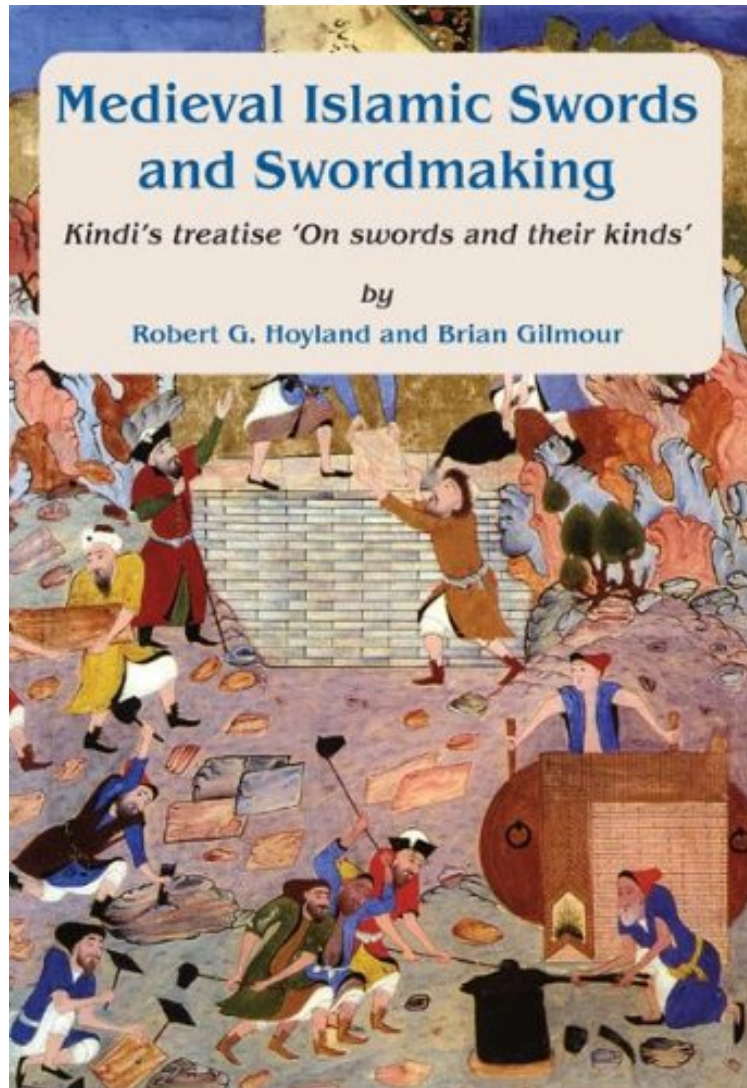


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Medieval Islamic swords and swordmaking (Gibb Memorial Trust Arabic Studies)

Robert G. Hoyland, Brian Gilmour
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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Resource of Rare Quality. By P. Ian McLeod An extremely rare and difficult to find resource in translation. This book deserves great accolade for that alone, but the parallel Arabic text, additional primary sources included in the volume, and the extensive commentary make it an absolutely indispensable text for anyone studying the medieval Islamic world in a serious capacity. 4 of 5 people found the

following review helpful. Welcome Addition to the History of Metal Working By John Matlock Although we have all seen the drawings and tapestries from the middle ages showing Islamic warriors carrying swords, there is very little available on the technical aspects of these weapons. There are several reasons for this: Historically we have paid a lot more attention to the history, both political and technological of Europe than we have to the Middle East. There wasn't a great deal written about such subjects anyway. The technology involved were closely guarded secrets of the family/clan/village that produced the swords. Publishing these secrets would allow others to capitalize on this knowledge. A lot of the material that was written was lost, or perhaps deliberately destroyed as it did not necessarily reflect on the religious fervor of the people. This book is a new translation of several documents that were written in the time as well as other documents that were written later but never available before in English. It is, perhaps the best source available, not only on swords, but on the production of iron and steel during the time. The authors are not only translators, but experts on the subject. Their commentary goes a long way to describing the meaning behind the actual translations. This book is a welcome addition to the library of the history of metalworking.

One of the problems pervading the study of medieval Islamic technology is the lack of surviving technical treatises. Tradition tended to be handed down by example and by word of mouth, and apprenticeships could last for decades. Fortunately, however, occasional treatises do exist. The treatise "On swords and their kinds" was written by the 9th century Muslim philosopher Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi. This work was commissioned by a powerful patron of scholarship, the Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim, and the content of the treatise presumably reflects the ruler's general interest in his army and its equipment, and his specific interest in the technical aspects of sword production. In this work, Kindi discusses the difference between iron and steel, distinguishes different qualities of sword blade, and different centres of swordsmithing. He refers to the Indian Ocean trade in steel ingots and to the distinctive character of European swords of the period. He includes technical terms used by the makers, and distinguishes swords by their physical features - form, measurements, weight, watered pattern, sculptured details, or inlaid ornaments. This publication includes the text and a translation of Kindi's treatise, and a detailed commentary on the work. The volume also includes a translation of Friedrich Schwarzlose's work on swords, which is based on the hundreds of references to swords in early Arabic poetry. Written in German, this extraordinary compendium of information was first published some 120 years ago; this volume makes it available again, and for the first time in English.

Altogether, this is a well-researched and scholarly work on the subject which will be of enormous value to the scholars and the general readers alike.' (Ayyub Malik Muslim World Book , 2007) This book is a 'must-have' for anyone interested in the swords of the medieval Near East, and in metals culture in early Islamic civilization.' (Philip Tom www.vikingsword.com) 'Medieval Islamic Swords and Swordmaking' contains fresh data and observations on Islamic arms and metalworking technology. As such, it is an indispensable addition to every reference library on the subject.' (Oliver Pinchot Center for Near Eastern Studies, 2007) It is, perhaps the best source available, not only on swords, but on the production of iron and steel during the time. The authors are not only translators, but experts on the subject. Their commentary goes a long way to describing the meaning behind the actual translations. This book is a welcome addition to the library of the history of metalworking.' (John Matlock Book-On-Line)...an invaluable reference for scholars interested in Islamic iron and steel working in general, and swordmaking in particular.' (Muhammed Hassanali deremilitari.org/reviews)