

**Lisa Deutscher, Mirjam Kaiser, Sixt Wetzler, eds.** *The Sword: Form and Thought*. Armour and Weapons Series. Melton: Boydell & Brewer, 2019. Illustrations. 294 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-427-7.

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*The Sword: Form and Thought* is a collection of papers presented at a conference of the same name at the German Blade Museum in Solingen, Germany, in 2015. The collection includes sixteen essays organized in four themed sections. The authors are primarily archaeologists, historians, and museum curators, with a few metallurgists and metalworkers also represented. Thus, the essays represent a variety of approaches, the best of them, in my opinion, being jointly written and interdisciplinary. Most examine European swords from the Bronze Age through the sixteenth century.

The "Typology" section begins with a contribution by Iason-Eleftherios Tzouriadis challenging the value of traditional classification systems for late medieval swords. Tzouriadis argues that the popular systems of classification for these swords, most notably, Ewart Oakeshott's typology, are overly narrow and offer unsupported impressions of "sword evolution" and narrow dating from form alone. Stephan Mäder follows with another challenge to traditional typology, this one looking at earlier swords depicted in the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter. Mäder examines the iconography of these swords to argue that several features thought to date two hundred to four hundred years later are carefully depicted in the Utrecht

Psalter. Daniel Jaquet's essay discusses fifteenth-sixteenth-century longswords with a significant widening of the blade near the hilt (*schilt*). He argues that they represent specialized fencing swords (*Fechtschwerter*).

The "Metallurgy and Production" section begins with a combination of traditional, material-science based, and experimental archaeology, narrating a project to analyze and accurately reproduce a spatha found in Beckum, Germany. Ulrich Lehmann, Stefan Roth, and Claus Lipka collaborated on the piece, and Darius Roth joined the latter two in production of the reproduction. Ingo Petri follows with a material analysis of the well-known VLFBERHT swords of the early Middle Ages. Petri disputes the theory that they were made from imported crucible steel, noting that the seventeen blades that he was able to examine were all made of layered material, although the layers are generally of similar alloys. He attributes the layering to the process used in Europe at the time to homogenize steel and remove slag. Thus, he argues that these blades represent local material. This essay is followed by two that examine specific swords, the first, by Holger Becker, addresses a mid-thirteenth-century "knightly sword" found in the Rhine River, and the second, by Florian Messner and Ulrike Töchterle, considers a mid-late

fifteenth-century hand-and-a-half sword from Tyrol. Each of these essays examines both its sword and the find context and compares them to others of similar types.

The "Symbolic Meaning and Cultural Perception" section begins with a wide-ranging contribution on early Nordic Bronze Age swords by Jan-Heinrich Bunnefeld arguing that these swords were clearly both practical weapons and status symbols. Fabrizio Savi follows with an essay looking at a fifth-century BCE iron cavalry sword found near Rome, arguing that it should be considered a *kopis*, rather than a *machiara*, as such swords are usually classified. Vincenzo d'Ercole next examines a group of iron swords of similar vintage, known as Capestrano swords. He concludes that they were used by Italic (rather than Etruscan or Celtic) peoples and that those with decorated hilts and scabbards were symbolically important. Michael Mattner's contribution discusses the ninth-century Japanese sword *Kogarasumaru* and the rare later swords that share its morphology. He argues that this sword was designed as a symbolic stand-in for the three sacred treasures of the imperial family and that the type remained rare due to its association with the Taira family after their fall from grace. Robert W. Jones next considers the use of a falchions as a symbol of land tenure in late medieval England. Nicole Mlk closes this section with a piece on the ceremonial sword of Frederick II, now held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, presenting it as a blend of Norman and Arabic elements from the workshops of Sicily.

The final section, "Fighting and Swordsmanship," examines the practical use of these weapons. The first essay, by Raphael Herman, Andrea Dolfini, Rachel J. Crellin, and Marion Uckelmen, combines wear analysis of Bronze Age swords with experimental archaeology. The authors commissioned replica bronze swords and undertook a series of combat tests to determine how damage to the period examples occurred and

what techniques of swordsmanship likely were and were not used. Mathias Johannes Bauer follows with an examination of several editions of the sixteenth-century Egenolff fighting manual. Bauer shows that it suffers from errors due to misuse of technical terms, malapropisms, and copy errors. He thus warns that recreating combat systems from manuals alone, especially a single source, is problematic. The book ends with a considerably later focus than most, as Henry Yallop traces the history of the British 1796 light cavalry sword. The essay serves as a fitting conclusion, as the connection between this sword's design and its intended fighting technique, or *The Sword: Form and Thought*, is unusually clear.

As is usually the case with conference proceedings, the essays are somewhat uneven, though whether they resonated for me may also reflect my interests and experience. Certainly, none seem out of place, and several are particularly well done. The binding and paper are high quality, and excellent high-gloss color photographs accompany almost every essay. This book is likely to be of interest to scholars, as well as serious sword enthusiasts, reenactors, and reproduction swordsmiths.

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