

Scramasax

Breitsax

Schmalsax



Sax

Groupsax

Longsax

Seax

Kurzsax

Hadsax

Honeylane style sax

Brokenback sax

Hurbuck style sax



This presentation is based on a presentation which I gave at the Bushfire Forge in, organized by Owen Bush in 2011. The presentation was aimed at giving a brief introduction into saxes, the various types and a summary of examples that provide a lot of detail in their construction and what details belong to which type of sax. The examples show here are selected from thousands of examples from which I have information based on burial reports, museum visits and even handling originals from archeological collections. And of course the internet is a great resource. Unfortunately there aren't really books specifically for saxes (that I am aware of). But there is a lot of information available spread over various books.

Hopefully this presentation will help bladesmiths who want to make historical reproductions of saxes and also to give bladesmiths inspiration for their own creations.

This is the second update of this presentation, as I keep adding interesting examples that I will come across.

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Why I got into saxes



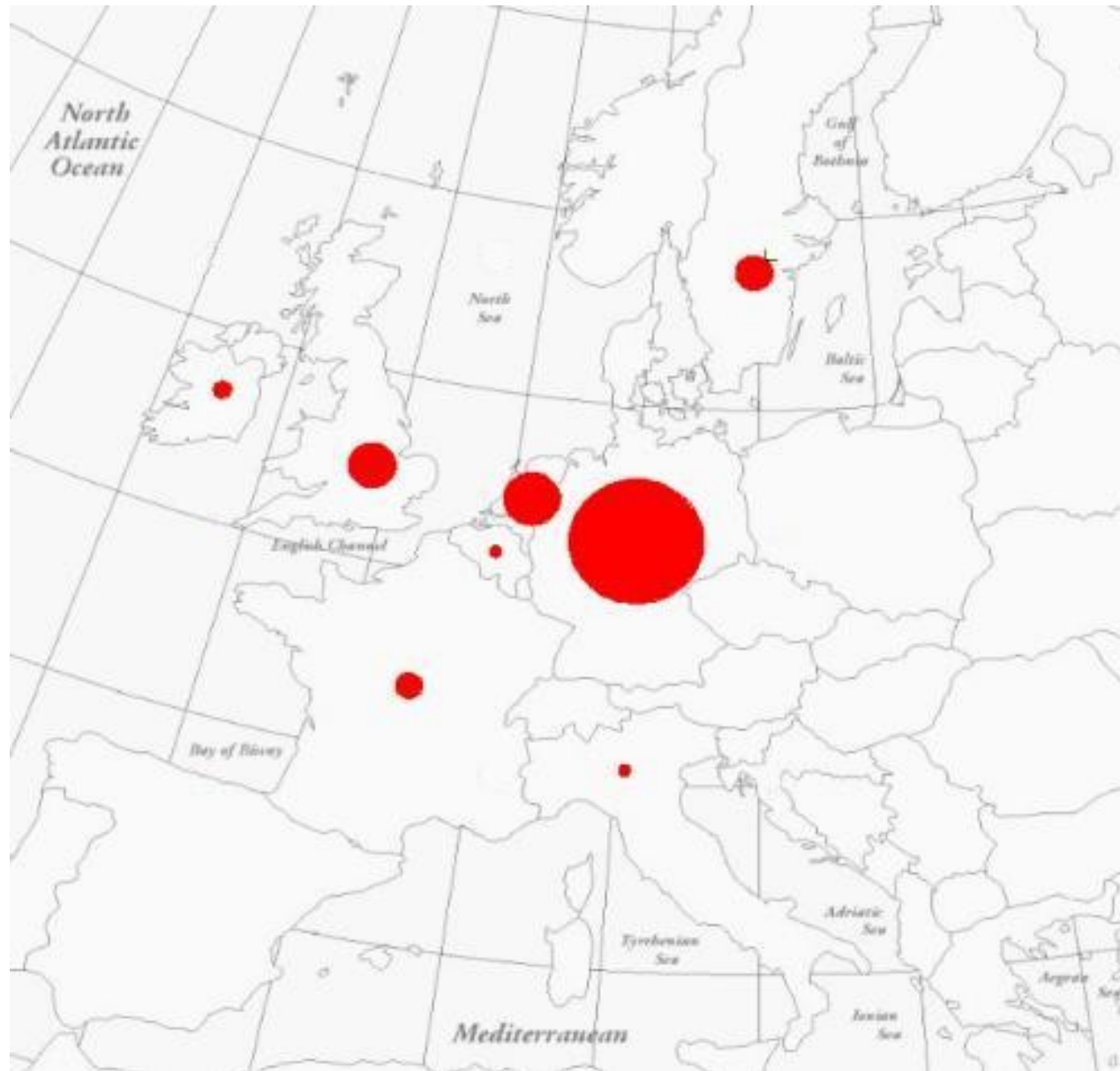
When I started forging iron, one of the first things I wanted to make was a sax. I knew them from reenactment, similar to what you see above: a rough and ready blade with an angled back and an antler hilt.

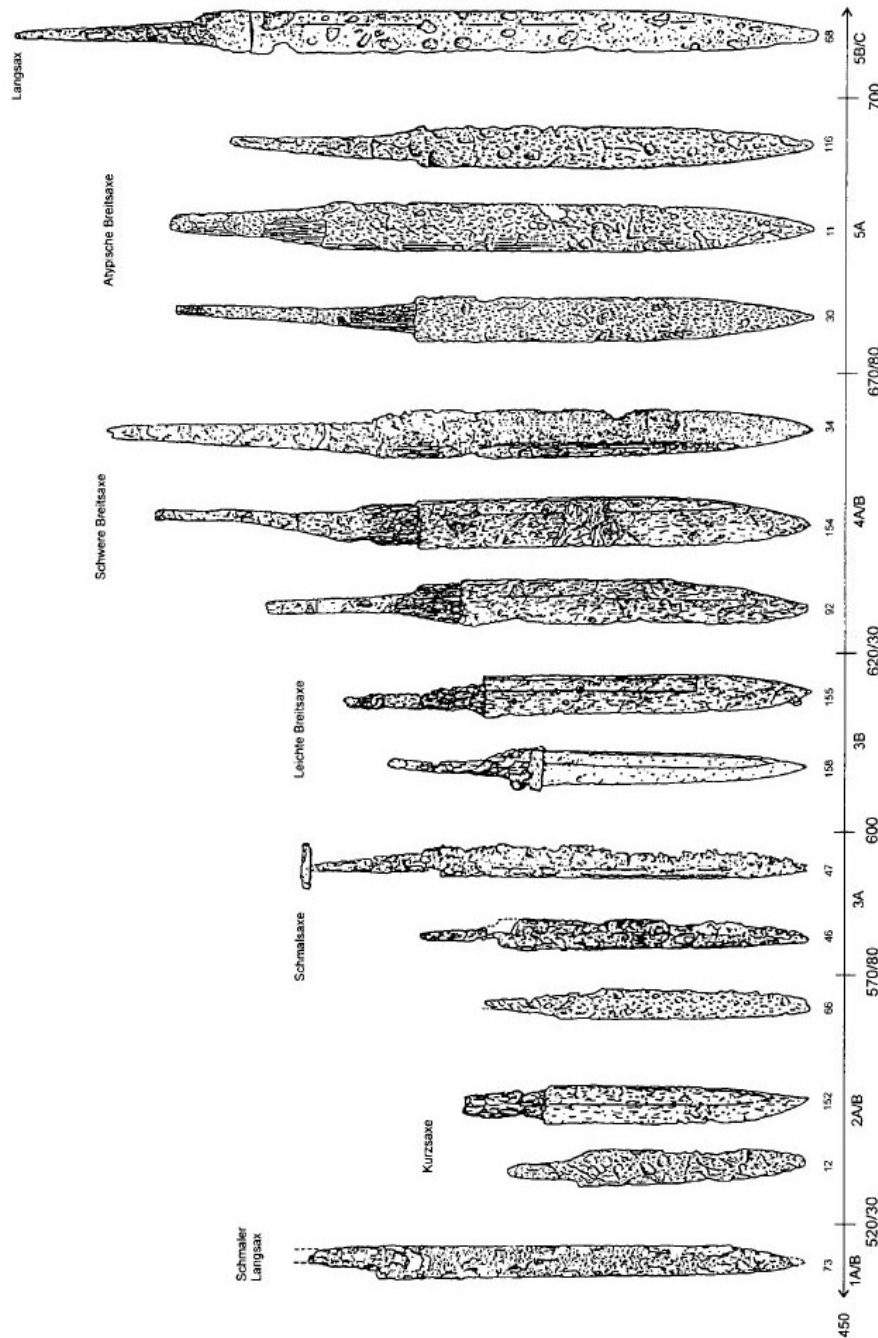
Why I got into saxes



When I started looking at historical examples, it became clear very quickly that this was completely wrong. The more I looked into them, the more I found that what was used in reenactment was pretty much the exact opposite. Saxes were anything but brutish simplistic as the one above, but instead highly sophisticated blades. So I started gathering and spreading data to show what these saxes were actually like, in the hope to inspire bladesmiths.

My knowledge of saxes in Europe





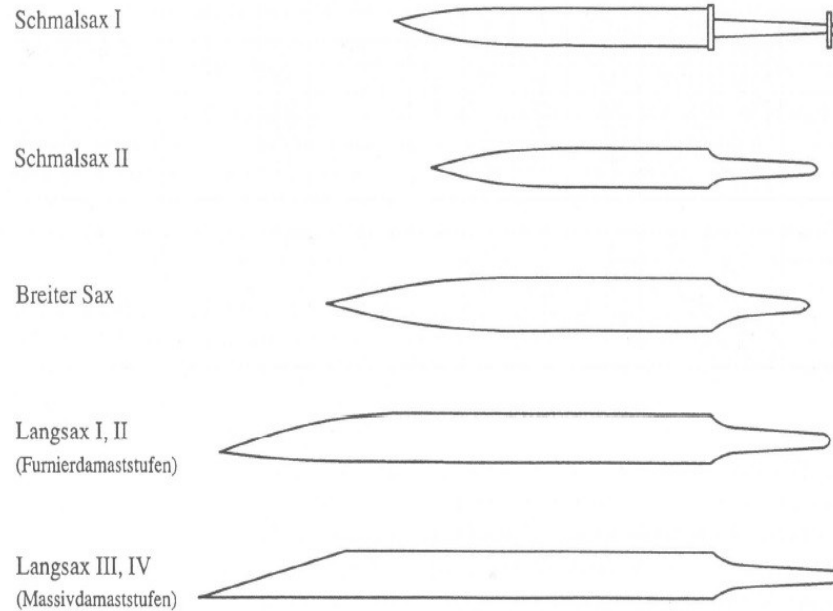
Seax typology and evolution of the sax

(based on German finds only from the 5th to early 8th century)

Sax typology by George Schmitt, as published in "Die Alamannen im Zollernalbkreis"

Another sax typology by Herbert Westphal.

Published in “Franken oder Sachsen?
Untersuchungen an frühmittelalterlichen
Waffen” (left) and “Untersuchungen an
Langsaxen aus niederländischen
Sammlungen” (under)



Textfigur 5

Die morphologische Entwicklung einschneidiger Schwerter im Nordkreis. Die Proportionen wurden aufgrund der Tabelle 2.4.a des Anhangs ermittelt.

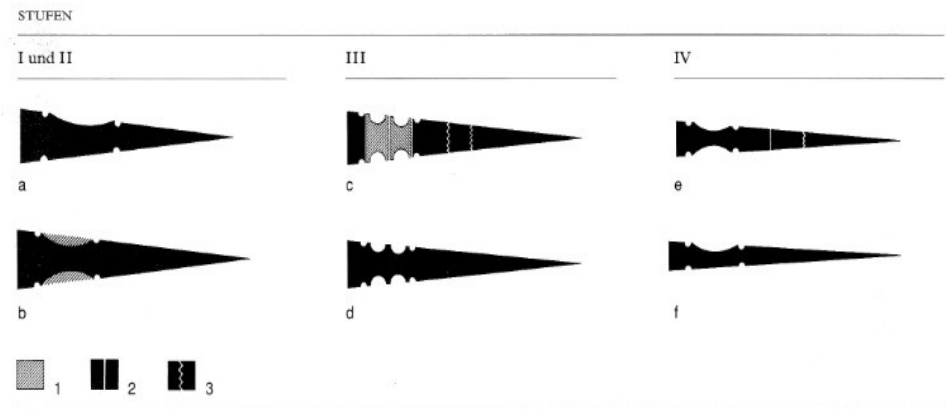


Abbildung 2 Charakteristische Klingenquerschnitte sächsischer Langsaxe kennzeichnen unterschiedliche Phasen ihrer schmiedetechnischen Entwicklung. Von Bedeutung ist insbesondere die abnehmende Stärke der Klingen. Nach: Westphal 1991, Textfig. 4; M 1,5:1.

Legende: a der asymmetrische Querschnitt einer nicht damaszierten Klinge; b eine Klinge mit beidseitigem Furnierdamast ohne Kehlung; c eine Klinge mit massivem Winkeldamast, Doppelkehlen und gezahnter Schweißnaht; d eine nicht damaszierte Klinge, die aber wie Beispiel c durch Doppelkehlen profiliert ist; e eine Klinge mit beidseitiger Kehle und gezahnter Schweißnaht; f der asymmetrische Querschnitt einer Klinge ohne weitere schmiedetechnische Besonderheiten; 1 damaszierte Teile der Klinge; 2 linienförmige Schweißnaht; 3 gezahnte Schweißnaht.

Typology and dating by Susanne Walter, published in “Das frühmittelalterlichen Gräberfeld von Mengen (Kr. Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald)”

Phase	absolute Datierung	Saxformen
1	480–510	langer Schmalsax?
2	510–540	<i>Kurzsax</i> , langer Schmalsax
3	540–570	langer Schmalsaxe, <i>Kurzsax</i>
4	570–610	Kurzsax, <i>massiver Kurzsax</i> , leichter Breitsax
5	610–640	Schmalsax, <i>leichter Breitsax</i> , <i>kleiner Breitsax</i> , <i>mittlerer Breitsax</i>
6	640–670	kleiner, <i>mittlerer und schwerer Breitsax</i> , kleiner Langsax
7	670–710	<i>kleiner Langsax</i> , Langsax

Tab. 32: Saxformen und ihre Datierung. Die dominierende Saxform ist kursiv hervorgehoben.

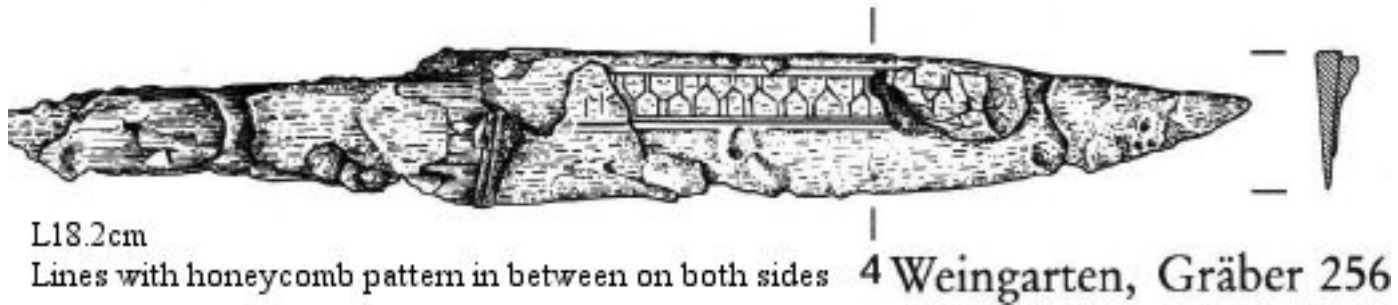
Proto-saxes, 5th century AD



Schmaler
Langsax



Short saxes 6th century AD



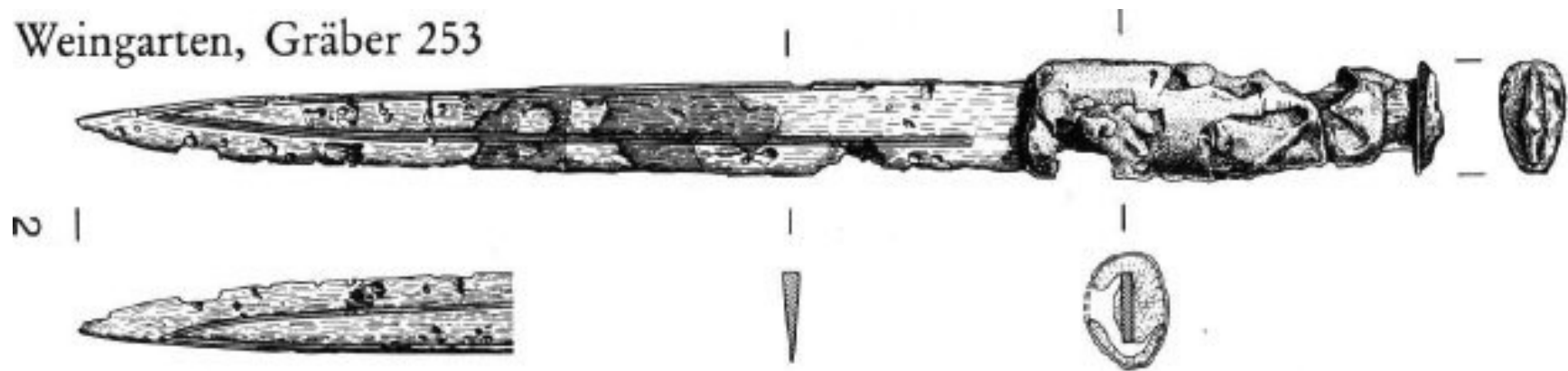
Source: "Das frühmittelalterlichen Gräberfeld bei Weingarten I" by Helmuth Roth and Claudia Theune



Reproduction by author

Narrow saxes

6th - early 7nd century AD



L42.8cm (blade 29.8cm, hilt 13cm), W2.9cm

Grooves on both sides

Hilt wood with leather covering

Triangular pommel with oval grip plate

Source: "Das frühmittelalterlichen Gräberfeld bei Weingarten I" by Helmuth Roth and Claudia Theune



2.1.1

Abb. 2.1.1 Wünnenberg, Grab 1: Gesamtansicht (1:5).



2.1.2

Abb. 2.1.2 Beckum I, Grab 65: Gesamtansicht (1:5).



2.1.3

Abb. 2.1.3 Beckum I, Grab 75: Gesamtansicht (1:5).



2.1.4

Abb. 2.1.4 Beckum II, Grab 2: Gesamtansicht. Die Waffe kann als exemplarisch für den Typus „Schmalsax II“ gelten (1:5).



2.1.5

Abb. 2.1.5 Beckum II, Grab 13: Gesamtansicht (1:5).



2.1.6

Abb. 2.1.6 Ossendorf, Grab 1: Gesamtansicht (1:5).



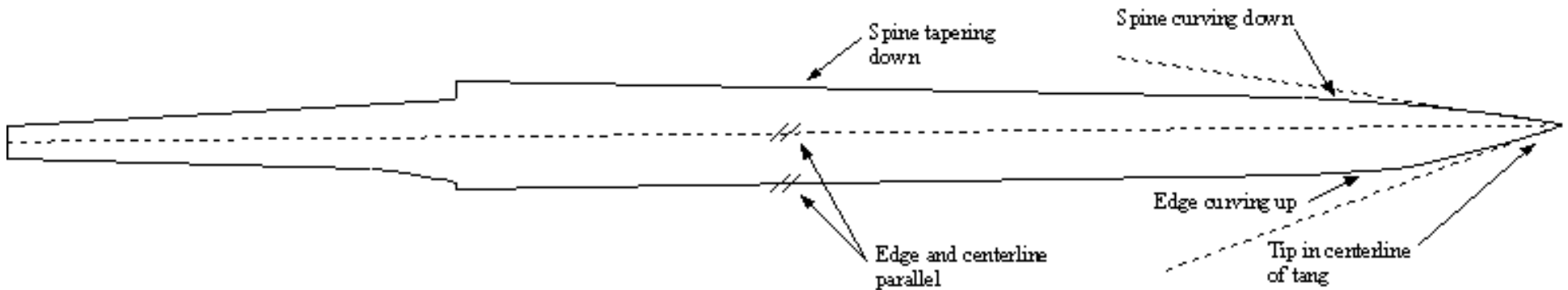
2.1.7

Abb. 2.1.7 Erle, Grab 12: Gesamtansicht (1:5).

Narrow sax Nijmegen, Netherlands 500-600AD



Original



General shape characteristics



Reproduction in progress by author



Reproduction by Ben Potter inspired by the Nijmegen sax

Narrow sax from Meurthe-et-Moselle, France
7nd century AD





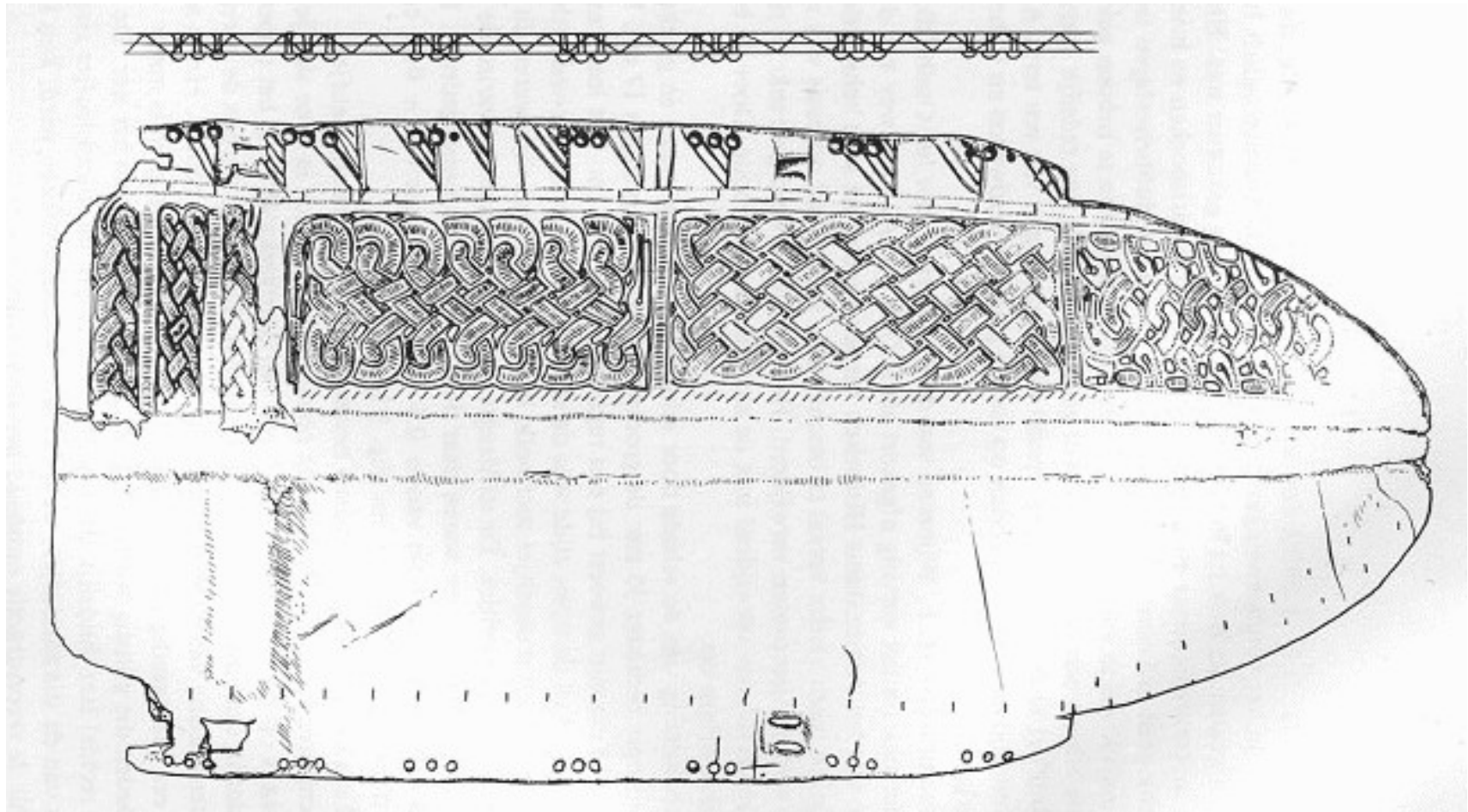


Narrow sax by Petr Florianek (from Gullinbursti), inspired by the sax from Meurthe-et-Moselle

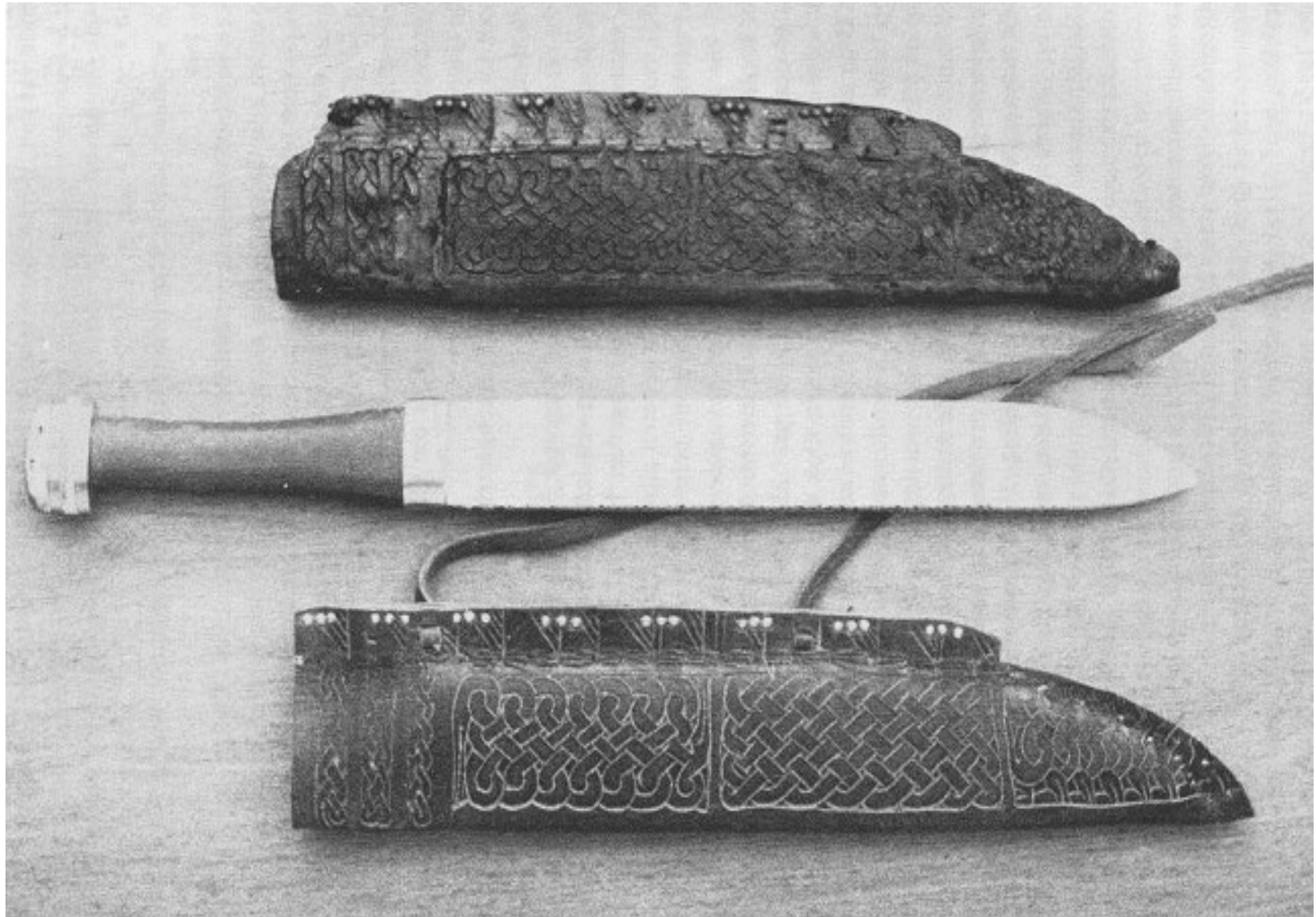


Unusually wide, heavy “narrowsax”
Rhenen, Netherlands

Narrow sax/early broad sax scabbard from Groningen, Netherlands



Narrow sax/early broad sax scabbard from Groningen, Netherlands
With reproduction commissioned by Jaap Ypey, including a
reproduction of a sax from Rhenen, Netherlands

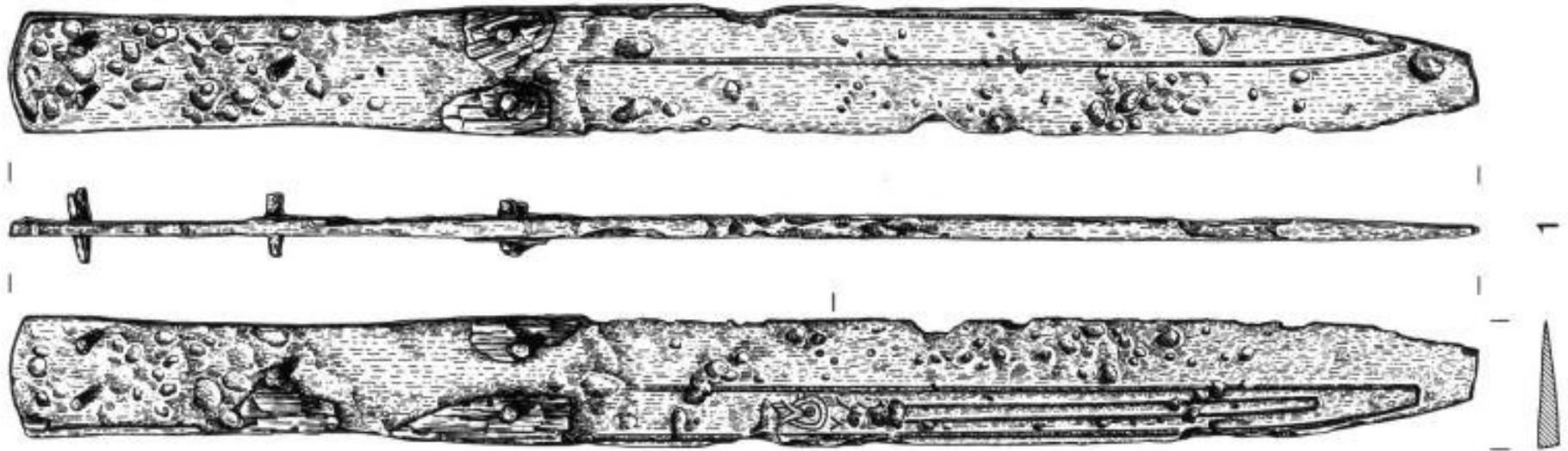


Broad saxes 7nd century AD

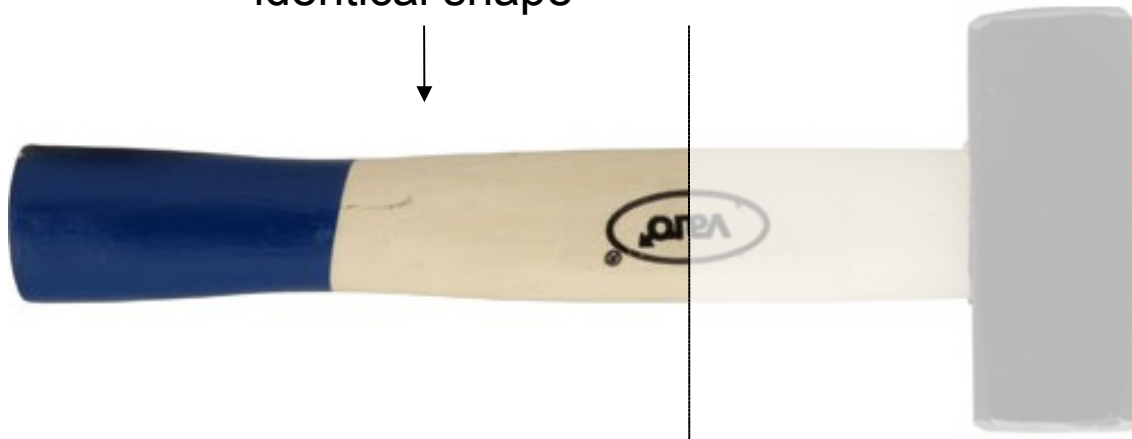
Two heavy broadsaxes
from Stuttgart, Germany



Unique full-tang broadsax from Weingarten, Germany, 610-660AD
Length: 569mm



↑
identical shape
↓





Broadsax, Langenau, Germany

Part hilt preserved, wood and
probably leather covering





Broadsax, Nijmegen-Lent, Netherlands
Mid 7th century AD

Broadsax from Geldrop, Netherlands, 650-675AD



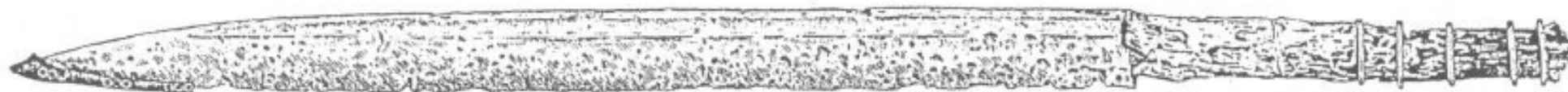


Long saxes late 7nd - 8th century AD

Two longsaxes, Dorestad, Netherlands

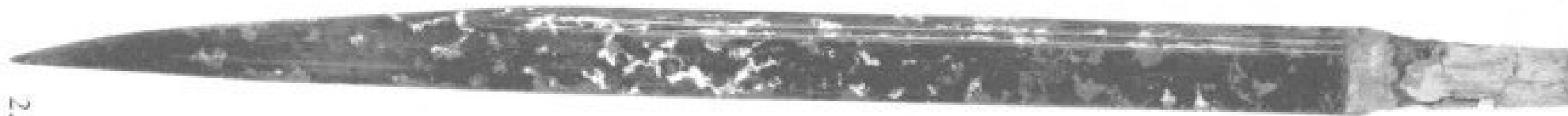


Jesenwang, Oberbayern, Germany (~700AD, Stufe II)

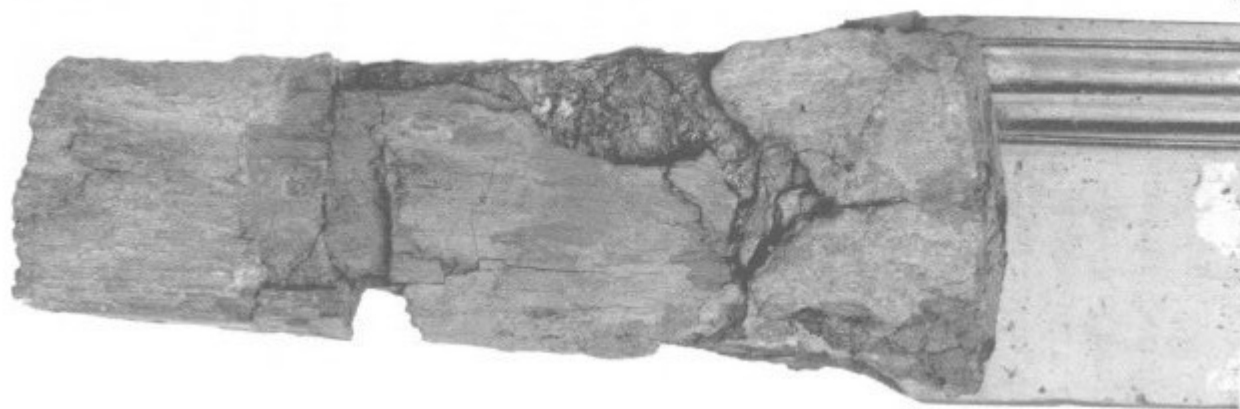


2.3.1

L895mm (blade 640mm) W44mm T6mm, tang 160mm, full hilt 235mm
No patternwelding, no indication of a separate welded on edge
Wooden hilt, with 5 dotted gilded silver bands, no pommel



2.1.18



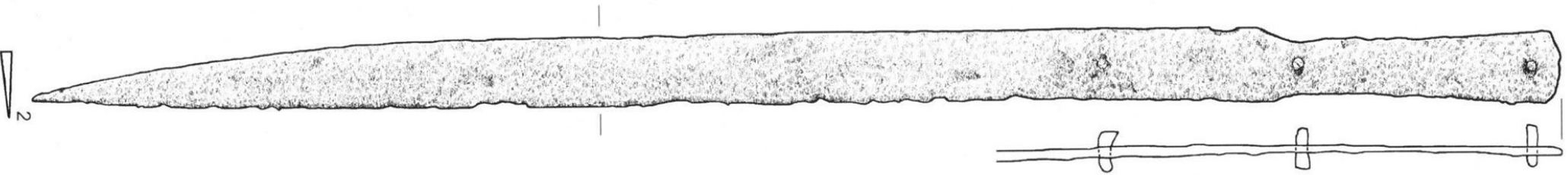
Soest, Germany (late 8th century, Stufe III/IV)

L670mm (blade 570mm) W40mm T7mm

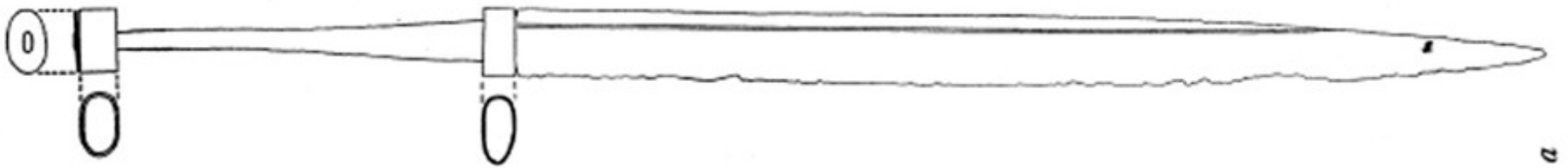
Wooden hilt remains, hilt incomplete (originally at least 160mm)

Blade exists of two billets, the edge and the spine

Weight 524gram



Rare full-tang example of a longsax from Etting, Bavaria, showing the outline of the hilt. Total length: 810mm, width: 40mm



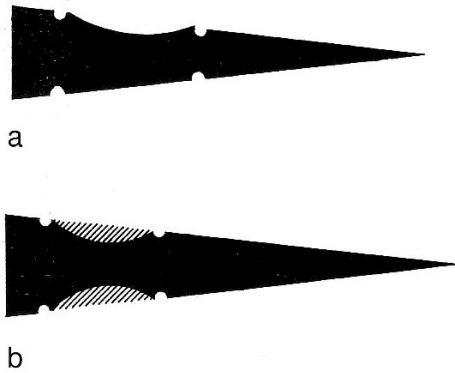
And a rare example of a longsax with ferules and a peened tang from the Thames off Newbridge.

Example of a very low quality longsax,
Nijmegen-Lent, Netherlands
7nd century AD

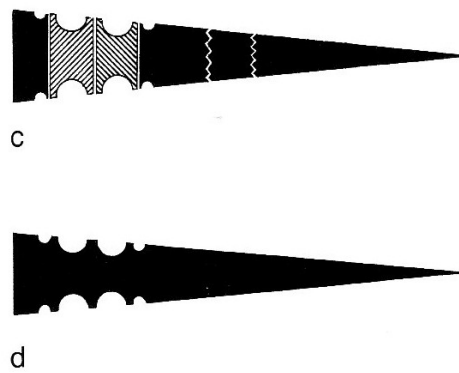


STUFEN

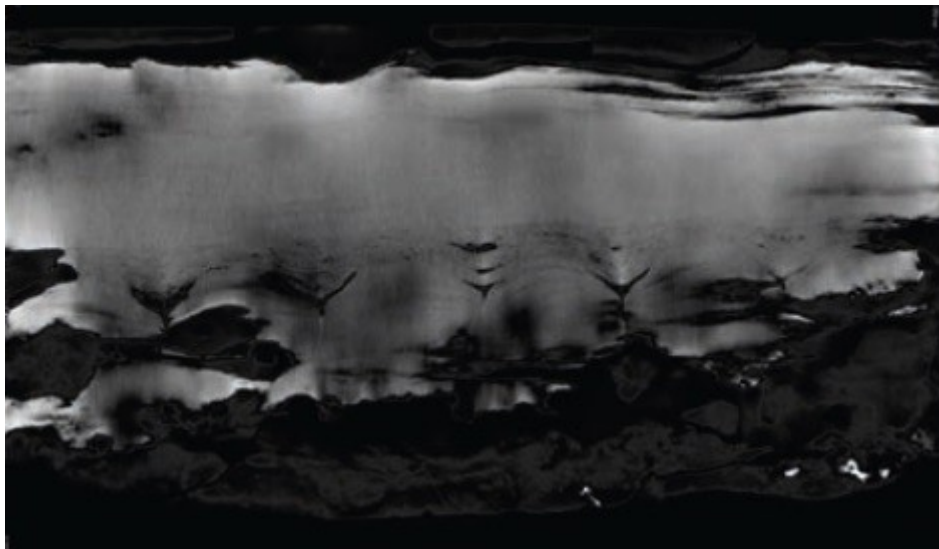
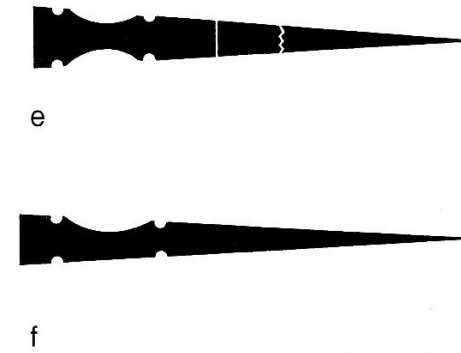
I und II



III



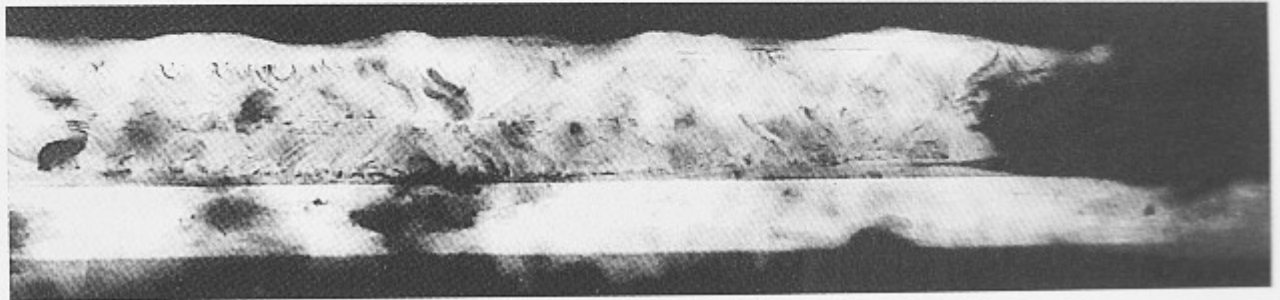
IV



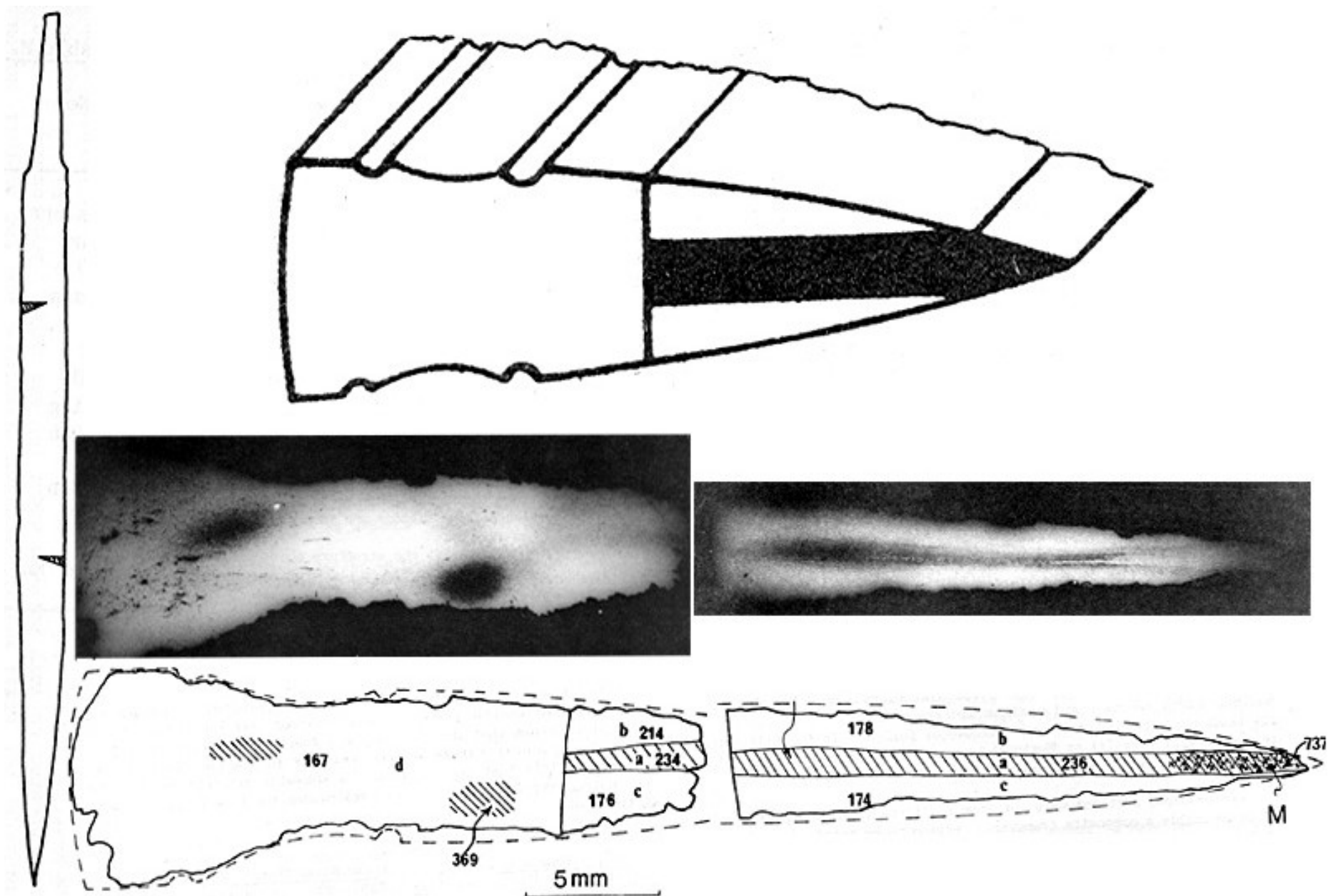
3D cat-scan of a langsax from Barkhausen with sawtooth weld (as in no. 3 in picture above)



b



Longsax, Putten-
Huinerveld, Netherlands
8th cent. AD



Longsax, Leyton, England, 9th cent AD



Longsax in the Klimagesmuseum, Solingen, Germany

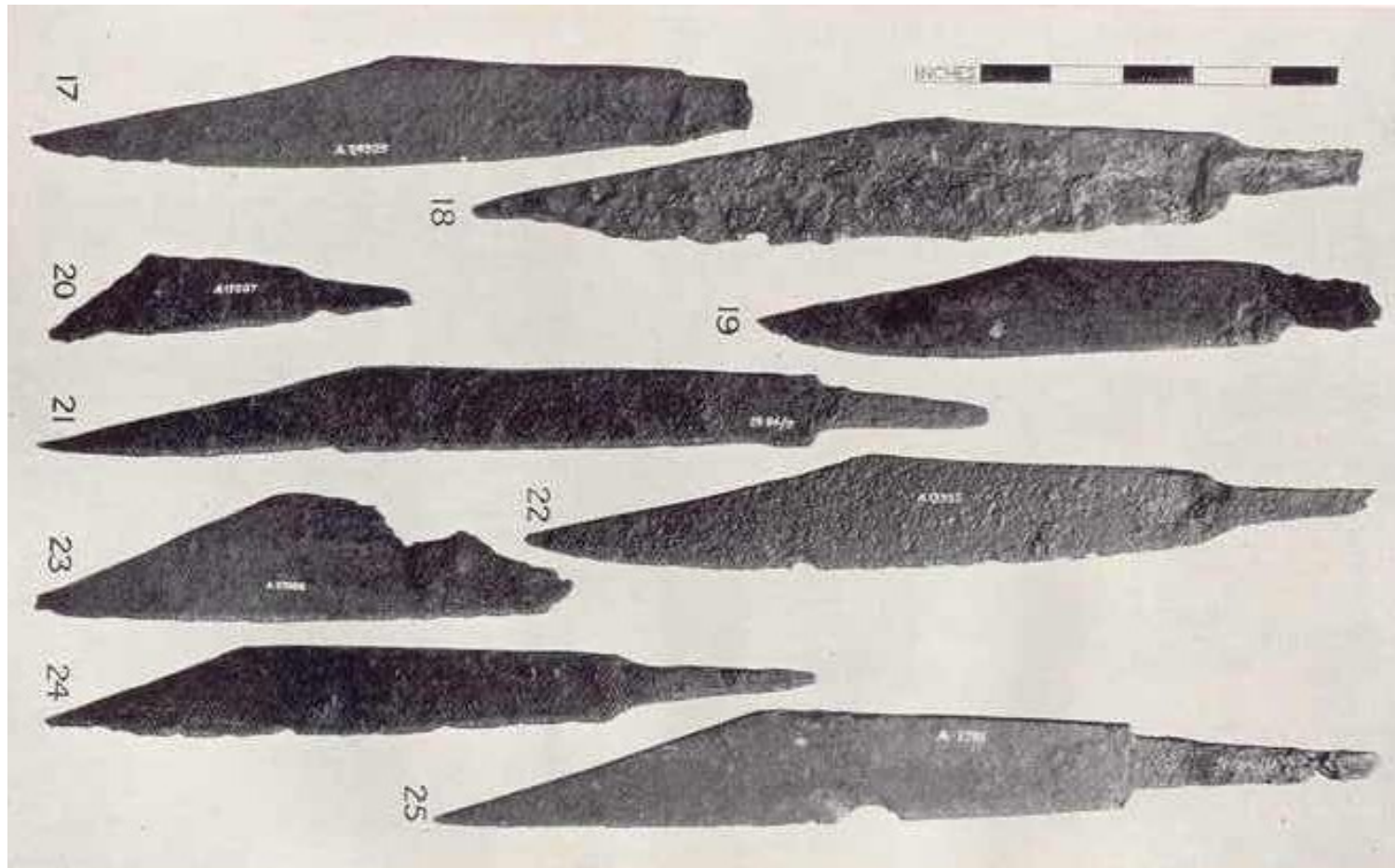


Longsax bearer, Stuttgart Psalter, 820-830AD



Longsax scabbard reconstruction and original from Barkhausen

Brokenback style saxes
Honeylane type
late 8th - 11nd century AD

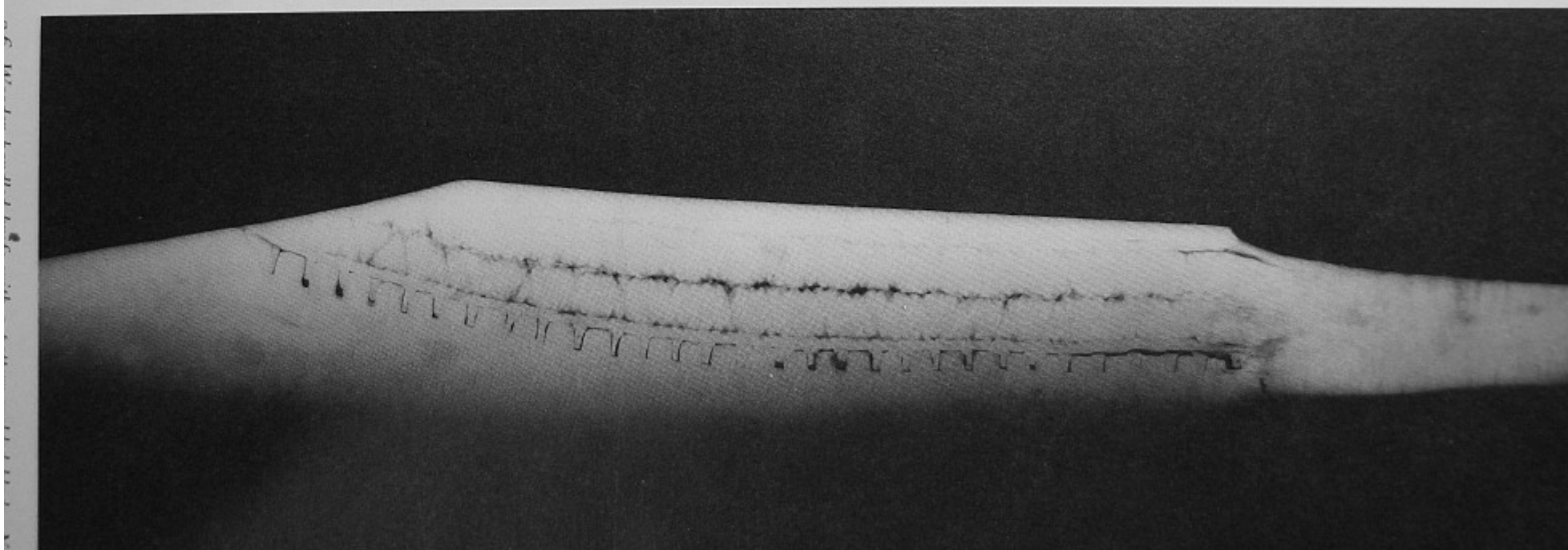


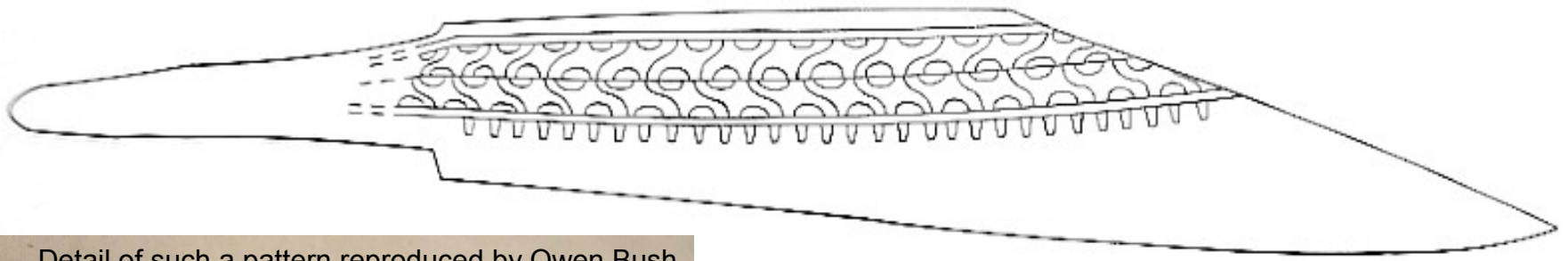
2.05 ...'s knife about 1000
Osmund ... proud of his
new knife ... asked the
smith to ... me on
a silver plate ...
The knife was
with twisted silver
wire. From the Th
Putney. ☺

3. Keys 1300s-1400s
Londoners were security
conscious. The highly
decorated key is probably from
a chest to hold valuables; the
other ... door key.

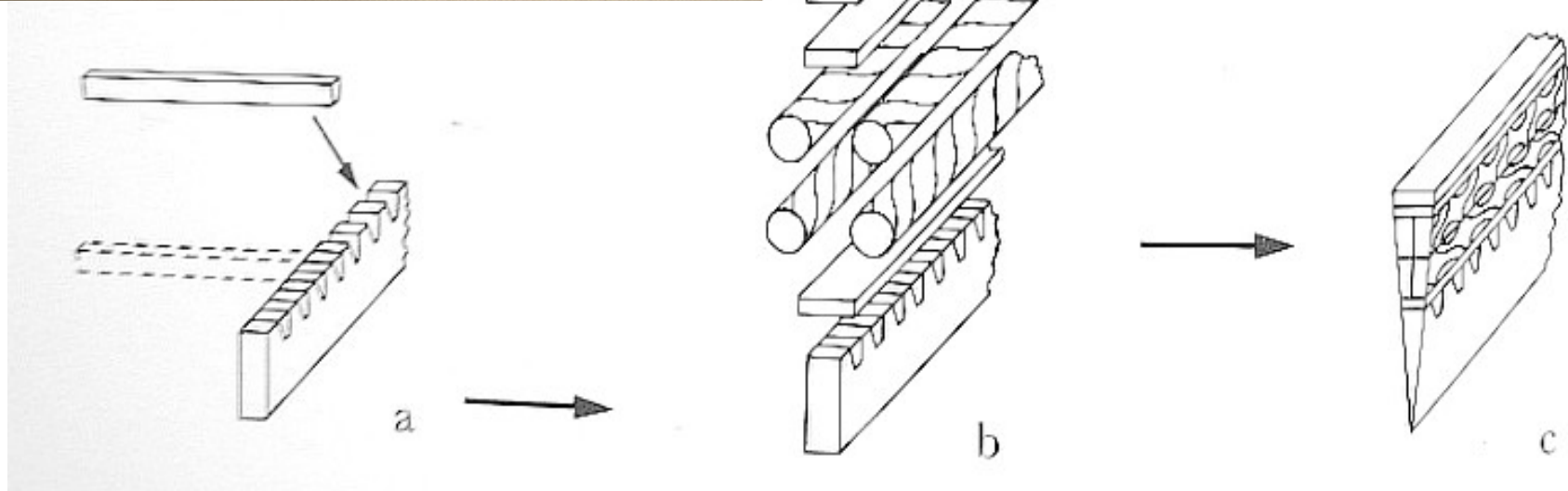
Finding the
...
...
...
...

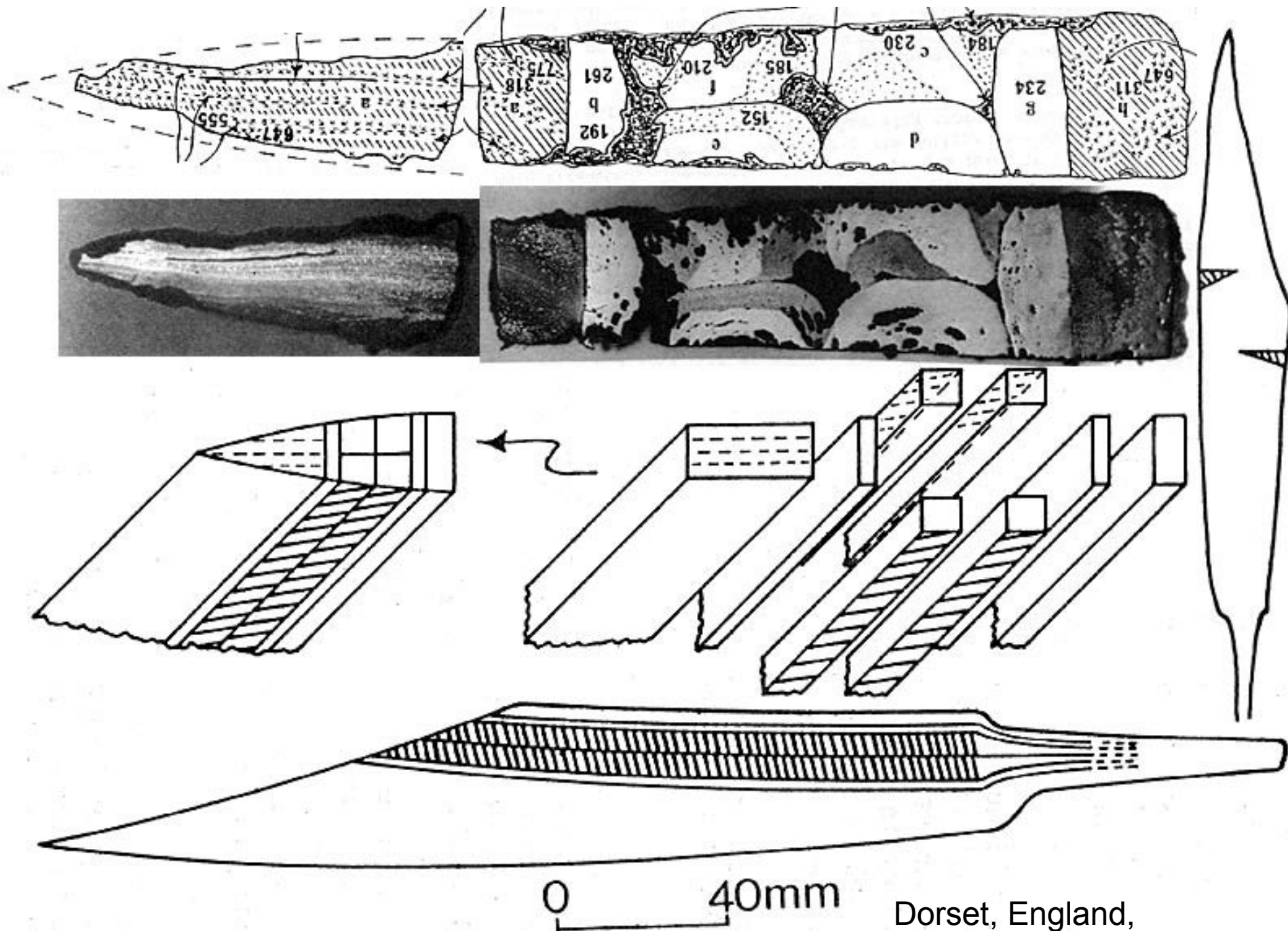
Alger (Sea) 1081



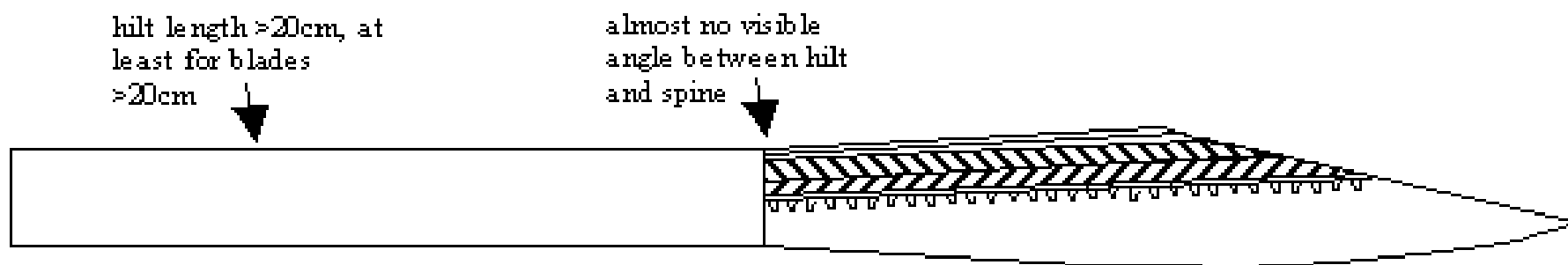
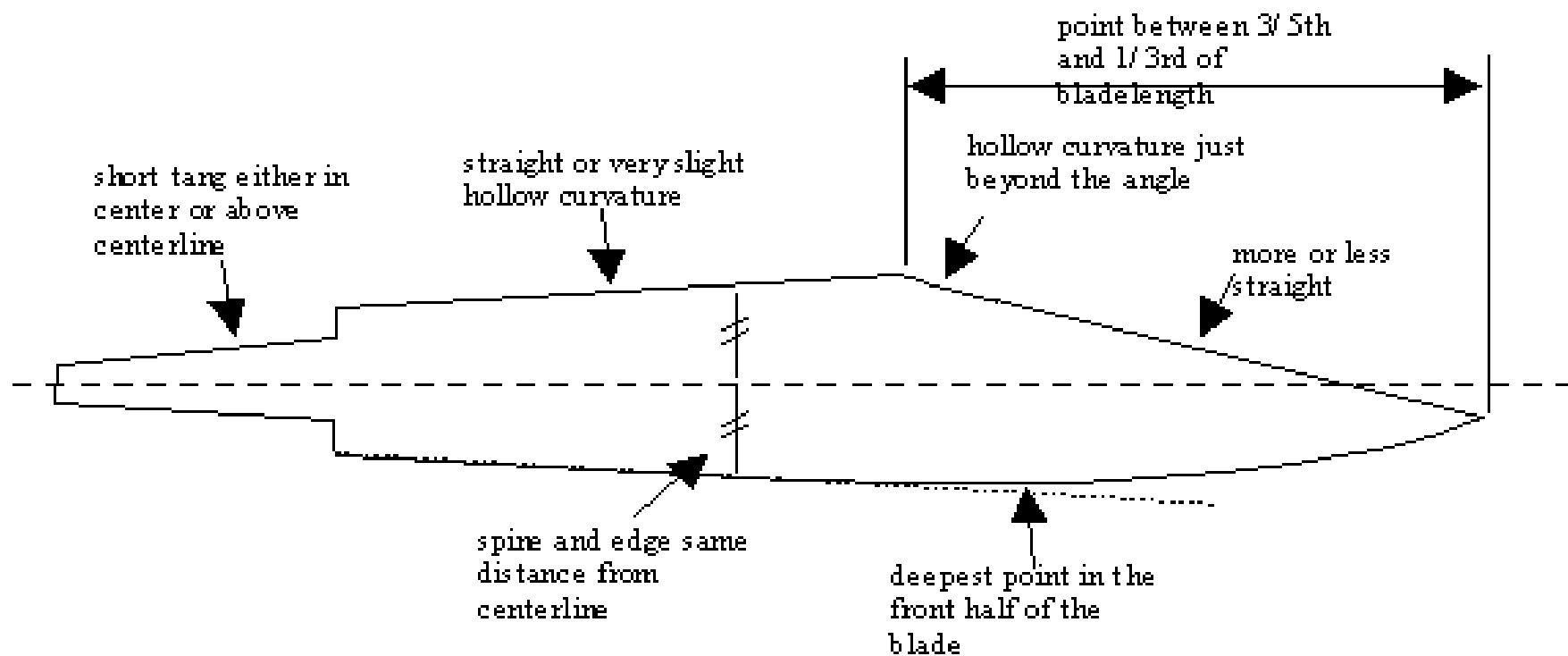


Detail of such a pattern reproduced by Owen Bush



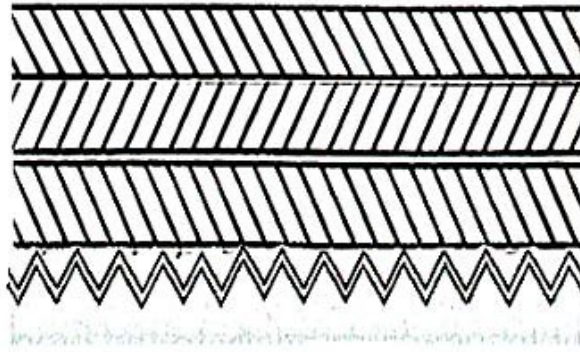


Dorset, England,
9-10th cent AD
Length 32cm, Width 33mm



"Hunting knife of Charlemagne"

Length: 53cm; Blade length: 31cm; Width: 4.5cm; Thickness 3.6mm; Horn grip length: 22cm
Aachen, Germany



Sittingbourne, Kent, UK
10th cent. AD



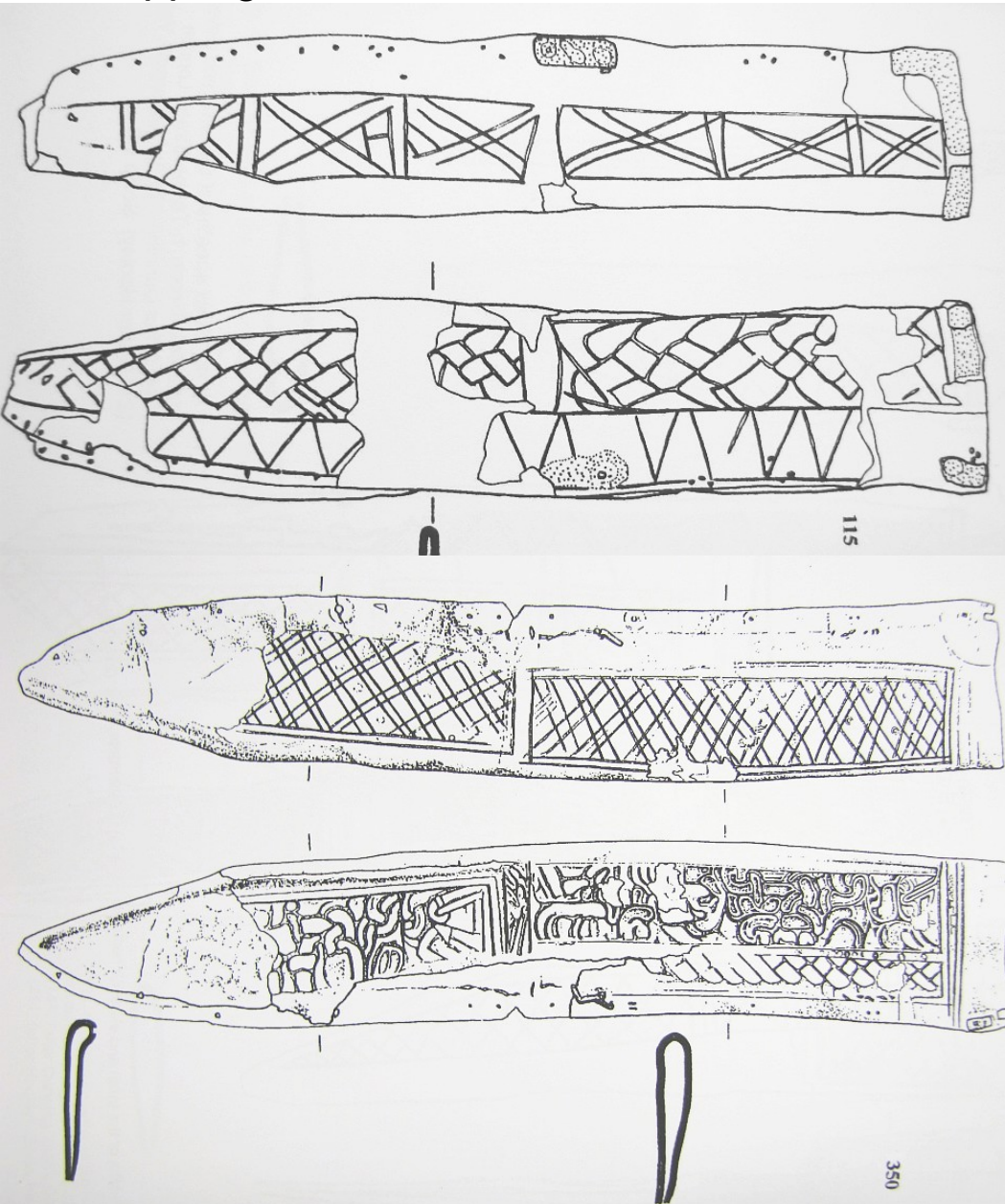
Honey lane, London, UK
9-10th cent. AD



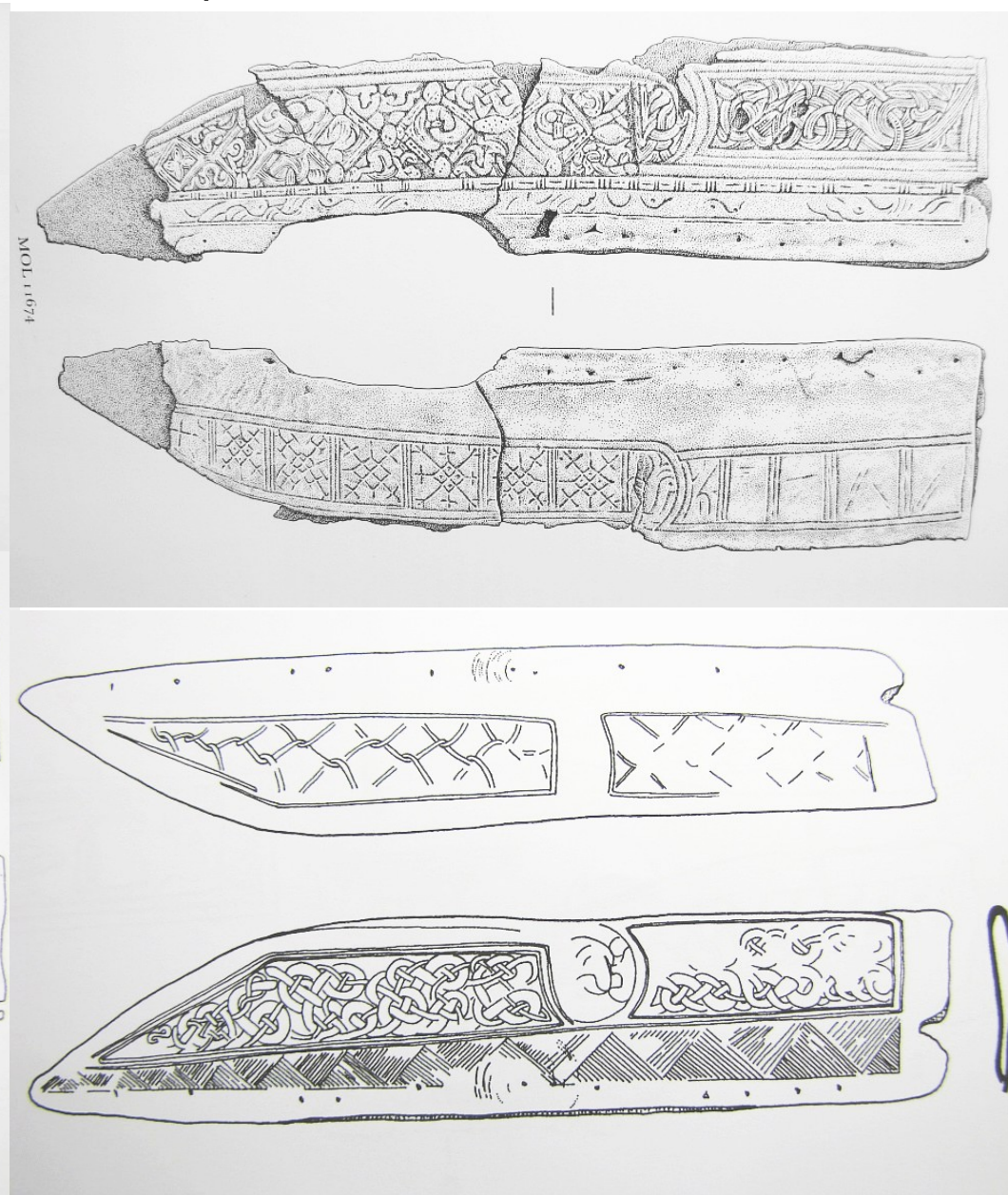
Thames, London, UK, ~1000AD



Coppergate, York, U.K., 10-11th cent. AD



Cheapside, London, U.K., 10-11th cent. AD



Berkeley str., Cloucester, U.K., 10-11th cent. AD Parliament Street, York, U.K., 10-11th cent. AD





Saxes in the Stuttgart Psalter, 820-830AD



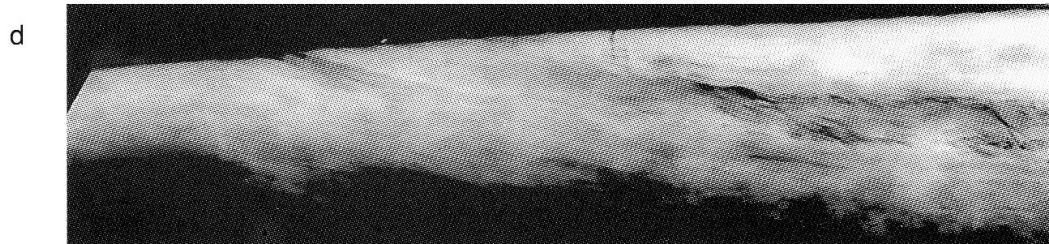
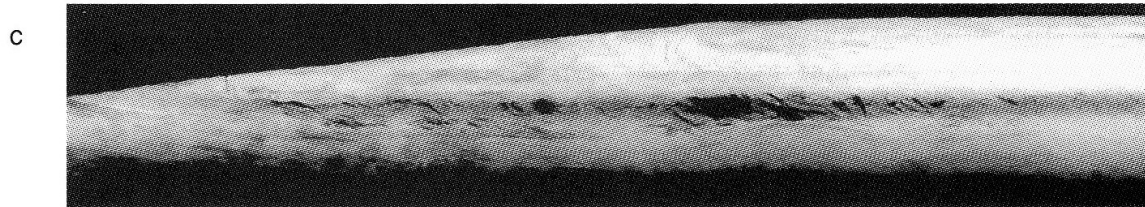
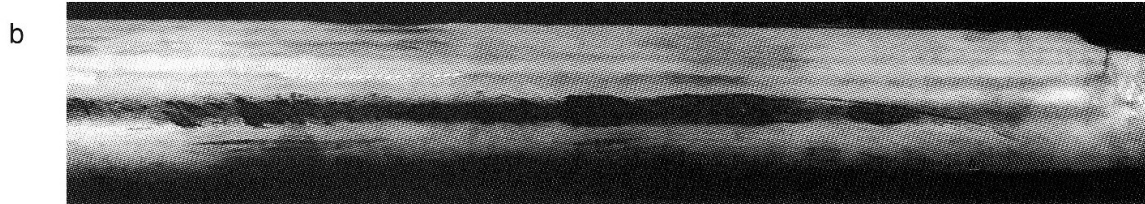
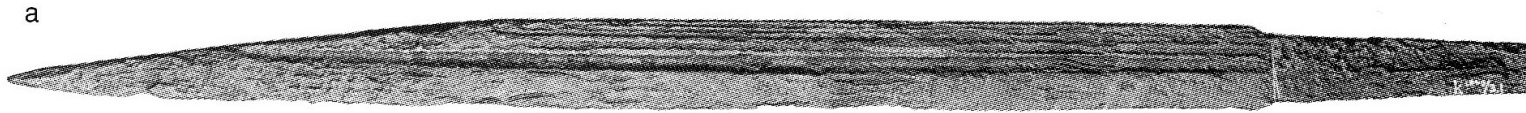
¶ Iohannes Baptista in hoc uetustior ostro

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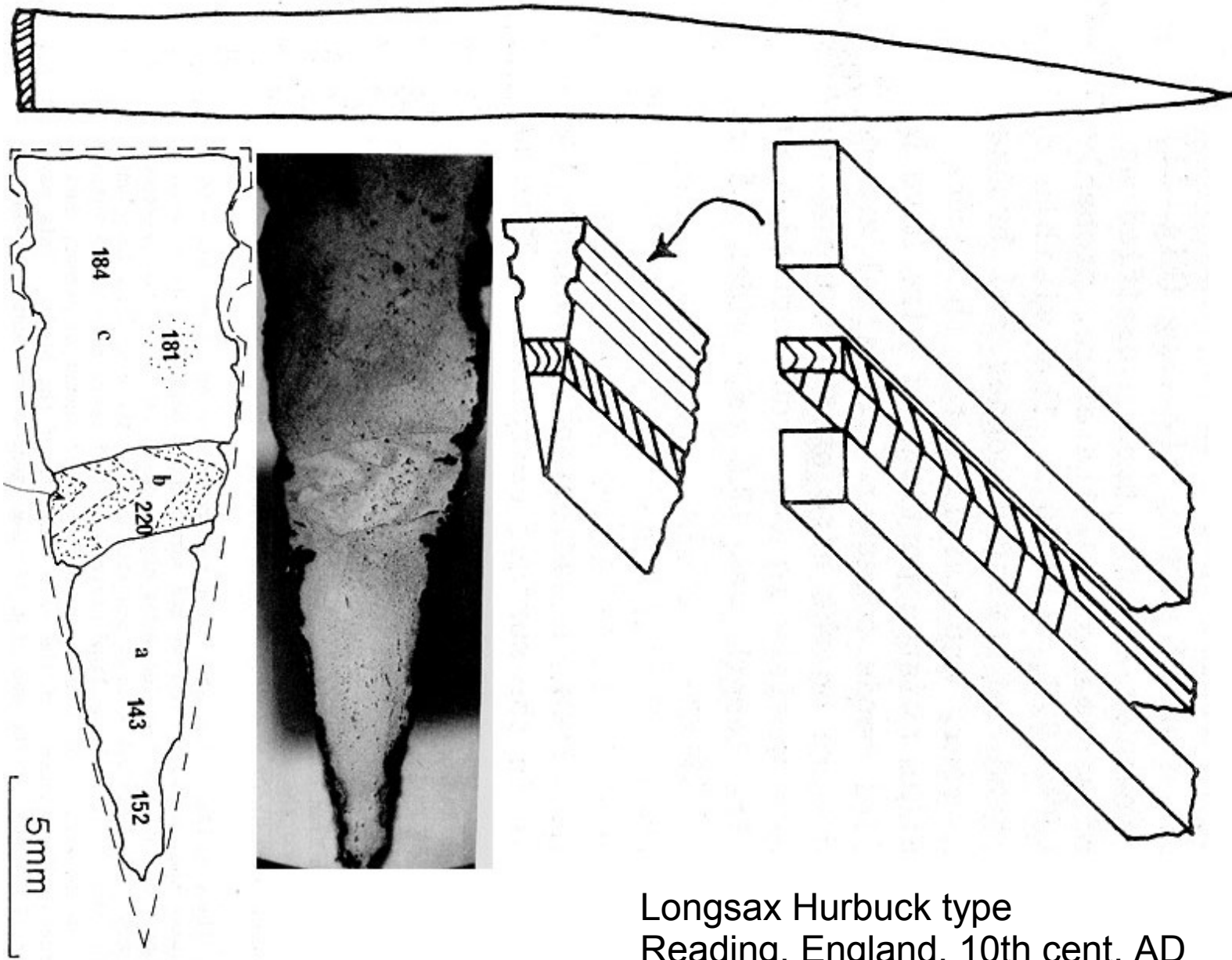
Sax in Hamartigenia & Psychomachia France 890AD

Brokenback style saxes Hurbuck type late 8th - 11nd century AD



Longsax Hurbuck type
Heusden, Netherlands
~10th cent. AD

Length: 630mm
Width: 36mm
Thickness: 5mm



Longsax Hurbuck type
Reading, England, 10th cent. AD
Width blade: 28mm





**Reproduction of the Heusden sax, excluding fuller and inlays.
Forged at Owen Bush' patternwelded sax course**