

L'Épée: Usages, mythes et symboles

("The Sword: Practice, myths and symbols")

Translation of figure captions by Michael R. Rhum, with additional comments by Fabrice Cognot

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76 & 77 (details p 70-71)	69	Two reliquary caskets of Saint Thomas Becket Limoges, beginning of the 13 th century Paris, Cluny Museum (cat. 65 and 66) These two reliquary caskets depict the murder of Thomas Becket in his cathedral at Canterbury. On one (cat. 65) the prelate receives the first sword blow from the front, on the other (cat. 66) he receives it from the back. This variant iconography underlines the character of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket and the ignominy of the crime, which was committed in front of numerous witnesses and accurately recounted.
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89	83	Pity stabbing Danger with her sword of tears <i>Roman de la Rose</i> , folio 110 verso (detail) France, middle of the 14 th century Paris, Saint Genevieve Library (cat. 75)
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91	86	Sword of Saints Cosmas and Damian (whole and detail) Opposite page: The sword in its scabbard Above: Detail of scabbard Essen, Domschatz (cat. 9)
92	89	Arthur taking the sword from the anvil⁸ Coronation of Arthur <i>Story of Merlin</i> French 95, fol. 159 verso France, circa 1280-1290 Paris, National Library of France
93	89	Arthur receiving Excalibur Boccaccio, <i>De Casibus [Virorum Illustrium]</i> French 229, fol. 342 verso Lyons, circa 1435-1440 Paris, National Library of France Excalibur is Arthur's legendary sword. According to some sources, the young Arthur accomplished the exploit of drawing it from an anvil in which it was stuck, before being crowned king. According to others, Arthur received the sword from the Lady of the Lake, who made it rise from the waves.
94	91	Sword called Frederic III's (1415-1493) Paris, Cluny Museum (cat. 46)

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97	95	Sword said to be John the Fearless', Duke of Burgundy (1371-1419) Montereau-Fault-Yonne (cat. 49) The sword is hung high in the nave of the church, in memory of the assassination of the duke (1419).
98	95	Sword said to be Joan of Arc's Dijon, Museum of Fine Arts (cat. 44)
99	95	Dante Gabriele Rossetti Joan of Arc Kissing the Sword of Deliverance Strasbourg, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (cat. 98)
100	97	Sword of Ernst von Mansfeld, governor of the Low Countries (1580-1626) Paris, Army Museum (cat. 52)
101	97	After Hyacinthe Rigaud Portrait of Louis XIV (detail) Versailles, National Museum of Versailles and the Trianon (cat. 95) The Sun King, dressed in his coronation robes, wears Joyeuse at his side.
102	99	(opposite page) Durandal, the sword of Roland Rocamadour (cat. 55)
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106	99	Mark Henley Voting Day in the Appenzell The men wear swords, symbol of their right to vote.
107	100	Saber with its sheath and marquetry case, given by President Hafez el-Assad to President François Mitterand Château Chinon, Museum of the Septennat ⁹ (cat. 59)
108	100	Academic sword of Jean-Pierre Mahé Eastern Europe, 19 th century (cat. 54)
109	101	Gilles Peress A pile of machetes in Goma, Zaire, near the Rwandan border, 1994 The machete being a very widely found, multi-purpose weapon, its use in a genocide, instead of firearms, has a symbolic dimension.
110	101	Duel between Gaston Deferre and René Ribièrè Neuilly, 1967
111	105	Hans Holbein the Elder (detail) Circa 1516 Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Alte Pinakothek This crossbowman wears on his belt a Katzbalger ¹⁰ , arm of Swiss and German mercenaries during the first part of the 16 th century.
112	107	First French fencing treatise Published in Paris in 1573 by Henry de Saint Didier and dedicated to Charles IX Ecouen, National Museum of the Renaissance
113	108	German rapier of the early 17th century Ecouen, National Museum of the Renaissance This specimen illustrates the extreme elongation of the blade resulting from the development of point play in fencing.

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114	109	Hunts of Maximilian, called the “Beautiful hunts of Guise”: The Month of December (detail) Brussels, circa 1530 Paris, Louvre Museum The hunter here is equipped with a sword specifically adapted for boar hunting.
115	110	David and Bathsheba, Eighth tapestry: “Death of the child and departure of David for Rabbah” (detail) Flanders, 16 th century Ecouen, National Museum of the Renaissance Ceremony showing the chamberlain carrying the sword upright and preceding King David.
116	111	Dress sword with double fuller, with engraved and gilded decoration, with the Kressenstein arms and monogram Beginning of the 16 th century Ecouen, National Museum of the Renaissance This sword is analogous to those presented by Pope Julius II to the Emperor Maximilian I and the future Emperor Charles V.

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Fabrice Cognot is one of the authors of “L’Épée” and a founder of De Taille et d’Estoc, an historical European martial arts group based in Dijon, France. He recently earned a doctorate in archaeology, with highest honors.

Errata and Translator's Notes

¹ Erratum: The sword shown is Colada, one of the swords of El Cid. Lobera was the sword of king Saint Ferdinand III and legendarily of Count Fernán González of Castille.

² Beatus of Liébana is the name of the author of this commentary. This work is typically referred to as the *Beatus*.

³ *Mœurs* encompasses morals, conduct, and manners.

⁴ Erratum: This dagger is from the 15th century, not the 14th.

⁵ *En pal*, a heraldic and ceremonial term.

⁶ “Puy Notre Dame” is a bit mysterious. It’s the name of a village in the middle of France, nowhere near Amiens, where this piece originated. “Puy” in modern French means a (dead) volcanic mountain in central France, coming from Latin *podium*. In Old French it still meant podium. In any case, this image is clearly part of an altarpiece.

The phrase “sacre du roi” in French is used to refer to a king’s coronation, because the kings of France were unique in being anointed, like the Biblical David. I have chosen to use the word “anointment” in its first use here because of the religious content of the painting. The next figure illustrates this.

⁷ Under the French monarchy, the Constable was the titular commander of the king’s armed forces, equivalent to the medieval English Lord High Constable.

⁸ The manuscript is wonderful: “... artus ... prist lespee as mains iointes et le leua del englume ausi legierement come selle ni tenist riens...” *Arthur ... took the sword in his joined hands and lifted it as lightly as if he held nothing...*

⁹ The “septennat” was the seven-year presidential term under the constitutions of the Third to Fifth Republics prior to abolishment in 2002 (1873-2002).

¹⁰ German mercenary infantry of this period were known as Landsknechts. In French, the type of sword shown is a “*lansquenette*.”