

TWO SWORDS FROM THE FOUNDATION OF GIBRALTAR

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ABSTRACT - RESUMEN

The two swords plus their associated acabbard and belt or baldric fragments which were found in Martin's Cave, Gibraltar, date from the 12th century AD. Such dating is supporting the design to the objects themselves, their cultural-historical context, and their varied decoration. This evidence is also used to propose that the ensemble was all of Andalusian or North African origin, and as such represents an almost unique survival of 12th century western Islamic military equipment.

Las dos espadas, junto con sus correspondientes vainas y restos de cinto o tahalí, halladas en Martin's Cave (Gibraltar), deben fecharse en el siglo XII d.C. Esta datación se basa en la tipología de los objetos, en su contexto histórico-cultural, y en su variada decoración. Estos datos se emplean también para proponer que el conjunto es de origen Andalusí o Norteafricano, y que por tanto representan un caso casi único de preservación de equipo militar islámico occidental del s. XII.

KEY WORDS - PALABRAS CLAVE

Andalusian. Baldric. Belt-buckle. Bird motif. Bronze. Eagle motif. Enamel. Feathered decoration. Galloon. Jihad. Jinete. Maghrib. Mozarab. Mudejar. Murabitin. Muwahhidun. Pommel. Quillons. Ropework decoration. Scale decoration. Silver. Star of David. Tang. Tin.

Al-Andalus. Siglo XII. Tahalí. Broche de cinturón. Motivo de ave. Bronce. Motivo de águila. Esmalte. Jihad. Jinete. Maghrib. Mozárabe. Murabitum. Muwahhidun. Pomo. Arriaz. Decoración sogueada. Decoración de escamas. Plata. Estrella de David. Espiga. Estaño.

The sword is a messenger more truthful than letters.

(Al-Mas'udī, d.956 AD, Kitāb al-Tanbīh, ed. De Goeje, in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Batavia 1894, vol. VIII, p. 170)

Dedication: To the late Dr Ada Bruhn de Hoffmeyer, Instituto de Estudios Sobre Armas Antiguas, Jarandilla. Also with thanks to the History Department of Nottingham University without whose encouragement and facilities this research would never have been completed. Unfortunately this study was written before the author became aware of a recent and very important study of a 9th century Andalusian sword by A. Canto García¹.

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¹ A. Canto García, «Una Espada de Época Omeya del Siglo IX D.C.», *Gladius* XXI, 2001, pp. 183-192.

In 1867 two swords and some fragments of what was almost certainly an associated sword-belt or baldric were found by an archaeologist named G. Busk in a small cave on the near vertical south-eastern side of the Rock of Gibraltar. The enamelled plaque which formed part of the sword-belt has been noted by students of Iberian and Islamic metalwork but the swords have gone virtually unnoticed since their discovery was published in an obscure journal in 1868. This is a shame since the swords and belt are very rare examples of 12th century western Islamic military equipment. They may also have been buried in the cave as part of an exercise in talismanic magic which ran counter to orthodox Muslim belief but which was, according to contemporary sources, widespread among Andalusian and Maghribi military personnel, particularly those of Berber origin². Or they may have been secreted in the cave, many years after having been made, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Castilians who temporarily took Gibraltar in 1309, and permanently conquered it in 1462. The swords spent many years in store in the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London and are now understood to be in store at the British Museum. The enamelled plaque is on show in the British Museum's Medieval Gallery (Case 4) while the other belt fragments are in a British Museum study collection (Swords, British Museum inv. 67.12.23.1 & 67.12.23.2; enamelled copper buckle-plate British Museum inv. 67.12.23.3; bronze strap-end British Museum, inv. 67.12.23.5).

Several of Gibraltar's caves were explored by Busk and his team of ten men, all of whom are said to have been 'prisoners' and who were probably glad of a chance to get out of their cells. One of these caves was Martin's Cave whose entrance faced the Mediterranean in a south-south-easterly direction and was named after the soldier who discovered it in 1821, at which time it was described as virtually inaccessible. No previous exploration is known to have taken place; the very narrow access path plus entrance gate which existed in 1867 being constructed by the Royal Engineers after 1821. Busk (1868) described Martin's Cave as having an entrance less than two metres wide and with a floor of black earth. He then had the prisoners excavate this earth along the northern side of the cave, in effect the right-hand rear wall, where they soon uncovered two flint knives over half a metre beneath the surface, followed shortly by seven more. During several days of excavations they found other flint knives, stone axes and fragments of pottery. The same sort of objects were also found when the base of the southern or left-hand wall was excavated. The discovery of the swords and belt came later, and here it is perhaps best to repeat Busk's own account³.

«Five days after the excavations commenced, a two-edged sword was found under six feet of earth, in a small chamber on the north side, at the lower end of the cavern; it was partly under stalagmite, and was fractured in five or six places; its dimensions are as follows, viz.:

	<i>Feet</i>	<i>Inches</i>
<i>HILT:-</i>		
<i>Length</i>	0	6 1/2
<i>Circumference of grip at thickest part</i>	0	5
<i>BLADE:-</i>		
<i>Length</i>	2	11
<i>Greatest breadth</i>	0	2 1/2
<i>Narrowest breadth</i>	0	1 1/2
<i>Centre thickness of blade</i>	0	0 1/4

² Nicolle, D., «Talismanic Swords from the 12th Century Maghrib», *Graeco-Arabica*, VII-VIII, 1999-2000, pp. 421-32.

³ Busk, G., «On the caves of Gibraltar in which human remains and works of art have been found», in *Congr s international d'anthropologie et d'arch ologie*, Norwich 1868, pp. 134-136.

The hilt was surmounted by a globular pommel, and the whole of this portion of the sword appeared to be of silver.

The scabbard had been of leather, lined (apparently) with wood; and it was mounted with silver. On the silver mounting at the mouth of the scabbard there was a stamped ornament.*

*(footnote on p. 135) * Mr. Franks thinks it is more probably of tin, but it certainly looks very like silver.*

The day following that on which this sword was found, another was discovered, or rather the remains of one. It was found at about the same depth as the other, but about four yards distant from it. The hilt is of the same form as the first, with a globular pommel; it is of iron, and the mountings of the scabbard of copper. It was found fractured in seven places, and was of the following dimensions, viz.:

	<i>Feet</i>	<i>Inches</i>
<i>HILT:-</i>		
<i>Length</i>	0	6 1/4
<i>Circumference of grip at thickest part</i>	0	5
<i>BLADE:-</i>		
<i>Length</i>	3	2
<i>Greatest breadth</i>	0	2 1/2
<i>Narrowest breadth</i>	0	1 3/4
<i>Centre thickness of blade</i>	0	0 1/4

The above sword was not in so good a state of preservation as the former one

A short time after the discovery of the swords, a copper plate was found under eighteen inches of hard stalagmite, close to the south side of the cave. When it was brought to me it was covered in verdigris. It is about one and half inch long, with a circular hole stamped or punched through each corner. Some of my friends thought it was a portion of some military appointments of the present period. I removed the incrustations as carefully as possible, and something very white appeared. In a short time an enamelled surface was visible, having depicted on it something like a bird in the coils of a serpent, which has been identified by Mr. Augustus Franks as a dragon. The plate is said to be of «Limoges» work, and of the same period as the swords. The colours of this plaque are still visible, and must have been very brilliant.*

*(footnote on p. 136) * Probably of the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century, according to Mr. Franks.*

The remains collected from this cave were as follows, viz.:

Human remains; animal remains (ox, chiefly, goat, sheep, ibex); bones of birds; bones of fish; bones of reptiles; fragments of pottery; sandstone querns, made of a material not to be found in Gibraltar, nor in the neighbourhood; stone axes; flint knives, numerous; one beautiful specimen of a flint core; worked bones; sea and land shells; round pebbles; runstones of sandstone; charcoal, distributed above and below the stalagmite floor».

Martin's Cave would seem to be a remarkable place to find this abundance of archaeological material, especially the swords and sword-belt or baldric. According to Busk it was 590 feet (180 m) above sea-level. According to a more recent survey Martin's Cave is actually on a narrow ledge, widened by the Royal Engineers and reached by a path known as Martin's Path from the Jews' Cemetery Battery, 638 feet (194.5 m) above sea-level east-north-east of Governor's Beach, almost directly below the summit called O'Hara's Battery, and 125 feet (38.1 m) north of the smaller Figtree Cave. Martin's Cave is also higher than and slightly north of Gorham's Cave, above a series of sea-caves some of which are partially collapsed.

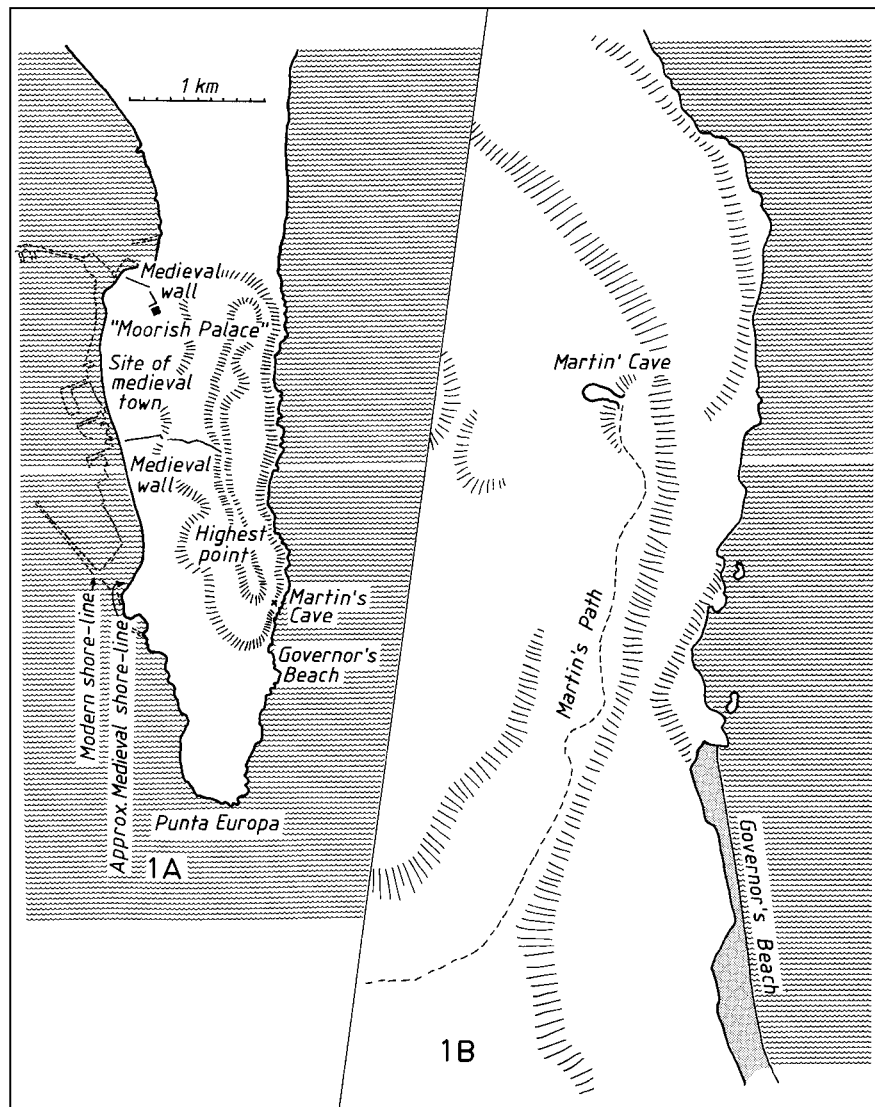


Figure 1. Map: Gibraltar, Martin's Cave, the medieval city, etc.

Some of these are at the back of Governor's Beach while others are still partially flooded by the sea at the northern end of the beach. The highest point of the Rock of Gibraltar is almost directly above Martin's Cave while Governor's Beach was the only place where a landing could be made from the sea on the eastern side of the Rock. The other beaches at Catalan Bay and Sandy Bay are backed by very high, near vertical cliffs while those further south are more exposed and closer to Europa Point which has either been garrisoned or at least partially inhabited throughout most of Gibraltar's recorded history. All these factors may be relevant when looking for a reason why Martin's Cave was selected as a place to bury a pair of swords for perhaps talismanic reasons. According to a detailed plan made by the Gibraltar Cave Research Group in 1966, Martin's Cave is approximately forty feet (12.2 m) from entrance to rear wall, the narrowest part of its entrance being around five feet three inches (1.6 m), widening to over sixteen feet (4.87 m) near the middle of the cave.

THE SWORDS & BELT

The objects found in Martin's Cave by G. Busk have undoubtedly deteriorated since they were unearthed. This is particularly true of the swords and what remained of their scabbard. Consequently more recent observation produced different measurements and even descriptions. According to the British Museum, for example, the first sword (inv. no. 67.12-23.1) has a bronze chape (figure 2D), a tin locket (figure 2F), tin inlay on the hilt (figures 2A & 2E) and a total length of 1030 mm. My own measurements give it a current overall length of 1021 mm and would describe it as follows: a chape of copper alloy only visible from the back as the weapon is now attached to a protective bed of plastic, locket of tin or very low quality silver, remains of curved quillons, grip, quillons and pommel decorated with small tin or silver studs in a feathered or scale pattern, those on the quillons perhaps being over the remnants of a layer of tin or silver foil. The quillons were clearly made in two pieces and probably hammer-welded together around the tang in a manner seen in other medieval eastern Islamic swords and also in 19th century Moroccan swords.

In 1981 one of the armourers at the Tower of London expressed the opinion that, judging by the manner of its corrosion, the blade was probably of wrought iron. The main features of this weapons according to E. Oakeshott's typology are as follows: blade, type XII; quillons, type 9; pommel, type R.⁴ According to the British Museum the second sword (inv. no. 67.12-23.2) has a bronze chape (figures 3D-E), bronze locket (figure 3A) and a total length of 1054 mm. My own measurements give a length of 1051 mm and the following description: remains of straight solid and cylindrical rod-like quillons, evidence of verdigris copper oxide on the edge of the grip, possible evidence of two rivets through the iron grip fastening it to the unseen tang. Once again an armourer in the Tower of London suggested that the blade appeared to be of wrought iron construction. According to Oakeshott's typology the main features of this second sword were: blade, type XII; quillons, type 1; pommel, type R.⁵ There is virtually no remaining evidence of the wood or leather parts of either scabbard.

The British Museum describes the enamelled copper plaque (inv. no. 67.12-23.3; figures 4A-B), which almost certainly formed part of a sword-belt or perhaps baldric, as being 40.5 mm square. M-M. Gauthier puts it at 40 mm across⁶. The brass strap-end (inv. no. 67.12-23.5; figure 7A-E) has received less attention than the enamelled plaque, despite the fact that it still encloses part of a woven fabric belt or baldric. My own measurements give the back-plate a maximum width of 455 mm, the front-plate 43 mm, and an overall length of 50 mm. The most complete though still extremely corroded iron buckle (inv. no. 67.12-23.4; figure 5) has, according to my measurements, a maximum width of 455 mm, an overall length of 395 mm, and a prong of 36 mm. The fragment of a second iron buckle (inv. no. 67.12-23.6; figure 6) has a maximum length of 40 mm and a remaining length of 11 mm. The buckles presumably came from two belts or baldrics and the fact that only one of these had an enamelled plaque and a decorated strap-end suggests that one was plain and the other decorated. Similarly one sword and scabbard are decorated while the second sword and scabbard are almost totally plain.

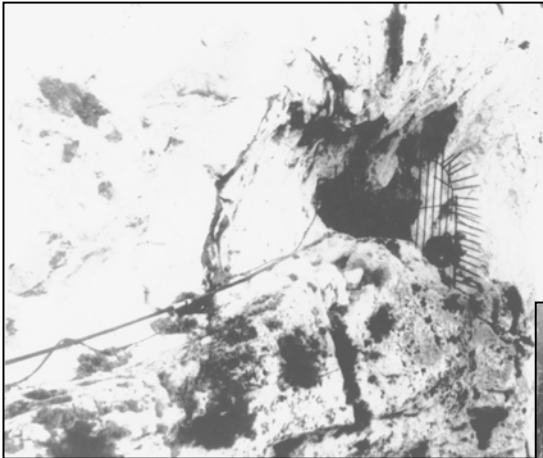
⁴ Oakeshott, E., *Records of the Medieval Sword*, Bury St. Edmunds 1991, pp. viii-ix & 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*

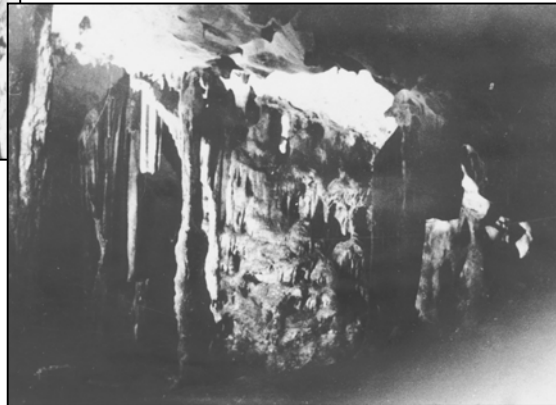
⁶ Gauthier, M-M., *Emaux méridionaux. Catalogue international de l'oeuvre de Limoges. I. L'époque romane*, Paris, 1987, p. 93, pl.LXXII.



The Rock of Gibraltar from the south-south-east, with the position of Martin's cave indicated above a row of sea-caves just north of Governor's Beach. (Rose & Rosenbaum 1990, courtesy of the authors and the Institution of Royal Engineers)



The entrance to Martin's Cave at the end of a very narrow path or ledge cut into the cliff face during the early 19th century. Before this was made the ledge is believed to have been much narrower, rendering the cave virtually inaccessible. (Gibraltar Museum)



The interior of Martin's cave, viewed from the entrance. The two swords were buried in the earth and rubble floor, close to the sides of the cave, probably near the 'stalagmite' wall in the centre of this photograph. (Gibraltar Museum)

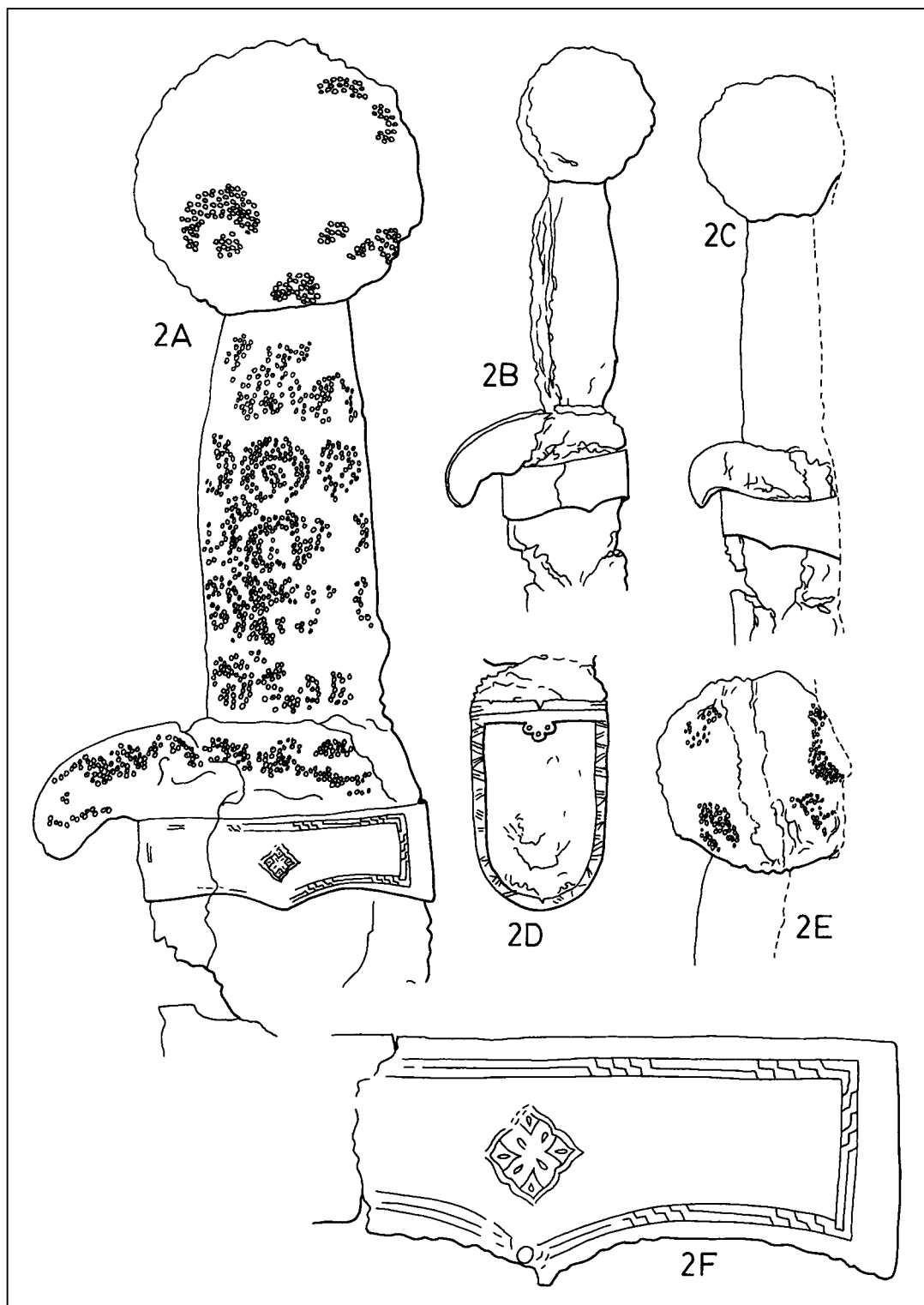
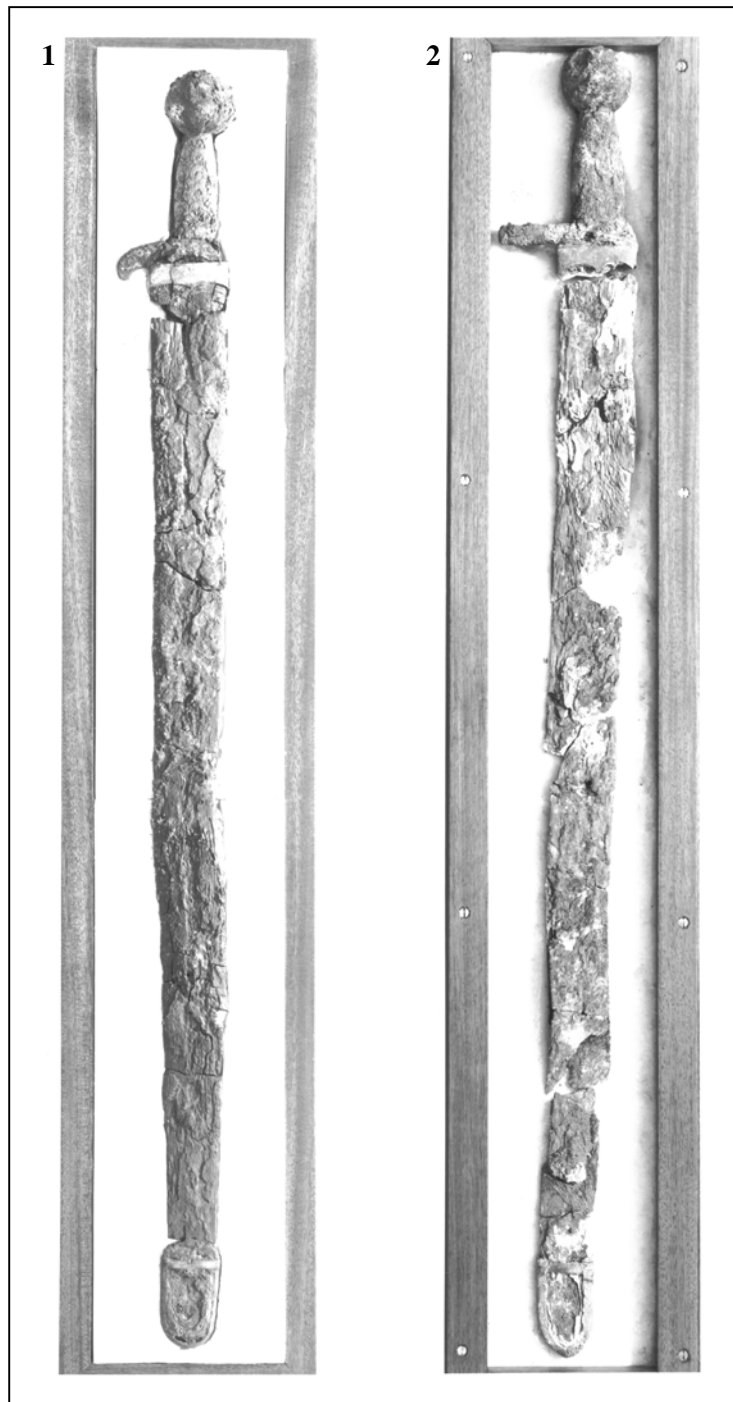
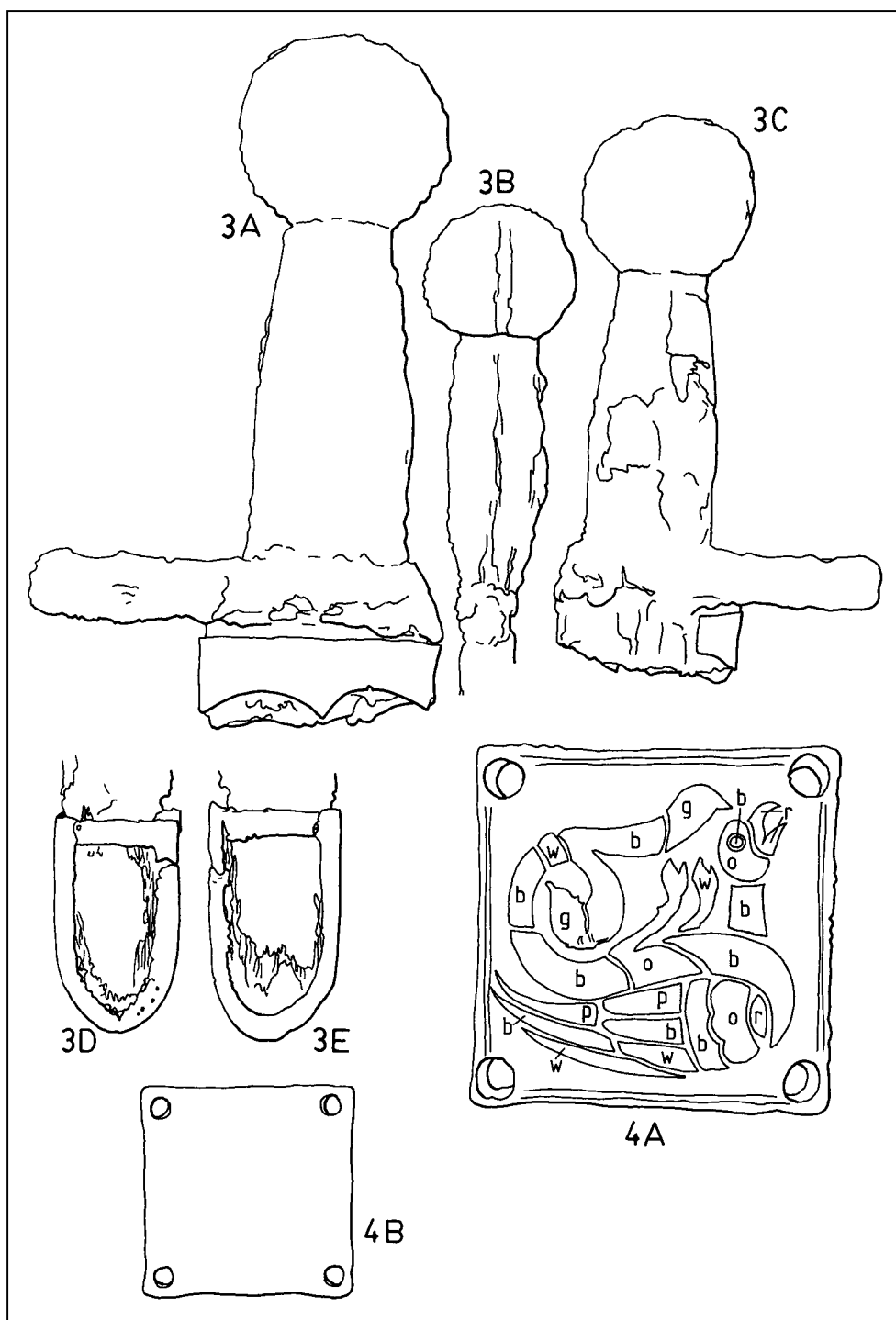


Figure 2a-2e) Sword with curved quillons from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.1, London).



1. The first sword found in Martin's Cave, Gibraltar. It has the remains of curved quillons and the hilt is decorated with a white metal. (British Museum, inv. no. 67.12.23.1, London)
2. The second sword found in Martin's Cave, Gibraltar. It has the remains of straight quillons and the hilt is undecorated. (British Museum, inv. no. 67.12.23.2, London)



Figures **3a-3e**) Sword with straight quillons from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.2, London). **4a-4b**) Enamelled bronze belt plaque from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.3, London). Colours: b - bright blue; g - pale green; o - olive or deep green; p - pale blue; r - brick red; w - white.



The enameled copper buckle-plate found in Martin's Cave, Gibraltar, decorated with a bird motif.
(British Museum, inv. no. 67.12.23.3, London)



The bronze strap-end found in Martin's Cave, Gibraltar, decorated with a star-motif and containing fragments of a fabric sword-belt. (British Museum, inv. no. 67.12.23.5, London)

FENCING STYLES

The general history of swords within the Islamic world is now reasonably well known but the way in which these weapons were used, and the changes in fencing styles over the centuries, has not received the same attention. Swordplay amongst pre- and early Islamic Arab peoples emphasized thrust rather than cut⁷. As such it reflected the predominance of infantry rather than cavalry combat in early Arab armies and the surviving influence of Roman styles of warfare. Subsequent centuries of Islamic military history saw the rise of cavalry to pre-eminence, partially as a result of the Arabs' increasing wealth, their conquest of horse-raising areas and their incorporation of other military traditions of which the Persian and the Turkish were the most important. It seems to have been from the Sassanian Persians that Muslim Arab swordsmen learned what later became known in Europe as the 'Italian Grip,' though this may actually have first been developed in early medieval India. It involved placing the index finger of the sword hand over the quillons, thus bringing the centre of gravity closer to the point of percussion. It also tended to nullify the pommel as a balance to the blade and, by giving greater control over the weapon, made lunging easier⁸. In fact the spread of this more sophisticated fencing technique through the Middle East and North Africa to Mediterranean Europe and eventually beyond was generally associated with a revival, elaboration or introduction of a thrust style of fencing in contrast to the slashing techniques of earlier times. This trend can also be seen within Islamic al-Andalus. Here pictorial evidence indicates that early Islamic Andalusian swords were for cutting rather than thrusting.⁹ As such they were unlike the first Muslim Arab weapons of a few generations earlier, but were comparable to Visigothic and other early medieval Germanic weapons.

A new type of sword and its associated tactics are believed to have been introduced to the Iberian peninsula by Berber mercenaries and conquerors in the 11th-12th centuries, perhaps as a precursor to or early version of the *jinete* light cavalry tactics clearly introduced from North Africa in the 13th-14th centuries. Light cavalry combat *a la jinete* was again associated with what western European came to know as the Italian Grip and, according to some scholars, with curved quillons¹⁰. In fact the term *jinete* comes from Zanata, the tribe from which many of the Berber soldiers of both Granada and Morocco came. Their highly effective light cavalry tactics using minimal armour, light leather shields, relatively light swords and javelins thrown from horseback were adopted first by the native Andalusian troops of Granada, then by their Christian Iberian foes, and eventually by some other European cavalry as well.

Ibn Hudhayl wrote in the second half of the 14th century; nevertheless some of his comments on Andalusian swordplay are probably relevant for the 13th and earlier centuries since so much of his text is directly dependent upon Arabic military manuals from the 9th and 10th centuries. For example, he clearly stated that fencing on horseback was done while standing in the stirrups and that fencing exercises involved the same exercises as those described in similarly dated Mamlūk *furūsiya* military manuals from the Middle East¹¹. Although some aspects of Ibn Hudhayl's military writings were influenced by Western European or more specifically Christian Iberian military traditions, Ibn Hudhayl and the various authors of

⁷ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., «Introduction to the History of the European Sword», *Gladius*, I, 1961, pp. 50-1.

⁸ Haskins, J.F., «Northern Origins of Sassanian Metalwork», *Artibus Asiae*, XV, 1952, p. 258 n.2.

⁹ Soler del Campo, A., «Sistemas de Combate en la Iconografía Mozarabe y Andalusí Altomedieval», *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*, XXII, 1986, p. 71.

¹⁰ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., «Introduction to the History of the European Sword», *Op. Cit.*, pp. 50-1.

¹¹ 'Alī Ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Hudhayl al-Andalusī, trans. L. Mercier, *La Parure des Cavaliers et l'Insigne des Preux*, Paris 1922, pp. 238-9.

Mamlūk *furūsīya* manuals based their work upon military writers from the earlier ‘Abbāsīd period¹².

Although Ibn Hudhayl’s reference to wielding a sword while ‘standing in the stirrups’ could be interpreted as comparable to the European knightly horseman’s use of a peaked war-saddle in which the rider effectively ‘stood’ in his stirrups, it is more likely to indicate that the Andalusian cavalryman rose from his saddle while striking with a sword. Pictorial evidence indicates that this was sometimes the case in the *torna-fuye* tactics used by both sides in Iberian warfare¹³. These stemmed from the *karr wa farr* cavalry tactics of earlier Islamic centuries which again had much in common with the *cursores* and *defensores* of late Roman cavalry warfare.

Ibn Hudhayl’s comments can also be substantiated by looking at pictorial and written evidence from the Christian side of the frontier where, for example, many of the Kingdom of Aragon’s famous 13th-14th century *almugaver* light cavalry and light infantry were of ‘Moorish’ (Islamic Andalusian) origin; some still probably retaining their Muslim faith¹⁴. A detailed description of an Islamic cavalryman in mid-13th century Majorca appears in the *Llibre dels Feyts* of King James of Aragon. Here he is described as «*i cavaller a peu, e tench son escut abraçat, e sa lança en sa ma, e sa espaa cinta, e son elm saragoça en son cap, e i perpunt vestit*»; in other words as a relatively lightly armoured light cavalryman.¹⁵ This stands in stark contrast to the better known statement by Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī which portrayed Andalusian cavalry as virtually identical to their Christian foes, heavily armoured and using the typical Western European ‘peaked’ war saddle. The fully equipped 13th century Spanish knight often also carried two swords, a larger cutting type in a scabbard hung from the saddle and a lighter thrusting weapon hung from his belt; a fashion followed by at least some of his Islamic Andalusian opponents¹⁶. While this might be assumed to be an example of typically ‘heavy’ Western European knightly wargear it is important to remember that the carrying of two swords was more typical of Middle Eastern heavy cavalry in the early and high medieval period, and continued to be so in Ottoman armies.

Where the swords themselves are concerned, it seems that Spanish sword blades, or at least the lighter types, tended to remain relatively short whereas those of Europe north of the Pyrenees grew longer in the 13th and 14th centuries¹⁷. Many of them also had highly decorated hilts; a fashion continued with the 14th century Iberian thrusting small-sword or large dagger known as an *estoc*, *estocadas*, *espasa bordonenença* or, in Catalan, *bordó*. These must not, however, be confused with the *espadas ginetas* or *espadas moriscas* specifically associated with cavalry tactics *a la jinete*¹⁸.

¹² Sarraf, S. al-, *L’Archerie Mamluke (648-924/1250-1517)*, Ph.D. thesis, Paris University 1989, passim; Sarraf, S. al-, «Adab al-furūsīya fi’l-‘aṣrīn al-‘Abbāsīya wa’l-Mamlūkiyya», in *Furūsīya, I*, edit. S. al-Sarraf, Riyadh 1421 AH/2000-1 AD, pp. 104-39; Sarraf, S. al-, «Furūsīya Literature of the Mamlūk Period», in *Furusiyya, Volume 1: The Horse and the Art of the Near East*, edit. D. Alexander, Riyadh 1996, pp. 118-35; Sarraf, S. al-, «Close Combat Weapons of the Early ‘Abbāsīd Period: Maces, Axes and Swords», in *Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour: New Studies in Medieval Military Technology*, edit. D. Nicolle, forthcoming Woodbridge 2002.

¹³ Soler del Campo, A., «Sistemas de Combate en la Iconografía Mozarabe y Andalusí Altomedieval», *Op. Cit.*, p. 73; Castro y Calvo, J.M., *El arte de gobernar en las obras de Don Juan Manuel*, Barcelona 1945, p. 194.

¹⁴ Shneidman, J.L., *The Rise of the Aragonese-Catalan Empire 1200-1350*, London 1970, pp. 143 & 333.

¹⁵ Burns, R.I., «The Muslim in the Christian Feudal Order: The Kingdom of Valencia, 1240-1280», *Studies in Medieval Culture* V, 1976, p. 117.

¹⁶ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., *Arms and Armour in Spain, a short survey, vol. II*, Jarandilla-Madrid 1982, pp. 31-34.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 189-195.

BELT OR BALDRIC

The question of why the sword-belt or the baldric was preferred by the troops of a particular culture at a particular time, and why such preferences changed, also remains to be studied in detail (figures 140-151). Yet the presence of fragments from one or possibly two belts or baldrics with the swords in Martin's Cave make it worth looking at this aspect of Andalusian and Maghribi military equipment. The hanging of a sword from the shoulder in a scabbard attached to a baldric was clearly characteristic of early Islamic Arab armies¹⁹, and would remain typical of tribal Arab forces throughout the Middle Ages. Such a baldric was called a *ḥamīlat* and in the earliest days seems to have held the *rā's* or locket of the scabbard in a *raṣā'i* or knot which was later replaced by a *ṭawq* or ring²⁰. Art from ancient Sudanese Meroe and Nubia²¹ shows the same system which was probably common to most of the peoples beyond the south-eastern and southern frontiers of the Romano-Byzantine world. It was also a remarkably long-lived military tradition, surviving in Sudanese Africa until the early 20th century.

A preference for baldrics over sword-belts seems to have remained characteristic of medieval North Africa. The Marīnid armies of 14th century Morocco, including the ruler's elite guards, still carried their swords in what was by then known as the 'bedouin fashion'²². Within the Iberian peninsula pictorial sources show the baldric being used on both sides of the religious frontier during the earlier medieval centuries. By the 13th century, however, Christian knights used sword-belts while squires used baldrics, clearly showing that the latter was regarded as a less prestigious way of carrying a sword²³.

Nevertheless some Arab-Andalusian fashions survived this change, including the use of sword-belts made of highly decorated fabric rather than leather, which was almost universally used elsewhere in Western Europe. Amongst surviving examples of such a fabric sword-belts is that of the sword of Sancho IV of Castile now in the Capilla Mayor of Toledo Cathedral. Here the scabbard is attached to the belt by leather lockets while the belt itself is of light green galloon (a narrow close-woven braid) with a red silk border. It was possibly made in the mid-13th century but certainly no earlier. A second example is the belt of the Sword of the Infante Fernando de la Cerda (figure 144), from his tomb in the Monastery of Las Huelgas, which probably dates from the mid-late 13th century and is decorated with

Figures **5**) Iron buckle from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.4, London). **6**) Fragment of iron buckle from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.6, London). **7a-e**). Bronze strap-end with remnants of fabric belt from Martin's Cave, Gibraltar (British Museum, inv. no. 67-12-23.5, London). **8**) Sword from grave at al-Sumā, Numidian 2-1 cent BC. **9**) Bronze cylinder, probably part of a sword-hilt, from Qaryat al-Faw, Arab 1-5 cent AD (Department of Archaeology, King Sa'ud University, Riyadh). **10**) Hilt of cavalry sword from Thorsbjerg, Roman 2 cent AD (National Museum, Stockholm). **11-13**) Sword-blades from graves at Castiltierra (Segovia), Visigothic 5-6 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid). **14**) Sword from a princely grave at Pouan, Frankish 5 cent AD (Musée Municipal, Troyes).

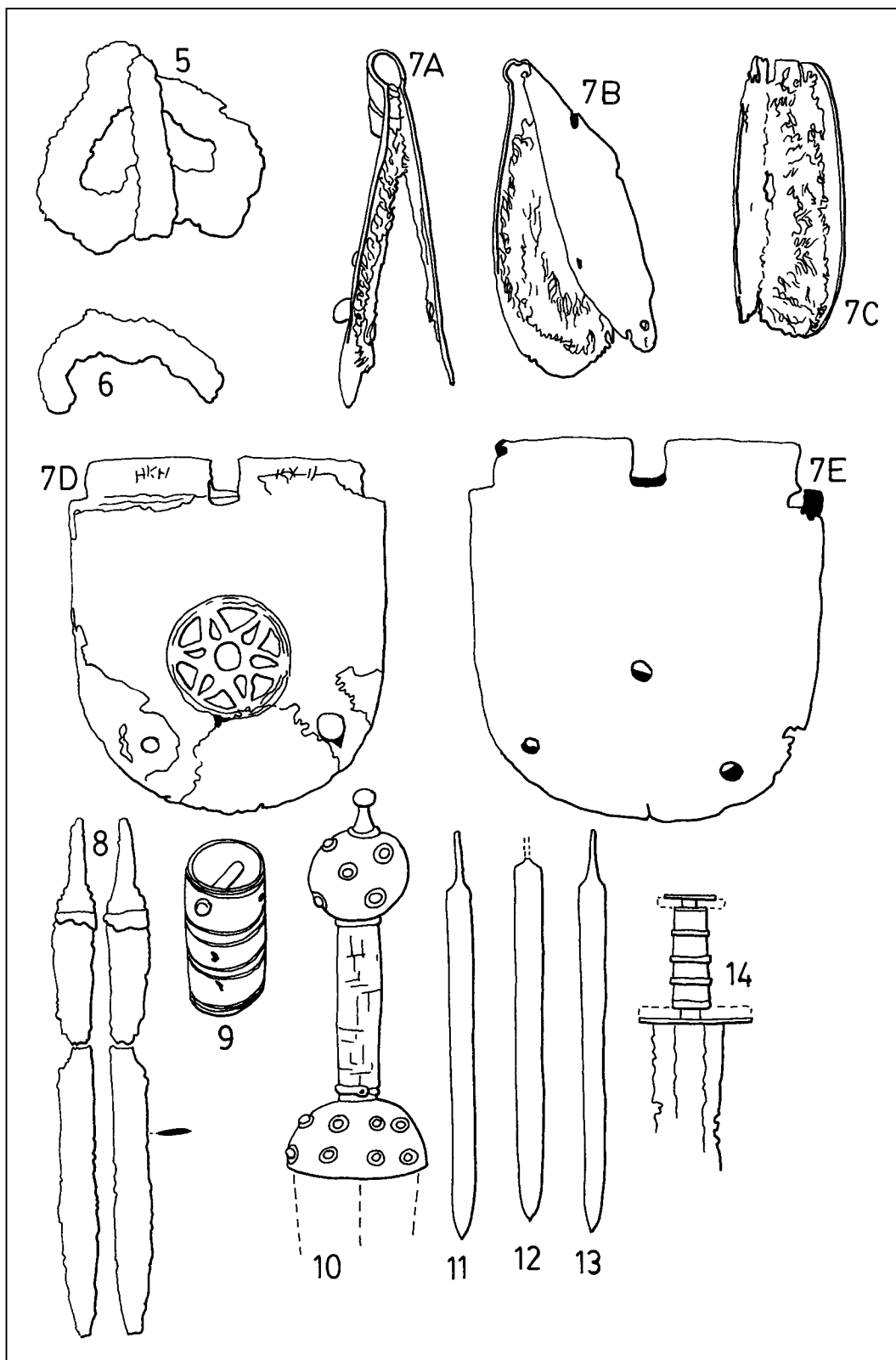
¹⁹ Canard, M., *L'Expansion Arabo-Islamique et ses répercussions*, London 1974, p. 47; S. al-Sarraf, «Close Combat Weapons of the Early 'Abbāsīd Period: Maces, Axes and Swords», *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Schwarzlose, F.W., *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*, Leipzig 1886, pp. 206-8.

²¹ Shinnie, P.L., *Meroe, a civilization of the Sudan*, London 1967, p. 163.

²² Ibn Faḍl Allah al-ʿUmārī, trans. Gaudefroy-Denomyne, *Masālik al-Absār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, Paris 1927, pp. 130-1 & 135.

²³ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., *Arms and Armour in Spain...., vol. II, Op. Cit.*, pp. 31-34.



beaded arabesques and enamelled heraldic medallions. In this case the fabric belt is over two metres long, made of gold galloon backed with green galloon. It is probably of Mudejar manufacture, in other words was made by an Islamic community under Christian rule²⁴. Pictorial evidence confirms that the soldiers of 14th-15th century Naşrid Granada normally hung their swords from baldrics rather than belts, but unfortunately Ibn Hudhayl's terminology is less precise, though he does state that the locket of the scabbard, to which a baldric would be attached, could be of silver, iron or 'other metals'²⁵.

HILT DECORATION

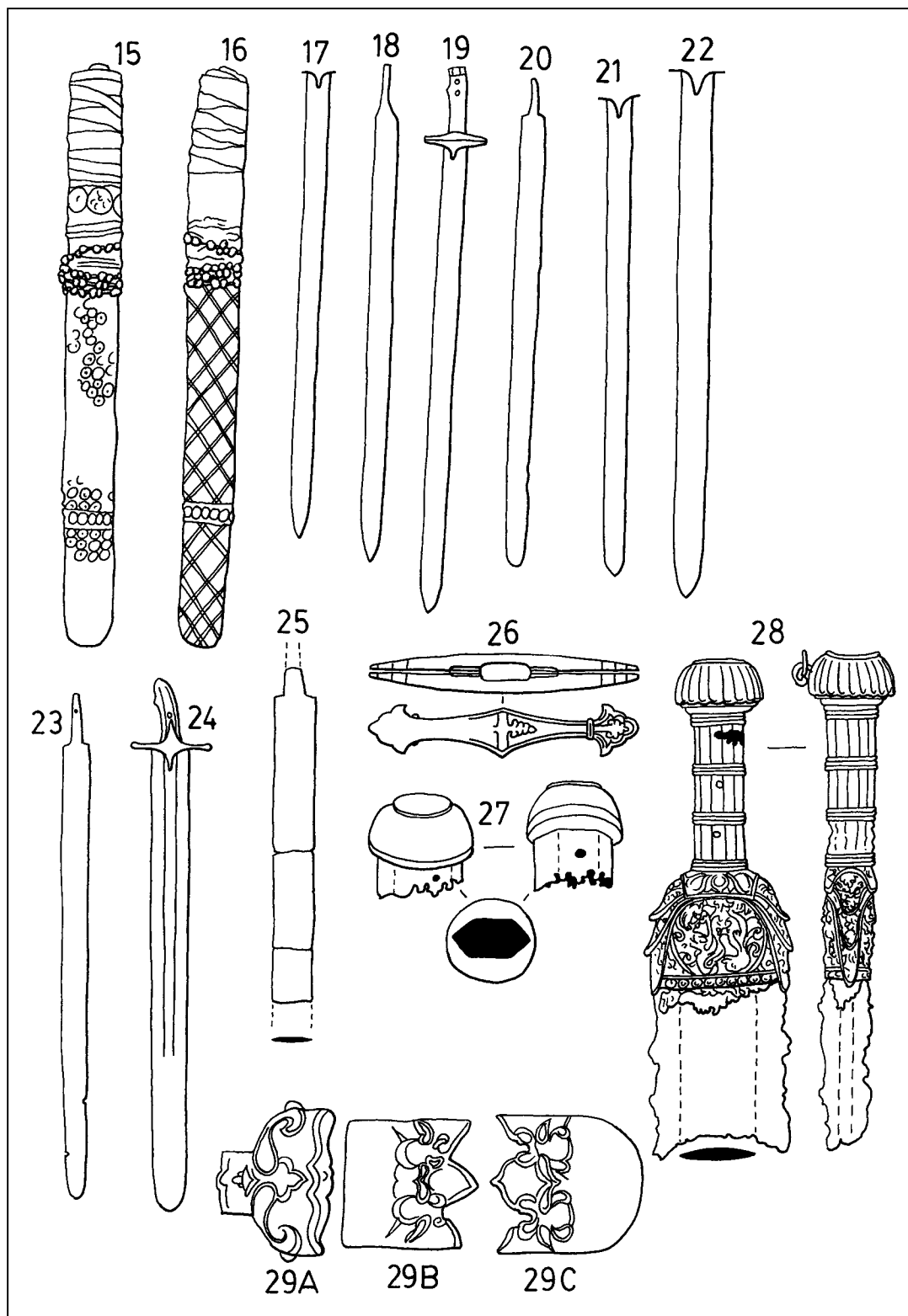
Whereas changes in the design of sword-blades mainly resulted from changes in armour, changes in the design and above all the decoration of sword-hilts were largely a result of fashion²⁶. The decoration of hilts in Islamic culture, as in virtually all civilizations, had a long pedigree. Nevertheless such details rarely appear in the artistic record since the hilt was itself relatively small (figures 64, 74, 95-111 & 127). The Prophet Muḥammad is said to have had a sword with a silvered *qabī'a* or pommel, and for this reason swords decorated in this manner had high prestige in the Muslim world. As Dr. al-Sarraf has recently pointed out, they had the highest 'moral value' and would be given by the Caliph to a man entrusted with an important military command, or with the governorship of a province, and who would thus

Figures **15-16** Short swords & scabbards from graves at Ballana, length c.450 mm, X-Group, Blemmye or Noba/Nubian 4-5 cents AD (Archaeological Museum, Cairo). **17** Sword attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, Arabia possibly 7 cent AD (Reliquary, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **18** Sword attributed to the Caliph Mu'āwiyah, Syria 7 cent AD or later (Armoury, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **19** Sword attributed to the Caliph Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Syria 7 cent AD or later (Armoury, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **20** Sword attributed to the Companion Sa'ad Ibn 'Abādah, Arabia or Syria 7 cent AD or later (Armoury, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **21-22** Swords attributed to Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd (simplified), Syria 7 cent AD or later (Reliquary, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **23** Sword attributed to the Caliph Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Syria 8 cent AD or later (Armoury, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **24** Sword attributed to the Companion Zayn al-'Ābidīn, Syria 8 cent AD or later (Reliquary, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, Istanbul). **25** Fragments of sword-blade from Nīshāpūr, width 60 mm., Persian 9-10 cents AD (National Museum, Tehran). **26** Bronze quillons of sabre from Nīshāpūr, Turco-Persian 9-10 cents AD (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 40.170.168, New York). **27** Silver pommel with inscribed dedication to 'The Prince Abi'l Ghanā'im Maṣṣūr Billah' (simplified), Būyid Persian 10 cent AD (exhibited at Spinks Gallery, London, April 1977; now in the Rifaat Sheikh al-Ard Coll., Geneva). **28** Bronze sword-hilt from Serçe Liman shipwreck, with marine encrustation showing size of iron blade now rusted away, probably made in Armenia-Azerbaijan area late 10-early 11 cent AD (Castle Museum, inv. GW 56, Bodrum). **29a-c** Bronze matrices to make moulds for casting quillons, chape and locket of sword-hilt and scabbard, Islamic perhaps Persian 12-14 cent AD (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1980.210.1-3, New York).

²⁴ Blair, C., «Medieval Swords and Spurs in Toledo Cathedral», *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society*, III, 1959, 42-46; Collin, B., *The Riddle of a 13th century Sword-Belt*, *Heraldry Society Monograph*, East Knoyle 1955, passim.

²⁵ 'Alī Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Hudhayl al-Andalusī, trans. L. Mercier, *Op. Cit.*, p. 233.

²⁶ Oakeshott, R.E., «Some Medieval Sword-Pommels: An Essay in Analysis», *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, XIV 1951, pp. 47-62.



be representing the Caliph himself. In ʿAbbāsīd ceremonial and symbolism gilded weaponry was the mark of the senior servant whereas simple silvered weaponry distinguished the ruler. Furthermore the silver decoration on such investiture swords was not applied as an overall surface layer, but was added to the hilt, plus scabbard and sword-belt or baldric, is a system known as *raṣīʿa*. This meant ‘external’ or ‘applied to the surface’ and resulted in the creation of patterns formed of small geometric shapes²⁷. The similarity with the decoration on the first sword from Gibraltar is astonishing (figures 2A & 2E). By the ʿAbbāsīd period swords with a certain degree of decoration were reserved for people of a certain rank, as shown when the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim rebuked a man for wearing a sword and belt above his station²⁸. Relatively few early Islamic sword-hilts have been found (figures 26-31), but those that do exist confirm that various types of decoration were employed. These included cast bronze hilts incorporating decorative motifs from various Islamic and non-Islamic sources²⁹. Silver, or perhaps in most cases a white metal or alloy resembling silver, played a significant role in the ceremonial of the 10th to 12th century Fāṭimid Caliphate of Egypt³⁰ while ‘*Qal-jūri swords with silver hilts*’ were included in the weapons sent by Baybars, the Mamlūk Sultan of Egypt, to Khan Berke of the Golden Horde in 1262 AD.³¹

Specific information from the Maghrib and al-Andalus states that there was enamelled as well as silvered and gilded decoration on the swords sent as diplomatic gifts to the Mamlūk Sultan of Egypt by Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf of Morocco in 1303-6 AD, along with what sound

Figures **30**) Bronze matrix to make mould for casting pommel and quillons of sword, Saljūq Turkish or Persian 12-13 cent AD (Rifaat Shaikh al Ard Collection, Geneva). **31**) Silver-gilt and niello sword quillons, Saljūq Turkish 12-13 cent AD (Rifaat Sheikh al-Ard Coll., Geneva). **32**) Ivory grip of sword-hilt, Islamic Andalusian probably 13-14 cent AD (ex-G. Le Bon; whereabouts unknown). **33**) Sword-hilt, Mamlūk or Maghribi 12-14 cent AD (Askeri Müzesi, inv. 2382, Istanbul). **34a-b**) Sword-blade called ‘La Tizona’, attributed to El Cid, Spanish 12 cent AD, and marks of the blade according to Gaspar de Bricio in 1503 AD (Real Armeria, inv. G.180, Madrid). **35a-c**) Broken sword with iron hilt and bronze scabbard mounts from Bayt Maʿāl tombs above Sayq, Jabal Akhdar, Omani 17-18 cent AD (via Capt. E. Roe) **36**) Hilt of sword, southern Tuareg type 19 cent AD (after G. Reed, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. 1154-1903, London). **37**) Hilt of sword, northern Tuareg type 19-early 20 cent AD (after G. Reed, Museum of Man-kind, inv. 1939, AF.726, London). **38**) Iron quillons of sword from al-Rabadhah way-station on Darb Zubaydah pilgrim road, Islamic 8-9 cent AD (Dept. of Archaeology, King Saʿud University, Riyadh). **39**) Sword from Islamic shipwreck off Agay, probably Maghribi 11-12 cent AD (Museum of Underwater Archaeology, St. Raphael). **40**) Fragment of sword and hilt from unknown location in province of Seville, Andalusian or Spanish probably 10-11 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico, Seville).

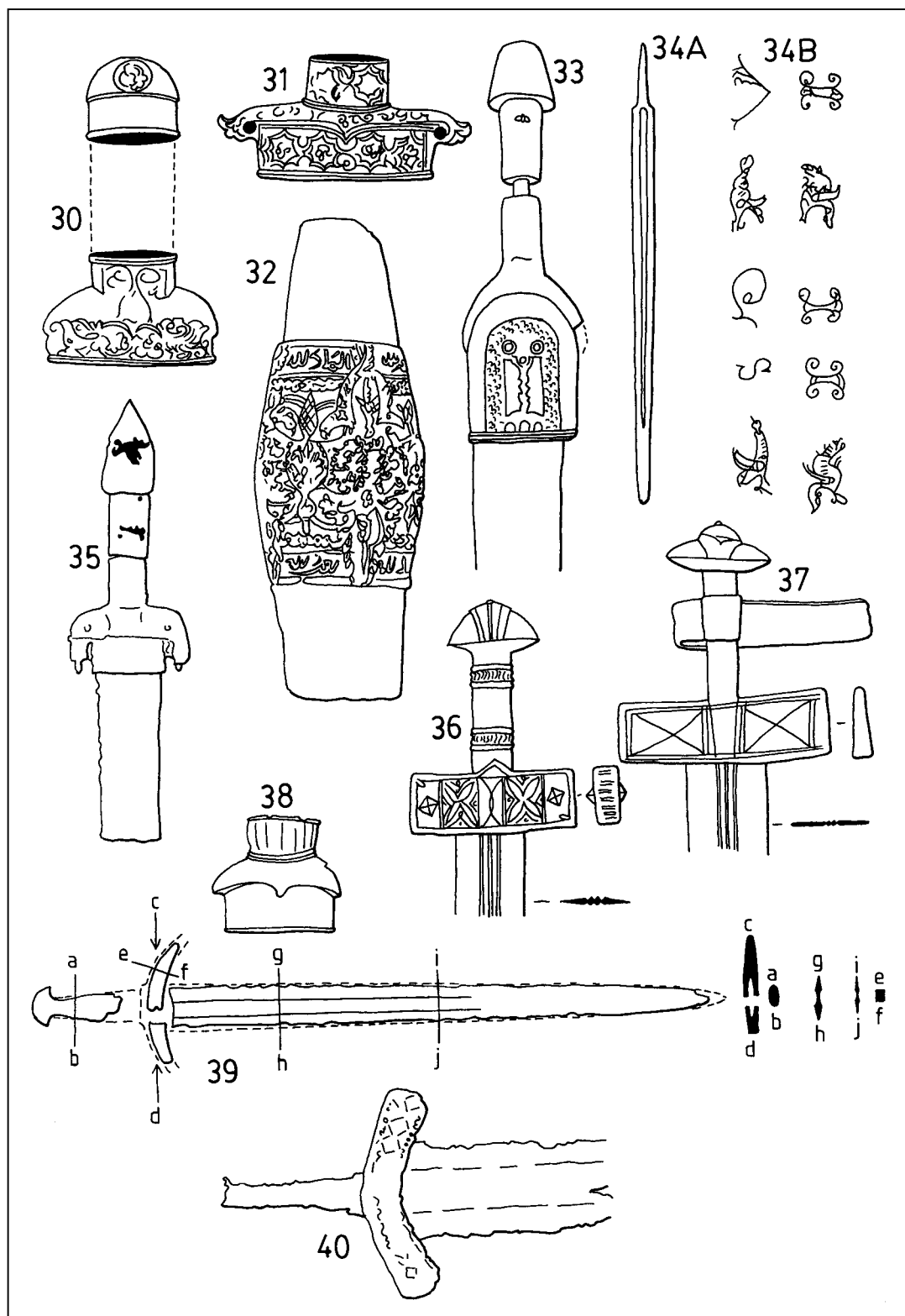
²⁷ Zaki, A.R., «On Islamic Swords», in *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honour of Prof. K.A.C. Creswell*, Cairo 1965, passim; Sarraf, S. al-, «Close Combat Weapons of the Early ʿAbbāsīd Period: Maces, Axes and Swords», *Loc. Cit.*

²⁸ Ṭabarī, al-, *Tarīkh al-Rusūl*, trans. E. Marin, New Haven 1951, p. 19, in D.G. Alexander & H. Ricketts, «Armes et armures», in S.-C. Welch, edit., *Trésors de l'Islam (Collections Rifaat Shaikh al Ard)*, Geneva 1985, p. 296.

²⁹ Schwarzer, J.K., «Arms from an Eleventh Century Shipwreck», *Graeco-Arabica*, IV, 1991, pp. 331-2; Schwarzer J.K. & E.C. Deal, «A Sword Hilt from the Serçe Liman shipwreck», *M.A.S.C.A. Journal*, IV/2, 1986, p. 58. The early Islamic sword and dagger hilts in the remarkable collection of Sheikh Rifaat al-'Ard have yet to be published, but they also incorporate a variety of decorative motifs and methods of decoration.

³⁰ Sanders, P., *The Court Ceremonial of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt*, PhD thesis, Princeton Univ. 1984, p. 185.

³¹ ʿAbd al- Zāhir in S.F. Sadeque, *Baybars of Egypt*, Oxford 1956, p. 189-90.



like belts or baldrics decoratively woven with gold thread³². There are considerably more references to decorated weapons within the Iberian peninsula, plus several surviving examples. Even before the Spanish Reconquista really got under way the army of the little Christian kingdom of Asturias is said to have used gilded arms and armour³³. This was, of course, at a time when Asturian military equipment was strongly influenced by Muslim Andalusia. A remarkably detailed account of the army of the Cordoban Caliph Al-Ḥakam II (961-976) of Cordoba mentions sword, or rather their hilts, decorated with gold, silver, niello and even encrusted with 'jewels'³⁴. Some of these weapons also had gilded scabbards.

Here it is worth mentioning that some references to silver decoration, particularly on the weapons of men who were not members of the ruling elite, might well have included hilts decorated with what was known as *al-nuḥās al-abyad* or 'white copper'. This alloy of copper, arsenic and zinc was known at least as early as the 11th century and was used for decorative inlay by the metalworkers of western Islam³⁵. Tin was already being used to protect iron and copper from oxidization in Carolingian Europe, and this was followed from the mid-12th century onwards by a general increase in use of tin resulting from the discovery of large new sources in Germany³⁶. It would, of course, be extremely interesting to have the white metal inlay on the hilt of one of the swords from Martin's Cave chemically identified.

An apparent abundance of decorated weapons remained characteristic of Muslim Andalusian armies in fact and fiction. For example the anonymous 12th century epic French poem, *Le Siège de Barbastre*, is widely considered to reflect a good knowledge of the Iberian peninsula. It includes detailed descriptions of the enamelled and silvered weapons and horse-harness used by the Islamic foe³⁷. An account of Granadan light cavalry in the *Crónica de Alfonso XI* describes them abandoning their gilded and silvered equipment in flight; «*Et otrosí en este desbarato fueron tornadas muchas espadas guarnidas de oro et de plata*»³⁸. The survival of decorated weapons from both sides of the frontier (figures 34, 41-43, 45 & 47-51) reflected the high status old swords had in medieval Spanish society and literature, as well as

Figures **41a-e**) Hilt of sword from Prado del Rey (Cadiz), Andalusian probably 14-15 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico, Seville). **42a-b**) Sword probably from Tarragona area, Andalusian or Spanish probably 13-14 cent AD (Armour Museum of Alava, inv. 13.208, Vitoria). **43**) Sword from unknown location near Granada, Andalusian 14-15 cent AD (ex-Collection of M. Felix Joubert, Paris; present whereabouts unknown). **44**) Sword-hilt, Italian 950-1000 AD (Museum of Art, inv. 1977.167.529, Philadelphia). **45**) Sword, Spanish 12 cent AD (ex-Museo Armeria Estruch; present whereabouts unknown). **46**) Sword, French 1150-1200 AD (Wallace Collection, inv. A458, London). **47**) Sword attributed to St. Ferdinand, probably Andalusian blade and Spanish hilt 13 cent AD (Real Armeria, inv. G22, Madrid). **48**) Sword of King Sancho IV of Castile (simplified), Spanish late 13 cent AD (Capilla Major, Cathedral, Toledo).

³² Canard, M., «Les Relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIV^e siècle», *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger*, V, 1939-41, pp. 55-8.

³³ Sánchez-Albornoz, C., «El Ejército y la Guerra en el Reino Asturleonés, 718-1037», in *Ordinamenti Militari in Occidente nell'alto Medioevo. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo*, XV. vol. I, Spoleto 1968, pp. 334-35.

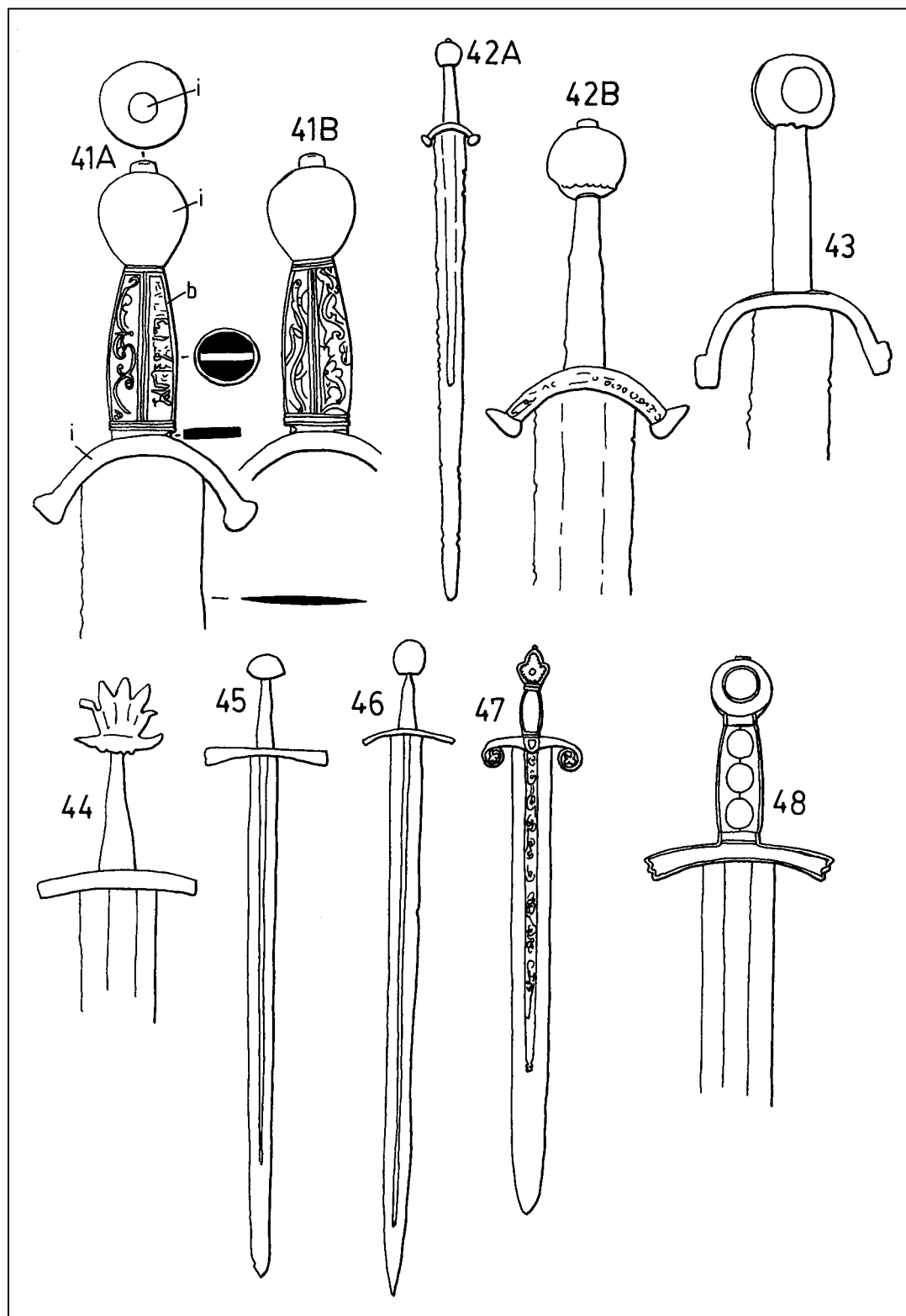
³⁴ García Gómez, E., «Armas, Banderas, Tiendas de Campaña, Monturas y Correos en los Anales de Al-Ḥakam II por 'Isa' Rāzi», *Andalus*, XXXII, 1967, p. 163-4.

³⁵ Golvin, L., «Note sur l'industrie du cuivre en Occident Musulman au Moyen Age» *Cahiers de Linguistique, d'Orientalisme et de Slavistique*, I-II, 1969, pp. 118-9.

³⁶ Van Cauwelaert, M., *Etains*, Brussels 1981, p. 3.

³⁷ Anon, *Le Siège de Barbastre*, edit. J-L. Perrier, Paris 1926, passim.

³⁸ *Crónica de Alfonso XI*, chap. 253, p. 329, in *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, edit. Rivadeneyra, in J. Ferrandis Torres, «Espadas Granadinas de la Jineta», *Archivo Español de Arte*, XVI, 1943, p. 147.



the fact that Islamic weapons were preserved as victory trophies³⁹. One of the most interesting such surviving weapons is that known as the Sword of Santa Casilda, now preserved in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid (figure 50). It is a late 13th century sword and although the inscription on its pommel is strictly Christian, the text on its quillons is a Latin translation of a Islamic Koranic quotation⁴⁰. Examples of such remarkable cultural cross-fertilization were probably common in medieval Iberia.

SOME COMPARISONS WITH THE GIBRALTAR FINDS

It has been argued that there was a strong pre-Islamic Visigothic influence upon the organization and military equipment of Muslim Andalusian armies, at least until the 11th century when a powerful wave of African influence swept across Andalusia following the Mu-rābiṭ conquest⁴¹. However, this in itself tells us little about the origins of Andalusian or indeed Maghribi swords since so little is known about the later Visigothic period (figures 11-13). Perhaps as a result opinions and comments concerning the two weapons from Granada have tended to be based only on one or two aspects of the swords.

Dr. Ada Bruhn De Hoffmeyer, for example, considered that they were both probably of North African origin, largely because one seemed to use tin in its decoration. This, in Dr. Hoffmeyer's opinion, was not characteristic of Andalusian metalwork⁴² though Ewart Oakshott points out that tinning as well as gilding, silvering and painting were used to decorate and rust-proof the pommels of some medieval western European swords⁴³. Dr. V. Gonzalez saw the sword with curved quillons as perhaps an early version of the later and more famous 'jinete sword' as shown in 14th-15th century Christian Iberian and Andalusian art; several examples of which survive from the 15th century. Dr. Gonzalez correctly believed both swords to be of Islamic origin, but thought that the hilt structure common to both pointed to Morocco rather than to al-Andalus. Furthermore the sword with straight quillons was sug-

Figures **49)** Sword-hilt, Spanish 13 cent AD (Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid). **50)** Hilt of sword called Sword of Santa Casilda, Spanish late 13 cent AD (Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, inv. no. 56, Madrid). **51)** Broken sword, Spanish 13 cent AD (ex-Museo Armeria Estruch; present whereabouts unknown). **52)** 'Sword of Archangel Michael' on wall paintings from Faras Cathedral, Nubian late 8 cent AD (National Museum, Warsaw). **53)** Relief carving of cavalryman on ivory chess-piece, Islamic Sind or eastern Iran 9 cent AD (Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 311, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). **54)** Warrior on lustreware bowl, Iraq 9-10 cent AD (Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 57.684, Boston). **55)** Warrior on ceramic bowl from Nīshāpūr, Khurāsān 9-10 cent AD (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. C.294-1987, London). **56)** Warrior on fragment of ceramic bowl from Nīshāpūr, Khurāsān 9-10 cent AD (National Museum, Tehran). **57)** Warrior on ceramic bowl from Nīshāpūr, Khurāsān 9-10 cent AD (National Museum, Tehran). **58)** Warrior on fragment of ceramic bowl from Nīshāpūr, Khurāsān 10 cent AD (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 66.176, New York). **59)** One of a pair of mirror-image gold necklace pendants, Būyid Persian 10 cent AD (Art Museum, inv. 1953.70, Cincinnati). **60)** Unnamed warrior Saint on a Synaxary from Tuṭūn, Fayūm, Coptic Egyptian 10 cent AD (Pierpont Morgan Library, inv. M613, f.1v, New York).

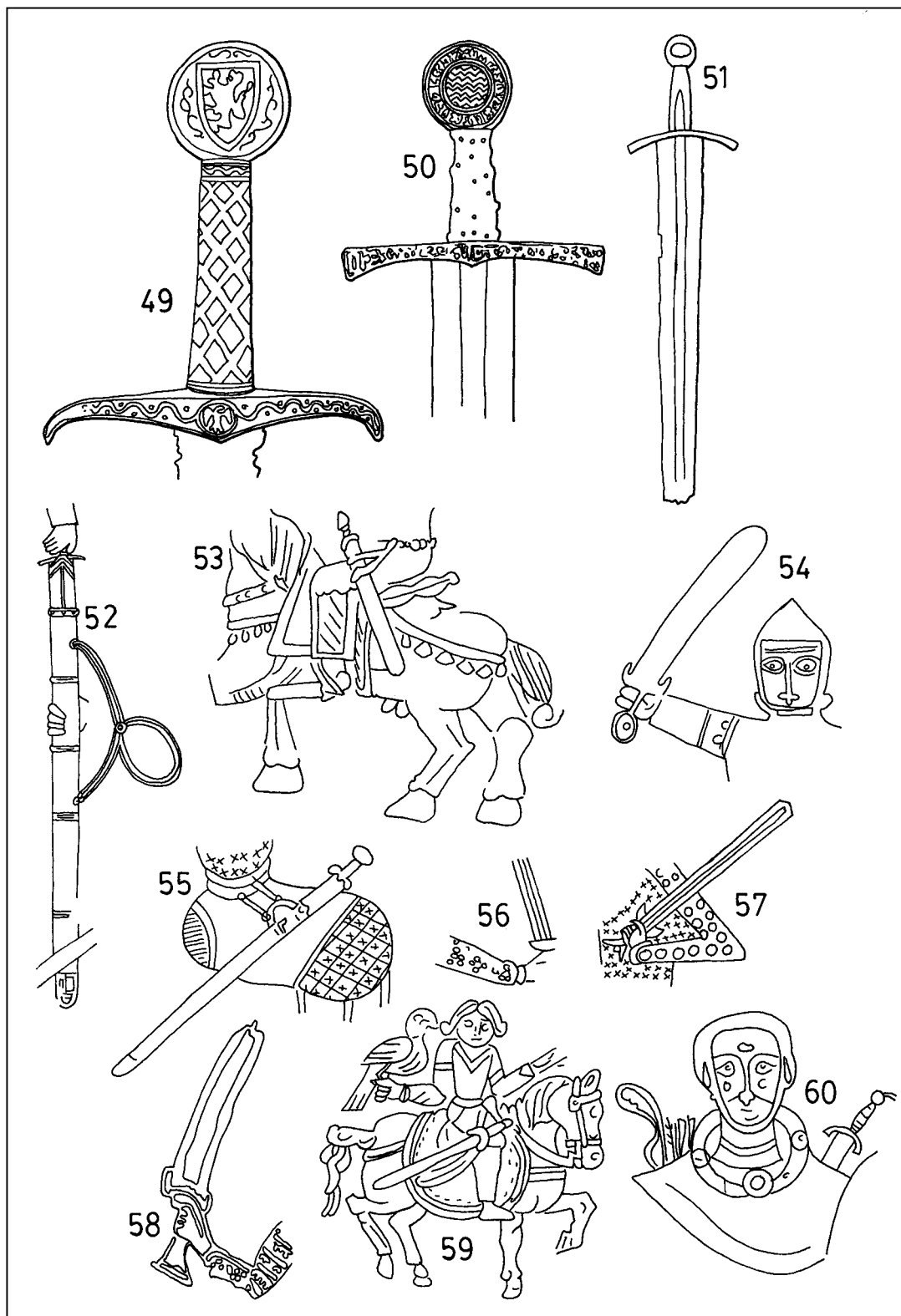
³⁹ Lovillo, José Guerrero, *Las Cántigas: Studio arqueológico de sus miniaturas*, Madrid, 1949, pp. 138-140.

⁴⁰ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., *Arms and Armour in Spain....*, vol. II, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 63-65.

⁴¹ Sánchez-Albornoz, C., «El Ejército y la Guerra en el Reino Asturleonés....», *Op. Cit.*, pp. 301-4.

⁴² De Hoffmeyer, A.B., (in correspondence with the author 21-11-88).

⁴³ Oakshott, R.E., «Some Medieval Sword-Pommels....», *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.



gested as a Christian adaptation of an early version of the ‘*jinete* sword’; parallels being drawn with the 13th century Sword of King Sancho IV in Toledo Cathedral⁴⁴. (figure 48) In fact the closest parallel appears to be between the blades of the Gibraltar swords and the weapon known as ‘The Sword of Roland’ in the Real Armeria (figure 34). This latter weapon is generally regarded as a 13th century Spanish war-sword, rather than one to be worn while in civilian dress. According to Baron de la Vega de Hoz its blade is 88 cms long with a maximum width of 73 mm.⁴⁵ This would give it very similar dimensions to the Gibraltar swords in their original condition. Most other scholars who have seen the Gibraltar swords or pictures of them agree on an Islamic, and usually a specifically Western Islamic, provenance while suggesting a rather later date than I am offering. For example, Ihsan Hindi suggested that their overall form and decoration pointed to Cordoba some time in the 13th century⁴⁶. Maya Schatzmiller preferred North Africa and a date as late as the 14th or even 15th century⁴⁷ while Ewart Oakeshott would say no more than they they were clearly Islamic⁴⁸.

Other less obvious parallels can be found in terms of the overall form of the Gibraltar weapons, and in the construction of their hilts. For example there is an extremely interesting but little-known sword in the Museo Arqueológico in Seville (figure 41). Its provenance is unknown but the decoration of its hilt, though worn, is clearly based upon Arabic words as well as Islamic decoration. Although these are sufficiently corrupted to indicate a date after the Christian conquest, the iron grip and almost spherical pommel are similar in concept to the Gibraltar swords while the curved quillons of the Seville weapon have at least a superficial similarity with one of the Gibraltar weapons⁴⁹. Another comparable weapon is to be found in the Alava Museum in Vitoria (figure 42).

Figures **61)** Warrior of ceramic fragment from Sabra, Tunisia 10-11 cent AD (Benaki Museum, inv. 11761, Athens). **62)** Guardsman on ivory casket dedicated to Ziyād Ibn Aflah, Andalusian 969/70 AD (Victoria & Albert Museum, London). **63)** Sword in illustration of ‘The Lamb overcomes the Beast’ in *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse* from Tavera, Mozarab-Spanish 975 AD (Cathedral Museum, Gerona). **64a-b)** Elephant rider and cavalryman on ivory casket dedicated to ‘Abd al-Malik al-Muzaffar, Andalusian 1005 AD (Cathedral Treasury, Pamplona). **65)** Illustration of an angel in *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Mozarab-Spanish 1091-1109 AD (British Library, Ms. Add. 11695, f.198, London). **66)** Carving of warrior Saint, Georgian mid-11 cent AD (*in situ* church, Nicorzminda, Georgia). **67)** ‘Sword of Archangel Michael’, wall-painting, Georgian 1096 AD (*in situ* church, Iprari, Georgia). **68)** Sword in illustration of ‘Martyrdom of St. Iullitz’, wall-painting, Georgian 111 AD (*in situ* Church of Sts. Kircha & Iullitz, Georgia). **69)** Sword of infantry soldier on lustre-ware plate, Persian or Egyptian 12 cent AD (Kier Collection, inv. 151, London). **70)** Coin of Ortuqid rulers of Amida (now Diyarbakir), late 12-early 13 cent AD (Cabinet des Medailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). **71)** Painting of guardsman in Siculo-Fātimid style, Norman Sicily c.1140 AD (*in situ*, ceiling of Capella Palatina, Palermo). **72)** Huntsman on a painted ivory box, Norman Sicily 12 cent AD (Capella Palatina Treasury, Palermo).

⁴⁴ Gonzalez, V., *Origine, developpement et diffusion de l'émaillerie sur métal en Occident musulman*, Doctoral Nouveau Régime, Sciences Humaines, Section Monde Arabe, Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille I, April 1989.

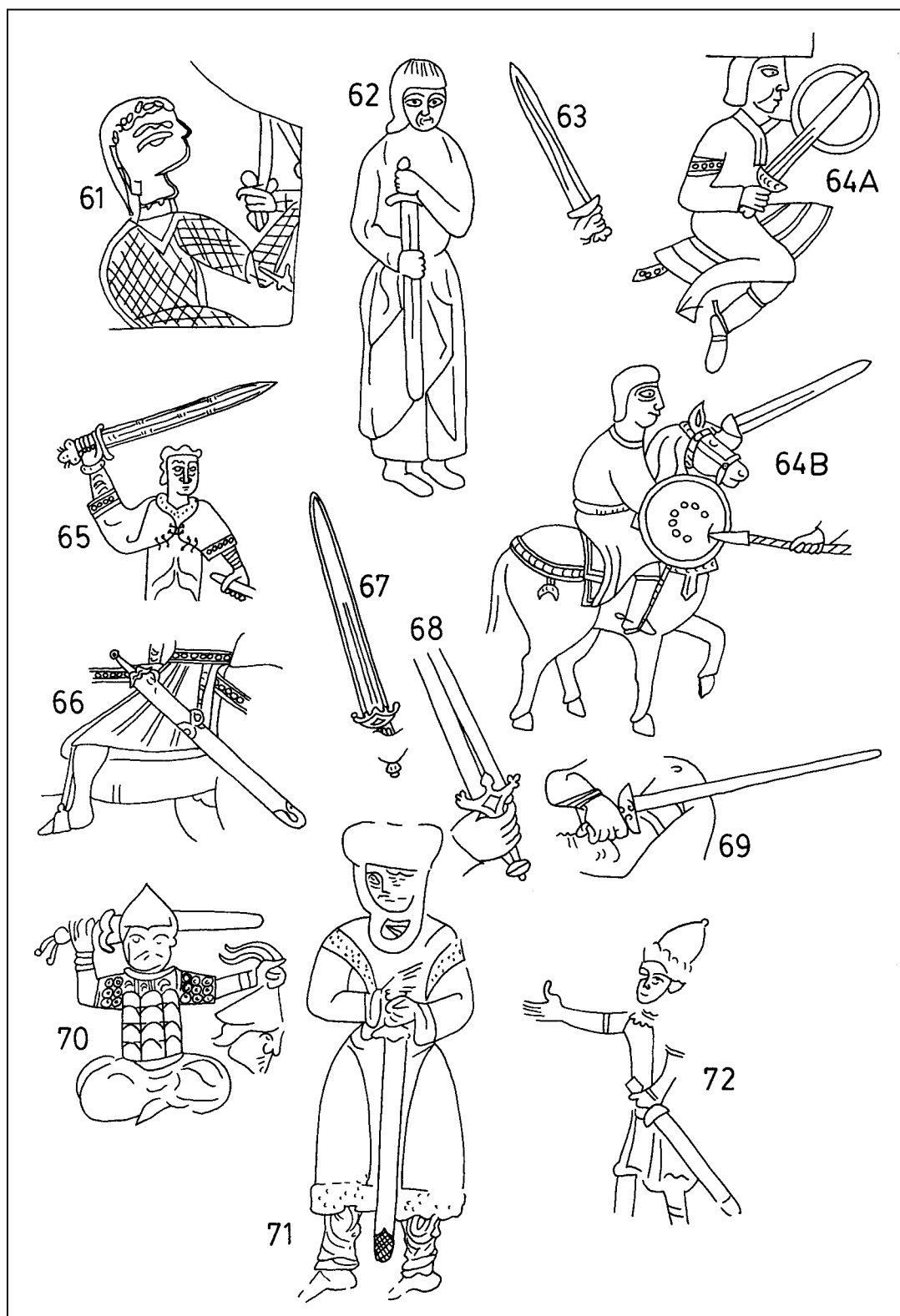
⁴⁵ De la Vega de Hoz, el Baron, «La Espada de Roldán», *Arte Español*, V, 1921, pp. 303-4.

⁴⁶ Hindi, Ihsan, (in correspondence with the author 17-12-88).

⁴⁷ Schatzmiller, Maya, (in correspondence with the author 16-1-89).

⁴⁸ Oakeshott, R.E., (in correspondence with the author 9-1-89).

⁴⁹ Fernández Gómez, Fernando, of the Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla (in correspondence with the author, December 1989).



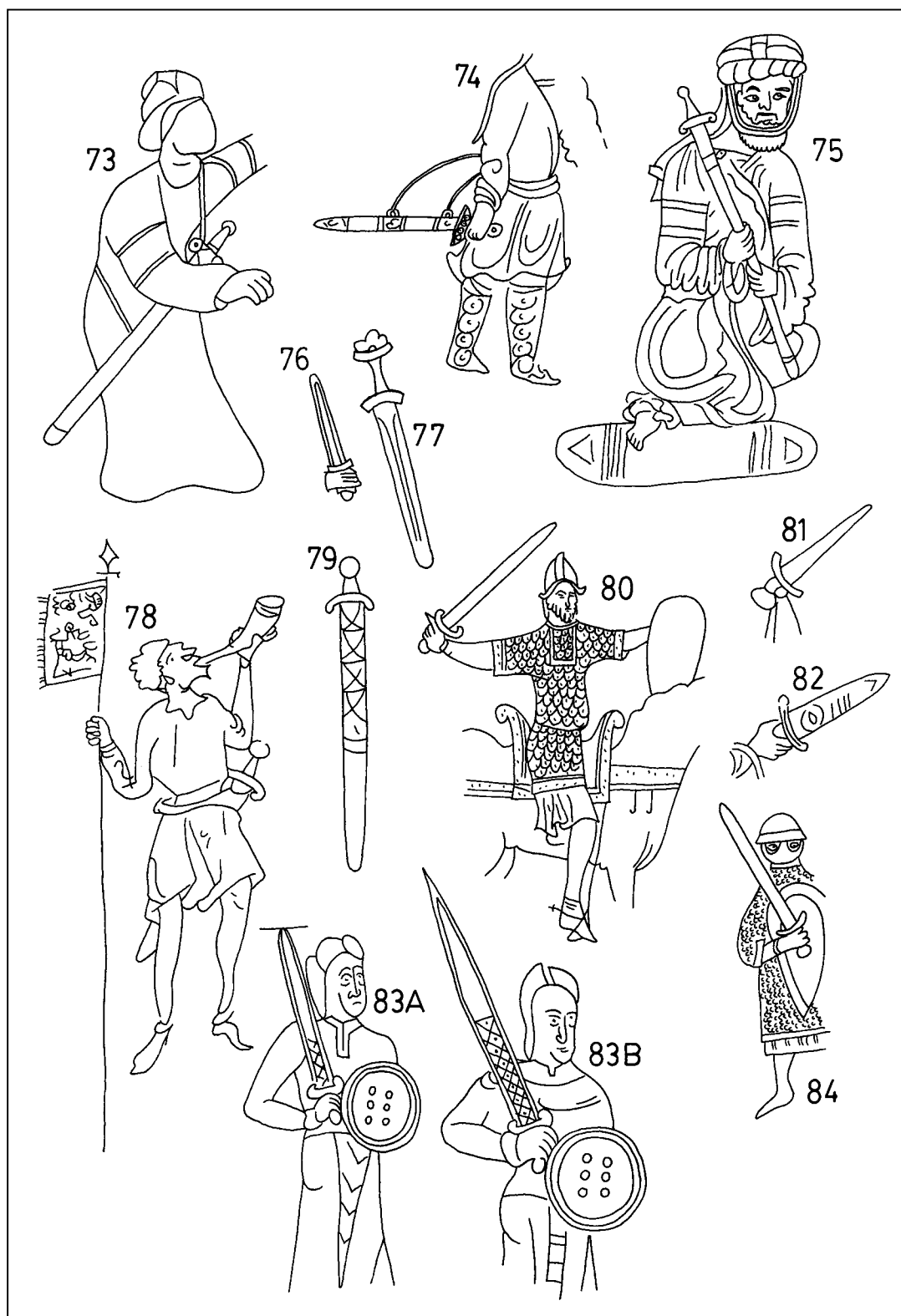
Another interesting sword was found with the bones of its presumed owner and the remains of a sheath in the wreck of a small boat alongside the wreck of a larger vessel off the French Mediterranean coast near Agay (figure 39). The main vessel has been identified as a 10th century ship, probably of North African origin. Though incomplete, the hilt of the Agay sword has several features in common with those from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar. Most obvious are the curved quillons, but more significant is the way in which the end of the tang broadens into the shape of the now lost pommel. Although the pommel of the Agay sword was not spherical, the way in which its two halves were presumably sandwiched around this broadened tang is identical to the Gibraltar swords and to some other medieval Arab rather than Turco-Persian swords. It is also unlike the system of construction seen in medieval Western European swords⁵⁰. Furthermore it appears in stylized but still recognizable drawings in later copies of al-Kindī's text on swords (figure 129). Interestingly, the Museum of Underwater Archaeology at St. Raphael has now proposed a slightly later 11th or 12th century date for this weapon. Similarities can also be seen between the Gibraltar sword with curved quillons and the amulet in the form of a miniature sword found in the province of Seville. (figure 237)

SPHERICAL POMMELS

The discovery of a small quotation in an Arabic source from al-Andalus cannot be said to prove the identity of the first and most decorated sword from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar, but it certainly fits that particular weapon. This single sentence stated that:

Figures **73**) Illustration of a 'Guard of the governor of Marw' in *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Iraq c.1230 AD (Oriental Institute Library, Ms. S.23, f.256, Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg). **74**) Illustration of a soldier in *Materia Medica*, Iraq 1224 AD (Freer Gallery of Art, inv. 575121, Washington). **75**) Illustration of a 'Bedouin *shaykh*' in *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Iraq mid-13 cent AD (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Ar. 6094, Paris). **76**) Illustration of 'Labyrinth' in the *Encyclopedia of Maurus Hrabanus*, southern Italy 1023 AD (Benedictine Library, Ms. 132, p. 348, Abbey of Monte Cassino). **77**) Illustration of 'On Weapons (De Repositorii)' in the *Encyclopedia of Maurus Hrabanus*, southern Italy 1023 AD (Benedictine Library, Ms. 132, p. 363, Abbey of Monte Cassino). **78**) Trumpeter of attacking force in illustration of 'Siege of Jerusalem', in *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Mozarab-Spanish c.1100 AD (Biblioteca Nazionale, Turin). **79**) Illustration to a sword in the *Liber Feudorum Ceritaniae* (after A.B. De Hoffmeyer), Spanish 11-12 cent AD (Chancery of Archivo del Coruña de Aragón, Barcelona). **80**) Illustration of 'King Antiochus in the attack on Bathzacharias (I. Mac.VI.v.33ff)' in the *Roda Bible*, Catalan 11 cent AD (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat. 6, f.145, Paris). **81**) Illustration of 'St. Michael and the angels' in the *Gospel of Jumièges*, Norman-French 11 cent AD (British Library, Ms. Add. 17739, f.17, London). **82**) Sword on carving of 'St. Martin', carved capital, south-western France c.1100 AD (*in situ* Cloisters, Abbey of St. Pierre, Moissac). **83a-b**) Illustration of the 'Guards of King Alfonso III of Asturia' in *Liber Testamentorum Regium*, Spanish 1126-1129 AD (Cathedral Library, Oviedo). **84**) Illustration of a ruler's guard in *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Spanish early 12 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico, Madrid).

⁵⁰ Visquis, A.G., «Présence Sarrazine en rade d'Agay au Xme Siècle», in *Rencontre d'Archéologie Sous-Marine de Fréjus. Saint-Raphael*, St. Raphael 1975, no page numbers.



«Some of the Andalusian swords had the tops of their hilts (*ṣadr al-ri'ās*) inscribed in the manner of the scales of a pine-cone, except that this (the real pine-cone) is in relief and that (the decorated sword pommel) is inscribed»⁵¹.

The spherical pommels on the Gibraltar swords are associated with relatively short grips and are examples of those short-hilts which were designed to fit snugly into the base of the palm of the hand rather than to extend beyond the hand⁵². Whereas the length of the grip reflected variations in fencing technique, differences in the design of the pommel tended to be a matter of fashion rather than function⁵³. Though not unknown in medieval Christian Western Europe, the spherical pommel was not common. It was found in several areas but seems mostly strongly associated with the Iberian peninsula or with swords of possible Iberian origin during the 12th and 13th centuries; one possible example being a weapon said to have come from Palermo Cathedral, via Saragossa Cathedral, to the Musée de l'Armée in Paris⁵⁴. Another of the relatively few surviving examples in medieval Christian Western Europe was found on what Ewart Oakeshott described as a small Castilian 'riding sword'. This had once been in his collection and is now believed to be in the Royal Armouries⁵⁵. Not until later was the spherical pommel more widespread. Almost by definition, the spherical pommel is not a feature which will be very clear in art, particularly two dimensional art, as it can so easily be confused with the disc-shaped pommel. Nevertheless where it can be identified, or presumed with some certainty, the artistic evidence supports the idea that the spherical pommel was a Middle Eastern and Mediterranean fashion (figures 89, 91-94, 100-101, 106-108, 111 & 121-139).

THE METAL-COVERED GRIP

The all-metal or metal-covered grip had not, as far as I am aware, been a feature of Western European swords since the late Roman (figure 10) and very early medieval periods. The gold-covered grip and guard was then typical of what are considered 'princely' weapons in

Figures **85**) Manuscript illustration, French 1111 AD (Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 168, Dijon). **86**) Sword from an illustration of 'Charlemagne's Army leaving for Spain' in the *Codex Calixtinus*, Spanish late 12 cent AD (f.162v, Archivo Catedral, Santiago de Compostela). **87a-d**) Warriors on carved capitals, Siculo-Norman late 12 cent AD (*in situ*, Cloisters, Cathedral, Monreale). **88**) Carving of a 'Virtue', French c.1185 AD (*in situ* church, Aulnay-de-Saintonge). **89**) Sword in illustration of 'Sacrifice of Isaac' in the *Illustrated Bible of King Sancho of Navarre*, Spanish 1197 AD (Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 108, f.12r, Amiens). **90**) Carved capital, Spanish late 12 cent AD (*in situ* Cloisters, Cathedral, Tudela). **91**) 'Herod's guard' on wall-painting, Spanish late 12 cent AD (*in situ* Pantheon of San Isidoro, Leon). **92a-b**) Illustrations of 'Sword of St. Peter' and 'Guards at the Holy Sepulche' in the *Avila Bible*, Mozarab-Spanish 12-13 cent AD (Biblioteca Nacional, Ms. ER8, Madrid). **93**) Carving of 'St. James', Spanish 12-13 cent AD (*in situ* Church of Santiago, Betanzos, La Coruña).

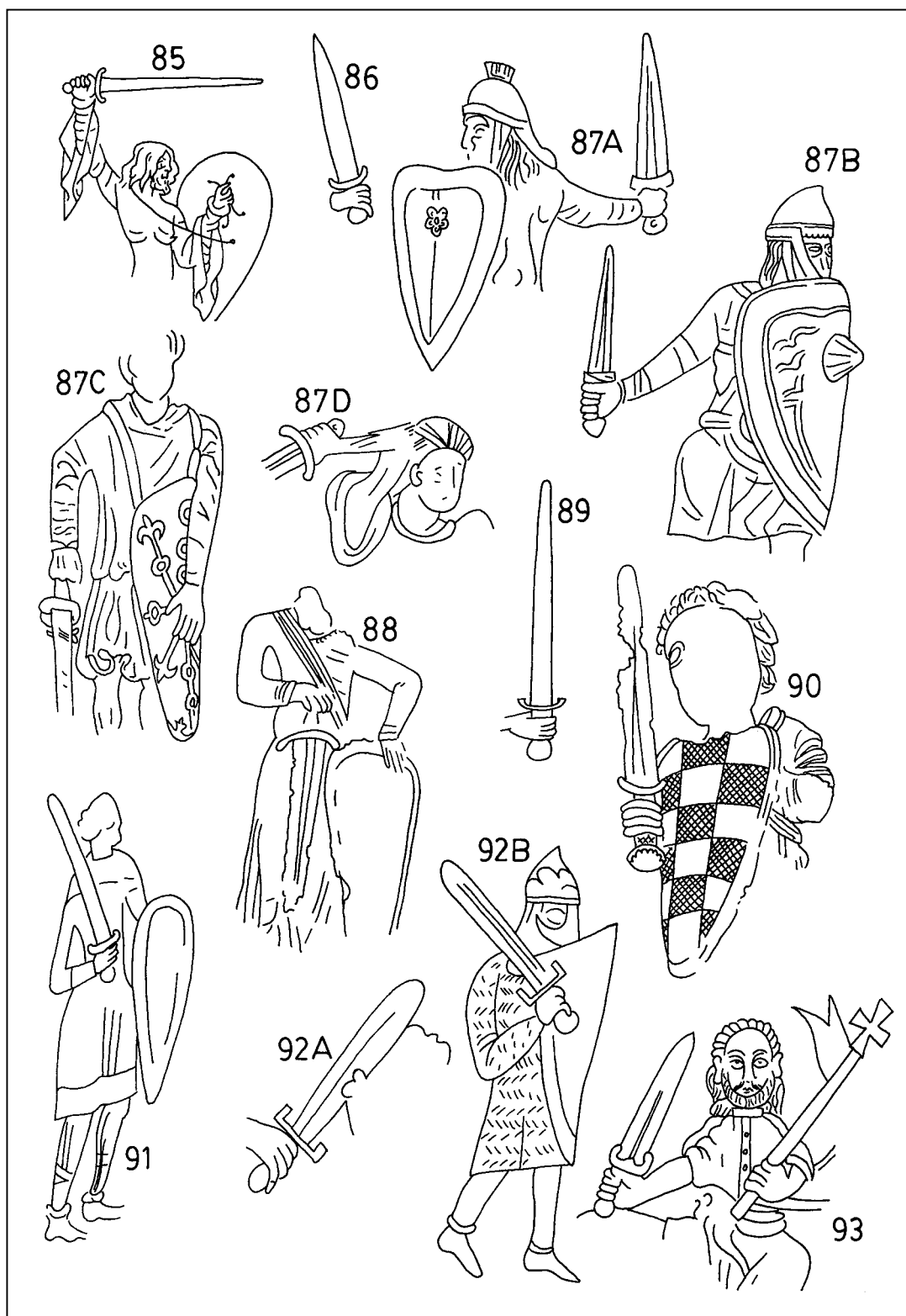
⁵¹ Maqqarī, al-, in R. Dozy, G. Dugat, L. Krehl & W. Wright, *Analectes sur l'Histoire et la Littérature des Arabes d'Espagne*, vol. II, Leiden 1858-61, p. 397 ll. 14-15, trans. D. Nicolle; Pérès, H., *La Poésie Andalouse en Arabe Classique au XIe Siècle*, Paris 1953, p. 352.

⁵² Oakeshott, R.E., «Some Medieval Sword-Pommels....», *Op. Cit.*, p. 55.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.49.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 68-9.

⁵⁵ Oakeshott, R.E., (in correspondence with the author, 9-1-89).



the Hun period; this fashion being continued for a while by Franks and Goths⁵⁶. (figure 14) Metal-covered grips were also seen on early Scandinavian weapons, but these were entirely different in design and purpose from the Gibraltar swords and other Islamic swords. In one beautiful 10th century Scandinavian weapon the metal covering of the grip was merely a sleeve which did not form an integral part of the structure⁵⁷. A decorative sleeve, often in the form of densely woven or wrapped wire, similarly became popular on Western European sword-hilts in the 13th and 14th centuries.

In contrast the integral metal grip was typical of many Islamic weapons, particularly those of early or specifically Arab origin. Here a distinction must be drawn between Islamic weapons where the grip is structurally metallic and other swords where the grip is covered with a thin sheet of precious or polished metal for decorative or anti-corrosive reasons. The origins of this form of hilt remain unknown, as do so several aspects of Arab-Islamic military technology. The earliest known example may be a bronze cylinder with one remaining rivet through it, found during excavations at Qaryat al-Faw in Saudi Arabia (figure 9). This site was probably *Dhat Kahl*, capital of the pre-Islamic Kinda tribal confederation and dated from the 1st to 5th centuries AD.⁵⁸ The object has not been identified as part of a sword hilt, but it is remarkably similar to the very few surviving examples of such sword hilts of early Arab-Islamic provenance.

The most similar object forms part of the grip of an all-bronze hilt on an extraordinary sword found in the wreck of the late 10th or early 11th merchant ship off the island of Serçe Liman in south-western Turkey (figure 28). Here the lower sections of the grip consist of such a cylinder attached to the tang by a single rivet⁵⁹. The ship itself it now believed to be

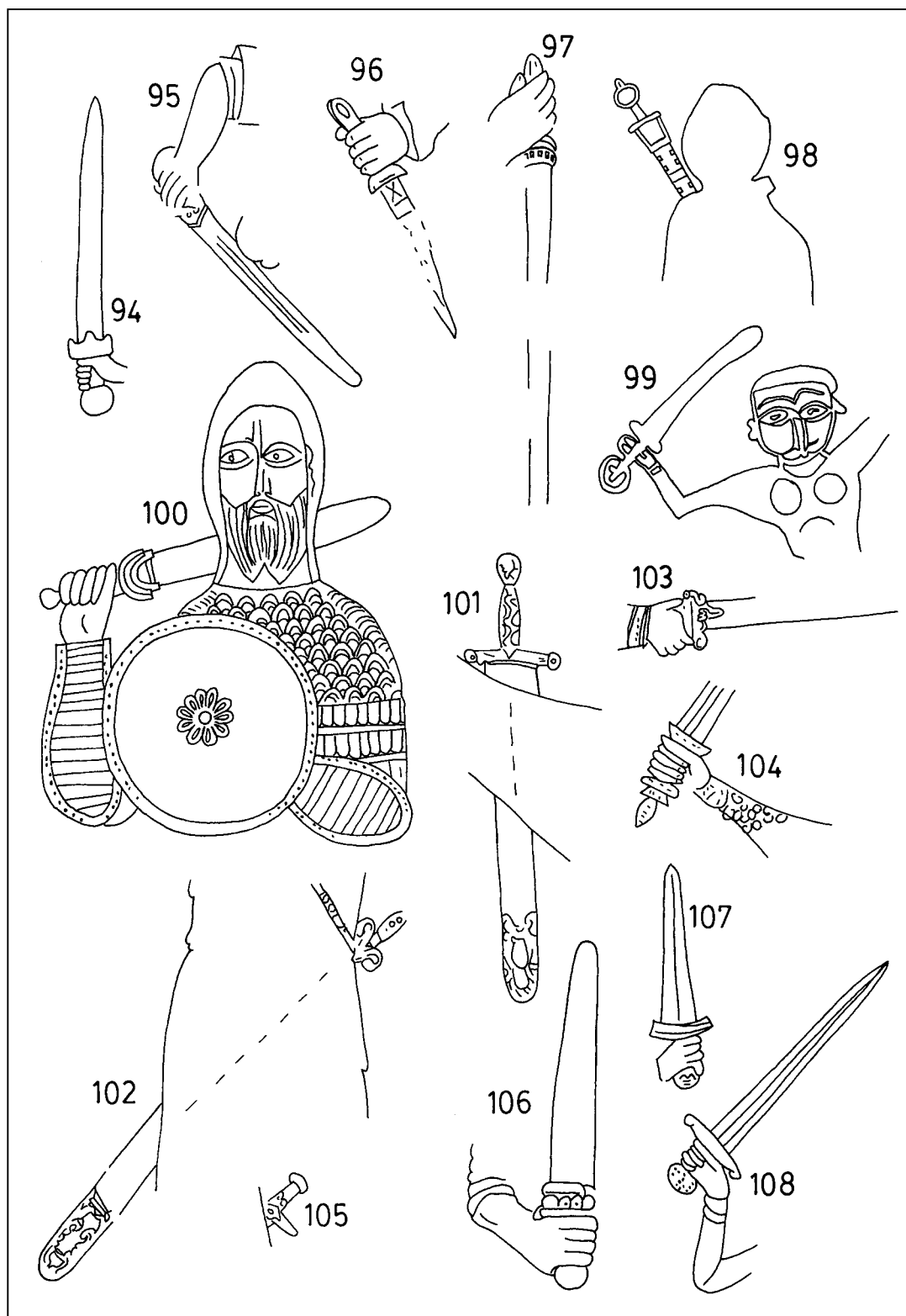
Figures **94**) Sword on carving of 'Arrest of Jesus', Spanish 13 cent AD (*in situ* Old Cathedral, Lerida). **95**) Illustration of the 'Sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter', wall-painting Coptic Egyptian 7-8 cent AD (*in situ* platform of church, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai). **96**) Sword on stucco statuette from *Khirbat al-Mafjir* probably representing the Caliph, Syria c.743/4 AD (Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem). **97**) Sword in 'Hunting scene', wall-painting, Syria c.740 AD (*in situ*, Qusayr 'Amra, Jordan). **98**) Probable illustration of the Caliph's local governor, mosaic, 'Abbāsid Syria late 8-early 9 cent AD (*in situ* Church of St. Stefan, Umm al-Raṣāṣ, Jordan). **99**) Illustration of a cavalryman on a lustreware dish, Iraq 10 cent AD (Kier Collection, London). **100**) Relief carving of 'Goliath', Armenian early 10 cent AD (*in situ* Church of Gagik, Aght'amar, Lake Van). **101**) 'St. George' on a silver icon from Sujana, Georgian 11 cent AD (National Museum, Tbilisi). **102**) 'St. George' on a silver icon from Khidistavi, Georgian 1000-1010 AD (National Museum, Tbilisi). **103**) Sword of a 'Mounted angel' on a wall-painting from church at 'Abd Allāh Nirqī, Nubian early 11 cent AD (National Museum, Khartoum). **104**) Sword in illustration of 'Angels fight the Beast' in *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Mozarab-Spanish 1091-1109 AD (British Library, Ms. Add. 11695, f.133, London). **105**) Sword on silver icon of 'St. George', Georgian mid-11 cent AD (*in situ* church, Lantchvel, Georgia). **106**) Sword of an infantry pawn in 'Charlemagne's Chess Set', southern Italian or Mediterranean Islamic 11-12 cent AD (Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). **107**) Sword in illustration of 'The Emperor's guard (Proto-spathius)' on an *Exultet Roll*, southern Italian 12 cent AD (Biblioteca Casanatense, Ms. 724.B1.13, pic.17, Rome). **108**) Probable illustration of Saul's sword in the hands of David in the *Biblia Segunde de Leon*, Spanish 1162 AD (Cathedral Library, Ms. V.I, Leon).

⁵⁶ Werner, J., *Beiträge zur Archäologie des Attila-Reiches*, Munich 1956, p. 43.

⁵⁷ Oakeshott, R.E., «Some Medieval Sword-Pommels...», *Op. Cit.*, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Ansary, A.R. al-, *Qaryat al-Faw: A Portrait of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia*, London 1982.

⁵⁹ Schwarzer, J. & E.C. Deal, «A Sword Hilt...», *Op. Cit.*, p. 52.



eastern Mediterranean Arab-Islamic origin. Metallurgical analysis of the sword-hilt proves that, despite its decoration of Hindu Indian or Zoroastrian Persian origin, it included ores mined either close to Tehran or the Caspian coast of Iran. In fact the sword might well have been made in Armenia, on the borderlands of the Islamic and Byzantine worlds. Furthermore the Serçe Liman sword is virtually identical with a weapon wielded by the Philistine Goliath on a 10th century Armenian carving on the church of Agt'amar, on a small island in Lake Van (figure 100). Goliath is otherwise armoured in the manner of a Turco-Persian elite cavalryman in the Caliphal army. Furthermore the metallic grip had a long history in Arab and Berber areas, clearly surviving beyond the Middle Ages (figures 33 & 35-37).

The overall design and shape of the bronze Serçe Liman sword-hilt is very different to that of both the iron-hilted Gibraltar swords, the unprovenanced sword in the Museo Arqueológico in Seville (figure 41) and the similar weapon in Vitoria (figure 42). Yet structurally they are all similar and must surely be members of the same technological family. The grip of the Seville sword is said to be of bronze or brass, may include some gilding and is divided lengthways into four parts. One of these panels contains a worn Arabic inscription which seems to include the word *al-baraka*, 'blessing'⁶⁰. The three other panels contain stylized plant motifs, only one of which seems to be within the normal Islamic decorative tradition⁶¹. None of these weapons was 'jewelled' in the true sense of the word but given a degree of poetic licence one could see how such weapons could be regarded as amongst the finest forms of gift for a military elite⁶². To some extent the decorated metal grip might also be reflected in Andalusian sword-grips made from other decorated materials such as ivory (figure 32).

THE QUILLONS: CURVED

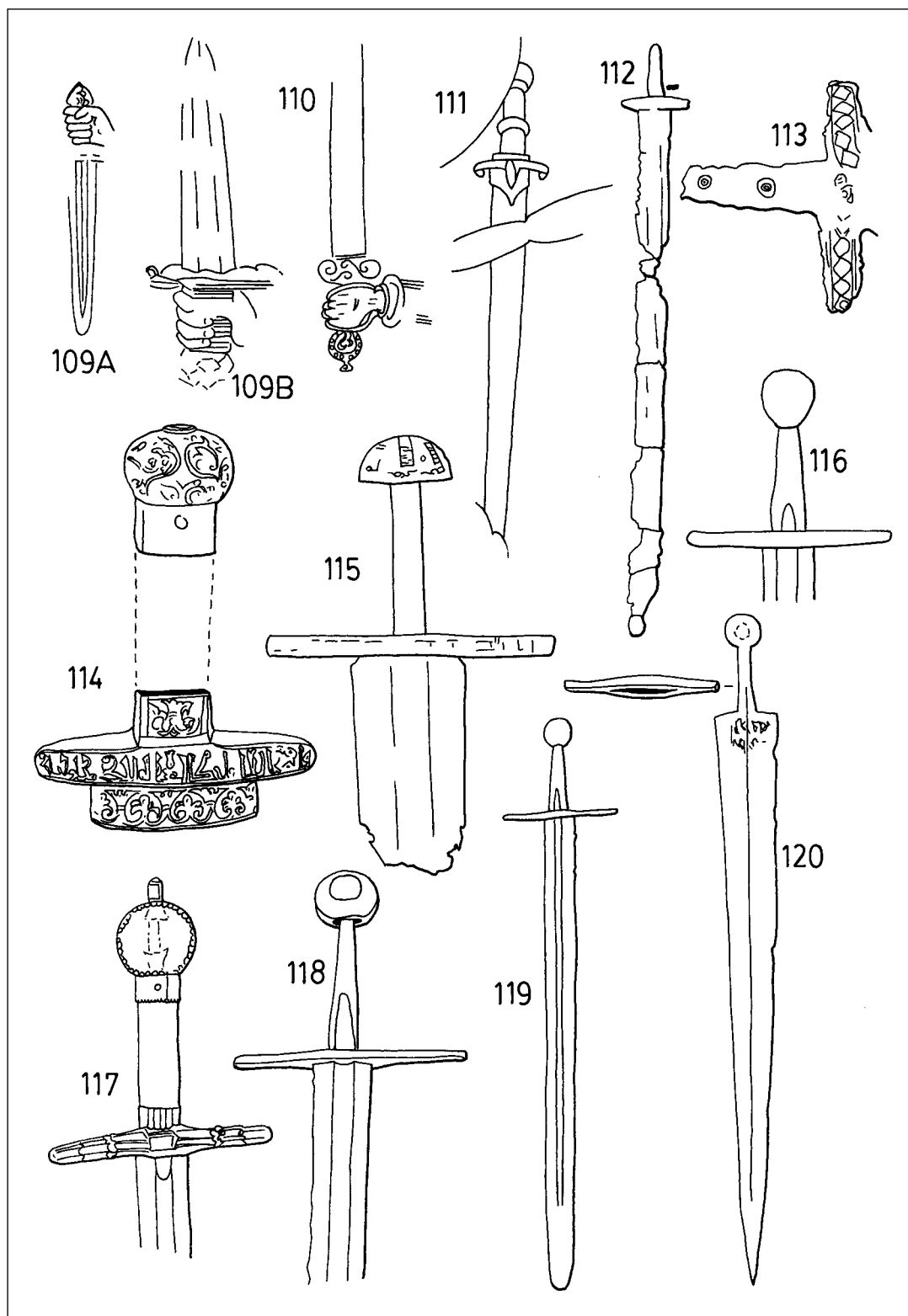
The down-turned quillons found on some medieval weapons and in medieval pictorial sources are generally agreed to be of eastern origin or at least inspiration. The Islamic, Medi-

Figures **109a-b)** Swords on a carved capital from the portal of the church at San Miguel de Uncastillo, Spanish 12 cent AD (Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 28.32, Boston). **110)** Illustration of the 'Sword of Perseus' in the *Book of Stars* by *al-Sūfī* from Ceuta, Morocco 1224 AD (Vatican Library, Ms. Ross, 1033, Rome). **111)** Sword of a seated soldier in an illustration of 'The Pilgrims arrive at Cologne', in the *St. Ursula Cycle* of wall-paintings by Carpaccio, Venetian 1493 AD (Academia, Venice). **112)** Sword from Beja, Visigoth 400-450 AD (Regional Museum, Beja). **113)** Sword-hilt from southern Portugal, Visigoth 500-550 AD (Regional Museum, Beja). **114)** Bronze sword pommel and quillons inscribed with Sura CXII of the *Koran*, Egypt 9-10 cent AD (ex-D. Storm-Rice Collection; present whereabouts unknown). **115)** Sword-hilt, Spanish or Andalusian 11 cent AD (Museo del Ejército, inv. 35.371, Madrid). **116)** Sword attributed to San Galgano, Italian 1170-80 AD (Hermitage, San Galgano). **117)** Sword attributed to San Fernando, Spanish early 13 cent AD (Cathedral Treasury, Toledo). **118)** Sword, Portuguese 13 cent AD (Military Museum, Lisbon). **119)** Sword, Spanish 13 cent AD (ex-Museo Armeria Estruch, Madrid; present whereabouts unknown). **120)** Sword attributed to an unnamed ruler of Egypt, max width 10 cms, Egyptian 13 cent AD (Askeri Müzesi, Istanbul).

⁶⁰ Fernández Gómez, Fernando, of the Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla (in correspondence with the author December 1989).

⁶¹ Baer, Prof E. (in correspondence with the author, 20-1-1990).

⁶² One such reference to a «jewelled sword» as the finest form of gifts appears in poem by the Andalusian Ibn ʿAmmār, written in the second half of the 11th century, in J.T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*, London 1974, pp. 188-89.



terranean and Iberian archaeological evidence ranges from quillons which are both substantial and down-turned, to those which are so truncated and rudimentary that they merely reflect this fashion (figures 28-30, 33, 35, 38-44 & 46-51) They are relatively rare in early medieval western Europe but do appear in Mozarab manuscript illustrations from the Iberian peninsula in the 10th and 11th centuries. As such they probably reflected Islamic Andalusian rather than Christian northern Spanish military styles, particularly as they are mostly on swords whose scabbards are carried on baldrics rather than sword-belts. In these manuscripts, however, the down-turned quillons are often associated with the clover-leaf or trilobate pommel rather than the spherical pommel of the Gibraltar swords⁶³ (figure 65). Early western Mediterranean examples of genuinely down-turned quillons include the probably western Islamic sword from the Agay shipwreck (figure 39), now considered to date from the 11th or 12th centuries⁶⁴, and a fragmentary sword from the region of Seville (figure 40).

On the mainland of Christian western Europe the most common form of supposedly down-turned quillons was not the same as the Gibraltar example. Instead it had much less of a curve but did have noticeable down-curved tips at the ends of the quillons. By the 12th century those with a more regular curve, and thus more in common with the Gibraltar example, were still rare but usually had Scandinavian associations. This should not necessarily cast doubt on an eastern stylistic origin, since Scandinavia in the so-called Viking Age had strong commercial and, in terms of military technology, surprisingly strong cultural links with both Byzantium and the eastern Islamic world.

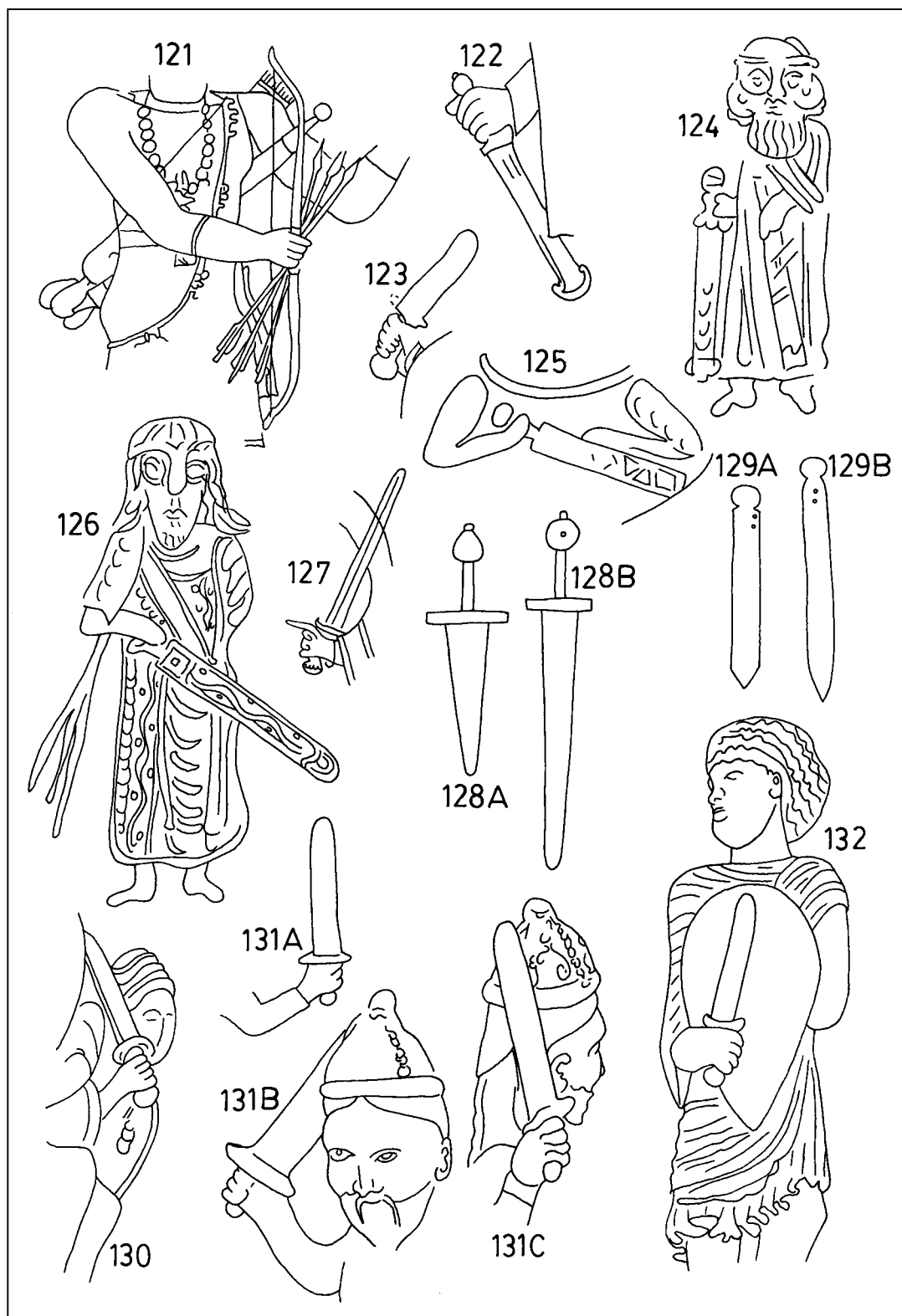
When regularly curved quillons did appear more commonly on western European swords in the 13th century they were not only longer and slenderer than the Gibraltar quillons, but were often still associated with the Iberian peninsula. In fact several were quite clearly made under Islamic influence in terms of surface decoration and even inscriptions as well as overall shape. A notable example is the late 13th century Sword of King Sancho IV of Castile, now in the Cathedral Treasury of Toledo⁶⁵.

Figures **121)** Rock-relief of King Scharaker, Meroitic probably 1-2 cent AD (*in situ* Jabal Qayli, Sudan). **122)** Sword of a soldier on an ivory plaque illustrating the 'Life of St. Paul', Roman 5 cent AD (Museo Nazionale de Bargello, Florence). **123)** Sword of a horseman on a fragment of a carved ivory situla, Coptic-Byzantine 7 cent AD (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore). **124)** Gold *dīnār* coin, Umayyad Syria pre-690 AD (Ray Gardner Collection, London). **125)** Coin of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, Umayyad Syria 694/5 AD (whereabouts unknown). **126)** Coin of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, Umayyad Syria 694/5 AD (Robert W. Morris Collection). **127)** Sword of 'Fortuna' in *Gregory's Commentaries on Job*, Spanish 914 AD (John Ryland's Library, Ms. 83, f.214b, Manchester). **128a-b)** Illustration of 'On Weapons (De Repositorii)' in the *Encyclopedia of Maurus Hrabanus*, southern Italy 1023 AD (Benedictine Library, Ms. 132, p.363, Abbey of Monte Cassino). **129a-b)** Illustration of a Yemeni *ṣamṣām* sword-blade in a later copy of al-Kindī's *Al-Suyūf wa 'ajnāsuha*, 10 cent AD (a - after A.R. Zaki; b - after Hammer-Purgstall). **130)** Carved capital, Spanish late 11 cent AD (*in situ* Church of San Isidoro, León). **131a-c)** Ceramic statuette of a horseman from Raqqa, Syria 12 cent AD (National Museum, Damascus). **132)** Relief carving, Spanish c.1120 AD (*in situ* portal of south door, Church of San Isidoro, León).

⁶³ De Hoffmeyer, A.B, *Arms and Armour in Spain, a short survey*, vol. I, Madrid 1972, pp. 119-124.

⁶⁴ Visquis, A.G., *Op Cit.*

⁶⁵ Oakeshott, R.E., «Some Medieval Sword Pommels.....», *Op. Cit.* pp. 72-3.



Unlike the spherical pommel, down-turned quillons are amongst the easiest features to identify in the pictorial records. Once again they tend to show a bias towards an eastern origin and a steady migration westward in association with the spread of Islam or at least in association with trade links in this direction (figures 52-94).

THE QUILLONS: STRAIGHT

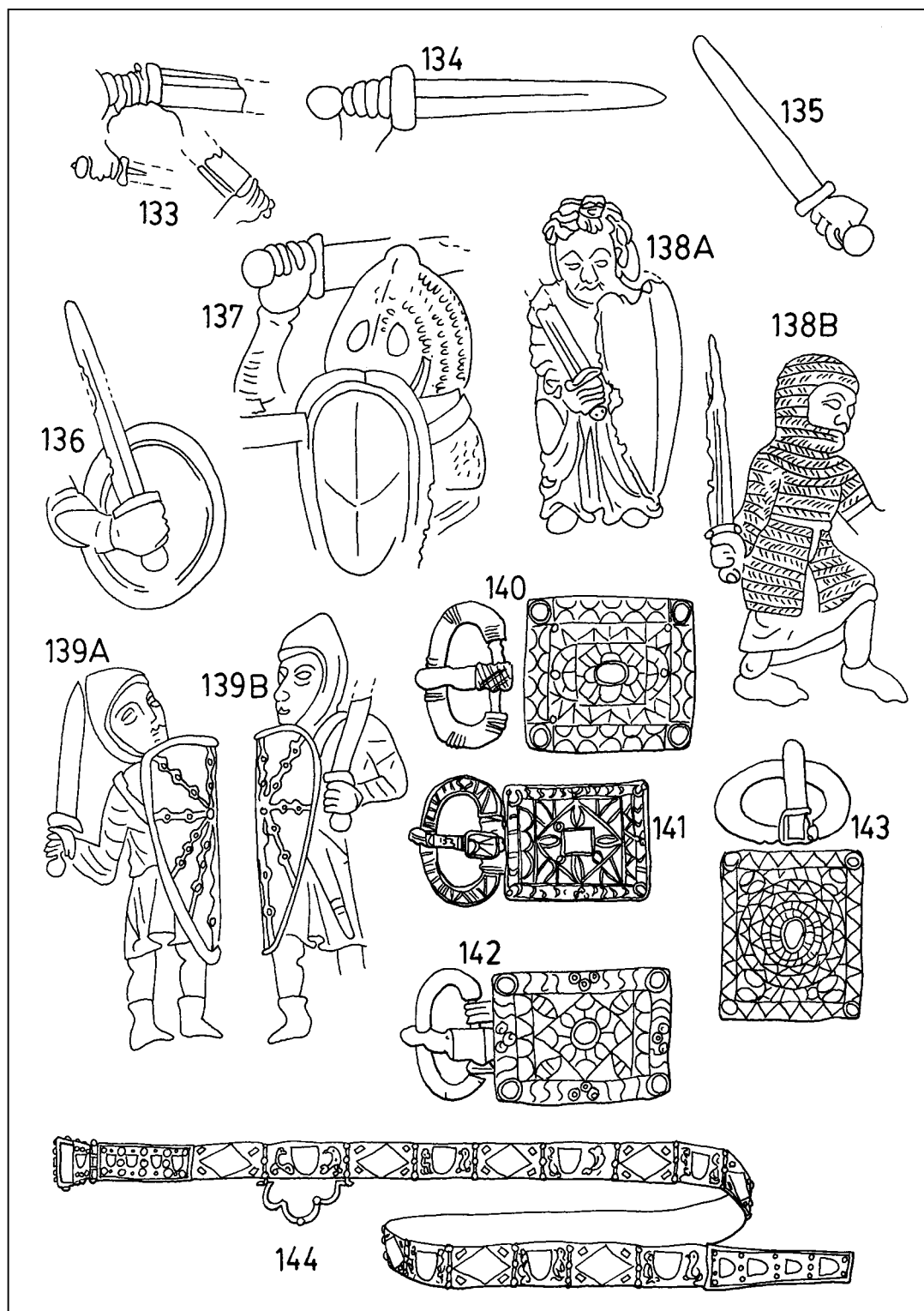
At first sight less can be deduced from the straight quillons of the second sword from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar. Straight bar-like quillons commonly appeared in pictorial sources throughout 11th-13th century western Europe. On the other hand Ewart Oakeshott has pointed out that most surviving straight quillons are of rectangular section. Cylindrical rod-like quillons such as those on the second Gibraltar sword are extremely rare. E. Oakeshott provides two possible examples but, as he pointed out, surviving examples of supposedly rod-like quillons are so corroded that their original section is unclear - nor do even these possible examples have any particular geographical associations⁶⁶.

Here it may also be worth drawing attention to an interesting 11th century sword-hilt and part of a straight blade in the Museo del Ejército in Madrid (figure 115). The quillons are straight, though rectangular in section, and like the domed pommel they have the remains of inlaid silver or white metal decoration. Dr. Hoffmeyer considered this unusual weapon to be of a mixed 'Mediterranean and Middle Eastern style'⁶⁷. Certainly it is closer in general form to a western European weapon than either of the Gibraltar swords. Nevertheless its decoration betrays Islamic influence. As such it might be seen as a style between that of western Europe and the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East, just as the Gibraltar swords seem to be. But whereas the Gibraltar swords are Andalusian or Maghribi Islamic weapons with Christian Iberian influence, the fragmentary sword in the Museo del Ejército is probably a Christian Iberian weapon with Andalusian or Maghribi Islamic influence. Otherwise all that can be said is that swords with straight bar-like quillons were as common in Iberia as elsewhere (figures 112-113, 115 & 117-119) and were also seen in the Islamic Middle East - though more rarely (figures 114 & 120).

Figures **133**) Relief carvings from doorway of Church of San Vincente Martyr at Frias, Burgos, Spanish late 12 cent AD (Cloisters Museum, New York). **134**) Carved capital of 'The Massacre of the Innocents' from Church of Santa Maria from Aguilar de Campo, Spanish late 12-early 13 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico, Madrid). **135**) Illustration of a sword in the *De Civitate Dei of St. Augustine*, Spanish 12 cent AD (Cathedral Library, f.1, Tortosa). **136**) Carved capital, Spanish late 12 cent AD (*in situ* Cloisters of Cathedral, Tudela). **137**) Carved capital, Spanish 12 cent AD (*in situ* church, Rebolledo della Torre). **138a-b**) Relief carving of the 'Massacre of the Innocents', Spanish late 12-early 13 cent AD (*in situ* west front of Church of Santo Domingo, Soria). **139a-b**) Carved capitals, Siculo-Norman late 12 cent AD (*in situ* Cloisters of the Cathedral, Monreale). **140**) Bronze buckle from Castilerra/Duraton, Castile, Visigothic 6 cent AD (Museu Arqueològic, Barcelona). **141**) Buckle from Toledo area, Visigothic 585-620 AD (Museo Arqueológico, Madrid). **142**) Buckle from the Castilian Meseta region, Visigothic 7 cent AD (Museu Arqueològic, Barcelona). **143**) Buckle from the Castilian Meseta region, Visigothic 7 cent AD (Museu Arqueològic, Barcelona). **144**) Sword belt from the tomb of Fernando de la Cerda, Spanish mid-late 13 cent AD (Reliquary, Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 59 & 60.

⁶⁷ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., *Arms and Armour in Spain...*, vol. I, *Op. Cit.*, p. 162.



THE BLADES

The blades of both swords from Martin's Cave are so corroded and broken that relatively little can be deduced from them. A proper metallurgical analysis would certainly be more useful but has so far been impossible. All that can be compared to other surviving weapons and to the iconographic evidence is the basic shape and assumed original dimensions of the Gibraltar swords. Their length, breadth and general shape are typical of 12th century Europe and, were it were not for the unusual broadening of the tang inside the spherical pommel, the blades could well have been made in western Europe. All that can be deduced from this is that the straight swords of western Islam were much the same as those of western Christendom.

Other than their distinctive tang and hilt construction, the Gibraltar swords lack other supposedly Andalusian or Maghribi characteristics. The so-called Sword of San Fernando in the Real Armeria, for example, has a broad, relatively thin and flexible blade, and has been tentatively identified as of Muwahhid Moroccan or Andalusian origin⁶⁸. By the 13th and 14th centuries the blades of most Christian Iberian swords were essentially the same as those seen elsewhere in western Europe, with the notable exception of some lighter sword-blades which have been considered 'very Spanish' in character, again presumably reflecting Iberian light cavalry traditions of Andalusian or Maghribi origin⁶⁹.

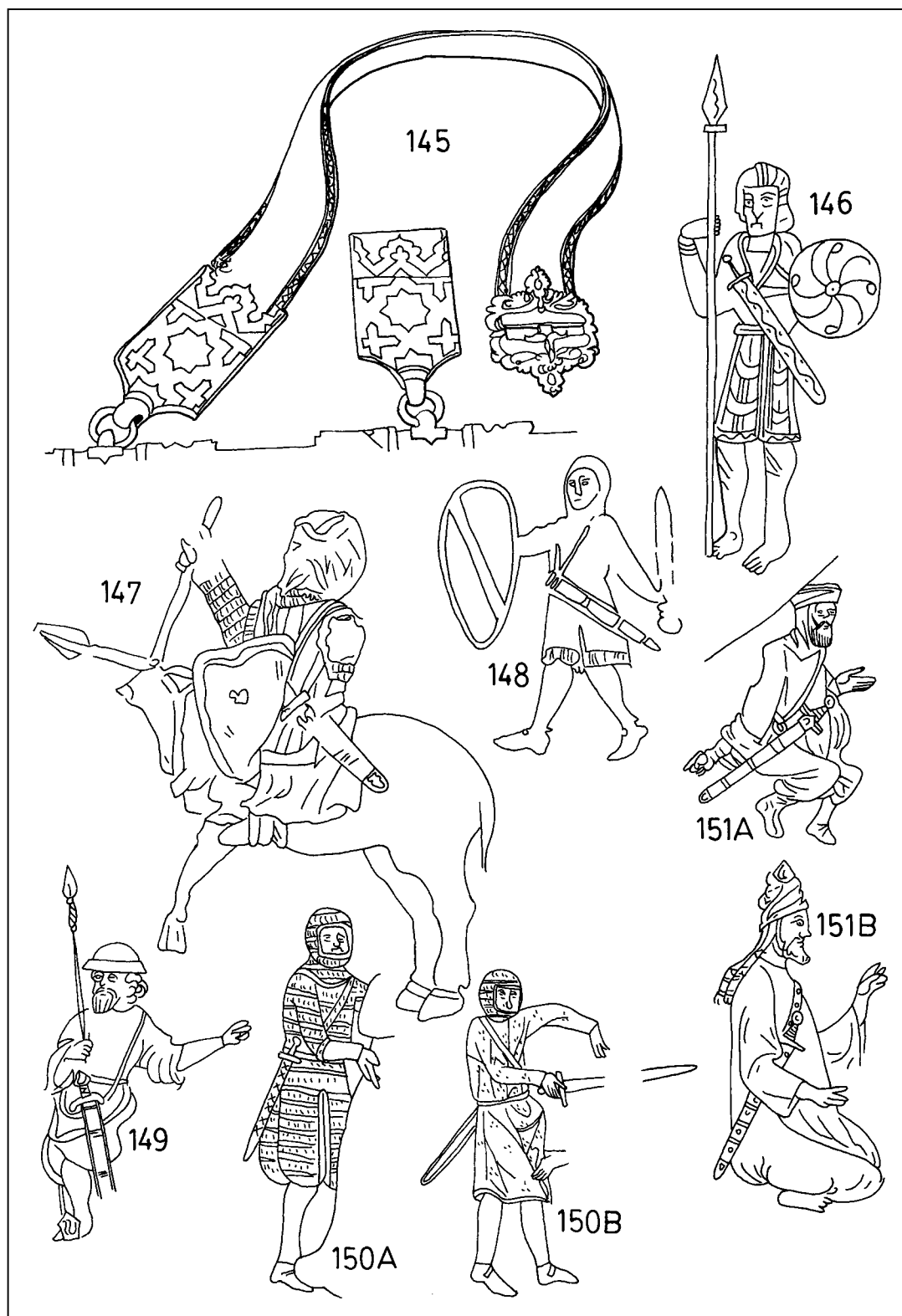
Efforts to compare the Gibraltar swords with the dimensions characteristic of certain Islamic sword-blade in the 9th century works of al-Kindī are hampered by the simple fact that al-Kindī gives dimension in finger-widths, open fingers and spans. Making the somewhat unscientific assumption that al-Kindī's hands were not unlike those of the author, it is interesting to note that a *Salmānī* sword-blade was four spans (820 mm) long and four fingers (80 mm) wide, a *Ruthūth* blade (considered a sub-division of the *Salmānī* type) was four spans (820 mm) long, three and a half to just under four fingers (70-80 mm) wide. Blades from Fārs were three spans plus four open fingers (770 mm) long and three fingers (60 mm) wide while those from Kūfa were three spans plus four open fingers plus three closed fingers (820 mm) long and again three fingers (60 mm) wide. On this very dubious basis al-Kindī might have regarded the Gibraltar swords as longer than a *Salmānī* sword-blade but having the same width as blades from Fārs or Kūfa⁷⁰.

Figures **145**) Incomplete baldric with both strap ends (simplified) of the Sword of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad XI of Granada (Boabdil), Andalusian late 15 cent AD (Museo del Ejército, Madrid). **146**) Illustration of a 'Guard of Darius' in the *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse* from Tavera, Mozarab 975 AD (Cathedral Museum, f.134, Gerona). **147**) Relief carving from doorway of Church of San Vicente Martyr at Frias, Burgos, Spanish late 12 cent AD (Cloisters Museum, New York). **148**) Painted panel on the 'Baldequin of Tost' from Urgell, Spanish 13 cent AD (Museu Arqueològic Artístic Episcopal, Vich). **149**) Illustration of a 'Moorish cavalryman' in the *Cantigas of Alfonso X*, Spanish late 13 cent AD (Library, Cod. T.I.1, Canto CLXXXV, El Escorial). **150a-b**) Illustration of 'The Martyrdom of Santa Lucia', wall-painting, Spanish late 13 cent AD (Museo de Arte de Cataluña, Room 32, Barcelona). **151a-b**) Illustrations of 'Moors or Berbers playing chess' in the *Libra de los juegos of Alfonso X*, Spanish 1283 AD (Library, Cod. T.j.6, Canto CLXXXV, Monastery of El Escorial).

⁶⁸ De Hoffmeyer, A.B., *Arms and Armour in Spain...., vol. II, Op. Cit.*, pp. 44-48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 40-68.

⁷⁰ Allan, J.W., *Persian Metal Technology, 700-1300 AD*, Oxford 1979, pp. 85-6.



DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: SCALES OR FEATHERS

The decorative motifs seen on the Gibraltar swords, their scabbards and associated belt fragments are more useful than the blades when it comes to pinpointing their place of origin or 'last use'. The most distinctive motif and the one which must have made the first Gibraltar sword a magnificent object in its original condition was the scale or feathered pattern covering its quillons, grip and pommel. This is made by tiny dots of some white metal which has yet to be identified.

Feathered patterns on armour and weapons had a long ancestry in the Middle East and were clearly more than merely decorative. the pattern was characteristic of some of the finest pieces of Iranian weaponry surviving from the final decades of the Sassanian Empire and was probably linked to the protective powers of the mythical Varanga bird which was itself an incarnation of the Zoroastrian god Verethraghna. He in turn was the expression of aggressive and irresistible victory. The protective power of the Varanga's feathers was mentioned in the Persian *Shāhnāmāh* epic in the late 10th-early 11th centuries as well as appearing in the earlier *Zend-Avesta* religious text of the Zoroastrian Indian Parsees⁷¹.

The idea of incorporating a pattern of mythical protective feathers into the decoration of weapons seems to have been adopted by several peoples under Sassanian cultural influence, including the Huns though it needs to be remembered that the eagle is believed to have been the Huns' totemic symbol⁷². The use of feathered or scale-like surface decoration then spread to several parts of early medieval Europe; most obviously Russia and Ostrogothic Italy⁷³. The 10th century Magyars (Hungarians) who settled in central Europe also had their totemic bird, the Turul which could mean both a real goshawk and a magical 'eagle-formed bird'. Further east the decoration of a helmet with real feathers was the mark of elite warriors amongst the pre-Islamic Turks of Central Asia.

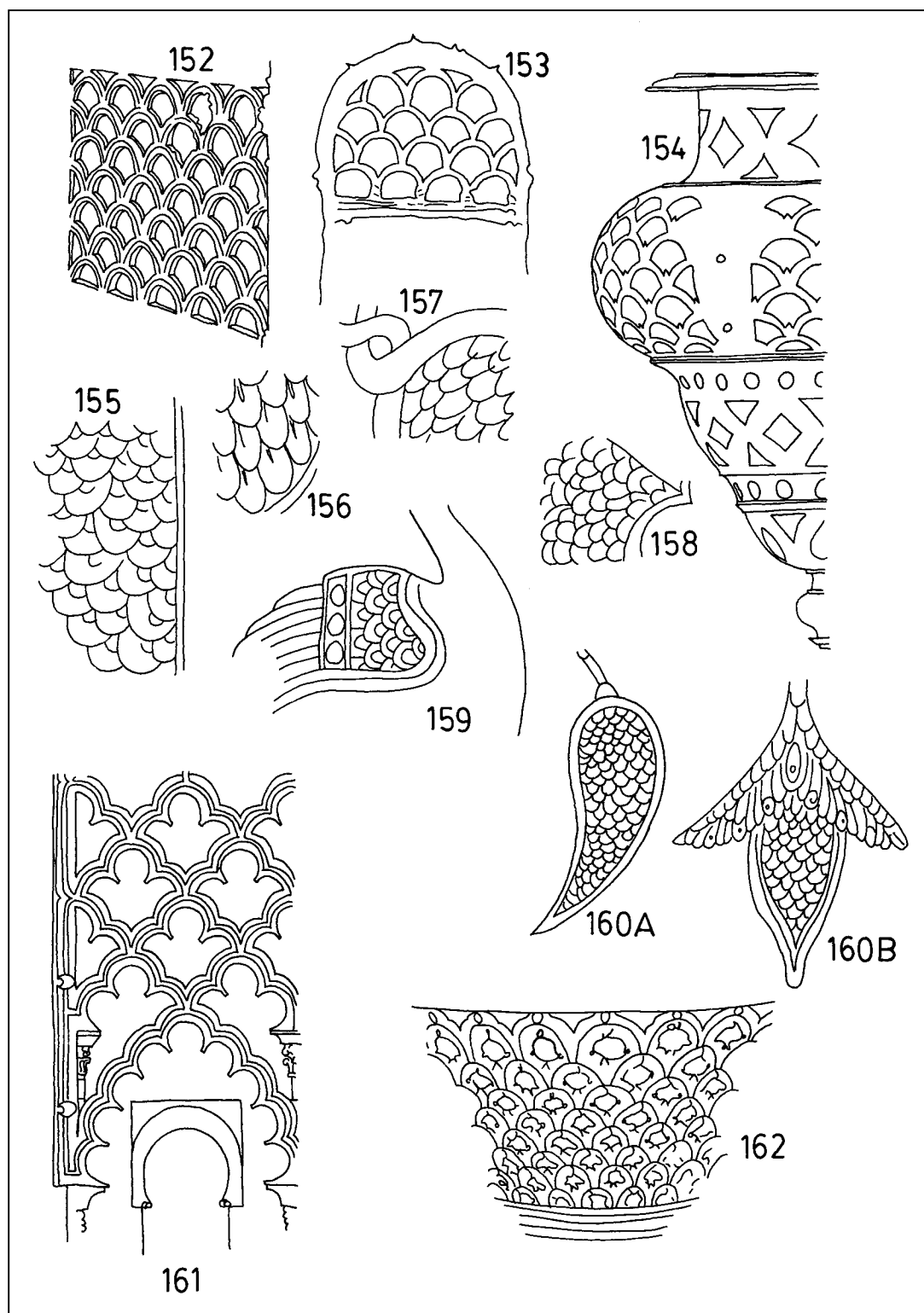
Given the remarkable geographical and cultural spread of this fashion, and its persistent association with military protection or at least military status, it is not surprising to find this pattern in the Muslim world as well, though without its pagan or non-Islamic religious associations. Alvaro Soler del Campo has noted the similarity between the scale pattern on the

Figures **152)** Carved stonework from the presbytery door, Merida workmanship, Visigothic late 6-7 cents AD (Muséo Arqueológico Provincial, Merida). **153)** Carved stone window-grill, Visigothic 7 cent AD (*in situ* Church of Santa Comba de Bande, Orense). **154)** Bronze mosque lamp, Tunisian 10-11 cents AD (Marcais, G., & L. Poinssot, *Objets Kairouanais IXe au XIIIe Siècle. Reliures, Verreries, Cuivres et Bronzes, Bijoux*, Tunis & Paris 1952, fig. 95). **155)** Detail from 'The Pisa Griffin', Egyptian 11 cent AD (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Pisa). **156-158)** Detail from ceramic fragments from al-Qala'a, Maghribi 11 cent AD (Golvin, L., *Recherches archéologiques à la Qala'a des Banu Hammād, Algérie*, Paris 1965, fig. 93). **159)** Detail from the St. Sernin Chasuble, Murābiṭ Morocco or Andalusia 1100-1150 AD (Treasury, Basilica de St. Sernin, Toulouse). **160a-b)** Detail of marquetry on the minbar, Muwaḥḥid probably 12 cent AD (*in situ* Kutubīya Mosque, Marrakesh). **161)** Detail of carving on the exterior of the minaret, Muwaḥḥid mid-12 cent AD (*in situ* Kutubīya Mosque, Marrakesh). **162)** Detail of lustre-ware ceramic vase, Naṣrid late 13 cent AD (inv. 5229, Galleria Regionale delle Sicilia, Palermo).

⁷¹ Overlaet, B.J., «Contribution to Sasanian Armament in connection with a decorated helmet», *Iranica Antiqua*, XVII, 1982, p. 201.

⁷² Ghirshman, R., «Notes Iraniennes XIII», *Trois Épées Sassanides*, *Artibus Asiae*, XXVI, 1963, pp. 310-11; Nickel, H., «About the Sword of the Huns and the 'Urepos' of the Steppes», *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, VII, 1973, p. 134 note 4.

⁷³ Overlaet, *Op. Cit.*, p.203.



hilt of the first Gibraltar sword and the so-called 'eagle plumage' pattern on several 10th-11th century Islamic ivories⁷⁴. The scale or feathered pattern had, in fact, been a popular motif in late Visigothic Iberian art (figures 152-153). It then saw a noticeable increase in popularity in Andalusia and North Africa in the 11th and 12th centuries (figures 154-161), thereafter becoming rarer (figure 162). None of these examples had particularly warlike associations though a connection with *jihād* or 'struggle for the Faith' may have been present where mosque lamps or architectural decoration on mosques were concerned. There is no proof for such an idea, though it is interesting to note that a scale or feathered pattern was incorporated as an unusual background pattern on an illuminated Koran page made in Syria during the reign of Nūr al-Dīn Ibn Zankī. This was made in a strongly *jihād* context facing the aggressive Crusader States⁷⁵. A clear distinction must, of course, be made between such a dense feathered or scale pattern and the Muwaḥḥid use of multiple but isolated crescents as decorative or symbolic motifs⁷⁶; these being said to represent the hoof-prints of the first conquering Arab-Islamic armies.

DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: ROPEWORK

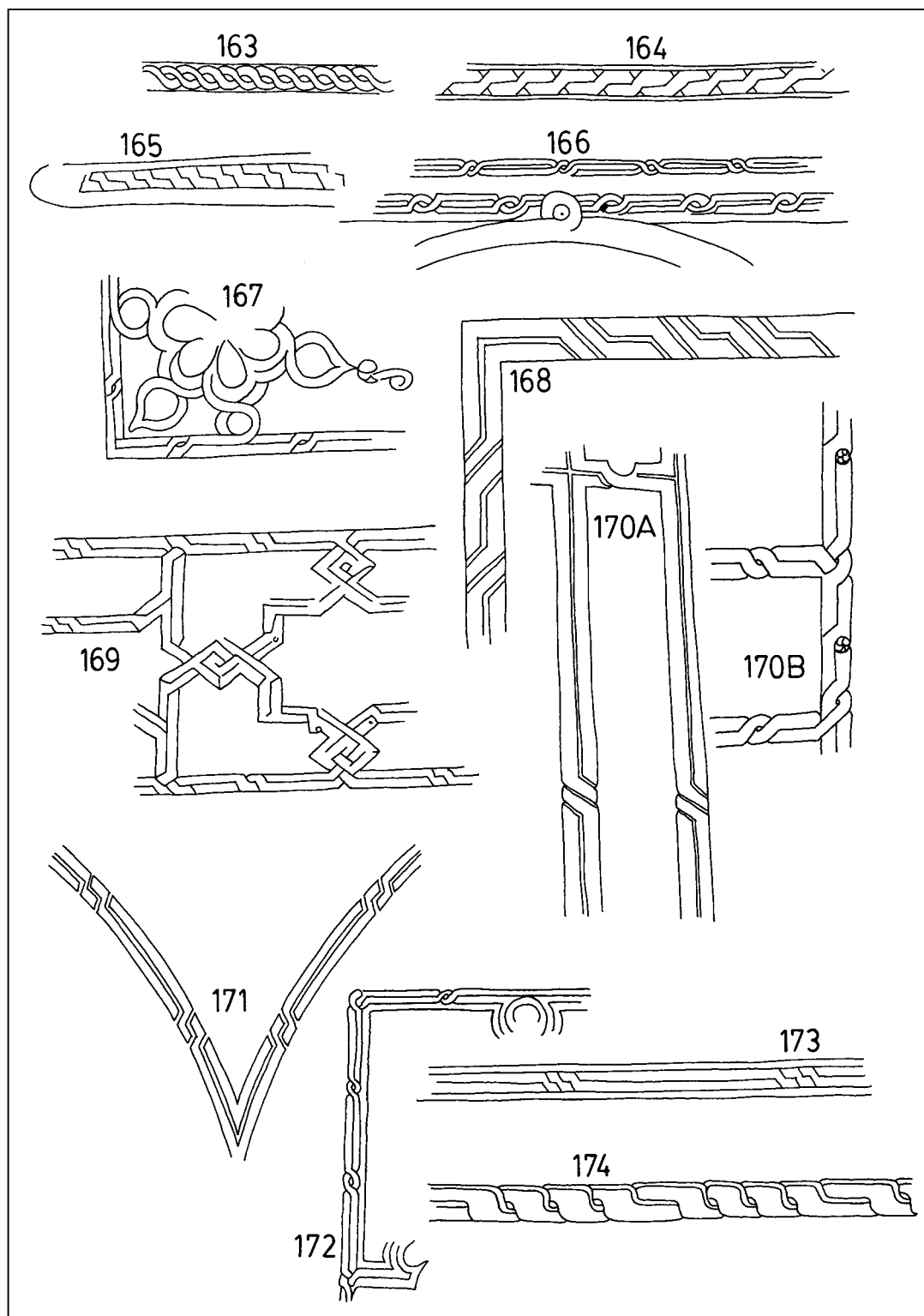
Another and more distinctively Islamic decorative motif is found on the locket of the first Gibraltar sword. This is a variation on the popular 'ropework' edging pattern (figure 2f) which uses groups of four 'twists' at regular intervals. Simple ropework had been seen in western Islamic art since the 11th century and it remained popular well into the 14th century (figures 163-165). The regular spacing of the 'twists' in the 'rope' ranged from well-separated 'double twists' (figures 167-172), to separated 'triple twists' (figure 173) and 'four-fold twists' (figure 174), apparently culminating in a very elaborate 'doubled rope with four-fold twists' (figure 175). The most common forms were the doubled, triple and four-fold; these being highly characteristic of architectural decoration, Koranic illumination and other 'religious contexts' during the Murābiṭ and Muwaḥḥid periods of the 12th century.

Figures **163**) Detail from carved ivory box, Andalusian probably 11 cent AD (Museo Nazionale de Bargello, Florence). **164**) Detail of illuminated decoration, Koran, Murābiṭ Maghribi or Andalus of 1162 AD (National Library, inv. Masahif no. 196, Cairo). **165**. Decoration on the handle of a gilded bronze bucket, Naṣrid 1350-1400 AD (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, inv. 50.888, Madrid). **166**) Detail of carved window arch from the Aljafería Palace in Saragossa, 11 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid). **167**) Detail of carving around the mihrab, Muwaḥḥid mid-12 cent AD (*in situ* Friday Mosque, Tinmal). **168**. Detail of the border of a carved stucco inscription panel, Murābiṭ early-12 cent AD (*in situ* Great Mosque, Tlemcen). **169**) Detail of carved wall decoration, Muwaḥḥid mid-12 cent AD (*in situ* Kutubiya Mosque, Marrakesh). **170a-b**) Details of the border of a carved inscription panel & of the mihrab, Murābiṭ early 12 cent AD (*in situ* Qarawīyin Mosque, Fez). **171**) Detail of carved wall decoration, Andalusian 1180 AD (*in situ* synagogue, now church of Santa María la Blanca, Toledo). **172**) Detail of carved decoration around the door, Naṣrid 1389 AD (*in situ* Maristān-Hospital, Granada). **173**) Detail of an illuminated decoration on a Koran page, Maghribi late 13-early 14 cents AD (Dawud Collection, Tetouan). **174**) Detail of the side of a painted altar from the parish church of Sagás, province of Barcelona, 12 cent AD (Museo Diocesana, Solsona).

⁷⁴ Soler del Campo, A. (in correspondence with the author, 6-12-88).

⁷⁵ The manuscript is now in Istanbul, but the author came across this potentially interesting use of the feathered pattern too late to include a drawing in this article; F. Déroche, «Un fragment de Coran zengide: un élément pour l'histoire du livre manuscrit à Damas sous le règne du Nūr ad-Din», paper read at the *Sixth Colloquium on Egyptian and Syrian Studies in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods*, Leuven Katholiek Universitet, 15 May 1997.

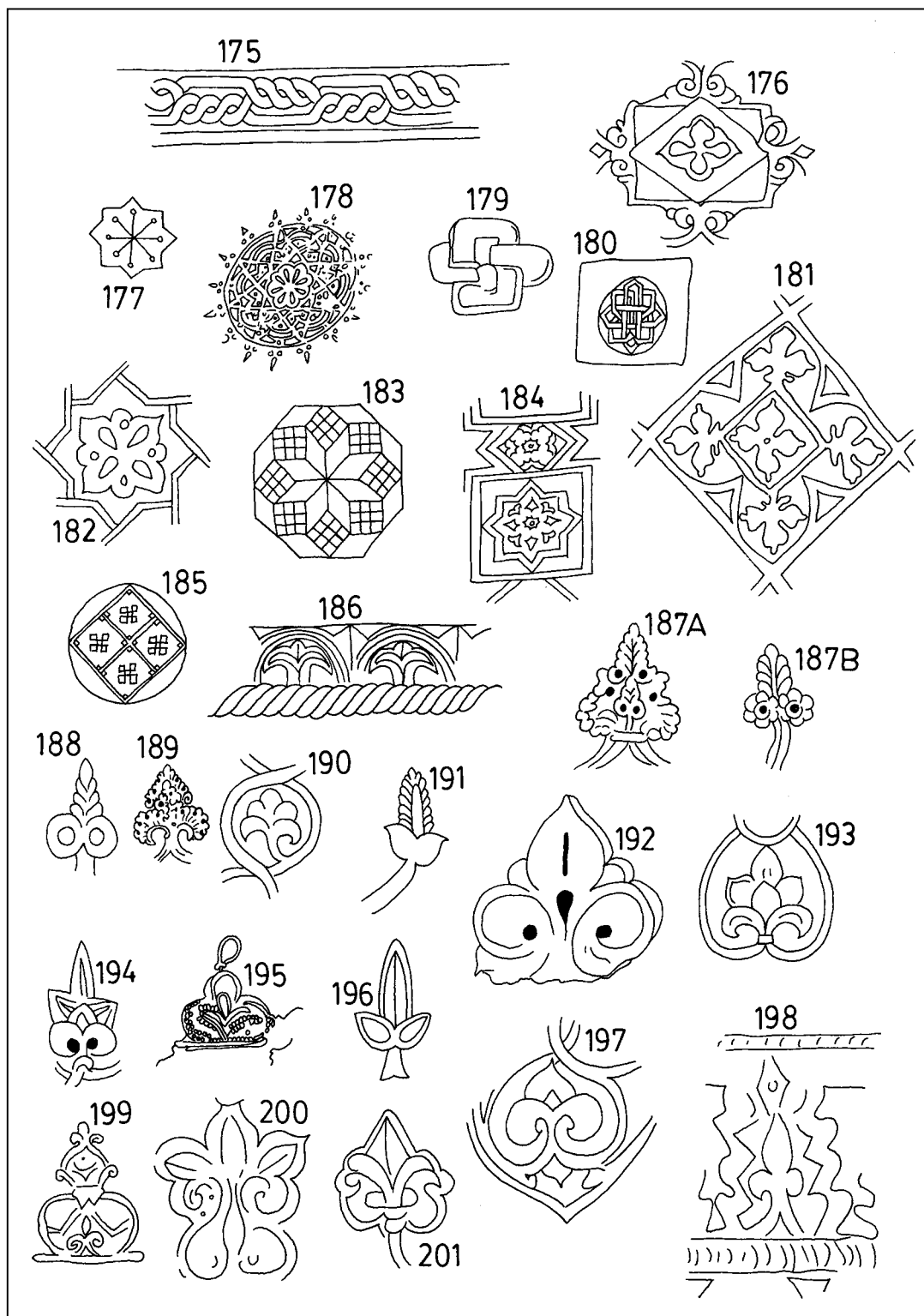
⁷⁶ Khan, G.M., «The Islamic and Ghaznawide Banners», *Nagpur University Journal*, IX 1943, p. 112.



DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: CROSS IN SQUARE MOTIF

The cross or very simplified floral motif in a rectangle with a wavy edge, which also appears on the locket of the first Gibraltar sword (figure 2f), is far less specific as to period. Nevertheless it was clearly a popular decorative motif in western Islamic art from at least the 11th to the 15th centuries (figures 176-185).

Figures **175**) Detail of carved stucco panels from the Generalife Palace, Naṣrid Granada 1273-1309 AD Museo Nacional de Arte Hispanomusulmán, (inv. I.346, Granada). **176**) Detail of a textile fragment, Andalusian 11 cent AD (Museo Episcopal y Capitular de Arqueología Sagrada, Huescar). **177**) Detail from the 'Shroud of San Pedro', Andalusian 1100-1150 AD (Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 33.371, Boston). **178**) Painted decoration on an ivory box, Muwahḥid late 12 cent AD (Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, inv. 4864, Madrid). **179**) Detail of the pillow-cover from the tomb of Maria de Almenar, Andalusian c.1200 AD (Museo de la Telas Medievales, inv. 00650516, Monastery of Santa Maria la Real de Huelgas, Burgos). **180**) Detail of a textile fragment, Andalusian 13 cent AD (Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, inv. 2093, Madrid). **181**) Detail of the pillow-cover from the tomb of Alfonso de la Cerda, Naṣrid Granada 1271-1333 AD (Museo de la Telas Medievales, Monastery of Santa Maria la Real de Huelgas, Burgos). **182**) Detail of an illuminated Koran page on vellum, Naṣrid Granada 1304 AD (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 385, f. 129v, Paris). **183**) Detail of marquetry on the minbar, Marīnid 14-15 cents AD (*in situ*, Great Mosque, Taza). **184**) Detail of a textile, Naṣrid Granada 15 cent AD (Museum of Ancient Art, Barcelona). **185**) Detail of pattern on a ceramic plate, Manises-ware, Spain 15 cent (Art Institute, Detroit). **186**) Detail of a carved frieze, Visigothic 7 cent AD (*in situ* Church of São Frutuoso de Monteluis, Portugal). **187a-b**) Detail of a carved ivory box made for a daughter of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, c.962 AD (Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 301-1866, London). **188**) Detail of a carved marble panel from Maḍīnat al-Zahrā, Andalusian 10 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico Provincial, Cordoba). **189**) Detail from a fragment of a carved ivory box, Andalusian probably 10-11 cents (Collection of Gómez Moreno). **190**) Detail of the decoration on a gilded bronze deer, Andalusian 10-11 cents AD (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid). **191**) Detail from a fragment of a carved basin, Andalusian 11 cent (*in situ*, Chella, Rabat). **192**) Detail of a carved architectural decoration from Qasr al-Baḥr, Maḡhribi 11 cent AD (Golvin, L., *Recherches archéologiques à la Qala'a des Banu Hammad, Algérie*, Paris 1965, fig. 52). **193**) Decoration from a fragment of painted ceramic from al-Qala'a, Maḡhribi 11 cent AD (Golvin, L., *Recherches archéologiques à la Qala'a des Banu Hammad, Algérie*, Paris 1965, fig. 53). **194**) Detail on a carved marble capital from the Aljafería Palace, Saragossa mid-11 cent AD (Museo de Zaragoza, inv. 7680, Saragossa). **195**) Detail from a pair of gold ear-rings, Murābiṭ or Muwahḥid 12 cent AD (Museo de Mallorca, inv. 23812/23813, Palma de Mallorca). **196**) Detail of carved wall decoration, Andalusian 1180 AD (*in situ* synagogue, now church of Santa María la Blanca, Toledo). **197**) Detail of decoration on a bronze lion from Monzón, Muwahḥid 12-13 cents AD (Musée du Louvre, inv. 7883, Paris). **198**) Detail of decoration on a bronze brazier, Muwahḥid early 13 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico Provincial, inv. D.92/2, Cordoba). **199**) Detail of carved wall decoration, 13 cent AD restoration (*in situ* Great Mosque, Taza). **200**) Detail of decoration on a bronze door hinge, Maḡhribi 13-14 cents (*in situ* Mosque of the Andalusian, Fez). **201**) Detail of decoration on a ceramic vase, Naṣrid Granada 14-15 cents AD (Museo Nacional de Arte Hispanomusulmán, inv. 290, Granada).



DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: TREFOIL

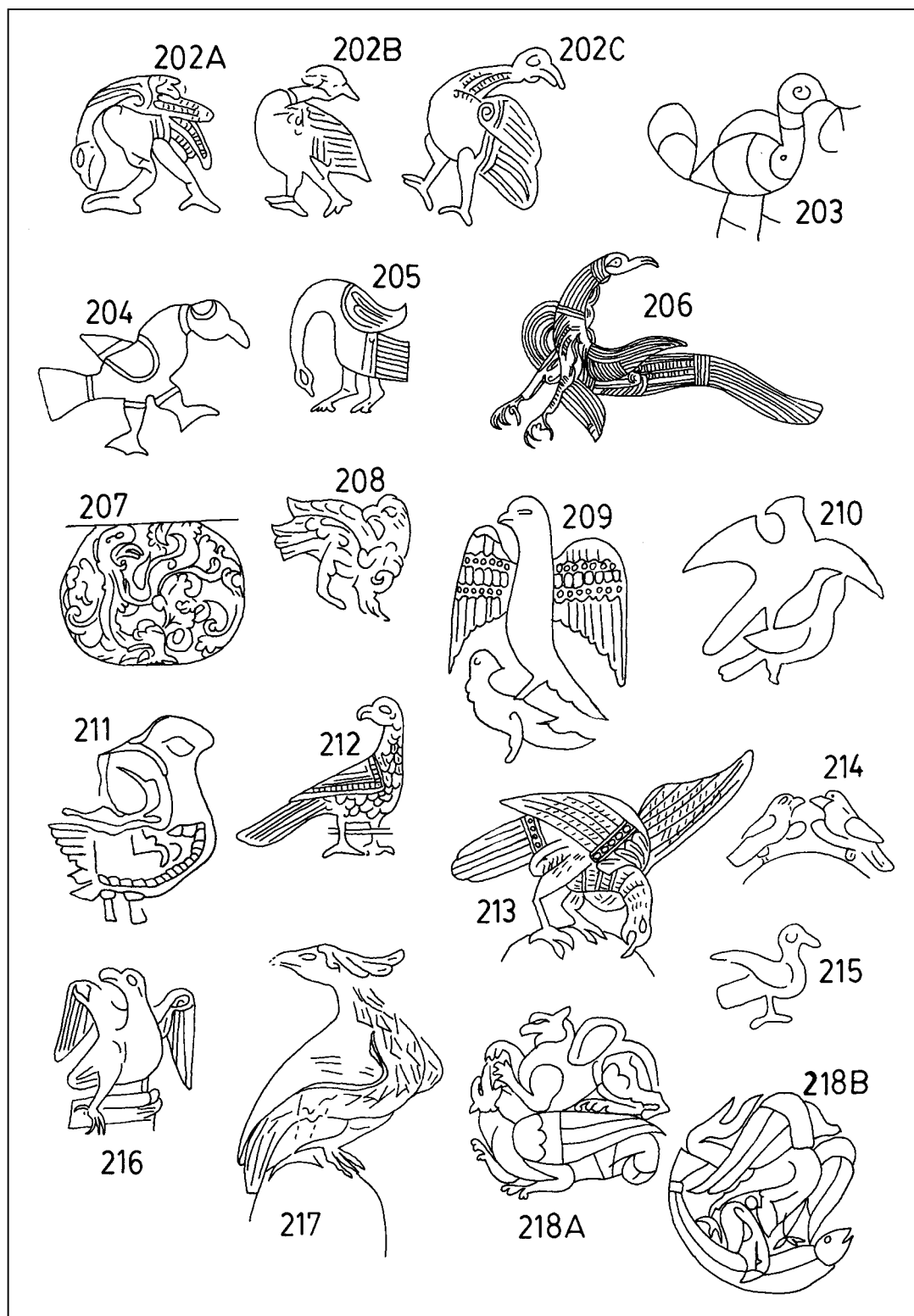
The trefoil is seen in an extremely simple, almost crude form on the chape of the first Gibraltar sword (figure 2d). Like the feathered or scale pattern it had also previously been seen as a form of architectural decoration in Visigothic Iberia (figure 186). Thereafter it was seen in various forms, from the simplest to the most elaborate and as a rudimentary fleur-de-llys, in almost all forms of western Islamic art from the 10th to 15th century (figures 187-198). In fact the trefoil was so common that its presence on the scabbard-chape tells us little, except perhaps that this motif seems to have been even more popular than usual during the 11th and 12th centuries⁷⁷.

THE BELT FRAGMENTS: BASIC FORM

Two of the fragments from the presumed baldric or baldrics which went with the two swords from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar incorporate interesting decorative motifs; a bird and a six-pointed star within a circle. But before looking at these in detail, the basic characteristics of the presumed baldrics should first be considered. One of these, assuming that there were in fact originally two, was clearly of woven material rather than leather (figure 7). Woven sword belts and baldrics, like woven bridles and other items of animal harness, seem to have been characteristic of the Arab Muslim peoples since the time of the Prophet Muḥammad

Figures **202a-c**) Details of carvings on carved capitals, Visigothic c.691 AD (*in situ* Church of San Pedro de la Nave, province of Zamora). **203**) Detail of gold filigree decoration on the Cruz de la Vitoria presented to the Cathedral by Alphonso III in 908 AD (Cámara Santa, Cathedral, Oviedo). **204**) Detail of the 'Caja de las Agatas', gold reliquary inlaid with agate, said to have been presented to the Cathedral by Fruela II in 910 AD (Cámara Santa, Cathedral, Oviedo). **205**) Detail of carving on ornamental stone screens, Spanish early to mid-10 cent AD (*in situ* Church of San Miguel de Escalada, province of León). **206**) Illuminated initial in the *Exposito Psalmorum* from San Millán de Cogola, Spanish 10 cent AD (Real Academia de la Historia, Ms. 8, Madrid). **207**) Detail of the decoration of the bronze sword-hilt from the Serçe Liman shipwreck, western Iran late 10 cent AD (Castle Museum, inv. GW 56, Bodrum). **208**) Detail of ivory box made for Ziyād Ibn Aflah, Andalusian 969/70 AD (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. 368-1880, London). **209**) Detail of carving on an Andalusian marble, 10 cent AD (Maldonado, B.P., *Arte Toledano Islamico y Mudejar*, Madrid 1973, fig. 118). **210**) Detail of a carved wooden panel, Egypt 11 cent AD (Maldonado, B.P., *Arte Toledano Islamico y Mudejar*, Madrid 1973, fig. 118). **211**) Detail of the so-called Veil of Hisham II textile, Andalusian late 10-early 11 cents AD (Real Academia de la Historia, inv. 292, Madrid). **212**) Detail from a carved ivory box known as the Pamplona Casket, Andalusian 1004/5 AD (Museo de Navarra, Pamplona). **213**) Detail from a carved ivory box, Andalusian early 11 cent AD (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. 10-1866, London). **214**) Detail of gold filigree on an earring, Egypt 11 cent AD (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). **215**) Detail of gold filigree on Andalusian jewelry, 11 cent AD (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore). **216**) Detail of carving on the ivory Crucifix of Fernand I y Sancha, Spanish 1063 AD (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid). **217**) Detail of carved capital, Spanish 1085-1100 AD (*in situ* Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, province of Burgos). **218a-b**) Cloisonnée enamelled discs, Andalusian or Spanish 11-12 cents AD (formerly in the Carrand Collection; now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

⁷⁷ Dodds, J.D., edit., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, New York, 1992, p. 300.



himself and almost certainly much earlier. The finest surviving medieval example comes from Spain. This is the sword-belt of the Infante Fernando de la Cerda, eldest son of King Alfonso X of Castile who died in 1275 AD. It was found in his tomb in the Monastery of Las Huelgas near Burgos and is considered to have been manufactured by the Castilian Mudéjar community of Muslims under Christian rule during the mid-13th century⁷⁸. In other words it is representative of Iberian Islamic military fashions, though used by a Christian prince. The belt is over two metres long, is made of gold galloon in a geometric design and is backed by galloon shot with green thread. It also resembles other fragmentary belts or baldrics found in other tombs at Las Huelgas.

The second and even more dramatic characteristic was the presence of an enamelled bronze plaque which might have formed a strap-end or a buckle-plate. Its visible copper front surfaces had been gilded and the enamels consisted of a deep cobalt blue, a lighter azure blue, plus green, red and turquoise. This has already been published several times and has usually been assumed to be of French Limoges workmanship. M-M. Gauthier, however, pointed out that Christian Spain was also a centre of cloisonnée enamel making⁷⁹ and he suggested that the plaque from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar was manufactured in Silos between 1170 and 1180 AD. Gauthier then went on to hypothesize that it was part of a larger object, looted by the Muwahḩidin⁸⁰.

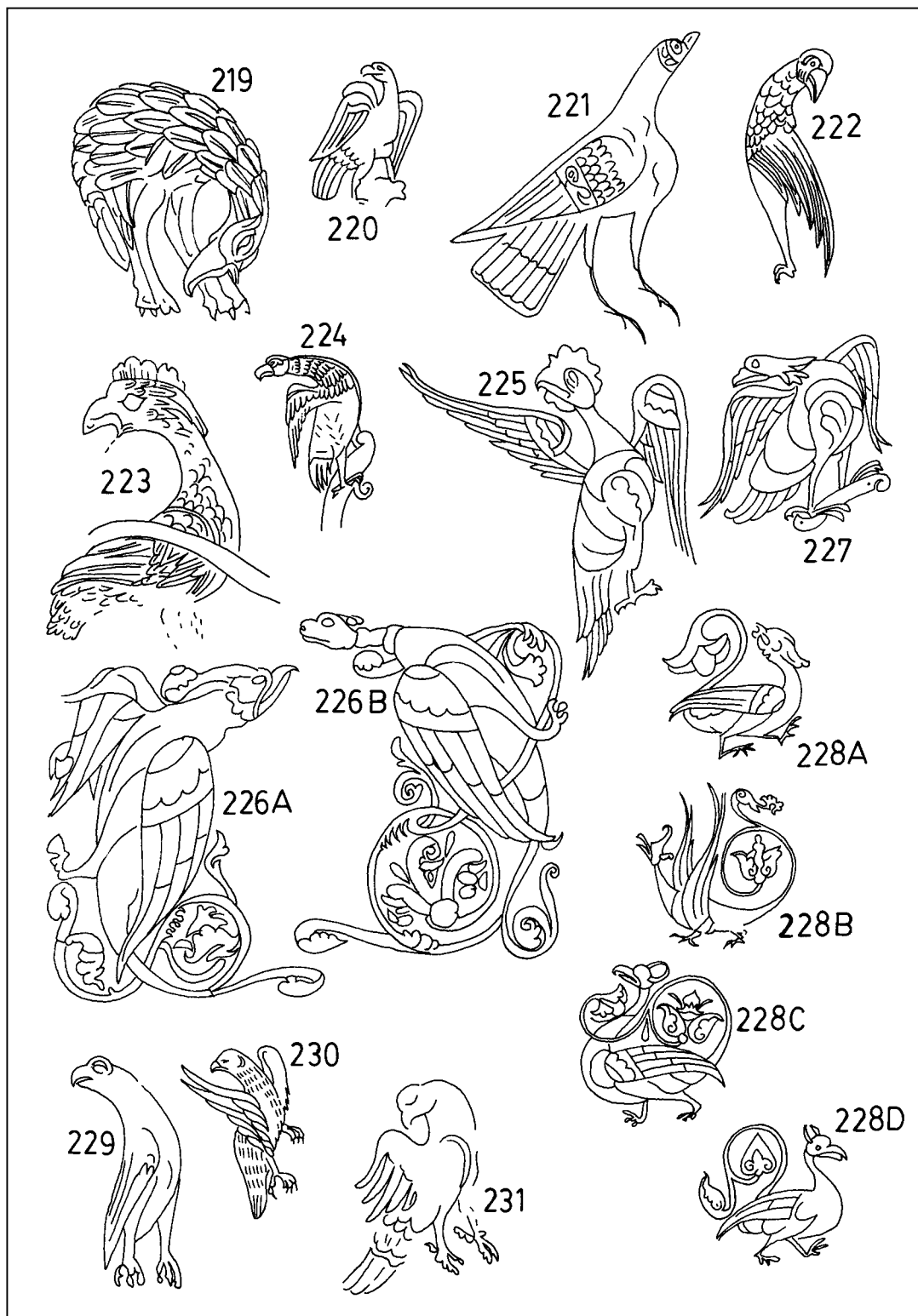
What he did not recognize, however, was the fact that Islamic Andalusia was another centre of enamelwork, being particularly noted for such decoration on jewelry, horse-harness, scabbards and weapons. The technique had been known here since the 10th century, when enamelled gold was made at the Caliphal palace-city of Madinat al-Zahra. It was also made during the *ṭā'ifa* period in the 11th century as well as in the Muwahḩid 12th and 13th centuries, while champlevé enamel on bronze remained one of the finest achievements of

Figures **219)** Detail of a carved capital from the former Cathedral of Pamplona, Spanish early 12 cent AD (Museo de Navarra, Pamplona). **220)** Decoration on the back of a silver niello Crucifix, Spanish 1109 AD (*in situ* Church of Mansilla de la Sierra). **221)** Decoration on a lustre-ware ceramic bowl, Muwahḩid 1100-1125 AD (Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa). **222)** Detail of carved capital, Spanish c.1152-75 AD (*in situ* Catedral Vieja, Salamanca). **223)** Detail of carved capital, Spanish early 13 cent AD (*in situ* Catedral Vieja, Lerida). **224)** Detail of decoration on the silver niello cover of the 'Diptych of Gonzalo', Spanish 1162-75 AD (Cathedral Treasury, Oviedo). **225)** Detail of cloisonée enamel decoration on the altar antependium from the Monastery Church of Santo Domingo de Silos, Spanish 1150-1200 AD (Museo Arqueológico, Burgos). **226a-b)** Detail of enamelled plaque on the cover of the 'Casket of St. Dominic' from Santo Domingo de Silos, Spanish mid-12 cent AD (Museo Arqueológico, Burgos). **227)** Detail of enamelled plaque, probably Spanish 12 cent AD (formerly in the Bardac Collection; now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). **228a-d)** Details from four enamelled plaques, Spanish or Andalusian 1170-80 AD (formerly Lambert Collection, Paris; present whereabouts unknown). **229)** Detail of carved capital, Spanish c.1190 AD (*in situ* southern Portal, Basilica of San Vicente, Avila). **230)** Detail of painted altar antependium by the Master of Valltarga from Cerdaña, province of Gerona, Spanish c.1200 AD (Museum of Catalan Arts, Barcelona). **231)** Detail of a textile fragment from the tomb of Berenguela, Spanish 13-14 cents AD (Reliquary, Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos).

⁷⁸ Collin, B., *Loc. Cit.*

⁷⁹ Gauthier, M-M., *Op. Cit.*, p. 68.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93, pl.LXXII. Number 86 in Gauthier's catalogue.



the Naşrid period right down to the late 15th century⁸¹. Here it is obviously important to note that enamelled bronze formed the most distinctive feature of the most richly decorated surviving pieces of 15th century Naşrid arms, armour and horse-harness. Their most popular colours were red, white, green, black and tiny amounts of blue⁸².

THE BELT FRAGMENTS DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: ENAMELWORK

The technique of cloisonnée enamel had been known in 6th century Byzantium and flourished in 11th-12th century Islamic Egypt, using bird motifs amongst many other designs. Such enamelwork may have been the *mīnā* or 'glass-paste' mentioned in written sources⁸³. Much the same techniques appear to have been used in 11th and 12th century Andalus, again including bird motifs, though generally of a lower artistic quality than enamels made in Egypt. Enamelling techniques had, of course, been known in Iberia during the late Roman period but there seems to have been such a long gap before the technique reappeared; so much so that a direct technological link between Roman and medieval Iberian enamelwork seems unlikely.

During the 9th and 10th centuries enamelwork from the Christian states of northern Iberia was under strong Mozarab artistic influence⁸⁴, which lends support to the idea that Andalus or Islamic southern Iberia played a role in the development of this industry. Furthermore at least one scholar had argued that most medieval so-called Limoges enamels are actually Spanish and that the Christian northern part of the Iberian peninsula was the main centre of enamelwork in western Europe⁸⁵. Perhaps this argument is overstated, but it remains clear that places such as Silos in Castile were major centres of enamel production from the 9th or 10th to 13th centuries. The craftsmen making champlevé enamels on copper at 12th century Silos were probably Muslim Mudejars, or were of recent Muslim origin, or were at least under strong Islamic artistic influence⁸⁶.

Unfortunately no enamelled harness or weaponry is known to have survived from 10th to 12th century Islamic Andalus; with the possible exception of the Gibraltar plaque. Very little also survives from later until there is a sudden flood of objects from the 15th century Naşrid period. These include arms, armour and horse-harness which survived as trophies from the final conquest of Granada. On the Christian side of the frontier, meanwhile, enamels survived because so many of them were either religious objects such as crucifixes or reliquaries, or were weapons associated with real or legendary heroes of the Reconquista⁸⁷. One such object immediately comes to mind; the 13th century sword-belt of the Infante Fernando de la Cerda which is decorated with numerous enamelled plaques. Unfortunately this is little help since the plaques in question are decorated with English and French heraldic shields⁸⁸. All that remains is the fact that a woven belt like that of Fernando de la Cerda could be decorated with enamelled bronze plaques.

⁸¹ Gonzalez, V., «Les Collections d'Oeuvres d'Art du Metal emailée Hispano-Musulmans dans les Musées Mondiaux hors d'Espagne, *Sharq al Andalus*, VII, 1990, pp. 195-97.

⁸² Soler del Campo, A., Exhibition catalogue entries nos. 60-64, in J.D. Dodds, J.D., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, New York, 1992, pp. 282-97.

⁸³ Ross, C., «An Egypto-Arabic Cloisonée Enamel», *Ars Islamica*, VII, 1940, pp. 165-66.

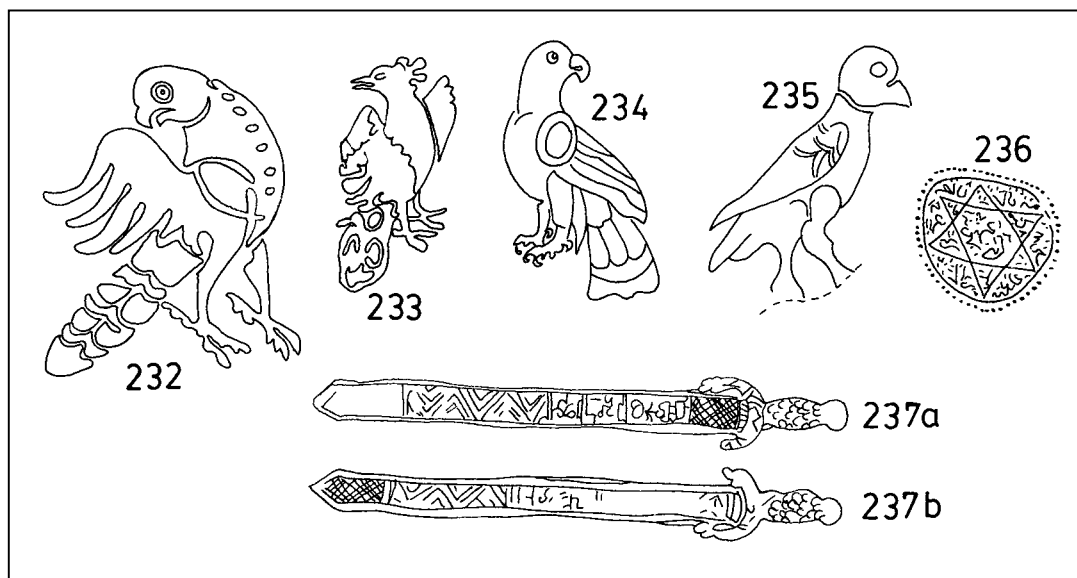
⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁸⁵ Hildburgh, W.L., *Medieval Spanish Enamels*, London 1936, pp. V & 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁸ Collin, B., *Op. Cit.*



Figures **232**) Detail of a textile fragment from the tomb of Berenguela, Spanish 13-14 cents AD (Reliquary, Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos). **233**) Detail of the textile of the cushion from the tomb of Blanca de Portugal, Spanish 13-14 cents AD (Reliquary, Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos). **234**) Detail of a textile from the tomb of Blanca de Portugal, Spanish 13-14 cents AD (Reliquary, Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos). **235**) Detail of decoration on a glazed ceramic fragment from the Alhambra Palace, Naşrid Granada probably 13-14 cents AD (Museo Arqueológico de la Alhambra, Granada) **236**) Detailed of decoration on a ceramic jug, Andalusian 1225-1250 AD (Centro de Estudios Arabes y Arqueológicos «Ibn Arabi», inv. M-18-1-84-P-1-3, Murcia). **237a-b**) Talisman or charm in the form of a miniature sword, Andalusian 13-14 cents AD (ex-T. Ibrahim).

The plaque from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar is generally considered to have been made in the workshop at the Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos and having its closest parallel in the 12th-13th century enamelled metalwork added to an earlier Andalusian ivory box now in the Treasury of Burgos Cathedral⁸⁹. When compared to other examples of Spanish enamelwork, the Gibraltar plaque looks more 12th than 13th century to me. The colours used in the Gibraltar plaque are a bright blue and a paler blue, an olive or deep green and a pale green, a brick red and a white. There is no yellow, and W.L. Hildburgh pointed out that a lack of yellow was a characteristic of Spanish enamels. He also listed the colours of the Palencia casket enamels as light lapis-blue, turquoise-blue, bluish-green, dull red-purple and white; those of the Oviedo plaque as lapis-blue, turquoise-blue and red⁹⁰.

THE BELT FRAGMENTS DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: THE BIRD

The bird motif itself was so widespread in the Iberian peninsula throughout the early and high medieval period that it can hardly be used to locate or date the enamel plaque's origins.

⁸⁹ Gonzalez, V., (in correspondence with the author referring to her Doctoral thesis: *Origine, developpment et diffusion de l'émaillerie sur métal en Occident musulman*, Doctoral Nouveau Régime, Sciences Humaines, Section Monde Arabe, Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille I, April 1989).

⁹⁰ Hildburgh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.

This even seems true of birds in the somewhat convoluted position adopted by the specimen on the Gibraltar plaque. The motif appeared on late Visigothic carvings (figures 202a-c) and on Christian art from the 10th century onwards, both northern Iberian and Mozarab (figures 203-206). Here it could perhaps be noted that the bird motif on the enamelled plate on the Caja de las Agatas (figure 204), once thought to date from the mid-8th century, is now considered very early 10th century⁹¹.

The eagle was, of course, the symbol of the St. John Evangelist, yet the use of a bird motif does not in itself indicate a northern Iberian or Christian origin. A winged beast, half bird half feline, appeared on a 4th century AD Gallo-Roman military buckle now in the Musée Fenaille, in Rodez.⁹² This may well have been a distant reflection of the Iranian *simurgh* which itself remained a popular decorative motif long after Iran became part of Islamic civilization. It appeared on 8th-9th century textiles, including the cap or helmet-cover found at Moschevaya Balya in the northern Caucasus⁹³. As already noted, it appeared on the hilt of a 10th century sword from the Serçe Liman shipwreck⁹⁴ (figure 207) and was carved on a probably 11th century ceremonial gate into the Islamic city of Harrān in northern Syria⁹⁵. The gates of Harrān also had carvings of hunting dogs and lions, all of which had some symbolic meaning. Although there was no officially regulated system of heraldry in medieval Islam comparable to that seen in medieval western Europe, animals and other symbols were used as more general expressions of identity, power or political control⁹⁶.

Birds, more often than not clearly birds of prey, commonly appeared in early Islamic art from Egypt, North Africa and Andalus (figures 208-215). The most immediately relevant is that on enamelled jewelry from 11th century Islamic Andalus (figure 215). In this case the colours were an off-white body and head, and a red-orange wing on a pinkish-brown background. Birds of prey then seem to have become even more popular decorative and symbolic motifs in Christian Iberia from the 11th to 14th centuries (figures 216-234). Several of them are very similar to the Gibraltar plaque, particularly those in enamelwork, and some of these may be of Islamic Andalusian origin or have been the work of Muslim craftsmen under Christian rule. Whereas M-M. Gauthier merely stated that the bird motif was characteristic of enamels from Silos⁹⁷, W.I. Hildburgh's maintained that 'bird-like monsters' rather than realistic birds of prey were typically Spanish⁹⁸, with those on the Casket of St. Dominic from Santo Domingo de Silos as prime examples (figure 226). Hildburgh may, in fact, have identified a motif which was not merely typical of Spanish enamelwork but which reached Spain from Iran via the Middle East and Islamic Andalus. Like many other forms of decoration based on living forms, the bird largely dropped out of favour in the emphatically Islamic and orthodox Naṣrid period, yet it did not disappear entirely (figure 235).

THE BELT FRAGMENTS DECORATIVE ELEMENTS: THE STAR

The final decorative motif is a six-pointed star within a circle on the bronze strap-end (figure 7d). This is at once highly distinctive and very difficult to place in a 12th century

⁹¹ Gauthier, *Op. Cit.*, p. 41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹³ Jeroussalinskaya, A., «La Cafetan aux Simourghs du Tombeau de Mochtchevaya Balja (Caucase Septentrional)», *Studia Iranica*, VI, 1978, pp. 184-86.

⁹⁴ Schwarzer, J. & E.C. Deal, *Op. Cit.*, p. 54

⁹⁵ Rice, D.S., «Medieval Harrān: Studies in its Topography and Monuments, I», *Anatolian Studies*, II 1952, pp. 52 & 65.

⁹⁶ Leaf, W., «Developments in the System of Armorial Insignia during the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Periods», *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, CXV, 1983, p. 61.

⁹⁷ Gauthier, M-M., *Op. Cit.*, p. 93.

⁹⁸ Hildburgh, W.L., *Op. Cit.*, p. 56.

western Islamic or Iberian context. It could be seen simply as a Star of David and, as explained earlier, Jews played a major political, cultural and even military role in this part of the world since even before the Islamic conquest of the Iberian peninsula. The six-pointed star was used as a decorative motif in 10th and 11th century jewelry from Andalus, some of which was enamelled⁹⁹ and, very unusually, on an early 13th century Andalusia ceramic jug, none of which had any obvious Jewish associations. Furthermore the six-pointed star had appeared much earlier on a headdress worn by the Eparchs of Nubia on medieval wall paintings from Faras Cathedral and elsewhere¹⁰⁰. At this stage there is simply not enough evidence to draw any conclusions from the presence of this motif on the strap-end from Martin's Cave in Gibraltar.

PROVENANCE & DATE: SUMMARY

On balance the evidence presented above indicates that the two swords and the remains of one or two belts or baldrics found in Martin's Cave date from the mid-12th century AD. Both weapons, and probably all the baldric fragments including the enamelled plaque, were of Islamic origin, probably made in Andalus or Morocco. Why they were buried in Martin's cave remains much more of a problem. Yet it remains possible, even perhaps likely, that they were placed there for unorthodox talismanic reasons during the foundation of the city of *Madinat al-Fath*, today's Gibraltar town, by the *Muwahhidin* (Almohades), perhaps even during the Caliph *aAbd al-Mu'min*'s visit to Gibraltar from November 1160 to early 1161 AD. If this is the case, then the long neglected swords and associated items from Martin's Cave are amongst the most important artifacts in Gibraltar's cultural history. Whatever the case, they remain unique examples of 12th century western Islamic military technology which deserve far more attention, far more conservation, and better display than they have yet received.

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⁹⁹ Dodds, J.D., *Op. Cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁰⁰ Plumley, J.M., «An Eighth-century Arabic letter to the King of Nubia», *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, LI, 1975, p. 245.