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ALEXANDRIE

SOCIÉTÉ DE PUBLICATIONS ÉGYPTIENNES

—
1937

European Swords with Arabic Inscriptions

from the Armoury of Alexandria.

At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, London, in 1892, the late Baron de Cosson ¹, a well known authority on ancient arms and armour, exhibited and read an interesting paper on an Italian sword of the XVth Century bearing an arabic inscription ². The same sword was also described by Sir Guy Laking, Keeper of the King's Armour at Windsor, in his great work, his remarks being based on the former description of it ³.

We have thought it interesting to submit this sword (our No. VI) to a new investigation and to examine, if possible, other weapons of the kind, of which Baron de Cosson mentioned two, one in the Arsenal of Istanbul, the other in the Royal Armoury of Turin. Actually, the arabic text of the inscription engraved on the sword was not published by Baron de Cosson, but a translation of it, done by the late Mr. Rieu of the British Museum, was given. As the deciphering did not seem us quite satisfactory, and possibly needed amendment, a photograph and a rubbing of the inscription were obtained. At the same time we began inquiries to obtain exact information regarding similar swords preserved in other collections.

¹ On the life and work of Baron C. A. de Cosson, see J. C. MANN, in *Zeitschrift für histor. Waffen-und Kostümkunde*, Neue Folge, Band III. Jahrgang VII, Heft 4, September 1929, p. 90-96.

² BARON DE COSSON, *On an Italian Sword of the XVth Century, bearing an Arabic Inscription*, in *Proceedings of the Soc. of Antiquaries*, 2d Series, XIV, 1893, p. 238-242.

³ SIR GUY LAKING, *A Record of European Armour and Arms through seven Centuries*, together with a Record of Armour Sales (1881-1924), 6 volumes, in 4^o London 1920-1925 ; see vol. II, p. 287 and fig. 667.

In this connection we received the most kindly assistance from the then Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, Mr. J. G. Mann, now Keeper of the Wallace Collection. From him we heard of the existence in America of swords, similar to that of Baron de Cosson, and Mr. Stephen V. Grancsay, Curator of the Arms and Armour Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New-York, has very kindly provided us two photographs of the sword preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, its description extracted from the Catalogue of the Bashford Dean Collection (our No. IV), the rubbings of the arabic inscription on a sword in the collection of Miss Harriet M. Dean (No. V), and on two swords belonging to Mr. Carl Otto von Kienbusch (No. I and III). These materials were obtained through the courtesy of Prof. C.T. Currelly, Director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archæology, Toronto, Canada. The generous response of this gentleman has enabled us to publish all the information concerning the four swords of the Museum at Toronto, with photographs of them and rubbings of the texts (No. II, and VII to IX).

We have at present no information concerning the swords which may still exist at Istanbul, nor the arabic text of that at Turin, which Angelo Angelucci¹ ascribed to the XIIIth Century, nor any data on other swords existing in certain other American Collections, but we hope to publish them later on.

The texts on the nine inscriptions we publish below are, however, very representative and of historical value, each of the swords having been « given as a legacy to the Armoury of the Frontier-City of Alexandria », according to the wording of the arabic engraved texts, which give also the names of the sultans, or of the emirs who made the bequest.

The swords are mentioned as under in chronological order.

¹ According to Baron de Cosson's memoir. We have not the *Catalogo della R. Armeria di Torino*. Per A. ANGELUCCI, Torino 1890.

I.

Collection of Mr. C.O. von Kienbusch, New York.— We have not a description of the sword but a rubbing (fig. 1) of the inscription.

Five lines, on one side only, in small engraved cursive characters. Dated: 769 (1367-1368).

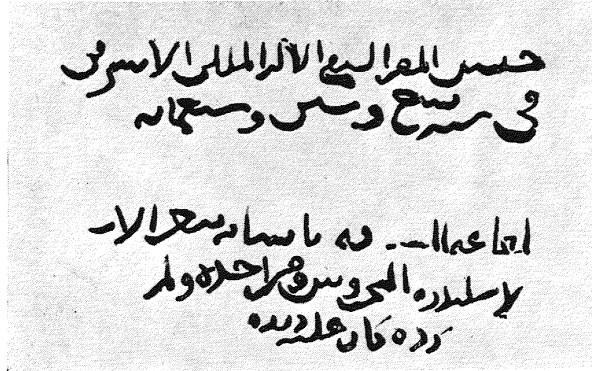


Fig. 1. No. I. — Inscription on a sword in the Collection of Mr. Carl Otto v. Kienbusch, New-York.

حسب المقر السيدي الأكرز الملكي الأشرفي
في سنة تسع وستين وسبع مائة
[بالقاعة المعروفة بإنشائه بشعر الاسد (sic)]
الإسكندرية المحروس ومن أخذه ولم
يرده كان عليه ذنبه

«(1) Unalienably bequeathed by His Excellency al - Saifî al - Ukuz al-Malikî al-Ashrafî, (2) in the year 769 (1367-68), (3) [in] the qâ'a he built, [and bearing his name], in the Frontier-City(4)of al-Iskandariya, the well-guarded. Who shall seize upon it, and not (5) return it, that will be imputed to him as a crime. »

Line 1: the verb *habasa* "to bequeath", i e. to make a thing to remain in itself unalienable, not to be inherited, nor sold, nor given away, has practically the same sense as *waqafa*, more commonly used in this country. This expression occurs at the beginning of all the inscriptions we publish.

“His Excellency” renders the arabic *al-maqarr*, a well-known epithet qualifying emirs of a high rank. Al-Saifî, i. e. Saif addin, al-Ukuz al-Malikî al-Ashrafî, who was a mamlûk of Sultan Malik Ashraf Sha’bân, is not an unknown emir. He is mentioned in the historical text relating the attack of Peter I of Lusignan on Alexandria, in the month of Muharram 767 (October 1365), at the beginning of the reign of Sha’bân ¹. He was then wâlî, governor of the town, and he gave orders to repair the Green-Gate, Bâb al-Akhdar, a few yards from the Western harbour, facing N. N. W., and a second and a third postern were at that time added to that gate. But the duration of his governorship was not very long, as in Shawwâl 768 (June 1367) he was replaced by the renowned emir Salâh addîn Khalil Ibn ’Arrâm, appointed for the second time to that office. Ukuz was not long afterwards chosen as vizir by the Sultan, but for a short time only. ².

Line 3: a *qâ’a* is something more than an ordinary room, it is a hall. They were many *qâ’ât* in the Armoury, *Qasr al-silâh*, of the city ³, and there were others outside this special building; we know for instance of «the hall of the archers of the Qarâfa», situated in the Qarâfa quarter, outside the walls, near the sea on the Pharos island ⁴. When the young Sultan Sha’bân paid an official visit to the town in 770 (1368), he gave order to build a new *qâ’a* in the said Qasr, in which was then stored a huge quantity of arms. It is said that his predecessors had done the same, and he was anxious that his name should be called in mind and immortalised by such a hall ⁵.

The expression *al-ma’rûfa bi-inshâihî*” built by him and bearing his name” is complete in No. II. It is interesting to note that the emir imitated the sultans; and from this, and from his epithet ‘Excellency’, we may conclude that it was built possibly during his vizirship.

¹ *Kitâb al-ilmâm*, Berlin Ms. fol. 102 ro, 185 vo, 187 ro. On that text, see ET. COMBE, *Les Sultans Ashraf Sha’bân et Ghaurî à Alexandrie*, in this *Bulletin* No. 30, 1936, p. 34 ss. We hope to publish the arabic text of the Berlin Ms., with a french translation and commentary, during 1937.

² *Kitâb al-ilmâm*, Cairo Ms., fol. 98 ro.

³ *Idem*, Berlin Ms., fol 109 ro and vo; 118 ro; 238 ro.

⁴ *Idem*, Berlin Ms. 26 ro, 104 ro and vo, 105 ro, 109 ro and vo. There were halls of arms in the remains of the old Pharos, which are also mentioned in the “Pharos Shadow Pantomime”, KAHLE, *Leuchtturmspiel*, p. 9, 2; p. 7 arabic text.

⁵ *Kitâb al-ilmâm*, Berlin ms., 238 ro; see this *Bulletin*, No. 30, p. 41.

Frontier-City, *thaghr*, is a well-known epithet of Alexandria, as of every town which might be directly menaced by the enemy.

At the end of the line 3, the engraver began to write : « Alexandria ».

Line 4 : the « well-guarded » city, *al-mahrûs*, is one of those typical eulogies, with a precative sense, that very commonly follows names of towns ; the expression *harasaha Allah* « may God guard it », is also frequent. The same expression No. II, VI to VIII.

The last phrase of the inscription is a curse, that should shield the sword from robbery! The uttering of imprecations on the works of art, and on the monuments, or at the end of legacies, is frequently used. As regards the punishments for robbery of arms, particular to Alexandria, we may recall the historical text carved above the entrance of Fort Qâyt-Bây, by order of Sultan Ghaurî in 907 (1501) which runs as follows : « It has been decreed, that nobody shall take away from the Royal castle in Alexandria, neither arms, nor guns, nor muskets, nor war-material, nor anything else. Any person belonging to the garrison of the castle, be he mam-lûk, slave or armourer, who should trespass against this order, and who should get out a single object, he will be strangled at the door of the castle; he will bring over him the malediction of God ¹. » Besides, we read in the administrative treatise of Qalqashandî ² : « it is not allowed for anyone to convey in the countries of Rûm, neither arms, nor war-material ». These two texts prove that thefts of arms, as well as unlawful sales of war-material, were not infrequent, even to deliver them to the Franks ³.

II.

Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto.— No. M. 976 described as follows : Sword, the blade Italian of the late 15th Century, with Oriental inscription. Circular copper pommel probably made in Turkey for contemporary use. From the Arsenal at Istanbul. Acquired in 1930. Photo. of one side only (fig. 2) ; no rubbing of the text.

An inscription was, (or is existing), on both sides ; on one of which six lines, in very small cursive characters, disposed in a rectangular frame with open dove-tail. Dated : 770 (1368-69)

¹ VAN BERCHEM, *Corpus Inscr. Arab. Egypte*, vol. I, No. 321, p. 490 ss.

² QALQASHANDI, *Subh*, VII, p. 205.

³ See also WIET, *Notes d'épigraphie*, in *Syria*, VII, p. 173.

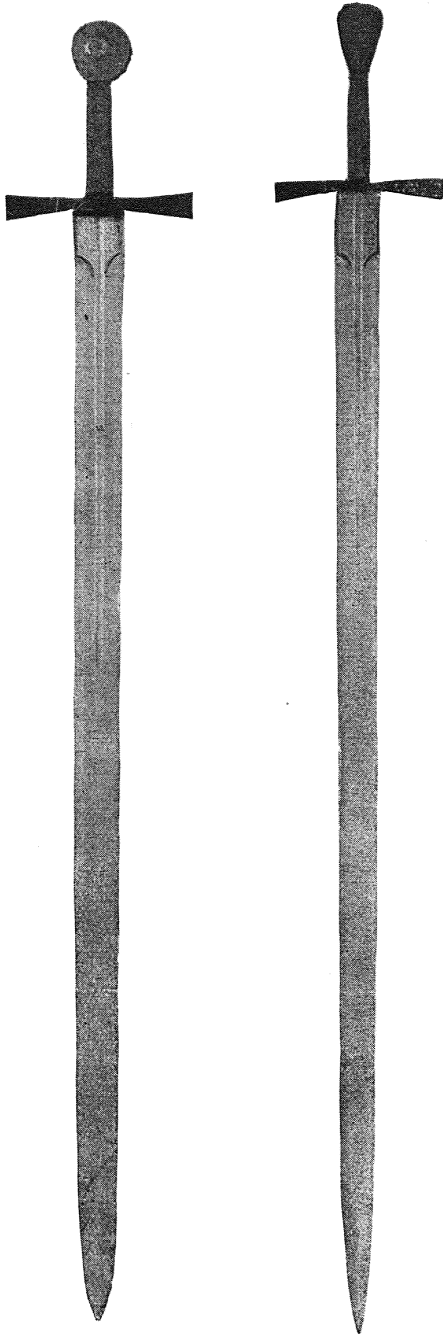


Fig. 2.—No. II, M. 976, and No. VII, M. 973.
Swords in the Royal Ontario Museum
of Archaeology, Toronto.

[حبس ...? ...] A.
 في سنة سبعين B.
 بالقاعة المعروفة
 بإنشائه بنجر المحروس
 من أخذه ولم يردّه كان
 عليه ذنبه
 وسبعائة

«(A) [Unalienably bequeathed by....?....] (B) (1) in the year seventy (6) and seven-hundred (1368-69), (2) in the qâ' a bearing his name, (3) which he built, in the Frontier-City, the well-guarded. (4) Who shall seize upon it, and not return it, that will be (5) imputed to him as a crime. »

We have before us but the small photograph of one side of the sword. It was not very easy to read that text with a magnifying-glass; but with the aid of the preceding text, we may ascertain the accuracy of the deciphering. The beginning of the text was on the other side; it was possibly the same as on No. I. We await a rubbing of the inscription for the exact details of the text.

III.

Collection of Mr. Carl Otto von Kienbusch, New York. — We have not a description of the sword, but a rubbing (fig. 3) of the inscription.

Three lines, on one side only, in small cursive characters, no date, probably 803 (1401).

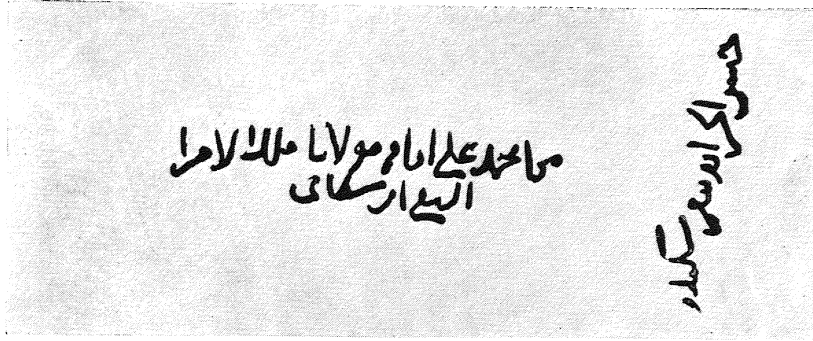


Fig. 3. No. III.— Inscription on a sword in the Collection of Mr. C. O. v. Kienbusch, New-York

حبس الخزانة بشعر سكندر (ية)
مما يحمل على أيام مولانا ملك الأمراء
السيني آرسطاي

«(1) Unalienably bequest of the store-house, in the Frontier-City of Sikandariya; (2) from what has been brought during the days of our Master, Chief of the emirs, (3) al-Saifî Aristây.»

Here *khizâna* «store-house,» instead of magazines of arms, as in No. IV to IX.

Sikandariya, as in No. VI, VII, and IX. The two forms of the name are common in arabic, as well as the adjectives : Sikandari, Iskandari.

The *malik al-umara'*, « Chief of the emirs », mentioned is Saif addîn Aristây al-Zâhirî, an ancient mamlûk of Sultan Zâhir Barqûq. That officer held different offices and was appointed to the governorship of the town,

at the end of Rabi' II 803 (beginning of December 1400). In the same year, Shawwâl 803 (May 1401), he was deposed. His death is recorded the 15th of Rabi' II 811 (September 7th, 1408); he was living in Cairo, probably in disgrace¹. The sword was then given to the armoury of Alexandria in 1401 ; this sword is therefore of XIVth Century workmanship.

IV.

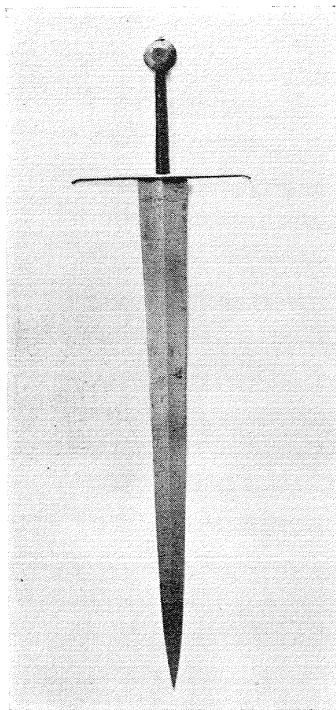


Fig. 4. — No. IV.
Sword in the Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New-York.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. — Described as follows in the *Catalogue of the Bashford Dean Collection*, p. 195-196, No. 138, and plate LII : « Sword, Italian, XVth Century. Wheel pommel ; grip of two plaques of wood ; straight guard with slightly decurved tips. Blade double-edged, wide, tapering, with mid-ridge running almost full length ; stamped on one face is a letter «W», on the other, a cross. Near the guard appears an Arabic inscription, which reads as follows... » (this reading is however erroneous). Photographs of the sword (fig. 4) and of the text (fig. 5).

Two lines, on one side only; slender script recalling the monumental naskhî mamlûk, with long shafts. Dated : 822 (1419), after correction.

ابو النصر شيخ
حبس الملك المؤيد بن جزائن السلاح بشعر الاسكندرية سنة اثنى
وعشر (sic) وثمانية

¹ *Nudjûm*, ed. Popper, VI, p. 9, 55, 85, 289 ; cf. 150-151. WIET, *Manhal*, in *Mémoires, Institut d'Égypte*, XIX, 1932, No. 356.



Fig. 5. — No. IV. Inscription on the sword Fig. 4, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New-York.

«(1) Abu'l-Nasr Shaikh. (2) Unalienably bequeathed by al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, in the magazines of arms, in the Frontier-City of al-Iskandarîya, in the year 812 (*sic*).»

The same text, No. V.

The Sultan Malik Mu'ayyad Abu'l Nasr Shaikh reigned from 815 (1412) until 824 (1421). Although the date is clearly written on the two swords, it ought to be corrected to **عشرين** «twenty», 822 (1419). Such an error is not uncommon.

The magazines of arms, *Khazâ'in al-silâh*, here, as in No. V to IX, are usually called in the arabic historical texts *silâh-khânâh*, which was a part of the building mentioned under the name *Qasr al-silâh*, Castle of Arms, or Armoury.

This Armoury was constructed in a place called *al-zarîba* the «enclosure» the exact position of which we do not know; it was probably in the Western part of the town. During the plundering by Peter I of Lusignan, the *qasr* was not destroyed by the invaders, its exact nature having escaped their attention ¹. The warder, *hâris*, was then the shaikh Abu'Abd-Allah Muhammad ibn Yûsuf, surnamed *Qarâdjâ* ², who has related what

¹ *Kitâb al-ilmâm*, Berlin Ms. 109 ro, 118 ro; cf. this *Bulletin*, No. 30, 1936 p. 41.

² *Idem*, fol. 109 vo.

happened in the street in front of the edifice. It is from there that all necessary arms and armour were taken by the inhabitants on the arrival of the Cypriotes, as well as in the following year, in 768 (1367), when a renewed attack was feared ¹. During the reign of Zâhir Barqûq, these magazines were repaired ². Ghars addîn Khalîl al-Zâhirî, who was governor of the city in 837 (1434), says in his political and administrative picture of the Mamlûk State in the XIIIth and the XIVth Century ³ : « The Qasr al-silâh is full of such a quantity of arms of various kinds, that, if the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Egypt did go there, it would be sufficient to arm them all. »

V.

Collection of Miss Harriet M. Dean, New-York. — We have not a description of the sword ; in the Catalogue quoted under No. IV, it is said that this sword is similar to that of the Metropolitan Museum.—Read on a rubbing (fig. 6).

Two lines, on one side only ; same script as No. IV. Dated : 822 (1419), after correction.

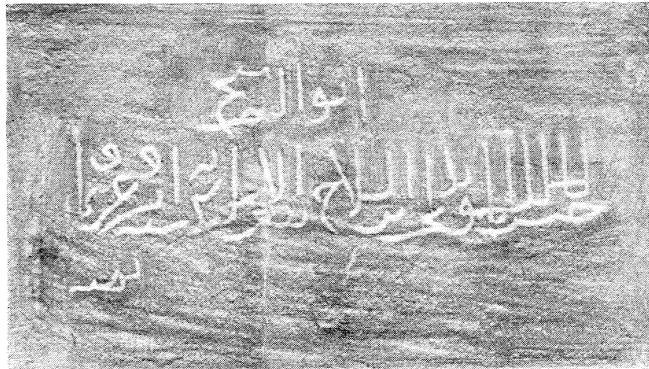


Fig. 6. No. V. — Inscription on a sword in the Collection of Miss Harriet M. Dean, New-York

أبو النصر شيخ
حبس الملك المؤيد بخزائن السلاح بفتح الاسكندرية سنة
اثن عشر (sic) وثمانية

¹ *Idem*, fol. 168 vo-169 ro.

² IBN IYAS, I, p. 315, where are mentioned the constructions of Barqûq, sultan since 784 (1382) ; at the same time he built the walls of Damanhûr.

³ *Zubda kashf al-Mamâlik*, édit. Ravaisse, p. 40.

«(1) Abu'l-Nasr Shaikh. (2) Unalienably bequeathed by al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, in the magazines of arms, in the Frontier-City of al-Iskandariya, in the year 812 (*sic*).»

Same text as No. IV ; read accordingly 822 (1419).

VI.

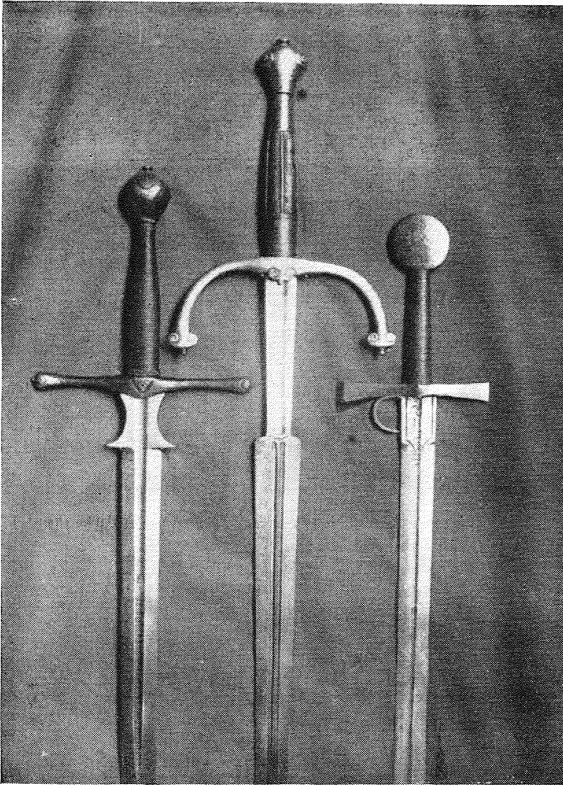


Fig. 7. — No.VI. Swords in the Baroness de Cosson Collection, Florence. (No. VI. is the sword on the right)

A. حبس الملك الأشرف برسباني عز نصره بخزائن
السلح المنصوره بثغر سكندرية المحروس
من متحصله في شهر
B. المحرم سنة ستة وثلاثين وثمانمائة

Collection of Baroness de Cosson, Florence. — Described by the late Baron, *Proceed. Soc. of Antiquaries*, London, 2d series, XIV, 1893, p. 238-242 ; the deciphering of Mr. Rieu is not accurate. Photo of one side (B) (fig. 7). Read on a rubbing of both sides, skilfully done by Miss Jennings-Bramly.

Four lines, three on one side, one on the other ; small script, disposed in a rectangular frame with open dove-tail. In (A), the characters are a little bigger and recall a small naskhî mam-lûk ; besides, the text goes beyond the frame over the dove-tail.

« (1) Unalienably bequeathed by al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbây, — may his victory be glorious! — in the magazines (2) of the victorious arms, in the Frontier-City of Sikandariya, the well-guarded, (3) from what came into his ownership, in the month (4) of al-Muharram, of the year 836 (August-September 1432). »

The same text on No. VII.

Sultan Barsbây, 825-843 (1422-1438), also named No. VII and VIII, was the conqueror of Cyprus, the invasion of which began in 829 (1426)¹.

'azza nasruhu «may his victory be glorious» is a common eulogy, which follows the name of the Mamlûk Sultans ; it is recalled in the qualification of the arms as *mansûra* «victorious.» These epithets may be an intended allusion to the past victory of Barsbây over the Cypriotes, or they may be the usual precative eulogy for the future. For the same formulae, see No. VII.

For the magazines of arms, No. IV ; for the well-guarded city No. I. The name of the month « Muharram » is frequently preceded by the article as here.

Baron de Cosson, having recalled the conquest of Cyprus by Barsbây, has suggested, that « the sword very probably formed part of the spoil taken in his victorious expeditions, and that the inscription was placed on it by order of the sultan when he learnt the death of his enemy ». The sword indeed was dated about two years after the death of John of Cyprus. Although we quite agree, that this sword, No. VII and others of the collections mentioned in this memoir, were very probably war-booty, we do not find in the inscriptions engraved by order of the donors any intrinsic proof, that the arms have been taken from the Christians at the indicated dates.

However in the description of the conquest of Cyprus and in the account of the arrival in Cairo of King John with his barons, we read that the sultan gave orders to hang the King's helmet in the mosque he had just built ; « it is hanging there still to-day », says Ibn Iyas, who wrote at the beginning of the XVIth Century ².

¹ See also M. MUSTAFA ZIADA, *The Mamluk Conquest of Cyprus*, in *Bulletin, Faculty of Arts, University of Egypt*, I, 1933, p. 90 ss ; II, 1934, p. 37 ss.

² Cf. *Nudjûm*, VI, p. 791 ; Mrs. DEVONSHIRE, in *Bulletin, Institut Français d'Archéol. Orient*, XXV, 1925, p. 122 ; IBN IYAS, II, p. 18.

From the description of Baron de Cosson, we quote the following interesting remarks : « There is one peculiar feature about this weapon, and that is the semicircular guard for the forefinger, growing out of one quillon, or half pas d'âne, if I may so term it. At present I only know of two other swords of this peculiar type, one being in the armoury of Constantinople, also bearing an arabic inscription and the other in the Royal Armoury at Turin. This last is a somewhat bigger and weightier sword than mine, and Angelo Angelucci, in his recent catalogue of the collection, ascribed it to the XIIIth century, probably somewhat to early a date for it. A sword at Windsor, belonging to H.M. the Queen, has the same peculiar guard ; the hilt is probably of the end of the XIVth or the first half of the XVth century ; the blade, or at least the gilding and engraving of it, are of the XVIth or XVIIth century.

The reason for this guard for the forefinger is found in a practice peculiar to the Italians and perhaps also to the Spaniards, for the Queen's sword was supposed to be Spanish, which I have traced back as far as the middle of the XIVth century.

In Northern Europe the plain cross-hilted sword was always grasped with all the fingers round the grip, but the Italians very often put the forefinger over the quillon. By this means they were better able to direct the edge of the sword in delivering a cut, and they also secured the hilt more firmly in the hand.

The first illustration of this practice which I have found is in a grand picture of the Coronation of the Virgin by Orcagna, in the National Gallery, probably painted about the middle of the XIVth century, in which St. Paul holds his sword with his forefinger over the quillon. Whilst the same thing is seen in a fresco at the Campo Santo at Pisa representing scenes from the life of St. Euphysius (1380-90), and also in the great naval combat at Spinello Aretino, Palazzo Publico at Bologna, dating from the same epoch. (The author gives other examples).

The form of the hilt of the sword studied would indicate the second half of the XIVth or the first half of the XVth century as its date. The blade has a ricasso ; a most unusual feature at this epoch. It has a central groove extending less than half its length, and there are two short lateral grooves on the ricasso.

If the blade were found without the inscription and the hilt, one would most certainly assign it to some time in the XVIth cent. and it is

interesting as showing that this type of blade had a much earlier origin than is commonly suspected.

At the end of the groove is an armourer's mark, a Gothic 'M' surmounted by a cross. I have no doubt this indicates Milan as the place of its manufacture. Milan is known to have produced great numbers of blades of remarkable excellence from the XIIIth century downwards, as well as armour and arms of every kind.» ¹.

VII.

Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto. — No. M. 973 described as follows: Sword, Italian; late XVth Century. Fige-shaped pommel, flattened quillons. The blade bears an oriental inscription on both sides. From the Arsenal at Istanbul. Acquired in 1930.—Photo. of (B) (fig. 2) and rubbing of both sides (fig. 8).

Five lines, three on one side, two on the other; cursive script; well engraved inscription disposed in a rectangular frame with open dove-tail. Dated : 836 (1432).

حبس الملك الأشرف برساي عز
نصره بخزائن السلاح
المنصورة بشغر سكندرية
المحروس من متحصله في شهر
المحرم سنة ستة وثلاثين وثمانمائة

A.
B.

«(1) Unalienably bequeathed by al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbây, — may be glorious (2) his victory! — in the magazines of arms, (3) the victorious, in the Frontier-City of Sikandariya, (4) the well-guarded, from what came into his ownership, in the month of (5) al-Muharram, of the year 836 (August-September 1432), »

The same text as No. VI, for which see the commentary above. This sword is therefore of the early XVth Century.

¹ BARON DE COSSON, *Letters concerning Milanese armourer's marks*, in *Burlington Magazine*, XXXVI, February and March, 1920, p. 99 and 150.



Fig. 8. — No. VII. Inscription on a sword in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto. M. 973.

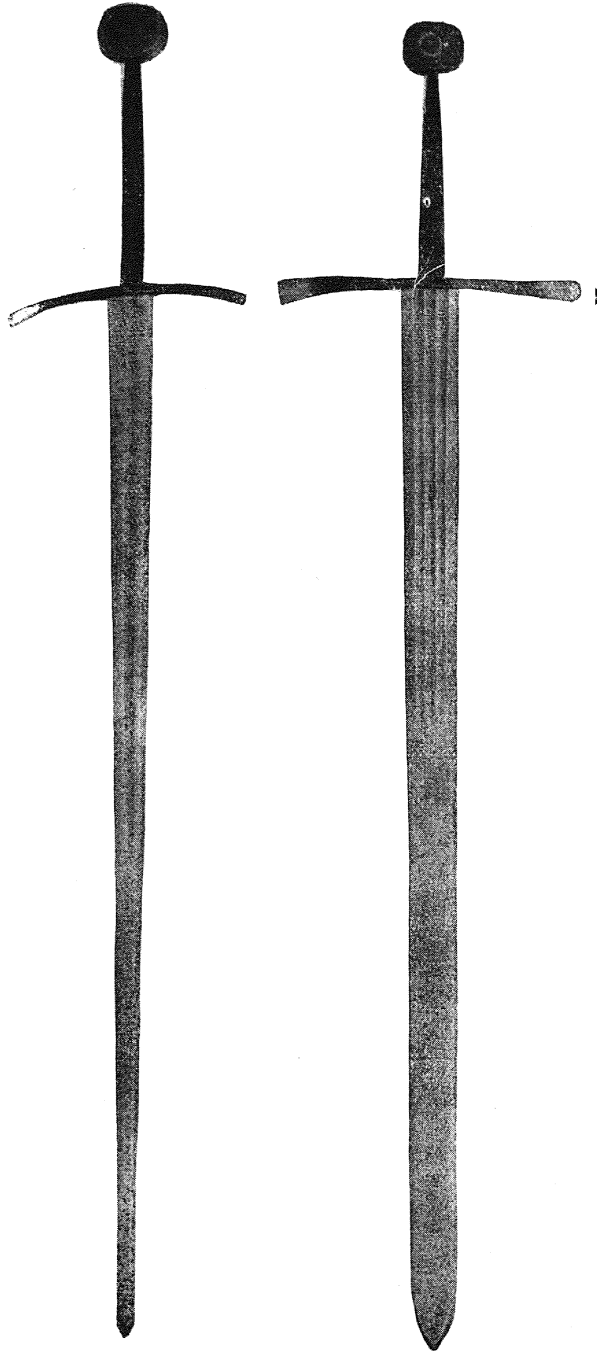


Fig. 9. No. VIII, M. 975, and No. IX, M. 974 — Sword.
in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto

VIII.

Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto. — No. M. 975, Described as follows: Sword, bastard type. Italian, mid-XVth Century. Lozenge-shaped pommel, wide counter-curved quillons, broad blade with triple grooves, bearing an Oriental inscription on both sides. From the arsenal at Istanbul. Acquired in 1930. — Photo. of (A) (fig. 9) and rubbing of both sides (fig. 10).

Four lines, three on one side, one on the other ; small cursive script. Dated: 840 (1436-37).

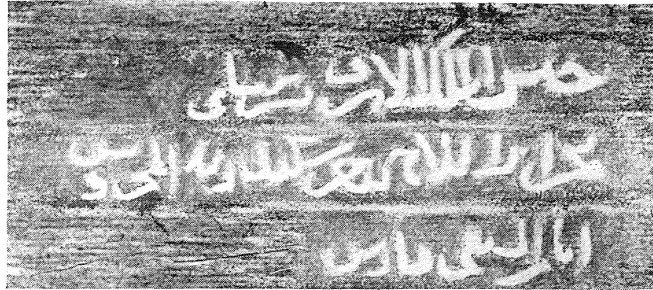


Fig. 10. No. VIII. Inscription on a sword in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto: M. 975

حس الملك الأشرف برسباي A.
بمخزائن السلاح بشهر سكندرية المحروس
أيام السيف فارس
الشاذ عام أربعين وثمانمائة B.

« (1) Unalienably bequeathed by al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbây, (2) in the magazines of arms, in the Frontier-City of Sikandariya, the well-guarded, (3) in the days of al-Saifî Fâris, (4) the commissary, on the year 840 (1436-37). »

For Barsbây, see No. VI ; for Sikandariya, No. III ; and for the eulogy, the well-guarded, No. I.

Line 3 : al-Saifî, i. e. Saif addîn, Fâris is also mentioned in the following No. IX, but without a date. We have not been able to identify this emir, who in 840 belonged to the inferior ranks of the military hierarchy ; the *shâdd* is indeed an « intendant, a commissary ». We know for instance, the commissary of the marine, of the mint, of the relays, of the magazines, of the constructions¹. The said Fâris was « commissary of the magazines of arms » *shâdd al-khazâ'in al-silâh*, in the armoury which was under the supervision of a *nâzir*.

IX.

Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto.—No. M. 974. Described as follows :

Sword, bastard type. Italian, mid-XVIth Century. Lozenge-shaped pommel, slightly drooping quillons of square section. The blade bears a maker's mark and an Oriental inscription. From the Arsenal at Istanbul. Acquired in 1930.— Photo (fig. 9) and rubbing (fig. 11).

Three lines on one side only ; small cursive script; mean engraving. No date : but 840 (1436-37), as No. VIII.

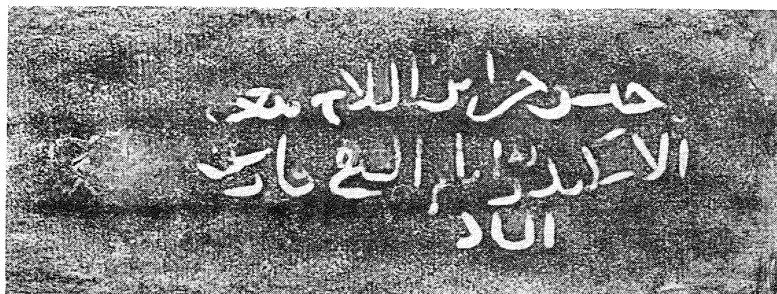


Fig. 11. No. 9. — Inscription on a sword in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto : M. 974.

حرس خزائن السلاح بمصر
الاسكندرية أيام السيفي فارس
الشاد

¹ See index of. W. BJÖRKMAN, *Beitraege zur Geschichte der Staats Kanzlei im islamischen Aegypten*, Hamburg, 1928.

« (1) Unalienable bequest of the magazines of arms, in the Frontier-City, (2) of al-Iskandariya, in the days of al-Saifî Fâris, (3) the commissary. »

Same official as in No. VIII, also the same date.

As the swords VIII and IX were in the possession of the said Fâris in 1436, the chronology fixed by the Museum authorities might now be amended.

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We wish, by way of conclusion, to answer some of the questions which may occur to the reader :

(1) As to the *authenticity* of such documents : there is not the slightest doubt, that these inscriptions have been engraved at the dates indicated in them as a record of lawful possession. Furthermore the arabic texts give historical information, some details of which are very peculiar, —such as the Hall of Arms, the names, — the accuracy of which are confirmed by the oriental historians of medieval Egypt. The inscriptions could not have been forged ; even the error in the dates (No. IV and V) is not an argument against this thesis. They bear the stamp of genuineness, It is hardly worth while to say, that they are not to be confused with the imitated arabic inscriptions, which were used sometimes as an ornament by Christian workmen, on textiles in pictures, on monuments, which practice was followed also by the armourers in Italy and Spain in the XVIth Century ¹.

(2) Regarding the *origin* of the swords: experts in arms and armour tell us that these swords are of Italian workmanship of the XIVth and the XVth Century. The dates engraved by the Egyptians confirm this chronology and perhaps the experts may now amend their opinion regarding some of the swords according to our commentary. Some of them certainly have been brought to Egypt by merchants trading in arms ; others may be war-booty.

That the trade in arms by Christian States with Musulman countries was not an uncommon practice, has been proved already by the historians of the Middle Ages. During the Crusades, the merchants were so anxious to profit by the situation, that the commerce between East and West was

¹ For the arms, see BARON DE COSSON, *On some ancient sword blade bearing spurious inscriptions*, read before the Soc. of Antiquaries, London, June 21st, 1900, 2d series, XVIII, p. 206.

even then very flourishing. The oriental sultans were asking for metals of every sort, iron, arms and also wood for their ship-yards. The Church frequently forbade any intercourse with the infidels and Papal letters were promulgated, and orders in council were placarded in the towns; but notwithstanding these sanctions this commerce continued.

To quote only some references : in 1254, a special ordinance of the Grand Council of Venice aimed especially at the selling of arms to Moslems, and this order followed previous decisions taken concerning wood and iron.

In his « Liber Recuperationis Terrae Sanctae »¹, the Franciscan friar Fidenzio di Padua regrets « that the Christians bring to the Saracens in Egypt, iron, copper, tin, and other metals, prohibited wood, oil, and honey, as well as many other commodities of which the Musulmans are in great need. »

On March, 12th, 1295, Pope Boniface VIII promulgated a papal letter against the Christians who were selling arms to the Saracens, or were merely assisting them in any way. The Bull mentions² : « iron, arms, pieces of wood for galleys and other navigable vessels, galleys or ships ». Mas Latrie published a « Memoir on the means of reconquering the Holy Land and of destroying the power of the Sultans of Egypt, presented by the envoys of the King of Cyprus to the Pope Clement V, during the general Council of Vienna » (1311-1312). Two articles of this document refer to the trading in arms, and the author gives a long « Note on the transport of arms and slaves to Egypt (by Christian countries) during the Middle Ages »³. In 1453, the famous French financier Jacques Coeur was brought for trial, and it is said that the chief indictment against him was that he « applied himself to a unlawful trade with the Saracens, to which he did deliver great quantities of harness, armour, as well as other arms. »

We may conclude, that European arms and armour were not a great rarity in the Near East. Merchants brought them to the markets, and a number of swords were certainly been offered, with other gifts, by the

¹ Published by GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Sancta e dell'Oriente Franceseano*, t. II, p. 47. The « Liber » was published towards the end of the XIIIth Century.

² MAS LATRIE, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre*, vol. II, p. 92-93.

³ *Idem*, II p. 118-125 et p. 125-128.

envoys of Pisa, of Venice, and of other States to the Mamûk Sultans and to the great Emirs.

Concerning swords taken as war-booty, everyone knows of the numerous encounters between the Crusaders and Saracens which took place after the first Crusade in 1096, the occupation of Palestine by the Franks, and the destruction of the Kingdom of Jerusalem by Saladin at the end of the XIIth Century. After the Crusades, sea-battles were frequent in the Mediterranean, and plundering expeditions were sent to the bordering countries by the Egyptian Sultans or by the Christian States. But the two principal encounters in the XIVth and the XVth century, which concern the history of the Frontier-City of Alexandria, were the attack on Alexandria by Peter I of Lusignan in 1365, and the conquest of Cyprus by Barsbây in 1426. We may suggest, that some of the swords given to the armoury of the town may well have come with the booty captured in Alexandria and in Cyprus by the Egyptian Mamlûks.

(3) The *provenance* of the swords preserved in the collections of Europe or of America : we have indicated that four of those we publish come from Istanbul. Mr. Mann wrote to us in January 1936 : «With regard to the other European swords with arabic inscriptions mentioned by Baron de Cosson as in the Arsenal at Constantinople, some if not all of these were dispersed some years ago. A number were offered for sale in London by the son of the late Sir J. C. Robinson, when I saw them, and four were brought for the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Another is in the Bashford Dean Memorial Collection in the Metropolitan Museum, New-York. What happened to the one with a single finger-ring like Baron de Cosson's sword, I do not know. It was clearly shown in an old photograph of the arsenal in the former church of St. Irene at Constantinople ». In a second letter (February), Mr. Mann says again that many of the swords were taken from St. Irene in 1922.

It is quite probable that the greater part of the stock preserved at Istanbul, as well as other arms and armour, with names of Egyptian sultans or emirs, were first removed from Egypt at the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1517. However, when Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798, they were still some arms left in the Fort Qâyt-Bây, as asserted in the "Description de l'Égypte" Gratien Le Père has made the suggestion, «that their form and their ornamentation prove that they belonged to the Cru-

saders, and probably to the unfortunate crusade of Louis IX»¹; and Saint-Genis says « that some of the arms date back to a time prior to the Hidjra² ». But it is certain that none of these arms were as ancient as the two authors cited supposed.

The Baron de Cosson bought his sword in France some forty-five years ago and it might possibly have been removed from Alexandria by the French during the campaign of 1798 to 1801, if it did not belong to the Istanbul stock³.

Finally, not having at hand the catalogue of Angelucci describing the sword at Turin, nor the information required concerning the arabic inscription engraved on it⁴, we cannot give any information on its provenance.

ET. COMBE
A. F. C. DE COSSON.

¹ GRATIEN LE PÈRE, in *Description de l'Égypte*, tome XVIII, 1, p. 397.

² SAINT GENIS, in *Description de l'Égypte*, tome XV, p. 410.

³ There is no information on swords similar to those we have studied, in the memoir published by HANS STOECKLEIN, *Die Waffenschaetze im Topkapu Serayi Müzesi zu Istanbul. Ein Vorläufiger Bericht*, in *Ars Islamica*, I, 2, 1934, p. 200-218.

⁴ We have not seen J. GHIRON, *Le Iscrizioni arabe della R. Armeria di Torino*. in 4^o, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1868.