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 A Story of Reconstruction - Part II

## 5. Scabbard

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According to Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:35), the scabbards of medieval swords were mostly made of wood or leather, and, therefore, the majority of them are not extant. There are, of course, some exceptions, such as the leather scabbard on the belt of Saint Hadrian from the 13<sup>th</sup> century that is kept in Historisches Museum in Bamberg. Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:35) adds that the scabbard of the *Reichsschwert* is another rare example that has survived. The scabbard of the *Reichsschwert* is one of the most beautiful works on sword scabbards. It is 101 cm long, 6.7 cm wide close to the scabbard mouth, and 3 cm close to the chape, meaning that it tapers towards its end (Schulze-Dörrlamm, 1995:117). The wooden scabbard consists of two slats of hard olivewood, and it is encased with gold panels. The edges/corners of the scabbard are covered with bands of gold plates from the scabbard mouth to the scabbard chape. In the middle of these bands are garnet stones in bezel settings, encircled with ringed pearl wires. The outer edges of these bands are also decorated with pearl wires.

The gold panels on the front and back of the scabbard have fourteen rectangular figures of standing kings in repoussé work. The figures are placed in a way that they are right way up (in the right position) if one holds the sword with the tip showing upward. Oakshott (1991:56) deduces from this fact that the *Reichsschwert's* scabbard was solely made for ceremonial purposes (such as coronation purposes). Further, Oakshott suggests that the scabbard and the sword itself were made in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Between each pair of panels, there is enamelling work in the form of tiny squares of red, white, and blue that are set in a diaper pattern (see Oakshott, 1991:56). Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:38) explains that the decisive hint that the scabbard was made during the Salian period and not during the era of Otto IV is due to the number, sequence, and identity of fourteen monarchs. Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:38) does not agree with the assumptions by Haupt (1939), Kahsnitz (1979), and Scharmm (1983), who suggest that the number of monarchs is a symbolic sequence of fourteen (2 times 7) of anonymous rulers. Moreover, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:39) explains that this is a sequence of German kings and emperors from Charlemagne to Henry III and states that the most important evidence for this assumption is that next to the youngest ruler, namely Louis IV, the Child (900-911 A.D.), there is a carved inscription "L : REX" (King L.). Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:39) stresses that many researchers either understood it as a late addition or misinterpreted its meaning. If one counts the rulers from the scabbard mouth to the scabbard chape consecutively, then this figure can be only identical to the young and beardless king number six, namely the last Carolingian Ludwig IV, the Infant. This German monarch ruled from 900 until 911 A.D. and was never enthroned as the emperor. Ludwig IV is the only monarch on the scabbard that is provided with this letter. This is due to the fact that only German kings and emperors are portrayed on the scabbards and not the kings of West Franks and Italian monarchs who were crowned, such as Emperor Charles the Bald (875-877 A.D.). Additionally, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:39) states that this



inscription does not take the division of the Empire of 876 A.D. into consideration because from the three sons of Louis the German or Louis the Second (843-876 A.D.), namely Charles, the Fat (876-887 A.D.), Carloman (King of 876-887 A.D.), and Louis III, the Younger (King of 876-882 A.D.), only Charles the Fat (876-887 A.D.) is portrayed on the scabbard. The reason for this is because Charles the Fat was the only one who was not only a king but also an emperor and who reunified the whole Empire under his rule. Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:39) does not agree with Speneder (1929), who considered the end of the sequence of the fourteen rulers with the Salian Conrad II (1024-1039 A.D.). She stresses that the end of the sequence is with the son of Conrad II, namely Henry III (1039-1056 A.D.). It is important to take into consideration that some of the rulers' faces in gold repoussée are crushed and not easily recognizable. However, the copper-plate engraving of the scabbard of the *Reichsschwert* from 1751 A.D. shows the figures in perfect state. So a comparison and identification could be made (see Schulze-Dörrlamm, 1995:18-124).

1. Charlemagne (in German Karl der Große) (768-814 A.D.), King and Emperor
2. Louis, the Pious (in German Ludwig der Fromme) (814-840 A.D.), King and Emperor
3. Louis, the German, also known as Louis the Second or Louis the Bavarian (in German, Ludwig der Deutsche) (843-876 A.D.), King
4. Charles, the Fat (in German, Karl III. der Dicke), (876-887 A.D.), King and Emperor
5. Arnulf von Carinthia (in German, Arnulf von Kärnten), (887-889 A.D.), King and Emperor
6. Louis IV, the Child (in German, Ludwig IV. das Kind), (900-911 A.D.), King
7. Conrad I, of Germany (in German, Konrad I. von Franken), (911-918 A.D.), King
8. Henry I, of Germany (in German, Heinrich I.) (919-936 A.D.), King
9. Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor (in German, Otto I. der Große) (936-973 A.D.), King and Emperor
10. Otto II, Holy Roman Emperor (in German, Otto II.) (973-983 A.D.), King and Emperor
11. Otto III, Holy Roman Emperor (in German, Otto III.) (983-1002 A.D.), King and Emperor
12. Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor (in German, Heinrich II) (1002-1024 A.D.), King and Emperor
13. Conrad II, Holy Roman Emperor (in German, Konrad II) (1024-1039), King and Emperor
14. Henry III, the Black or the Pious (in German, Heinrich III) (1039-1056), King and Emperor

Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:39) adds that the very fact that the Salian Heinrich III is portrayed as the fourteenth and last king on the scabbard does not mean that the scabbard was made for him. Moreover, Schulze-Dörrlamm suggests that his son Henry IV (1056-1106 A.D.) should have ordered the scabbard to be made. She adds that the reason that he was not portrayed could be due to Christian humility or because of keeping the symmetry of the figures. Additionally, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:41) argues that the engraved inscription "L:REX" proves that the scabbard of the *Reichsschwert* was not made during the reign of Otto IV (1198-1218 A.D.). If it had been the case, a symbolic number from 2 times 7 rulers (the Christian symbolism for the numbers 2 and 7) would have been chosen instead, and the nomination of the young king with the number six would have not made sense. Contrary to the assumption of Fillitz (1954), who considers the inscription "L:REX" as cursoriness

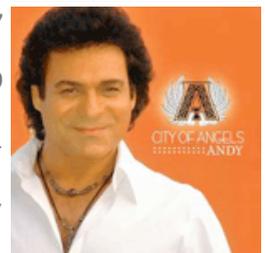
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in engraving, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:41) identifies them as Latin capital letters. She adds that similar letters were used often on engraved Romanesque bronze bowls in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, they were also used often in Ottonian and Salian eras. As evidence, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995:41) provides the name inscriptions next to the reliefs of King Otto III and the Empress Theophanu on the front cover of Codex Aureus of Echternach (985-991 A.D.) as well as the engraved portrait of Saint Mauritius on the back cover of Mauritius-Evangeliars of Mainz from the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century as well as the inscriptions on the gravestone of Archbishop Liemar from Bremen (died in 1101 A.D.) (for further evidence that the sword scabbard was made during the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, see Schulze-Dörrlamm, 1995:41-43).

## **6. Reconstruction of the *Reichsschwert***

It is important to take into consideration that *Reichsschwert* was already copied and reconstructed by Paul Beumers in 1915. This copy exactly matches the original in all aspects, meaning the whole sword and its scabbard, and is kept in Krönungssaal des Rathauses in Aachen (see Lauer, 2000:317). By the end of 2001, a team of German experts was set up to reconstruct this sword again. It is important to take into consideration that the scabbard was not planned to be copied but only the *Reichsschwert* itself. Instead of replicating the original scabbard, the team decided to make a wooden scabbard covered with leather outside and filled with sheepskin inside. This model was based on other medieval swords so that after the blade was oiled it can have been preserved accordingly. The team was set up as the following:

- a) Mr. Frank Johannes: bladesmith with years of experience in forging and making European medieval and Renaissance swords. He was responsible for forging the blade, mounting the crossguard and the pommel made by Mr. Fritz and Alexander Rottler, mounting the twisted silver wrapping and gilded silver wrappings made by Mr. Würkner on the handle, and making the wooden handle.
- b)



First

Next

Mr. Fritz Rottler: master goldsmith with 35 years of professional work experience in goldsmithing. Mr. Rottler has restored many antique jewelry and artifacts during his career. He was responsible for planning, organization, coordination, drafts, and final drawings of the crossguard and the pommel.

c) Mr. Alexander Rottler: a goldsmith who was responsible for preparing wax models of the crossguard and the pommel for the lost-wax process, adding the finishing touches on the final cast parts, adding the finishing touches to the engravings, making adjustments to the tang; niello, and partial enamelling.

d) Mr. Alexander Würkner: scabbard and shield maker with years of experience in making authentic medieval scabbards and shields. He was responsible for making the scabbard and silver wires for the *Reichsschwert*.

As is known, many books show only one side of the *Reichsschwert*, meaning the side that shows the engraved Arms of the Empire (Eagle of the Empire) (see North, 1994:37; Seitz, 1965:140-141, and Oakshott, 1997: plate 5B; 1991:56), whereas the side of the engraved personal arms of Otto IV (1198-1218 A.D.), a demi-eagle and three leopards, is normally not shown. However, Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995) provides detailed pictures and drawings of different parts of the sword. Leimsidor (1999:268) also provides excellent pictures of the other side of the pommel, namely the engraved personal arms of Otto IV, a demi-eagle and three leopards. Fortunately, as mentioned above, all pictures, drawings, and dimensions of the *Reichsschwert* can be found in the very well-researched book by Ms. Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm (1995), entitled *Das Reichsschwert: Ein Herrschaftszeichen des Saliers Heinrich IV und des Welfen Otto IV*. This book is an excellent academic book and the best text published on this magnificent sword. Additionally, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna kindly provided Mr. Würkner and Mr. Rottler with exact dimensions and extra pictures, among them a color picture, showing the gilded pommel and crossguard. The end result of the work of this team of professionals was truly amazing. Mr. Johannes forged the blade based on the exact dimensions of the original blade. It is important to note that Mr. Johannes signed the blade not in the fuller but with

his own mark, namely a cross crosslet, on the right side of the fuller, close to the crossguard. This was done to make a difference between this sword and the original one. Additionally, Mr. Johannes engraved the year of forging the blade, 2002, on the tang of the blade. Then, he sent the blade to Mr. Firtz Rottler and Mr. Alexander Rottler. They made the pommel and the crossguard based on original crossguard and pommel. First, the pommel and the crossguard were made in wax. Next, through the lost wax process, the molten massive silver 925/000 was poured into the mold. After solidification, Mr. Alexander Rottler did the final touches to the engravings and partially nielloed and enameled the crossguard and the pommel. The attention to detail of these gentlemen was truly amazing. Then, the blade, the pommel, and the crossguard were sent to Mr. Johannes again. In the next step, Mr. Johannes assembled the crossguard, the handle, the pommel, and the twisted silver wires on the sword handle. Afterward, the sword was sent to Mr. Würkner, who made the wooden scabbard. The scabbard was made of two slats of hard olivewood that were fitted with sheepskin inside and glued to each other. Then, the scabbard was covered with claret-colored leather. The tip of the scabbard and the belt buckles were made of brass. The end result is truly amazing and beautiful.

## 7. Measurements of the Copy of the Sword

Total length: cm	110
Length of the blade: 95.3 cm	
Length of the fullers: 69.8	
Width of the fullers: cm	0.9
Width of the crossguard: 19.7 cm	
Width of the blade at the forte: cm	4.5
Point of balance: cm to the guard	14
Center of percussion: 27 cm to the tip	
The weight of the gilded silver crossguard and pommel: 600 grams	
Weight of the sword without scabbard: 1380 grams	
Weight of the sword with scabbard: 2095 grams	

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