if you wish to have constant loyalty).

On the Braunschweig-1, the inscription speaks about fidelity: “treu yst selt[en] in der weld” (fidelity is rare in the world). Couples promising fidelity also appear on the different sides of a *Minnekästchen*, where the man states, “uf din tru bu ich al stund” (I rely always on your loyalty), to which the woman replies, “din tru lob ich nu” (your loyalty I now praise - Figure III.70). A similar dialogue about fidelity appears on a tapestry from Strasbourg from around 1490–1500, depicting a romantic couple in a floral environment (Figure III.106).

Man: “ich wyl mit üch in truwe.” (I wish to be faithful to you.)

Woman: “das sol úch niemer rúwen.” (You shall never regret it.)⁴⁶⁸

As Jürgen Wurst points out, at the end of the fifteenth century, fidelity became important in man-woman relationships, not only as a moral virtue, but also because it confirmed the marital alliance that provided the economic survival of the family.⁴⁶⁹ The earlier traditions which expressed the love between men and women—but exclusively outside of marriage—were transformed into marital love poems between spouses.⁴⁷⁰ One of the pioneers of this new tendency was Oswald von Wolkenstein in whose work the vestiges of the motifs of the traditional love lyric can be recognized but he dedicated his poems primarily to his wife.⁴⁷¹

III.4.3. Mottos

There are also other, typically short inscriptions that appear on bone saddles. The recurring “gedenkch und halt” (remember and wait/stop) on the Boston-1, and the

⁴⁶⁷ Joseph Maria Christoph Freiherr von Lassberg, ed., *Lieder-Saal: Sammlung altdeutscher Gedichte*, vol. 2 (1968), 215 (207).

⁴⁶⁸ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 268–69.

⁴⁶⁹ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 119–20.

⁴⁷⁰ Classen, “Courtly Love Lyric,” 118.

⁴⁷¹ Albrecht Classen, “Love and Marriage in Late Medieval Verse: Oswald von Wolkenstein, Thomas Hoccleve and Michel Beheim,” *Studia Neophilologica* 62, no. 2 (1990): 164–65

inscription on the Firenze-2 (“aspeto tempo / amor / laus / deo” – I await time / love / praise / to God), as well as those on the Modena-1 (“deus fortitudo mea / deus adiutor” – God is my strength / God is my helper).⁴⁷² Such short sentences can be interpreted as mottoes.

Of these mottoes, there is only one which can be dedicated to a certain person. On the Modena-1, the “deus adiutor” accompanies the figure of Saint George on the right rear cantle. The “deus fortitudo mea” is read in its entirety on the left rear cantle, above the figure of Hercules fighting the lion,⁴⁷³ and it appears in abbreviated form on both sides of the saddle (“deus forti, deus fortitu” - Figure III.107). The “deus fortitudo mea” also appears on the reverse side of the coin of Ercole I d’Este, where it encircles the figure of Saint George (Figure III.108).⁴⁷⁴ The personal motto, along with the coat of arms of the Este family appearing on the first cantle of the saddle, indicates that the saddle was made for Ercole I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara (1471–1505).⁴⁷⁵

III.4.4. Conclusion

The inscriptions on the bone saddles examined in this chapter provide a representative sample that highlights their diverse types and meanings. Notably, some inscriptions reflect Middle High German literature, indicating the cultural and literary influences of the period. The romantic inscriptions are particularly significant as they often complement and enhance the love-themed iconography on the saddles. Additionally, these inscriptions shed light on the literary context of this transitional period, emphasizing emerging themes of fidelity and marriage.

The recurrence of phrases such as “im ars is vinsten,” “lach li[e]b lach,” and “mit ganzem willen” across various genres suggests that these were commonly used proverbs in the early fifteenth century. This repetition illustrates the versatility of these proverbs, demonstrating that they fit well in different contexts. Furthermore, the presence of vulgar texts on the saddles reflects the popular idioms of the time. Lastly, the mottos likely served to personalize the saddles for their original owners.

⁴⁷² The expression “aspeto tempo” appears in one of Dante’s *Canzone* as well: “Aspetto tempo che più ragion prenda; / Purché la vita tanto si difenda.” (Dante Alighieri, *Canzone XIV*). *Opere Poetiche* 1823, 152. I am grateful to Patrik Pastrnak for drawing my attention to this excerpt from the verse.

⁴⁷³ See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings? III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Lions.

⁴⁷⁴ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 273. For the interpretation of Saint George as a mirror for the princes of Este, see note 618.

⁴⁷⁵ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms; IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

III.5. Initials

In total, seven bone saddles are adorned with initials, which appear in various ways on the surfaces of the saddles: in some cases, only a single letter is visible, while in others, they are repeated multiple times, filling the entire surface of the saddles (Table XII). In historiography, these initials were often interpreted as references to former owners of the bone saddles.

On the the front of the pommel of the Vienna-2, under the volute a single *e* letter can be seen (Figure III.109). Because next to it, on the inner side of the left pommel, the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire is visible, Schlosser attributed the saddle to Wenceslas IV, and interpreted the *e* as it refers to his second wife, Euphemia-Žophie.⁴⁷⁶

The *v*, *e*, and *b* initials appearing on the New York-4 has been also attributed to Wenceslas and his wife in historiography (Figure III.110). Accordingly, the *v* and *e* initials refer to their marriage in 1389, and *b* refers to the Bavarian lands, which were the part of the bride's dowry.⁴⁷⁷ Similar double initials decorate the Bible of Wenceslas (Figure III.111). Throughout the whole manuscript, a *w* and *e* embellish the margin, which Schlosser identified as also standing for Wenceslas and Euphemia-Žophie.⁴⁷⁸ This identification was disputed by Hana Hlaváčková who suggests that the initials do not necessarily stand for the royal couple.⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, even if they do, the simple *v* on the saddles is slightly different, than the *w* of the Bible.

The initials of the Braunschweig-1 also pose questions. There are several *ms* or *ws* on the surface, and a *v* on the left side in the hand of a woman, while on the two cantles the *m/w* intertwists with an *h/n/u* (Figure III.112). Hermann Riegel read these combined letters as an *M* and *II*, and identified it as it signifies Magnus II, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg who could be the owner of the saddle.⁴⁸⁰ This assumption was questioned already by Schlosser, who pointed out that the other initial cannot refer to a *II*, and the

⁴⁷⁶ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 263. See: IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁴⁷⁷ Ramírez-Weaver, "No 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV", 236; "Saddle (selle); so-called Trivulzio saddle," *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/9554ADDE_7bcef3cf.html.

⁴⁷⁸ Julius von Schlosser, *Die Bilderhandschriften Königs Wenzel I*, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 14 (1893): 214–51, 270–308, 291–95.

⁴⁷⁹ Hlaváčková, "Courtly Body in the Bible of Wenceslas IV," 375.

⁴⁸⁰ Herman Riegel, *Die Sammlung mittelalterlicher und verwandter Gegenstände* (Braunschweig: G. Westerman, 1879), 98-100.

duke died much before the saddle was probably made. However, he did not exclude the possibility that the initials refer to him.⁴⁸¹

Similar intertwining initials decorate other artworks related to Jadwiga, Queen of Poland. There are two intertwining *ms* on her crystal vessel (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden), as well as on the Sankt Florian Psalter where the double initials appear three times (Figure III.113).⁴⁸² According to Aleksander Brückner, since these *ms* adorn other objects related to Jadwiga, and an *m* also decorates the wall of a hall in the Wawel of Cracow, it can be interpreted as her personal, devotional motto.⁴⁸³ However it does not necessarily mean that it refers to her. According to Brückner, these mottos were fashionable in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.⁴⁸⁴ Jadwiga intertwining alphabets were originally read as an interwoven minuscule of two minuscule of two *m*, according to a more recent opinion: *u-i* or *v-j*.⁴⁸⁵

Another detail worth mentioning regarding Braunschweig-1 is that the letters are inscribed within a circular, sun-like motif featuring dense rays. Similarly, the initials of Florence-1 are also within this motif (Figure III.114). This design closely resembles a Bohemian *pavise* adorned with the arms of Zwickau from the late fifteenth century (Figure III.115).

On the Vienna-1, on the rear forks of both sides a *u* or *v* can be seen with a crown top of it (Figure III.116). Oskar Pausch claims that these letters match the letters of the Ladislaus Vocabulary (Figure III.117).⁴⁸⁶ In historiography, this letter was interpreted as an initial to Ladislaus Posthumus (the initial of Vladislaus) and thus as the possible owner of the saddle.⁴⁸⁷ A crowned *U* can be seen in the above mentioned Bohemian *pavise*

⁴⁸¹ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 267.

⁴⁸² Verö, "4.70. Beinsattel," 362.

⁴⁸³ Aleksander Brückner, review of *Psalterz floriański, łacińsko-polsko-niemiecki. Rękopis Biblioteki Narodowej w Warszawie*, edited by Ryszard Ganszyniec, Witold Taszycki, Stefan Kubica, and Ludwika Bernackiego (Ossolineum: Lwów, 1939), *Pamiętnik Literacki: Czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej* 35, no. 1/4 (1938). For the different interpretations of the motto, see Brückner, review of *Psalterz floriański*; as well as Krzysztof Ożóg, "The Intellectual Circles in Cracow at the Turn of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and the Issue of the Creation of the Sankt Florian Psalter," *Polish Libraries* 4 (2016), 166–85.

⁴⁸⁴ Ożóg, "The Intellectual Circles in Cracow."

⁴⁸⁵ Tarcsey, "Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels," 36. See: IV.1.2. Place and time of production; IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁴⁸⁶ Oskar Pausch and Alois Haidinger, *Imperator, Kaiser, Ceyesars: Die dreisprachigen Vokabulare für Ladislaus Postumus und Maximilian I.* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 38.

⁴⁸⁷ Bruno Thomas, "Die Polonica der Wiener Waffensammlung," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 70 (1971): 51; Bruno Thomas and Ortwin Gamber, *Katalog der Leibbrüstammer*, pt. 1, *Der Zeitraum von 500 bis 1530* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1976), 70–71; Georg Johannes

(Figure III.114). Similar crowned letters appear on other types of artworks as well. On a *pavise* from the late fifteenth century, a crowned *M* is depicted,⁴⁸⁸ on the sides of a fifteenth-century casket a crowned *e* and *b* minuscule can be seen.⁴⁸⁹ A similar crowned minuscule appears even on a fragment of a window arch from Bosnia.⁴⁹⁰ However, the meaning of these crowned letters is not known.

Recurring *m* and *n* letters can be read in Field L2 and R2 of the Glasgow-1 as well as on the L-R1 and upper part of L-R4. It also appears on the fragments of the Vienna-fr-1. These *ms* appear frequently on ceremonial arrowheads and *pavises* as well.⁴⁹¹ According to Helmut Nickel, the *ms* can be interpreted as invocations for Mary.⁴⁹²

Double initials also decorate marriage caskets, for example, *e* and *i* minuscules can be seen inside the lid of the Alsatian casket from Cologne. These initials could be identified as the initials of the married couple.⁴⁹³

As shown above, several proposals have been put forward in the course of research, associating the initials on the bone saddles with specific individuals, and indeed, scholars have often linked the bone saddles to Central European monarchs—a subject I will revisit in Part IV of the dissertation.⁴⁹⁴ However, these associations are often contradictory and difficult to prove. Although the initials could indeed refer to couples or individuals, they could also serve as abbreviations for devotional mottos. Accepting this line of reasoning, they can be considered as abbreviations with an apotropaic role similar to prayers to Saint George, or Mary, acting as protectors. Similarly to the emblems of the saddles, although

Kugler, Wilfried Seipel, and Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, *Kaiser Ferdinand I. 1503-1564: Das Werden Der Habsburgermonarchie: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 15. April Bis 31. August 2003* (Vienna, Milan: Kunsthistorisches Museum; Skira, 2003), 331, no. II. 8; Verő, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” 278. See: IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁴⁸⁸ “Setzartsche (Pavese), Schildmotiv: gekröntes ‘M’ (Matthias Corvinus?),” c. 1485, *Wienmuseum - Online Sammlung*, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/objekt/575317-setzartsche-pavese-schildmotiv-gekroentes-m-matthias-corvinus/>.

⁴⁸⁹ *Minnekästchen*, München, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 15th century, right and left narrow sides. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” Plates LXXII, LXXIII.

⁴⁹⁰ Lidija Fekeža, Margita Gavrilović, and Pál Lövei, “5.12. Bogenfragment eines Fensterrahmens,” in: *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 449.

⁴⁹¹ Helmut Nickel, “Ceremonial Arrowheads from Bohemia,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 1 (1968): 66–67, 71.

⁴⁹² Helmut Nickel, “Ceremonial Arrowheads from Bohemia.” 75; Tarcsay, “Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels,” 36. See: III.3.1. Emblems.

⁴⁹³ *Minnekästchen*, Cologne, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Alsace (?), second half of the 15th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 223–24; Kohlhaussen, *Minnekästchen im Mittelalter*, 85 (no. 61), Plate 47. See: notes 373, 432, 591.

⁴⁹⁴ See: IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

their meaning and role may be questionable to us today, they were undoubtedly clear to their medieval owners.

III.6. Program of the carvings

Having examined the diverse types of carvings on the bone saddles, including various iconographic motifs, inscriptions, and initials, the question arises whether these carvings are merely arbitrary decorations or if they form a structured program. In this final chapter of the art historical analysis, I aim to address this question. Additionally, I will focus on the arrangement of the carvings, seeking to identify any patterns in the placement of motifs on different parts of the bone saddles. Lastly, I will enumerate the motifs that can be considered part of a dominant iconographic program and identify the saddles where this program is evident.

III.6.1. Placing and structure of the motifs

Earlier scholarship suggested that the scenes adorning the saddles were not elements constituting a unique iconographical program, but a collection of disparate motifs.⁴⁹⁵ At a glance, the carvings, including both the iconographical motifs and the inscriptions, indeed seem arbitrary, even chaotic. In some cases, it is more or less visible which figures are in contact with one another. In other instances, it is not that obvious. For example, as shown above, in the chapter discussing Saint George, it is not always obvious whether the crowned maiden, can be identified with the princess of the legend, or it is a completely separate motif.⁴⁹⁶

As opposed to the seemingly arbitrary composition of the bone saddles, comparing the placement of the motifs on the bone saddles, some structural similarities can be found between the arrangement of the carvings. Moreover, in some cases, even a hierarchic pattern can be detected, similarly to illuminated manuscripts: there are main areas for the main compositions as well as marginal fields for the more marginal ones. In many instances, the figures are arranged according to this layout. The main fields for larger compositions are the L-R4, L-R5, L-R6, and L-R7, often dominated by images of

⁴⁹⁵ Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," 274; Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters," 283-84.

⁴⁹⁶ See: III.2.1. Saint George and the dragon - Saint George on foot.

romantic couples.⁴⁹⁷ Saint George appears in seven cases in Field L4.⁴⁹⁸ The couples usually appear in Fields L-R2, L-R5 and L-R6. (Figure III.118). Less obvious is the case where the man and woman of the couple appears in different fields of the saddles. In some instances, they are divided on either side of the saddle, such as in the Bologna-1, London-2, New York-3, and Unknown Location-1 (Figure III.119). These saddles feature one or at most two lovers, most often in the Fields L-R4. There are indications that they form a pair, for example, their gestures suggest some kind of relationship between them, which is complemented by their dialogue on banderols, as in the case of the London-2 and the New York-3. Generally, women appear on the left and men on the right.

The image of Saint George and the princess follows the same pattern as the romantic couples on the London-1. Similarly to the couples separated between either side of the saddles, Saint George appears in courtly attire on one side, and a courtly lady on the other side, which can thus also be interpreted as the figure of the princess.

In comparison with other types of secular objects, this visual separation of couples cannot be found elsewhere. It is more typical that couples are depicted on the same or neighboring fields—for example on caskets (Figure III.70). Therefore, it seems that it is a unique practice found only on bone saddle carvings, probably developed on account of the particular shape of the saddles.

On the rest of the bone saddles, lovers can be seen in the same field as well as separated to the two sides of the saddle.⁴⁹⁹ In these cases, they can appear in almost any field and their arrangement appears less structured and more accidental. They are most typically shown in the same fields as the first two couple types (Fields L-R2, L-R4, L-R5, L-R6).

As opposed to the main motifs, ornamental representations, drolleries, fantastic creatures, bathing nudes etc. are often, but not exclusively, placed on the marginal fields: most typically in the Fields L-R1, L-R2, L-R3, L-R8, but they also appear in narrow and tiny fields. As already discussed in Part III, because of their placement in less important fields, they can also be interpreted as solely decorative elements similarly to manuscript

⁴⁹⁷ These fields, in some cases, are divided into additional fields, especially L-R7, for example: Budapest-1, Florence-1, Vienna-2,

⁴⁹⁸ Berlin-1; Boston-1; Budapest-1; Budapest-2; Budapest-3; Florence-1; London-1. See: III.2.1. Saint George and the dragon.

⁴⁹⁹ With the exception of the Braunschweig-1, where the women appear on the Fields L-R4, while the men in the L-R7.

margins or the hidden carvings of misericords.⁵⁰⁰ They may have served simply to fill these areas to avoid the horror vacui. However, in some instances, their placement has a symbolic meaning: the angels, for example, appear in different marginal fields, but most typically in L-R1 (Figure III.56).⁵⁰¹ This can be explained by the fact that the field L-R1 is the highest field of the bone saddles, and therefore it is also the highest place in hierarchy as celestial territory. Another example for this kind of hierarchic structure is the baggy hand reaching down from the clouds, which is also typically placed in Fields L-R2.⁵⁰²

Another interesting feature in the hierarchy and placement of the motifs is the “im ars is vinstre” proverb in Fields L8 and R8 on the London-3, at the rear of the saddle’s cantles. If anyone read these words while someone was riding in the saddle, the only thing they could see above the inscription must have been the backside of the rider.⁵⁰³

To conclude, of the main motifs, such as Saint George and the couples, are mostly arranged in the main fields, while less visible parts of the saddles are decorated by more marginal subjects. This pattern, as summarized in a stylized plan of the placement of the most typical motifs (Figure III.120), suggests the use of a system of patterns or rules in the carving of these bone saddles. However, this kind of composition does not apply to all of the bone saddles. For example, on the Budapest-2, couples appear in almost all fields, and the Vienna-1, Florence-2, and Modena-1 are different in shape.

III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles

Not only the arrangement and placement of the motifs seem arbitrary and chaotic, but also the iconographical program. As discussed above, many typical motifs on bone saddles offer multiple possibilities for interpretation. In some instances, these motifs can be explained within the context of other depictions. However, in other cases, they seem independent of the other carvings and cannot be clearly interpreted, appearing merely as decorative, space-filling elements. Despite this, an analysis of the different motifs reveals

⁵⁰⁰ See: III.2.5. Ornamental and other motifs.

⁵⁰¹ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures – Angels.

⁵⁰² See: III.2.6. Ornamental and other motifs - “Cloud” and hand.

⁵⁰³ Assuming, of course, that nothing covered the inscription, such as the rider’s cloak. See: IV.3.1. Ridden saddles?

a predominant theme: most motifs have some connection to love. Among these, the most obvious are the depictions of romantic couples, which appear on most of the bone saddles, often accompanied by love-related inscriptions.⁵⁰⁴ Additionally, many other motifs suggest love, sexual, and wedding symbolism.

In this chapter, I approach the carvings from this perspective, reviewing the love-related motifs, and other references to love, sexuality, and marriage. I will also introduce other motifs that have not been previously examined but may also have similar interpretations. The aim of this study is to determine whether a unified love-related program can be identified on the bone saddles.

Love, sexual and wedding symbols

The most obvious love-related content appears in connection with the images of couples, which can be seen in almost all the bone saddles. Of the couples, one of the most obvious expression of love is embracing, e.g. on the Modena-1 and New York-4 (Figures III.38–39), and the heart offering in Field R6 of the New York-4, as well as on the front view of the pommel and the right rear fork of the Florence-2 (Figure III.40). Another obvious act of love is the offering of engagement or wedding ring, which appear on two bone saddles (Figures III.121–122). In Field L6 of the New York-2, the woman offers a ring to the man in the corresponding R6 field. In the field R2 on the Vienna-2, it is an angel who bears the ring. Apart from these, the *dextrarum iunctio*, the visual representation of marriage vow, is found on the Budapest-3 and the New York-4, as discussed in Part III above (Figures III.42–43).⁵⁰⁵

The couples are often accompanied by love-related inscriptions and dialogues. In some cases, the presence of double initials may be interpreted as references to couples/spouses.

The forget-me-not flower is also a common love symbol, which appears on seven saddles (Figure III.123). On the carvings, the men or women typically holds a single flower or a blooming branch. Forget-me-nots, which have similar names in European languages, signify betrothals in fifteenth-century portraits, such as in the picture of a Bridal Couple by a Swabian master from around 1470, where the couple are holding this

⁵⁰⁴ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Romantic couples; III.4.2, III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs.

⁵⁰⁵ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures -Romantic couples – Dextrarum iunctio.

flower and the man wears it in his hair (Figure III.124)⁵⁰⁶ Forget-me-nots also appear on marriage caskets such as on a *Minnekästchen* from Stuttgart.⁵⁰⁷

There are other motifs as well, which have less explicit and more hidden love, erotic, or marriage symbolism. Some of these motifs were discussed in Part III.⁵⁰⁸ These include the traditional iconographic animals of the iconography of courtly love, the falcon and unicorn,⁵⁰⁹ the bathing nudes which can be interpreted as fertility symbols,⁵¹⁰ the wild men as a symbol of marriage values in the late Middle Ages,⁵¹¹ the dog as symbol of fidelity,⁵¹² and the monkey as an erotic symbol.⁵¹³

Another less obvious love-related symbol is the flower wreath and crown. On the front left pommel plate of the Vienna-1, a woman is holding a floral wreath of forget-me-nots, on the Modena-1, a courtly lady is crowing the man with the flower wreath (Figures III.125–126). The image of a woman in the castle reaching downwards towards the man with the flower wreath can be seen in the Codex Manesse and was also popular in fourteenth-century Parisian ivory carvings.⁵¹⁴ The motif of women offering a floral wreath to the man, who is usually kneeling, is interpreted in medieval art as a promise of marriage or as an indication of permission for defloration.⁵¹⁵

A floral wreath signifies the betrothed status of Ladislaus Posthumus on his betrothal picture with Magdalena of Valois, from c. 1457. In the picture, the fiancée is holding a sprig of cloves—probably of a similar symbolism as the forget-me-nots (Figure III.127). Ladislaus also wears a floral wreath on his individual portrait, which can also symbolize that he is engaged.⁵¹⁶

Apart from being a love and engagement symbol, the floral wreath had other meaning as well. The term “wreath money” (*Kranzgeld*) was in use until the middle of the twentieth century in German legal language. Until the 1960s, the German Civil Code

⁵⁰⁶ Celia Fischer, “Flowers and Plants, the Living Iconography,” in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 462. For more examples of forget-me-nots see: Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 217–19.

⁵⁰⁷ *Minnekästchen*, Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum, South Germany (?), early 15th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 262–64, 414, Plate XXXVII.

⁵⁰⁸ See: III. Motifs.

⁵⁰⁹ See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures – Falcons, - Unicorns.

⁵¹⁰ See: III.2.3. Nudes - Bathing nudes.

⁵¹¹ See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Wild men.

⁵¹² See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Dogs.

⁵¹³ See: III.2.4. Animals, beasts and fantastic creatures - Monkeys.

⁵¹⁴ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 258–59.

⁵¹⁵ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 258.

⁵¹⁶ Júlia Papp, “A mohácsi csata és II. Lajos a 16–19. századi képzőművészetben [The Battle of Mohács and Louis II in 16th–19th Century Art]” (PhD diss., Hungarian Academy of Science, 2022), 267.

prescribed that a man who did not enter into marriage despite being engaged, but to whom the woman had granted sexual intercourse with a view to this marriage, had to pay the wreath money for the loss of her virginity (§1300).⁵¹⁷

Crowned figures also recur on bone saddles as well— although some of them can be identified as the princess figures of the Saint George iconography.⁵¹⁸ On the Berlin-1 and Florence-1, crowned youths appears three times (Figure III.128).⁵¹⁹ Crowned couples appear in many representations of late medieval weddings. In a Siennese fresco by Ambrogio Lorezetti of the Palazzo Pubblico, depicting a wedding procession, a bride is shown wearing a crown, a symbol of purity. According to fourteenth-century Siennese law, only brides were allowed to wear a crown in the wedding procession (Figure III.129).⁵²⁰ In the Middle Ages, veiling or crowning the couple together is one of the symbols of finalizing their marital union.⁵²¹ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, crowns were also an important part of the bride's attire in Austrian regions, evoking the crowns in depiction of saints and the Virgin Mary.⁵²²

Although at a glance, these motifs do not seem to form a unified program on the bone saddles, the presence of these different elements with similar meaning can suggest a deliberate planning. There are fifteen bone saddles on which dominant love-related iconography can be identified (Table XIII). Of these fifteen pieces, there are some where the dominant iconographical program is the most obvious, for example, the Budapest-2, which is almost entirely covered with depictions of different kinds of couples. Apart from these, the four nudes in Fields L-R2 can be interpreted as fertility symbols. The falcons, symbols of traditional courtly love iconography, are clearly parts of love-related scenes (Fields L-R5). In Field L5, a man is handing a forget-me-not to his lady, who is holding the hand of a monkey which can be interpreted as an erotic symbol. There are also love related inscriptions, for instance, above the scene of Aristotle and Phyllis in Field R6, the

⁵¹⁷ Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 260.

⁵¹⁸ See: III.2.1. Saint George and the dragon.

⁵¹⁹ According to the verbal opinion given in 2022 by Antje Nützmann, restorer of wooden objects at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, the crowned lady in field R7 of the Berlin-1 is not original but the result of an earlier restoration. Therefore, only the two other crowned figures on this saddle should be taken into consideration.

⁵²⁰ Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," 21. See: IV.2.2. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval marriages - The bridal procession.

⁵²¹ John K. Leonard, "Rites of Marriage in the Western Middle Ages," in *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, ed. Lizette Larson-Miller (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 166.

⁵²² Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," 21.

inscription reads “lach lieb lach,” and the couple in Field L6 hold a scroll saying “mit lieb.”

The majority of the carvings on the Budapest-3 are also love-related. There are two couples: one is the *dextrarum iunctio* of the sitting couple in Field R7, the other is a couple in conversation in Field L5. Apart from these, several motifs can be interpreted as love symbols, such as the traditional courtly love symbols, the falcon and unicorn. Additionally, two appearances of wild men can be interpreted as the symbol of marital values. The crowned lady in Field R4, apart from the interpretation as the princess of the Saint George legend, may also refer to a bride wearing a crown in another level of interpretation.

The Florence-1 has the most dominant, and at the same time most diverse, love-related motifs. The figures in Fields L3 and R4 can be interpreted as a romantic couple. Apart from them, other couples are separated into Fields L-R6 and L-R2. In these, three figures are holding forget-me-nots in their hands or handing them to their beloved. Besides the princess in Field R4, the figures of L-R2 also wear crowns. There is also a falcon held by a falconer, representing traditional courtly love iconography. Moreover, the saddle’s carvings are decorated with love-related inscriptions. In Field L6 the man says “allain mein ader las gar sein” (Be only mine or leave) and in Field R6 the lady replies “ich han nicht lieberr wen dich” (I do not love anyone more than you). Finally, the two sides of the saddle are decorated with *a* and *b* initials in Fields L-R7, which can be interpreted as a reference to the couple.

On some examples, however, the identification of love-dominated iconography is not that obvious. On the Vienna-2, the presence of the following motifs suggests a love-related program: couples offering each other’s gifts in Fields L8 and R8, a lady holding a crown in Field R2, and an angel holding a ring beneath her. The symbol of courtly love, the unicorn, appears in Field L7. Bathing nudes in the same field can be interpreted as fertility or erotic symbols, the monkeys in the same field can also have erotic connotation. Apart from these, wild men appear in Fields L-R7. However, this saddle also features other figures that may have different explanations or they serve only as decorative elements, such as the lion and dog scene in Field L7, and the pelican in Field R7.

Understanding that many of the the bone saddles feature a single dominant subject which determines the arrangement of the motifs challenges earlier assumptions in historiography, which regarded the bone saddle carvings as arbitrary. The hierarchy and patterns which organize the motifs on the saddles also bear out this idea. The other

dominant motif, Saint George slaying the dragon,⁵²³ does not contradict the single subject theory: in some cases, Saint George and the princess are integrated into the prevailing romantic context. At the same time, there are also motifs that can only be interpreted as decorative space-fillers. The presence of the similar, mainly love related, motifs, however, suggest that some of the bone saddles' have a central iconographical program.

III.6.3. Conclusion

This chapter examined whether the bone saddles followed a conscious iconographical program and arrangement. There are altogether fifteen bone saddles on which love is the dominant theme. In other examples there are no love-related symbols at all, for example, the ornamental Berlin-2 and Glasgow-1, and the London-3. The Stockholm-1 and Stockholm-2 also do not bear any love related content.⁵²⁴ The rest of the cases, however, feature love-related content to varying extents.

The complex love iconography of the bone saddles is intriguing not only because of the unusual medium, but because it contains both traditional iconographical motifs and new ideas. Such traditional elements include motifs of courtly love, such as the falcon and the unicorn, which were popular and widespread in the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages. At the same time, it also contains symbols which acquired new meanings in the late Middle Ages, for example, the wild men, which came to represent family unity and marital fidelity. Jürgen Wurst writes in connection with the marriage chests that this transitionality is due to the adoption of these motifs by the emerging middle class whereby old motifs were modified and new ones were created.⁵²⁵ As shown through examples above, the transitional character of this period is captured by the motifs and inscriptions on the saddles as well.

⁵²³ See: IV.2. Interpretation of Saint George on bone saddles in the context of his cult in fifteenth-century Central Europe.

⁵²⁴ On the Berlin-2 and Glasgow-1 there are only ornamental decorations, the carvings of the Florence-3 are largely fragmented, and the Chicago-1 is not carved at all.

⁵²⁵ Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love," 97.

IV. BONE SADDLES IN CULTURAL HISTORY

The purpose of this section is to discuss the original cultural context of late medieval bone saddles. First, I address the historical background, revisiting the well-known theory that connects the bone saddles to Emperor Sigismund. Drawing on previous observations from earlier chapters, I specify the geographical and chronological context of these bone saddles. Additionally, I discuss how the recent discovery of two fragments in Vienna and Tata nuances our understanding of this object group. I also address the issue of the original owners of the bone saddles.

In the second subchapter, I return to the question of Saint George and explore his representations on bone saddles in connection with his late medieval cult.

Finally, I discuss the original use and function of the bone saddles, examine their practical usability and explore their potential relevance to late medieval wedding ceremonies.

IV. 1. Bone saddles in a late medieval context

Bone saddles played a prominent role in the large-scale exhibition titled *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator*, organized in Budapest and Luxembourg in 2006. Seven pieces were exhibited in Budapest and five in Luxembourg.⁵²⁶ The exhibition highlighted the close connection between bone saddles and the reign of Sigismund; in fact, these objects are known in Hungarian academic circles as the “bone saddles from the Sigismund era.”⁵²⁷ Accordingly, Sigismund’s reign and the international Gothic was identified as the time of origin of the bone saddles, and the variety of their styles was attributed to the increased mobility of artists at that time.⁵²⁸ Throughout his reign, the emperor traveled through Europe multiple times, which created opportunities for the dissemination of these artistic elements.⁵²⁹ During his travels, the emperor hired different masters, e.g. to participate in the extension of the Castle of Buda.⁵³⁰ Therefore,

⁵²⁶ See: I.1. Introduction, note 1; Figure I.1.

⁵²⁷ See: I.2.2. Bone Saddles and Sigismund: Scholarship in the twentieth century.

⁵²⁸ Roland Recht, “Einleitung,” in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 1–4.

⁵²⁹ For his travel routes, see: Map 5 (Sigismunds Reisen) and Map 6 (Sigismunds Romzug), in: *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 54–55.

⁵³⁰ Recht, “Einleitung,” 2.

Sigismund's travels may have fostered the dissemination of artistic objects across Central and Western Europe, and even Northern Europe.

IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon

The assumed connection between the bone saddles and the court of Emperor Sigismund is based on the symbol of the Order of the Dragon: a dragon with its tail curving around its neck, which appears on the left cantle of the Budapest-3 (Figure III.90). Drawing on the presence of this emblem, some scholars attempted to identify the owner of the saddle. In 1910, Géza Nagy proposed that the saddle was a gift from Sigismund to Vlad Dracul, Voivode of Wallachia, in 1431, when he was accepted among the members of the order.⁵³¹ According to the inventory of the Jankovich Collection, the gift was donated by Sigismund after the Battle of Nikopol.⁵³²

Following Nagy's suggestion, bone saddles came to be interpreted as gifts for the members of the order, founded by Sigismund in 1408.⁵³³ Stephen V. Grancsay, who was Curator of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art between 1929–1964, claims that the Budapest-1, -2, and -3 were made for the Order of the Dragon, and cites a letter written by Hungarian art historian Jolán Balogh in 1941.⁵³⁴ As István Genthon points out in his paper (published posthumously in 1970),⁵³⁵ Nagy's hypothesis was also accepted by Kornél Divald,⁵³⁶ and then taken at face value by Henrik Horváth.⁵³⁷ János Kalmár created an even more fantastical story about the order and the bone saddles; he

⁵³¹ Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban: Első közlemény," 232.

⁵³² Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban: Első közlemény," 226, *Inv. Arm.*, 158. sz.: „Ephipium osseum ebore exornatum, atque multo encausto viridi et ceruleo profundioribus in locis tinctum, latere sinistro ceteras inter hominum figuras pugilem equitem cum dracone pugnantes, dextro vero latere reginam quandam elegantis formae per leonem defensam exhibet. Frons ephipii parte ab una turritam civitatem, altera vero aquilam expansis alis virgini invigilantem refert; pars posterior sinistro latere leonem rugientem, dextro griphum alatum exhibet. Opus hoc mirae vetustatis ex cimeliis archiepiscopalis ecclesiae Bukarestensis per Agentem viennensem nationis Valachiae, Josephum Salad, a 500-is florenis ea cum declaratione obtentum, quod occasione cladis Nicopolitanae una cum sonipede imperatoris et regis Hungariae Sigismundi a Valachis obtentum, et eidem ecclesiae dono datum fuerit, eotum temporis auro copioso vestitum, quod tamen actu deest. Inscriptionem habet:
»da pacem Domine« litteris gothicis maioribus, tempore huius imperatoris in diplomatibus usitatis.” Árpád Mikó, ed., *Jankovich Miklós (1772–1846) gyűjteményei* [The Collections of Miklós Jankovich] (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2002), 206.

⁵³³ Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban: Első közlemény," 232; Divald, *A Magyar iparművészet története*, 47–48; Grancsay, "A Medieval Sculptured Saddle," 76.

⁵³⁴ Grancsay, "A Medieval Sculptured Saddle," 76.

⁵³⁵ Genthon, "Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero," 8.

⁵³⁶ Divald, *A Magyar iparművészet története* 47–48.

⁵³⁷ Horváth, *Zsigmond király és kora*, 183–84.

writes in 1943 in connection with the Boston-1, exhibited in Körmen, that the knights in Sigismund's order received the bone saddles as tournament prizes.⁵³⁸

This theory was first criticized by István Genthon in 1970, although he still argued for a date of creation during the reign of Sigismund, and supposed a less direct, although still possible relationship between the objects and the emperor.⁵³⁹ János Eisler revisited the problem in 1977 and 1979 and came to the conclusion that the only bone saddle with an unambiguous connection to Sigismund is the Budapest-3.⁵⁴⁰ However, he questions the idea that it belonged to Vlad Dracul, pointing out that Eberhardt Windecke, Sigismund's chronicler, reports that Vlad Dracul was admitted to the order and Sigismund donated the order's badge to him, but he fails to mention the donation of the bone saddle.⁵⁴¹

Although it is uncertain whether Vlad Dracul was the original owner of the Budapest-3 saddle, of all the saddles this is the only one with an unquestionable link to the Order of the Dragon. However, it does not necessarily mean a connection to Sigismund, because after his death, the order remained functional under the leadership of his successors, such as King Matthias and Vladislaus II, who both accepted new members.⁵⁴² Not only did the Order of the Dragon continue to exist after Sigismund's death, but its emblem also became more widespread and popular. It appears in the works of Master E.S.,⁵⁴³ as well as in the *corvinas* of King Matthias.⁵⁴⁴ The continued use of

⁵³⁸ "Egy csontberakású nyereg tűnik fel az üvegtárlóban, amint tovább haladunk. A Sárkányrend tagjai - amelyet Zsigmond király 1408-ban alapított - kaptak ilyen nyerget lovagi torna díjául. Csontberakásos bibliai alakok, köztük Sárkányölő Szent György lovag szerepel teljesen olyan alakban, mint a kolozsvári testvérek Szent György szobra Prágában..." [A bone-inlayed saddle appears in the glass door as we continue on our way. Members of the Order of the Dragon, founded by King Sigismund in 1408, were given saddles like this as tournament prizes. Biblical figures, including the dragon-slayer knight Saint George, are depicted in the carvings exactly like the statue of Saint George by the Brothers of Kolozsvár in Prague]. Zsófia Csák, "A körmenyi Batthyány-Strattmann gyűjteményt megőrkítő felvételek az 1912-es Vas vármegyei műtörténeti kiállításon [Recordings of the Batthyány-Strattmann collection in Körmen at the 1912 Vas County art history exhibition]," in *A Batthyányak évszázadai* [Centuries of the Batthyáns], Conference in Körmen, October 27–29, 2005 (Körmen, 2006), 319.

⁵³⁹ Genthon, "Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero," 8–10.

⁵⁴⁰ Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I," 194–96; Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II," 240.

⁵⁴¹ Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I." 198–99.

⁵⁴² Pál Lövei, "Hoforden im Mittelalter, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Drachenordens," in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 260.

⁵⁴³ Master E.S.: *The Letter T*, engraving, Munich, 1466–1467, Artstor, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.12383532>. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

⁵⁴⁴ See: Porphyrio: *Commentaria et interpretationes in opera Horatii*, Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. No. 818, Florence – Illuminator Attavante degli Attavanti, 1488–1489, fol 2r, *Bibliotheca Corvina Virtualis*, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://corvina.hu/hu/corvina/virtualis-corvinak/codno818-hu/>.

the symbol is further evidenced by the Báthory family's sixteenth-century coat of arms in the Calvinist church of Nyírbátor.⁵⁴⁵ As seen above, the direct connection with Sigismund is uncertain even in the case of the Budapest-3, let alone in the case of the other saddles where there is no indication of such an emblem. Therefore, the theory that late medieval bone saddles were made exclusively for members of the Order of the Dragon is completely unfounded.⁵⁴⁶ Still, the idea of a connection between the saddles and Sigismund became so widespread in the twentieth century that it appears even in recent works about bone saddles, and it has also taken root in public opinion. For example, the description of two saddles on the Gothic Ivories Project website still subscribes to this theory; both the Boston-1 and London-3 saddles are linked with the Order of the Dragon founded by Sigismund.⁵⁴⁷ While in her 2019 study Maria Schröder follows this line of argument and associates the group of objects with the court of Sigismund,⁵⁴⁸ in her monograph published in 2024 she moves away from this interpretation. She argues that the motif on the Budapest-3 saddle should be identified simply as an *ouroboros*, since it lacks the cross on the dragon's back that is characteristic of the emblem of the Order of the Dragon.⁵⁴⁹

Recent findings have suggested a link between the bone saddles and the Order of the Dragon. However, these are only indirect connections of two bone saddle fragments excavated in Vienna and Tata. The Tata-fr-1 was excavated in the former (and present) main square of the town, close to the castle that Sigismund visited regularly from 1409.⁵⁵⁰ Members of the Order of the Dragon appear as possible owners of Vienna-fr-1. The excavation site where the remains of the bone saddles were found, may have been in the possession of the lords of Zelking and Starhemberg, who were both members of the order in 1409. However, it is not possible to identify the one-time owner of the given

⁵⁴⁵ Báthory emblem, early 16th century, Nyírbátor, Calvinist church, *Wikibooks*, accessed, June 16, 2024, https://hu.wikibooks.org/wiki/F%C3%A1jl:B%C3%A1thory-c%C3%ADmer,_a_16._sz%C3%A1zad_eleje,_Ny%C3%ADrb%C3%A1tor,_reform%C3%A1tus_templom.png.

⁵⁴⁶ The London-3 may have been owned by a member of the Order of Saint George, as suggested by the ornamental dragon carvings and the Saint George cross on it. However, the connection with the Order of the Dragon is not certain here either. See: IV.2. Interpretation of Saint George on bone saddles in the context of his cult in fifteenth-century Central Europe.

⁵⁴⁷ Boston-1: "Saddle (selle)" *GIP*, accessed May 2, 2024, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/FF5148DE_726c0691.html; London-3: "Saddle (selle)" *GIP*, accessed May 2, 2024, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/50B64607_cb45869b.html

⁵⁴⁸ Schröder, "Animals and the Medieval Art of Love," 227.

⁵⁴⁹ Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 12, 90.

⁵⁵⁰ See: IV.1.3. Two bone saddle fragments from Vienna and Tata.

archaeological unit, i.e., the latrine.⁵⁵¹ Still, it is an interesting find that may shed new light on the possible connection with the order. However, at this stage it remains an interesting addition to the subject.

Associating the bone saddles with the reign of Sigismund remains highly problematic and should therefore no longer be maintained in scholarly discourse. One of the issues is that this theory limits the date of their production to the reign(s) of Sigismund.⁵⁵² However, as discussed in the next chapter, some of the bone saddles are dated with certainty to the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century, suggesting a chronological scope that extends far beyond the reign of Sigismund.

IV.1.2. Place and time of production

Since written sources mentioning bone saddles are very limited in detail and cannot be confidently linked to the objects discussed in this dissertation, there is no direct evidence regarding the place of their production.⁵⁵³ In scholarship, many attempts have been made to date and locate the bone saddles more precisely (in addition to linking them with the court of Sigismund). According to Schlosser, they may have been made in the Embriachi workshop by various masters,⁵⁵⁴ or in the area of Venice or Friuli.⁵⁵⁵ Other suggested locations are Rhineland and Tirol.⁵⁵⁶ In some cases, cities such as Buda, Prague, and Pressburg have been named as possible cities of manufacture, especially in connection with the three saddles of Budapest. Eric Ramírez-Weaver claims that the New York-4 is a Bohemian product from the time of Wenceslas IV, around 1400.⁵⁵⁷ Maria Schöder identifies most of the bone saddles as Austrian or South German products.⁵⁵⁸

Tempting as it may be to link the bone saddles to a specific area and a narrow timeframe, the iconographical, stylistic, motivic, and literally analogies discussed in the

⁵⁵¹ Tarcsay, “Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels aus Wien 1., Herrengasse 10.,” 36. See: IV.1.3. Two bone saddle fragments from Vienna and Tata.

⁵⁵² Sigismund of Luxembourg was king of Hungary and Croatia (1387–1437), King of Germany (1410–1437), King of Bohemia (1419–1437), and Holy Roman Emperor (1433–1437).

⁵⁵³ See: II.1.3. Bone saddles in medieval written sources.

⁵⁵⁴ Schlosser, “Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig.” 220-82; Eisler II isler, “Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II,” 206.

⁵⁵⁵ Nagy, “Hadörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban,” 227; Temesváry, *Fegyverkincsek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban*, 23; Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Age* (Freiburg: Office du livre, 1978), 213.

⁵⁵⁶ Kovács “Dísznyereg Sárkányrenddel,” 85; Genthon, “Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero”; Eisler, “Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II.”

⁵⁵⁷ Ramírez-Weaver, “No 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV”, 236.

⁵⁵⁸ Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 133–204.

dissertation suggest a broad geographical range and a longer period. Their distribution range extends from the western border of Rhineland to Transylvania. The northern and southern borders are uncertain, but South Germany and even North Italy can be included in the distribution area (Figure IV.1). The chronological framework can be set from the 1430s to the end of the fifteenth century for most of the bone saddles.

Different factors can explain this relatively broad chronological and geographical range. As pointed out by Timothy Husband, popular motifs were often reproduced over decades.⁵⁵⁹ One example is the motivic similarity of representations of the Standing Saint George on a Tyrolean wall painting from the early fifteenth century and a Transylvanian altar dated after 1460 (Figures III.32–33). Another factor is the clothing depicted, whose main character is similar across all of the saddles. The puffed sleeves are typical in the area from the beginning and end of the fifteenth century: such gowns appear in a manuscript from Nuremberg from 1425–1431, as well as in the Bohemian Jensky Codex dated to 1490–1510 (Figures IV.2–3).

Armors depicted on the saddles are similar, as they have analogies in South Germany from the 1430s and from Hungary, Transylvania, from the 1460s. An example is the Albrecht altar in Klosterneuburg, made in 1437, showing armors similar to those depicted on the bone saddles, and the ones worn by Saint George and Saint Michael on the altar of Almakerék, dated after 1460.⁵⁶⁰ The fact that analogies can be found from South Germany to Transylvania suggests that these armor features cannot be localized to one specific area, and they may have been typical in Eastern Europe as well.⁵⁶¹

The limited diversity of these representations on the saddles may be explained by the spread of woodcuts, which could have a great impact on the carvings on the bone saddles.⁵⁶² From the second half of the fifteenth century they became widespread in the whole of Europe, and the same motifs and stylistic elements can be discovered on artistic objects with a provenance that covers a wide geographical – and also chronological –

⁵⁵⁹ Timothy B. Husband, *The World in Play: Luxury Cards 1430-1540* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 66.

⁵⁶⁰ In the latter case, not only the armors are similar to the shape of the *kastenbrust* but also the curly, long hair with the headband with a feather. Tóth, “Az almakeréki szárnyasoltár dendrokronológiai kormeghatározása,” 356.

⁵⁶¹ However, more in-depth research into the history of armor would likely provide further insights into this topic. See: Ralph Moffat, *Medieval Arms and Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume I: The Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2022); Ralph Moffat, *Medieval Arms and Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume II: 1400–1450* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2024); Ralph Moffat, *Medieval Arms and Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume III: 1450-1500* (Boydell & Brewer, 2024).

⁵⁶² See: III.1.3. Sources for the carvings: woodcuts and engravings?

range. These factors make it even harder to date and locate the bone saddles. The geographical distance may explain why some of them are so different in style and quality, such as the Berlin-1.

There are also exceptions that do not fit in this topographical and chronological frame: the two saddles in Stockholm.⁵⁶³ The entirely different carving and style of these saddles suggest that they should not be classified like the rest of the saddles. Moreover, the possibility may be raised that they were made at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Stockholm-1 and Stockholm-2.). Factors suggesting this dating include the dress depicted on the Stockholm-1, which significantly differs from the rest of the dress depictions on the bone saddles (Figure IV.4). Similar dresses and elaborate necklaces can be seen on the portrait of Margareta Vasa from 1528 (Figure IV.5), suggesting that the saddle's carvings may also date from the early sixteenth century. This analogy even raises the possibility that this saddle was made in Sweden.

There are only two saddles whose production date can be more precisely defined within this geographical and chronological framework (Figure IV.1). As discussed above, the Modena-1 is a saddle that can be attributed to a certain person, and therefore its time of production can also be narrowed down to the rule of Ercole I d'Este (1471–1505). In addition, there is a relatively recent scientific result; a radiocarbon analysis conducted in 2012 on the New York-2 dated the saddle to 1440–1450.⁵⁶⁴

In two other cases an approximate dating can be suggested based on the date of analogous inscriptions: the “im / in dem ars is vinsten” inscription of the London-3 and the New York-1.⁵⁶⁵ The manuscript citing the same passage from the Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf in the Biblioteca Batthyaniensis dates from 1469, while Clara Hätzerlin's *Liederbuch*, containing another variant, dates from 1471. This raises the possibility that these two saddles can be dated to the later fifteenth century, around 1470.

These arguments overrule the previous theory that dated the bone saddles to the time of Sigismund, and define a broader period and area. However, the fact that the surviving pieces show similarities to the artistic language of the above discussed narrow area suggest that they may have been typical products there. The similarity of motifs appearing

⁵⁶³ Additionally, the Unknown Location-2 differs significantly from the rest of the bone saddles. However, as only archival photographs were available until recently—and I discovered the 2021 images shortly before the submission of this dissertation—and given that the piece is heavily restored and likely a nineteenth-century copy, it is not taken into consideration in this study. See: note 222.

⁵⁶⁴ See: note 242.

⁵⁶⁵ See: III.4.2. Romantic dialogues and proverbs.

on the saddles and their connection to Central European artworks also suggest this. However, the different styles and craftsmanship of the saddles indicate that they must have been made in different carving workshops in various parts of this area. This also testifies to the vivid artistic interactions and the dissemination of the saddles, and reflects the appearance and spread of printing techniques, such as woodcuts and engravings. Moreover, the two Swedish saddles broaden the area even further, suggesting that these objects reached even more distant locations. This also raises the possibility that bone saddles had once existed in other parts of Europe, such as France or England as well.

IV.1.3. Two bone saddle fragments from Vienna and Tata

Recently, two fragments have been excavated in Vienna and Tata.⁵⁶⁶ Resting under the ground for hundreds of years, these are the only pieces of the object group that remained at the same location over the course of the centuries. Therefore, the two findings provide a unique possibility to gain a better understanding of the original late medieval context of the bone saddles, and to locate the object group more precisely in the above presented broader area and timeframe.

The Vienna-fr-1 was excavated in 2007 in the cellar of Herrengasse 10, Vienna. The find was recovered from a well that was later used as a latrine. The remains of the bone saddle must have been thrown into the latrine around the early sixteenth century.⁵⁶⁷ According to Heike Krause's historical research, these lots may have been in the property of the lords of Zelking and Starhemberg, who were members of the Order of the Dragon around 1409. However, this identification is only theoretical, and reflects again an attempt to connect the bone saddles to Sigismund.⁵⁶⁸ Although the owners of the area are unknown, the excavation site is very close to the Hofburg, which was an imperial residence already in the late Middle Ages.⁵⁶⁹

The Tata-fr-1 was found in present-day Kossuth Square, on a lot of a former medieval house that was later destroyed. The fragment was found in a pit, the exact function of which could not be identified; it may have originally been a storage pit that had been burned from the inside, and later used as a trash pit. The pit can be dated only

⁵⁶⁶ I thank Bianka Kovács for her help and corrections about the Tata-fr-1.

⁵⁶⁷ Tarcsay, "Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels," 25.

⁵⁶⁸ See: IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon. Tarcsay, "Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels," 36.

⁵⁶⁹ I thank Bianka Kovács for drawing my attention to this.

within a wider timeframe, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century; the bone plate was probably deposited in the pit during the fifteenth century.⁵⁷⁰

In the Middle Ages, Tata was close to the “Medium Regni” area, the central part of the Hungarian Kingdom. In the fourteenth century, it became a market town and the estate in question became the property of King Sigismund, who soon built a castle in the area, which he visited regularly from 1409, and used for huntings and for receiving foreign emissaries.⁵⁷¹ The presence of the royal residency fostered the development of the market town of Ótata, and another market town formed on the eastern side of the castle.⁵⁷² As for the one-time landlords of the area, no information is available about the late medieval owner of the lot where archaeological excavation took place. However, the finds from the later fifteenth century show that during this period, the owner of the plot must have been relatively wealthy. Another factor that undergirds this assumption is that this house was located next to the main square.⁵⁷³ Another possibility is that the bone saddle fragment can be connected to the nearby royal castle that had its heyday during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. In this period, the castle’s owners included

⁵⁷⁰ Bianka Gina Kovács, “Adatok Tata középkori településtörténetéhez – Feltárás Tata, Kossuth tér 16. szám alatt” [Data on the medieval settlement history of Tata - Excavation at 16 Kossuth tér, Tata], in *A Fiatal Középkoros Régészek VIII. konferenciájának tanulmánykötete* [Volume of Studies of the VIII Conference of Young Medieval Archaeologists], ed. István Ringer (Sátoraljaújhely, 2018), 35; Bianka Gina Kovács, “Késő középkori leletegyüttesek Tata belvárosából” [Late Medieval Artefacts from the Centre of Tata], in *Kuny Domokos Múzeum Évkönyve* [Annual of Kuny Domokos Museum] (Tata, forthcoming).

⁵⁷¹ Richárd Schmidtmayer, “Vitány, Gesztes, Tata, Gerencsér várai és uradalmi a késő középkorban” [Castles and manors of Vitány, Gesztes, Tata, Gerencsér in the late Middle Ages] (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, 2015), 36, 183; Olivér Gillich, “A tatai vár építéstörténete: Egy uralkodói mellékrezidencia építészeti reprezentációja a késő középkorban” [The history of the construction of Tata Castle: The architectural representation of a secondary royal residence in the late Middle Ages], *Castrum* 22 (2019): 53.

⁵⁷² Sarolta B. Szatmári, “Tata története a honfoglalástól 1526-ig” [The history of Tata from the Hungarian conquest to 1526], in *Tata története I. Az őskortól 1727-ig* [History of Tata I. from prehistoric times to 1727], ed. Endre Bíró (Tata 1979), 167; Sarolta Szatmári, “Tata a magyarországi érett középkor településhálózatában” [Tata in the settlement network of the Late Middle Ages in Hungary], in *Arx – oppidum – civitas. A vártól a városig. Tata évszázadai* [Arx - oppidum - civitas. From the castle to the city. The centuries of Tata], ed. Julianna Kisné Cseh, *Annales Tataiensis IV* (Tata, 2004), 34; Richárd Schmidtmayer, “Tata, egy jelentős mezőváros és polgárai a késő középkorban” [Tata, a significant market town and its citizens in the late Middle Ages], *Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei 17* [Publications of Komárom-Esztergom County Museums] (2011): 192.

⁵⁷³ Based on the available archaeological data, the present main square may have also served as a main square or marketplace during the Middle Ages. Kovács, “Adatok Tata középkori településtörténetéhez,” 36–37; Kovács, “Késő középkori leletegyüttesek Tata belvárosából.”

Sigismund, and later King Matthias (Figure IV.6).⁵⁷⁴ It is also important to note that the high traffic Vienna-Buda trade route was passing through the area (Figure IV.7).⁵⁷⁵

These two bone saddle fragments are the only examples that can be traced back to the late medieval era. Unfortunately, only limited conclusions can be drawn from these two finds. Both fragments were excavated near royal residences and in areas inhabited by high-ranking nobles. Because the excavation material is mixed and includes finds from different periods, it is not possible to draw further conclusions about the owners of these locations. Additionally, the presence of the fragments at these locations does not necessarily mean that they were produced here. Nonetheless, the fact that the two fragments were found along the same commercial route suggests that nobles in Vienna, as well as in Tata, once owned bone saddles and that these items could have been used in this area.

IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles

As already discussed, the only saddle the original owner of which is known, is the Modena-1, which was in the property of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1471–1505).⁵⁷⁶ His ownership is evidenced by both the repeated “*deus fortitudo mea*” inscription,⁵⁷⁷ which was his personal motto, and his coat of arms.⁵⁷⁸

In previous scholarship, there have been some attempts to identify the owners of the bone saddles, mainly in the circles of Central European royalties. The Braunschweig-1, for example, was linked to Jadwiga, Queen of Poland, because of the intertwined letters that were usually associated with her.⁵⁷⁹ However, as suggested in a previous chapter,

⁵⁷⁴ Vendel Kiss, *Thatha Arx Regia. A tatai vár metszetábrázolásai a XVI-XVII. századból* [Thatha Arx Regia. Engravings of the Tata Castle from the XVI-XVII centuries] (Tata, 1998), 3; Schmidtmayer, “Vitány, Gesztes, Tata, Gerencsér várai és uradalmi a késő középkorban,” 36, 99, 183.

⁵⁷⁵ Charlotte Szatmári-Bíró, “Städtisches Leben im Spätmittelalter am Beispiel des Marktfleckens Tata/Totis,” in *Das Leben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters*, ed. Harry Küchnel (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977), 37; Lajos Glaser, “Dunántúl középkori úthálózata” [The medieval road network of Transdanubia], *Századok* 63 (1929): 152.

⁵⁷⁶ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms. According to the most recent publication about the saddle, it was made after 1474. Paolo Parmiggiani, “13. Artista dell'Italia settentrionale (Friuli o Tirolo). Sella da parata con le armi di Ercole I d'Este, dopo il 1474,” in *Orlando furioso 500 anni: cosa vedeva Ariosto quando chiudeva gli occhi*, ed. Guido Beltramini, Adolfo Tura, and Palazzo dei Diamanti (Ferrara: Ferrara arte, 2016), 58.

⁵⁷⁷ See: III.4.3. Mottos.

⁵⁷⁸ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms. Moreover, the 1494 inventory of the Este family mentions two saddles adorned with bone, one of which might correspond to this saddle. See: G. F. Ferrari-Moreni, *Descrizione di un'antica sella da cavalcare ornata di bassi rilievi in osso bianco, esistente nella Regia Galleria Palatina di Modena, Memorie della R. Accademia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti in Modena*, vol. 8 (Modena: Tipografia dell'Erede Soliani, 1867), 9; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 66, 179.

⁵⁷⁹ See: III.5. Initials.

this saddle, just like the others, can be dated later than 1400.⁵⁸⁰ The primary argument for this later dating lies in its robust style, which departs significantly from the graceful elegance characteristic of the International Gothic. Additionally, the depicted dresses with puffed sleeves are widely represented in artworks between the 1430s and the early 1500s (Figures IV.2–3).

Schlosser attributed the Vienna-2 to Wenceslas IV because of the presence of the letter *e* on the saddle, close to the carving of the German imperial coat of arms. He suggests that the *e* refers to the king's second wife, Euphemia-Žophie.⁵⁸¹ However, later scholarship attributed the saddle to King Albert II and his wife, Elisabeth of Luxemburg, daughter of Emperor Sigismund.⁵⁸² This identification was based on the style of clothing, which indicates that the saddle was produced later than the reign of Wenceslas IV.⁵⁸³

In addition to the initial on the Vienna-2, scholarship has linked the *v*, *e*, and *b* initials on the New York-4 to Wenceslas and his wife as well.⁵⁸⁴ Accordingly, the *v* and *e* initials may refer to their marriage in 1389, while *b* refers to the Bavarian lands that were part of the bride's dowry.⁵⁸⁵ Schlosser's theory about the object's connection to the Holy Roman Emperor is also supported by the one-headed imperial eagle on the back of the right cantle.⁵⁸⁶ Eric Ramírez-Weaver also subscribes to the attribution to Wenceslas.⁵⁸⁷ He interprets the one-headed eagle as a symbol of the Kingdom of Germany. He argues that the saddles were made around 1400 because the “starburst” trees and the dresses are similar to those in the fresco depicting May at Torre Aquila, painted around the same time.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁰ See: IV.1.2. Place and time of production.

⁵⁸¹ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 263. See: III.5. Initials.

⁵⁸² Albert V Duke of Austria, King Albert II, Albert I, Hungarian king, Albert I, Bohemian king.

⁵⁸³ Thomas and Gamber, *Katalog der Leibrüstammer. I. Teil. Der Zeitraum von 500 bis 1530*, 69; Verő, “4.72. Beinsattel (Sattel von König Albrecht),” in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 364. See: III.3.2. Coat of arms.

⁵⁸⁴ See: III.5. Initials.

⁵⁸⁵ Ramírez-Weaver, “No 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV”, 236.

⁵⁸⁶ See: III.3.2. Coat of arms. Julius von Schlosser, *Die Bilderhandschriften Königs Wenzel I, Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 14 (1893): 214–51, 270–308, 291–95; Verő, “4. 66. Beinsattel,” in *Sigismundus rex et imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 358; “Saddle (selle); so-called Trivulzio saddle,” *GIP*, accessed May 2, 2024, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/5728F829_7bcef3cf.html.

⁵⁸⁷ Ramírez-Weaver, “No 90. Saddle, possibly of Wenceslas IV”, 236.

⁵⁸⁸ Ramírez-Weaver, “No 90. Saddle,” 236.

The interpretation of the one-headed eagle as a reference to Wenceslas is highly questionable. While it was indeed the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire until 1433—when Sigismund introduced the double-headed eagle, and the one-headed eagle subsequently became the heraldic symbol of the Kingdom of Germany—it does not consistently function as an imperial reference.⁵⁸⁹ The one-headed eagle appears in various contexts, including the *Bible of Wenceslas* and numerous shields, but its use is far more widespread and cannot always be directly associated with emperors.⁵⁹⁰ For instance, similar heraldic eagles frequently appear on shields from the fifteenth century. A comparable example is found on the narrow right side of the Alsatian casket from the second half of the fifteenth century, now held in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Cologne.⁵⁹¹ Furthermore, as in the case of the Braunschweig-1, the robust style of the figures and the depiction of clothing suggest that the New York-4 saddle should be dated post-1400, more precisely to the mid- or late fifteenth century.⁵⁹²

In connection with the Vienna-1, Ladislaus Posthumus was named as a possible owner of the saddle.⁵⁹³ This is suggested by the similarly shaped *u* or *v* on the two rear forks of the saddle, which may be the initial of Vladislaus.⁵⁹⁴ The letters in the *Ladislaus Vocabulary* serve as useful analogies.⁵⁹⁵ Moreover, the presence of the floral wreath on the pommel plate of the saddle and its interpretation as a betrothal symbol,⁵⁹⁶ and its connection to the betrothal portrait of Ladislaus and Magdalena, can also support this idea.⁵⁹⁷ In this case, the suggested ownership does not contradict the possible production period of the bone saddle; the style and the analogies fit the mid-fifteenth century.

Connecting bone saddles to historical figures sometimes remains hypothetical. As we have seen, some of these suggested connections, such as the ownership of Wenceslas

⁵⁸⁹ Husband, *The World in Play*, 61.

⁵⁹⁰ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 262; “Prunkwappen von Krain (Funeralschild für Albrecht VI.)” 1463, *Wienmuseum - Online Sammlung*, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/objekt/222552-prunkwappen-von-krain-funeralschild-fuer-albrecht-vi/>; “Prunkwappen von Oberösterreich (Funeralschild für Albrecht VI.)” 1463, *Wienmuseum - Online Sammlung*, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/objekt/222277-prunkwappen-von-oberoesterreich-funeralschild-fuer-albrecht-vi/>.

⁵⁹¹ Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” 223–24, 445, Plate LXVIII. *Minnekästchen*, Cologne, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Alsace (?), second half of the 15th century. Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe,” See: notes 373, 432, 493.

⁵⁹² See: IV.1.2. Place and time of production.

⁵⁹³ See: note 487.

⁵⁹⁴ See: III.5. Initials.

⁵⁹⁵ See: note 486.

⁵⁹⁶ See: III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles.

⁵⁹⁷ See: note 516.

and Jadwiga, contradict the timeframe set in the previous chapter. Other theoretical links, such as to Ladislaus Posthumus can be more convincing; however, they must remain hypothetical due to the lack of written sources.⁵⁹⁸ Instead of seeking to find a connection with late medieval royalties, one thing can be stated for certain: the original owners of the saddles probably belonged to the higher strata of society.

IV.1.5. Conclusion

As demonstrated above, only broad conclusions can be drawn about bone saddles from the late medieval period. The style, composition, and depiction of dress and armor in the carvings display notable similarities, and comparable examples can be found across a wide region dating roughly between 1430 and 1500. For this reason, establishing a relative chronology based solely on stylistic features would be problematic and potentially misleading.

Nevertheless, certain locations emerge as relevant to the origin and production of bone saddles. One such location is Vienna, where bone saddle fragments were recently excavated.⁵⁹⁹ The city also houses two surviving bone saddles that were formerly part of the imperial collection.⁶⁰⁰ Additionally, stylistic parallels can be observed between some of the saddle carvings and the *Courtly Household Cards*, which may have been produced in or around Vienna (Figures III.6; III.8. and III.16).⁶⁰¹ Another possible site is Tata, where another bone saddle fragment was discovered.⁶⁰² Located along the same trade route, Tata lies relatively close to Vienna, suggesting potential regional connections.

It is also notable that five known bone saddles were once in the possession of Hungarian aristocratic families.⁶⁰³ Furthermore, historical sources indicate the presence of bone-carving workshops in the royal palaces of Buda and Visegrád, as well as in the

⁵⁹⁸ Another identification that lacks any supporting written documentation is that of Unknown Location-3, which was in the possession of the Esterházy family in 1781 at the Castle of Cseklész (German: Lanschütz; former Slovak names: Čeklís, Čeklýs; today Bernolákovo, Slovakia). At the time, the saddle was attributed to the first Hungarian king, Stephen I. See: Johann Bernoulli, *Sammlung kurzer Reisebeschreibungen und anderer zur Erweiterung der Länder- und Menschenkenntniß dienender Nachrichten*, vol. 10 (Berlin, 1783), 215; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 65.

⁵⁹⁹ Vienna-fr-1.

⁶⁰⁰ Vienna-1 and Vienna-2.

⁶⁰¹ See: III.1.1. Style, Drapery and Ornamentation.

⁶⁰² Tata-fr-1.

⁶⁰³ Boston-1 (Batthyány-Strattmann family); Budapest-1 (Batthyány family); Budapest-2 (Rhédey family); Budapest-3 (Jankovich family); Unknown Location-3 (Esterházy family) See the provenance of each saddles in the database: *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu.>

Archbishop's residence in Esztergom.⁶⁰⁴ However, no surviving fragments from these workshops can be directly linked to bone saddles, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. As discussed in part II,⁶⁰⁵ bone saddles were likely produced in multiple workshops, and the limited number of finds, combined with the absence of direct evidence, does not provide sufficient grounds to attribute production to these locations.

Taken together, these observations raise the possibility that the region encompassing Vienna and the Hungarian Kingdom may have been one of the centers of bone saddle production. However, this remains a hypothesis and should be treated with appropriate caution.

IV.2. Interpretation of Saint George on bone saddles in the context of his cult in fifteenth-century Central Europe

How can one interpret the popularity of Saint George on the carvings on the bone saddles? To answer this question, it is necessary to look at the cultural context of the fifteenth century. The cult of Saint George became extremely popular from the fourteenth century onwards in the whole of Europe. This is reflected in the numerous depictions of

⁶⁰⁴ The surviving material from these sites includes clothing accessories, jewelry, knife handles, crossbow components, and production waste. This suggests that the workshops were primarily engaged in producing simple, functional items for everyday use, most likely to supply the surrounding residences. See, for Buda: Mária G. Sándor, "Középkori csontmégmunkáló műhely a budai Várpalotában" [Medieval Bone-Carving Workshop in the Royal Palace of Buda], *Budapest Régiségei* 20 (1963): 107–24. Ágnes Font, "Bone working in Buda between the fifteenth-seventeenth century" (MA thesis, Central European University, 2022), accessed March 31, 2025, https://libsearch.ceu.edu/permalink/43CEU_INST/179qfpk/alma991003607800908861; for Visegrád: István Kováts, "Finds of Worked Bone and Antler from the Royal Palace of Visegrád," in *From Hooves to Horns, from Mollusc to Mammoth: Manufacture and Use of Bone Artefacts from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, Muinasaja Teadus 15 (Tallinn, 2005), 293–304; for Esztergom: Erika Gál, "Late Medieval Bone and Antler Working at the Residence of the Archbishop of Esztergom (Northern Hungary)," *Archaeologia Litwana* 21 (2020): 79–96, <https://doi.org/10.15388/ArchLit.2019.21.5>.

⁶⁰⁵ See: II.3. Bone saddles as products of guild and workshop cooperations?

⁶⁰⁶ Although the *Buda Law Book (Ofner Stadtrecht)*, compiled in the early 15th century (between 1405 and the 1440s), mentions the guild of saddlers, it does not provide any detailed description of their activities or specific regulations governing their trade. Font, "Bone working in Buda between the fifteenth-seventeenth century," 34.

the saint, as well as the settlements and churches of which he was the patron in German, Austrian, Italian, and Hungarian territories.⁶⁰⁷

Saint George was the patron of most of the *ordos*. In addition to the religious associations, secular chivalry orders became popular as well, and therefore the saint entered the political arena. He was the patron of the English Order of the Garter, the Burgundian noble society, and the Austrian order of Friedrich III. Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor, even had a relic of the dragon's head in his castle of Karlstein.⁶⁰⁸ The first Central European order of Saint George was founded by Charles I of Hungary in 1326,⁶⁰⁹ and the Order of the Dragon, founded by Sigismund, may be seen as its successor.⁶¹⁰ Ivan Gerát argues that the foundation of the Order of the Dragon was a conscious political act, and the defeated dragon symbolized Sigismund's political enemies. These enemies included, on the one hand, the Hussites and other heretics, and, on the other hand, anyone who aspired to his throne because he failed to have a male heir.⁶¹¹

As discussed in previous chapters, the Budapest-3 saddle has previously been associated with a Saint George-related order.⁶¹² Another—more plausible—possible link to Saint George can be established on the London-3. There are certain facts that indicate that the owner of the latter might have been a member of an order devoted to Saint George. The surface of the saddle is carved with ornamental dragons, and there is also a Saint George cross.⁶¹³ Its inscription also contains the saint's name (“hilt got wol auf

⁶⁰⁷ Settlements and church titles named after Saint George in the Hungarian Kingdom is listed in: Zoltán Magyar, “Szent György középkori kultusza Magyarországon” [The Medieval Cult of Saint George in Hungary], *Századok* 132, no. 1 (1998): 177–82.

⁶⁰⁸ Endre Tóth, “Szent György [Saint George],” in *Szent György a lovasság védőszentje [Saint George, the patron of cavalry]* (Budapest: Magyar Honvédség Oktatási és Kulturális Anyagellátó Központ Nyomda, 1992), 32.

⁶⁰⁹ For the detailed discussion of the Saint George order founded by Charles I, see the relevant chapter, in: László Veszprémy, *Lovagvilág Magyarországon: Lovagok, keresztesek, hadmérnökök a középkori Magyarországon [Chivalric World in Hungary: Knights, Crusaders, and Military Engineers in Medieval Hungary]* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2008), 171–83 (Chapter title: A Szent György lovagrend megalapítása Károly Róbert udvarában - The foundation of the Order of St George at the court of Charles Robert).

⁶¹⁰ Magyar, “Szent György középkori kultusza Magyarországon,” 173.

⁶¹¹ Ivan Gerát, *Svätí bojovníci v stredoveku: úvahy o obrazových legendách sv. Juraja a sv. Ladislava na Slovensku* [“Holy warriors in the Middle-Ages: reflections on the pictorial legends of St. George and St. Ladislav in Slovakia”] (Bratislava: Veda, 2011), 114. Samantha Riches also emphasizes that he chose a defeated dragon as a symbol on purpose, because of the defeat of the Hussites. Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, martyr and myth* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000.) 152.

⁶¹² See: I.2.2. Bone Saddles and Sigismund: Scholarship in the twentieth century; III.3.1. Emblems, and IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon.

⁶¹³ This cross appears on the Boston-1, New York-2 as well, at the same field: on the pommel from the front view. It also appears on the Paris and Sporting Copies.

sand jorgen nam” – with God’s help, well then, in the name of Saint George – see Table XI). On the other saddles, the presence of the Saint George cross can also show a connection to an order devoted to Saint George.⁶¹⁴

In addition to the saddles with a hypothesized connection to an *ordo* linked to Saint George, there are other cases when the saint’s presence is more unusual, especially when placed in a strongly secular context, often accompanied by loving couples. The works of other genres where George generally appears, such as wall and panel paintings and statues, were usually made for religious purposes, mostly as church decoration. In these works, the symbol of the dragon-slayer was obvious for the fifteenth-century audience: it symbolized the victory over Satan.⁶¹⁵ According to Sándor Bálint, a Hungarian ethnographer, the frescos, paintings, sculptures, and coins showing the image of Saint George were originally not made to honor the saint, but more likely served magical purposes; supposedly, George defeats evil and reduces the suffering that threatens one’s life.⁶¹⁶ In contrast, the bone saddles are entirely secular products, and therefore, Saint George can be most likely interpreted here as the embodiment of chivalric ideas. By saving and baptizing the princess and the city, he became the prototype of the ideal Christian knight.⁶¹⁷ This interpretation helps us understand why he appears among courtly figures.⁶¹⁸

Saint George’s appearance on the saddles can also be explained by his role as the patron of cavalry. As it will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, bone saddles were probably not made for everyday use, but were used only in ceremonial processions – as indicated by the exquisite material and the lavish carvings. Although Saint George was primarily regarded as a military patron (protector of knights and archers), he was also the

⁶¹⁴ See: III.3.1. Emblems.

⁶¹⁵ Moreover, Samantha Riches interprets the battle in connection with Uccello’s painting on a deeper level that George symbolizes Christ, while the princess is Virgin Mary or the Church itself, and the Dragon is the Devil. Accordingly, the Virgin Mary trapped the Devil by giving birth to the Savior while she was a virgin, or the Church trapped the Devil by obeying the law of God and refusing to be tempted. Riches, *St George*, 148.

⁶¹⁶ Sándor Bálint, “Szent György kultuszának maradványai a hazai néphagyományban” [The remains of the cult of Saint George in the Hungarian folklore], *Ethnographia* 85. (1974): 220.

⁶¹⁷ Gruia, “Religious Representations on Stove Tiles from the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary,” 122.

⁶¹⁸ Moreover, as discussed in a recent monograph by Alison C. Barker, Saint George functioned as a mirror for princes. This is why members of the Este family employed his image to legitimize their authority, highlight their chivalric virtues, express their piety, and symbolize the continuity of their dynasty through various artistic representations and ceremonial events. Alison C. Barker, *The Dissemination of Saint George in Early Modern Art* (New York: Routledge, 2025), 24–28.

patron of horses and saddle makers.⁶¹⁹ Therefore it does not come as a surprise that his figure is a popular element of decoration on other fifteenth-century arms, such as shields (*pavises*) and crossbows.⁶²⁰ In addition, the prayer inscriptions suggest that Saint George could appear as a protector on the saddles. Furthermore, the couple of George and the princess can be easily integrated into the context of the iconography of romantic couples. Finally, one may assume that both the visual and textual appearance had the same purpose: they served as prayers to the saint. In this devotional context, it is important to note that Saint George is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a group of saints who were especially popular in Central Europe in the fifteenth century.⁶²¹

Saint George is not the only medieval saint who slayed a dragon. He is one of over a hundred saints depicted in this way, although it is not an overstatement to say that he became the most favored dragon slayer in medieval iconography.⁶²² Two other dragon-slayer saints, Saint Michael and Saint Margaret of Antioch, appear on saddles as well.

The identification of Saint Michael—and his distinction from Saint George—relies on subtle details. The presence of wings suggests that the figure in Field L2 on the Stresa-1 is likely Saint Michael, while the corresponding figure in Field R2 on the opposite side can be identified as Saint George. The two dragon-slaying male saints often appear together in other works of art, for example on the two wings of altars.⁶²³ As Samantha Riches writes, their joint presence may be explained by the fact that, as opposed to other dragon-slayer saints, Michael and George are the only ones who did not defeat the dragon with their supernatural abilities but with their mere physical force.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien, vol. III: Iconographie des saints* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1958), 573.

⁶²⁰ See: “Crossbow of Count Ulrich V of Württemberg (1413–1480),” New York, The Met, Stuttgart (?), 1460, *The Met Collection*, accessed, June 13, 2024, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/21940>; “Shield (Pavise),” New York, The Met, Saxony, 1475, *The Met Collection*, accessed, June 13, 2024, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/23334>.

⁶²¹ David Farmer, “Fourteen Holy Helpers,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford University Press, 2011.); Volbach, “Die Darstellung des Heiligen Georg zu Pferd in der deutschen Kunst des Mittelalters,” 28; Gruia, “Religious Representations on Stove Tiles from the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary,” 122; For further discussion on the Holy Helpers, see: Ottó Gecser, “Holy Helpers and the Transformation of Sainly Patronage at the End of the Middle Ages,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 22 (2016): 174–202; and Ottó Gecser, “Helper Saints and Their Critics in the Long Fifteenth Century,” in *Bridging the Historiographical Divides: Religious Transformations in ‘New Communities of Interpretation’ in Europe (1350–1570)*, edited by Élise Boillet and Ian Johnson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 43–70.

⁶²² Gruia, “Religious Representations on Stove Tiles from the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary,” 121.

⁶²³ For example on the altar of Almakerék. “Az Almakeréki Szárnyasoltár Dendrokronológiai Kormeghatározása,” 352, figure 1.

⁶²⁴ Riches, *St George*, 149.

On the New York-2, a second dragon appears on the right side, with an elegant, courtly lady stepping on it. This woman can be identified as Saint Margaret of Antioch, whose appearance on the bone saddle poses more exciting questions about the saved princess. As Juliana Dresvina claims, according to late medieval beliefs, the princess who is saved by Saint George is no other than Saint Margaret.⁶²⁵ This theory is supported by the iconography of Margaret, who, in many cases, is depicted with a lamb, just like the princess in the iconography of Saint George. Furthermore, Saint George and Margaret usually appear in the same works (especially in manuscripts), and Margaret often wears the same outfit as the princess.⁶²⁶

The presence of dragons defeated by various saints on the bone saddles reflects well that conquering evil or sin itself was a popular medieval theme. In medieval Paris, processions were organized during the Rogation Days where a dragon was part of the parade.⁶²⁷

As we have seen, the complexity of the interpretation of Saint George on saddles reflects the intricacies of the late medieval cultural context. The presence of the saint on these special objects can be explained by many factors, but, probably most importantly by his strong connection to cavalry and chivalry.

IV.3. Use and Function

IV.3.1. Ridden saddles?

One of the most popular questions in connection with the bone saddles is whether they were used for practical purposes. Because of the use of a specific top cover for the saddle tree – namely bone – it sounds convincing that they were produced purely for representative purposes and were not used for riding at all. However, there are different arguments that support the idea that they were used. One argument is the presence of

⁶²⁵ Saint Margaret of Antioch (4th century) probably never existed. According to the legend, she was the daughter of a pagan priest, and was sent away from home because she became a Christian. She was living as a shepherdess when the governor of Antioch tried to marry her, but she refused the marriage proposal due to her Christian faith. Then she was tortured and tempted, even swallowed by a dragon, which burst open and Margaret survived. She was finally beheaded. David Farmer, “Margaret of Antioch,” In *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Dresvina, Juliana: *A Maid with a Dragon: The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch in Medieval England: Handbook with Texts* (Oxford 2016), 185. I am grateful to Dorottya Uhrin for directing my attention to this exiting connection between the princess and Saint Margaret.

⁶²⁶ Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon*, 185.

⁶²⁷ Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 178.

certain technical details that reflect the practice of late medieval saddle workshops, suggesting that in most cases they were used. This topic was discussed in Part II of the dissertation.⁶²⁸ Still, the hard surface of the bone saddle does not seem to provide any comfort in horse riding. One way to make the seat of the saddles more comfortable could be to cover them with a cloth. For that, there are some examples in late medieval pictorial sources. In Masaccio's painting of the Adoration of the Magi, a saddle – which actually looks like a bone saddle – is covered with black fabric (Figure II.10). A counterargument for this could be that if the bone saddles were covered similarly by a cloth, it would have also covered the lavish carvings.⁶²⁹ However, even if the saddle was not covered with a saddle cloth, and the bone saddle was ridden without any extra layers of fabric on top, most of the surface of the bone saddle would have been covered by the rider's body and dress anyway, should it be a man or a woman, as seen in Figure IV.13.

The medieval way of riding

Covered with an extra layer or not, these saddles do not look comfortable to the modern eye. However, it is important to keep in mind that the medieval technique of riding was significantly different from the horse riding known today. The sport saddles used today were developed for hunting and sport during the nineteenth century. A modern rider typically sits in an English saddle, with shorter stirrups and more bended legs, and the saddles are constructed accordingly (Figure IV.8).

Most of the late medieval representations of riding show a very different technique than the one customary today. The rider usually sat with his legs stretched out, and therefore the leather straps holding the stirrup were much longer, and the rider's hip was tilted forward. This posture was more comfortable for the rider and allowed a better movement with the horse, and the saddle was made accordingly to help maintain this posture.⁶³⁰ This can be seen in the *Guiron le Courtois*, where it is clearly visible that the rider in the back sits on the cantle, with his hip tilted forward (Figure II.2). The main purpose of the structure of the saddles was to be provide comfortable seat during long

⁶²⁸ See: II.2. The construction of bone saddles.

⁶²⁹ However, this practice is not uncommon in medieval art. Consider the high column capitals in churches, which were not visible to the audience, or the hidden carvings of the misericords. Other analogies include marriage caskets, where some decorative elements were hidden from the public view, painted inside the lid and visible only when the casket was opened. See: IV.3.2. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval marriages - Bone saddles in marriage processions?

⁶³⁰ I would like to thank Benedek Sáfár, Marcin Ruda, historical saddlers, and Arne Koets, historical riding instructor, for demonstrating and helping me understand medieval riding techniques.

journeys. Experiments of using the reproductions of medieval saddles confirmed the idea that saddles with low cantles and pommels, like most of the bone saddles, were more ergonomic and allowed for a more comfortable riding position during a long ride (Figure IV.9). Moreover, this construction makes it possible for the rider to feel the movement of the horse more easily. Another technique of medieval riding is shown in the representation of the knight sitting in a high saddle in the *Guiron le Courtois*. The knight is not even in a sitting but rather in a standing position, where the cantle, like the back of a chair, supports the rider's bottom.⁶³¹ This way of riding was applied in high cantle saddles which are similar in shape to the Florence-1, Modena-1, and Vienna-1.

To sum up, the medieval way of riding is so different from the one practiced today that it can be misleading to base conclusions on present-day practices. Still, the carved surface of the bone saddles was not likely to be comfortable. Since these objects were likely used only rarely and on special occasions, it can be assumed that they were indeed functional riding equipment. It is also important to note that the seats of the Modena-1 and Vienna-1 are partially covered with leather, providing a more comfortable surface to sit on.

Traces of abrasion

Another factor that supports the idea of their use are the traces of abrasion on parts of the saddle in contact with the human body during riding. The part which can be affected by the weight of the rider is the thin edge between the L5 and R5 fields, where the carvings are smoother than on the other surfaces. This can be clearly seen on the Berlin-2 and Boston-1 (Figure IV.10). On the latter, this pressure affected also the paintwork: red became much lighter in these sections. On the Budapest-2, these polished surfaces even affect the faces of the figures under the edges (Figure IV.11). Another section where the traces of use can be identified is where the straps holding the stirrups and the girths were inserted. The lower edges of these slots are less sharp and more rounded, as it is clearly seen on the Braunschweig-1 (Figure IV.12). The abrasion of the edges may be explained by the contact with the leather straps and girth that polished these surfaces.

⁶³¹ This way of riding is also explained in the book of horsemanship written by Duarte I of Portugal. He writes: "(...) to ride firm in the stirrups with your legs straight, not sitting in the saddle, but receiving some help from the arçons." Forggeng, *The Book of Horsemanship by Duarte I of Portugal*, 60.

These traces clearly suggest that most of the bone saddles were used for riding, even if only in exceptional cases. However, in one case it is difficult to decide whether it was used. As already mentioned in Part II, on the Budapest-3 the absence of some essential technical details, such as the rounded holes, the cut-out rectangular slots for the stirrup leather, girth, and buckles, suggest that it was never in use. On the contrary, the presence of other details, such as the rectangular iron clips in Fields L2 and R2 that could have served to attach the breast collar, do suggest that this saddle was possibly used.⁶³²

Bone saddles therefore can be interpreted as luxurious versions of regular medieval saddles, used on exceptional occasions, probably during ceremonies.⁶³³ The following chapter will explore the context of their original use in greater detail.

IV.3.2. Bone saddles in the context of late medieval marriages

The original context of the use of bone has long captured the imagination of scholars. As already suggested, the lavishly carved decorations of the bone saddles suggest that they could have been used in special festive occasions, probably during processions. This idea was already proposed by scholars throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Some scholars attempted to link the hypothetical procession to a type of event. According to Stephen V. Grancsay, for example, the New York-4 was used in a procession after a battle.⁶³⁴ Other scholars linked it to a quite different event, namely wedding processions. The first describer of the Budapest-2, Jakab Ferdinand Miller, claimed in 1825 that the saddle was used during a wedding procession, and identified its use as a specifically Hungarian wedding custom. He even attempted to link it to a specific event: the engagement of Sigismund's daughter Elisabeth to Prince Albert.⁶³⁵ Recently, Benedetta Chiesi also argued in favor of the use of bone saddles in weddings. According to her, the bone saddles were used during the wedding procession, when the bride was

⁶³² See: II.2.3. Conclusion.

⁶³³ Schröder argues that the elaborate decoration of the bone saddles—meant to be fully appreciated only by walking around the three-dimensional object—suggests they were primarily intended for display and reception in a collection or exhibition context. However, with the exception of the Jankovich saddle (Budapest-3), she acknowledges that they were also fully functional riding seats. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 52.

⁶³⁴ Grancsay, "A Medieval Sculptured Saddle," 73.

⁶³⁵ Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban," 229; Miller, *Cimeliotheca Musei nationalis Hungarici*, 65–66.

escorted by the wedding crowd to the groom's house, which custom was mainly practiced in Italy in the fifteenth century.⁶³⁶

This latter hypothesis is supported by many different arguments which suggest that in most cases, bone saddles could be used in such contexts. These arguments include the love and wedding-related iconography and inscriptions discussed above.⁶³⁷ Furthermore, this hypothesis is also supported by the fact that marriage chests, caskets and other objects connected to wedding ceremonies and processions provide most of the analogies for the motifs on bone saddles. This argument is based on the assumption that in late medieval art, function and decoration were closely intertwined.

Function and decoration: marriage-related objects

A study of secular objects from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries reveals that the themes and motifs of the decoration often reflected the function of the object. The combination of function and decoration served as an explanation for the original purpose of the reliquary of Saint Sigismund Chapel, in the treasury of Prague Cathedral. The originally painted *coffret*, with bone, intarsia and metal mounts, is decorated with court and hunting scenes that seem incompatible with its function as a reliquary.⁶³⁸ The depictions, which seem strange in a sacral setting, suggest that the chest was originally made for secular purposes. It is safe to assume that it was originally intended for use in a marriage ceremony, and was transformed to a reliquary only later.⁶³⁹

Objects related to love, engagement and wedding, from small engagement chests to large dowry chests, serve as examples for the connection of function and decoration. The smaller engagement caskets (*forzerini*,⁶⁴⁰ *Minnekästchen*)⁶⁴¹ contained small

⁶³⁶ Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," 21–35; Jane Fair Bestor, "Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss's Essay on the Gift," *Past & Present* 164 (1999): 25; Benedetta Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," 101.

⁶³⁷ See: III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles.

⁶³⁸ Charles T. Little, "Coffret," in *Prague: the Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437*, edited by Barbara Drake Boehm and Jirí Fajt (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Prague, 2005–2006), 189; Jenny Wischnewsky, "5.20 Schmuckkästchen für Reliquien des hl. Sigismund," in *Kaiser Karl IV.: 1316-2016: Erste Bayerisch-Tschechische Landesausstellung: Ausstellungskatalog*, ed. Jirí Fajt and Markus Hörsch (Prague–Nuremberg: Nationalgalerie / Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2016), 356–57.

⁶³⁹ According to Charles T. Little, this could have been a common practice since there are other examples that secular boxes contain relics. Little, "Coffret," 189.

⁶⁴⁰ The term is coming from Florentine sources. See: Brucia Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," *Artibus Et Historiae* 3, no. 5 (1982): 54, note 3; 56, note 31.

⁶⁴¹ As Jurgen Wurst emphasizes, the term *Minnekästchen* likely originated in the 19th century. It distinguishes itself from the *forzerini* by being more modest compared to its Italian counterparts, which

valuables, usually jewellery, and gifts sent by the groom during the courtship period.⁶⁴² These were typical in late medieval Germany and France as well.⁶⁴³ The larger bridal or dowry chests (*forzieri, cassoni*), in which the dowry and linen were stored, became important objects in wedding processions by the fourteenth century.⁶⁴⁴ The iconographic program of these objects often focuses on love. From the fourteenth century onwards, these boxes were decorated with figures from well-known courtly romance stories as well as various love-related motifs.⁶⁴⁵ These motifs, similarly to the ones on the bone saddles, are typically couples in love, sometimes with love dialogues, and other motifs which have obvious or hidden love-related content.⁶⁴⁶

Not only the chests, but also other objects feature similar love-related iconography and could have been used as wedding gifts, such as combs, mirror cases and writing tablets.⁶⁴⁷ As Martha Easton points out, the vast majority of courtly love scenes appear on items used by women, including combs, gravoires, caskets and other objects associated with their toilette.⁶⁴⁸

As demonstrated in Part III, the theme and iconography of love is predominant on the carvings of the saddles, similarly to the objects linked to weddings and love.⁶⁴⁹ The fact that the bone saddles are primarily luxury versions of riding equipment, yet display an iconography similar to the engagement and dowry chests, may reveal information about their original function. The iconography of the bone saddles suggests their use in wedding representation. In the following, I will provide an overview of this possible cultural context of late medieval wedding rituals and discuss whether bone saddles can be interpreted in this context.

were typically gilded and adorned with lavish paintings. Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe," 8–9; Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love," 98.

⁶⁴² Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 43–45.

⁶⁴³ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 43.

⁶⁴⁴ Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love" 117; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Les femmes dans les rituels de l'alliance et de la naissance à Florence," *Riti e rituali nelle società medievali*, ed. Jacques Chiffolleau, Lauro Martines, and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), 8.

⁶⁴⁵ Such as the love stories of *Tristan and Isolde*, and *Pyramus and Thysbe*. Carns, "Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum," 72–75.

⁶⁴⁶ See the illustrations in Wurst, "Reliquiare der Liebe."

⁶⁴⁷ For (mainly French) examples, see: *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, 218–78.

⁶⁴⁸ Martha Easton, "Feminist art history and medieval iconography," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 428.

⁶⁴⁹ See: III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles.

The bridal procession

Most of our written and pictorial sources connected to late medieval wedding ceremonies and bridal processions originate from Italy, but there are a few surviving sources from German areas as well.⁶⁵⁰ These reveal that wedding rituals, such as the circumstances of the wedding processions, differed from one place to the other.

During the bridal procession, the *domumductio* (also known as *ductio ad domum* or *traductio*), the bridal party marched through the streets from the house of the bride's parents to the groom's house.⁶⁵¹ In Italy, during the procession, the bride would march through the streets accompanied by her and her fiancé's female relatives.⁶⁵² According to the Nuremberg laws, it was the groom who picked up the bride from her parents' house and led her to the church, accompanied by two bridal attendants.⁶⁵³ In the Landshut Wedding in 1475—celebrating the marriage of George of Bavaria, son of the Bavarian duke, and Hedwig Jagiellon, daughter of King Casimir IV of Poland—the bridal procession went through the town of Landshut and ended at the door of the church dedicated to Saint Martin.⁶⁵⁴ Obviously, here even the procession's destination was different; it was not the husband's house but the church.⁶⁵⁵

The main purpose of the Italian wedding processions was publicity: they confirmed the marriage in the eyes of the community.⁶⁵⁶ As the burghers of the city watched the bride on horseback, they became witnesses to the marriage. The processions also had a legitimizing function and provided an opportunity to demonstrate the economic and

⁶⁵⁰ For the rituals of Florentine sources see: Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 43–59.

⁶⁵¹ Chiesi calls it *domumductio*. Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," 101; Bestor uses the terms *ductio ad domum* and *traductio*. Bestor, "Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss's Essay on the Gift," 25.

⁶⁵² Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 47.

⁶⁵³ August Jegel, "Altnürnberger Hochzeitsbrauch und Eherecht, besonders bis zum Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 44 (1953): 238–72.

⁶⁵⁴ The Landshut wedding continues to be celebrated annually amidst festive circumstances. Thomas Alexander Bauer, *Feiern unter den Augen der Chronisten: Die Quellentexte zur Landshuter Fürstenhochzeit von 1475*, Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften 26 (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2008), 81.

⁶⁵⁵ Jegel, "Altnürnberger Hochzeitsbrauch und Eherecht, besonders bis zum Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts," 252.

⁶⁵⁶ According to the law of Modena, the *deductio* in public was the true bond of marriage "la deductio in pubblico era il vincolo vero del matrimonio." Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 46, 57, note 41, Angelo De Gubernatis, *Storia comparata degli usi nuziali in Italia*, 2nd ed. (Milan: E. Treves & C., 1878), 188.

political status of the family:⁶⁵⁷ the audience saw the wealth indicated by the dowry and the beautifully dressed bride.⁶⁵⁸

The processions of the wealthy families were impressive parades, sometimes with the participants dressed in festive attires. The procession was led by musicians, even for poorer families.⁶⁵⁹ Some processions may have even imitated triumphal marches, such as a procession that took place in Bologna in 1472, described as *trionfalmente*. The wedding of Lorenzo de Medici was also compared to triumphal processions,⁶⁶⁰ such as the wedding of Ercole I d'Este and Eleonora of Aragon, daughter of Ferrante I, in 1473.⁶⁶¹

There are two Italian representations where the bridal procession can be clearly identified. One is the detail of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco titled *Effects of Good Government in the City*, which is part of the series called *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico of Florence (Figure IV.13). On the bottom left corner of the fresco we see a bridal procession. This fresco is, however, dated around 1337–1339, and is therefore earlier than the saddles. The other representation is a *cassone* painting showing a detail of the the story of Trajan and the Widow from c. 1480 (Figure IV.14).⁶⁶² Both paintings show bride and groom in the wedding march, accompanied by servants and other attendants. On Lorenzetti's fresco, both the bride and the groom are riding while on the other painting, the bride and groom walk behind a white horse led by a child. The white color of the horse may have symbolized the bride's virginity.⁶⁶³ As

⁶⁵⁷ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 46.

⁶⁵⁸ Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," 25.

⁶⁵⁹ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 47–49.

⁶⁶⁰ Ludovico Frati, *La vita privata di Bologna dal secolo XII al XVII* (Bologna, 1900), 52-53; Girolamo Mancini, "Il bel S. Giovanni e le Festi Patronali di Firenze descritte nel 1475 da Piero Cennini," *Rivista d'Arte* 6 (1909): 198; Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 49.

⁶⁶¹ Ondedio da Vitale: *Cronaca*, Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, MS Classe I, 757. fol. 5r–6v; D. R. Bryant, "Affection and Loyalty in an Italian Dynastic Marriage: The Early Years of the Marriage of Eleonora d'Aragona and Ercole d'Este, 1472–1480" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2011), 174.

⁶⁶² The story, popularized by Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and retold by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, recounts Emperor Trajan's act of justice. As Trajan prepared for a campaign, a widow sought justice for her son, killed by Trajan's son. Despite the widow's concerns about his return, Trajan held a court. The depicted scene, set unusually from the right, shows Trajan's army assembled outside Rome. Trajan, enthroned in a pavilion with his son and the widow, decides his son will marry the widow. On the left, the widow invites Trajan's son into her house. Lucy Cox, "Giovanni di ser Giovanni Guidi, Lo Scheggia (San Giovanni Valdarno 1406-1486 Florence)

Trajan and the Widow: a cassone panel," *Christie's*, accessed June 19, 2024, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6088928?ldp_breadcrumb=back. The painting was formerly identified as the story of Ippolito Buondelmonti and Lionora Bardi. Klapisch-Zuber, "Les femmes dans les rituels de l'alliance et de la naissance à Florence," 9.

⁶⁶³ Seidel, "Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento," 21; Enrico Narducci, ed., *Marcantonio Altieri: Li Nuptiali*, (Rome, 1873), 67.

Klapisch-Zuber points out, the white *haquenée*, a small horse usually ridden by women, was an important part of wedding processions from the fourteenth century onwards.⁶⁶⁴

In the painting on the *cassone*, no one is sitting in the saddle and thus the it is fully visible. Both the saddle, the breast collar and crupper seem lavishly decorated, ornate pieces, intended for special, ceremonial occasions. The golden colored saddle is decorated with circular ornamentation, possibly gemstones and jewels.

The representation of this horse with a decorated saddle provides an opportunity to interpret bone saddles in a similar context. Moreover, it could have served representative purposes comparable to the similarly decorated marriage chests. The primary role of dowry chests during the wedding procession in Italy was to carry the dowry from the parents' house to the groom's house, where it became part of the bedroom furniture.⁶⁶⁵ According to Brucia Witthoft, the elaborated decoration of wedding chests became necessary as it substituted the earlier practice of displaying the dowry itself.⁶⁶⁶ The target audience for the rich decoration of the outside of the caskets was the men in the street, so the family's aim was to make the caskets as ornate as possible to represent the family's wealth. In contrast, the target audience for the interior decoration of the crates was only the newlyweds.⁶⁶⁷ Such a chest can be seen in the aforementioned *cassone* painting, carried by servants on the right side of the picture (Figure IV.14).

In view of these, I propose that decorating a white horse with a lavishly carved saddle could have served a similar function as the wedding caskets: they communicated the family's wealth, power, and social status to the public. What is more, bone saddles may also have served as wedding gifts. As saddles in the Middle Ages were customized, i.e., constructed to fit one particular horse, this gift had to include the horse as well.⁶⁶⁸

Lavishly ornamented horses appear in written sources from the period. In 1440 Bianca Maria Sforza, daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti, when traveling to Ferrara to meet Francesco Sforza and marry him, rode a white horse covered with a golden

⁶⁶⁴ Larousse, "Haquenée," accessed May 13, 2017, <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/haquen%C3%A9e/39045> Klapisch-Zuber, "Les femmes dans les rituels de l'alliance et de la naissance à Florence," 9. For the symbolism of the white horse in Old French and German epic romances, see: Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 75–89.

⁶⁶⁵ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 43. In contrast with Italy, German written sources remain silent about wedding chests in wedding processions. Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love and Bourgeois Marriage," 117.

⁶⁶⁶ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 51.

⁶⁶⁷ Klapisch-Zuber, "Les femmes dans les rituels de l'alliance et de la naissance à Florence," 6.

⁶⁶⁸ Forsyth, "The Saddle from Unicorn Passage," 56. This is still practiced by Marcin Ruda, a historical saddle maker who creates custom-made saddle reconstructions.

blanket.⁶⁶⁹ Similarly, during the bridal procession of Eleonora of Aragon, the source reports that the bride

sat on a white horse, [and she was] dressed in clothes of gold in the Neapolitan manner, with her hair over her shoulders, a most precious crown on her head, under an umbrella, or should we say a baldachino, of richly decorated white silk.⁶⁷⁰

In 1519, Pope Leo X organised a triumphal wedding procession for thirty orphans in Florence. The orphans were dressed in gold and silver gowns adorned with pearls and jewels. Each orphan sat on a mule and fifteen mules carried the dowry boxes. The mules were covered with expensive saddle blankets showing the Hospedale di Santo Spirito coat of arms.⁶⁷¹

Bone saddles in marriage processions?

In terms of the iconography, the objects showing the greatest similarity to the bone saddles are the betrothal and marriage-related caskets and boxes, which suggests that bone saddles could have been used in a similar context.

Moreover, as it has been demonstrated in Part III, love-related symbols are dominant motifs in the carvings on bone saddles, and there are also concrete references to weddings.⁶⁷² The most obvious reference is the appearance of the *dextrarum iunctio*, the visual display of the marriage vow, on two saddles.⁶⁷³ Less obvious symbols connected to wedding and betrothal are the floral wreaths and crowns, which also appear in some of the carvings. The bride wearing a crown is a recurring element in the pictorial representations and written sources of late medieval wedding processions, as seen, e.g., in the fresco by Lorenzetti (Figure III.129 and Figure IV.13), and in the previously cited description of Eleonora of Aragon's procession.

⁶⁶⁹ Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *La femme italienne à l'époque de la Renaissance: sa vie privée et mondaine, son influence sociale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1907), 72, note 3.

⁶⁷⁰ "Dita madama era suxo uno cavalo bianco, vestita de drapo de horo a la napulitana, con li chapili zoxo per le spale, et uno corona preciosissima in capo, sotto una ombrella, o voli dire baldachino, de seda bianco, richo de forniminti." Ondedio da Vitale, *Cronaca*. Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, MSS Classe I, 757. fol. 5r-6v; Bryant, "Affection and Loyalty in an Italian Dynastic Marriage," 174.

⁶⁷¹ Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," 49.

⁶⁷² See: III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles - Love, sexual and wedding symbols on the bone saddles.

⁶⁷³ Budapest-3 and New York-4. See: III.2.2. Courtly figures - Romantic couples - *Dextrarum iunctio*; III.6.2. Dominant iconographical program of the bone saddles.

The interpretation of bathing nudes on the bone saddles as fertility symbols also confirms this hypothesis (Figure III.57).⁶⁷⁴ It was already suggested in connection with the Bible of Wenceslas that their presence may suggest that the object was made for his second marriage.⁶⁷⁵ Moreover, similar naked women and men also appear on some marriage caskets, hidden on the inside of the lid, and these clearly had similar significance. These nudes are probably concealed inside the caskets because, unlike the other decorations on the outer side of the chests, their only target audience was the young couple (Figure IV.15).⁶⁷⁶

There are other symbols which refer to the ceremonial use of the bone saddles. As shown in Part III, a total of six saddles show figures of musicians (Figure III.50).⁶⁷⁷ The musicians appearing on bridal boxes were interpreted in scholarship as references to the ceremonial celebration.⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, the musicians on the carvings of bone saddles may be interpreted as visual representations of their ceremonial function. As noted above, musicians played a crucial role in the marriage processions.⁶⁷⁹ Their number was even regulated by laws in Siena.⁶⁸⁰ An illustration of the chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi, which describes the procession of the bride of the Doge of Pisa and Lucca, Giovanni d’Agnello in 1367, shows the crowned bride on a white horse, escorted by musicians.⁶⁸¹ In 1475, during the Landshut Wedding, the bridal procession was accompanied by 1110 “Trummetter, paugker vnd Pfeiffer.”⁶⁸²

IV.3.3. Conclusion

Is it possible to link this theory to the bone saddles with known ownership? As the sources are silent on this matter, these remain only hypothetical assumptions. However, in connection with two royal weddings (only one of which was realized) it is plausible that the bone saddles were used in such wedding-related festivities. Eleonora of Aragon,

⁶⁷⁴ See: III.2.3. Nudes – Bathing Nudes.

⁶⁷⁵ Hlaváčková, “Courtly Body in the Bible of Wenceslas IV,” 374.

⁶⁷⁶ Witthoft, “Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence,” 52.

⁶⁷⁷ See: III.2.2. Courtly figures – Musicians.

⁶⁷⁸ Robert L. Benson, “251. Bridal Box,” in *The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: E.P. Dutton), 255.

⁶⁷⁹ Seidel, “Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento,” 28–29.

⁶⁸⁰ Seidel, “Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento,” 21.

⁶⁸¹ Giovanni d’Agnello: „Triumphal procession of the Bride,” *Chronik des Giovanni Sercambi*. Lucca, Archivio di Stato, Cod. 107, fol. 67r. Seidel, “Hochzeitsikonographie im Trecento,” 29–31.

⁶⁸² Drummers and pipe-players. Bauer, *Feiern unter den Augen der Chronisten*, 81.

the bride of Ercole I d'Este, who owned the Modena-1, had a triumphal bridal procession and festivities connected to her wedding in 1473.⁶⁸³ Although there is no mention of a bone saddle in the written sources about the event, the predominantly love-related iconographical program, including loving couples and floral wreath, as well as the reports of the lavish festivities, justifies the interpretation of the object in this wedding context.

Accepting the hypothesis that Ladislaus Posthumus was the owner of the Vienna-1, based on the presence of the crowned letters *v*,⁶⁸⁴ and of the floral wreath, the usual attribute of the young king,⁶⁸⁵ the saddle could have been made for his planned wedding with Magdalena of Valois in 1457. Due to the sudden death of the king on November 23, the wedding did not take place,⁶⁸⁶ but sources report on the arrival of and the festivities organized for the wedding legation, sent there to take care of the wedding preparations. This indicates the lavishness of the events, including receptions and tournaments.⁶⁸⁷

These two cases raise the possibility that the bone saddles could have been used, or intended for use, during these festive events. Since both saddles bear the groom's attributes, they might have been meant for the groom to ride during the ceremonies, or they could have been gifts for the bride to ride during the wedding procession. Additionally, they might have been presented along with a horse. However, due to the lack of conclusive evidence, these scenarios remain speculative.

Although there are no surviving written or pictorial sources to prove the theory, various arguments support the idea that bone saddles were used in late medieval marriage ceremonies. These arguments are based on the connection between function and decoration in late medieval secular objects, with marriage-related caskets being the best examples. My arguments primarily rely on the love and wedding-related iconography, which is most similar to the decorative programs of the marriage-related caskets.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the tradition of wedding processions, along with the custom of carrying chests, had diminished, leading to the disappearance of such

⁶⁸³ See: note 670.

⁶⁸⁴ See. III.5. Initials; IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁶⁸⁵ See: note 516.

⁶⁸⁶ Györkös Attila, "V. László házassági terve: diplomáciai fordulat 1457-ben?" Attila Györkös, "V. László Francia Házassági Terve: Diplomáciai Fordulat 1457-Ben? [V. László's French Marriage Plan: A Diplomatic Turn in 1457?]," in *Francia-Magyar kapcsolatok a középkorban*, ed. Györkös Attila and Kiss Gergely, vol. 13 (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézet, 2013), 271.

⁶⁸⁷ Le Baron de Reiffenberg, *Memoires de J. Du Clerco* (Bruxelles: J. M. Lacrosse, 1835), 260–65; Antonius de Bonfini, *Rerum ungaricarum decades*, Decas III, Liber VIII (Lipsiae: 1936), 295–305.

caskets.⁶⁸⁸ Similarly, most late medieval bone saddles were primarily made in the fifteenth century, with only a few regional examples from the north surviving into the early sixteenth century.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁸ Wurst, "Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love and Bourgeois Marriage," 117–19. Johannes W. Pommeranz, *Pastigliakästchen: Ein Beitrag zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der italienischen Renaissance* (Münster–New York: 1995), 35.

⁶⁸⁹ Stockholm-1; Stockholm-2.

V. THE RECEPTION HISTORY OF BONE SADDLES

The history of bone saddles continued after the end of the Middle Ages; they maintained their role and became an integral part of the culture of subsequent periods. This part of the dissertation delves into the afterlives of bone saddles, shedding light on their presence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when abundant sources indicate their importance as highly sought-after artifacts.

V.1. Bone saddles in collections and the art market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Before their current location in museums, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most bone saddles were part of rich collections found throughout Europe and, in some cases, the United States. During this time, some of them entered the art trade, while others stayed outside it. Thanks to their involvement in the art trade and their detailed records, many sources survived regarding the demand for bone saddles, their ownership, as well as the art dealers interested in them during this period. In some cases, even their price was recorded. In this transitional, changing period in the history of the art market, the trade of bone saddles, such as the New York-2 and New York-4, also show how the US connected to the European art market at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The popularity of the bone saddles during that time is well reflected by the fact they were copied, mostly modelled after two bone saddles: six copies were based on the New York-2, one copy on the New York-4.

This chapter offers an overview of bone saddles and their nineteenth-century copies in private collections, the types of collectors and collections, as well as their place in the art market. I also present three case studies in which I detail the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century life of the bone saddles. The research of this period relies on written and even visual sources of bone saddles, much more abundant than those from the time of their production. The sources used for this study are also significantly different from the rest of the dissertation: business archives of art dealers, auction catalogs, art reports, and archival photos.

V. 1.1 Bone Saddles in private collections

Looking at the collections demographically reveals that many bone saddles, altogether seven known pieces, come from Italian collections.⁶⁹⁰ Five saddles were kept in Hungarian noble or aristocratic family collections.⁶⁹¹ Other collectors of bone saddles kept them in Germany, the UK, and France. At the beginning of the twentieth century, bone saddles appeared in the US, becoming part of American collections and museums.

Regarding the social status of the owners of bone saddles in this period, besides noblemen and aristocrats, princes and royals had these artifacts in their collections, too. The London-3 originates from the old collection of the Tower of London.⁶⁹² The Vienna-2 was in the imperial treasury of Vienna as early as 1731: it appears in the inventory of the Small Secret Treasury as a “Muscovite saddle.”⁶⁹³ One of the nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2, the New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy) came in the possession of Napoleon III when he bought the armor collection of Prince Soltykoff in 1861.⁶⁹⁴

Many other saddles were kept in the collections of European princes. The Berlin-1 and Berlin-2 were in the collection of Karl, Prussian prince (1801–1883), at the Monbijou Castle.⁶⁹⁵ The Braunschweig-1 was in the Kunstkammer of Duke Ferdinand Albrecht I

⁶⁹⁰ Bologna-1 (Pelagio Pelagi); Florence-1 (Medici family); Florence-2 (Medici family); Modena-1 (Este family); New York-2 (Possenti family); New York-4 (Trivulzio family); Stresa-1 (Borromeo family). See the provenance of each saddles in the database: *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu>.

⁶⁹¹ See: note 603.

⁶⁹² John Hewitt, *Official Catalogue of the Tower Armouries* (London: Eyre–Spottiswoode, 1859), 41, no. 61.

⁶⁹³ Stefan Krause, Fabian Brenker, and Sabine Haag, *Meisterwerke der Hofjagd- und Rüstammer* (Wien: KHM-Museumsverband, 2022), 34; Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 263; “Vienna-2 („Saddle of King Albert”),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/4>. For the term *Muscovite* see: II.1.4. Appellation of bone saddles in written sources.

⁶⁹⁴ Important collection d’armes orientales. La vente n’eut pas lieu, la collection fut achetee en bloc par l’Empereur Napoleon III: [vente] 25 mars 1861 [Collection Soltykoff], n. p, 1861; Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Expose des faits relatifs a la transaction passee entre le gouvernement francais et l’ancienne liste civile. Musee des armes et musee chinois* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1874), 3; “New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/24>.

⁶⁹⁵ “Saddle (*selle*),” *GIP*, accessed February 3, 2024, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/b9036339_97040303.html; Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 265; “Berlin-1,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/6>.

(1636–1687).⁶⁹⁶ The Florence-1 and Florence-2 were in the Medici collection,⁶⁹⁷ while the Modena-1 was in the property of the Este family.⁶⁹⁸ The New York-4 was in the collection of Prince Gian Giacomo Trivulzio of Milan,⁶⁹⁹ and the Boston-1 belonged to the Hungarian Batthyány-Strattmann family of Rohonc and Körmend.⁷⁰⁰

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, bone saddles were typically part of armor collections, which is still reflected in how they are displayed to this day. This is most typical for former private collections that became public collections. Such an example is the Wallace Collection, which was given to the British nation in 1897.⁷⁰¹ Richard Wallace purchased two late medieval bone saddles (London-1, London-2) and a nineteenth-century copy (New York-C3 = Wallace Copy), all in 1871, but from different collections.⁷⁰² Archival photos taken between 1871 and 1902 show two bone saddles exhibited in the armor collection during Sir Richard Wallace’s lifetime, identifiable as the London-2 and the Wallace Copy (Figures V.1–2). In another photo from 1902/1903, when the collection was already in the property of the State after Wallace’s death, the collection is rearranged and all three saddles are exhibited in the same room (Figure V.3).

There are also other famous armor collectors whose armor collection used to contain bone saddles. Count Alfred-Émilien de Nieuwerkerke, who was *Surintendant des Beaux-Arts* to the court of Napoleon III from 1863 to 1870, owned two saddles, the London-1 and the New York-2-C3 (Paris Copy).⁷⁰³ The New York-1 and New York-2 were owned by the American collector, Charles Maurice Camille de Talleyrand-Périgord,

⁶⁹⁶ “Saddle (*selle*),” *GIP*, accessed February 3, 2024, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/1763BF61_130c6003.html; “Berlin-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 22, 2024, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/7>. The saddle is mentioned in an inventory written after the death of the Duke Ferdinand Albrecht, as “*Ein mit Elfenbein belegter Sattel*.” Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Altregistratur, Neu 655, 106. The number of the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv in Wolfenbüttel is 96 Alt 68. I thank Regine Marth for providing me this information.

⁶⁹⁷ Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 324; “VIII. 67: Sella da Parata,” 328; “Florence-1,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/15>; “Florence-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/16>.

⁶⁹⁸ See: IV.1.4. Owners of the bone saddles.

⁶⁹⁹ See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: “Where there is smoke there is fire.” the New York-4.

⁷⁰⁰ See: V. 1.1 Bone Saddles in private collections - Case study: Stolen from the Castle. The Boston-1.

⁷⁰¹ “About us,” The Wallace Collection, accessed February 3, 2024, <https://www.wallacecollection.org/about-us/>

⁷⁰² “London-1,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/22>; “London-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/23>; “New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/26>.

⁷⁰³ Rosalind Savill, “Vollon’s ‘Curiosités’, the Comte de Nieuwerkerke and the Wallace Collection,” *The Burlington Magazine* 122, no. 932 (1980): 767.

Duc de Dino, whose armor collection, comprising nearly five hundred pieces including armor, weapons, and equestrian equipment, was assembled in France in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰⁴

Although bone saddles typically appear in armor collections on account of their equestrian character, another type of collection also used to include a bone saddle once: New York-2 was part of the famous ivory collection of Girolamo Possenti de Fabriano between 1841 and 1888.⁷⁰⁵

Case study: Stolen from the Castle. The Boston-1

The Boston-1 had been kept in an aristocratic collection for a long time and did not enter the art market. The saddle was probably owned by the Hungarian Batthyány-Strattmann family already before the nineteenth century. According to the curatorial file of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, it is thought to have belonged to either Balthasar Batthyány (who died in 1520) or his son Francis. The file also claims that the saddle was part of the armor collection that was legally recognized as family heirloom.⁷⁰⁶

As opposed to its origin, there are abundant sources about its history during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was exhibited in the Millenium Exhibition of 1896, then in the Vas County Art Exhibition in 1912 in Körmend Castle.⁷⁰⁷ Of the latter, two photos by Géza Farkas survived, one is of the saddle itself, complete with a breastcollar and reins (Figure V.4). In another photo of the interior of the exhibition, the saddle can be seen in the context of other pieces on display (Figure V.5). The saddle was exhibited once again in Körmend in 1943.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁴ Stuart W. Pyhrr, "Armor for America: The Duc the Dino Collection," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 47 (2012):183. See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2.

⁷⁰⁵ See: V.1.3. The Unicorn Group: The nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2.

⁷⁰⁶ The curatorial file of the bone saddle in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston reports that the arms collection, including the saddle of Field Marshal Carl Batthyány-Strattmann, the then holder of the titles of Prince Batthyány and Count of Strattmann (granted by Maria Theresia in the 18th century), was legally recognized as family heirloom (Fidei Comiss.). Curatorial File of inv. 69.944, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The archives of Field Marshal Batthyány-Strattmann contain no reference to this armor collection. Hungarian National Archives P 1320 Archives of the Batthyány family, Batthyány family members, item r. Batthyány Károly József (168-1772), 2nd box.

⁷⁰⁷ Csák, "A körmendi Batthyány-Strattmann gyűjteményt megörökítő felvételek," 319.

⁷⁰⁸ Csák, "A körmendi Batthyány-Strattmann gyűjteményt megörökítő felvételek," 319. János Kalmár came up with the story of the bone saddles being gifts in medieval tournaments, in connection with this particular exhibition. See: IV.1.1. Bone Saddles and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon, note 538.

The history of the bone saddle takes an exciting turn following this, as it becomes intertwined with the events of WWII. In 1945, Russian military troops were stationed in Körmend Castle. After the family had partially emptied the castle, it was looted. János Kőszegi, a local teacher, who played a major role in saving the archive, reported that the Cossack soldiers stationed in the castle dragged the famous collection of weapons apart. The pride of the collection, the “ivory saddle” from Sigismund’s time, was tried on the horse of a Cossack soldier, then put in a sack and taken away, despite Kőszegi’s pleas.⁷⁰⁹ Although this story is still commonplace in academic circles,⁷¹⁰ a 1947 letter by János Kapossy, the chief archivist of the Hungarian National Archives, to Béla Iványi, the archivist of the Batthyány family, reveals that Kőszegi was mistaken and the stolen item was not the bone saddle:

Good news, the ivory saddle of the Order of the Dragon is here! That donkey Kőszegi must have seen something else on the Cossack’s horse.⁷¹¹

The fact that Kőszegi made a mistake is confirmed by the fact that the saddle appears in the Sotheby’s auction catalog in London on April 17, 1969. The saddle was sold by Antoinette Windisch-Grätz (1902–1990), the widow of László Batthyány-Strattman (1904–1966),⁷¹² and purchased by Herbert Bier on behalf of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.⁷¹³ Thus, written sources confirm that the saddle was not stolen, but legally purchased in an auction from a member of the family who still owned it.

⁷⁰⁹ Zsolt Bajzik, “A körmendi Batthyány kastély műkincseinek és levéltárának sorsa 1945 után [The fate of the art treasures and the archives of the Batthyány Castle in Körmend after 1945],” in *A Batthyányak évszázadai* [Centuries of the Batthyánys] (Scientific Conference in Körmend, 2005 October 27–29.), (Körmend, 2006), 266.

⁷¹⁰ I have encountered the anecdote multiple times both at academic events and consulting with scholars.

⁷¹¹ “Egy örömhír, a Sárkányrend elefántcsont nyerge megvan! A szamár Kőszegi mást látott a kozák lován.” Zoltán Nagy, “Iványi Béla szerepe a körmendi helytörténetírásban [The role of Béla Iványi in the historiography of Körmend],” in *A Batthyányak évszázadai* [Centuries of the Batthyánys] (Scientific Conference in Körmend, 2005 October 27–29.), (Körmend 2006), 263, note 16.

⁷¹² Catalogue of Fine Medieval, Renaissance and Later Works of Art, 17th April 1969 (London: Sotheby & Co., 1969), 9. no. 6.

⁷¹³ “Saddle,” MFA Boston, accessed March 1, 2024, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/64967>; Curatorial File of inv. 69.944, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; “Boston-1,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/9>.

V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market

In contrast with the family history of Boston-1, some bone saddles long circulated the art market. Some well-known art dealers are known to have traded bone saddles. For example, Louis Bachereau, the famous Parisian dealer, bought at least three bone saddles.⁷¹⁴ Frédéric Spitzer was one of the best-known dealers of the century who became a major figure in the art trade.⁷¹⁵ His Parisian collection of medieval and Renaissance artworks was one of the most prominent in Europe.⁷¹⁶ He bought two bone saddles: London-2 and the New York-2.⁷¹⁷

In the following, I present case studies to trace the route of two bone saddles in the art trade of the early twentieth century.

Case study: “Where there is smoke there is fire.” The New York-4

Through the example of the New York-4, the extensive and rich documentation of the Duveen Brothers’ art dealer firm from the beginning of the twentieth century provides an insight into how the negotiation, purchase, and delivery of a bone saddle took place in practice.⁷¹⁸

The Duveen Brothers was a firm of art dealers, active from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. It was founded by Joel Joseph and Henry Duveen and was taken over by the son of Joel Joseph, Sir Joseph Duveen. The company’s most successful period was during his presidency, between 1909 and 1939. The firm had business activities in London, Paris, and New York. They played a pivotal role in bringing old

⁷¹⁴ The Unknown Location-1 (Zschille), the New York-2 and the Chicago-1. See: *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu>. For Louis Bachereau, see: Gabriel Schmit, “Les réseaux de Georges Pauilhac à la lumière des archives De Saint-Sernin aux Invalides. De Saint-Sernin aux Invalides. Annexes” (Study dissertation, École du Louvre, 2023), Annexe 3., accessed March 1, 2024, https://www.academia.edu/107433502/Les_r%C3%A9seaux_de_Georges_PAUILHAC_%C3%A0_la_lumi%C3%A8re_des_archives_Annexes; Pyhrr, “Armor for America,” 188–92.

⁷¹⁵ Pyhrr, “Armor for America,” 196.

⁷¹⁶ Paola Cordera, “Art for Sale and Display: German Acquisitions from the Spitzer Collection ‘Sale of the Century’,” in *Florence, Berlin and Beyond: Late Nineteenth-Century Art Markets and Their Social Networks*, ed. Lynn Catterson (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 121.

⁷¹⁷ “London-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/23>; “New York-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/32>.

⁷¹⁸ Among others, the business archive of the Duveen company consists of stock books, sales books, invoice books, and correspondence files. The archive is fully digitalized by the Getty and available online. “Duveen Brothers Records, 1876-1981, bulk 1909-1964”, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 960015, accessed February 27, 2024. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa960015>.

master paintings and decorative arts from European collections to the American art market.⁷¹⁹

The documentation regarding the saddle consists mostly of telegrams between the firm's three branches in New York, London, and Paris, from 1927 to 1929.⁷²⁰ These documents help reconstruct how long the journey took from the point when the saddle left Milan and arrived at its final destination, New York. What is more, it opens a small window to the world of the art market in Europe and America, the motivation for art dealers to get an artifact, the risks they took, and the client's opinions about their purchase.

Before the negotiations started, the saddle was the property of its earliest traceable owners, the Trivulzio family of Milan.⁷²¹ The last owner was Luigi Alberico Teodoro Trivulzio, prince of Musocco, whom Duveen's contacted in 1927 with the intention of buying the saddle.⁷²² It first turns up in the telegrams in December 1927, when the Parisian office reported to Joseph Duveen in the New York office that a "Mr. Stiebel of Rosenbaum"⁷²³ asked them if they would be interested in the ivory saddle of the Trivulzio collection.⁷²⁴ The sender of the telegram suggests that it would interest "Mr. M" very much, which implies that they had a possible customer in mind for the saddle. "Mr. M" can be undoubtedly identified with a rich American collector, Clarence H.

⁷¹⁹ "Duveen Brothers Records, 1876-1981, bulk 1909-1964."

⁷²⁰ Sir Joseph Duveen's annual itinerary was relatively fixed. He was in New York from September until the end of May, then spent June and July in London. Afterwards he travelled to Paris for a couple of weeks, then took the cure for three weeks in Vittel. At the end of summer, he returned to London, and in September sailed back to New York. S.N. Behrman, *Duveen, The Story of the Most Spectacular Art Dealer of All Time* (New York: The Little Bookroom, 2003), 1. Thanks to this fix itinerary, it is more or less certifiable which telegrams were sent by or to Sir Joseph.

⁷²¹ It appears in the Exhibition Catalog of the Palazzo di Brera in 1872 as the property of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, first prince of Musocco. The saddle was exhibited in the Room VII, where all the artifacts were the property of Trivulzio. The saddle was in Vitrine no. 241, among other ivory products.: "Avorii, fra cui una sella di stile alemanno del XV secolo; dittici trattici, tavolette diverse scolpite a rilievi storiati, cassette, pettini, ecc." *Catalogo delle opera d'Arte antica esposte nel Palazzo di Brera*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Societa cooperativa fra tipografi, 1872), 34.

⁷²² The person that the telegrams simply refer to as „prince" is Gian Giacomo's son, second prince of Musocco, after 1902. "Luigi Alberico Teodoro Trivulzio," Geneanet, accessed February 27, 2024. <https://gw.geneanet.org/fcicogna?lang=en&pz=francesco+maria&nz=cicogna+mozzoni&ocz=1&p=luigi+alberico+teodoro&n=trivulzio>

⁷²³ The firm Rosenberg & Stiebel, was established in 1874 by Jakob Rosenbaum in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany. Over time, Rosenbaum's four nephews, including Hans and Eric Stiebel, became involved in the business, and in the 1930s they opened branches in Amsterdam, London, Paris and New York. The source may refer to either Hans or Eric. "Stiebel, Ltd.," National Gallery of Art, accessed April 20, 2025. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/provenance-info.859.html#biography>.

⁷²⁴ December 9, 1927, from Paris to New York. Duveen Brothers. Files regarding works of art: Folder 29. Ivory, Chair, Virgin, and Saddle, c. 1924-1930, 003, accessed February 27, 2024. https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/mlc5om/GETTY_ALMA21124730440001551.

MacKay. The Duveen brothers had built a clientele in the American market, and closed several deals with MacKay who became the future owner of the saddle.⁷²⁵ In his reply from New York, Sir Joseph expressed his liking unmistakably in the following short but concise telegram: “crazy about it, most important, do not miss.”⁷²⁶ He confirmed his intention of purchase in the next telegram, declaring that the saddle is priceless and adding the proverb “where there is smoke there is fire.”⁷²⁷ However, in a later telegram, it turns out that the prince had rejected their offer and did not wish to sell the saddle until the following March.⁷²⁸

The next time the saddle appears in the telegrams is the following June. By that time, it seems that the Rosenbaums as middlemen were replaced by Julius Böhler, a German art dealer.⁷²⁹ On June 7, the saddle arrived at the London office of Duveen’s.⁷³⁰ However, a couple of days later, some trouble seems to have been unfolding. On June 18, Böhler sent a telegram to Duveen’s that the saddle has been exported without the necessary formalities which may cause serious trouble for the Prince of Trivulzio. Joseph Duveen’s reply to Böhler reflects the sender’s despair:

Saddle already en route America on offer to client stop
Situation very embarrassing stop
Will naturally try do all I can stop.⁷³¹

The tension is palpable in the messages between the Paris and London office. In one telegram, the Paris office suggests the following to Joseph Duveen:

You should let him have the saddle back to export properly. The saddle is no use to you otherwise, as if you should sell it the Italian authorities would claim it and in your position you could not do otherwise than give

⁷²⁵ Clarence Hungerford MacKay (1874-1938) was an art collector, patron, philanthropist, chairman of the board of the Postal Telegraph and Cable Corporation, and president of MacKay Radio. He collected Italian paintings, sculpture, Flemish tapestries, armor and caskets. “MacKay, Clarence H. (Clarence Hungerford), 1874-1938”, Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America, The Frickl Collection, accessed April 20, 2025. <https://research.frick.org/directory/detail/1403>.

⁷²⁶ However, it is unclear whether he refers to himself or about MacKay. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 004.

⁷²⁷ December 20, 1927, from New York to Paris. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 006.

⁷²⁸ December 20, 1927, from Paris to New York. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 007.

⁷²⁹ Julius Böhler was an art dealer based in Munich, one of the most significant figures in the German-speaking art market in the beginning of the 20th century. “Böhler, Julius,” National Gallery of Art, accessed April 20, 2025. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/provenance-info.8492.html#biography>.

⁷³⁰ June 8, 1928, from Paris to London. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 008.

⁷³¹ June 18, 1928, from London to Lucerne. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 009.

it back to them. If you do not do this, you are likely to get another ‘Chef de St. Martin’ case.⁷³²

The case of the “Chef de Saint Martin” refers to a late medieval reliquary bust in the Saint Martin parish church in Soudeille, France, which had been illegally forged and sold and finally ended up in a court case.⁷³³ Although the case did not affect the Duveens directly (or it is not documented), it was used as a deterrent example to warn colleagues at the firm about potentially serious problems. Amid these troubling news, the Duveens even considered giving up the saddle.⁷³⁴ However, the saddle was probably returned and exported again legally because another telegram reports that the purchase was finally closed for £9000 through Julius Böhler on June 21.⁷³⁵ It was shortly dispatched to the US, and on November 5 Joseph Duveen wrote to MacKay that the saddle arrived and is ready to be shown.⁷³⁶

Much as the Duveens thought that MacKay would love the saddle, upon inspection he complained about the price. In a letter sent to Joseph Duveen on January 19, 1929, he explains that Joseph Duveen’s suggested price is too high,⁷³⁷ and argued for a lower price on account of the fact that it is not made of ivory:

it is a fine and rare object, but not in any way as valuable as the price you put on it, [...] I think anybody who knows this period at all will tell you

⁷³² June 18, 1928, from Paris to London. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 009.

⁷³³ The reliquary bust, originally housed in the Saint Martin parish church in Soudeille, France, had a duplicate crafted between 1900 and 1906. The parish priest unlawfully sold the original to Pierpont-Morgan in 1906. Subsequently, in 1910, the duplicate was fraudulently sold as the original to a dealer in Brussels. Eventually, both the original and the duplicate were recovered. Following this, the Beaux-Arts administration determined that the original bust (inventory number OA 6459) should be allocated to the Musée du Louvre, while the duplicate would remain in the possession of the commune of Soudeilles. In November 1911, Arthur Delmas, a French politician and deputy for Ussel, who also served as the mayor of Soudeilles, was fined by the Ussel court for his involvement in the fraudulent scheme. Un désabusé, “Vous connaissez l’histoire du chef de saint Martin...,” *Notes Sociales, Le Gaulois: littéraire et politique*, November 22, 1911; “Copie du buste-reliquaire de saint Martin,” POP: la plateforme ouverte du patrimoine, accessed April 20, 2025. <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM19001274>. Buste-reliquaire de saint Martin de Soudeilles, reliquary bust, Paris, Louvre, OA 6459, France, Avignon / Limousin (?), 1340 / 1500, *Louvre - collections*, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010099252>.

⁷³⁴ June 18, 1928, from Paris to London. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 010.

⁷³⁵ September 14, 1928, from London to Paris. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 016.

⁷³⁶ “I thought you would like to know that the famous Ivory Saddle from the Collection of the Prince Trivulzio of Milan is now here and I shall be very happy to show it to you at any time that you may be in the neighborhood and can spare a few minutes.” November 5, 1928, New York, from Joseph Duveen to Clarence H. MacKay. Duveen Brothers, Collectors' files: MacKay, Clarence H., 5, c. 1928-1929, 1928, 058, accessed February 27, 2024. https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/mlc5om/GETTY_ROSETTAIE1164031.

⁷³⁷ The original price proposed by Joseph Duveen has not been preserved in the archives.

that \$60,000 is a very generous and fair offer for this saddle, and one that I will be willing to make, but it is my limit.⁷³⁸

Duveen rejected MacKay's counteroffer arguing that "whether the saddle is of Ivory or Bone does not in any way effect its value as an outstanding historical object of art."⁷³⁹ The next thing the sources reveal is that the saddle was delivered on the afternoon of May 11, 1929, to MacKay's estate, Roslyn, New York, which suggests that they finally agreed. However, since MacKay bought it together with another item and paid altogether \$150,000 for the two, the final price remains unknown.⁷⁴⁰ The saddle remained in the collection of MacKay until his death in 1938. In 1940 it was bought for \$15,000 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art through the firm of Jacques Seligmann & Company, acting as agents for the executors of MacKay's estate.⁷⁴¹

The New York-2 took the long journey from Milan to New York in 1928. The case shows that buying an art piece was an act that could involve many art dealers, and the case provides a unique insight into the operation of the Duveens' firms in New York, London, and Paris.

Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century written sources and historiography contain a great deal of uncertainties and errors about the New York-2.⁷⁴² Although the museum's latest opinion, based on radiocarbon dating issued in 2012, suggests that it dates from c. 1450,⁷⁴³ it was long regarded as a forgery in historiography.⁷⁴⁴ The first scholar who debated its authenticity was probably Stephen V. Grancsay, the Curator of the Arms and Armor Department of The Metropolitan Museum of Art between 1929–1964, who

⁷³⁸ January 19, 1929, New York, from MacKay to Duveen. Duveen Brothers, MacKay 5, 045.

⁷³⁹ January 21, 1929, New York, from Duveen to MacKay. Duveen Brothers, MacKay 5, 043.

⁷⁴⁰ May 11, 1929, from London to Paris. Duveen Brothers, Folder 29, 016; August 23, 1929. Duveen Brothers, Client summary book, M-N, 1910-1959, 1910, 27, accessed February 27, https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/mlc5om/GETTY_ROSETTAIE1304887.

⁷⁴¹ "MacKay, Clarence H. (Clarence Hungerford), 1874-1938", The Frickl Collection; Curatorial File of inv. 40.66, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁷⁴² This chapter is an updated version of a section from a paper originally published in 2021. See: Virág Somogyvári, "'The Unicorn Group': The Possenti Saddle and Its Nineteenth-Century Copies," in *Engraving, Plaster Cast, Photograph: Chapters from the History of Artwork Reproduction*, ed. Júlia Papp (Budapest: ELKH Research Centre for the Humanities, 2021), 41–51.

⁷⁴³ See: note 242.

⁷⁴⁴ I have also regarded it as a forgery in my MA thesis, categorizing it among the copies. See: Somogyvári, "The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles," 149., no. 25.

claimed (without references) that “it is now considered to be modern.”⁷⁴⁵ Paul Post, curator of the Zeughaus in Berlin, mentions Grancsay’s report in his article of 1938, adding a personal note that Grancsay never replied to his query why he deemed it a forgery.⁷⁴⁶ After Grancsay’s statement, however, historiography regarded the New York-2 as a forgery.⁷⁴⁷ Grancsay also claimed that the New York-2 was confused with a similar saddle, which differs from it in certain details.⁷⁴⁸ According to him, this other saddle was once in the Possenti Collection, then in the collection of Marchese D in Milan, followed by the Aicholz Collection in Vienna.⁷⁴⁹ Paul Post also acknowledges the existence of this copy of the New York-2, calling it the “Aicholz Saddle” and integrating it into his list of other copies.⁷⁵⁰ However, the provenance and detailed examination of the carvings of the New York-2 reveal that these scholars were on the wrong track.

Provenance

In 1904, The Metropolitan Museum of Art bought the glamorous armor collection of Charles Maurice Camille de Talleyrand-Périgord, Duc de Dino. The purchase, worth \$400,000, was published in the *New York Times* with a half-page illustration containing the most prominent items in the collection.⁷⁵¹ This illustration includes two “ivory saddles,” one of which can be identified as the New York-2 (Figure V.6).⁷⁵² Before selling it to The Met, the Duc de Dino presented his whole collection in a comprehensive catalog, in which these two saddles also appear.⁷⁵³ According to a report about the acquisitions of the Duc de Dino, these two saddles were purchased in Vienna by the Bachereau Company, Dino’s main agent and supplier, around 1895.⁷⁵⁴ The New York-2 cannot be traced further back than this point, and the Aicholz Saddle comes into the

⁷⁴⁵ Stephen V. Grancsay, “An Early Sculptured Saddle,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 32, no. 6. (1937): 92.

⁷⁴⁶ Paul Post, “Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel,” *Mitteilungen des Museen-Verbandes als Manuskript für die Mitglieder gedruckt und ausgegeben im Juli 1938.* (1938): 47.

⁷⁴⁷ Verö, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” 278, no. 17.

⁷⁴⁸ Grancsay, “An Early Sculptured Saddle,” 92–93.

⁷⁴⁹ Grancsay, “An Early Sculptured Saddle,” 92–93.

⁷⁵⁰ Post, “Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel,” 46–47.

⁷⁵¹ “The Duc de Dino Collection of Armor,” *The New York Times*, May 15, 1904.

⁷⁵² The other saddle is the New York-1. “New York-1,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/31>.

⁷⁵³ Charles Alexander Cosson, *Le Cabinet d’Armes de Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Duc de Dino* (Paris: E. Rouveyre, 1901), 49, no. E6, pls. 20–21.

⁷⁵⁴ A letter from August 4, 1895, reports that Dino had recently acquired his second bone saddle in Vienna for 23,000 francs. Pyhrr, “Armor for America,” 189; 192; 212, note 54.

picture instead. In 1894, Julius von Schlosser assembled all twenty bone saddles he knew of at the time in his dissertation.⁷⁵⁵ Saddle no. 10, from the collection of Miller von Aichholz (1835–1919) in Vienna, illustrated with a drawing by J. G. Fahrnbauer (made after a photograph by J. Löwy), presents an item similar to the New York-2, with some differences in details.⁷⁵⁶ Schlosser mentions in the paper that it was purchased in Milan.⁷⁵⁷ A saddle of the same specifications appears in the sale catalogue of Marchese D in 1888, under no. 35, although the photo of the saddle is reversed.⁷⁵⁸ The earliest identifiable owner of the saddle was Girolamo Possenti de Fabriano: it appears in the catalogue of his collection from 1880, under no. 93, illustrated with an archive photo (Figure V.7).⁷⁵⁹ A source from 1841 about a papal visit to the Possenti Collection mentions a saddle that can be identified with this one, indicating that it had spent at least forty years in the collection before it was sold.⁷⁶⁰

As the provenance demonstrates, what both the New York-2 and the Aichholz Saddle have in common is their sojourn in Vienna: the former cannot be traced further back from this point, while the latter vanishes at the same time. It is known from Schlosser’s article that the Aichholz Saddle was still in the Aichholz collection in 1894, and the Duc de Dino bought his saddle around 1895.⁷⁶¹ This overlap in their histories suggests

⁷⁵⁵ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 260–94.

⁷⁵⁶ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 266–67, no. 10.

⁷⁵⁷ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 267, no. 10.

⁷⁵⁸ *Catalogo della collezione del Marchese D... di Genova: 200 avori antichi, quadri antichi, armi, bronzi, ferri, maioliche, porcellane, oggetti d’arte, marmi antichi, mobili artistici, oggetti di scavo ; di cui la vendita ... 28 Maggio 1888. Impresa di Vendite in Italia di Giulio Sambon, bd. 9.5 (Milan: Pirola, 1888), 4. no. 35, pl. II.*

⁷⁵⁹ Raffaele Dura and M. DeLange, *Catalogue d’objets d’art et de curiosité, formant la collection de feu Mr. le Comte Girolamo Possenti de Fabriano: superbe collection d’ivoires, antiques, Byzantins, moyen-âge, XV, XVI, et XVII siècles, sculptures en bois, tableaux, dessins, bronzes et objets divers* (Rome, 1880), 12, no. 93. It is accompanied by another bone saddle (no. 94), however, its current location is unknown. According to a report called “Fanfulla” dedicated to the sale on April 12, 1880, the saddle was bought by a certain Parisian antiquarian, Signor Mosle, for 92,000 liras. The buyer of the other saddle (22,000 lira) was Stefano Bourgeois. However, in 1888, the two saddles appear together again in the collection of Marchese D. Ranieri Varese, “Prime indicazioni per la ricostruzione del Museo Possenti in Fabriano: una collezione neoclassica,” in *Cultura nell’eta`delle Legazioni. Quaderni degli Annali dell’Università di Ferrara*, 1, 2003, ed. Franco Cazzola and Ranieri Varese (Florence: Le Lettere, 2005), 759; 773–774; 781, note 39.

⁷⁶⁰ A report about the visit of the Pope Gregory XVI tells the story that the saddle accidentally fell to the floor but luckily was not damaged. Roma, Archivio Massimo: Camillo Vittorio Massimo, *Descrizione del viaggio a Fabriano del Pontefice Gregorio XVI nel 1841*. Varese, “Museo Possenti: considerazioni e integrazioni,” in *Riflessi del collezionismo tra bilanci critici e nuovi contributi: atti del convegno* (Urbino, Palazzo Albani, Aula Clemente XI, 3-5 ottobre 2013), Biblioteca del CURAM, 1 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2014), 1–2.

⁷⁶¹ Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel Des Ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 266–67; Pyhrr, “Armor for America,” 212, note 54.

that the Aicholz Saddle and the New York-2 are in fact the same object. The differences in their appearance can likely be attributed to restoration carried out between 1894 and 1901. This proposed timeframe is supported by the significant differences between the 1894 drawings and the photographs published in 1901, which may also have contributed to the earlier scholarly assumption that they were two distinct bone saddles.⁷⁶² The close comparative analysis of its surface before and after would be necessary to support this hypothesis and to clarify once and for all the contradictions regarding the New York-2.

Comparison

Since all that survives of the earlier appearance of the New York-2 are archival photos from nineteenth-century catalogues and the drawing by J. G. Fahrnbauer, identifying the tiny details is particularly challenging.⁷⁶³ Including the nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2 in the comparison helps overcome this difficulty, since most of them copy the earlier appearance of the saddle.⁷⁶⁴ There are four main differences between the saddle's reproductions. The field around the slots on each side (Fields L5 and R5), several little segments in Field L7 depicting the story of Saint George, as well as a circular field on the cantles (Fields L6 and R6) (Figures V.8–9).

The areas around the slots (Fields L5 and R5)

On the left side of the saddle in its former state, the field under the unicorn is largely fragmented, unlike the modern version (Figure V.10). The tail of the lizard-like animal and the long, windblown sleeve of the courtier only appear in the saddle's present state,

⁷⁶² In my 2021 publication, I mistakenly identified the period of restoration as taking place during the time the saddle was in the collection of the Duc de Dino, between 1901 and 1904. However, since the catalogue of his collection—published in 1901—already presents the saddle in its restored state, the restoration must have occurred earlier. Cf. Somogyvári, “The Unicorn Group,” 42–51 and Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 193.

⁷⁶³ It is notable that the initial comparison was conducted on the basis of reproductions. When I first undertook this comparison in 2020, I had neither the opportunity to personally examine New York-2 at The Met, nor any information regarding its earlier technical analysis. Consequently, I relied solely on the official photos provided by The Met. As a result, I considered the conclusions drawn at that time to be preliminary, with the intention of conducting a thorough examination in the near future to draw more definitive conclusions. In my comparison, I used The Met photo that closely corresponded to the perspective of the archival photo, although it was not an exact match. I applied the markings accordingly. It was not until 2022 that I finally had the chance to conduct the autopsy of the saddle, which only served to confirm my earlier hypotheses.

⁷⁶⁴ For the copies of the New York-2, see: V.1.3. The Unicorn Group: The nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2.

while on the earlier one, these details are unfinished or vestigial, as they appear on most of the copies.

Another important element in this field is closely connected to the practical use of the saddles. As shown in Part II of this dissertation, most of the late medieval bone saddles had two square slots on each side.⁷⁶⁵ The stirrup leathers and the girth were connected to the saddle and the horse by these slots. Both slots are visible in the present state of the New York-2, while in the former, the second squared slot is unfinished, only marked (Figure V.11).⁷⁶⁶ This fragmented second slot appears in all the copies as well.

As for the other side of the saddle, the lower slot is absent (Field R5), both in its earlier state and on the copies.⁷⁶⁷ Traces of the restoration carried out on this area around 1894–1901 can be easily identified in the present state of the New York-2, through the different color of the bone plates (Figure V.13). This piece includes the hind legs and rounded tail of the dragon, the space between the courtier's two legs, and the second slot. Additionally, the lighter color of the head of the courtier on the left also stands out. In the drawing and on the copies, this courtier wears a *chaperon*, while in the current state of the saddle, he is bare-headed and has long curls, which suggests that the head of the courtier was replaced during the restoration.

The field of Saint George (Field L7)

This field depicting the dragon-slaying episode was probably heavily restored, which is clearly visible by comparing the New York-2 with its earlier state and the copies (Figure V.14). There are four segments in Field L7 which are different in the two photos. These elements, which were definitely replaced during the restoration, can be identified by the discrepancies. The color of the bone is also slightly different in these fields (Figure

⁷⁶⁵ See: II.2.2. Other technical additions, details – Rectangular slots.

⁷⁶⁶ Schröder claims that, in its earlier state, the lower strap openings of the saddle were covered by a light-colored material. She also misrepresents my argument, stating that I ignored this detail and concluded that no traces of a second rectangular slot existed on the saddle prior to 1894. In contrast, in my 2021 paper, I argued for the presence of an unfinished slot on the left side of the saddle, while simply noting the lack of any indication of a similar fragmented slot on the right side. It is also important to point out that, at the time of that publication, I was unaware of two additional archival photographs—published in 1882—which depict both sides of the saddle. My analysis was based solely on the drawing by J. G. Fahrbauer. However, the 1882 photographs have since confirmed my earlier assumption: there are no visible traces of a second slot on the right side of the saddle either. Cf. *L'arte antica: Alla IVa esposizione nazionale di belle arti in Torino nel 1880*, ed. Fratelli Doyen (Turin, 1882), plates 27, 28; Somogyvári, “The Unicorn Group,” 47; Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 192–93, note 458.

⁷⁶⁷ Since I discovered the photographs published in 1882 shortly before the submission of the present dissertation, I did not have the opportunity to replace the drawings of Fahrbauer with them in Figures V.9, V.11, and V.12.

III. 35). Based on this, the following parts can be determined as a result of the restoration: an irregular triangular piece next to the praying princess, the head and the upper body of the dragon, and the hind legs of the horse. Since this part of the archival photo is not clearly visible, the analysis can be conducted on the drawing and the similarly executed copies (especially the New York-2-C1 = Paris Copy; Figure V.15). In these, the most striking difference is that it features a naked young man instead of the dragon. Furthermore, the jaw of the dragon on the New York-2, into which Saint George stabs one of his swords, looks like an unidentifiable object on both the pre-restored version and the copies. Both Saint George and the naked young man hold a sword, although the arm of the latter is anatomically shortened. There are other tiny inconsistencies in this field, both in the drawing and on the copies, such as a bush-like item under the horse's tail, and the bricks behind the naked man.

These observations imply that the dragon in the current state of the New York-2 is the result of restoration and that the original carving was of a naked young man. However, representing a nude man along with Saint George on horseback as he strikes him with his sword is entirely inappropriate in late medieval iconography. As shown in Part III of this dissertation, discussing the Saint George iconography of bone saddles, by the fifteenth century, a relatively specific iconography of the dragon-slaying episode was established in European art containing some obligatory elements.⁷⁶⁸ These include Saint George in a central position, normally on horseback, while a praying princess can be seen on her knees in the background. She is often accompanied by a lamb, and at the very back, a castle is visible with a royal couple looking out of the window. In most cases, the scene is set in a natural environment. The dragon scene was not part of the original story, its pictorial representation probably emerged in twelfth-century Byzantine art, from where it spread to Western Europe.⁷⁶⁹

The comparison between the earlier and the restored appearance of the saddle, suggests either that the early twentieth-century restorer was more aware of this late medieval iconography than the medieval master, or that the New York-2 was restored earlier than the nineteenth century. If the former is true, the figure can be interpreted as a bathing nude, which appears on many other saddles as well.⁷⁷⁰ However, the nude man

⁷⁶⁸ See: III. 2.1. Saint George and the dragon - Saint George slaying the dragon in late medieval images.

⁷⁶⁹ Gruia, "Religious Representations on Stove Tiles," 120.

⁷⁷⁰ See: III.2.3. Nudes.

of the New York-2 shows more similarities to manuscript illuminations depicting the bath of Tristan.⁷⁷¹ At this point, it is also worth mentioning an iconographical motif depicting Saint George killing a man, primarily appearing in Georgian icons between the ninth and eleventh centuries. In certain examples from the eleventh century, this figure is identified explicitly as Emperor Diocletian. This depiction can likely be explained by the belief that Saint George played a role in Diocletian's downfall.⁷⁷² The motif predates the more familiar depiction of Saint George slaying a dragon, although only a few examples survive from Georgia. However, these examples originate from a significantly earlier period than the original carvings on the bone saddle, making it unlikely that this is the meaning of the motif of Saint George and the naked man.

It is also important to note the disproportionately short length of the right arm of the figure and other elements that lack consistency. These may suggest another explanation for the nude young man, namely, the saddle was restored earlier, and initially a different dragon was carved in its place.⁷⁷³

The bow-like emblem on the cantles (Fields L6 and R6)

Unlike the other discrepancies discussed above, the last major difference appears only in the earlier version and on most of the copies: the emblem that once decorated the central area connecting the two rounded cantles.⁷⁷⁴ Since no reproductions survived of the top view of the saddle before restoration, its former appearance can be inspected only in the copies. The emblem in the New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy) clearly visibly depicts a bow-like motif in a vegetal garland (Figure V.16). This emblem in the archival photo of the New York-2 seems as though it was probably fringed with the same metal studs that run along the border of the whole saddle. Unfortunately, the place where this additional element was once located is no longer possible to identify in the present state of the New York-2.

⁷⁷¹ See: Gottfried von Strassburg: *Tristan und Isolde*, Königl. Bibl., MS. 14697, France 1455-1460, fol. 268 v.

⁷⁷² Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 105, 129; Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 317.

⁷⁷³ Schröder argues that the original carving depicted a dragon, suggesting that the dragon's mouth is still visible to the left of the human figure's head on the saddle copies. She interprets this detail as a remnant of the original pictorial program, which she believes featured a dragon. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 193.

⁷⁷⁴ See: III. 3.1. Emblems.

Conclusion

These observations clearly confirm the hypothesis suggested by the provenance history, namely, that the New York-2 was intensely restored between 1894–1901 and is identical with the Aicholz Saddle.⁷⁷⁵ Sadly, this restoration—similarly to other items listed there—was not documented in Cosson’s catalog.⁷⁷⁶ The artistic quality of the restored parts as well as the knowledge of late medieval iconography, indicated by replacing the iconographically inappropriate young man with a dragon, suggest that the restorer was an expert. This “scientific restoration” was probably an art-trade ruse, carried out to increase the price of the New York-2 on the art market. Nevertheless, the earlier, more fragmented—and more authentic—carvings of the New York-2 were perpetuated in its nineteenth-century copies.

V.1.3. The Unicorn Group: The nineteenth-century copies of the New York-2

The emergence of a group consisting of five copies made after the New York-2 attests to the growing popularity of and interest in these special items.⁷⁷⁷ The study of the nineteenth-century copies of bone saddles has been almost entirely overlooked by scholarship. In the twentieth century, only one 1938 study by Paul Post draws together and examines all the known copies of the New York-2, calling it the “Einhorngruppe” (Unicorn Group), after the prominent unicorn carving on the left side.⁷⁷⁸

Five copies of the New York-2 can be distinguished in written and visual sources from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century, and only two of these are known to have survived in collections (Figure V.17). In the nineteenth century, similarly to many late medieval bone saddles, the copies were found in different aristocratic collections especially in Western Europe, changing hands relatively often.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Schröder claims that the saddle had already undergone extensive restoration prior to 1894. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 192.

⁷⁷⁶ Charles Alexander Cosson, *Le Cabinet d’Armes de Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, Duc de Dino* (Paris: E. Rouveyre, 1901), 49., no. E. 6, pls. 20–21.; Pyhr, “Armor for America,” 204.

⁷⁷⁷ This chapter is an updated version of a section from a paper originally published in 2021. See: Somogyvári, “The Unicorn Group,” 52–62.

⁷⁷⁸ Post, “Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel,” 41–48. In her 2024 monograph, Schröder briefly discusses the 19th-century copies and includes them in her catalogue. Schröder, *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 29–32, 213–22, no.32–37.

⁷⁷⁹ For the provenance of the copies, see: “Nineteenth-Century Copies,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/browse?collection=2>. For the sake of easier legibility, in this

The copies of the New York-2 known today are the following:

- New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy), Musée de l'Armée, Paris, 3485 I; G546ROB
- New York-2-C2 (ex-Berlin Copy), unknown location, called "Berliner Sattel" by Paul Post⁷⁸⁰
- New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy), Wallace Collection, Inv. Nr. A 415.
- New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy), unknown location, once in the Sporting collection
- New York-2-C5 (ex-Peucker Copy), unknown location, once in the Peucker Collection⁷⁸¹

The Relationship between the Copies

In most cases, the carvings of the copies strongly resemble one another, although they often remarkably differ in shape. While the Paris Copy and the ex-Berlin Copy follow the New York-2 in shape, the Wallace Copy and the ex-Sporting Copy are squatter. Furthermore, both sides of the Wallace Copy feature a half-rounded, horizontal element under the pommel, between Fields L-R2 and L-R4, which heavily affect the carvings as well. The differing shapes and materials suggest that the copies were probably produced in different workshops.

Concerning the carvings, as noted in the analysis of the New York-2 above, most of the copies follow the old, pre-restored version of the New York-2. However, compared to the others, the Paris Copy has significant differences. These include the fields around the slots on both sides (Fields L5 and R5) and the emblem on the cantles (Fields L6 and R6). While the areas around the slots are fragmented in the other copies, following the original appearance of the New York-2, the carver of the Paris Copy completed the unfinished figures of these sections. These additions, however, do not correspond to the current appearance of the New York-2. In Field L5 of the Paris Copy, the tail of the lizard

section, the longer appellations of the copies, such as New York-2-C1, New York-2-C2, will be replaced by the shorthand designations Paris Copy, ex-Berlin Copy, and so on.

⁷⁸⁰ Post, "Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel," 41–48.

⁷⁸¹ Schröder claims that this saddle is identical to the New York-2-C2 (ex-Berlin Copy). She supports this identification by referring to their wooden material, similarities in motifs—such as the *fleur-de-lys* motif—and that both saddles could be connected to Berlin, suggesting that they represent one and the same object. *Die Beinsättel des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 219, note 624. J. G. Mann refers to the existence of a sixth copy as well, which was once in the Pitt-Rivers Collection. I have enquired about its existence at the Pitt-Rivers Collection, but received no information to date. James G. Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues: European Arms and Armour*. I. (London: The Wallace Collection, 1962), 230.

is relatively thin, and the windblown mantle of the courtier is completed in a rather idiosyncratic way. At the same time, the tail of the dragon is carved on the right side (Field R5), also different from the New York-2. The most significant difference between this copy and the others is the emblem, which is completely missing on the cantles of the Paris Copy. As a result, this part more closely resembles the present state of the New York-2. Furthermore, instead of the emblem, there is a *fleur-de-lys* made of the same material as the edges of the saddle: gilt copper.⁷⁸² The replacement of the emblem with a *fleur-de-lys* motif may suggest that this copy was made for a French nobleman, and the craftsman was aware that the former, bow-shaped emblem represented someone else in the past.⁷⁸³

Although there are no two identical copies, there are discernible affinities between them (Table XIV). The panels of the Paris Copy and the ex-Berlin Copy, the most similar in shape to the New York-2, were made of the same material (pearwood), which suggests that they could have been made by the same craftsman. In the case of the ex-Berlin Copy, however, the carver copied the original saddle and did not attempt to improve its look by augmenting the fragmented parts, unlike the carver of the Paris Copy. In fact, the details of the Paris Copy discussed above set it apart from the other copies to such an extent that suggests an altogether different craftsman than the rest of the copies. The two other saddles, however, are more likely to have been made by the same hand: both the panels on the saddle tree of the Wallace Copy and the ex-Sporting Copy were made of gesso, and they also share similarities in their general character, which suggests the same master.

Copies or forgeries?

Discussing nineteenth-century copies raises an important question, namely, whether they were made purely to reproduce the original or to deceive. In the nineteenth-century sources, almost all the copies were regarded as authentic late medieval items. The Paris Copy appears in the Album of Napoleon III as a fourteenth-century item, while Schlosser and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc date it to the end of the fifteenth century.⁷⁸⁴ At the

⁷⁸² The documentation of the Musée de l'Armée also suggests that the *fleur-de-lys* may refer to a French prince. I am grateful for Christine Duvauchelle for providing me with this information. Curatorial File of inv. 3485 I; G546ROB, Musée de l'Armée, Paris. See: Figure V.16.

⁷⁸³ Curatorial File of inv. 3485 I; G546ROB, Musée de l'Armée, Paris; Post, "Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel," 46.

⁷⁸⁴ Octave Penguilly L'Haridon, Album du cabinet d'armes de sa majesté l'empereur Napoléon III: pour faire suite au Catalogue dressé par M. A. Penguilly L'Haridon, officier supérieur d'artillerie, conservateur

beginning of the twentieth century, the Wallace Copy was considered a fifteenth-century north Italian work, and it was identified as a forgery as late as 1962 by J. G. Mann.⁷⁸⁵

The unusual technique and raw material of the copies' carved panels, which significantly differ from late medieval saddles, may shed light on the original intention of making two of the copies in question. As shown in Part II above, late medieval bone saddles were manufactured using a unique method that involved covering a saddle tree with leather, with bone panels mounted on it.⁷⁸⁶ The panels were made of cattle bone and antler. As opposed to the originals, the materials of the copies are quite diverse.⁷⁸⁷ In most cases the saddle tree was made following the same method as the original but was covered with plates made of other materials. The panels of the Paris Copy and the ex-Berlin Copy, for example, are made of pearwood, while the copy formerly in the Peucker collection is said to have been covered with boxwood.⁷⁸⁸ The material covering the saddle tree of the Wallace Copy and the ex- Sporting Copy was gesso.⁷⁸⁹ J. G. Mann, who first identified the Wallace Copy as a forgery, emphasizes the this particular and astonishing choice of material, stressing that the gesso was painted to imitate ivory.⁷⁹⁰ The use of cheaper materials in nineteenth-century copies is one of the strongest arguments for regarding these copies as deliberate forgeries.

Authenticity is a question in the case of the other copies as well. According to Sven Lützen, curator of the Armour Collection at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, the ex-Berlin Copy could have come from the atelier of *Erich Kahlert und Söhne* in Berlin, which was a prominent workshop of forged reproductions and is known to have traded artifacts to Paul Post and the Zeughaus. Although there is no trace of the saddle copy in their catalogue, the fact that the Zeughaus and Post were regular customers strongly suggests that the copy may have come from them or a similar forgery atelier.⁷⁹¹

du musée de l'Artillerie (Paris: J. Claye, 1867) 27, no. 67; Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 265., no. 5; Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'époque carolingienne à la Renaissance*, vol. 3 (Paris: Martinet, 1872), 447.

⁷⁸⁵ Laking, Cosson, and Cripps-Day, *Record of European Armour and Arms*, 175; Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, 230.

⁷⁸⁶ See: II.2.1. Layers of the bone saddles.

⁷⁸⁷ See: Table XIV.

⁷⁸⁸ Grancsay, "An Early Sculptured Saddle," 92, note 7; "Falsche mittelalterliche Beinsättel," 47.

⁷⁸⁹ Similarly to the original New York-4, its nineteenth-century copy, the New York-4-C1 (Riggisberg Copy), is covered with bone panels. "Saddle (selle)" *GIP*, accessed October 5, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/B7F11733_884974a9.html "New York-4-C1 (Riggisberg Copy)," *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/29>.

⁷⁹⁰ Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, 230.

⁷⁹¹ I am grateful to Sven Lützen, curator of the armor collection at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, for this information. For the atelier of Erich Kahlert und Söhne see: Hans Schedelmann, *Die Waffenbestände*

Although these clues may imply that the original intention of some of the copies was to deceive, the case of the Paris Copy seems to be different. The fact that the carver of the Paris Copy not only copied but attempted to augment the fragmented parts, and even personalized it by removing the emblem and adding the *fleur-de-lys*, suggests that his main aim was not forgery, but transforming the original design into a copy personalized for its owner.

There is another case, which attests to a nineteenth-century demand for copies for another reason than falsification: producing official replicas. In 1887, the president of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris requested permission to have copies made of Florence-1 and Florence-2. In the end, Enrico Ridolfi, deputy director of the Royal Galleries, declined this request for conservation reasons; he did not want the object to suffer any potential damage during the casting process.⁷⁹²

Time of production

Although the migration of the copies in the second half of the nineteenth century can be traced in many cases, there are no sources about their time of production. The copy whose provenance can be traced back the earliest is the ex-Peucker Copy in 1854.⁷⁹³ The Paris Copy and Wallace copy can be traced back to 1864 and 1865, respectively.⁷⁹⁴ This implies that the copies could have been produced in the first half or middle of the century. Fortunately, as noted above, a source from 1841 testifies that the New York-2 was already in the prominent ivory collection of Count Possenti at that time, which was so famous that it was praised by contemporaries as early as 1809, and even visited by the pope.⁷⁹⁵

It is very probable, therefore, that the copies were made after the New York-2 during its time in this illustrious ivory collection. However, this does not necessarily

der Firma E. Kahlert & Sohn, Berlin in Liquidation; Versteigerung am 17. Juni 1940 (Berlin: Lange, 1940). For more on the forgery of artworks in general, see: Sándor Radnóti, *The Fake: Forgery and Its Place in Art*, trans. Ervin Dunai (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999); János György Szilágyi, *Legbölcsebb az idő: Antik vázák hamisítványai* [Time is the Wisest: Forgeries of Ancient Vases] (Budapest: Corvina, 1987).

⁷⁹² Archivio Storico della Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence. R.R. Gallerie, 1887 m E, pos. 9, ins. 21.; Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 328.

⁷⁹³ “New York-2-C5 (ex-Peucker Copy),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/28>.

⁷⁹⁴ “New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/24>; Wallace “New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy),” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/26>.

⁷⁹⁵ See: note 760.

imply that the source of the copies was the original saddle. It is also possible that they were made after reproductions, probably drawings and engravings at that time. It is important to note that due to the three-dimensional character of saddles, manufacturing them after reproductions of the two sides was not possible. Using reproductions to recreate the objects may explain their slightly—or in the case of the Wallace Copy markedly—different shape. The differences on the front and back are especially notable, although the Saint George's cross on the front of the pommel on the New York-2 can be seen on three copies as well.⁷⁹⁶ Regardless of the solution of this problem, the existence of these copies clearly attests to the popularity of the New York-2 in the first part of the nineteenth century.

The fact that so many copies of the New York-2 were made indicates that it was probably the best-known bone saddle kept in an illustrious ivory collection, which was easily accessible to the public in the nineteenth century. Despite their adventurous life in rich aristocratic collections, the copies of the New York-2 today are no longer at the center of interest but hidden away in private collections and museum repositories. Nevertheless, the unique group of copies of the New York-2 serves as a testament to the art trade in nineteenth-century Europe.

V.1.4. Value and price

Examining the bone saddles' contemporary sales prices provides and insight into their market value. In some cases, the bone saddles were purchased as part of a whole collection, such as in 1871, when Wallace bought the collection of Nieuwerkerke (incl. London-1) for 400,000 francs, although the price of the saddle on its own is unknown.⁷⁹⁷ Bone saddles sold / purchased individually tell us more about their value at the time.

Two sources preserve information about the price of the New York-2. On April 1, 1880, a certain Signor Mosle bought it for 92,000 Italian lira from the collection of Girolamo Possenti di Fabriano.⁷⁹⁸ Compared to the other ivory products of the sale, the saddle fetched the highest price among the items described in the report.⁷⁹⁹ New York-1

⁷⁹⁶ On the Paris Copy, the Wallace Copy and the ex-Sporting Copy.

⁷⁹⁷ Savill, "Vollon's 'Curiosités,' the comte de Nieuwerkerke and the Wallace Collection," 767.

⁷⁹⁸ See: note 759.

⁷⁹⁹ See: note 759.

was much cheaper at 22,000 lira. For comparison, the only other artifact sold for a similar price was a seventeenth-century “carabina a ruota” (wheellock carbine) at 27,000 lira.⁸⁰⁰

The price of the saddle is noted again fifteen years later, in 1895, when the New York-2 was bought for 23,000 francs by the Duc de Dino in (of?) the United States.⁸⁰¹ To compare: in 1896, two Monet paintings fetched a similar price at a New York sale.⁸⁰²

The price of the New York-4 is known from a purchase on June 21, 1927, when it was bought by the Duveen brothers from Count Trivulzio. The price of the saddle was £9000.⁸⁰³ It was almost as much as *The Doctor*, a c. 1665 painting by Jan Steen, in the London stock book of the Duveen Brothers.⁸⁰⁴ The next year, MacKay wanted to buy it for \$60,000, the equivalent of c. £12,000, meaning that the Duveens may have made £3000 on the sale, however, the final sales price is not known.⁸⁰⁵ In 1940, it was bought by the Met through the firm of Jacques Seligmann & Company for \$15,000.⁸⁰⁶ Its price was almost \$5000 higher than a *Nature Morte* by Henri Matisse sold in the same year.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁰ Varese, “Prime indicazioni per la ricostruzione del Museo Possenti in Fabriano,” 772-75. For a parallel example of a seventeenth-century Wheellock Carbine see: “Wheellock Carbine,” *The Met Collection*, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/22376>

⁸⁰¹ See: note 754. Pyhrr is uncertain whether this corresponds to the New York-2 or New York-1. However, considering that the New York-1 was acquired from the Egger firm in 1894, it is likely that this refers to the New York-2. Pyhrr, “Armor for America,” 212, note 54.

⁸⁰² no. 152: “Antibes, vue du plateau Notre Dame” and no. 163: “Melting Ice.” According to the notes in the sale catalog, the former was priced at \$4500 while the latter was \$4250. *Catalogue of the extremely valuable and Highly Artistic Property belonging to the American Art Association, New York* (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1895), 74 (no 152), 80 (no. 163), accessed October 5, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/b1475315/page/n87/mode/1up>. According to the Historical Currency Converter, around 1895, 23,000 francs was equivalent to around \$4600. Historical Currency Converter, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>.

⁸⁰³ See: note 735.

⁸⁰⁴ London stock, £10,000. Duveen Brothers, General stock book, 1926-1927, 1926., 190, accessed February 27, 2024, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b176>. Jan Steen: *The Doctor*, oil on panel, c. 1665. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Northbrook Provenance, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://northbrook.cmoa.org/items/the-doctor-1478/>.

⁸⁰⁵ According to the Historical Currency Converter, around 1927-28, \$60,000 equalled c. £12000. Historical Currency Converter, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>. See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: “Where there is smoke there is fire.” The New York-4.

⁸⁰⁶ See: note 741. Curatorial File of inv. 40.66, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁸⁰⁷ No. 71. Henri Matisse: *Nature Morte*. The handwritten price on this example of the sale catalog is \$10,400. *Important works by celebrated modern French painters*, (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries Inc., 1940), 32, no. 71, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://archive.org/details/importantworksby00park/page/32/mode/2up>. The painting is currently at the MOMA, New York. Henri Matisse: Still Life after Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s ‘La Desserte,’ oil on canvas, 1915. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79872>.

One of the nineteenth century copies, the New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy) was sold by the art dealer E. Juste in 1866, and bought by Nieuwerkerke for 1600 francs.⁸⁰⁸ In comparison, in the same year, a drawing by Gainsborough fetched this price.⁸⁰⁹

Bone saddles have also appeared on the twenty-first-century art market. The New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy) was acquired by Anna Botterell (Sporting Collection) in 2008 for £180 at a Bonhams auction in London.⁸¹⁰ In 2021, the Unknown Location-2 was offered at auction by Hermann Historica and sold for €7,400.⁸¹¹ This is the saddle of which only an archival photograph was previously available.⁸¹² The newly published images in the sales catalogue reveal significant alterations, indicating that the piece has undergone extensive restoration.

V.1.5. Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, bone saddles regularly appear in collection catalogues, auction inventories, and art reports. The frequent changes of ownership clearly attest to the popularity of bone saddles during this time. The appearance of copies and forgeries also shows the growing interest in these special display objects. The second blossoming of bone saddles five hundred years after their original production opens a window into nineteenth-century aristocratic taste in collecting art.

V.2. Bone saddles today

Today, bone saddles are kept in different museums in Europe and in the US. Most of them are displayed in exhibition cases, while others remain hidden in storage rooms. In recent years, bone saddles have come to the center of attention again. This is evidenced by the different kinds of reproductions made after them. In 2021, a reproduction of the

⁸⁰⁸ Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, 230; Receipt by E: Juste “Une selle du XV^e siècle.” Curatorial File of inv. A 415, The Wallace Collection, London.

⁸⁰⁹ No. 536. Park Scenery. The handwritten price for this item in the sale catalog is £63. *Catalogue of the Memorable Cabinet of the Drawings by the Old Masters, and Collection of Engravings, Formed with Profound Taste and Judgement* (London: J. Davy and Sons, 1866), 37, no. 536, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://archive.org/details/b14685929/page/n39/mode/2up>. According to the Historical Currency Converter, around 1866, 1600 francs was c. £63. Historical Currency Converter, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>.

⁸¹⁰ Anna Botterell, email message to author, October 4, 2023; “Lot 187. A Saddle In German Or Flemish 15th Century Style,” *Bonhams*, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.bonhams.com/auction/15809/lot/187/a-saddle-in-german-or-flemish-15th-century-style/>.

⁸¹¹ See: note 222.

⁸¹² See: “Unknown Location-2,” *Bone Saddles*, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://bonesaddles.abtk.hu/items/show/20>.

London-3 was made as part of an international cooperation: the reconstructed saddle tree was made by Joram van Essen from the Netherlands, the paintings imitating the bone panels were made by Markéta Poskočilová (*margaritae.ars*) from the Czech Republic, while the leather parts were produced by Marcin Ruda, a saddle maker from Poland (Figure II.31). Currently, three bone saddle reconstructions are in the making: Peter Spätling is working on a reconstruction of the Braunschweig-1, Wouter Nicolai is reconstructing the Vienna-1, and Sebastian Höhn is manufacturing a saddle based on the Vienna-2.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, bone saddles currently housed in private collections occasionally reappear on the art market. Two recent examples illustrate this trend: the New York-2-C4 (ex- Sporting Copy) auctioned at Bonhams in 2008,⁸¹³ and the Unknown Location-2, which appeared at a Hermann Historica auction in 2021.⁸¹⁴ These cases offer hope that additional pieces, currently hidden in private collections, may resurface over time.

⁸¹³ See: note 810.

⁸¹⁴ See: note 222.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through a multidisciplinary approach and methodology that incorporates source criticism, art historical analysis, and the analysis of material culture and the historical context, this dissertation aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of these extraordinary objects.

Interpreting bone saddles as horse equipment not only enriches the art historian's understanding of these objects but also addresses rarely considered issues in art history. A detailed examination of the layers and technical aspects of bone saddles in workshop and guild records reveals information about the raw materials and manufacturing processes, which pave the way for further physical reconstruction of these complex objects.

The stylistic analysis of the bone saddles suggests a common workshop for the Budapest-1 and Budapest-3, and reveals that these are the highest-quality items in the object group. The deep analysis of the motifs and their relationship to each other challenges earlier historiographical assumptions that viewed the carvings as arbitrary designs and interprets the love-related scenes and symbols as part of a conscious iconographical program. Moreover, the transitional character of this period, reflected through the presence of the old traditions and new tendencies, is captured by the motifs and the inscriptions on the saddles as well.

In contrast with the tendency favored earlier in historiography, which connected the bone saddles to the reign and the court of Sigismund, the chronological framework of the bone saddles is much broader, from the 1430s to the end of the fifteenth century for the most of the bone saddles. As a result, the theory linking the bone saddles to the Order of the Dragon and Sigismund can no longer be sustained and should be set aside. Based on the iconographical, stylistic, motivic, and literary relations discussed in the dissertation, the majority of the bone saddles can be located within a broader area, with the western border in Rhineland and the eastern border in Transylvania. As for the questions of function, although there is no written source that would prove the idea of the use of the bone saddles in marriage processions, there are several arguments supporting this idea, the most relevant of which is the love and wedding-related iconography. Still, due to the lack of sources, this link remains hypothetical in the discussion about the objects' original function.

The reception history of bone saddles was not discussed in detail in earlier scholarship, however, the abundance of written sources provides new insight into this matter. The great interest in bone saddles in the late nineteenth, early twentieth-century art market, and the presence of copies, reflect the popularity of these objects during that time and provides a glimpse into the nineteenth-century aristocratic taste in collecting art.

In 2006, visitors to the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts who marveled at the seven bone saddles had no choice but to delve into exhibition and collection catalogs to learn more about these unique items. Today, thanks to the continuous advancement of digital technology, accessing these objects has become much easier. New digital techniques, such as creating three-dimensional models, allow us to appreciate these objects in their full perspective. The renewed and growing interest in bone saddles has brought them into the spotlight in both academic and public circles. Through my work, I aim to contribute to this interest, highlight the importance of these unique objects, and restore their rightful place in scholarly discourse.

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Abbreviations

- GIP** Courtauld Institute of Art, *Gothic Ivories Project* [GIP], accessed October 5, 2023. <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/>
- UH** Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg
- BnF** Bibliothèque nationale de France
- KHM** Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

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APPENDICES

Three-dimensional digitization of late medieval bone saddles through photogrammetry

This chapter presents a digitization project started in 2021, during which three-dimensional models of late medieval bone saddles were created using photogrammetry.¹ During the project, five late medieval bone saddles were digitized: the Glasgow-1, the London-1, the London-2, the Vienna-1, and the Vienna-2.² In addition to these, I also created a model of one of the fragments, the Tata-fr-1.³

The aim of the project

The primary aim of the project was to facilitate the research of bone saddles, as their multi-faceted and complex forms can be thoroughly examined only on models that allow for a visual in 360 degrees, encompassing all details. Where such models are unavailable, the investigation is limited to photographs which often means a loss of information due to the limited and sometimes distorted image. However, a three-dimensional model, created as a digital reconstruction of the original object and rotatable in all directions, significantly simplifies not only the examination of the objects' surfaces but also the comparative analysis of multiple bone saddles.

The idea of the three-dimensional digitization of bone saddles was first conceived in 2017. The creation of models was justified by several factors in the research. Firstly, bone saddles are multi-view objects decorated with carvings on all sides, requiring at least four views—top, side, and bottom—to be adequately studied using traditional photographs. Furthermore, due to the complex and curved surfaces of the saddles, there are numerous components that are less visible in traditional photographs and it can be difficult to see the details in relation to the overall saddle structure. These components mainly relate to the saddle's construction techniques and former usage, often involving carvings. For instance, the internal surface of most saddles, straps, and buckles indicate their past use and their relationship with other horse equipment.⁴ Without a three-dimensional model, mapping such technical segments and their relation to the object as a whole is only possible through the comparison of traditional photographs taken from multiple angles and a comprehensive understanding of their spatial positioning.

Since bone saddles are currently scattered across numerous museums worldwide, conducting a comprehensive comparative study of them in one place is also cumbersome. Comparative analysis through traditional photography is limited to the aspects visible only in photographs. Therefore, a comparison based solely on photographs, similar to the examination of carvings and technical details, leaves researchers feeling dissatisfied.

Therefore, the creation of three-dimensional models can provide new perspectives in the research of bone saddles, greatly facilitating both the technical and surface examination of the objects, as well as comparative analyses. Moreover, creating a model offers additional insights. Printing a model of a bone saddle using a 3D printer or crafting it with CNC technology opens up possibilities that might not be feasible for carefully guarded, fragile artifacts displayed in glass cases. Such a reproduction can be practically tested, helping to address several questions: for instance, how well the saddle fits and conforms to a horse's back, and how practical it is in actual use.

Photogrammetry: a new direction of digitizing artefacts

Photogrammetry is a science of measuring in photos.⁵ This technique can be applied to a wide range of scales, from small objects to large-scale terrain mapping, with the primary requirement being the capture of a sufficient number of photographs.⁶ Its practical application allows for the creation of accurate three-dimensional models, making it a cost-effective alternative to the significantly more expensive method of three-dimensional laser scanning.⁷ The essence of the method is to capture as many overlapping photographs of the object as possible. Photogrammetric software then calculates the position of the environment and the camera, based on the photographs. By combining the angles and comparing them with each other, it computes the three-dimensional data and recognizes the common points between adjacent photos.⁸ Based on this information, the software reconstructs the three-dimensional structure of the objects and the surrounding environment visible in the photos, and stores the resulting data in a point cloud.⁹ The next step is to generate a mesh based on this point cloud, which is a model composed of polygons.¹⁰ Texture can then be applied to this mesh, generated based on the texture data extracted from the photographs.¹¹

In recent years, the number of three-dimensional models of artifacts significantly increased. The three-dimensional digitization of artifacts and the application of photogrammetry are encouraged through supplementary materials and instructional

videos. Tutorial videos produced by Livrustkammaren in Stockholm are specifically designed to assist museum professionals in applying these techniques.¹² In their videos, they demonstrate the application of photogrammetric methods on museum artifacts, encouraging other museums to adopt this practice. Many of their models are available on Sketchfab, the largest online repository for three-dimensional models.¹³

From plan to implementation¹⁴

Equipment

A crucial aspect of preparing for my photogrammetry project involved acquiring the necessary technical equipment and assembling a suitable toolkit, primarily inspired by Livrustkammaren’s instructional videos. However, adapting the Swedish museum’s practices to a “traveling project” posed several challenges. The most significant difference was that while a museum typically has a permanent photography studio, the digitization of bone saddles took place in various museums across different countries. Therefore, it was necessary to procure equipment that met the following criteria: professional yet portable, mobile, and adaptable to different museum environments (Figure A.1).



Figure A. 1: On-site photo of the Wallace Collection, London, during the photo shoot of the London-1, May 26, 2022. Photo by author.

The following equipment was procured:

- Digital single-lens reflex camera with a fixed lens (Nikon D5600, AF-S Nikkor 50mm f/1.8 GB)
- Photogrammetry software (Agisoft Metashape)
- a high-performance computer (custom-built configuration with specifications: RAM: 2*DDR4 32GB/3000MHz Corsair K2 Vengeance LPX; CPU: Core i9-9900K; GPU: RTX 2070 8GB MSI SUPER ARMOR OC) and lighting technology (a softbox kit consisting of three lamps and a green background)

Among these tools, the lighting technology had to meet the most criteria:

- Application of constant, non-direct, diffused light (to avoid the formation of shadows)
- Suitable color temperature
- Use of bulbs that do not heat up, thus avoiding heating up the artifacts
- Mobility and portability

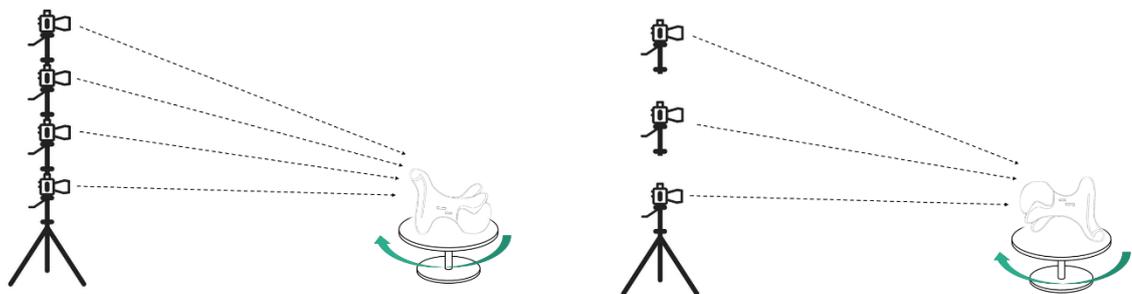


Figure A. 2: Flowchart of photographing the bone saddles. Drawing by author.

Workflow¹⁵

Photography

The saddle was placed on a rotating table and manually rotated 360 degrees, incrementally, approximately every one to two centimeters, to take photos from different angles. Photographs were taken from four distinct height levels; subsequently, the object

was inverted, and additional images were taken from three more height levels. In total, approximately six hundred photographs were captured of each saddle. (Figure A.2).

Post-processing

The post-processing phase of the workflow began with the essential task of adjusting the color settings and organizing the images. Subsequently, the images underwent processing in the *Agisoft Metashape* software. While the software inherently automates much of the three-dimensional modeling process, numerous factors necessitate manual post-processing. Notably, the unique nature of museum artifacts, such as bone saddles, requires special handling. A notable challenge arose from the need to place the saddle upside down on a soft surface for preservation purposes.¹⁶ (Figure A.3) During software post-processing, this soft material had to be manually trimmed away, significantly slowing the workflow.

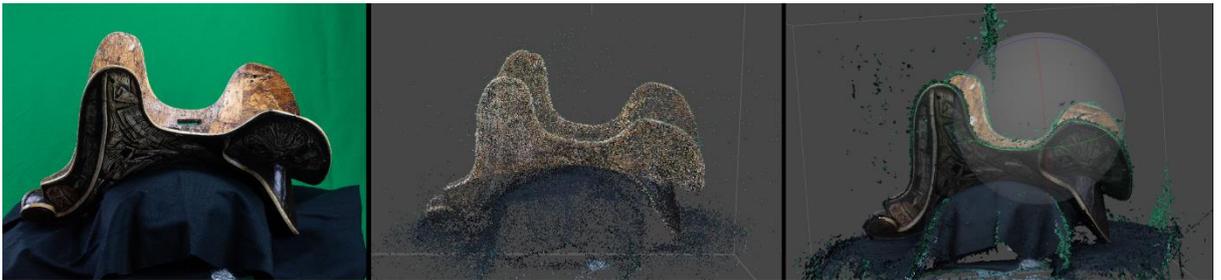


Figure A. 3: Phase photos of the photogrammetry of the London-2: a) single photo example, b) point cloud representation c) 3D mesh. Photo by author.

Furthermore, the complex shape and curved surfaces of bone saddles required extensive additional adjustments and “cleaning” post-processing steps. Techniques commonly employed for standard objects—such as applying matte paint to glossy surfaces before photography— were inapplicable to bone saddles due to conservation concerns. Consequently, concerns initially arose regarding the minimal gloss of the birch bark-coated surfaces inside the bone saddles and the potential impact of the shadow cast by the cantles on the lower part of the saddle on the final model.



*Figure A. 4: The model of the Glasgow-1: the buckle in duplicated and corrected version.
Photo by author.*

The slots on the bone saddles posed significant challenges and required extensive post-processing. These included the slots for the girth and stirrup leathers, as well as the small circular holes used for saddle attachment. These features had to be manually "cut out" afterward, often resulting in imperfect outcomes. Additionally, in the case of the Glasgow-1, difficulties arose in connection with one of the buckles. During photography, the buckle shifted position when the object was turned upside down, causing duplication in the merged images. This issue had to be resolved by manually removing one of the duplicate buckles during software processing (Figure A.4). Further complications arose with the Vienna-2 due to its original painted covering, which prevented it from being inverted for photography. As a result, the final model of this saddle remained incomplete and "perforated" on the underside (Figure A.5).

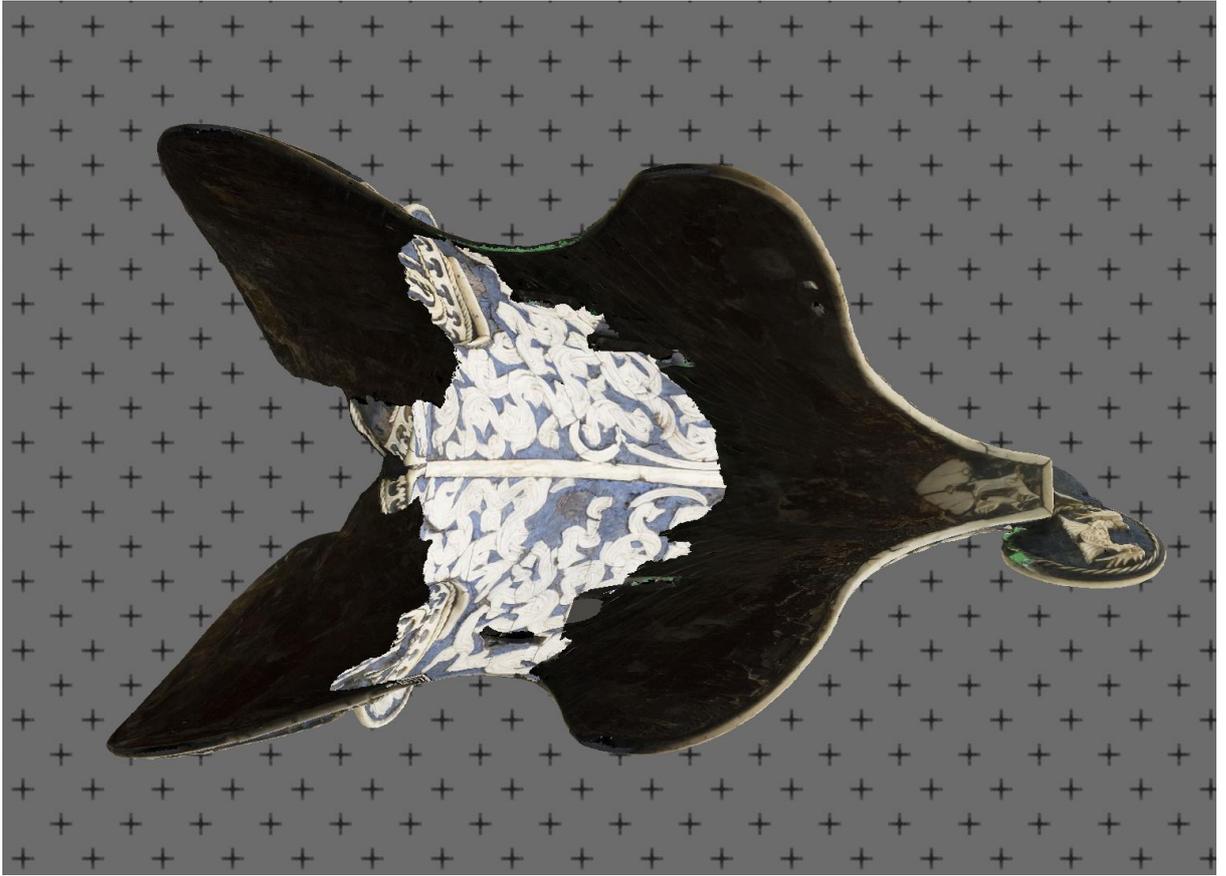


Figure A. 5: Underside of the model of the Vienna-2. Photo by author.

Results, relevance and future perspectives

The completed three-dimensional reproductions have successfully met the expectations, resulting in fully rotatable models. The texture quality of the models is high, with the various materials (wood, bone, leather) being well-identified and distinguishable from one another. However, the results are not as precise as detailed close-up photographs; when magnified, the model's details appear blurred. The quality can be enhanced in subsequent phases by using a higher-grade fixed lens and integrating close-up detailed photographs into the software. Therefore, at this project stage, the optimal approach is a hybrid method that combines three-dimensional models with high-resolution, two-dimensional detailed photographs for research purposes. Further insights gained from the completed models indicate that subtle relief details often do not translate effectively into spatial perception, instead appearing as flattened surfaces.

The creation of three-dimensional models is therefore primarily a tool for the study of carvings and structures, as well as for comparative analysis. Additionally, 3D models offer practical benefits, whether they are employed for 3D printing, CNC technology to

produce physical replicas, or as reference guides to facilitate the reconstruction of traditional saddles. The resulting physical replicas can significantly contribute to ongoing research and may also be valuable in future museum exhibitions and educational projects developed in close collaboration with museum institutions.

¹ The project has previously been published in Hungarian and English in the following three publications: Virág Somogyvári, “Késő középkori csontnyergék háromdimenziós digitalizálása fotogrammetriával” [3D Digitization of Late Medieval Bone Saddles Using Photogrammetry], in *Opus mixtum: Tanulmányok a Fiatal Művészettörténészek VIII. Konferenciájának előadásából*, ed. Kitty Arvai-Józsa (Budapest: HUN-REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Művészettörténeti Intézet, 2023), 49–61; Virág Somogyvári, “Késő középkori csontnyergék háromdimenziós digitalizálása fotogrammetriával,” *HUN-REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont – Ismerettár* (blog), accessed April 9, 2025, <https://abtk.hu/ismerettar/blog/keso-kozepkori-csontnyergek-haromdimenzios-digitalizalasa-fotogrammetriaval>; Virág Somogyvári, “Three-dimensional digitization of late medieval bone saddles by photogrammetry,” *HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities* (blog), accessed April 9, 2025, <https://abtk.hu/en/news/three-dimensional-digitization-of-late-medieval-bone-saddles-by-photogrammetry>.

² The project was made possible by the Isabel and Alfred Bader Art History Research Fellowship and the IT and Peregrination Grants from the Institute of Art History of the Research Centre for the Humanities.

³ The models of the Glasgow-1, London-1 and London-2 can be viewed in the datasheets of the bone saddles in the Database, as well as on the Sketchfab page of the Research Centre for the Humanities: <https://sketchfab.com/researchcentreforthehumanities>. All the 3D models including the Vienna-1 Vienna-2, and the Tata-fr-1 are available in separate PDF files attached as appendices to the dissertation.

⁴ See: II.2. The construction of bone saddles.

⁵ Wilfried Linder, *Digital Photogrammetry: A Practical Course* (Berlin; New York: Springer, 2016), 1.

⁶ Nobuya Watanabe, *Photogrammetry for Cultural Heritage* (Booklets for Protection of Syrian Cultural Heritage 1.) (Tsukuba: University of Tsukuba, 2017), 2;

⁷ Máté Metzger, Zsolt Újvári, and Gergely Gárdonyi, “A fotogrammetria kriminalisztikai célú alkalmazása: helyszínek, holttestek, tárgyak rekonstrukciója három dimenzióban [Application of photogrammetry for forensic purposes: reconstruction of locations, corpses, objects in three dimensions],” *Belügyi Szemle* 68, no. 11 (2020): 57.

⁸ Watanabe, *Photogrammetry for Cultural Heritage*, 7. “Complete Photogrammetry course, part 1 of 5,” Youtube, accessed May 20, 2024, <https://youtu.be/010IAKpr7JE?si=UvLFrPOiivPABTJq>.

⁹ Watanabe, *Photogrammetry for Cultural Heritage*, 2.; Metzger, Újvári, and Gárdonyi, “A fotogrammetria kriminalisztikai célú alkalmazása,” 59; “Agisoft Metashape User Manual Professional Edition, Version 1.7,” 2021. V.

¹⁰ Metzger, Újvári, and Gárdonyi, “A fotogrammetria kriminalisztikai célú alkalmazása,” 59; “Agisoft Metashape User Manual Professional Edition, Version 1.7” 2021. V.

¹¹ Metzger, Újvári, and Gárdonyi, “A fotogrammetria kriminalisztikai célú alkalmazása,” 59; Róbert Ferenczi, “04. Rekonstrukció–Magyar nyelvű Agisoft Metashape Tutorial [04. Reconstruction – Agisoft Metashape Tutorial in Hungarian],” Youtube, accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcxYaVrr5A0>.

¹² “Photogrammetry at the Swedish Exhibition Agency – Tutorial,” Youtube, accessed, May 2, 2024, <https://youtu.be/KxcywCzJVjw?si=iHXGJ2xaSAbJvxh->.

¹³ “The Royal Armoury (Livrustkammaren),” Sketchfab, accessed, May 2, 2024, <https://sketchfab.com/TheRoyalArmoury>.

¹⁴ I learned the method of photogrammetric digitization in a self-taught manner. To learn and correctly apply the technique, I relied on the Agisoft Metashape software manual and various instructional videos. Additionally, I received support in IT and photography to refine certain aspects of the technique. Traditional printed literature on photogrammetric digitalization of objects is scarce, given the continuous evolution of the technology and digitalization in general. Therefore, most of my references do not come from traditional printed publications but mainly from internet sources.

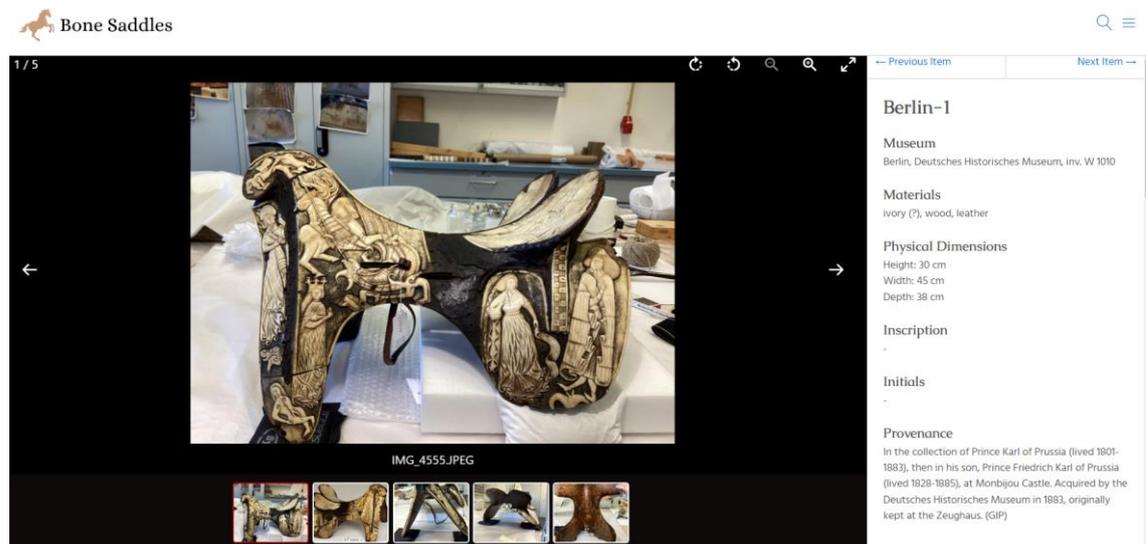
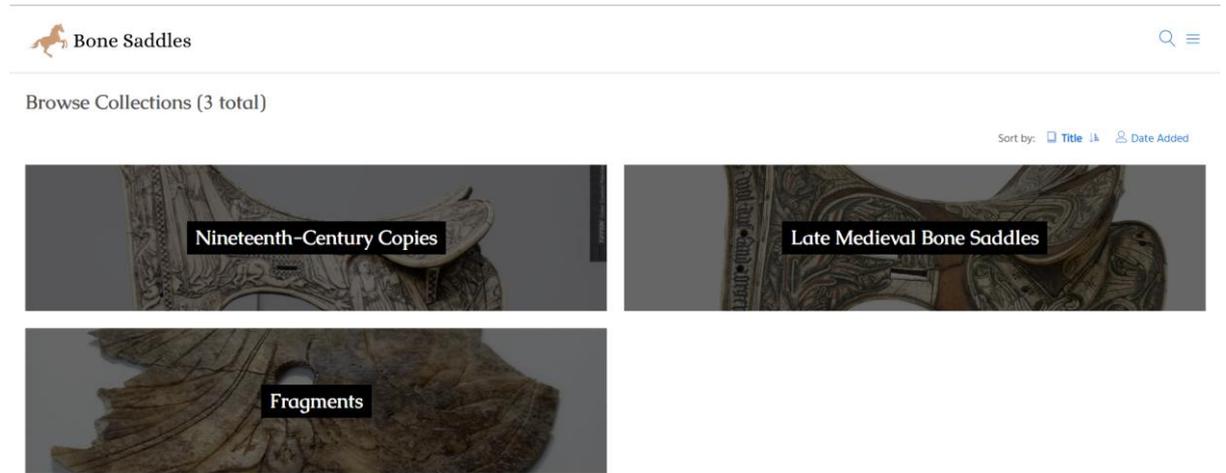
¹⁵ I implemented my workflow, especially post-processing, using the previously referenced (mainly online accessible) resources and applied them to my project. In several instances, I refined and modified these based on the experiences gained during the work. Since then, I have been continuously striving to simplify and further automate the workflow to achieve faster, yet more accurate results.

¹⁶ For this purpose, I used bubble wrap covered with black fabric, which was shaped and compressed to conform to the saddle's shape.

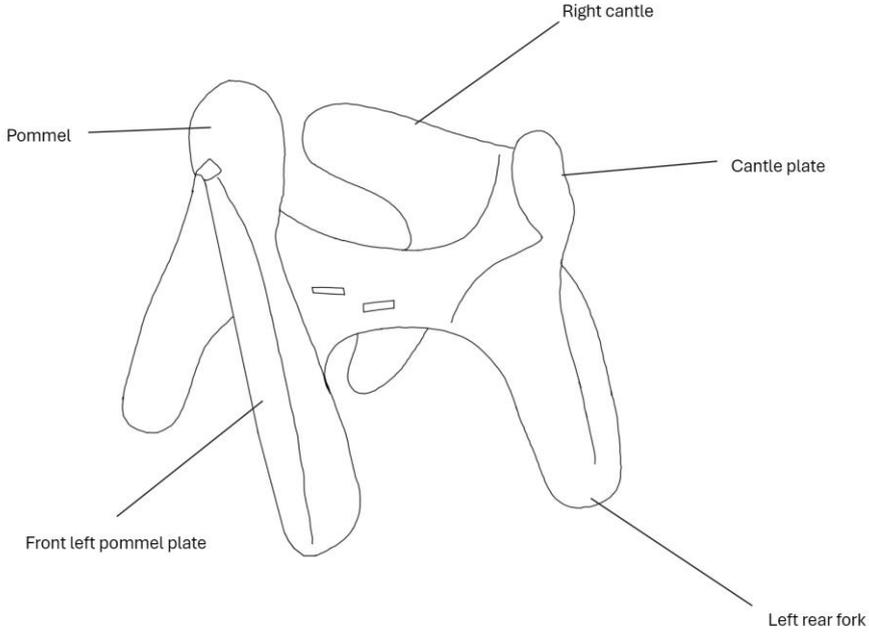
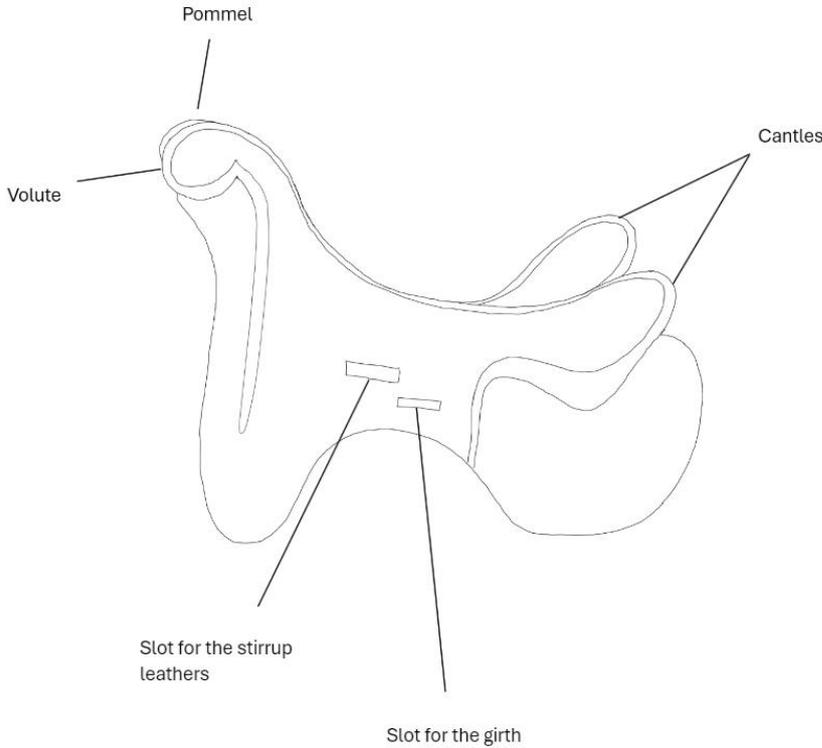
The Database

URL: bonesaddles.abtk.hu

This database is password protected. To request access, please contact the author at simigvirag@gmail.com



Glossary



arçon	The raised parts in front of and behind the seat of the saddle, i.e., the pommel and cantle (French).
breast collar	Prevents a saddle or harness from sliding back on the horse. It typically consists of a strap that runs across the horse's chest and attaches to the saddle or harness on either side.
cantle	The raised, rear part of a saddle.
crupper	Prevents a saddle or harness from sliding forward. It consists of a padded loop that goes under the horse's tail and attaches to the back of the saddle or harness.
fork	Forms the base of the pommel and extends downward to connect to the bars of the saddle tree.
girth	A strap that goes around the horse's belly, attaching to the saddle on both sides to keep it in place.
kastenbrust	A German form of plate armour from the first half of 15th century.
pavise	A large, convex shield designed for full-body protection in medieval warfare, particularly for archers and crossbowmen.
pommel	The raised front part of a saddle.
pommel plate	Protects the front of the saddle and the rider's inner thighs and groin.
reins	Straps used to guide and control a horse.
saddle tree	The wooden frame or support of the saddle.

- saddle flap** A large, flat piece of fabric on either side of a saddle that lies between the rider's leg and the horse. It protects the horse from the rider's leg, and covers and protects the saddle's girth straps and buckles.
- sallet** A type of helmet that was popular in Europe during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It typically features a rounded top, an extended rear to protect the neck.
- stirrup leather** Serves to connect the stirrups to the saddle, providing support, stability, and safety for the rider.

Tables

Table I: Comparison of the nomenclatures

Abbreviations: **BS**: Bocksattel, **KS**: Krippensattel

Schlosser 1894			Veró 2006			Schröder 2024			Database
No.	Name	Type	No.	Name	Type	No.	Name	Type	Name
0	Der Sattel Königs Wenzel I.	BS	1	Sattel von König Albrecht	BS	25	Habsburg-Sattel	BS	Vienna-2
1	London, Museum des Tower	-	13	Beinsattel	-	17	Tower-Sattel	BS	London-3
2	London, South Kensington Museum, Collection Meyrick	BS	14	Beinsattel	-	18	Meyrick-Sattel	BS	London-2
3	Paris, ehemals Sammlung Spitzer,	-	26.I	Drei Bruchstücke (Entstehungszeit und Herkunft ungewiß, eventuell Fälschungen): I: Amazonenkampf	KS	1	Carrand-Sattelbogen	-	-
-	-	-	26.II	Drei Bruchstücke (Entstehungszeit und Herkunft ungewiß, eventuell Fälschungen): II: Ritterfiguren	KS	2	Possenti-Sattelbogen	-	-
4	Paris, ehemals Collection des Grafen von Nieuwerkerke, jetzt	BS	15	Beinsattel	-	19	Nieuwerkerke-Sattel	BS	London-1
5	Schloss Pierrefonds bei Compiègne (Waffencabinet Napoleon III.).	Typus des Wiener Sattels (Bocksattel)	22	Sattel. Genaue Nachbildung des Possenti-Sattels des New Yorker Metropolitan Museum	-	34	Soltykoff-Holzsattel in Paris	-	New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy)
6	Berlin, Sammlung des Prinzen Karl von Preussen (jetzt im Zeughause	BS	2	Beinsattel	BS	3	Hohenzollern-Sattel	BS	Berlin-2

7	Berlin, Zeughaus (früher Sammlung des Schlosses Monbijou).	BS	3	Beinsattel	BS	4	Monbijou-Sattel	BS	Berlin-1
8	Braunschweig, Herzogliches Museum. Beschrieben	BS	6	Beinsattel	BS	7	Welfen-Sattel	BS	Braunschweig-1
9	Wien, Kunsthistorisches Hofmuseum, Waffensammlung (aus Schloss Ambras).	KS	23	Sattel von Ladislaus V. von Ungarn (Ladislaus Postumus)	KS	26	Ambras-Krippensattel	KS	Vienna-1
10	Wien, Sammlung des Herrn E. Miller von Aichholz (in Mailand erworben).	BS	17	Beinsattel	-	24	Possenti-Sattel	BS	New York-2
11	Wien, Kunsthandlung Gebr. Egger (früher bei Sr. Excellenz dem Grafen Enzenberg auf Schloss Tratzberg in Tirol).	BS	16	Beinsattel	-	23	Tratzberg-Sattel	BS	New York-1
12	12—14. Budapest, Nationalmuseum. Drei Bocksättel I. Sattel, aus dem Schatze der erzbischöflichen Kathedrale von Bukarest	BS	8	Beinsattel, sog. Jankovich-Sattel	BS	8	Jankovich-Sattel	BS	Budapest-3
13	II. Sattel, ehemals im Besitze der gräflichen Familie Batthyány in Kis-Berum	BS	7	Batthyány-Sattel	BS	9	Battyány-Sattel	BS	Budapest-1
14	III. Sattel (Albrecht II. oder Ludwig II. zugeschrieben)	BS	9	Beinsattel, sog. Rhédey-Sattel	BS	10	Rhédey-Sattel	BS	Budapest-2
15	Körmend, im Besitze	Der Sattel, vom gewöhnlichen Typus, (BS)	5	Beinsattel	BS	6	Körmend-Sattel	BS	Boston-1
16	Mailand, beim Fürsten Gian Giacomo Trivulzio	BS	19	Beinsattel	-	22	Trivulzio-Sattel	BS	New York-4

17	Modena, R. Galleria Estense.	KS	25	Sattel	KS	20	Este-Krippensattel	KS	Modena-1
18	Bologna, Museo civico.	BS	4	Beinsattel	BS	5	Palagi-Sattel	BS	Bologna-1
19	Florenz, Museo Nazionale (Bargello)	KS	24	Beinsattel	KS	14	Medici-Krippensattel	KS	Florence-2
20	Florenz, Museo Nazionale (Bargello)	BS	10	Beinsattel	BS	13	Medici-Bocksattel	BS	Florence-1
-	-	-	11	Beinsattel	BS	12	Bardini-Sattel	BS	Florence-3
-	-	-	12	Beinsattel	BS	15	Montgomerie-Sattel	BS	Glasgow-1
-	-	-	18	Beinsattel	BS	21	Thill-Sattel	BS	New York-3
-	-	-	20	Beinsattel	BS	16	Borromeo-Sattel	BS	Stresa-1
-	-	-	21	Beinsattel	BS	27	Gries-Sattel	BS	Unknown Location -1
-	-	-	-	-	-	11	Harding-Sattel	BS	Chicago-1
-	-	-	-	-	-	28	Bureus-Sattel	-	Stockholm-1
-	-	-	-	-	-	29	Gonzaga-Sattel	-	Unknown Location-2
-	-	-	-	-	-	32	Juste-Gipssattel	-	New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy)
-	-	-	-	-	-	34	Soltykoff-Holzsattel	-	New York-2-C1 (Paris Copy)
-	-	-	-	-	-	35	Lechenperg-Beinsattel	-	New York-4-C1 (Riggisberg Copy)
-	-	-	-	-	-	36	Peuker-Holzsattel	-	New York-2-C5 (ex-Peucker Copy)
-	-	-	-	-	-	37	Botterell-Gipssattel	-	New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy)

Table II: Comparison of the numberings

Database	Schlosser 1894	Veró 2006
Late Medieval Bone Saddles		
Berlin-1	7	3
Berlin-2	6	2
Bologna-1	18	4
Boston-1	15	5
Braunschweig-1	8	6
Budapest-1	13	7
Budapest-2	14	9
Budapest-3	12	8
Chicago-1	-	-
Florence-1	20	10
Florence-2	19	24
Florence-3	-	11
Glasgow-1	-	12
London-1	4	15
London-2	2	14
London-3	1	13
Modena-1	17	25
New York-1	11	16
New York-2	10	17
New York-3	-	18
New York-4	16	19
Stockholm-1	-	-
Stockholm-2	-	-
Stresa-1	-	20
Unknown Location -1	-	21
Unknown Location -2	-	-
Unknown Location-3	-	-
Vienna-1	9	23

Vienna-2	0	1
19th century copies		
New York-2-C1_(Paris Copy)	5	22
New York-2-C2 (ex-Berlin Copy)	-	-
New York-2-C3 (Wallace Copy)	-	-
New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy)	-	-
New York-2-C5 (ex-Peucker Copy)	-	-
New York-4-C1	-	-
Fragments		
Tata-fr-1	-	-
Vienna-fr-1	-	-

Table III: Covering of bone plates

Group	Description	Bone Saddles
Group 1	The bone plates nearly cover the entire surface of the saddle tree.	Budapest-1, Budapest-2, Budapest-3, Boston-1, Chicago-1, Glasgow-1, New York 1-3, New York-2, New York-3, Stockholm-1, Stresa-1
Group 2	The bone plates do not cover the entire surface of the saddle tree, leaving some of the leather visible.	Berlin-1, Bologna-1, Braunschweig-1, London-1, Stockholm-2, Modena-1, Vienna-1
Group 3	The bone plates are irregularly shaped and are independent pieces, each carved separately to match the contours of the actual motifs.	Florence-1, Florence-2, London-2, Stockholm-2, Vienna-2

Table IV: Pigments

The pigments generally affect the bone plates, but in some cases, they also impact the leather layer, as noted in a footnote. The pigment identification is primarily based on autopsy results, with some cases relying on photographs and, in exceptional instances, technical analysis, which is also noted in the footnotes.

Bone Saddles	Pigments					
	<i>red</i>	<i>green</i>	<i>blue</i>	<i>black/dark</i>	<i>gold</i>	<i>other</i>
Berlin-1	✓	-	✓ ¹⁷	✓ ¹⁸	-	-
Berlin-2	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Bologna-1	✓ ¹⁹	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Boston-1 ²⁰	✓ ²¹	✓	-	✓	-	-
Braunschweig-1	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Budapest-1	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Budapest-2	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Budapest-3	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Florence-1 ²²	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Florence-2 ²³	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Florence-3	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Glasgow-1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ²⁴	-
London-1	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
London-2	✓	✓	✓	✓ ²⁵	-	-
London-3	✓	✓ ²⁶	-	✓ ²⁷	-	-
Modena-1	✓	✓	-	✓	✓ ²⁸	-
New York-1	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
New York-2 ²⁹	✓ ³⁰	✓ ³¹	✓ ³²	-	-	-
New York-3	-	-	-	✓	-	-
New York-4 ³³	✓	✓	✓ ³⁴	✓	-	brown
Stockholm-1	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Stresa-1	✓	✓	✓ ³⁵	✓	-	-
Vienna-1	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Vienna-2	✓	✓	✓ ³⁶	-	✓	orange

Vienna-fr-1	-	-	-	✓ ³⁷	-	-
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¹⁷ Pigments can be found on the bone and the leather as well.

¹⁸ Pigments can be found on the bone and the leather as well.

¹⁹ Pigments can be found on the bone and the leather as well.

²⁰ "Examination Report and Treatment Proposal. Research Laboratory Conservation Record, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, May 20, 1988" Curatorial file, inv. 69.944, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

²¹ Cinnabar (mercuric sulfide), on the bone and leather as well. Examination Report of inv. 69.944, MFA.

²² On the bone and the leather as well. Chiesi, "VIII. 66: Sella da Parata," 324.

²³ On the bone and the leather as well. Chiesi, "VIII. 67: Sella da Parata," 328.

²⁴ On the leather of Fields L8 and R8.

²⁵ Pigments can be found on the bone and the leather as well.

²⁶ A recent chemical analysis of a black sample by Emma Schumuecker, conservator at the Royal Armouries, established that some dark-colored elements were painted with a vibrant green that has blackened. Watts, "Une selle médiévale d'Europe centrale au Royal Armouries Museum," 50.

²⁷ Watts, "Une selle médiévale d'Europe centrale au Royal Armouries Museum," 50.

²⁸ Schlosser, "Elfenbeinsättel des Ausgehenden Mittelalters," 274.

²⁹ "Examination Report, Department of Objects Conservation, Metropolitan Museum of Art, December 1990." Curatorial file, inv. 04.3.250, New York, The MET, Arms and Armor.

³⁰ Vermillion (cinnabar). Examination Report of inv. 04.3.250, MET.

³¹ Malachit. Examination Report of inv. 04.3.250, MET.

³² Natural ultramarine (lapis lazuri). Examination Report of inv. 04.3.250, MET.

³³ "Examination Report, Interdepartmental Memorandum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, January 3, 2005." Curatorial file, inv. 40.66, New York, The MET.

³⁴ Mineral blue, probably azurite. Examination Report of inv. 40.66, MET.

³⁵ Leather is painted into blue in some parts (for example on the cantles).

³⁶ On the leather: Smalte, azurite and ultramarine. The ultramarine layer was removed in 2000. See: Schwarzkogler, "Restaurierung und Konservierung eines farbig gefassten mittelalterlichen Prunksattels" 50.

³⁷ Probably charcoreal wax. Tarcsay, "Fragmente eines beinernen Prunksattels," 32.

Table V: Rectangular slots

Bone Saddles	Upper Slot	Lower Slot	Number of slots
Berlin-1			2
Berlin-2			
Bologna-1			
Boston-1			
Braunschweig-1			
Florence-1			
Florence-2			
Florence-3			
London-1			
London-2	✓	✓	
London-3			
New York-1			
New York-2 ¹			
New York-3			
New York-4			
Stresa-1			
Vienna-2			
Unknown-1			
New York-4-C1			
Budapest-1			
Budapest-2			
Chicago-1			
Stockholm-1			
Stockholm-2			
Vienna-1	✓	-	
New York-2-C1			
New York-2-C2			
New York-2-C3			
New York-2-C4			
Modena-1			

Unknown-2	-	-	0
Budapest-3	marked but uncut	-	OTHER
Glasgow-1	once cut and later filled		

¹ Before its restoration in the turn of the 19th-20th century, there was only one (the upper) slot. See: V.1.2. Bone Saddles in the art market - Case study: Authentic or fake? The New York-2. - Comparison - The areas around the slots.

Table VI: Round slots

Abbreviations: **S**: single slot, **T**: triple slots, **D**: double slots, **Q**: quadruple slots

Bone Saddles	Fields													
	2		3		4		5		7					
	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	Upper corner		Middle		Bottom	
									Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right
Berlin-1	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-
Bologna-1	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	1 D	1 D
Boston-1	1 S	1 S	1 D ¹	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	1 D	1 D
Braunschweig-1	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D
Budapest-1	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 S	1Q	1Q	1D	1D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	-
Budapest-2	-	-	1 S ²	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-
Chicago-1 ³	1 S	1 S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D
Florence-1 ⁴	2 S	2 S	1 T	1 T	1 S	2 S	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D	-	-	1 D	1 D
Florence-2 ⁵	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 S	1 S	-	-	-	-

Florence-3	-	-	1 T	1 D	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	-	-	-	-
Glasgow-1	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	- ⁶
London-1	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D
London-2	1 S	-	1 S	1 S	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D
London-3	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D
New York-1	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	1 D	1 D
New York-3	2 S	2 S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New York-4	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 S	1 S	1 D	1 D
Stockholm-1 ⁷	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 T	1 D	1 D; 1 S	-	-	-
Stockholm-2 ⁸	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	?	1 D	?	1 D	?
Stresa-1 ⁹	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 S	1 S
Vienna-1	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	-	-	1 D	1 D
Vienna-2	1 D	1 D	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D	1 D
Unknown-1 ¹⁰	1 S	?	1 S	?	-	-	-	-	1 D	?	-	-	1 D	?
New York-4-C1 ¹¹	1 S	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 D	?	1 S	?	1 D	?
Tata-fr-1	1 D													

¹ Restored

² Filled (?)

³ Most holes are filled.

⁴ Some holes are filled.

⁵ Many additional slots, probably bug bites.

⁶ Restored.

⁷ Fragmented construction, many additional iron fillings.

⁸ No data of the right side of the saddle.

⁹ Lots of extra smaller dots (for bone pins?).

¹⁰ No data of the right side of the saddle.

¹¹ No data of the right side of the saddle.

Table VII: Straps and Buckles

Abbreviations: **EX**: External side, **IN**: Internal side, **FS**: Fragmented strap, **BS**: Strap with buckle, **HS**: strap forming a loop, for hanging

Bone Saddles	Front Left	Front Right	Rear Left	Rear Centre	Rear Right	Other
Berlin-1	✓ IN; FS	-	-	-	-	- (modern) strap thread through the upper rectangular slot
Berlin-2	-	✓ IN; FS	-	-	-	- (modern) strap thread through the upper rectangular slot
Bologna-1	-	-	✓ EX; FS	✓ IN; BS	✓ EX; FS	-
Braunschweig-1	✓ IN; HS	✓ IN; HS	-	-	-	-
Budapest-3	-	-	-	-	-	- iron straps in the L2 and R2 fields
Chicago-1	✓ EX; BS	✓ EX; BS	-	-	✓ EX; FS	-
Florence-1	-	-	✓ IN; FS	-	✓ IN; FS	-
Florence-2	✓ IN; FS	✓ IN; FS	✓ IN; FS	-	✓ IN; FS	- additional straps in the middle (stirrup leathers?)
Glasgow-1	✓ IN; BS	✓ IN; BS	-	✓ IN; BS	-	-
New York-4	✓ IN; FS	✓ IN; FS	-	✓ IN; BS	-	-
Stockholm-1	✓ IN; FS EX; HS	✓ IN; FS EX; HS	-	-	-	-
Vienna-1	✓ IN; BS IN; HS	-	✓ IN; FS IN; HS	-	✓ IN; FS	-two extra straps on the external right side (girth?)

Table VIII: Saint George on the bone saddles

Bone Saddles	Saint George figure	Saint George inscription	Saint George cross	Other
<i>Late Medieval Bone Saddles</i>				
Berlin-1	✓	-	-	-
Bologna-1	-	-	-	-
Boston-1	✓	-	✓	-
Braunschweig-1	-	-	-	-
Budapest-1	✓	-	-	-
Budapest-2	✓	-	-	-
Budapest-3	✓	-	-	emblem of the Order of the Dragon
Florence-1	✓	✓	-	-
Glasgow-1	-	-	-	-
London-1	✓	-	-	-
London-2	-	✓	-	-
London-3	-	✓	✓	dragons
Modena-1	✓	-	-	-
New York-2	✓	-	✓	-
New York-3	-	✓	-	-
New York-4	✓	-	-	-
Stresa-1	✓	-	-	dragons
Vienna-2	✓	-	-	dragon
<i>19th century copies</i>				
New York-2-C1_(Paris Copy)	-	-	✓	-
New York-2-C4 (ex-Sporting Copy)	-	-	✓	-
New York-4-C1	✓	-	-	-

Table IX: Saint George on Horseback

Abbreviations: **ST**: Spear thrust with both hands, **RS**: Right hand: sword, **LL**: Left hand: lance

Bone Saddles	Field of St George	Field of Princess	Field of the castle	Posture of Saint George	St George Inscription	Other
Berlin-1	L4	L4+L3/R4 (?)	-	ST	-	
Budapest-3	L4	R4 ¹	L2	RS, LL	-	
Florence-1	L4	R4	-	RS, LL	R4 “ritt[er] sa[n]d Jöri ^g ”	
New York-2	L7	L7	L7	RS, LL	-	St George cross on Field 9
Vienna-2	L2	L7(?) ²	L2	ST	-	

Table X: Saint George on Foot

Bone Saddles	Field	Princess	Posture of Saint George	Other
Boston-1	L4	R4 (?)	ST	St George cross on Field 9
Budapest-1	L4	-	RS, LL	-
Budapest-2	L4	-	ST	-
London-1	L4	R4 (?)	ST	-
New York-4	L2	-	ST	-
	L7	-	RS, LL	
Stresa-1	R2(?)	-	ST	-

	L2(?) ³		ST	
Modena-1	On the back of the right cantle	-	RS, LL	-

¹ With a lamb.

² Under St George (?)

³ Saint Michael.

Table XI: Inscriptions

German inscriptions ¹				
Bone Saddles	Inscription		Translation	
	Left side	Right Side	Left side	Right side
Bologna-1	vol auf heute morgen ²	ich frewe mich denn [?] ³	to this morning	I am looking forward ⁴
Boston-1	gedenkch und halt	gedenkch und halt	recall and wait ⁵	recall and wait
	gedenkch	und halt ⁶	recall	and wait
Braunschweig-1	treu yst selt[en] in der weld ⁷	-	fidelity is rare in the world	-
Budapest-2	ich hof	si b[...] ⁸	I hope	[?]
	mit lieb	lach lieb lach	with love	laugh [my] love laugh ⁹
		hof mit		hope... [with something]
Florence-1	ich han nicht lieberr ¹⁰ wen dich	allain mein ader las gar sein ¹¹	I do not love anyone more than you	Be only mine or leave ¹²

	bit erd [...] ¹³	ritt[er] sa[n]d Jörig ¹⁴	[?]	Knight Saint George
		dich li[e]bt ¹⁵ got		God loves you
Florence-3	ander für	ich lib all hie und wais nit wi[e] [u]nd mues vo' ... ich... ¹⁶	other for	I love all here and don't know how and I must ... [leave from here...]
London-2	ich pin hie, ich ways nit wie ¹⁷ ich var von dann, ich ways ¹⁸ nit wan ¹⁹	ich var, ich har, ye lenger ich har me gresser nar ²⁰	I am here, I don't know how I am leaving, I don't know when ²¹	I go, I wait, the longer I wait the more rescue/salvation I have. ²²
	nu wol auf mit willen unvergessen	dein ewichleich in sand ierigen nam ²³	Now then, willingly unforgotten ²⁴	yours forever in the name of Saint George ²⁵
	ich frei mich all zeit dein	we den k[...] ²⁶ rat ²⁷	I always rejoice you ²⁸	[?] ²⁹
London-3	hilf got wol auf sand jorgen nam	ich hoff des pesten dir geling	with God's help well then, in the name of St George [God grant in the name of Saint George]	I hope for the best that you succeed
	i m a r s	is vinster	in the arse	it is black/dark
New York-1	wol mich wart	wol mich nu wart	wait for me	just wait for me
	ich hof	in dem ars is vinster	I am hoping	it is black/dark in the arse
	der liben somerzeit ³⁰	frei dich	for dear summertime	rejoice/free yourself
	lach lib lach	mit gantzem willen	laugh, [my] love, laugh. ³¹	with full/whole will
New York-3	bol auf sand [jo]rgen nam [h]ilf ritter sand jorig ³²	hilf	well then, in the name of Saint George, help knight Saint George	help
Stresa-1	lib		love	
Vienna-2	wyl es gott ych helf dir au[s]	not ³³	if God is willing, I will help you out of	misery ³⁴
Latin inscriptions				
	<i>Inscription</i>		Translation	

Bone Saddles	<i>Left side</i>	<i>Right Side</i>	Left side	Right side
Budapest-3	da pacem domine ³⁵		give peace, lord	
Florence-2	amor	aspeto ³⁶ tempo	love	I wait time
	deo	laus	to god	praise
Modena-1	deus forti[tudo]	deus fortitu[do]		
	deus fortitudo mea	deus adiutor	God my strength	God my supporter

¹ The table is based on the critically reviewed, transcribed, and translated inscriptions of the bone saddles, previously published in: Virág Somogyvári, “‘Laugh, my love, laugh’: Mottos, Proverbs and Love Inscriptions on Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 25 (Budapest: Central European University, 2018), 125-28. I would like to express my gratitude to Gerhard Jaritz and András Vizkelety for their help with the inscriptions of the saddles.

² “C) vol avf D) sente E) mvrgen” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 138, Nr. 5.

³ Or “ich frewe mich dein” – I rejoice you; “*ICH FREUUE MICH VOL AUF HEUTE MORGEN.*” “Saddle (selle); also known as the ‘Körmend Saddle’ or ‘Batthyany-Strattman Saddle,” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/994F41EC_726c0691.html; “A) ich frevve / mich; B) nain” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 138, Nr. 5.

⁴ The right order is probably “Ich frewe mich denn [?] vol auf heute morgen” – I am looking forward to this morning.

⁵ Literally, “think and stop” or, colloquially, “look before you leap” *GIP*.

⁶ “A) [...] gedenkch · vnd · halt · B) · gedenkch · // · C) · / · vnd · // · / · halt · D) gedenkch · vnd · halt // · E) · k · k · k · F) · s · // · s · // s · // · s · · G) · s · s · s · H) · k · k · k” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 140, Nr. 6.

⁷ “trev yst selth in der weld” “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/1763BF61_130c6003.html; “A) trev / yst · selth // in der / weld” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 144, Nr. 7.

⁸ “G lib (?)” Verő, “4.68. Beinsattel (Rhédey-Sattel),” *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 360.

⁹ “Lieb” can also be in imperative mood, therefore the inscription can be translated as: “laugh, love, laugh.”

¹⁰ “lieben” “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/5cc38dc3_b0441ea7.html; “liebere” Verő, “4.70. Beinsattel,” *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 362.

¹¹ “ALLAIN MEIN ODER LOCGAR SEIN” *GIP*; “allain mein ader loc gar skein” Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 324.

¹² “se non sei mia sono un uomo libero” Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 324.

¹³ “huerd” or “Sit erd (?)” *GIP*; “Hu/Hit erd” Chiesi, “VIII. 66: Sella da Parata,” 324; “B) [...]it erv.” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 159, Nr. 13.

¹⁴ “Ritt sad iorig” *GIP*.

¹⁵ “hab” *GIP*.

¹⁶ “ICH LIB ALL HIR UND WAIS NIT WI[E] / [U]ND WUCS [?] VO HIN” and “ICH WAI [SS] NI” Mario Scalini, “Sella da pompa,” in *Le Temps revient - Il tempo si rinnova. Feste e spettacoli nella Firenze di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. Paola Ventrone (Milano: Silvana, 1992), 173; “A) ˘ ich ˘ leb ˘ all ˘ hie ˘ vnd ˘ wais ˘ nit ˘ wi[e] [...] / [...] [u]nd ˘ mv̄es voʹ(n) [d]an ich [w]ai ni B) ˘ w. [...]e ˘ ander[...]n. C) [...] ˘ mir ˘ [...] D) ˘ fvr ˘ d[...]” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 157, Nr. 12.

¹⁷ “ich pin bie / ich wans nit wie” Sir James Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, vol. 1. Armour (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1962), 226–27; “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/6609D6CF_96b7c444.html.

¹⁸ “waus” William Maskell ed., *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), 175.

¹⁹ “ich var von v... / ich wans nit wan” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, 226–227; *GIP*.

²⁰ “Ich war, ich har, ne lenger ich har, Me gresser nar” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; “ich var ich bar / ye lenger ich bar / me greffen (gresser) nar” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–27; *GIP*.

²¹ “I go hence, I know not where” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, 226–27; *GIP*.

²² “I go, I stop, the longer I stop, the more mad I become” Ibid.

²³ “Dein ewigleich land ierigen varn” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; *GIP*.

²⁴ “Well a day! Willingly thou art never forgotten” Ibid.

²⁵ “Thine forever, The world o’er your betrothed” Ibid.

²⁶ “Me den krg: ent” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–27; *GIP*.

²⁷ It can be also read as “Nie den k[r...].” “E) ˘ me ˘ ˘ den // kz ˘ ent ˘ ˘ // ˘ ˘ ” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 173, Nr. 18.

²⁸ “I rejoice to be ever thine” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–27; *GIP*.

²⁹ “But if the war should end?” Ibid.

³⁰ “C) der lib / en zvmer tzeit” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 189, Nr. 23.

³¹ The order is probably the following: Right side: “wol mich nu wart / in dem ars is vinsten / frei dich mit gantzem willen” Left side: “wol mich wart / ich hof der liben somerzeit / lach lib lach”

³² “HILF VOL AUF SAND [JO]RGEN NAM -ILF(?) RITTER SAND JORG” “Saddle (selle),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/e84a0cc2_f12d9581.html.

³³ “wyl es got ych helf dir au[s] not, ave...” Verö, “4.72. Beinsattel (Sattel von König Albrecht),” Mária Verö, “4.72. Beinsattel (Sattel von König Albrecht),” in *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 363; “A) wyl es got ych helf dir au B) aus” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 196, Nr. 25.

³⁴ The right order is probably: “wyl es got ych helf dir aus not” – “If God is willing I will help you out of misery.” “if it is God’s will then I will aid you in your distress”. Stefan Krause, Fabian Brenker, and Sabine Haag, *Masterpieces of the Imperial Armoury* (Wien: KHM-Museumsverband, 2023), 34.

³⁵ “A) da padrin ˘ domnit” Schröder, *Die Beinsättel Des 13. Bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 147, Nr. 8.

³⁶ “aspero” “Saddle with reliefs (selle; appliqués),” *GIP*, accessed October 5, 2023, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/06a0263c_1c0398a5.html.

Table XII: Initials

Bone Saddles	Initial	Field
Braunschweig-1	m/w	repeatedly on the whole surface
	v	L4
	m/w + u/n/h	L6 and R6
Boston-1	g g g/s s s (?) k k k (?)	L7 and R7
Florence-1	b	L7
	a	R7
Glasgow-1	m n	L1/L4; R1/R4; L2; R2
New York-4	e	L6
	b	R6
	v	R7
Vienna-1	u/v (with crown)	right and left rear fork
Vienna-2	e	front view of the pommel

Table XIII: Love, sexual and wedding symbols

Bone Saddles	Motifs						
	Couple	Forget-me-not	Crown / floral wreath	Falcon	Unicorn	Love inscription	Other
Berlin-1	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-
Bologna-1	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Braunschweig-1	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	double initials
Budapest-1	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	dog
Budapest-2	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	bathing nudes, monkey
Budapest-3	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	dextrarum iunctio, wild man
Florence-1	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	double initials
Florence-2	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	heart offering
London-2	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Modena-1	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	kissing couple
New York-1	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-

New York-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	ring offering, nude, dog, monkey
New York-4	✓	-	-	-	-	-	dextrarum iunctio, double initials, embracing couple
Vienna-1	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
Vienna-2	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	heart offering, bathing nudes, wild men, dog, monkey

Table XIV: Copies

Copies	Material of the panels	St. George and the...	Motifs		
			Around the slots		Bow-like emblem on the cantles
			Left side mantle of the courtier + second slot	Right side tail of the dragon + second slot	
New York-2	bone	dragon (restored)	✓	✓	-
Paris Copy	pearwood	naked man	✓	✓	- ¹
ex-Berlin Copy	pearwood	naked man	-	-	✓
Wallace Copy	gesso	naked man	-	-	✓
ex-Sporting Copy	gesso	naked man	-	-	✓
ex-Peucker Copy	boxwood (?)	naked man	?	?	- ²

¹ Fleur-de-lys.

² Only a rough drawing remained of this copy from the nineteenth century, therefore the details are not visible either.

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Abstract

The dissertation delves into the historical and artistic importance of late medieval bone saddles, exploring their origins, the techniques used in their creation, and their role within the broader context of medieval European art and aristocratic culture. Through a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates source criticism, art historical analysis, and the examination of material culture and historical context, the dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these extraordinary objects.

By interpreting these objects as horse equipment, the study enhances the art historical comprehension of bone saddles and addresses underexplored issues within the field. Detailed analysis of workshop and guild records illuminates the raw materials and manufacturing processes, facilitating potential physical reconstructions.

Stylistic examination suggests a common workshop for two bone saddles (Budapest-1 and Budapest-3), identifying them as the highest-quality items in their group. The investigation challenges previous assumptions about the carvings, interpreting the motifs and symbols as part of a deliberate iconographical program reflecting transitional cultural elements.

Contrary to earlier historiographical trends linking bone saddles exclusively to the court of Sigismund, this research extends their chronological framework from the 1430s to the late fifteenth century and locates their production across a broad area from the Rhineland to Transylvania. While the use of bone saddles in late medieval marriage processions remains hypothetical due to a lack of written sources, the love and wedding-related iconography provides supporting arguments.

Finally, the dissertation examines the reception history of bone saddles, highlighting their popularity on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art market, which reflects the collecting preferences of the aristocracy at the time. Their continued appeal is further evidenced by their presence in the work of historical saddle makers and their occasional reappearance on the twenty-first-century art market.

Absztrakt

A disszertáció a késő középkori csontnyergek történelmi és művészeti jelentőségét vizsgálva, feltárja azok eredetét, az elkészítésükhöz használt technikákat, valamint szerepüket a középkori európai művészet és arisztokratikus kultúra tágabb összefüggésében. A disszertáció célja multidiszciplináris megközelítést alkalmazva, forráskritika, a művészettörténeti elemzés, valamint az anyagi kultúra és a történelmi kontextus vizsgálatát ötvözve átfogó képet nyújtani ezektől a különleges műtárgyakról.

A csontnyergek lószerszámként való értelmezése a művészettörténet kevésbé vizsgált kérdéseire ad választ. A középkori céhes források elemzése feltárja a csontnyergek nyersanyagait és rekonstruálja az egykori gyártási folyamatokat, megteremtve egy esetleges későbbi fizikai rekonstrukció lehetőségét.

A stilisztikai elemzés közös műhelyt valószínűsít két csontnyereg esetében (Budapest-1 és Budapest-3), egyúttal a tárgycsoport legmagasabb minőségű darabjaként identifikálja őket. A motívumok és azok egymással való kapcsolatának vizsgálata megkérdőjelezi a korábbi feltételezéseket, amelyek a faragásokat program és struktúra nélküli díszítőelemeknek tekintették, és a szerelmi jeleneteket és szimbólumokat tudatos ikonográfiai program részeként értelmezi.

A korábbi történetírás tendenciáival ellentétben, amelyek a csontnyergeket Luxemburgi Zsigmond uralkodásához és udvarához kapcsolták, jelen kutatás a csontnyergek kronológiai keretét az 1430-as évektől a 15. század végéig, készítésük területét a Rajna-vidéktől Erdélyig határozza meg. Bár nincs olyan írott forrás, amely egyértelműen alátámasztaná a csontnyergek esküvői ceremóniális használatát, több érv is emellett szól, különösen a szerelmi ikonográfia. Ugyanakkor a források hiánya miatt ez csupán egy hipotetikus elmélet.

A disszertáció a csontnyergek recepciótörténetének vizsgálatával zárul – ez a kérdéskör eddig feltáratlan maradt a szakirodalomban, ugyanakkor a rendelkezésre álló bőséges írott forrásanyag új megvilágításba helyezi a témát. A 19. század végén és a 20. század elején tapasztalható fokozott érdeklődés, valamint a másolatok elterjedése jól tükrözi e tárgyak népszerűségét, és betekintést enged a korabeli arisztokrata műgyűjtés ízlésvilágába is. Végezetül, a csontnyergek napjainkig tartó népszerűségét jelzi, hogy a történelmi nyeregrekonstrukciók készítői körében kedvelt darabok, valamint a jelenleg lappangó darabok időről időre a 21. századi műtárgypiacon is felbukkannak.