

Abstract

Early Medieval Swords from the Czech Republic (9th–10th Centuries)

Swords provide valuable information on early medieval technologies, warfare, and society. The variability of hilts and signs on blades, as well as changes in the blacksmithing, make swords extraordinary tools for both chronological classification of archaeological sources, and for a comparison among the material culture of various regions of early medieval Europe. The dissertation contains a comprehensive evaluation of early medieval sword finds from the Czech Republic originated from the period, when it was customary to bury weapons in graves (in the 9th–10th centuries). An objectivity of the assemblage's assessment was ensured due the detailed review, which included personal documentation and X-ray imaging of almost all swords. Approximately one third of the studied swords was examined metallographically. Both detailed information about the swords and a brief description of the find circumstances are summarized in included catalogue. The Czech sword finds are compared with European swords, the study of which is based on systematic data collection. The main part of the study is a detailed analysis of the shape, construction and decoration of hilts and blades (pattern-welding, marks, and inscriptions). The new findings concerning changes in the shape and construction of blades, on the basis of which specific, innovative types of blades have been identified in Moravia, are particularly significant. The analysis of hilts confirms the close connection of most Czech sword finds to the Carolingian milieu. Thanks to better conditions for dating, the sword finds from the Czech Republic can significantly contribute to understanding the development of Frankish swords in 9th and early 10th centuries. A brief evaluation of the contribution of swords to the history of early medieval societies of Great Moravia and Bohemia, which is focused primarily on the analysis of archaeological sources, is included in the conclusions.