

Merowinger Damascene Sword

Illustration

Well, here it is - the [Sword from Ingersheim](#) from the 6th century that got me all excited. While the original (about one half of the total length is shown) does not look too precious to the uninitiated, the reconstruction (below) is breathtaking.

- Unfortunately the picture shown here does not do justice at all to the real thing. If you ever get to Stuttgart, don't miss to look at it.
- Shown is the front side and the backside of about half of the length. Note that the pattern is different.



- The pictures are taken from the [wonderful book](#) of [Manfred Sachse](#) (with his friendly permission).

Here comes what the Museum has to say (translated and shortened) to this sword:

- The "Spatha" (= roman name for long straight sword) from Ingersheim represents a top achievement of the early medieval art of metal technology. It is more intricate and more complex in its structure than the celebrated blade from Sutton-Hoo (famous English site of two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of the 6th and early 7th centuries, one of which contained an undisturbed ship burial including a wealth of artifacts of outstanding art-historical and archaeological significance). Especially remarkable is the exactly calculated change from torsion damask (the curlicue pattern) to linear damask (the straight part). More precisely, the core of the blade consists of two layers, each composed of three rods that change between being twisted and straight. The smith, quite obviously, chose a sequence of 5 successions, paying tribute to some antique number mythology, The number 5 always had a special meaning (pentagram!) and is known to have had a magical property for ancient smiths.*

The Sutton-Hoo blade also shows a succession of twisted and straight layers, but the individual rods all are patterned in parallel. The more sophisticated Spatha from Ingerheim surpasses that by the masterly interchange of twisted and straight portions on one side of the blade and yet another pattern on the other side, while always sticking to the 5 steps sequences.

A blade like this was strictly a status symbol. The Master, with the help of two or three apprentices, would need at least two full weeks to forge a blade like this one. The proud future owner would have to hand over at last 10 oxens - the present day equivalent of a mercedes sedan.

- You and me could not have afforded a weapon like that, and the alemanni nobleman who owned the blade would most certainly not have used it for lowly tasks like killing [scum like you and me!](#)

Well, you find Ingersheim two miles to the North of the town I grew up in, right in the heart of Suebia in Baden-Württemberg. While we know that Suebians are presently a superior kind of people (Suebia produced Mercedes, Porsche and me - need I say more?), here we have incontrovertible evidence that Suebians were superior to those English lads even as early as **600 AC!**