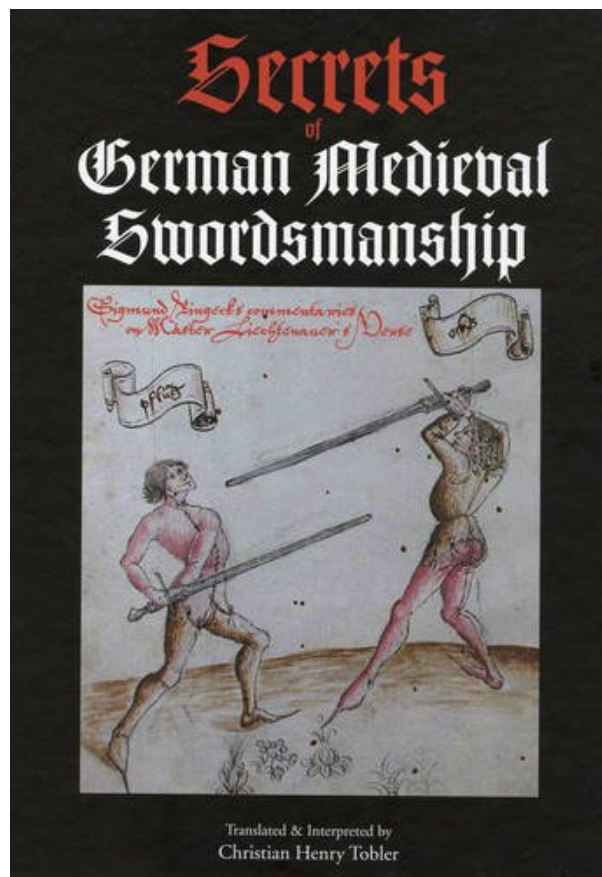


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# Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship



Translated & Interpreted by  
Christian Henry Tobler

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## Review

"...\*stupendous\*...well made, beautifully photographed, clearly explained and in all ways \*exceeds\* expectations...the most important WMA work to date." -- Armour Archive, March 29, 2002

## About the Author

Mr. Tobler has been a student of swordsmanship for more than twenty years. Since 1999 he has been a structural pillar within the historical swordsmanship community, championing the German system, especially in North America. His abilities are lauded worldwide, and he is an acknowledged expert on the German system of Johannes Liechtenauer.

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Medieval Fighting with the German Masters Christian Henry Tobler presents a beautifully interpreted study of fighting techniques recorded in the mnemonic verse of the legendary German swordmaster, Johannes Liechtenauer. Johannes Liechtenauer was a 14th century German fencing master born in the mid 1300s. Some of Liechtenauer's teachings were preserved in rhyming couplets, possibly done so to prevent the uninitiated from learning the techniques he presented. Christian presents his interpretation in a style that is readable, translating the original and then providing a practical interpretation of each technique. At once bold and martially efficient, these classic techniques of swordsmanship have proven their enduring allure. In this second reissue of a classic work, Chivalry Bookshelf offers students of martial arts, of martial culture during the middle ages, fencing historians, reenactors and students of medieval history.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Ichiban! Another Japanese Reviewer Weighs In!

By Kaoru Hiratsuka

Before I recommend this book, I want to put a disclaimer in. The techniques in this book are DEADLY. I highly recommend that if you have never handled a steel weapon before, or even IF you are a trained Martial Artist, that you use a WASTER to practice this art. Good wooden Wasters from Purpleheartarmory are available through Amazon.com for a reasonable price. Repeat...even if you've handled edged weapons use a

WASTER. Liechtenauer's methods were not meant to win a Martial Arts match...they were meant to KILL your opponent on a battlefield. Remember that when you practice.

Now to the review.

This book is by far one of the best and most comprehensive Martial Arts Books I've ever read. What makes it even more exciting is that this book deals with the subject of Medieval Western Combat as practiced by the German School of Johannes Liechtenauer and interpreted by his disciple, Sigmund Ringeck.

Master Christian Henry Tobler's presentation of Liechtenauer provides a complete system of Defense, including combat with Longswords, Short Swords and Bucklers, Hand-to-Hand-Combat and Armored Combat either on foot or on horseback and presents it in a manner that is clear, concise and easy-to-follow. The scope of this work is simply astounding and there is literally a life-times worth of study in this work alone, should you choose to concentrate on it.

Abundant photographs with supporting documentation and a comprehensive glossary put the icing on the cake. In short, this is the book many a martial artist looks for...a complete combat system. Yes...you can buy this book and you've got all you need.

Note:Daggers are not included, but as the author points out, it appears that this section of the original manuscript was probably lost a long time ago. However, even without dagger combat, this is a complete system.

As someone who's practiced Martial Arts for over thirty years, I feel the best facet of Liechtenauer's school is it's simplicity. In combat...the simpler the technique the better. Trust me...you will forget more complex techniques under a pressure situation...so Liechtenauer's philosophy makes abundant good sense.

As an Asian Martial Artist, I found the section on using the Half-Sword to be most exciting! There are really no comparable techniques in the Oriental Arts (although Chinese Broadsword fighting has some similarities.) The Half-Sword Technique lends a devastating new arsenal of moves to your combat repertory that is well worth studying.

There is another version of Liechtenauer/Ringeck out by David Lindholm which is also excellent. However, I believe that Master Tobler's text is slightly superior in that 1:It uses photographs and not line drawings and 2:It contains everything (Lindholm's version is split into two books.) However, if you become a serious student of Liechtenauer, I'd recommend eventually getting Lindholm as well...but buy THIS BOOK by Master Tobler FIRST.

As for the criticisms by the "reviewer from Japan" I'd say that these "criticisms" stem from the fact that it is DIFFICULT to interpret ancient Martial Arts Texts, even if the tradition survived! Everybody has a slightly different take on a text. But it is a credit to BOTH Master Tobler and Master Lindholm that they are virtually in agreement to Liechtenauer's techniques...which shows very careful analysis and scholarship (contrary to what the critical reviewer claimed.)

The previous "Japanese writer's" critiques are simply groundless and a similar criticism could be made of the over-killed "Book of Five Rings" by Musashi. I've studied Musashi for twenty years and have yet to figure out what he was really trying to say. Even the fact that there are schools in Japan that claim descent from Musashi doesn't help matters much...since you'll find differences from school-to-school. Frankly, you can go to two different Kendo schools and get different interpretations of the SAME standardized techniques.

Everybody will have a slightly different twist on a technique.

In closing, the curious Martial Artist might ask me, which technique is superior...Eastern or Western? My answer is that it depends upon the Practitioner and the circumstances and the terrain. However...I feel that the WESTERN techniques are slightly superior. Let me explain.

Contrary to common opinion, the Eastern Arts (although they retained more combat techniques than Western Olympic Fencing, Boxing, etc.) are also all SPORTIZED versions of the original arts. In Japan this resulted from the Shogun suppressing all the Samurai Houses and then Meiji trying to outlaw them. In China this came from the Manchus trying to suppress the Native Chinese. The upstart is that the techniques that survived became sportified...whereas the techniques being revived by Western Masters like Christian Tobler and David Lindholm are the original FIGHTING techniques. Therefore someone who's practicing sport Kendo is going to be trounced by someone who knows Liechtenauer's system.

Today, most Asian Fighting Arts are for winning tournaments (as is the vaunted Gracie Ju-Jitsu and Ultimate Fighting League.) Sure, people might get beaten up, and sometimes beaten badly...but the goal isn't to KILL someone, it's to win a tournament by scoring points. In contrast, Liechtenauer is talking about KILLING someone. As one of my teachers said, "There's a BIG difference between Karate-do (Martial arts as a way of life) and Karate-show."

In closing, I feel it's VERY exciting that the Western arts are being revived. I look forward to the day when a revitalized system of Combat Masters exists and it would be possible for me to study with a WESTERN Master without having to move half-way across the United States.

Knighthood transcends nationality, and knowledge has no boundaries. In the pursuit of Martial Excellence to defend your family, your planet and yourself and to perfect your character in the process, the more dissemination of knowledge with different approaches to the problem, the better.

Christian Henry Tobler's book should set the bar for all future Martial Arts books, be they concerned with an Eastern Art or a Western Art. It's well worth the price...but...remember...please use a WASTER and BE SAFE.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A GREAT Medieval Art presented via an EXCELLENT modern work +++

By Kevin Kiersky

"Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship" is a fine quality book and best presentation of the quietly renowned COMBAT-PROVEN Art of Master Johannes Liechtenauer -- as ordered and renewed by Master Sigmund Ringeck -- and as further ordered and renewed by Master Christian Henry Tobler of our time. This is a fine quality hard-cover with good binding, paper-stock, pictures, photos, font and calligraphy. It follows the main ordering of Master Ringeck -- but as logically extended, just a bit, by Master Tobler to spell-out and flesh-out some of the few murky areas for a modern follower of Medieval Combat Tradition. I greatly appreciate the parallel commentary of these Masters. This way one can find added aspects to already fine learning. An earlier version of this Fectbuch was my main source of Inspiration when attempting to master the Medieval Great Sword with a Medieval Society for about ten years off-and-on. There are other such Fectbuchs -- but this one, in this version, is the best in my view.

EXCELLENT strategy, tactics and methods of Armed and Unarmed Combat, CENTERED ON THE MEDIEVAL GREAT SWORD, are rationally presented -- even with a section near the start of this manual on exactly how-to-use this fine book. So one can acquire know-how in an ordered rational effective way. This



work, and its Art, are as good as any I've seen -- West, East or Other. A walking-cane held-up in both hands -- could be a "Great Sword" for nowadays. The many methods of unarmed combat self-defense are as good as any. Much as with Medieval Japanese Methods -- these unarmed methods work well when defending in-or-out of armor -- versus foes in-or-out of armor. Consider just what is "armor" -- folks deranged, drugged or drunk have about the equivalent of "armor" for practical self-defense. A rich variety of knock-downs, take-downs and lock-downs are presented in several sections -- some of these methods are very dangerous ["murder-strikes"] -- all are COMBAT-PROVEN effective.

Then there's the ULTRA-COMPACT Drei Ringen [chapter 27 page 211]. These THREE methods of wrestling ENTRY-METHODS form a cycle -- defender can ENTER via each [in order] to re-counter a countering foe. They comprise TWO "body-measure" [mirror] take-downs that are flexible in themselves -- they can be done via loose or stiff arms [slapping or slamming] as defender ENTERS into the take-down -- AND a lock-down. As the foe slips-out of the first attempt via an escape-pivot -- defender just circles-in [switching arms] with a mirror take-down -- to back that up, defender can follow-on via a smooth "armbar-pivot" lock-down. They even counter themselves -- the lock-down counters the take-down which counters the lock-down. THEREFORE these Drei Ringen follow-on in natural succession -- forming an ULTRA-COMPACT combat-grappling Art -- to ENTER other methods. This is good cause of the rich variety of other knock-downs, take-downs and lock-downs -- which are effectively ordered by these ENTRY-MOVES.

A GREAT Medieval Art presented via an EXCELLENT modern work +++

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

this is so fun!

By Vivian Cook

i bought this book on the recommendation of the guy at the UPS store (long story), and I am so glad that I did! this is just a lot of fun to read through. the combination of text and photography helps make these concepts extremely clear for something that can't really be taught through a book - pretty impressive! one caution, however. though i have not had any training in swordsmanship, i am a black belt with over a decade of experience, and this has made a substantial difference in my ability to interpret the text. I suspect that some sort of training in marital arts is probably necessary to follow the instructions for something which....can't really be taught in a book.

See all 21 customer reviews...

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