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The Sword In Anglo-Saxon England



Synopsis

This book is an invaluable exploration of the significance of the sword as symbol and weapon in the Anglo-Saxon world, using archaeological and literary evidence. The first part of the book, a careful study of the disposition of swords found in peat bogs, in graves, lakes and rivers, yields information on religious and social practices. The second is concerned with literary sources, especially Beowulf.

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Customer Reviews

H.E. Davidson is one the best European/English historians of the early to mid 20th century, having written many great works including the now unavailable "Road to Hel", "Myths in Pagan Europe", numerous works on Norse mythology, and many works on Goddess-lore that never strays into the "fluffy bunny" utopianisms of Gimbutas or other fantasies. Here, Davidson puts her considerable skills as a compiler of numerous fields including Anglo-Saxon poetry, lore, archeology, history, and just about anything else she can think of to put together an excellent monograph on the most potent ancient weapon and symbol, the sword. Since there is no preview available, I will list the contents here: List of swords in Museums in the British Isles THE MAKING OF THE SWORD 1. Iron for the Blade 2. Eastern Sword-blades 3. Pattern-welded Blades 4. When and Where were they Made? 5. The Teutonic Sword 6. Inscribed Blades 7. The Construction of the Hilt 8. The Pommel 9. The Grip 10. The Guard 11. The Decoration of the Hilt 12. The Ring on the Hilt 13. Inscribed Hilts 14. Sword Attachments 15. The Scabbard 16. Scabbard Inscriptions THE TELLING OF THE SWORD 1. Historical Records 2. Anglo-Saxon Wills 3. Some Sword Terms in Beowulf 4. The Sword Hurling 5. The Sword from the Lake 6. Other Swords in Anglo-Saxon Poetry 7. Sword Riddles 8. The

Sword-blade in Old Norse Literature 9. The Hilt in Old Norse Literature 10. The Scabbard in Old Norse Literature
THE USING OF THE SWORD CONCLUSION APPENDIX A. The Forging of a Pattern Welded Sword APPENDIX B.

The Sword in Anglo Saxon England by Hilda Ellis Davidson is the best book of its kind for the sheer number of aspects of the topic covered - and covered well. I must admit I was impressed by this book, the author's expertise and the depth of the research done to bring so much about this subject to the reader, Davidson brings every aspect of the sword from many different disciplines. The book covers the technical aspects of the swordsmith's art, beginning with the development of pattern-welded swords on the continent from whence the Anglo Saxons came. There are brief forays into the development of swords in northern Europe before the Germanic tribes began to move onto the world scene and how Celtic and Roman weapons influenced German sword makers. There is then a detailed discussion of the metallurgical requirements as well as the experimentation of modern swordsmiths who have been able to duplicate the work of "dark age" smiths. The author relates the evidence from archeology and literature for pattern-welded swords. There are good conversations in regard to the blades, the hilts, the ornamentation, scabbards, belts, baldrics, fittings...you name it. I found it interesting that swords were not only suspended from baldrics and belts, but were also strapped to the side with the hilt high on the body almost under the armpit as well as slung over the soldier. The author covers the sword as a weapon of the elite and were highly valued, being lavishly decorated. Though decorated, they were used in combat and were exposed to the damage of hand-to-hand combat in spite of their embellishment. These were the real deal - used to deal out death in battle. Also covered are the examples of using swords in battle as well as duels.

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