

Swords

A Wikipedia Compilation
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Chapter 1

Sword

For other uses, see [Sword \(disambiguation\)](#).

A **sword** is a **blade** weapon used primarily for **cutting** or **thrusting**. The precise definition of the term varies with the historical epoch or the geographical region under consideration. A sword in the most narrow sense consists of a straight **blade** with two edges and a **hilt**. However, in nearly every case, the term may also be used to refer to weapons with a single edge (**backsword**).

The word *sword* comes from the Old English *sweord*, cognate to *swert*, Old Norse *sverð*, from a Proto-Indo-European root **swer-* “to wound, to cut” . Non-European weapons called “sword” include single-edged weapons such as the Middle Eastern **saif**, the Chinese **dao** and the related Japanese **katana**. The Chinese **jian** is an example of a non-European double-edged sword, like the European models derived from the double-edged Iron Age sword.

Historically, the sword developed in the **Bronze Age**, evolving from the **dagger**; the earliest specimens date to ca. 1600 BC. The **Iron Age** sword remained fairly short and without a **crossguard**. The *spatha* as it developed in the **Late Roman** army became the predecessor of the European sword of the **Middle Ages**, at first adopted as the **Migration period sword**, and only in the **High Middle Ages** developed into the classical **arming sword** with **crossguard**.

The use of a sword is known as **swordsmanship** or (in an early modern or modern context) as **fencing**. In the **Early Modern period**, the sword developed into the **rapier** and eventually the **smallsword**, surviving into the 18th century only in the role of **duelling** weapon. By the 19th century, swords were reduced to the status of either **ceremonial** weapon or **sport equipment** in **modern fencing**.

1.1 History

1.1.1 Ancient history

Bronze Age

Main article: [Bronze Age sword](#)

The sword developed from the **dagger** when the construction of longer blades became possible, from the late 3rd millennium BC in the Middle East, first in **arsenic copper**, then in **tin-bronze**. The oldest sword-like weapons are found at **Arslantepe, Turkey**, and date to around 3300 BC. However, it is generally considered that these are longer **daggers**, and not the first ancestors of swords. Sword blades longer than 60 cm (24 in) were rare and not practical until the late Bronze Age because the **tensile strength** of **bronze** is relatively low, and consequently longer blades would bend easily. Copper and tin were mined in different places and later brought together for **smelting** process. It was a slow transition and hence needed skilled personnel to make these swords at that time.*[1] It was not until the development of stronger alloys such as **steel**, and improved **heat treatment** processes that **longswords** became practical for **combat**. They were also used as **decorations**.*[2]

The **hilt**, either from organic materials or **bronze** (the latter often highly decorated with **spiral patterns**, for example), at first simply allowed a firm grip and prevented the hand from slipping onto the blade when executing a **thrust** or the sword slipping out of the hand in a **cut**. Some of the early swords typically had small and slender blades intended for **thrusting**. Later swords were broader and were both **cutting** and **thrusting** weapons. A typical variant for European swords is the **leaf-shaped blade**, which was most common in **North-West Europe** at the end of the **Bronze Age**, in the

British Isles and Ireland in particular. Robert Drews linked the Naue Type II Swords, which spread from Southern Europe into the Mediterranean, with the Late Bronze Age collapse.

Sword production in China is attested from the Bronze Age Shang Dynasty.* [3] The technology for bronze swords reached its high point during the Warring States period and Qin Dynasty. Amongst the Warring States period swords, some unique technologies were used, such as casting high tin edges over softer, lower tin cores, or the application of diamond shaped patterns on the blade (see sword of Goujian). Also unique for Chinese bronzes is the consistent use of high tin bronze (17–21% tin) which is very hard and breaks if stressed too far, whereas other cultures preferred lower tin bronze (usually 10%), which bends if stressed too far. Although iron swords were made alongside bronze, it was not until the early Han period that iron completely replaced bronze.* [4]

In South Asia earliest available Bronze age swords of copper were discovered in the Harappan sites, in present-day Pakistan, and date back to 2300 BC. Swords have been recovered in archaeological findings throughout the Ganges-Jamuna Doab region of Bangladesh, consisting of bronze but more commonly copper.* [5] Diverse specimens have been discovered in Fatehgarh, where there are several varieties of hilt.* [5] These swords have been variously dated to times between 1700–1400 BC, but were probably used more notably in the opening centuries of the 1st millennium BC.* [5]

Iron Age

Main article: Iron Age sword

Iron became increasingly common from the 13th century B.C. Before that the use of swords was less frequent. The iron was not quench-hardened although often containing sufficient carbon, but work-hardened like bronze by hammering. This made them comparable or only slightly better in terms of strength and hardness to bronze swords. They could still bend during use rather than spring back into shape. But the easier production, and the better availability of the raw material for the first time permitted the equipment of entire armies with metal weapons, though Bronze Age Egyptian armies were at times fully equipped with bronze weapons.* [6]

Ancient swords are often found at burial sites. The sword was often placed on the right side of the corpse However there are exception to these. A lot of times the sword was kept over the corpse. In many late Iron Age graves, the sword and the scabbard were bent at 180 degrees. It was known as killing the sword. Thus they might have considered swords as the most potent and powerful object.* [7]

Greco-Roman antiquity

Further information: Migration period sword

By the time of Classical Antiquity and the Parthian and Sassanid Empires in Iran, iron swords were common. The Greek xiphos and the Roman gladius are typical examples of the type, measuring some 60 to 70 cm (24 to 28 in).* [8]* [9] The late Roman Empire introduced the longer spatha* [10] (the term for its wielder, spatharius, became a court rank in Constantinople), and from this time, the term *longsword* is applied to swords comparatively long for their respective periods.* [11]

Swords from the Parthian and Sassanian Empires were quite long, the blades on some late Sassanian swords being just under a metre long.

Swords were also used to administer various physical punishments, such as non-surgical amputation or capital punishment by decapitation. The use of a sword, an honourable weapon, was regarded in Europe since Roman times as a privilege reserved for the nobility and the upper classes.* [12]

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea mentions swords of Indian iron and steel being exported from India to Greece.* [13] Sri Lankan and Indian Blades made of Damascus steel also found their way into Persia.* [13]

Persian antiquity

In the first millennium BC the Persian armies used a sword that was originally of Scythian design called the akinaka (acinaces). However, the great conquests of the Persians made the sword more famous as a Persian weapon, to the extent that the true nature of the weapon has been lost somewhat as the name Akinaka has been used to refer to whichever form of sword the Persian army favoured at the time.

It is widely believed that the original *akinaka* was a 14 to 18 inch double-edged sword. The design was not uniform and in fact identification is made more on the nature of the scabbard than the weapon itself; the scabbard usually has a large, decorative mount allowing it to be suspended from a belt on the wearer's right side. Because of this, it is assumed that the sword was intended to be drawn with the blade pointing downwards ready for surprise stabbing attacks.

In the 12th century, the Seljuq dynasty had introduced the curved *shamshir* to Persia, and this was in extensive use by the early 16th century.

Chinese antiquity

Chinese steel swords made their first appearance in the later part of the Western Zhou Dynasty, but were not widely used until the 3rd century BC Han Dynasty.*[4] The Chinese *Dao* (刀 pinyin dāo) is single-edged, sometimes translated as *sabre* or *broadsword*, and the *Jian* (劍 or 阝 pinyin jiàn) is double-edged. The *zhanmadao* (literally “horse chopping sword”), an extremely long, anti-cavalry sword from the Song Dynasty era.

1.1.2 Middle Ages

Europe and the Middle East

During the *Middle Ages* sword technology improved, and the sword became a very advanced weapon. It was frequently used by men in battle, particularly during an attack. The *spatha* type remained popular throughout the *Migration period* and well into the Middle Ages. *Vendel Age* *spathas* were decorated with Germanic artwork (not unlike the Germanic *bracteates* fashioned after Roman coins). The *Viking Age* saw again a more standardized production, but the basic design remained indebted to the *spatha*.*[14]

Around the 10th century, the use of properly quenched hardened and tempered steel started to become much more common than in previous periods. The Frankish 'Ulfberht' blades (the name of the maker inlaid in the blade) were of particularly consistent high quality.*[15] Charles the Bald tried to prohibit the export of these swords, as they were used by Vikings in raids against the Franks.

Wootz steel which is also known as *Damascus steel* was a unique and highly prized steel developed on the Indian subcontinent as early as the 5th century BC. Its properties were unique due to the special smelting and reworking of the steel creating networks of iron carbides described as a globular *cementite* in a matrix of *pearlite*. The use of *Damascus steel* in swords became extremely popular in the 16th and 17th centuries.*[nb 1]*[16]

It was only from the 11th century that Norman swords began to develop the *crossguard* (*quillons*). During the *Crusades* of the 12th to 13th century, this *cruciform* type of *arming sword* remained essentially stable, with variations mainly concerning the shape of the *pommel*. These swords were designed as cutting weapons, although effective points were becoming common to counter improvements in armour, especially the 14th-century change from *chain mail* to *plate armour*.*[17]

It was during the 14th century, with the growing use of more advanced armour, that the *Hand and a half sword*, also known as a “*bastard sword*”, came into being. It had an extended grip that meant it could be used with either one or two hands. Though these swords did not provide a full two-hand grip they allowed their wielders to hold a shield or parrying dagger in their off hand, or to use it as a two-handed sword for a more powerful blow.*[18]

The earliest evidence of curved swords, or *scimitars* (and other regional variants as the *Arabian saif*, the *Persian shamshir* and the *Turkic kilij*) is from the 9th century, when it was used among soldiers in the *Khurasan* region of Persia.*[19]

In the Middle Ages, the sword was often used as a symbol of the word of God. The names given to many swords in mythology, literature, and history reflected the high prestige of the weapon and the wealth of the owner.*[20]

East Asia

As steel technology improved, single-edged weapons became popular throughout Asia. Derived from the Chinese *Jian* or *dao*, the Korean *hwandudaedo* are known from the early medieval *Three Kingdoms*. Production of the Japanese *tachi*, a precursor to the *katana*, is recorded from ca. 900 AD (see *Japanese sword*).*[21] Japan was famous for the swords (*nihonto*) it forged in the early 13th century for the class of warrior-nobility known as the *samurai*. The types

of swords used by the samurai included: *nodachi/odachi* (extra long field sword), *tachi* (long cavalry sword), *katana* (long sword), *wakizashi* (shorter companion sword for katana), *tantō* (short sword). Ancient pre-samurai swords included *tsurugi* (straight double edged blade) and *Chokutō* (straight single edged blade).*[22]

The Japanese *katana* reached the height of its development in the 15th and 16th centuries, when samurai increasingly found a need for a sword to use in closer quarters, leading to the creation of the modern *katana*.*[23]

Some western historians have said that Japanese *katana* were among the finest cutting weapons in world military history.*[24] *[25]

South and Southeast Asia

The swords manufactured in Indian workshops, such as the *Khanda*, find mention in the writing of *Muhammad al-Idrisi*.*[26] In *Sri Lanka*, a unique wind furnace was used to produce the high quality steel. This gave the blade a very hard cutting edge and beautiful patterns. For these reasons it became a very popular trading material.*[27]

The *Talwar* is a type of curved sword that was introduced to India in the 13th century by invading Muslim conquerors and was adopted by communities who favoured the sword as their main weapon, including the Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs. It became more widespread under the Mughals who fought with curved swords from horseback.*[28] It was revered by the Rajputs as a symbol of the god *shiva*, and is still used today as the primary weapon of the Sikh martial art *Gatka* and also by South Asian Shiite Muslims for *Tatbir*.*[29]

The *Urumi*:(Tamil: சுருள் பட்டாக்கத்தி *surul pattai*, lit. curling blade; Sinhalese: එතුණු කඩුව *ethunu kaduwa*; Hindi: *aara*) is a longsword with a flexible whip-like blade from India. Originating in the country's southern states, it is thought to have existed as far back as the Maurya dynasty (322 - 185 BC). The *urumi* is considered one of the most difficult weapons to master due to the risk of injuring oneself. It is treated as a steel whip,*[30] and therefore requires prior knowledge of that weapon.

The *Firangi* (/fəˈrɪŋɡiː/; derived from the Arabic term for a Western European a "Frank") was a sword type which used blades manufactured in Western Europe and imported by the Portuguese, or made locally in imitation of European blades. Because of its length the *firangi* is usually regarded as primarily a cavalry weapon. The sword has been especially associated with the *Marathas*, who were famed for their cavalry. However, the *firangi* was widely used by the Mughals and those peoples who came under their rule, including Sikhs and Rajputs.*[31]

In *Indonesia*, the images of Indian style swords can be found in Hindu gods statues from ancient Java circa 8th to 10th century, which means swords already known in ancient Indonesia culture. However the native types of blade known as *kris*, *parang*, *klewang* and *golok* are popular to be used as weapon rather than sword. These daggers are shorter than sword but longer than common dagger.

In *The Philippines*, traditional large swords known as the *Kampilan* and the *Panabas* were used in combat by the natives. A notable wielder of the *kampilan* was *Datu Lapu-Lapu*, the king of *Mactan* and his warriors who defeated the Spaniards and killed Portuguese explorer *Ferdinand Magellan* at the *Battle of Mactan* on 27 April 1521.*[32] Traditional swords in *The Philippines* were immediately banned, but the training in swordsmanship was later hidden from the occupying Spaniards by practices in dances. But because of the banning, Filipinos were forced to use swords that were disguised as farm tools. *Bolos* and *baliswords* were used during the revolutions against the colonialists not only because ammunition for guns was scarce, but also for concealability while walking in crowded streets and homes. *Bolos* were also used by young boys who joined their parents in the revolution and by young girls and their mothers in defending the town while the men were on the battlefields. During the *Philippine-American War* in events such as the *Balangiga Massacre*, most of an American company was hacked to death or seriously injured by *bolo*-wielding guerillas in *Balangiga, Samar*.*[33] When the Japanese took control of the country, several American special operations groups stationed in the Philippines were introduced to the Filipino Martial Arts and swordsmanship, leading to this style reaching America despite the fact that natives were reluctant to allow outsiders in on their fighting secrets.*[34]

Central America

Before and during the Spanish conquest of the *Aztec Empire* many different groups were using the obsidian sword as a weapon, including the *Aztecs*, *Mayans* and *Mixtecs*, the *Nahuatl* name for the obsidian sword was the *Macuahuitl* which consisted of a mahogany core with obsidian flints in its edge. One example of this weapon survived the Conquest of Mexico and it was part of the Royal Armoury of Madrid until it was destroyed by a fire in 1884. Its original design survives in diverse catalogues, among them the one created by the medievalist *Achille Jubinal* in the 19th century.

According to one source, the macuahuitl was 3 to 4 feet (0.91 to 1.22 m) long, and three inches (80 mm) in diameter, with a groove along either edge, into which sharp-edged pieces of obsidian were inserted, and firmly fixed with an adhesive.*[35] The rows of obsidian blades were sometimes discontinuous, leaving gaps along the side, while at other times the rows were set close together and formed a single edge.*[36] It was noted by the Spanish that the macuahuitl was so cleverly constructed that the blades could be neither pulled out nor broken.

The macuahuitl was sharp enough to decapitate a man.*[37] According to an account by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of Hernán Cortés' s conquistadors, it could even decapitate a horse:

Pedro de Morón was a very good horseman, and as he charged with three other horsemen into the ranks of the enemy the Indians seized hold of his lance and he was not able to drag it away, and others gave him cuts with their *broadswords*, and wounded him badly, and then they slashed at the mare, and cut her head off at the neck so that it hung by the skin, and she fell dead.*[38]

—Bernal Diaz del Castillo, '**Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España**'

Several obsidian mines were close to the Aztec civilizations in the Valley of Mexico as well as in the mountains north of the valley.,*[39] among them the Sierra de las Navajas “Razor Mountains” , named after its obsidian deposits. In a Chichen Itza carving, a possible ancestor of the macuahuitl is shown as a club having separate blades sticking out from each side. In a mural, a warrior holds a club with many blades on one side and one sharp point on the other, a possible ancestor of the macuahuitl.*[36]

The macuahuitl had some drawbacks. It takes more time to lift and swing it because of its weight than it does to thrust with a sword. More space is needed as well, so warriors advanced in loose formations.*[40]The macuahuitl has experienced somewhat of a rebirth in recent times, it enjoys a cult following, and interest on how to build the weapon and its capabilities remain a focal point.*[41]*[42]*[43] There are also many places on line from which to buy modern replicas of the macuahuitl.*[44]*[45]*[46]

1.1.3 Late Middle Ages and Renaissance

Main articles: Longsword and Zweihänder

From around 1300 to 1500, in concert with improved armour, innovative sword designs evolved more and more rapidly. The main transition was the lengthening of the grip, allowing two-handed use, and a longer blade. By 1400, this type of sword, at the time called *langes Schwert* (longsword) or *spadone*, was common, and a number of 15th- and 16th-century *Fechtbücher* offering instructions on their use survive. Another variant was the specialized armour-piercing swords of the estoc type. The longsword became popular due to its extreme reach and its cutting and thrusting abilities.*[47]

The estoc became popular because of its ability to thrust into the gaps between plates of armour.*[48] The grip was sometimes wrapped in wire or coarse animal hide to provide a better grip and to make it harder to knock a sword out of the user's hand.*[49]

A number of manuscripts covering longsword combat and techniques dating from the 13th–16th centuries exist in German,*[50] Italian, and English,*[51] providing extensive information on longsword combatives as used throughout this period. Many of these are now readily available online.*[50]*[51]

In the 16th century, the large zweihänder was used by the elite German mercenaries known as doppelsöldners.*[52] Zweihänder, literally translated, means two-hander. The zweihänder possesses a long blade, as well as a huge guard for protection. It is estimated that some zweihänder swords were over 6 feet (1.8 m) long, with the one ascribed to Frisian warrior Pier Gerlofs Donia being 7 feet (2.13 m) long.*[53] The gigantic blade length was perfectly designed for manipulating and pushing away enemy pole-arms, which were major weapons around this time, in both Germany and Eastern Europe. Doppelsöldners also used katzbalgers, which means 'cat-gutter'. The katzbalger's S-shaped guard and 2-foot-long (0.61 m) blade made it perfect for bringing in when the fighting became too close to use a zweihänder.*[54]

Civilian use of swords became increasingly common during the late Renaissance, with duels being a preferred way to honourably settle disputes. The practice of civilian duelling, with specifically designed civilian swords such as the Italian Cinquedea and Swiss Baselard, became so popular that according to one scholar: “In France during the reign of Henry IV (1589–1610), more than 4,000 French aristocrats were killed in duels in an eighteen-year period...During the reign of Louis XIII (1610–1643)...in a twenty-year period 8,000 pardons were issued for murders associated with duels.”*[55]

The *side-sword* was a type of war sword used by infantry during the *Renaissance of Europe*. This sword was a direct descendant of the *arming sword*. Quite popular between the 16th and 17th centuries, they were ideal for handling the mix of armoured and unarmoured opponents of that time. A new technique of placing one's finger on the *ricasso* to improve the grip (a practice that would continue in the *rapier*) led to the production of hilts with a guard for the finger. This sword design eventually led to the development of the civilian *rapier*, but it was not replaced by it, and the *side-sword* continued to be used during the *rapier's* lifetime. As it could be used for both cutting and thrusting, the term *cut and thrust sword* is sometimes used interchangeably with *side-sword*.^[56] Also of note is that as rapiers became more popular, attempts were made to hybridize the blade, sacrificing the effectiveness found in each unique weapon design. These are still considered *side-swords* and are sometimes labeled *sword rapier* or *cutting rapier* by modern collectors.

Also of note, *side-swords* used in conjunction with *bucklers* became so popular that it caused the term *swashbuckler* to be coined. This word stems from the new fighting style of the *side-sword* and *buckler* which was filled with much “swashing and making a noise on the buckler” .^[57]

Within the *Ottoman Empire*, the use of a curved sabre called the *Yatagan* started in the mid-16th century. It would become the weapon of choice for many in *Turkey* and the *Balkans*.^[58]

The sword in this time period was the most personal weapon, the most prestigious, and the most versatile for close combat, but it came to decline in military use as technology, such as the *crossbow* and *firearms* changed warfare. However, it maintained a key role in civilian self-defence.^[59]

1.1.4 Early Modern period

Further information: *Rapier*, *Backsword*, *Smallsword* and *Sabre*

The *rapier* is believed to have evolved either from the Spanish *espada ropera* or from the swords of the Italian nobility somewhere in the later part of the 16th century.^[60]^[61] The *rapier* differed from most earlier swords in that it was not a military weapon but a primarily civilian sword. Both the *rapier* and the Italian *schiaivona* developed the *crossguard* into a *basket-shaped guard* for hand protection.^[62] During the 17th and 18th centuries, the shorter *smallsword* became an essential fashion accessory in European countries and the New World, though in some places such as the *Scottish Highlands* large swords as the *basket-hilted broadsword* were preferred, and most wealthy men and military officers carried one slung from a belt. Both the *smallsword* and the *rapier* remained popular *dueling swords* well into the 18th century.^[63]

As the wearing of swords fell out of fashion, *canes* took their place in a gentleman's wardrobe. This developed to the gentlemen in the Victorian era to use the *umbrella*. Some examples of canes—those known as *sword canes* or *swordsticks*—incorporate a concealed blade. The *French martial art la canne* developed to fight with canes and swordsticks and has now evolved into a sport. The *English martial art singlestick* is very similar.

1.1.5 Modern history

Further information: *Épée*

Towards the end of its useful life, the sword served more as a weapon of self-defence than for use on the battlefield, and the military importance of swords steadily decreased during the *Modern Age*. Even as a personal sidearm, the sword began to lose its preeminence in the early 19th century, reflecting the development of reliable *handguns*.^[59]

However, swords were still used in combat, especially in *Colonial Wars* between native populations and *Colonial Empires*. For example, during the *Aceh War* the *Acehnese Klewangs*, a sword similar to the *machete*, proved very effective in close quarters combat with *Dutch troops*, leading the *Royal Netherlands East Indies Army* to adopt a heavy cutlass, also called *klewang* (very similar in appearance to the *US Navy Model 1917 Cutlass*) to counter it. Mobile troops armed with *carbines* and *klewangs* succeeded in suppressing *Aceh resistance* where traditional infantry with *rifle* and *bayonet* had failed. From that time on until the 1950s the *Royal Dutch East Indies Army*, *Royal Dutch Army*, *Royal Dutch Navy* and *Dutch police* used these cutlasses called *Klewang*.^[64]^[65]

Swords continued in use, but were increasingly limited to military commissioned officers' and non-commissioned officers' ceremonial uniforms, although most armies retained heavy cavalry until well after *World War I*. For example, the *British Army* formally adopted a completely new design of cavalry sword in 1908, almost the last change in *British*

Army weapons before the outbreak of the war.* [66] At the outbreak of World War I, in August 1914, infantry officers in all combatant armies still carried swords as part of their field equipment. The high visibility and limited practical use of the weapon however led to it being abandoned within weeks, although most mounted cavalry continued to carry sabres throughout the War. In China troops used the long anti-cavalry *Miao dao* well into the **Second Sino-Japanese War**. The last units of British heavy cavalry switched to using **armoured vehicles** as late as 1938. Swords and other dedicated melee weapons were used occasionally by many countries during **World War II**, but typically as a secondary weapon as they were outclassed by coexisting **firearms**.* [67]* [68]* [69]

Ceremonial use

Further information: **Sword of State**

Swords are commonly worn as a **ceremonial item** in many military and naval services throughout the world. Occasions to wear swords include any event in dress uniforms where the rank-and-file carry arms: **parades**, reviews, **tattoos**, and changes of command. They are also commonly worn for officers' weddings, and when wearing dress uniforms to church—although they are rarely actually worn in the church itself.

In the British forces they are also worn for any appearance at **Court**. In the **United States**, every Naval officer at or above the rank of **Lieutenant Commander** is required to own a sword, which can be prescribed for any formal outdoor ceremonial occasion; they are normally worn for changes of command and parades. For some Navy parades, cutlasses are issued to **Petty Officers** and **Chief Petty Officers**.

In the **U.S. Marine Corps** every officer must own a sword, which is prescribed for formal parades and other ceremonies where dress uniforms are worn and the rank-and-file are under arms. On these occasions depending on their billet, Marine Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (E-6 and above) may also be required to carry swords, which have hilts of a pattern similar to U.S. Naval officers' swords but are actually **sabres**. The **USMC Model 1859 NCO Sword** is the longest continuously-issued edged weapon in the U.S. inventory

The Marine officer swords are of the **Mameluke** pattern which was adopted in 1825 in recognition of the Marines' key role in the capture of the Tripolitan city of **Derna** during the **First Barbary War**.* [70] Taken out of issue for approximately 20 years from 1855 until 1875, it was restored to service in the year of the Corps' centennial and has remained in issue since.

Sword replicas

Main article: **Sword replica**

The production of **replicas** of historical swords originates with 19th-century **historicism**.* [71] Contemporary replicas can range from cheap factory produced look-alikes to exact recreations of individual artifacts, including an approximation of the historical production methods.

Some kinds of swords are still commonly used today as weapons, often as a side arm for military infantry. The Japanese **katana**, **wakizashi** and **tanto** are carried by some infantry and officers in Japan and other parts of Asia and the **kukri** is the official melee weapon for India. Other swords in use today are the **sabre**, the **scimitar**, the **shortsword** and the **machete**.* [71]

- In the case of a rat-tail tang, the maker welds a thin rod to the end of the blade at the crossguard; this rod goes through the grip.
- In traditional construction, Swordsmiths **peened** such tangs over the end of the pommel, or occasionally welded the hilt furniture to the tang and threaded the end for screwing on a pommel. This style is often referred to as a “narrow” or “hidden” tang. Modern, less traditional, replicas often feature a threaded pommel or a pommel nut which holds the hilt together and allows dismantling.
- In a “full” tang (most commonly used in knives and **machetes**), the tang has about the same width as the blade, and is generally the same shape as the grip.* [72] In European or Asian swords sold today, many advertised “full” tangs may actually involve a forged rat-tail tang.

1.2 Morphology

Further information: [Classification of swords](#)

The sword consists of the blade and the hilt. The term *scabbard* applies to the cover for the sword blade when not in use.

1.2.1 Blade

Main articles: [Sword blade](#) and [Oakeshott typology](#)

There is considerable variation in the detailed design of sword blades. The diagram opposite shows a typical Medieval European sword.

Early iron blades have rounded points due to the limited metallurgy of the time. These were still effective for thrusting against lightly armoured opponents. As armour advanced, blades were made narrower, stiffer and sharply pointed to defeat the armour by thrusting.

Dedicated cutting blades are wide and thin, and often have grooves known as fullers which lighten the blade at the cost of some of the blade's stiffness. The edges of a cutting sword are almost parallel. Blades oriented for the thrust have thicker blades, sometimes with a distinct midrib for increased stiffness, with a strong taper and an acute point. The geometry of a cutting sword blade allows for acute edge angles. It should be noted, however, that an edge with an acuter angle is more inclined to degrade quickly in combat situations than an edge with a more obtuse angle. Also, an acute edge angle is not the primary factor of a blade's sharpness.* [73]

The part of the blade between the **center of percussion** (CoP) and the point is called the *foible* (weak) of the blade, and that between the **center of balance** (CoB) and the hilt is the *forte* (strong). The section in between the CoP and the CoB is the *middle*.

The *ricasso* or *shoulder* identifies a short section of blade immediately below the guard that is left completely unsharpened. Many swords have no ricasso. On some large weapons, such as the German *Zweihänder*, a metal cover surrounded the ricasso, and a swordsman might grip it in one hand to wield the weapon more easily in close-quarter combat.* [54] The ricasso normally bears the **maker's mark**.

The **tang** is the extension of the blade to which the hilt is fitted.

On Japanese blades, the maker's mark appears on the tang under the grip.* [74]

1.2.2 Hilt

The hilt is the collective term for the parts allowing for the handling and control of the blade; these consist of the **grip**, the **pommel**, and a simple or elaborate **guard**, which in post-Viking Age swords could consist of only a **crossguard** (called a **cruciform hilt** or **quillons**). The pommel was originally designed as a stop to prevent the sword slipping from the hand. From around the 11th century onward it became a counterbalance to the blade, allowing a more fluid style of fighting.* [75] It can also be used as a blunt instrument at close range, and its weight affects the centre of percussion. In later times a *sword knot* or *tassel* was sometimes added. By the 17th century, with the growing use of firearms and the accompanying decline in the use of armour, many **rapiers** and **dueling swords** had developed elaborate basket hilts, which protect the palm of the wielder and rendered the **gauntlet** obsolete.* [76]

In late medieval and Renaissance era European swords, a flap of leather called the *chappe* or *rain guard* was attached to a sword's **crossguard** at the base of the hilt to protect the mouth of the scabbard and prevent water from entering.* [77]

1.2.3 Sword scabbards and suspension

Main article: [Scabbard](#)

Common accessories to the sword include the **scabbard**, as well as the *sword belt*.

- **Scabbard**: The scabbard, also known as the **Sheath**, is a protective cover often provided for the sword blade. Over the millennia, scabbards have been made of many materials, including leather, wood, and metals such as

brass or steel. The metal fitting where the blade enters the leather or metal scabbard is called the **throat**, which is often part of a larger scabbard **mount**, or **locket**, that bears a carrying ring or stud to facilitate wearing the sword. The blade's point in leather scabbards is usually protected by a metal **tip**, or **chape**, which on both leather and metal scabbards is often given further protection from wear by an extension called a **drag**, or **shoe**.*[78]

- **Sword belt**: A sword belt is a belt with an attachment for the sword's scabbard, used to carry it when not in use. It is usually fixed to the scabbard of the sword, providing a fast means of drawing the sword in battle. Examples of sword belts include the *Balteus* used by the Roman legionary.*[79]

1.3 Typology

Main articles: [Types of swords](#) and [Classification of swords](#)

Sword typology is based on morphological criteria on one hand (blade shape (cross-section, taper, and length), shape and size of the hilt and pommel) and age and place of origin on the other (Bronze Age, Iron Age, European (medieval, early modern, modern), Asian).

The relatively comprehensive *Oakeshott typology* was created by historian and illustrator Ewart Oakeshott as a way to define and catalogue swords based on physical form, though a rough sense of chronology is apparent. However, this typology does not set forth a prototypical definition for the longsword. Instead, it divides the broad field of weaponry into many exclusive types based on their predominant physical characteristics, including blade shape and hilt configuration. The typology also focuses on the smaller, and in some cases contemporary, single-handed swords such as the *arming sword*.*[62]

For any other type than listed below, and even for uses other than as a weapon, see the article [Sword-like object](#).

1.3.1 Single and double-edged

“Double-edge” redirects here. For the physical theatre company, see [Double Edge Theatre](#).

As noted above, the terms *longsword*, *broad sword*, *great sword*, and *Gaelic claymore* are used relative to the era under consideration, and each term designates a particular type of sword.

jian

In most Asian countries, a sword (*jian* 劍, *geom* (☒), *ken/tsurugi* (剣), *pedang*) is a double-edged straight-bladed weapon, while a knife or saber (*dāo* 刀, *do* (☒), *to/katana* (刀), *pisau*, *golok*) refers to a single-edged object.

Kirpan

In Sikh history, the sword is held in very high esteem. A single-edged sword is called a *kirpan*, and its double-edged counterpart a *khanda* or *toga*.*[80]

Churika

The South Indian *churika* is a handheld double-edged sword traditionally used in the Malabar region of Kerala. It is also worshipped as the weapon of *Vettakkorumakan*, the hunter god in Hinduism.

backsword and falchion

European terminology does give generic names for single-edged and double-edged blades but refers to specific types with the term 'sword' covering them all. For example the *backsword* may be so called because it is single-edged but the *falchion* which is also single-edged is given its own specific name.*[81]

Two-handed

See also: [Two-handed sword](#)

Two-handed sword may be used to refer to any sword that usually requires two hands to wield. However, in its proper sense it should be used only to refer to the very large swords of the 16th century. * [75]

Throughout history two-handed swords have generally been less common than their one-handed counterparts, one exception being their common use in Japan.

Hand and a half sword

A Hand and a half sword, colloquially known as a "bastard sword", was a sword with an extended grip and sometimes pommel so that it could be used with either one or two hands. Although these swords may not provide a full two-hand grip, they allowed its wielders to hold a shield or parrying dagger in their off hand, or to use it as a two-handed sword for a more powerful blow. * [49] These should not be confused with a longsword, two-handed sword, or Zweihänder, which were always intended to be used with two hands.

A sword as a literature award

In Hungary, the most prestigious literary award is the Balint Balassi Memorial Sword Award, which was founded by Pal Molnar.

1.4 See also

- [Classification of swords](#)
 - [Types of swords](#)
 - [List of swords](#)
- [List of sword manufacturers](#)
- [Chinese swords](#)
- [Japanese swords](#)
- [Korean swords](#)
- [Oakeshott typology](#)
- [Sword making](#)
- [Sword replica](#)
- [Swordsmanship](#)
- [Waster](#)
- [List of blade materials](#)

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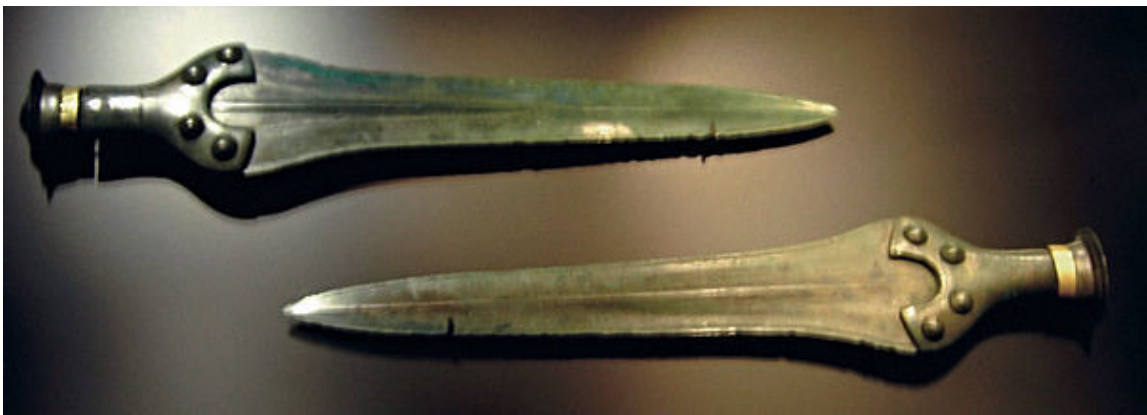
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Apa-type swords, 17th-century BC.



The swords found together with the Nebra skydisk, ca. 1600 BC.



Hallstatt swords



Darius I of Persia holding an acinaces in his lap



Battle scene from the Morgan Bible of Louis IX showing 13th-century swords



A Japanese wakizashi of the 17th century, with its koshirae and shirasaya.



Chinese Dao Sabre (Decorative or acrobatic version)



जुल्फिकार, मुगल काल
ZULFIKAR, MUGHAL PERIOD

4



Kampilan a Filipino long sword.



Obsidian edge sword, the Aztec Macuahuitl. Drawing part of the Catalog of the Royal Armoury of Madrid by the medievalist Achille Jubinal in the 19th century, original specimen was destroyed by a fire in 1884.

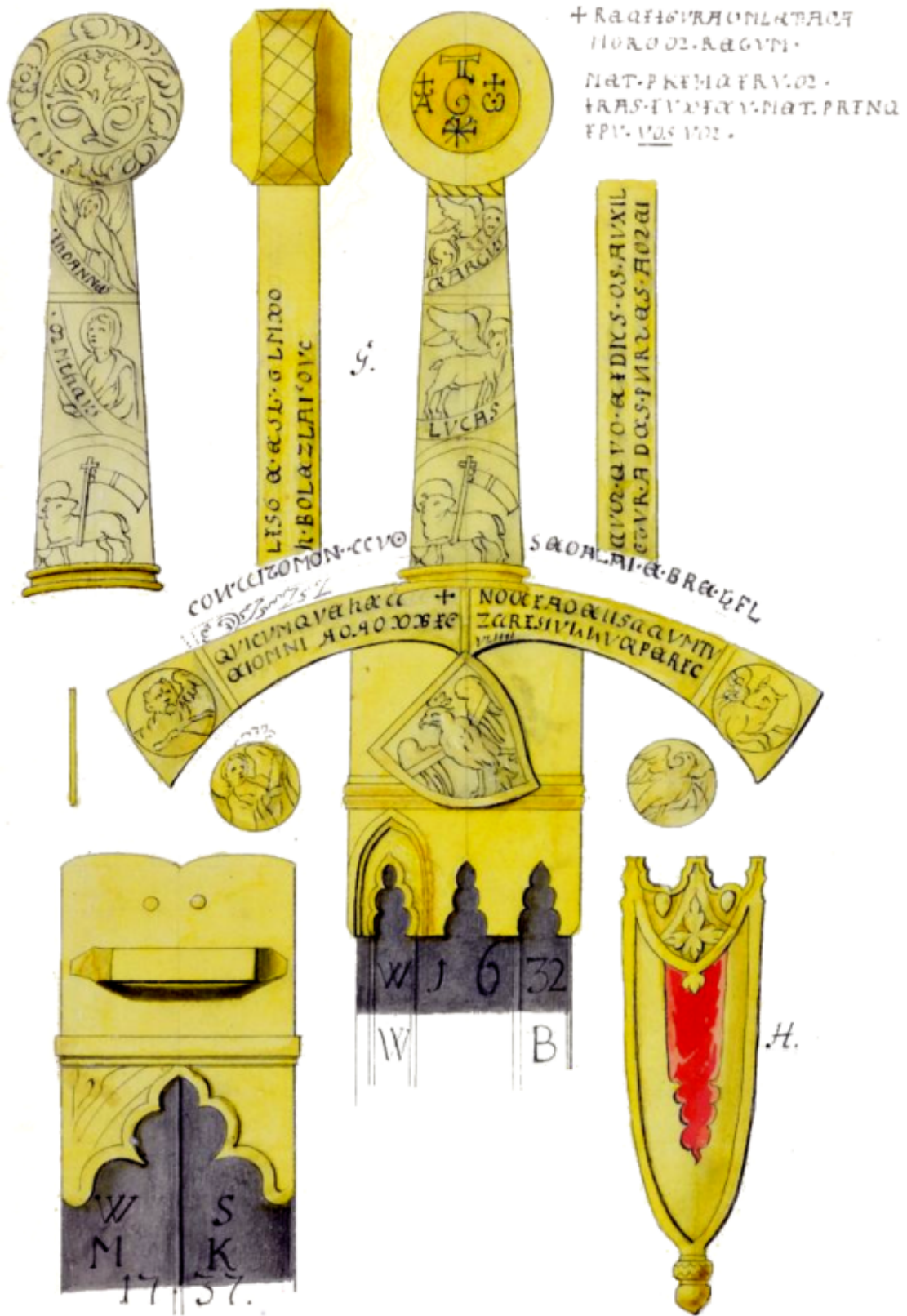


1548 depiction of a Zweihänder used against pikes in the Battle of Kappel

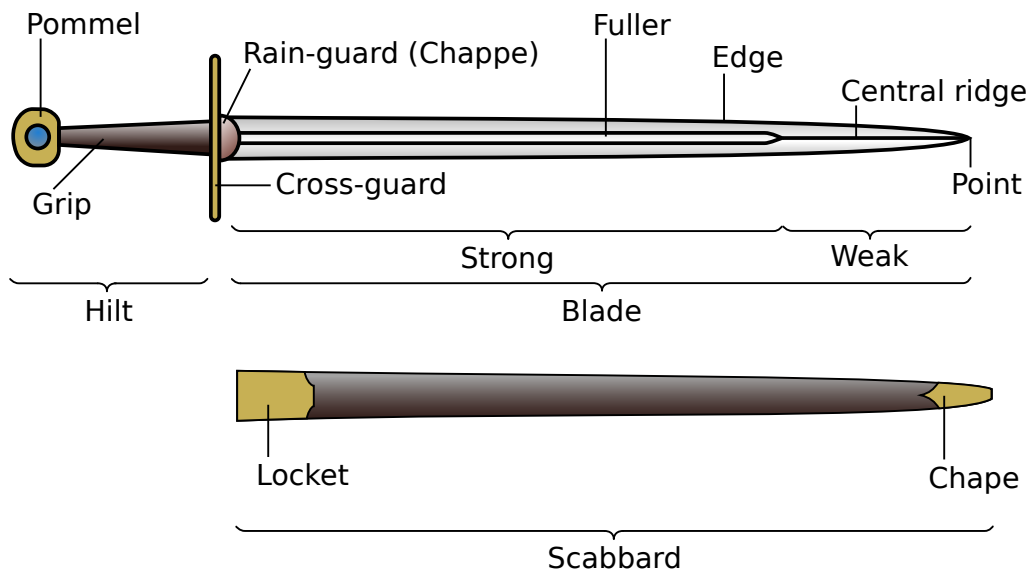




British Major Jack Churchill (far right) leads Commandos during a training exercise, sword in hand, in World War II.



Graphical documentation of the Szczerbiec, a sword that was traditionally used in the coronation ceremony of Polish kings, 12th-13th century.





Hilt of a rapier. In this case, with a swept hilt



Chapter 2

Arming sword

The **arming sword** (also sometimes called a **knight's** or **knightly sword**) is a type of European sword with a single-handed cruciform **hilt** and straight double-edged blade of around 69 to 81 centimetres (27 to 32 in), in common use from the 11th to 16th centuries. It is a common weapon in period artwork, and there are many surviving examples in museums.

2.1 History and use

The arming sword was the standard military sword of the medieval European knight. The term came into use to differentiate the standard single-handed sword from the **great sword**. It is so called because it was worn with armour.* [1]

It was typically used with a **shield** or **buckler**; however, there are many texts and pictures depicting effective arming sword combat without the benefit of a shield. According to medieval texts, in the absence of a shield the empty (normally left) hand could be used for grabbing or grappling opponents. The arming sword was overall a light, versatile weapon capable of both cut and thrust combat, and normally boasted excellent balance.

After the **longsword** came to predominate, the arming sword was retained as a common sidearm but came to be referred to as a **shortsword**, later evolving into the cut and thrust swords of the Renaissance.

2.2 Morphology

Although a variety of designs fall under the heading of 'arming sword', they are characterized as having single-handed cruciform hilts and straight double-edged blades designed for both cutting and thrusting.

Blade length was usually from 69 to 81 centimetres (27 to 32 in); however, examples exist from 58 to 100 centimetres (23 to 39 in).*[2] Pommels were most commonly of the 'Brazil-nut' type from around 1000-1200 CE,* [1] with the 'wheel' pommel appearing in the 11th and predominating from the 13th to 15th centuries.

Arming swords correspond to Oakeshott types XI, XII and XIII. The type is a development of the **High Middle Ages**, first apparent in the **Norman swords** of the 11th century. As such they are a continuation of the early medieval "**Viking sword**", which ultimately derives from the **spatha** of **Late Antiquity** and the **Migration Period**.

A combination of the Oakeshott and Peterson Typologies shows a chronological progression from the Viking sword to a "transitional sword", type X, which incorporated elements of both Viking and arming swords. This "transitional sword" continued to evolve into the presently defined arming sword.

Oakeshott contrasts the arming sword both from what he calls the "great swords"—describing the latter as having longer and broader blades—and from what he calls "hand-and-half swords" which he describes as similar in size but with a longer grip (typified by the subtypes XIIa and XIIIa that were in use simultaneously with the arming swords in the latter part of the High Middle Ages, c. 1250–1350). He notes these subtypes as the progenitors of the later two-handed longswords of the **Late Middle Ages**, in use c. 1350–1550. For this reason, scholars occasionally refer to these "great swords" improperly and anachronistically as "longswords". By contrast, the arming sword would evolve into the later "shortsword" worn as a sidearm while wielding the two-handed longsword.

2.3 See also

- Types of swords
- Oakeshott typology
- Longsword

2.4 Notes

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2.6 External links

Chapter 3

Classification of swords

Further information: [Types of swords](#) and [List of premodern combat weapons § Swords](#)

The English-language terminology used in the **classification of swords** is imprecise, and has varied widely over time, with terms such as “broadsword”, “long sword”, “short-sword”, “bastard sword”, “side-sword” and “two-handed sword” being used to group together weapons, often with no particular agreed upon definition, relation to one another in regards their technology, and construction or intended use and fighting style. However, in modern times many of these have been given specific meanings (although sometimes quite arbitrarily). Some of these terms originate contemporary with the weapon they refer to, others are modern or early modern terms used by antiquarians, curators, and modern-day sword enthusiasts for historical swords.

Terminology was further complicated by terms introduced (i.e. “hand-and-a-half sword”, “single-handed sword”, “*Pappenheimer*”,^[1]^[2] “Walloon sword”, “Sinclair Sabre”, “Mortuary sword”, “*spada da lato*”, “town sword”, etc.) or misinterpreted (i.e. bastard sword, broadsword,^[3]^[4] rapier,^[5] *estoc*, *flamberge*, etc.) in the 19th century by antiquarians, and in 20th century pop culture (sword and sorcery, role playing games, fighting games, etc.). Also the addition of new terms to the mix such as “great sword”, “*Zweihänder*” (instead of *Bidenhänder*), and “cut-and-thrust sword”. Historical European Martial Arts associations have turned the term *spada da lato*, a term that was coined by Italian curators, into “side-sword”. Furthermore, there is a disregard for the use of the term broadsword by these associations. All these newly introduced or redefined sword terms add to the confusion of the matter.

The most well known systematic typology of blade types of the European medieval sword is the Oakeshott typology (although this is a modern classification and not a medieval one, and has many overlaps). Elizabethans used descriptive terms such as “short”, “bastard”, and “long” which emphasized the length of the blade, and “two-handed” for any sword that could be wielded as such.

3.1 Classification by “Hilt-Type”

3.1.1 “Handedness”

The term **two-handed sword**, used as a general term, may refer to any large sword designed to be used primarily with two hands:

- the European longsword, popular in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance.
 - the Scottish late medieval **claymore** (not to be confused with the basket-hilted claymore of the 18th century)
- the *Bidenhänder* sword favoured by the *Landsknechte* of 16th-century Germany.

The term “hand-and-a-half sword” is modern (late 19th century).^[6] During the first half of the 20th century, the term “bastard sword” was used regularly to refer to this type of sword, while “long sword” or “long-sword”, if used at all, referred to the rapier (in the context of Renaissance or Early Modern fencing).^[7]

The term “single-handed sword” (or “one-handed sword”) is a **retronym** coined to disambiguate from “two-handed” or “hand-and-a-half” specimens. “Single-handed sword” is used by Sir Walter Scott. * [8] It is also used as a possible gloss of the obscure term *tonsword* by Nares (1822); * [9] “one-handed sword” is somewhat later, recorded from c. 1850.

Apparently, some swords were designed for left-hand use, although left-handed swords have been described as “a rarity” . * [10]

Great sword

These include the long swords in both the Middle Ages * [11] * [12] * [13] and Renaissance, like the “outsized specimens” - between 90 cm and 120 cm - such as the Oakeshott type XIIa or Oakeshott type XIIIa. These swords can be wielded with either one hand or with two hands, but their grip may be designed specifically for one hand, two hands, or the “hand-and-half” grip where the off-hand grips the pommel, depending on the preference of the wielder.

Claymore

The Scottish name Claymore (Gaelic *claidheamh mor*, lit. “great sword”) * [14] * [15] can refer to either the longsword with a distinctive two-handed grip, or the basket-hilted sword developing from a rapier.

Bidenhänder

The *Bidenhänder* or two-hander is the “true” two-handed sword.

The *Bidenhänder* was a specialist weapon wielded by certain *Landsknechte Doppelsöldners*. It is highly doubtful that these two-handed swords were used to chop off the point of pikes; however, the two-handed sword was an ideal weapon for protecting the standard bearer or a breach since a *Doppelsöldner* armed with one could fend off many attackers by using *moulinets*.

3.2 Classification by “Blade-Type”

3.2.1 Double-edge and Straight swords

These are double-edged, usually straight bladed swords.

Longsword and bastard sword

These days, the term **longsword** most frequently refers to a late Medieval and Renaissance weapon designed for use with two hands. The German *langes Schwert* (“long sword”) in 15th-century manuals did not necessarily denote a type of weapon, but the technique of fencing with both hands at the hilt.

Contemporary use of “long-sword” or “longsword” only resurfaces in the 2000s in the context of reconstruction of the German school of fencing, translating the German *langes Schwert*.

The French *épée bâtarde* as well as the English *bastard sword* originates in the 15th or 16th century, originally as having the general sense of “irregular sword or sword of uncertain origin” . *Qui n'étoit ni Française, ni Espagnole, ni proprement Lansquenette, mais plus grande que pas une de ces fortes épées* (“[a sword] which was neither French, nor Spanish, nor properly *Landsknecht* [German], but longer than any of these sturdy swords.”) * [16] *Espée bastarde* could also historically refer to a single-handed sword with a fairly long blade compared to other short swords. * [17]

Joseph Swetnam states that the bastard sword is a sword that is midway in length between a short sword and a long sword, * [18] and Randall Cotgrave’s definition seems to imply this as well. The French *épée de passot*, was also known as *épée bâtarde* (i.e., bastard sword) and also *coustille à croix* * [19] (literally a cross-hilted blade), referred to a medieval single-handed sword optimized for thrusting * [20] The *épée de passot* was the sidearm of the *franc-archers* (French / Breton bowmen of the 15th and 16th centuries). * [21] The term *passot* comes from the fact that these swords passed (*passaient*) the length of a “normal” short-sword. * [21] The German term for a bastard sword was *Reitschwert* (literally a riding sword), * [22] * [23] “...in the early Renaissance the term bastard-sword was also sometimes used to refer to

single-hand arming-swords with compound-hilts. A form of German arming sword with a bastard-style compound hilt was called a 'Reitschwert' ('cavalry sword') or a 'Degen' ('knight's sword').” * [24]

The “Masters of Defence” competition organised by Henry VIII in July 1540 listed * [25] *two hande sworde*, *bastard sworde* and *longe sworde* as separate items (as it should in Joseph Swetnam's context). * [26] * [27] * [28]

Antiquarian usage in the 19th century established the use of “bastard sword” as referring unambiguously to these large swords. * [29] However, George Silver and Joseph Swetnam refer to them merely as *two hande sworde*. The term “hand-and-a-half sword” is modern (late 19th century). * [6] During the first half of the 20th century, the term “bastard sword” was used regularly to refer to this type of sword. * [7]

The Elizabethan long sword (c.f. George Silver * [30] and Joseph Swetnam) is a single-handed “cut-and-thrust” sword with a 4-foot-long (1.2 m) blade * [18] similar to the long rapier. “Let thy (long) Rapier or (long) Sword be foure foote at the least, and thy dagger two foote.” Historical (15th to 16th century) terms for this type of sword included the Italian *spada longa* (*lunga*), and French *longue épée*.

The term **longsword** has also been used to refer to different kinds of sword depending on historical context:

- *Bidenhänder* or two-hander, a late Renaissance sword of the 16th century *Landsknechte*, the longest sword of all;
- the long "side sword" or "rapier" * [5] with a cutting edge (the Elizabethan long sword).

Broadsword

The basket-hilted sword was a military sword, termed “broad” in contrast with the **smallsword**. The term **broadsword** has been used loosely to indicate any of the following swords:

- Claymore * [31]
- Basket-hilted sword * [32]
- A sabre. * [33]

It must be noted that the term **broadsword** was never used historically to describe the one-handed **arming sword**. The arming sword was wrongly labelled a broadsword by antiquarians as the medieval swords were similar in blade width to the military swords of the day (that were also sometimes labeled as **broadwords**) and broader than the dueling swords and ceremonial dress swords.

Long knife

Knives such as the *seax* and other blades of similar length - between 1 and 2 feet (~ 30 cm and 60 cm) - are sometimes construed as “swords”. This is especially the case for weapons from antiquity that lack access to the technology for the high quality steel that is necessary for reliable swords of the length of a *spatha* or longer.

- Iron Age swords
 - *Seax*, a tool and weapon, common in Northern Europe.
 - *Gladius*, an early ancient Roman blade
 - *Xiphos*, a double-edged, single-hand blade used by the ancient Greeks;
- certain Renaissance era sidearms:
 - *Baselard*, a late medieval heavy dagger;
 - *Cinquedea*, a civilian long dagger;
 - *Dirk*, the Scottish long dagger (*biodag*);
 - *Hanger* or wood-knife, a type of hunting sword or infantry *sabre*;
- certain fascine knives:

- Model 1832 Foot Artillery Sword, a blade of about 25 inches in length designed after the Roman *gladius*. Also known as a *coupe-chou* (literally a cabbage cutter) in France.

Over-sized two-handers that were not practical weapons were popular as parade swords.

3.2.2 Edgeless and Thrusting swords

The edgeless swords category comprises weapons which are related to or labeled as “swords” but do not emphasize “hacking or slashing techniques” or have any “cutting edges” whatsoever. The majority of these elongated weapons were designed for agility, precision and rapid thrusting blows to exploit gaps in the enemy's shield wall and armor, or pierce iron or steel armour.

xiphos

The *Spartiatēs* were always armed with a *xiphos* as a secondary weapon. Among most Greek warriors, this weapon had an iron blade of about 60 centimetres, however, the Spartan version was typically only 30-45 centimetres. The Spartan's shorter weapon proved deadly in the crush caused by colliding phalanxes formations – it was capable of being thrust through gaps in the enemy's shield wall and armor, where there was no room for longer weapons. The groin and throat were among the favorite targets. In one account, an Athenian asked a Spartan why his sword was so short and after a short pause he replied, “It's long enough to reach your heart.”

Rapier

The rapier (French *épée rapière*, Spanish *espada ropera*). Note that there is no historical Italian equivalent to the English word rapier.*[5]

The term rapier appeared in the English lexicon via the French *épée rapière* which either compared the weapon to a rasp or file; or rapier may be a corruption of “rasping sword”*[34] which referred to the rasping*[35] sound the blade makes when it comes into contact with another blade.

Confusingly, the German *rappier**[36]*[37] is not the same weapon as the rapier but rather a long sword.*[38]

Panzerstecher and koncerz

The *Panzerstecher* is a German and East European weapon with a long edgeless weapon of square or triangular cross-section for penetrating armour.*[39]*[40]*[41] Early models were either two-handers or “hand-and-half” hilted,*[42] while later 16th and 17th century models (also known as *koncerz*) were one-handed and used by cavalry.*[43]

Tuck and Verdun

The tuck (French *estoc*, Italian *stocco*) is an edgeless blade of square or triangular cross-section used for thrusting. In French, *estoc* also means thrust or point; and *estoc et taille* means cut and thrust.

The tuck may also get its name from the verb *to tuck* which means *to shorten*.

Small-sword

The **small sword** or **smallsword** (also **court sword**, fr: *épée de cour* or **dress sword**) is a light one-handed sword designed for thrusting which evolved out of the longer and heavier rapier of the late Renaissance. The height of the small sword's popularity was between the mid-17th and late 18th century. It is thought to have appeared in France and spread quickly across the rest of Europe. The small sword was the immediate predecessor of the French dueling sword (from which the *épée* developed) and its method of use—as typified in the works of such authors as Sieur de Liancour, Domenico Angelo, Monsieur J. Olivier, and Monsieur L'Abbat—developed into the techniques of the French classical school of fencing. Small swords were also used as status symbols and fashion accessories; for most of the 18th century anyone, civilian or military, with pretensions to gentlemanly status would have worn a small sword on a daily basis.

3.2.3 Single-edge and Curved swords

These are single-edged, usually thick or curved bladed swords, typically designed for hacking or slashing purposes.

Kopis

Unlike the xiphos, which is a thrusting weapon, the kopis was a hacking weapon in the form of a thick, curved single edged iron sword. In Athenian art, Spartan hoplites were often depicted using a kopis instead of the xiphos, as the kopis was seen as a quintessential “bad guys” weapon in Greek eyes. ^[44]

Katanas

Main article: *katana*

Historically **katana** (刀) were one of the traditionally made *Japanese swords* (日本刀 *nihontō*) ^[45]^[46] that were used by the *samurai* of feudal Japan. ^[47] Modern versions of the katana are sometimes made using non-traditional materials and methods. The katana is characterized by its distinctive appearance: a curved, slender, single-edged blade with a circular or squared guard and long grip to accommodate two hands.

Hanger

The **hanger** (Obs. *whinyard*, *whinger*, *cuttoe*), wood-knife or *hunting sword* is a long knife or short sword that hangs from the belt and was popular as both a hunting tool and weapon of war. ^[48]^[49]

Falchion and cutlass

The falchion (French *braquemart*, ^[50] Spanish *bracamarte*) proper is a wide straight-bladed but curved edged hanger or long knife. ^[51] The term falchion may also refer to the early cutlass.

The **cutlass** or curtal-axe also known as a falchion (French *badelaire*, *braquemart*, ^[52] *coutelas*, ^[53] *malchus* Italian *coltellaccio*, *storta*, German *messer*, ^[54] *dussack*, *malchus*) is a broad-bladed curved **hanger** or long knife. In later usage, the cutlass referred to the short naval boarding *sabre*.

Sabre

The **sabre** (US *saber*) or *shable* (French *sabre*, Spanish *sable*, Italian *sciabola*, German *sabel* or *säbel*, Russian *sablya*, Hungarian *szablya*, Polish *szabla*) is a single-edged curved bladed cavalry sword. ^[55]

Scimitar

The scimitar (French *cimeterre*, Italian *scimitarra*) is a type of *saber* that came to refer in general to any *sabre* used by the Turks or Ottomans (*kilij*), Persians (*shamshir*) and more specifically the *Stradioti* ^[56] (Albanian and Greek mercenaries who fought in the French-Italian Wars and were employed throughout Western Europe ^[57]). ^[58] The scimitar proper was the *Stradioti* *saber*, ^[59]^[60] and the term was introduced into France by Philippe de Commines (1447 – 18 October 1511) as *cimeterre*, ^[61] Italy (especially the Venetian Republic who hired the *stradioti* as mercenaries) as *scimitarra*, and England as *cimeter* or scimitar via the French and Italian terms.

3.3 See also

- Types of swords
- Oakeshott typology

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Chapter 4

Zweihänder

The ♣ *Zweihänder* (German for “two hander”, also called **Two handed sword**, **Montante**, **Great sword**, **Bidenhänder**, **Schlachtschwert***[1] or **Bihänder**), is a two-handed sword primarily of the Renaissance. It is a true two-handed sword because it requires two hands to wield, unlike other large swords that are wielded with two hands but can also be wielded with one.*[2]

The *Zweihänder* swords develop from the longsword of the Late Middle Ages and they became a hallmark weapon of the German *Landsknechte* from the time of Maximilian I (d. 1519) and during the Italian Wars of 1494–1559. The *Goliath Fechtbuch* (1510) shows an intermediate form between longsword and *Zweihänder*

These swords represent the final stage in the trend of increasing size that started in the 14th century. In its developed form, the *Zweihänder* has acquired the characteristics of a polearm rather than a sword. Consequently, it is not carried in a sheath but across the shoulder like a halberd. By the second half of the 16th century, these swords had largely ceased to have a practical application, but they continued to see ceremonial or representative use well into the 17th century. Some ceremonial zweihänder, called “bearing-swords” or “parade-swords” (Paratschwert) were much larger and weighed about 10 pounds (4.5 kg).*[3]

4.1 Morphology

Due to their size and weight—typically at least 1.4 m (4 ft 7¹/₈ in) long and with a weight of over 2 kg—Zweihänders require two hands; as such they require at least 25 cm (9.84 in) for the grip.*[4] Zweihänders above 4 kg are considered to be more ceremonial than practical.

Early Zweihänders were simply larger versions of longswords. Later examples had *Parierhaken* (“parrying hooks”) at the top of the *ricasso* as well as side rings on the hilt. A sword did not necessarily have both features.*[5]

Some Zweihänders had wavy blades and were called *Flammenschwert*.

4.2 Application

The weapon is mostly associated with either Swiss or German mercenaries known as *Landsknecht*, and their wielders were *Doppelsöldner*. However, the Swiss outlawed their use, while the *Landsknechte* kept using them until much later.*[6] The Black Band of German mercenaries (active during the 1510s and 1520s) included 2,000 two-handed swordsmen in a total strength of 17,000 men. *Zweihänder* wielders fought with and against pike formations. There are some accounts of *Zweihänders* cutting off pike heads. Soldiers trained in the use of the sword were granted the title of *Meister des langen Schwertes* (lit. Master of the Long Sword) by the Marx brotherhood.

Frisian hero Pier Gerlofs Donia is reputed to have wielded a *Zweihänder* with such skill, strength and efficiency that he managed to behead several people with it in a single blow. The *Zweihänder* ascribed to him is, as of 2008, on display in the Frisian museum. It has a length of 213 cm (84 in) and a weight of about 6.6 kg (14¹/₂ lb).*[7]



1548 depiction of a Zweihänder used against pikes in the Battle of Kappel

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4.4 External links

- Essay by Anthony Shore (Journal of Western Martial Art)
- The Weighty Issue of Two-Handed Greatswords, by John Clements

Chapter 5

Claymore

Not to be confused with a type of Scottish broadsword.

For other uses, see Claymore (disambiguation).

A **claymore** (/ˈkleɪmɔːr/; from Scottish Gaelic *claidheamh-mòr*, “great sword”)^[1] is the Scottish variant of the late medieval two-handed longsword. It is characterised as having a cross hilt of forward-sloping quillons with quatrefoil terminations. It was in use from the 15th to 17th centuries.

In later years (1700s onwards) the word claymore began to be used in Scotland and parts of England to refer to basket-hilted swords. While this description was probably not used during the 1600s when basket hilted swords were the primary military swords across Europe but over time the large, heavy, broad bladed swords remained in service with Scottish regiments. After the Acts of Union in 1707 when Scottish and English regiments were integrated together the swords were seen as a mark of distinction by Scottish officers over the more slender sabres used by their English contemporaries. As a broad, heavy weapon the swords were seen as a symbol of physical strength and prowess, and a link to the historic Highland way of life. Although these swords were no longer recognizable as the historical claymore they were the broadsword of that era and so were referred to using that same word. Such swords remained in service with Scottish regiments into the 1800s.

5.1 Terminology

The term *claymore* is an anglicisation of the Gaelic *claidheamh-mòr* “great sword” , attested in 1772 (as *Cly-more*) with the gloss “great two-handed sword” .^[2] The sense “basket-hilted sword” is contemporaneous, attested in 1773 as “The broad-sword now used [...] called the Claymore, (i.e. the great sword).” ^[3] OED observes that the latter usage is “inexact, but very common” . The 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica likewise judged that the term is “wrongly” applied to the basket-hilted sword.^[4]

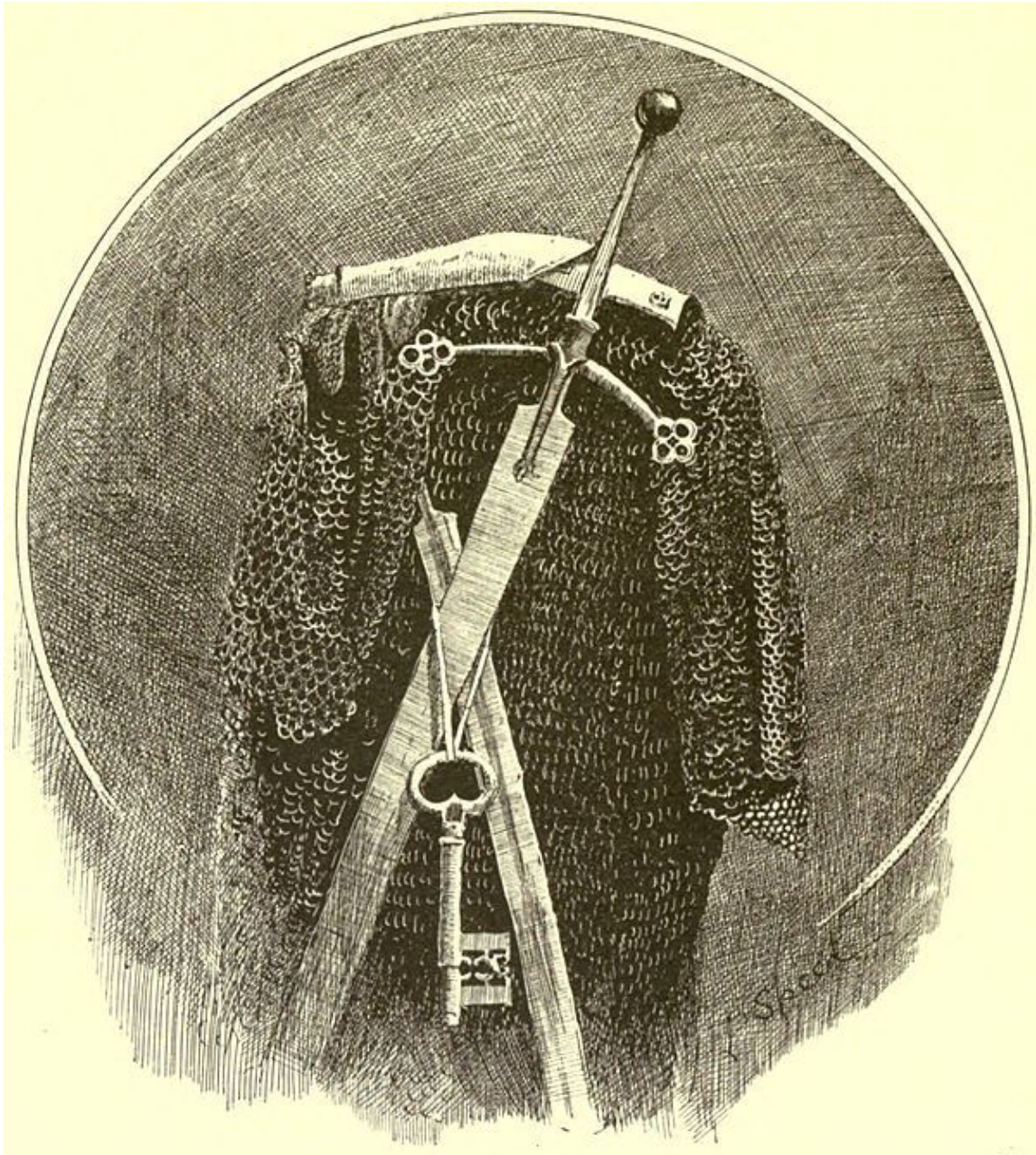
Countering this view, Paul Wagner & Christopher Thompson argue that the term “claymore” was applied first to the basket-hilted broadsword, and then to all Scottish swords. They provide earlier quotes than those given above, in support of its use to refer to a basket-hilted broadsword and targe: “a strong handsome target, with a sharp pointed steel, of above half an ell in length, screw'd into the navel of it, on his left arm, a sturdy claymore by his side” (1715 pamphlet). They also note its use as a battle-cry as early as 1678.^[5]

Authors arguing that the basket-hilted sword is “incorrectly” called *claymore* have been known to suggest that *claybeg* (from a purported Gaelic *claidheamh-beag* “small sword”) should be used instead.^[6]

This does not parallel Scottish Gaelic usage. According to the *Gaelic Dictionary* by R. A. Armstrong (1825), *claidheamh-mòr* translates to “broadsword” , and *claidheamh dà làimh* to “two-handed sword” , while *claidheamh-beag* is given as a translation of “Bilbo”.^[7]

The term “claymore” became part of vocabulary of the Victorian era sentimental or Romanticist “retro-Jacobite” literature and poetry such as the *Skye Boat Song* (1870).

Other contemporary Gaelic descriptives of swords include *claidheamh-cùil* or *back sword*, referring to a single-edged sword with a flat “spine” (not one worn on the back, a common misinterpretation), the *claidheamh-crom* or *crooked sword*, which could describe either a typical sabre style blade (such as that worn by Archibald Campbell, 1st Duke of Argyll, in the painting by Medina) or a scimitar style blade known as a “Turcael” (“Turkish” blade) such as that



Engraving of a claymore and armour at Dunvegan Castle (from *Footsteps of Dr. Johnson*, 1890).

brandished by Alasdair Mòr, the Champion of Clan Grant, in the c. 1715 portrait by Waitt, or the *claidheamh-caol* or *narrow sword*, usually describing a rapier or small-sword.

The term *claybeg*, purportedly from Scots Gaelic *claidheamh-beag* meaning “little sword” is not seen in clan-era Gaelic song or poetry, 'Dwelly's' [ibid.], or other authorities, and seems to be a fairly recent invention.

5.2 Two-handed (Highland) claymore

The two-handed claymore was a large sword used in the late Medieval and early modern periods. It was used in the constant clan warfare and border fights with the English from circa 1400 to 1700.*[8] Although Claymores existed as far back as the Wars of Scottish Independence they were smaller and few had the typical quatrefoil design (as can be seen on the Great Seal of John Balliol King of Scots).*[9] The last known battle in which it is considered to have been used in a significant number was the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689. It was somewhat longer than other two-handed



A mid-16th-century tomb effigy from Finlaggan

swords of the era. The two-handed claymore seems to be an offshoot of Early Scottish medieval longswords (similar to the *Espee de Guerre* or *Grete* war sword) which had developed a distinctive style of a cross-hilt with forward-angled arms that ended in spatulate swellings. The lobed pommels on earlier swords were inspired by the Viking style. The spatulate swellings were later frequently made in a quatrefoil design.* [10]

The average claymore ran about 140 cm (55 in) in overall length, with a 33 cm (13 in) grip, 107 cm (42 in) blade, and a weight of approximately 5.5 lb (2.5 kg). For instance, in 1772 Thomas Pennant described a sword seen on his visit to Raasay as: “an unwieldy weapon, two inches broad, doubly edged; the length of the blade three feet seven inches; of the handle, fourteen inches; of a plain transverse guard, one foot; the weight six pounds and a half.” *^[11]

Fairly uniform in style, the sword was set with a wheel pommel often capped by a crescent-shaped nut and a guard with straight, forward-sloping arms ending in quaterfoils, and langets running down the centre of the blade from the guard. Another common style of two-handed claymore (though lesser known today) was the “clamshell hilted” claymore. It had a crossguard that consisted of two downward-curving arms and two large, round, concave plates that protected the foregrip. It was so named because the round guards resembled an open clam.

5.3 See also

- Historical fencing in Scotland

5.4 Notes

- [1] “claymore” . *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989. (subscription required)
- [2] Thomas Pennant, *A map of Scotland, the Hebrides, and part of England*, cited after OED. See also Alexander Robert Ulysses Lockmore (1778). *Annual Register Vol. 23*. London.
- [3] James Boswell, *The journal of a tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson*, cited after OED.
- [4] Chisholm 1911, p. 474.
- [5] Wagner, Paul & Thompson, Christopher, “The words claymore and broadsword” in Hand, Stephen, *Spada II: Anthology of Swordsmanship* (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2002)
- [6] so Nick Evangelista, *The encyclopedia of the sword*, 1995, ISBN 978-0-313-27896-9, p. 113. The suggestion appears as early as 1835, in a letter to the editor of *The United service magazine* p. 109: "... the claybeg or Andrew Ferrara, now worn by the officers and sergeants of the Highland corps, and which has usurped the venerable name of the ancient Scottish weapon" .
- [7] *A Gaelic Dictionary*, p. 120. see also Wagner, Paul; Christopher Thompson (2005). “The words “claymore” and “broadsword””. *SPADA* (Highland Village, Texas: The Chivalry Bookshelf) 2: 111–117.. *Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* (Gairm Publications, Glasgow, 1988, p. 202); 'Culloden – The Swords and the Sorrows (*The National Trust for Scotland, Glasgow, 1996*).
- [8] swords and sabres harvey J S withers
- [9] Ewart Oakeshott= Records of the Medieval Sword pg.117 BOYDELL&BREWER Ltd
- [10] Highland grave slab national museum of Scotland.
- [11] Wagner, Paul & Thompson, Christopher, “The words claymore and broadsword” in Hand, Stephen, *Spada II: Anthology of Swordsmanship* (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2002)

5.5 References and further reading

- Claude Blair, 'The Word *Claymore*' in David H. Caldwell (ed.), *Scottish Weapons and Fortifications* (Edinburgh 1981), 378–387
- David H. Caldwell, *The Scottish Armoury* (Edinburgh 1979), 24–26
- Fergus Cannan, *Scottish Arms and Armour* (Oxford 2009), 29–31, 79, 82
- Tobias Capwell, *The Real Fighting Stuff: Arms and Armour at Glasgow Museums* (Glasgow 2007), 84
- Ross Cowan, 'Weapon of Deeds: The Two-Handed Scottish Highland Sword', *Medieval Warfare* 1.3 (2011), 24–25

- Ross Cowan, 'Lairds of Battle', *Military History Monthly* 32 (2013), 47–48
- G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'Sixteenth Century Swords Found in Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 78 (1948), 38–54
- J. G. Mann, 'A Late Medieval Sword from Ireland', *Antiquaries Journal* 24 (1944), 94–99
- *Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* (Gairm Publications, Glasgow, 1988, p. 202)
- Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Claymore". *Encyclopædia Britannica* 6 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 474.

5.6 External links

- **Scottish hand-and-a-half and two-handed swords**
- Two-handed Highland swords in the collections of Glasgow Museums, the National Museum of Scotland, and the British Museum.
- Scottish two-handed swords with clam shell guards in Kelvingrove, the National Museum of Scotland and Dean Castle (Kilmarnock).
- Scottish swords image resource

Chapter 6

Longsword

For other uses, see [Longsword \(disambiguation\)](#).

A **longsword** (also spelled as **long sword** or **long-sword**) is a type of European sword characterized as having a cruciform hilt with a grip for two-handed use and a straight double-edged blade of around 90 to 110 cm (35 to 43 in),* [1] prevalent during the [late medieval](#) and [Renaissance](#) periods (approximately 1350 to 1550), with early and late use reaching into the 13th and 17th centuries.

6.1 Terminology

Further information: [Oakeshott typology § Type XIII](#)

Historical (15th to 16th century) terms for this type of sword included Spanish *espadón*, *montante*, or *mandoble*, Italian *spadone* or *spada longa (lunga)*, Portuguese *montante* and Middle French *passot*. The Gaelic *claidheamh mòr* means “great sword”; anglicised as *claymore*, it came to refer to the Scottish type of longsword with v-shaped crossguard. Historical terminology overlaps with that applied to the [Zweihänder](#) sword in the 16th century: French *espadon*, Spanish *espadón*, or Portuguese *montante* may also be used more narrowly to refer to these large swords. The French *épée de passot* may also refer to a medieval single-handed sword optimized for thrusting.

The French *épée bâtarde* and the English *bastard sword* originate in the 15th or 16th century, originally in the general sense of “irregular sword, sword of uncertain origin” , but by the mid-16th century could refer to exceptionally large swords.* [2] The *Masters of Defence* competition organised by [Henry VIII](#) in July 1540 listed *two hande sworde* and *bastard sworde* as two separate items.* [3] It is uncertain whether the same term could still be used to other types of smaller swords, but antiquarian usage in the 19th century established the use of “bastard sword” as referring unambiguously to these large swords.* [4]

The German *langes schwert* (“long sword”) in 15th-century [manuals](#) does not denote a type of weapon, but the technique of fencing with both hands at the hilt, contrasting with *kurzes schwert* (“short sword”) used of fencing with the same weapon, but with one hand gripping the blade (also known as a [half-sword](#)). It is only in the later 16th century that the term *langes schwert* can be shown to be applied to a type of sword; it had found its way into English as *longsword* or *long sword* by the time of Shakespeare, in whose *Romeo and Juliet* (Act I, scene i) this loan translation is attested.

Contemporary use of “long-sword” or “longsword” only resurfaced in the 2000s in the context of reconstruction of the German school of fencing, translating the German *langes schwert*.* [5]* [6]* [7]

The term “hand-and-a-half sword” is relatively modern (from the late 19th century).* [8] This name was given because the balance of the sword made it usable in one hand, as well as two. During the first half of the 20th century, the term “bastard sword” was used regularly to refer to this type of sword, while “long sword” (or “long-sword”), if used at all, referred to the rapier (in the context of Renaissance or Early Modern fencing).* [9]

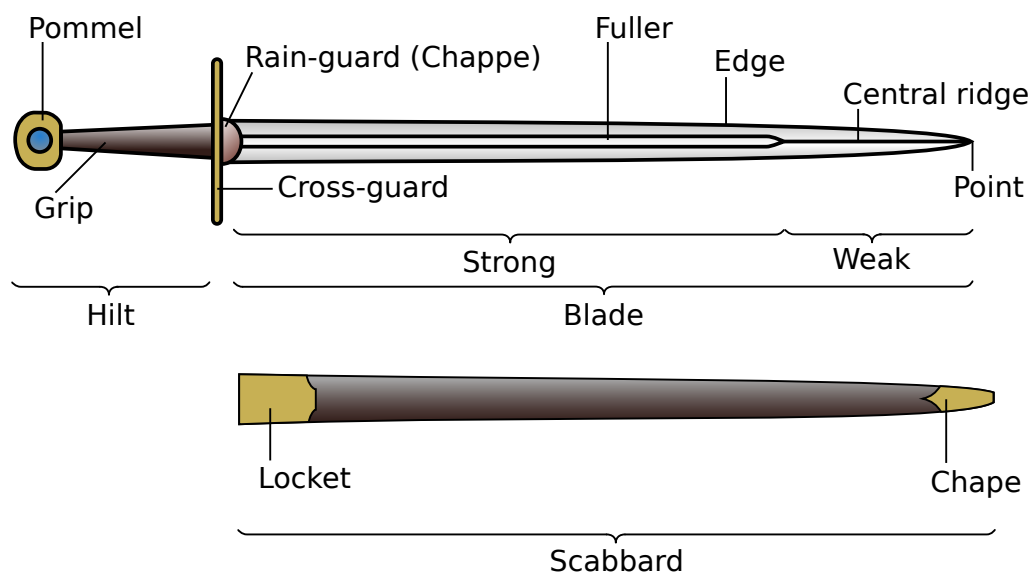
6.2 Evolution

The longsword is characterised not so much by a longer blade, but by a longer grip, which indicates a weapon designed for two-handed use. Swords with exceptionally long hilts are found throughout the High Middle Ages, but these remain exceptional, and are not representative of an identifiable trend before the late 13th or early 14th century.

The longsword as a late medieval type of sword emerges in the 14th century, as a military weapon of the earlier phase of the **Hundred Years' War**. It remains identifiable as a type during the period of about 1350 to 1550.*[10] It remained in use as a weapon of war intended for wielders wearing full plate armour either on foot or on horseback, throughout the late medieval period. From the late 15th century, however, it is also attested as being worn and used by unarmoured soldiers or mercenaries. By the 16th century, its military use was mostly obsolete, culminating in the brief period where the oversized *Zweihänder* were wielded by the German *Landsknechte* during the early to mid 16th century. By the second half of the 16th century, it persisted mostly as a weapon for sportive competition (*Schulfechten*), and possibly in knightly duels.

Distinct “bastard sword” hilt types developed during the first half of the 16th century. Ewart Oakeshott distinguishes twelve different types.*[4]*:130 These all seem to have originated in Bavaria and in Switzerland. By the late 16th century, early forms of the developed-hilt appear on this type of sword. Beginning about 1520, the *Swiss sabre* (*schnepf*) in Switzerland began to replace the straight longsword, inheriting its hilt types, and the longsword had fallen out of use in Switzerland by 1550. In southern Germany, it persisted into the 1560s, but its use also declined during the second half of the 16th century. There are two late examples of longswords kept in the Swiss National Museum, both with vertically grooved pommels and elaborately decorated with silver inlay, and both belonging to Swiss noblemen in French service during the late 16th and early 17th century, Gugelberg von Moos and Rudolf von Schauenstein.*[4]*:133*[11] The longsword or bastard-sword was also made in Spain, appearing relatively late, known as the *espadon* or the *montante*.

6.3 Morphology



The basic anatomy of an arming sword.

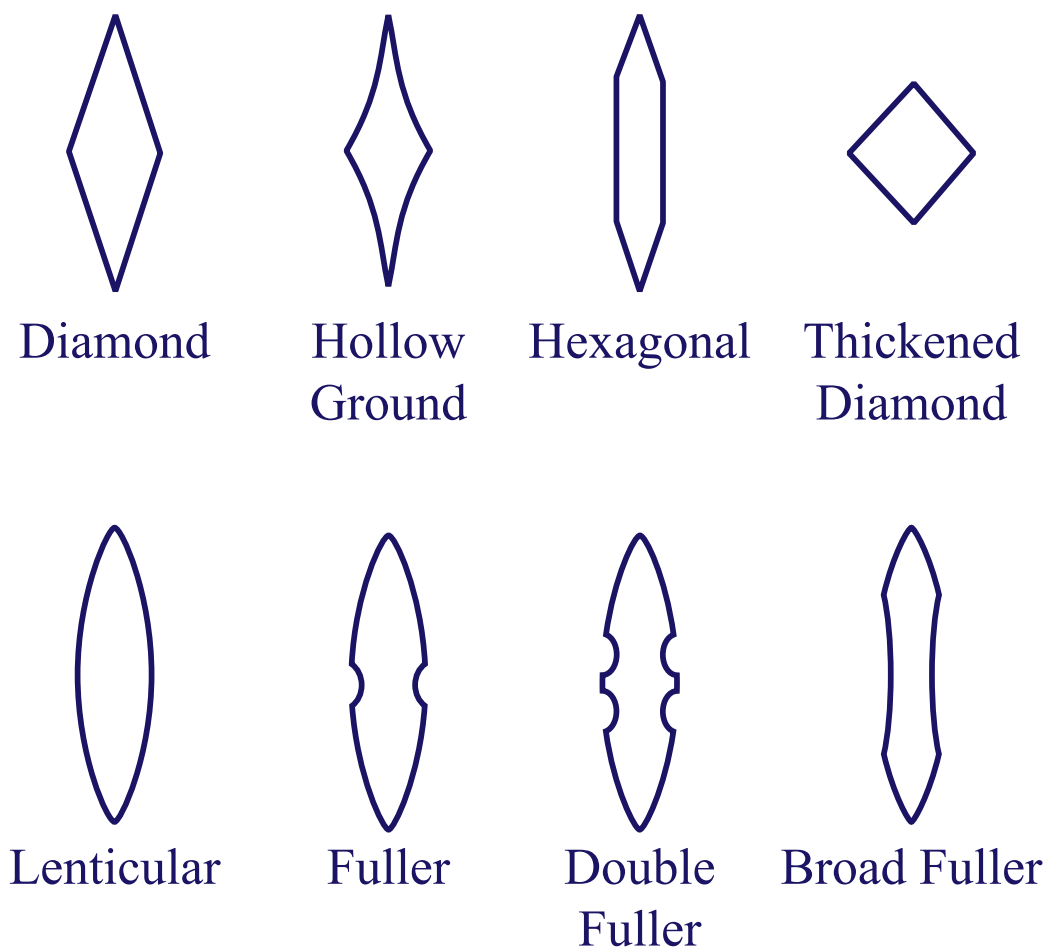
6.3.1 Blade profile

The blade of the longsword is straight and double-edged. Over time, the blades of longswords become slightly longer, thicker in cross-section, less wide, and considerably more pointed. This design change is largely attributed to the use of plate armour as an effective defence, more or less nullifying the ability of a sword cut to break through the armour system. Instead of cutting, long swords were then used more to thrust against opponents in plate armour,

requiring a more acute point and a more rigid blade. However, the cutting capability of the longsword was never entirely removed, as in some later rapiers, but was supplanted in importance by thrusting capability.

6.3.2 Blade cross-section

Common Blade Cross-Sections



Different blade cross-sections. At the top, variants of the diamond shape. At the bottom, variants of the lenticular shape.

The two most basic forms of blade cross-section are lenticular and diamond. Lenticular blades are shaped like thin double convex lenses, providing adequate thickness for strength in the centre while allowing a proper cutting edge. These normally have fullers, which are grooves or channels running down the flats of the blade, originating at or slightly below the hilt. The resultant geometry both lightens and strengthens the blade. On earlier blades, this shape ran almost the entire length of the blade. As points became more acute, the fuller stops around one-third from the point and the cross section changed to a diamond shape. The diamond-shaped blade slopes directly up from the edges, without the convex curve of the lenticular blade. The central ridge produced by this angular geometry is known as a *riser*. Many later blades are of diamond section their entire length though with the flats of the diamond hollowed to give increased rigidity for thrusting. These forms were hammered in by the bladesmith and only the surface finish was ground.

6.3.3 Hilts

A variety of hilt styles exist for longswords, with the style of *pommel* and *quillon* (crossguard) changing over time to accommodate different blade properties and to fit emerging stylistic trends.

6.4 Fighting with the longsword

For more details on this topic, see *Historical fencing*.

The expression *fechten mit dem langen schwert* (“fighting with the long sword”) in the German school of fencing denotes the style of fencing which uses both hands at the hilt; *fechten mit dem kurzen schwert* (“fighting with the short sword”) is used in half-sword fighting, with one hand gripping the blade. The two terms are largely equivalent to “unarmoured fighting” (*blossfechten*) and “armoured fencing” (*fechten im harnisch*).

6.4.1 History

Codified systems of fighting with the longsword existed from the later 14th century, with a variety of styles and teachers each providing a slightly different take on the art. Hans Talhoffer, a mid-15th-century German fightmaster, is probably the most prominent, using a wide variety of moves, most resulting in wrestling. The longsword was a quick, effective, and versatile weapon capable of deadly thrusts, slices, and cuts.^[12]:15–16 The blade was generally used with both hands on the hilt, one resting close to or on the pommel. The weapon may be held with one hand during disarmament or grappling techniques. In a depiction of a duel, individuals may be seen wielding sharply pointed longswords in one hand, leaving the other hand open to manipulate the large dueling shield.^[12]:plates 128–150 Another variation of use comes from the use of armour. *Half-swording* was a manner of using both hands, one on the hilt and one on the blade, to better control the weapon in thrusts and jabs. This versatility was unique, as multiple works hold that the longsword provided the foundations for learning a variety of other weapons including spears, staves, and polearms.^[12]^[13] Use of the longsword in attack was not limited only to use of the blade, however, as several *Fechtbücher* explain and depict use of the pommel and cross as offensive weapons.^[12]:73–73; plate 67 The cross has been shown to be used as a hook for tripping or knocking an opponent off balance.^[12]:plate 58 Some manuals even depict the cross as a hammer.^[14]

What is known of combat with the longsword comes from artistic depictions of battle from manuscripts and the *Fechtbücher* of Medieval and Renaissance Masters. Therein the basics of combat were described and, in some cases, depicted. The *German school of swordsmanship* includes the earliest known longsword *Fechtbuch*, a manual from approximately 1389, known as *GNM 3227a*. This manual, unfortunately for modern scholars, was written in obscure verse. It was through students of Liechtenauer, like *Sigmund Ringeck*, who transcribed the work into more understandable prose^[15] that the system became notably more codified and understandable.^[16] Others provided similar work, some with a wide array of images to accompany the text.^[17]

The *Italian school of swordsmanship* was the other primary school of longsword use. The 1410 manuscript by *Fiore dei Liberi* presents a variety of uses for the longsword. Like the German manuals, the weapon is most commonly depicted and taught with both hands on the hilt. However, a section on one-handed use is among the volume and demonstrates the techniques and advantages, such as sudden additional reach, of single-handed longsword play.^[18] The manual also presents half-sword techniques as an integral part of armoured combat.

Both schools declined in the late 16th century, with the later Italian masters forgoing the longsword and focusing primarily on rapier fencing. The last known German manual to include longsword teaching was that of *Jakob Sutor*, published in 1612. In Italy, *spadone*, or longsword, instruction lingered on in spite of the popularity of the rapier, at least into the mid-17th century (*Alfieri's Lo Spadone* of 1653), with a late treatise of the “two handed sword” by one *Giuseppe Colombani*, a dentist in Venice dating to 1711. A tradition of teaching based on this has survived in contemporary French and Italian stick fighting.^[19]

6.4.2 German school of fencing

Main article: *German school of fencing*



1440s illustration of one- and two-handed use of the longsword. Note the sword being used one-handed is drawn shorter and may also be intended as a large knightly sword (CPG 339 fol. 135r).

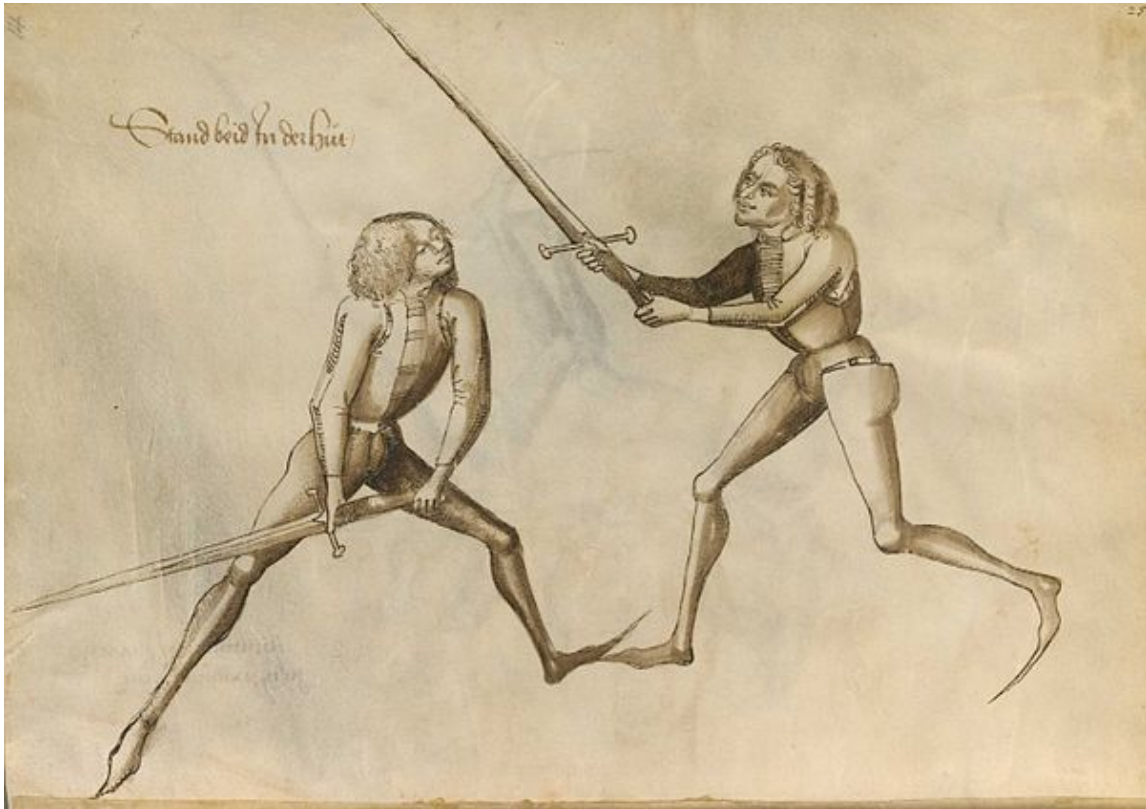
Bloßfechten

Bloßfechten (*blosz fechten*) or “bare fighting” is the technique of fighting without significant protective armour such as plate or mail.



Example of two handed use vs. half-sword, dating to ca. 1418 (CPG 359, fol. 46v).

The lack of significant torso and limb protection leads to the use of a large amount of cutting and slicing techniques in addition to thrusts. These techniques could be nearly instantly fatal or incapacitating, as a thrust to the skull, heart, or major blood vessel would cause massive trauma. Similarly, strong strikes could cut through skin and bone, effectively amputating limbs. The hands and forearms are a frequent target of some cuts and slices in a defensive or offensive manoeuvre, serving both to disable an opponent and align the swordsman and his weapon for the next attack.



Unarmoured longsword fencers (plate 25 of the 1467 manual of Hans Talhoffer)



Page of the Codex Wallerstein showing a half-sword thrust against a two-handed sword's Mordstreich (Plate 214)

Harnischfechten

Harnischfechten, or “armoured fighting” (German *kampffechten*, or *Fechten in Harnisch zu Fuss*, literally “fighting in armour on foot”), depicts fighting in full plate armour.* [20]

The increased defensive capability of a man clad in full plate armour caused the use of the sword to be drastically changed. While slashing attacks were still moderately effective against infantry wearing half-plate armour, cutting and slicing attacks against an opponent wearing plate armour were almost entirely ineffective in providing any sort of slashing wound as the sword simply could not cut through the steel, although a combatant could aim for the chinks in a suit of armour, sometimes to great effect.* [21] Instead, the energy of the cut becomes essentially pure concussive energy. The later hardened plate armours, complete with ridges and roping, posed a threat against the careless attacker. It is considered possible for strong blows of the sword against plate armour to damage the blade of the sword, potentially rendering it much less effective at cutting and producing only a concussive effect against the armoured opponent.

To overcome this problem, swords began to be used primarily for thrusting. The weapon was used in the half-sword, with one or both hands on the blade. This increased the accuracy and strength of thrusts and provided more leverage for *Ringen am Schwert* or “wrestling at/with the sword”. This technique combines the use of the sword with wrestling, providing opportunities to trip, disarm, break, or throw an opponent and place them in a less offensively and defensively capable position. During half-swording, the entirety of the sword works as a weapon, including the pommel and crossguard. One example how a sword can be used this way is to thrust the tip of the crossguard at the opponent's head right after parrying a stroke. Another technique would be the *Mordstreich* (lit. “murder stroke”), where the weapon is held by the blade (hilt, pommel and crossguard serving as an improvised hammer head) and swung, taking advantage of the balance being close to the hilt to increase the concussive effect (see the fighter on the right of the Codex Wallerstein picture).* [21]

6.5 See also

- Historical European martial arts
- Oakeshott typology
- Ricasso
- Great sword
- Claymore
- Side-sword
- Waster
- Jian
- Tachi
- Katana

6.6 Notes

- [1] Loades, Mike (2010). *Swords and Swordsmen*. Great Britain: Pen & Sword Books. ISBN 978-1-84884-133-8.
- [2] Rabelais, François (1741). Le Duchat, Jacob, ed. *Oeuvres* (in French). p. 129 (footnote 5). Qui n'étoit ni Française, ni Espagnole, ni proprement Lansquenette, mais plus grande que pas une de ces fortes épées. ([A sword] which was neither French, nor Spanish, nor properly *Landsknecht* [German], but larger than any of these great swords.
- [3] Strutt, Joseph (1801). *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England from the Earliest Period: Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, May Games, Mummers, Pageants, Processions and Pompous Spectacles*. Methuen & Company. p. 211.
- [4] Oakeshott, Ewart (1980). *European Weapons and Armour: From the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution*. Boydell & Brewer, Incorporated. pp. 129–135. ISBN 9780851157894.
- [5] A nonce attestation of “long-sword” in the sense of “heavy two-handed sword” is found in Kezer, Claude D. (1983). *Principles of Stage Combat*. I. E. Clark Publications. ISBN 9780886801564.

- [6] Thimm, Carl A. (31 May 1999). *A Complete Bibliography of Fencing and Duelling*. Pelican Publishing. ISBN 9781455602773. uses “long sword (*Schwerdt*) on p. 220 as direct translation from a German text of 1516, and “long sword or long rapier” in reference to George Silver (1599) on p. 269.
- [7] Systematic use of the term only from 2001 beginning with Tobler, Christian Henry; Ringeck, Sigmund; Liechtenauer, Johann (2001). *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*. Chivalry Bookshelf. ISBN 9781891448072.
- [8] As attested in *Exhibition of the Royal House of Tudor*. London: New Gallery. 1890.
- [9] See, for example, *A General Guide to the Wallace Collection*. H.M. Stationery Office. 1933. p. 149.
- [10] Oakeshott, Ewart (1994). *The Sword in the Age of Chivalry* (PDF). Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press. p. 56. ISBN 9780851157153. OCLC 807485557.
- [11] “Peter Finer” . Archived from the original on 2011-07-17. Two further silver-encrusted swords possessing pommels of this type can be seen in the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum, Zurich...The first belonged to Hans Gugelberg von Moos (recorded 1562–1618), and the second to Rudolf von Schauenstein (recorded 1587–1626), whose name appears on its blade along with the date 1614.
- [12] Talhoffer, Hans (2000). Rector, Mark, ed. *Medieval Combat: A Fifteenth-Century Illustrated Manual of Swordfighting and Close-Quarter Combat*. Greenhill Books. ISBN 1853674184.
- [13] Lindholm, David (2006). *Fighting with the Quarterstaff: A Modern Study of Renaissance Techniqu*. Highland Village, Texas: Chivalry Bookshelf. p. 32. ISBN 9781891448362.
- [14] Talhoffer, Hans (1467). *Fechtbuch* (in German).
- [15] Ringeck, Sigmund. *MS Dresd. C 487*.
- [16] Lindholm, David; Svard, P. (2003). *Sigmund Ringneck's Knightly Art of the Longsword*. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press. p. 11. ISBN 1581604106.
- [17] Talhoffer, Hans. *Thott 290 2*.
- [18] dei Liberi, Fiore. *Flos Duellatorum* (PDF) (in Italian).
- [19] See, for instance, Giuseppe Cerri's *Trattato teorico e pratico della scherma di bastone* of 1854.
- [20] Clements, John. “Medieval and Renaissance Fencing Terminology” .
- [21] Lindholm, David; Svård, Peter (2006). *Sigmund Ringeck's Knightly Arts of Combat*. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press. p. 219. ISBN 1581604998.

6.7 References

- Cvet, David M. (February 2002). “Study of the Destructive Capabilities of the European Longsword” . *Journal of Western Martial Art*.
- Dawson, Timothy (February 2005). “A club with an edge” . *Journal of Western Martial Art*.
- Hellqvist, Björn (November 2000). “Oakeshott's Typology – An Introduction” . *Journal of Western Martial Art*.
- Melville, Neil H. T. (January 2000). “The Origins of the Two-Handed Sword” . *Journal of Western Martial Art*.
- Shore, Anthony (October 2004). “The Two-Handed Great Sword – Making lite of the issue of weight” . *Journal of Western Martial Art*.

6.8 External links

- “Oakeshott's Typology of the Medieval Sword: A Summary” Albion Armorers, inc. 2005 – This quick survey lists the types and sample illustrations of the Oakeshott Typology. Extremely useful, but note, the webpage updates the statistics of the original Oakeshott Typology, with the findings from later research.
- **Scottish hand-and-a-half and two-handed swords**

6.9 Further reading

- Clements, John (1998). *Medieval Swordsmanship: Illustrated Methods and Techniques*. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press. ISBN 1581600046.
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Chapter 7

Basket-hilted sword

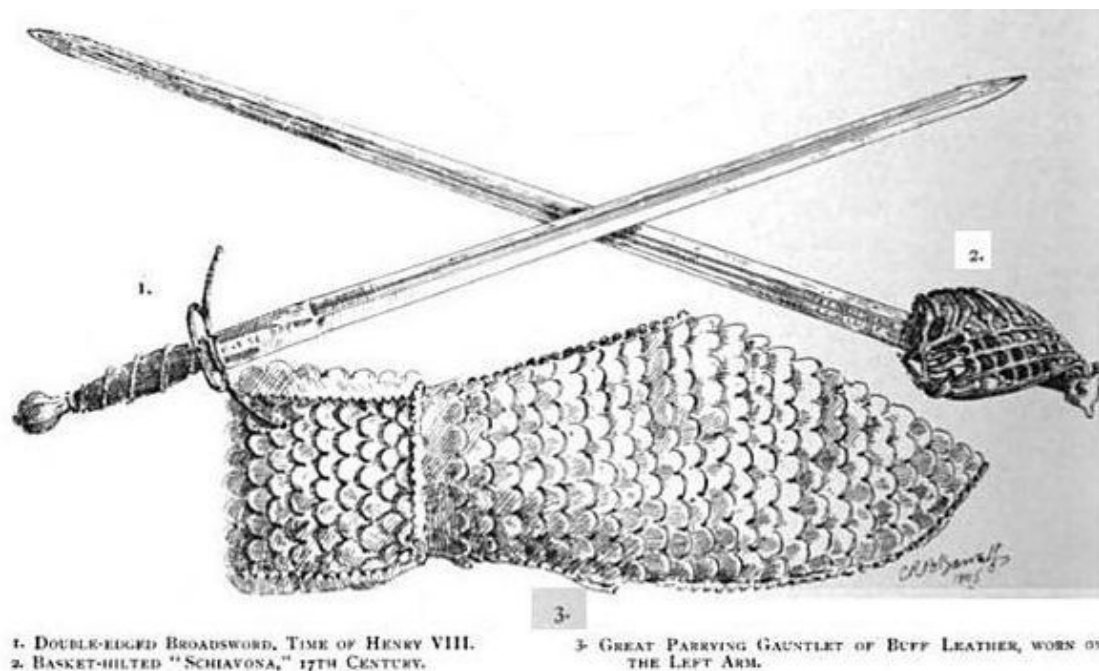
“Broadsword” redirects here. For other uses, see [Broadsword \(disambiguation\)](#).

The **basket-hilted sword** is the name of a group of early modern sword types characterized by a basket-shaped



A typical schiavona of the late 17th century.

guard that protects the hand. The basket hilt is a development of the quillons added to swords' crossguards since the



Juxtaposition of an early broadsword with quillons with a 17th-century schiavona, from The Encyclopaedia of Sport & Games (1911).

Late Middle Ages. In modern times, this variety of sword is commonly referred to, in colloquial contexts, as the **broadsword**, though it should be noted that no historical evidence has currently been unearthed which demonstrates that this was one of the sword's titles during the times of its prevalence.*[1]*[2] The basket-hilted sword was generally in use as a military sword, in contrast with the rapier, the slim dueling sword worn with civilian dress during the same period, although each did find some use in both military and civilian contexts.

7.1 Morphology

The basket-hilted sword is a development of the 16th century, rising to popularity in the 17th century and remaining in widespread use throughout the 18th century, used especially by heavy cavalry up to the Napoleonic era.

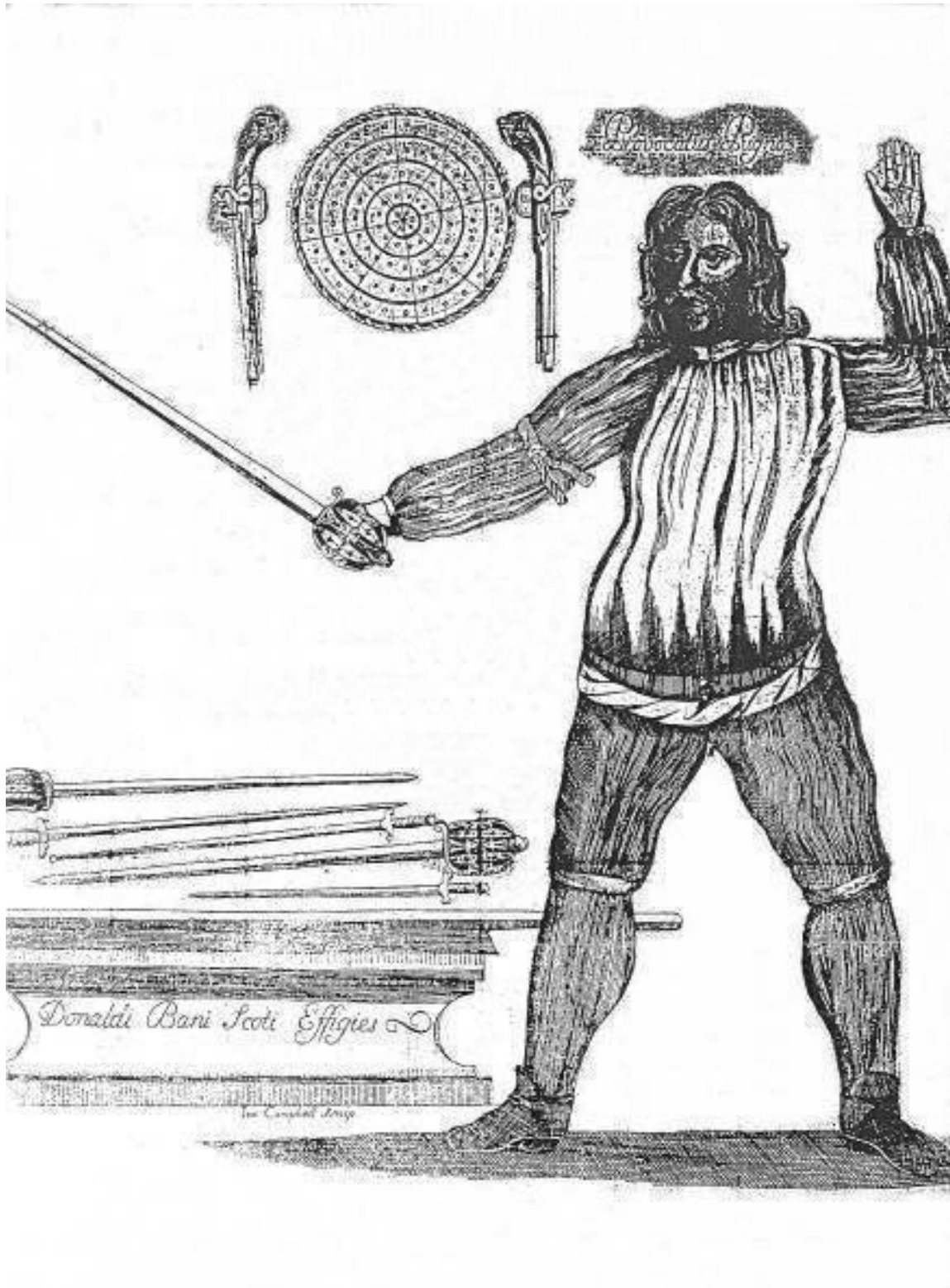
One of the earliest basket-hilted swords was recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, an English warship lost in 1545. Before the find, the earliest positive dating had been two swords from around the time of the English Civil War.*[3] At first the wire guard was a simple design but as time passed it became increasingly sculpted and ornate.*[4]

The basket-hilted sword was a cut and thrust sword which found the most use in a military context, contrasting with the rapier, the similarly heavy, thrust-oriented sword most often worn with civilian dress which evolved from the *espada ropera* or *spada da lato* type during the same period. The terms “broadsword” and “backsword” were not used in the 17th and 18th centuries and are of Victorian invention, referring to double-edged and single-edged basket-hilted swords respectively. Both terms were introduced to distinguish these cut and thrust swords from the narrower rapier and smallsword.

By the 17th century there were regional variations of basket-hilts: the **Walloon hilt**, the **Sinclair hilt**, **schiavona**, **mortuary sword**, **Scottish broadsword**, and some types of eastern European **pallasches**.*[5]*[6]*[7] The mortuary and claymore variants were commonly used in the British isles, whether domestically-produced or acquired through trade with Italy and Germany. They also influenced the 18th-century cavalry sabre.*[8]

During the 18th century, the fashion of dueling in Europe focused on the lighter smallsword, and fencing with the broadsword came to be seen as a speciality of Scotland. A number of fencing manuals teaching fencing with the Scottish broadsword were published throughout the 18th century.

Descendants of the basket-hilted sword, albeit in the form of backswords with reduced “half” or “three-quarter” baskets, remained in use in cavalry during the Napoleonic era and throughout the 19th century, specifically as the 1796 Heavy Cavalry Sword, the Gothic Hilted British Infantry Swords of the 1820s to 1890s, the 1897 Pattern British



Portrait of Donald McBane, a Scottish fencing master, from Donald McBane's *The Expert Swordsman's Companion* (1728). This image portrays McBane in the "Inside Guard" with a broadsword, while the table next to him has both broadswords and smallswords. The wall behind him has a targe with flintlock pistols on each side.

Infantry Officer's Sword and as the Pattern 1908 and 1912 cavalry swords down to the eve of World War I.

7.2 Subtypes

7.2.1 Schiavona

The **Schiavona** was a Renaissance sword that became popular in Italy during the 16th and 17th centuries.*[9] Stemming from the 16th-century sword of the Balkan mercenaries who formed the bodyguard of the Doge of Venice, the name came from the fact that the guard consisted largely of the *Schiavoni*, Istrian and Dalmatian Slavs.*[7] It was widely recognisable for its “cat's-head pommel” and distinctive handguard made up of many leaf-shaped brass or iron bars that was attached to the cross-bar and knucklebow rather than the pommel.*[7]

Classified as a true broadsword, this war sword had a wider blade than its contemporary civilian rapiers. It was basket hilted (often with an imbedded quillon for an upper guard) and its blade was double edged. A surviving blade measures 93.2 cm × 3.4 cm × 0.45 cm and bears two fullers or grooves running about 1/4 the length of the blade. Weighing in at around 1.1 kg, this blade was useful for both cut and thrust.*[10]

The schiavona became popular among the armies of those who traded with Italy during the 17th century and was the weapon of choice for many heavy cavalry.*[11] It was popular among mercenary soldiers and wealthy civilians alike; examples decorated with gilding and precious stones were imported by the upper classes to be worn as a combination of fashion accessory and defensive weapon.*[12]

7.2.2 Mortuary sword

A similar weapon was the cut-and-thrust **mortuary sword** which was used after 1625 by cavalry during the English Civil War. This (usually) two-edged sword sported a half-basket hilt with a straight blade some 90–105 cm long. These hilts were often of very intricate sculpting and design.

After the execution of King Charles I (1649), basket-hilted swords were made which depicted the face or death mask of the “martyred” king on the hilt. These swords came to be known as “mortuary swords”, and the term has been extended to refer to the entire type of Civil War–era broadswords by some 20th-century authors.*[13]

This sword was Oliver Cromwell's weapon of choice; the one he owned is now held by the Royal Armouries, and displayed at the Tower of London. Mortuary swords remained in use until around 1670 when they fell out of favor among civilians and began to be replaced with the smallsword.*[8]

7.2.3 Scottish broadsword

Further information: [Historical fencing in Scotland](#) and [Andrew Ferrara](#)

A common weapon among the clansmen during the Jacobite rebellions of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the Scottish Basket Hilted Broadsword was the ideal weapon of choice for combating the British Redcoats armed with muskets. When paired with a “targe”, or light buckler a highlander was provided with a staunch defense to block a bayonet and then deliver a thrust with the sword. In between rebellions and after the overall failure of the rebellions, the Highlanders would hide these weapons in the heath. It is not an uncommon story that features a hiker finding such a blade.

7.2.4 Sinclair Hilt

The Sinclair Hilt was one of the earliest basket-hilt designs and was of south German origin.*[14] On average the blade of a Sinclair or “compound” hilt sword measured 38in.

It had long quillons and an oval leather-wrapped grip that was originally designed for falchion blades but was soon applied to the broadsword.*[15] It had a large triangular plate very similar to the ones used on main gauche daggers and was decorated with pierced hearts and diamonds.*[16]

Hilts of this design were also used on other weapons including sabres, cutlasses, rapiers, backswords and civilian hunting hangers.*[17]

A similar weapon was the Pallasch which had the same hilt and straight blade but was single-edged. It was used until the mid-18th century by the Austrian army and inspired the British 1796 Heavy Cavalry Sabre.

It is believed that these swords were brought back to Scotland by George Sinclair's mercenaries who had served on the continent.*[18]

The Sinclair hilt broadsword influenced the development of the Scottish **basket-hilted claymore**, which was used by highlanders in the 17th and 18th century.*[19] After the Jacobite Wars it became a symbol of Scotland.*[20]

7.2.5 Walloon sword

The so-called **walloon sword** (*épée wallone*)*[21] was common in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Scandinavia in the Thirty Years' War and Baroque era. Basket-hilted rapiers made during the same period are known as Pappenheimer rapiers.*[22]

The Walloon sword was favored by both the military and civilian gentry.*[23] Its hilt was ambidextrous with shell-guards and knuckle-bow that inspired 18th century continental hunting hangers.*[24]

Following their campaign in the Netherlands in 1672 (when many of these German-made swords were captured from the Dutch), the French began producing this weapon as their first regulation sword.*[25] Weapons of this design were also issued to the Swedish army from the time of Gustavus Adolphus until as late as the 1850s.*[26]

- Venetian schiavona of the late 17th century
- British Pattern 1788 Heavy Cavalry Sword
- A Scottish broadsword of the *claidheamh cuil* or “back-sword” type
- George Sinclair's forces land in Norway, 1612. The soldier in the center is armed with a Sinclair hilt broadsword and wears a comb morion.
- Swiss-made Walloon sword

7.3 Fencing technique

Further information: Elizabethan fencing and Historical fencing in Scotland

George Silver in his *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), published some material on broadswords, but no instructive details. Two later books by Silver, *Brief Instructions on my Paradoxes of Defence*, and *Rules of Defence to be observed in open Fyght, &c.*, contained more detailed instructions in the use of the broadsword. Silver advises three principal “fyghts” , or stances for attack, one with the hilt held above the wielder's head with the point towards the wielder's knee; the second with the wielder's hilt just below chest level with the point towards the wielder's left foot; and the third having the hands held low and the point held upright. The “wards” or parries were made from these middle positions by moving the sword to the right or left. Silver was also the first author of any nationality to distinctly advocate parrying and riposting, to which he devoted an entire chapter.*[5]

7.4 See also

- Backsword
- Claymore

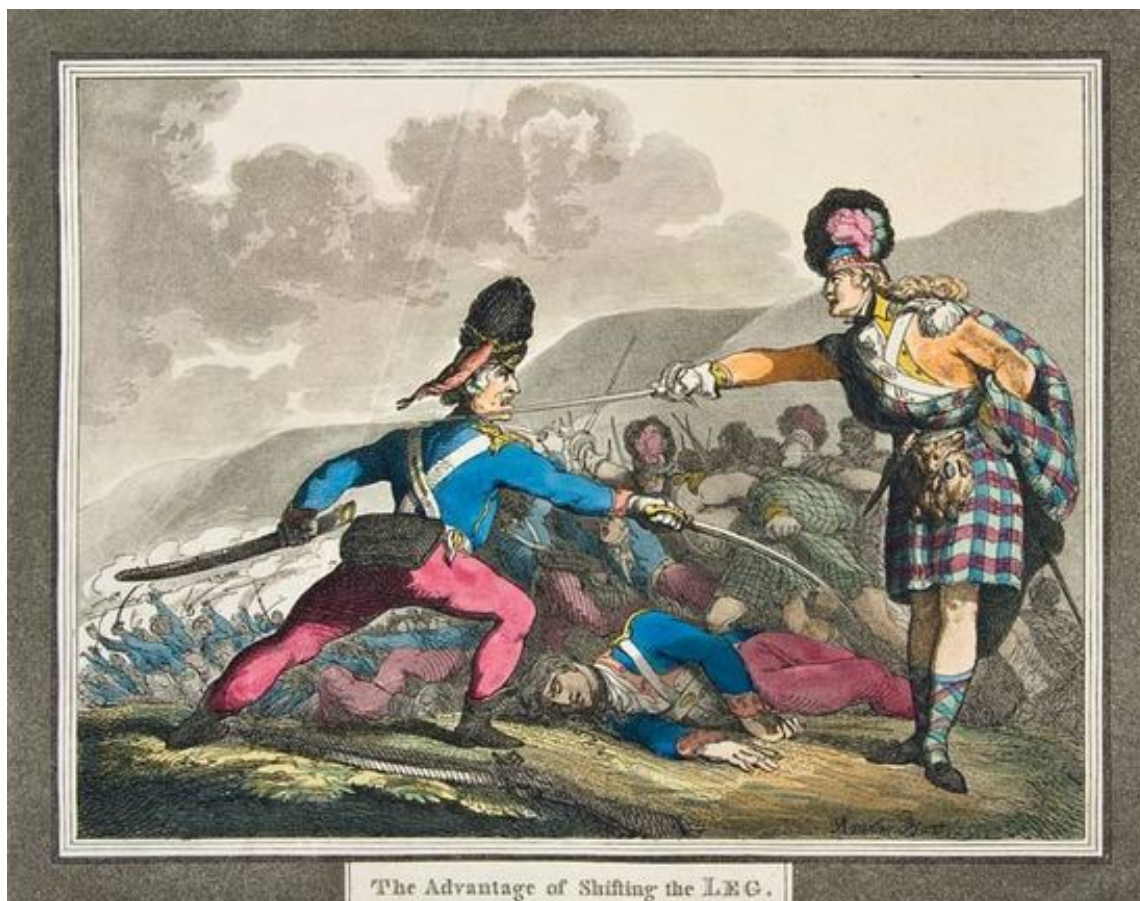
7.5 Notes

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- [22] Pappenheimer
- [23] Grandy, B, Phoenix Metal Creations Pappenheimer Sword (Dec 5 2009)
- [24] Fitzwilliam Museum
- [25] MyArmoury - Walloon Swords
- [26] Armemuseum - Varjor

7.6 References

- R. E. Oakeshott, *European weapons and armour: From the Renaissance to the industrial revolution* (1980).

7.7 External links

- Scottish basket-hilted swords in the National Museum of Scotland, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the Trades House of Glasgow.
- The basket-hilted sword. Description and photos (interestingswords.com)
- Schiavona – Venetian basket-hilted sword (interestingswords.com)

Chapter 8

Falchion

This article describes the medieval weapon. For the Finnish heavy metal band, see Falchion (band).



Falchion

A **falchion** (/ˈfɔːltʃən/; Old French: *fauchon*; Latin: *falx*, “sickle”) is a one-handed, single-edged sword of European origin, whose design is reminiscent of the Persian scimitar, the Chinese *dadao*, and modern machete.* [1]

The weapon combined the weight and power of an axe with the versatility of a sword. Falchions are found in different forms from around the 11th century up to and including the sixteenth century. In some versions the falchion looks rather like the weapon-seax and later the sabre, and in some versions the form is irregular or like a machete with a crossguard.

8.1 Types

The blade designs of falchions varied widely across the continent and through the ages. They almost always included a single edge with a slight curve on the blade towards the point on the end and most were also affixed with a quilloned crossguard for the hilt in the manner of the contemporary arming swords. Unlike the double-edged swords of Europe, few actual swords of this type have survived to the present day; fewer than a dozen specimens are currently known.* [2] Two basic types can be identified:

- **Cleaver falchions:** One of the few surviving falchions (the Conyers falchion) is shaped very much like a large



Falchion from medieval painting

meat cleaver, or large bladed *machete*. This type is also illustrated in art (e.g. the Westminster Hall mural, shown to the right) The type seems to be confined to the 13th. and 14th. Centuries.*[3]

- **Cusped falchions:** The majority of the depictions in art reflect a design similar to that of the *großes Messer*. A surviving example from England's thirteenth century (The Thorpe Falchion) was just under 2 pounds (0.91 kg) in weight. Of its 37.5 inches (95.25 centimetres) length, 31.5 inches (80.01 cm) are the straight blade which



Image of the Battle of the Golden Spurs, showing men with falchions

bears a cusped or flare-clipped tip similar to the much later kilij of Turkey.*[4] This blade style may have been influenced by the Turko-Mongol sabres that had reached the borders of Europe by the thirteenth century. This type of sword continues in use into the 16th. century*[5]

In addition, there are a group of 13th. and early 14th. century weapons sometimes identified with the falchion. These have a falchion-like blade mounted on a wooden haft 1–2 ft (30–61 cm) long, sometimes ending in a curve like an umbrella. These are seen in numerous illustration in the mid-13th. century Maciejowski Bible.*[6]

A number of weapons superficially similar to the falchion existed in Western Europe, including the Messer, hanger and the backsword.

8.2 Status

It is sometimes presumed that these swords had a lower quality and status than the longer, more expensive swords. It is possible that some falchions were used as axe-like tools between wars and fights, since they were practical pieces of equipment. While falchions are commonly thought to be peasants' weapons*[7] this is not always the case; the Conyers falchion belonged to a landed family,*[8] and the falchion is shown in illustrations of combat between mounted knights.*[9] Some later falchions were ornate and used by the nobility; there is an elaborately engraved and gold plated falchion from the 1560s in the Wallace Collection, engraved with the personal coat of arms of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany.*[10]

8.3 References

[1] 1.

[2] The Conyers Falchion accessed January 27, 2007.

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[5] Oakeshott (1980), p.152

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Catalogue Reference A710

8.4 External links

- The Falchion sword – a wonderful curved sword

Chapter 9

Flame-bladed sword

This article is about historical swords. For mythological weapons, see [Flaming sword \(mythology\)](#). For entertainment/performance props, see [Flaming sword \(effect\)](#).

A **flame-bladed sword** or **wave-bladed sword** has a characteristically undulating style of blade. The wave in the blade is often considered to contribute a flame-like quality to the appearance of a sword. While largely decorative, some attributes of the waved blade were useful in combat. The two most flame-bladed swords are [rapiers](#) or [zweihänders](#), although there have been other sword types with flame-blades.

9.1 *Flambard, flammard, and Flammenschwert*

The two-handed flame-bladed sword is called *flambard*, *flammard* or by the German *Flammenschwert* (literally “flame sword”). These swords are very similar to [two-handed sword](#) or *Zweihänder*, the only difference being the blade. Like other *Zweihänder* they were used during the 16th century by the *Landsknechts*, well-trained and experienced swordsmen, who were called *Doppelsöldner* (double mercenary) because they received double pay.

9.2 Flamberge

The term *flamberge*, meaning “flame blade” , is an undulating blade that is found on both long blades and [rapiers](#). When [parrying](#) with such a sword, unpleasant vibrations may be transmitted into the attacker's blade. These vibrations caused the blades to slow contact with each other because additional friction was encountered with each wave. The term *flamberge* was misapplied to refer to two-handed swords and was used later to refer to cup hilt rapiers with a straight blade.* [1] Very large blades of the flamberge variety were viable for destroying halberds mid-combat, as an undulating edge causes far more damage when dragged along a tough material than a straight edge.

9.3 See also

- [Flaming sword \(mythology\)](#)
- [Colichemarde blade](#)
- [Kris](#)

9.4 References

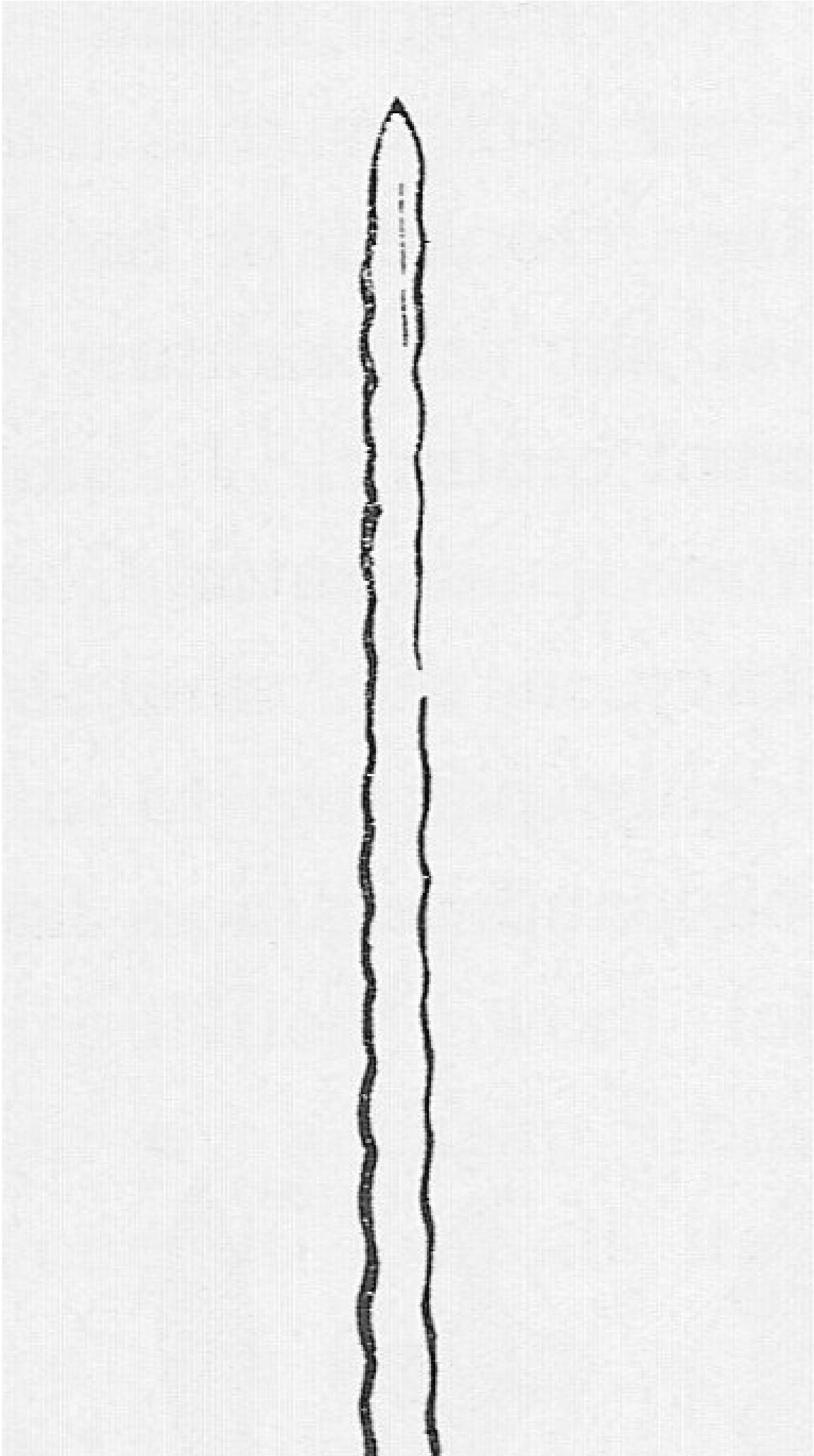
[1] ARMA. “Sword Forms” . *Definitions & Study Terminology*.



A Flammenschwert. *This is a two-handed sword featuring an exceptionally long blade and hilt, a wide crossguard, and a ricasso with a pair of parrying hooks*

9.5 External links

Media related to [Flame-bladed swords](#) at Wikimedia Commons





A flame-bladed swept hilt side-sword(right)

Chapter 10

Sabre

For other uses, see Sabre (disambiguation).

Saber redirects here. For other uses, see Saber (disambiguation)

The **sabre** or **saber** (see spelling differences) is a sword that usually has a curved, single-edged blade and a rather large hand guard, covering the knuckles of the hand as well as the thumb and forefinger. Although sabres are typically thought of as curved-bladed slashing weapons, those used by the world's heavy cavalry often had straight and even double-edged blades more suitable for thrusting. The length of sabres varied, and most were carried in a scabbard hanging from a shoulder belt known as a baldric or from a waist-mounted sword belt, usually with slings of differing lengths to permit the scabbard to hang below the rider's waist level. Exceptions not intended for personal carry include the Patton saber adopted by the United States Army in 1913 and always mounted to the cavalryman's saddle.

10.1 Etymology

The English word *saber* derives from the French *sabre* which is akin to the Hungarian *szablya*, Polish *szabla*, and Russian *сабля* (*sablya*). The word is believed to originate from the Kipchak Turkic *selebe*, with contamination from the Hungarian verb *szab*, which means “to cut” .*[1]

10.2 Origins of the weapon



Medieval (12th century) Eastern European szabla blade.

Sabre-like curved backswords have been in use in Europe since the medieval period (falchion, Byzantine paramērion which was inspired by the Avar Cavalry sword), but the introduction of the *sabre* proper in Western Europe, along with the term *sabre* itself, dates to the 17th century, via influence of the Eastern European *szabla* type.

The original type of Szabla, or Polish sabre, was used as a cavalry weapon, possibly inspired by Hungarian or wider Turco-Mongol warfare. The *Karabela* was a type of *szabla* popular in the late 17th century, worn by the Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian nobility class, the Szlachta. While designed as a cavalry weapon, it also came to replace various types of straight-bladed swords used by infantry.*[2] The Swiss sabre originates as a regular sword with a single-edged blade in the early 16th century, but by the 17th century begins to exhibit specialized hilt types.



A British Hussar general with a scabbarded kilij of Turkish manufacture (1812)

10.2.1 Mameluke sword

Europeans rekindled their interest in sabres inspired by the Mameluke sword, a type of Middle Eastern scimitar, encountered due to their confrontations with the Mamelukes in the late 18th century and early 19th century. The Mamluks were originally of Turkish descent; the Egyptians bore Turkish sabres for hundreds of years. During the Napoleonic Wars, the French conquest of Egypt brought these beautiful and functional swords to the attention of Europeans. This type of sabre became very popular for light cavalry officers, in both France and Britain, and became a fashionable weapon for senior officers to wear.

In 1831, the “Mameluke” sword became a regulation pattern for British general officers (and is still in use today). The American victory over the rebellious forces in the citadel of Tripoli in 1805, during the First Barbary War, led to the presentation of bejewelled examples of these swords to the senior officers of the US Marines. Officers of the

US Marine Corps still use a mameluke-pattern dress sword. Although some genuine Turkish *kilij* sabres were used by Westerners, most “mameluke sabres” were manufactured in Europe; although their hilts were very similar in form to the Ottoman prototype, their blades, even when an expanded *yelman* was incorporated, tended to be longer, narrower and less curved than those of the true *kilij*.

10.3 Use



The briquet, typical infantry sabre of the Napoleonic Wars.

The sabre saw extensive military use in the early 19th century, particularly in the Napoleonic Wars, during which Napoleon used heavy cavalry charges to great effect against his enemies. Shorter versions of the sabre were also used as sidearms by dismounted units, although these were gradually replaced by fascine knives and sword bayonets as the century went on. The sabre faded as a weapon by mid-century, as longer-range rifles made cavalry charges obsolete, even suicidal.

In the American Civil War, the sabre was used infrequently as a weapon, but saw notable deployment in the Battle of Brandy Station and at East Cavalry Field at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Many cavalymen—particularly on the Confederate side—eventually abandoned the long, heavy weapons in favour of revolvers and carbines. Although there was extensive debate over the effectiveness of weapons such as the sabre and lance, the sabre remained the standard weapon of cavalry for mounted action in most armies until World War I. Thereafter it was gradually relegated to the status of a ceremonial weapon, and most horse cavalry was replaced by armoured cavalry from 1930 on.

In the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (16–18th century) a specific type of sabre-like melee weapon, the *szabla*, was used. The Don Cossacks used the *shashka*, (originating from Circassian “sashho” - big knife) and *sablja* (from Circassian “sa” - knife and “blja” - snake), which also saw military and police use in the Russian Empire and early Soviet Union.

10.3.1 Adoption by Western forces

The elegant but effective 1803 pattern sword that the British Government authorized for use by infantry officers during the wars against Napoleon featured a curved sabre blade which was often blued and engraved by the owner in accordance with his personal taste.



French Navy sabre of the 19th Century, “boarding sabre” .

During the 19th and into the early 20th century, sabres were also used by both mounted and dismounted personnel in some European police forces. When the sabre was used by mounted police against crowds, the results could be appalling, as portrayed in a key scene in *Doctor Zhivago*. The sabre was later phased out in favour of the baton, or nightstick, for both practical and humanitarian reasons. The Gendarmerie of Belgium used them until at least 1950,^[3] and the Swedish police forces until 1965.

In the late 20th and early 21st century, swords with sabre blades are worn by most national Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and Coast Guard officers as a component of the dress uniform. Some militaries also issue ceremonial swords to their highest-ranking non-commissioned officers; this is seen as an honour since, typically, non-commissioned, enlisted/other-rank military service members are instead issued a cutlass blade rather than a sabre. Sword deployments in the modern military are no longer intended for use as weapons, and now serve primarily in ornamental or ceremonial functions. As such, they are typically made of stainless steel, a material which keeps its shine bright but is much too brittle for direct impacts, let alone full blade-on-blade combat, and may shatter if such usage is attempted. One distinctive ceremonial function a sabre serves in modern times is the Wedding Arch or Sabre Arch, performed for servicemen or women getting married.



Lieutenant Colonel Teófilo Marxuach's M1902 Officer's Sabre and Scabbard at the National Historic Trust site at Castillo San Cristobal in San Juan, Puerto Rico

10.4 Modern sport fencing

Main article: [Sabre \(fencing\)](#)

The modern fencing sabre bears little resemblance to the cavalry sabre, having a thin, 88 cm (35 in) long straight blade. One of the three weapons used in the sport of fencing, it is a very fast-paced weapon with bouts characterized by quick footwork and cutting with the edge. The only allowed target area is from the waist up - the region a mounted man could reach on a foe on the ground.

The concept of attacking above the waist only is a 20th-century change to the sport, previously sabreurs used to pad their legs against cutting slashes from their opponents. The reason for the above waist rule is unknown* [4] as the sport is based on the use of infantry sabres and not cavalry sabres

10.5 Colorguard

In a marching band or a drum & bugle corps, the colorguard is a non-musical section that provides additional visual aspects to the performance. The marching band and colorguard performance generally takes place on a football field while the colorguard interprets the music that the marching band or drum & bugle corps is playing via the synchronized spinning of flags, sabres, rifles, or through dance. In the Winter colorguards, or Winter guard perform indoors on gymnasium floors and usually performs to interpret recorded music.

Unlike in traditional, military colorguards, the sabre, and rifle are used as apparatus for spinning, tossing and as an extension to interpretative movement. The sabre is considered one of the more advanced of the equipment used by the guard members.

10.6 See also

- Pattern 1796 light cavalry sabre
- Pattern 1908 and 1912 cavalry swords
- Szabla wz. 34
- Sabrage, the act of opening a Champagne bottle with a sabre
- Buffalo Sabres, takes their name from the sword
- Cutlass
- Dao or tao, the Chinese equivalent
- Scimitar, the Arab equivalent
- Shamshir, the Persian equivalent
- Szabla, the Eastern European equivalent
- Talwar, the South Asian equivalent
- Zulfiqar
- Barboourofelidae and Nimravidae, feliforms of which some members are called “sabre-toothed cats”
- Machairodontinae, the group of felids commonly called “sabre-toothed cats”

10.7 References

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10.8 External links

Chapter 11

Katana

For the *Mortal Kombat* character, see *Kitana*. For Other uses, see *Katana (disambiguation)*.

Historically, **katana** (刀) were one of the traditionally made Japanese swords (日本刀 *nihontō*)*[2]*[3] that were used by the samurai of feudal Japan.*[4] Modern versions of the katana are sometimes made using non-traditional materials and methods. The katana is characterized by its distinctive appearance: a curved, slender, single-edged blade with a circular or squared guard and long grip to accommodate two hands.

11.1 History

The production of swords in Japan is divided into specific time periods:

- Jokoto (ancient swords, until around 900 A.D.)
- Koto (old swords from around 900–1596)
- Shinto (new swords 1596–1780)
- Shinshinto (newer swords 1781–1876)
- Gendaito (modern swords 1876–1945)*[5]
- Shinsakuto (newly made swords 1953–present)*[6]

The first use of “katana” (gatana) as a word to describe a long sword that was different from a *tachi* occurs as early as the Kamakura Period (1185–1333).*[7] These references to “*uchigatana*” and “*tsubogatana*” seem to indicate a different style of sword, possibly a less costly sword for lower-ranking warriors. The evolution of the *tachi* into the katana seems to have started during the early **Muromachi period** (1337 to 1573). Starting around the year 1400, long swords signed with the “katana” signature were made. This was in response to samurai wearing their *tachi* in what is now called “katana style” (cutting edge up). Japanese swords are traditionally worn with the signature facing away from the wearer. When a *tachi* was worn in the style of a katana, with the cutting edge up, the *tachi*'s signature would be facing the wrong way. The fact that swordsmiths started signing swords with a katana signature shows that some samurai of that time period had started wearing their swords in a different manner.*[8]*[9]

The rise in popularity of katana amongst samurai came about due to the changing nature of close-combat warfare. The quicker draw of the sword was well suited to combat where victory depended heavily on fast response times. The katana further facilitated this by being worn thrust through a belt-like sash (*obi*) with the sharpened edge facing up. Ideally, samurai could draw the sword and strike the enemy in a single motion. Previously, the curved *tachi* had been worn with the edge of the blade facing down and suspended from a belt.*[10]*[7]

The length of the katana blade varied considerably during the course of its history. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries, katana blades tended to have lengths between 70 and 73 cm (27½ and 28½ in). During the early 16th century, the average length approached closer to 60 cm (23½ in). By the late 16th century, the average length returned to approximately 73 cm (28½ in).



Japanese Edo period wood block print of a samurai with a tachi.

The katana was often paired with a similar smaller companion sword, such as a *wakizashi* or it could also be worn with the *tantō*, a smaller, similarly shaped dagger. The pairing of a katana with a smaller sword is called the *daishō*. Only samurai could wear the daisho: it represented the social power and personal honor of the samurai. * [10]* [7]* [11]

11.2 Modern katana (gendaito)

During the Meiji period the samurai class was gradually disbanded and the special privileges granted to them were taken away including the right to carry swords in public. The Haitōrei Edict in 1876 forbade the carrying of swords in public except for certain individuals, such as former samurai lords (daimyo), the military, and police. * [12] Skilled swordsmiths had trouble making a living during this period as Japan modernized its military and many swordsmiths started making other items such as farm equipment, tools, and cutlery. Military action by Japan in China and Russia during the Meiji period helped revive interest in swords but it was not until the Showa period that swords were produced on a large scale again. * [13] Japanese military swords produced between 1875 and 1945 are referred to as *guntō* (military swords). * [14]

During the pre World War II military buildup and throughout the war, all Japanese officers were required to wear a sword. Traditionally made swords were produced during this period, but in order to supply such large numbers of swords blacksmiths with little or no knowledge of traditional Japanese sword manufacture were recruited. In addition,

supplies of the Japanese steel (tamahagane) used for sword making were limited, so several other types of steel were used, as well. Quicker methods of forging were also used, such as the use of power-hammers, and quenching the blade in oil, rather than hand forging and water quenching. The non-traditionally made swords from this period are called “showato” after the regnal name of the Emperor Hirohito, and in 1937, the Japanese government started requiring the use of special stamps on the tang (nakago) to distinguish these swords from traditionally made swords. During this period of war, older antique swords were remounted for use in military mounts. Presently, in Japan, showato are not considered to be “true” Japanese swords and they can be confiscated. Outside of Japan, however, they are collected as historical artifacts.*[12]*[13]*[15]

11.3 Post-World War II



Japanese girl practicing iaido with a modern katana. The example in the photograph shows a training katana or iaitō. This sword was custom made in Japan according to the weight and size of the student. As most iaitō, the blade is made of aluminum alloy and it lacks of the exquisite sharpness typical of the traditional steel katanas for the student's safety.

In Japan, from 1945 to 1953, sword manufacture and sword-related martial arts were banned. Many swords were confiscated and destroyed, and swordsmiths were not able to make a living. Since 1953, Japanese swordsmiths have been allowed to work, but with severe restrictions: swordsmiths must be licensed and serve a five-year apprenticeship, and only licensed swordsmiths are allowed to produce Japanese swords (nihonto), only two longswords per month are allowed to be produced by each swordsmith, and all swords must be registered with the Japanese Government.*[16]

Outside Japan, some of the modern katanas being produced by western swordsmiths use modern steel alloys, such as L6 and A2. These modern swords replicate the size and shape of the Japanese katana, and are used by martial artists for iaido and even for cutting practice, called (tameshigiri). The use of modern steel and technology can create strong blades without the risk of damaging or destroying the artisan's hard work.

Mass-produced swords including iaitō and shinken in the shape of katana are available from many countries, though China dominates the market.*[17] These types of swords are typically mass-produced and made with a wide variety of steels and methods.

11.4 Description



Antique Japanese (samurai) daishō, the traditional pairing of two Japanese swords which were the symbol of the samurai, showing the traditional Japanese sword cases (koshirae) and the difference in size between the katana (top) and the smaller wakizashi (bottom).

The *katana* is generally defined as the standard sized, moderately curved (as opposed to the older "tachi" style featuring more curvature) Japanese sword with a blade length greater than 60 cm (23 ½ inches).*[7]

With a few exceptions, *katana* and *tachi* can be distinguished from each other, if signed, by the location of the signature (*mei*) on the tang (*nakago*). In general, the *mei* should be carved into the side of the *nakago* which would face outward when the sword was worn. Since a *tachi* was worn with the cutting edge down, and the *katana* was worn with the cutting edge up, the *mei* would be in opposite locations on the *nakago*.*[18]

The katana is characterized by its distinctive appearance: a curved, slender, single-edged blade with a circular guard and long grip to accommodate two hands.*[7] It has historically been associated with the samurai of feudal Japan.

Some western historians have said that katana were among the finest cutting weapons in world military history. *[19] *[20]

11.5 Etymology and loanwords

“Katana” is the term now used to describe *nihontō* that are 2 shaku (606 mm / 23.9 in) and longer, also known as “dai” or “daito” among Western sword enthusiasts although daito is a generic name for any long sword. *[21]

As Japanese does not have separate plural and singular forms, both “katanas” and “katana” are considered acceptable forms in English. *[22]

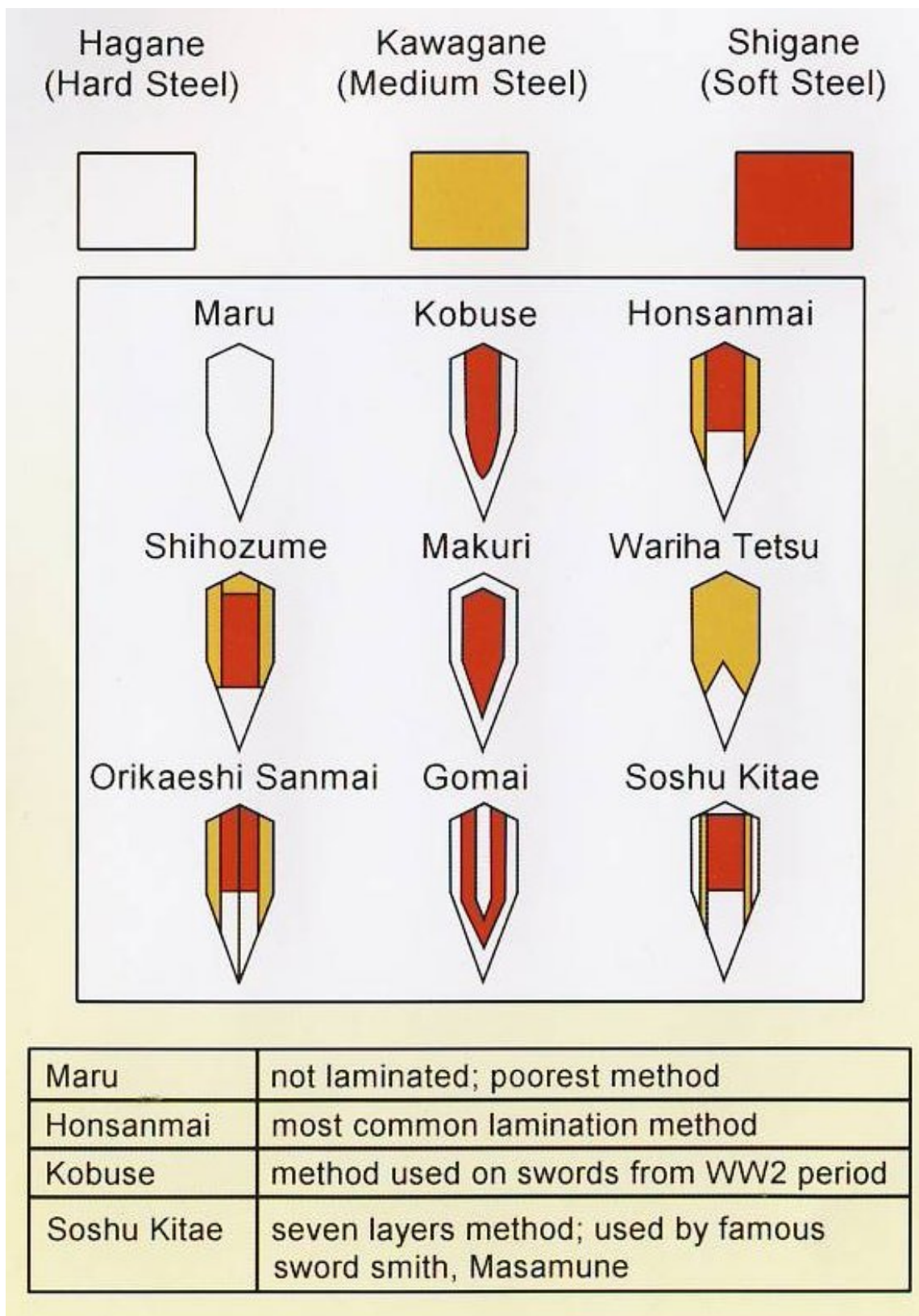
Pronounced [katana], the *kun'yomi* (Japanese reading) of the kanji 刀, originally meaning dao or knife/saber in Chinese, the word has been adopted as a loanword by the Portuguese language. *[23] In Portuguese the designation (spelled *catana*) means “large knife” or machete. *[23]

11.6 Forging and construction

Main article: Japanese swordsmithing

Katanas are traditionally made from a specialized Japanese steel called *tamahagane*.*[24] which is created from a traditional smelting process that results in several, layered steels with different carbon concentrations. *[25] This process helps remove impurities and even out the carbon content of the steel. The smith begins by folding and welding pieces of high and low carbon steel several times to work out most of the impurities. The resulting block of steel is then drawn out to form a billet.

At this stage, it is only slightly curved or may have no curve at all. The gentle curvature of a katana is attained by a process of differential hardening or differential quenching: the smith coats the blade with several layers of a wet clay



Cross sections of Japanese sword blade lamination methods

slurry, which is a special concoction unique to each sword maker, but generally composed of clay, water and any or none of ash, grinding stone powder, or rust. The edge of the blade is coated with a thinner layer than the sides and spine of the sword, heated, and then quenched in water (some sword makers use oil to quench the blade). The slurry

causes only the blade's edge to be hardened and also causes the blade to curve due to the difference in densities of the micro-structures in the steel. * [10] When steel with a carbon content of 0.7 percent is heated beyond 750 °C, it enters the *austenite* phase. When austenite is cooled very suddenly by quenching in water, the structure changes into *martensite*, which is a very hard form of steel. When austenite is allowed to cool slowly, its structure changes into a mixture of ferrite and *pearlite* which is softer than martensite. * [26] * [27] This process also creates the distinct line down the sides of the blade called the *hamon*, which is made distinct by polishing. Each hamon and each smith's style of hamon is distinct. * [10]

After the blade is forged, it is then sent to be polished. The polishing takes between one and three weeks. The polisher uses finer and finer grains of polishing stones in a process called *glazing*, until the blade has a mirror finish. However, the blunt edge of the katana is often given a matte finish to emphasize the hamon. * [10]

11.7 Usage in martial arts

Katana were used by samurai in practising several martial arts and modern martial artists still use a variety of katana. Martial arts in which training with katana is used include *Iaijutsu*, *battōjutsu*, *iaidō*, *kenjutsu*, *Shinkendo*, *kendo*, *Aikido*, *Ninjutsu*, and *Tenshin Shōden Katori Shintō-ryū*. * [28] * [29] * [30]

11.8 Storage and maintenance

If mishandled in its storage or maintenance, the katana may become irreparably damaged. The blade should be stored horizontally in its sheath, curve down and edge facing upward to maintain the edge. It is extremely important that the blade remain well-oiled, powdered and polished, as the natural moisture residue from the hands of the user will rapidly cause the blade to rust if not cleaned off. The traditional oil used is *choji* oil (99% mineral oil and 1% clove oil for fragrance). Similarly, when stored for longer periods, it is important that the katana be inspected frequently and aired out if necessary in order to prevent rust or mold from forming (mold may feed off the salts in the oil used to polish the katana). * [31]

11.9 Ownership and trade restrictions

11.9.1 United Kingdom

As of April 2008, the British government added swords with a curved blade of 50 cm (20 in) or over in length (“the length of the blade shall be the straight line distance from the top of the handle to the tip of the blade”) to the *Offensive Weapons Order*. * [32] This ban was a response to reports that samurai swords were used in more than 80 attacks and 4 killings over the preceding four years. * [33] Those who violate the ban would be jailed up to six months and charged a fine of £5,000. Martial arts practitioners, historical re-enactors and people currently possessing such swords may still own them. The sword can also be legal provided it was made in Japan before 1954, or was made using traditional sword making methods. It is also legal to buy if it can be classed as a “martial artist's weapon” . * [34] This ban applies to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This ban was amended in August 2008 to allow sale and ownership without licence of 'traditional' hand-forged katana.

11.9.2 Ireland

Under the *Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act 1990 (Offensive Weapons) (Amendment) Order 2009*, katanas made post-1953 are illegal unless made by hand according to traditional methods. * [35]

11.10 Gallery

- Antique Japanese (samurai) katana, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Antique Japanese (samurai) katana, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

- A katana blade made by *Muramasa*, 16th century, in Tokyo National Museum.
- Antique Japanese (samurai) katana with koshirae and shirasaya, attributed to *Sukenao*, 1600s.
- Japanese katana showing a horimono (blade carving), MOMA.

11.11 See also

- Daishō
- Iaidō, martial art associated with the katana
- Japanese sword mountings
- Japanese swords
- Nodachi
- Ōdachi
- Tachi
- Tantō
- Uchigatana
- Wakizashi

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11.14 External links

- Media related to [Katana](#) at Wikimedia Commons
- Media related to [Nihonto](#) at Wikimedia Commons

Chapter 12

Ulfberht

Ulfberht is a modern transcription of the inscription +*VLFBERHT*+, found on some Early Middle Ages Germanic swords of the 8th to 11th century. Swords so inscribed have been found in many parts of Europe, most numerous in Scandinavia. They are believed to originate from the Taunus region of Germany in what was the Frankish realm.* [1]

There are many variations of the inscription, including +*VLFBERHT*+ or *VLFBERHT*+. [2] The inscription is a Frankish personal name and became the basis of a trademark of sorts, used by multiple bladesmiths for several centuries. Stalsberg argues that a smith is unlikely to have been literate, and that the presence of crosses in the signature suggest an ecclesiastical or monastic origin. She discusses how the swords may have reached Scandinavia, suggesting smuggling, looting by vikings, or as ransom for dignitaries captured by vikings.* [2]

Most “Ulfberht” swords are of Oakeshott Type X form. They are forged from excellent steel with a very low content of sulfur and phosphorus and up to 1.1% carbon. This steel was most likely acquired through trade through the Volga trade route, where ingots of the steel were obtained from central Asian countries: who were producing crucible steel to emulate the famous wootz steel of India.* [3]* [4]

12.1 See also

- Ingelrii, a similar inscription

12.2 References

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12.4 External links

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12.5.1 Text

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- rolls, Jan eissfeldt, Chivas1029384756, SPat, JSR, Lekumanunic, Ben Ben, Luckas-bot, Yobot, WikiDan61, Themfromspace, Kadrun, Victoriaearle, Swordsmith, Pheral, THEN WHO WAS PHONE?, Btippet2, AnomieBOT, Anne McDermott, Iexec1, Jim1138, Axstytty, Davidsonc, Mintrick, AdjustShift, Samun007, Crecy99, Csigabi, Flewis, Powerzilla, MaterialsScientist, Hunnjazel, The High Fin Sperm Whale, Aff123a, Citation bot, Maxis ftw, DynamoDegsy, Shruo, Timir2, Hi2you, Sharkstfont, Sionus, Cureden, Karagamber, Capricorn42, Bihco, Tad Lincoln, XXxConkerXXx, MY MOM WONT LET ME EAT AT THE TABLE WITH A SWORD., Trip Fisk, Linguoboy, Doctorx0079, Haydo3321, Biógrafo, Shirik, Edwardsesq, Happyman19, Silverije, Basharh, Nirbhaesingh, Imanenkov, Amitpardeshi, Shadowjams, Clokemg, Dartheragon1, Dartheragon2, Josemanimala, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, FrescoBot, And thanks for all the fish, Sky Attacker, Pieman77777, Yomajoe, VI, BodvarBjarki, Year of the black man, Lucky Ding Dong, Hchc2009, XxTimberlakexx, Biker Biker, Pinethicket, Boulaur, Hockeyninja101, Jonesey95, Slashvirus, SpaceFlight89, Hello133, AmesJussellR, Asaddul, Jauhienij, Trappist the monk, Yunshui, Ptj tsubasa, Crowbar1234, MCQknight, Lotje, Metalikid12, Neferkare, MrX, RPinney331, JenniferSimmons, Thehistorysage, Reaper Eternal, Specs112, Unrulyevil, Suffusion of Yellow, Tbhotch, Reach Out to the Truth, Aniten21, Thecheap-eateroffod, Leopard734, Mean as custard, The Utahraptor, RjwilmsiBot, Salh474, DASHBot, EmausBot, Editingfail, Fly by Night, Garyknowswhatsup, Samuraiantiqueworld, GoingBatty, Minimac's Clone, Ben salvatori, Pal Molnar, Wikipelli, P. S. F. Freitas, ZondaSX, Thecheesykid, RemmyVanBe, Grarspitting, ZéroBot, Fæ, Traxs7, Systemofadown44, Hibe123pie, NicatronTg, Curly220, Matthewc-girling, Billymoffy, Aeonx, Dieorbadead, Wayne Slam, Ocaasi, Sky380, ApersonLOLxD, Trlight, TyA, Brandmeister, Mm4rc1234, Thoth19, Orange Suede Sofa, Peter Karlsen, Crsdudrhgh, Highlord777, Delpprmacropan, ClueBot NG, People n'stuff, Random7000, Macarenses, Rtucker913, Moses-bot, Ptdtch, Diabalo17, Snotbot, OpenInfoForAll, Bronsonboy, Widr, WikiPuppies, Mohd. Toukir Hamid, Knives182, TRunfree, IHateWikiYesThatsRight, Helpful Pixie Bot, H MSSolent, Calabe1992, Nakidmager, HistoricalArmouries, Wiki13, Atomician, ASCIIIn2Bme, Tony Tan, Jeancey, Sawman123, Otafoku, Yutwong, Dabeast12, Glacialfox, Renshawhu, Jaqeli, Radj397, Imfatandfatr, DirtyLittleLawBreaker, Pratyya Ghosh, Aanshin, ChrisGualtieri, Codeh, Robloxiskool, JYBot, Webclient101, Codspell, BieberFannie, Viewmont Viking, Swordsswordswiki, Lugia2453, Frosty, Mrsuperpanda, Juzumaru, Telfordbuck, Brhorne3n1, Wikighost2, Royroydeb, Epicgenius, Owenspitt, Melonkelon, Dndelro, Vimalrajappil, Jakec, Ketola24, Matty.007, Firestorme50, Ratty lovebunny, Mr walrus 666, FuckNerdz, ALBERTZ649, BlakeBerrier, Lnp37, Sarumaru the Poet, Sheepyrox, Skr15081997, Terracronus, Furno123, Monabot, Rehanabdi, 2Orack, Filedelinkerbot, MOWWWW, Vieque, Maxjiang000, Paleolithic Man, PedroOfAwesomeness, Robert2282, Ashdonsoccer, SwordsKingdom, Solumija, Zach1zach2zach, Enigmantra, Floopypoopie, Pman222, Alrich44, 6757w, KH-1, 555nhs, Cgreet678, Strycki, Infernodragon12, Weaver 777, Cesar1788, Connorshotapotman, Pepsdel9, BermudianMiller, PauloCalvo, Brian0897, Vaibhav MJoshi, Bigbossross14, Bkill33, Ura scrub LOL and Anonymous: 1208
- **Arming sword** *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arming%20sword?oldid=653058848> *Contributors:* Stevenj, Palfrey, Peregrine, Altenmann, Jason Quinn, Gracefool, Iceberg3k, Dbachmann, Elipongo, AKGhetto, Pearle, Dlatrex, TaintedMustard, Saxifrage, Kelisi, Kbdank71, Jdcooper, Dimitrii, Haldrik, Hairy Dude, Grafen, Megapixie, TDogg310, zover0, Jaerom Darkwind, Appleseed, Yvww, SmackBot, Gilliam, Mairibot, Durova, Xiliquiern, Moshe Constantine Hassan Al-Silverburg, DynamoDT, Paul S, Zearin, JMK, CapitalR, Altaileopard, Wandalstouring, Marek69, Mercurio.Wilder, Seaphoto, JHFTC, ClovisPt, AlexiusHoratius, Jmcw37, Oshwah, Andy Dingley, DFRussia, Arakunem, Ludwigs2, Abrech, Uddannelse, Dislocatedthumb, Addbot, Download, Lightbot, Middayexpress, Ptbogourou, AnomieBOT, A. di M., Erik9bot, Dougofborg, FrescoBot, Sirtywell, Vincenzo80, OgreBot, Pinethicket, EmausBot, ClueBot NG, Widr, Helpful Pixie Bot, Mark Arsten, Duxwing, Fylbecatulous, Radj397, MadGuy7023, Mutley1989, Ca2james, Robert2282 and Anonymous: 48
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