

# What is a Feder?

---

## **Abstract**

What follows is a discussion of the weapon commonly referred to as the feder. This investigation examines some of the etymology of the commonly used term federschwert in reference to this weapon along with how the term feder was used in documents of the period in which they were used. Further, it examines other proposed terms for the weapon, and examines images from various treatises of the weapon to discover the form of the weapon. It then discusses the actual form of the weapon, its physical characteristics and usage.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	1
Introduction .....	3
The Short Answer.....	4
A Neologism.....	5
The Feder, a Rapier? .....	6
Federfechter and Marxbrüder.....	7
Fencers of St. Vitus.....	10
Paratschwert .....	11
Fechtschwert.....	13
Image Discussion.....	16
Characteristics – Old and New Weapons.....	43
Sport Sword or Not? .....	45
Not Just for Longsword Training?.....	45
Renaissance Practice Weapon .....	46
Conclusion .....	48
Bibliography .....	52

## Introduction

The question posed above would seem to be answered straight-forwardly and simply enough, but to truly understand this weapon, more digging and research needed to be done. Not only was there the question of the term itself, but there was the question of where this term came from, and what it actually meant, and what it has been interpreted to mean over the years that it has been used. This is without examining the weapon itself.

Unfortunately, there are so few well-structured and efficient reports on the museum pieces which are held. This is not to mention, the simple mismanagement and elements of failure to place them under the correct category, often of predecessors of current curators, that has allowed some to be lost, that has made examining museum pieces difficult for this examination. Thus there is very little if any examination of museum pieces in this study.

What has been studied in this examination is all of the documentation possible to be accessed about this particular weapon. Of course with the authors own limitations on finances and language limits. There has been a lot of research done on this weapon and much to be said from many different sources about it.

One of the results of this investigation is an examination of image sources where the weapon appears and a discussion of what represents this weapon in these images. This alone, should give some pause for thought and remind them that though a weapon may be named, its form does not stay static over time. Much of the same consternation occurs when it comes to the question of the rapier.

## Organisation

The investigation which follows is rather in-depth as a result it has been divided into parts. There is the introductory part which includes this introduction and the immediately following section giving the short answer to the question proposed. This is designed to introduce the reader to the argument which surrounds this topic.

Following this is a discussion of “Words”. These are all discussions of words associated with the weapon, in other words reasons for it being called a particular thing or other and also discussions of other words which it may or may not be called by. Naming a thing or finding out the name of a thing can cause a lot of grief amongst a community.

The next section consisting of a single discussion is about “Pictures”. This is an investigation of how the weapon was depicted in various treatises over the period in which it was used. This gives the reader an image of the weapon in its various different forms and demonstrates that there was no one form which flowed through its entire existence.

The “Objects” section is designed to give a sort of physicality to the weapon, to describe some of the attributed gathered about the weapon and describe it as such. This will also describe some of its uses and proposed uses and then come up with a way it was used the most.

All of this is wrapped up in the Conclusion as any other paper is and that should be no surprise to any reader of this kind of paper. This part is designed to take all of the pieces which have been presented and make some sort of sense out of what has been presented. For the most part this will be evident to the reader as it this investigation processes along.

## Only German?

There should be parts of this paper which should be of interest to most people that are interested in the longsword, especially the German one. What is of most interest is that there is a distinct German bias when discussing the weapon. There are examples of other nationalities having this weapon from museums from around the world. This is also evident from the broad collection presented by Norling (2012) in his article and the images which accompany it. The German bias found in the following investigation is due to the commonality with the investigations which have preceded this one, that have focused on German sources and naming conventions.

## The Short Answer

While a long answer will be forth-coming about the *federschwert*, detailing various arguments about the weapon and discussing what was used for and its history, there is also the short answer to consider as well. The short answers cover such things as literal translations of the name of the sword from German to English. The slightly more in-depth discussions of the weapon lead to further investigations which will be presented further along.

## The “Feather-sword”

The first place people go for an interpretation of what a foreign thing is will be to translate the name of the object from the native language into English and interpret this into some idea of what this means thus, "*federschwert* - a lightweight sword. "Feder" is German for "feather," and "schwert" is German for "sword."" (Shackleford, 2010). This would seem to be a logical progression and explanation of the weapon, but leaves the reader with no real explanation of what the weapon is for. This is where an explanation from a more use-approach comes in handy, "A *Federschwert* ("Feather swords") is a foiled practice blade with a large flanged ricasso and a thick but narrow blade used for longsword training." (Wassom, 2016).

## A School Longsword

Wassom's (2016) explanation of what a *feder* is begins to explain not only what a *federschwert* is but also what it is used for. There is also a physical description which is most useful. Further explanation of the form of the weapon is possible and even a hint as to its use,

“special fencing school longswords called *federschwert*, with a narrow rapier-like blade and more mass close to the cross, in the area called the *schilt* or the *ricasso*.” (Norling, 2011)

With all this in mind there is the image of a weapon which is relatively light, blunt because it is used for practice in a school-type setting, which has a wide ricasso called a *schilt*, which brings the mass of the weapon close to the hilt, and a narrow but thick blade. This would seem to cover a reasonably good explanation, but there would seem to be a problem.

## What's in a Name?

“In Sweden we have a saying; "A loved child has many names" and looking at what is today called a *federschwert* this seems to be true for this type of sword

as well, at least if we think of it in general terms as a sword for training.”  
(Norling, 2013)

There would seem to be a lack of agreement on what this weapon should be called. Again, much like the rapier, the weapon is trapped in a web of confusion as to some naming nomenclature. For some *federschwert* or *feder*, is not a suitable term for this weapon, and another needs to be sought. Other names will be discussed.

### Not Historically Used

“we can feel quite safe in assuming that *federschwert* or *feder* was not a term historically used for training swords other than as a *poetic* choice of words.”  
(Norling, 2013)

Not an historical term? Nope. This will also be revealed. The question is whether or not this even matters or not. Does the term as it has been implied and used by the community suit the weapon and thus, being informed of its lack of history, does this really impact its use? The lack of history of this term will also be discussed in more detail. Needless to say, there is no short answer.

### A Neologism

“The term *federschwert* is quite clearly a *neologism*, i.e. a modern, reinvented term that wasn't used historically with the same meaning as we confer to it today.” (Norling, 2013)

In a nut-shell, a new term is what a neologism is, and *federschwert* is that. Of course if we have a look at Castle (1885) *Schools and Masters of Fence: From the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century*, it is not quite as new as some would like to claim, even if he did misuse the term. For better recognition of the word, and also the most accurate use of the word “*federschwert*”, and thus its diminutive “*feder*”, it is described as a modern word of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“The term *federschwert* (German for "feather sword") is sometimes used to describe these training swords, though it should be noted that this is an incorrect term made up in the early 20th century. Period texts simply describe these as swords.” (Grandy, 2003)

### Job Done

What is most interesting about the word is that even though it does not appear in any medieval or Renaissance *fechtbuch* (“fight book”), it “fills a gap in our vocabulary by not only defining the sword as a training sword, but also as a specific type of training sword with a flared *schilt*.” (Norling, 2013). This means the word has a use and there is really no reason not to use the word. Thus the word does exactly what it is supposed to do providing a term which describes an object which previously did not really have a specific word to describe it. Further, the fact that the word has become part of the modern language to discuss this form of sword means that there is really no reason not to use the word, even if it is new.

“Note: The term "federschwert" is a neologism and it is only about a 100 years old, but is in such common use today, that I choose to use it, and although the term *Parat Schwert*, as *Matt Galas* has suggested, earlier appeared to be suitable, other evidence has shown that the term "Fechtschwert" is more appropriate. Still, the term *federschwert* or *feder* is in such common use today that there is really not reason not to use it.” (Norling, 2011)

The following discussion of the *feder* is not designed to deny the use of the term or the existence of the weapon more to pinpoint the weapon itself, to identify it and to locate it in history and use. At no point in time was it the purpose ever to deny the term being used to describe it, merely to gather evidence about the weapon so as to understand it better.

## The Feder, a Rapier?

According to some fencing historians, especially those of the late nineteenth century, the term *feder* was used in reference to the rapier. There are arguments proposed about this to and fro, and they will be discussed here. Most of these arguments will be based on fencing history and fencing historians. Of course these arguments will also be based on points of view and interpretations.

## Partial Evolutionist

“The *Schwerdt* – the two-handed sword – the *Düssack* and the broadsword were replaced by the *Feder* or *Rapier*. The play was oriented more to the Italian than the French school. Nevertheless, play with the older weapons did continue and eventually developed into the purely cutting play of the *Schläger* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” (Wise, 2014:184)

The interesting thing to find here is that Wise (2014) claims that the *feder* and rapier are one and the same and replaced the sword and *düssack*, and that play oriented toward the Italian and French play. This is what would be expected from the typical evolutionist explanation of typical fencing historians, what is most interesting is the claim that the older weapons continued and changed to the *schläger*. The question is where would the idea that the *feder* and rapier were the same thing come from?

## Castle's Term

Castle (1885) is to blame for the confusion that *feder* was a term used for rapier in the sixteenth century. What is most interesting is that it is not even in the main text, it is a foot note about the *Federfechter*, “They [Federfechter] derived their name from the “Feder,” a slang word for the “Rapier” – the fashion which began to spread about 1570.” (Castle, 1885:30 fn.1). This footnote is then reinforced by a further statement in the text where he makes mention that by the end of the sixteenth century the “Feder” or “Rapier” was adopted in all schools of arms in Germany (Castle, 1885:180). Of course in his usual style, Castle leaves the reader with no idea of his sources.

“However, investigating the historical use of these terms is interesting. The word *federschwert* appears to stem from a paragraph describing the “feder” as

being the preferred weapon of the Federfechter, in Egerton Castle's *Schools and Masters of Fencing - From the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century* of 1885. According to Castle the "feder" was slang for the rapier," (Norling, 2013)

The interesting thing is that Castle can be credited with the use of the slang term feder for federschwert, as being the preferred weapon of the Federfechter. Of course the fact that he uses it in 1885 means that it does not have the Renaissance or medieval history most would like. What can be noted by this investigation and the investigation of others is that Castle was inaccurate in his interpretations.

"Most likely, Castle's idea of a *federschwert*, comes from an over-generalization or misunderstanding of poetic comparisons ... comparisons between a sword and a pen, which the craftsmen of the Marxbrüder used to ridicule the students of the Freifechter guild." (Norling, 2013)

What seems to have happened is that Castle has indeed read the original sources and misinterpreted the poetic comparison between the sword and the pen and assumed that they were somehow talking about the rapier, thus inferred that a federschwert was a rapier. This is most interesting as the Germans already had a word for rapier, "Rappier". Thus a feder is not a rapier.

## Federfechter and Marxbrüder

"The "Federfechter," while taking care to be proficient in the use of the two-handed "Schwerdt," looked upon the "Feder" as their distinctive weapon, and challenged the "Marxbrüder," wherever they met them, "to fight honourably with them, cut *and thrust*." (Castle, 1885:30)

The description above relies on Castle's (1885) explanation about the feder being a rapier, however, could be interpreted that the feder was some other kind of similar weapon. Castle was perhaps describing a weapon which was just not as large i.e. with a shorter handle, emphasis being on the thrust also being a difference. More likely, as has been discussed previously, with the confusion made and indicated Castle more likely made a mistake in identification of the weapon.

"Most likely, Castle's idea of a *federschwert*, comes from an over-generalization or misunderstanding of poetic comparisons ... comparisons between a sword and a pen, which the craftsmen of the Marxbrüder used to ridicule the students of the Freifechter guild." (Norling, 2013)

While such an indication of the weapon inaccuracy is important, so is the indication of a different way of using the weapon with the use of the point. It could also be the case that the Marxbrüder, or Marx Brothers, were criticising the Federfechter (or Freifechter) for their light, version of the feder, thus a real "feather sword", which was possibly more point-orientated in its use. Needless to say, what is most indicated is that there was a distinct argument between the two schools and a feder lies somewhere in the middle of it, whether it be a sword or a pen.

## Feder as "Feather"

"The German word *Feder* means "feather" or "quill", but came to be used of metal springs in the 17th century (i.e. at about the same time as the name of the sparring weapon and possibly influenced by it). The term *Fechtfeder* itself seems to be connected to the name of the *Federfechter*, i.e. "feather fencers", a guild or brotherhood of fencers formed in 1570 in Prague. It is possible that the term *Feder* for the sparring sword arose in the late 16th century at first as a term of derision of the practice weapon used by the *Federfechter* (who were so called for unrelated reasons, because of a feather or quill used as their heraldic emblem) by their rivals, the Marx Brothers, who would tease the *Federfechter* as "fencing with quills" as opposed to with real weapons, or as scholars or academics supposedly better at "fighting with the quill" than at real fighting (reflecting the different professional backgrounds of the rival fencing guilds). Johann Fischart in his *Gargantua* (1575) already compares the fencing weapon to a "quill" writing in blood." (Wikipedia, 2016)

In its usual way, the Wikipedia (2016) attempts to round things up and simplify things for the reader so it is easy to read. It also attempts to place all of the information in a simple format in the same place at the same time. Of course this is supposed to result in a simple answer for the reader. The problem is that sometimes the scholarship is not as good as it could be, but it does lead the reader in a direction in which to research. The first statement is true about the definition of "feder" being for "quill" or "feather". It has an interesting note that the sparring weapon may have become related to springs which the word became known for also possibly due to the nature of the blade. Then it gets to the interesting and relevant parts.

The *Federfechter* and the *Marxbrüder* often came into conflict over the rights to operate in towns, or more to the point with the blessing of local lords. Sometimes this would result in a match with blunted weapons other times, not so blunt. Interestingly, sometimes it would also result in arguments via statements made in local publications as well. Due to the heraldic emblem being the feather or quill, the *Marxbrüder* would often refer to them as better fencing with a quill or pen, or also referring to a lighter weapon. Interestingly, this is a point which will come up as a significant point and where Castle (1885) may have gained his information.

## Quill Fencers

“It is also highly intriguing to note, that the various protestant authors often are called "federfechter", ie "quill fencers" in the late 1500s and 1600s, eg. in "*Probstein oder Censur des Lutherischen Tractäts...*" by Mattias Faber in 1650 and "*Lilium Sionaeum Quinquagenâ Prole foecundum...*" from 1695, given that there appears to have existed strong connotations between some of the *Freyfechter von der Feder* and the Calvinist movement. - Perhaps not so surprisingly, the term *federfechter* with the meaning of *pen fencer* is still used in many countries, e.g Germany, Sweden and Belgium.” (Norling, 2013)

The reference above lays the argument firmly in place that the discussion of the feder being discussed here is that of the quill, or pen, being that they are discussing authors of a particular movement. The implication could also be made that such indication could also cross over to other such “federfechter” accusing them of being better with a pen than with a sword. This idea of the pen being more important to the Federfechter could have come from a difference in class status as there was a distinct difference between the two brotherhoods.

“Given this *poetic connotation* between *federfechter* and *quill fighting*, it is again very interesting to see how the Marxbrüder members (often being *furriers* or *tanners*) appear to have ridiculed the *Freifechter von der Feder* for being scholars and academics (... *Because, hear ye, feather thin paper [and] black ink should be found only in a scriptorium*).” (Norling, 2013)

The membership of the two different groups, in the modern world, would not be of particular interest, but in the periods in which these groups existed, this difference was quite significant. It essentially meant that the members of the Marxbrüder were more from the lower classes, while the members of the Freifechter were from the upper classes, thus creating an instant class gap and friction between the two groups.

“This opposition between the "working man's" Marxbrüder and the "academic" Freifechter Guild is corroborated by Heinrich von Gunterrodt stating the same in his 1579 treatise, where he describes how the Marxbrüder, come from dirty professions like tanners and connected crafts and think they are better than the Freyfechter von der Feder just because they have the Imperial Privilege, while the Freyfechter, more often being students of the good sciences and arts clearly are superior in fighting.” (Norling, 2013)

From the statement above there is a clear attitude expressed about the difference between the two groups. One is simply better than the other because they come from the “good sciences and arts” and this must make their fencing much better. Needless to say there were quite a few conflicts between the two groups, as already indicated. It should also be noted that with an upper class station it would not be surprising if they did have access to information about the rapier and its fashionable status, and no doubt access to the weapon, this aside, even with the accusation of the lighter weapon and its relation to the pen, could it not have been claimed by the Freifechter?

“So, perhaps this is where the name originates from, an originally *derogatory* word, rooted in a constantly growing opposition between artisans and students, an epithet that the Freyfechter came to carry with pride?” (Norling, 2013)

## Fencers of St. Vitus

“*Feder* in German means “feather” or “quill”. Grimm et al. postulated that “*Feder*” also was a slang term for rapier, an assumption that cannot be supported with a shred of evidence. Karl Wassmannsdorff derived the term “Federfechter” from *Veiterfechter*, or fencers of St. Vitus. This could be adducted by two or three examples. Schmied-Kowarzik and Kufahl, however, point out that the coat of arms of the Federfechter featured a quill, thus rendering etymological calisthenics redundant.” (Amberger, 1999:114 fn.127)

While Castle (1885) is the biggest proponent for *feder* referring to a rapier he is not the only one as can be seen above. Of course, as can be seen above Amberger (1999) denies Grimm’s claim due to a lack of evidence, much in the same way that Castle’s is by other authors. He then presents evidence to suggest that the idea came from the fencers of St. Vitus, first presenting evidence from Wassmannsdorff in the form of word formation and then the coat of arms presented by Schmied-Kowarzik and Kufahl which seem to seal the evidence with the quill being present on the coat of arms (Amberger, 1999:114 fn.127). The evidence presented would seem to bury once and for all the idea of the *feder* as a rapier and present the quill being referred to that being the one on the coat of arms of St Vitus. Norling (2013), on the other hand, disputes this claim of the quill.

“Another theory that has been suggested is that it refers to what the patron saint of the Freifechter von der Feder and Bohemia, St. Vitus, holds in his hand, but that is simply a misinterpretation of a *palm frond*, which is a sign of his martyrdom. On the other hand, in his other hand, he holds a *rooster*, the animal St. Vitus is said to have been boiled alive with and this might partly explain the association with the fanciful feathers of the Freyfechter von der Feder. The rooster is also sometimes used to symbolize the Freyfechter von der Feder, in place of the Griffin which was the official symbol of the Freyfechter Gesellschaft.” (Norling, 2013)

Thus Norling claims that the quill is a palm frond rather than a quill, but states that the association can still be made through the presence of the rooster, thus feathers, which are one symbols of the Freifechter. This all goes to suggest a reason for the naming of the weapon to being a *feder*, through the naming of the group rather than any direct correlation to the weapon itself. Of course, this link is much less tenuous than any direct link made with the weapon itself, especially as the weapon is seen in the hands of many different figures in many different images, not all necessarily related to the Freifechter.

## Paratschwert

The discussion which follows about the *paratschwert* is about another possible name for the feder. The information for this discussion comes from a single author, namely Norling (2013) however he does give the best coverage of the subject. Usually this would be a problem, but in this case Norling has done some extensive research on the subject and covers the areas of importance.

## Etymology

“Well, the word *Parat* stems from the Latin *paratus / parare* which means *to prepare / be prepared / be ready*. The word is also related to the modern German word *bereit* (or *beredd, bereda* in Swedish).” (Norling, 2013)

According to this first account of the word the *paratschwert* is a “ready”-sword, but ready for what? This does not really make much sense alone. Of course a person could read into it to be prepared would be to practice, therefore it is likely that the word could be interpreted as a “practice” sword, as some may have done. Luckily for the reader Norling goes into more detail and explanation.

“Furthermore, *parat* also means both *parrying / floryishing* and *showing off / displaying*, and we know that the fencers carried various arms when processing in a parade and with other associated festivities, like the *Schwerttanz* (sword dancing). Finally we also know that fencers initiated the fencing events called *fechtschulen* by floryishing their weapons to show their skill. All these connotations to the word make full sense, given that the parading and the ceremonial sword dancing all *prepare* for the main event; the Fechtschulen, with fancy display of arms and skills.” (Norling, 2013)

The information above presents a weapon which is used for demonstration purposes; to demonstrate their skills and in other parade elements, and not so much for practice as may have been indicated previously. Thus the word does not have the same sort of connotation that even *federschwert* has even in the modern language, but of more of a weapon with less practical and more demonstration purpose in mind. The information which Norling presents further reinforces this idea.

“Well, looking to the sources, the oldest note I have found is in *The Swedish Etymological Wordbook*, which generally is quite reliable. This source actually states that a *parate-swerdh*, as used in 1563-64, is a sword used for a parade and possibly an especially fine one. Also, the modern Swedish word *paradsvärd* means just that: *A sword that you carry in a parade*, usually more decorated and not used for anything else.” (Norling, 2013)

So from this point of view the *paratschwert* is a parade sword, a finely decorated weapon which is carried in a parade. Thus the idea of the weapon being used for sword dancing and merely being flourished about to demonstrate skill rather than being used in any form of combat, real or simulated, begins to take shape. Clearly this is not a practice weapon. This idea of the weapon being ceremonial in purpose is further reinforced by the following.

“in 1589 Christoff Rösener describes the procedure for how a newly approved *Meister des Schwerdts* receives his masterhood in his treatise *Ehren Tittel und Lobspruch der Ritterlichen Freyen Kunst der fechter ... the Meisterbrief* in a formal ceremony where a paratschwert is used to “knight” him, while he swears himself to never abandon his mastership for the rest of his life. In a sense he has now both *prepared* and *readied himself* and he is made, *prepared* into a proper master using a specific sword.” (Norling, 2013)

In this case there is definitely the element of the weapon being used as a ceremonial weapon, as it was being used in the ceremony. There was also the element mentioned before about preparing mentioned before as he would have had to prepare himself for the challenges of being a master, and also the use of his weapon. This is more of an aside, but the interpretations do not actually stop here.

### Parry or Trick Sword

“The meaning of the word *parat* is interesting, but if we interpret it as a *parry* or a *trick*, then it gets a bit confusing, since it describes a meaning that I think would fit most weapons and thus becomes redundant for signifying the sword type. I would suggest that the fact that you can do a parat with a sword doesn’t make it a paratschwert. Instead, there are other more important factors that decide the naming of the sword type; factors like *context* and *appearance*.” (Norling, 2013)

To attempt to define a sword as a trick or parry sword is very broad, as Norling indicates. This sort of signification for a weapon is more designed to indicate some sort of negative aspect to the weapon, as a “trick sword”. This sort of application of idea can really be applied to any sword of any shape if the individual can do a trick with it, or if it was designed to do such. Such indications may be pointers toward those who would like to indicate negative toward the sword in general.

“Curiously, it has also been suggested that the term paratschwert is *derogatory*, meaning a sword used by someone who just shows off but knows little about real fencing, although that claim still needs corroboration.” (Norling, 2013)

### Paratschwert: A Parade Sword

The idea of *paratschwert* being a derogatory term because it is against a person who shows off sword work but knows little about actual fencing, pushes the idea of the *paratschwert* back toward it being a parade sword, or ceremonial sword rather than a practice weapon.

“A paratschwert would still be a blunted but otherwise *fully functional* sword and could certainly be used for fencing, but this was not its primary function. With that said, we know for certain that sometimes *both* paratschwerter and fechtschwerter were carried in the very same parades. However, I have thus far not found a single clear instance of a paratschwert being used for actual fencing.” (Norling, 2013)

For the most part, aside from a couple of side-notes toward some interesting places, it has been noted that the *paratschwert* is a parade or ceremonial sword. This is indicated by the evidence which has been presented above. As a substitute for the frequently used *feder* indicating a practice sword, it simply does not fill the gap.

## Fechtschwert

*Fechtschwert* is another name by which a *feder* may be referred, i.e. another option for naming. This is an option which is discussed heavily by Norling (2013), so much so that this will be the only reference which will appear in this part of the discussion. What is most interesting about how describes the naming of the weapon is that it is by the same way that *federschwert* is described and analysed by other authors. What is even more interesting is that this discussion of the optional naming for the *feder* provides a bridge to another and an overall wrap-up to the naming discussion.

## Fechtschwert – “Fight Sword”

“So what about *fechtschwert* then? Well *fechten* simply means *fighting*, but the word has been combined into various combinations associated with training throughout the centuries. For example, but not limited to:

*Fechtschule* - In 1494, 1495, 1512, 1531 , 1537 and 1542.

*Fechtschwert* - pre 1541, 1550, 1575, 1583, 1620, 1671 and 1676.

*Fechthaus* and *Fechtboden* - In 1594, 1651 , 1654 and 1670.

*Fechtdegen* (training rapier) - In 1646, 1647, 1653 and 1660.

*Fechthandschuhe* (fencing glove) In 1740, 1762 and 1763.

*Fechtrapier* - In 1661, 1832, 1849 and 1850.

*Fechtsäbel* - in 1847, 1848 and 1851.” (Norling, 2013)

The obvious one which Norling fails to mention is *fechtbuch* (fight book), the primary reference from which the method for using the weapons comes. With this history and clear evidence for the use of the word “fecht” in relation to various weapons, locations and objects it would seem that it is a better fit for the weapon than *feder* ever was. It would seem that the weight of history, and particularly printed history, is what has resulted in the prevalence of the use of *federschwert* over *fechtschwert*.

## Fechtschwert for Training

“we find two interesting sources; *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules Und Der Böhmischen Königlichen Fräulein Valiska* from 1676 and *Geschichte der Oranien-Nassauischen Länder und ihrer Regenten* from 1816 mention the *fechtschwert* specifically. The latter describes how in 1550 a fencing master is hired for the court of Duke Konrad von Sickingen and *fechtschwerter* are purchased for the then 13 year old Duke Georg Wilhelm and the other young nobles of the court.” (Norling, 2013)

Clearly the *fechtschwert* is a sword used for training, evidence for which the feder presents by image and association with the word more than in literature as above. This weapon was designed for training as the previous demonstration of language proves; further evidence such as what appears immediately above only further demonstrates further evidence to support the idea in clear documentation, rather than documentation by association. Further to this there is evidence for the use of this weapon.

“a *fechtschwert* being described as “being comfortable in the hand”. ... sources *clearly*, refer to the *fechtschwert* as a *training* sword used for actual fencing.” (Norling, 2013)

What this means is that there is evidence for the weapon being used, rather than some idea of the weapon being used and some idea about how it was used. That it was used for training and fencing is most interesting in that it gives credence to the idea of the longsword being used in fencing matches in the period but not in duelling. Not saying that the sword would not do damage, quite the opposite, “the *Bloß-fechtschwert* obviously hurts badly, even blinding the Freyfechter opponent, though most likely from bleeding into the eyes.” (Norling, 2013). The head being the primary target for a bleeding wound in these matches, however the rapier had taken preference for duelling, as worn by the gentlemen in the image below.



“Fencers parading by Balthasar Kuchler, 1611” (Norling, 2012)

These gentlemen carry their *fechtschwert* over the shoulder and are equipped with rapiers at the same time. The rapier had taken over the longsword for duelling in this period and the longsword, while still trained in earnest, had been pushed more to the side. In discussing fencers in parades the discussion turns to the *paratschwert* and the *fechtschwert* and their differences.

## Paratschwert and Fechtschert Together - Different Uses

“Another interesting source that we have already looked at, the *Kurtze und gründliche Beschreibung des Königlichen Einzuges* from 1620, by Georg Reutter, describes a Furrier's guild parade, preceding a sword dance with public fencing by fencing masters in Breslau, ... This passage is interesting as we are told that the three boys carry first a Paratschwerdt and then a *pair* of Fechtschwerter. This I think further reveals a difference in purpose for the two types of swords; the first being a finer sword used for ceremony, the second for training and tournament fighting. The Paratschwert is carried at the very front of the parade, which would seem to indicate a certain importance carried by it (alongside of the laurel wreaths), perhaps even a certain reverence, similar to a relic or a cross.” (Norling, 2013)

The *paratschwert* is discussed in more detail in another section of this investigation. Needless to say, it is another term vying for a place by which the feder may be called. By the evidence presented above it would appear, however, that this weapon is more of a weapon designed for ceremonial purposes rather than training or fighting with. That the source mentions both types of sword being carried is significant that they can be separated and some idea of their purpose is determined. It would seem to start to separate these types of weapon from one another and start to disentangle at least some of the terms from the confusion.

### Too Broad

“Some may think that the term *fechtschwert* is too broad, not really defining the historical training swords with flared schilts and although this is hard to know for sure, since there is a lack of source material on the topic, I would also suggest that the term may actually have referred to what we today think of as *federschwert*, considering that the particular type of sword possibly has been used as far back as the first quarter of the 1400s and were particularly common in Blossfechten (unarmoured fencing). In fact, they appear to have been more common than regular, blunt longswords, if we are to trust the illustrated treatises.” (Norling, 2013)

The *fechtschwert* and *federschwert* may have been the same thing, according to the research which has been presented above. This would imply that this word *fechtschwert* is another viable term, perhaps more viable than feder due to the evidence supporting it, though the sources do not specify that it is actually the actual weapon referred to as a feder being spoken about. Though this is true, the greatest criticism against it is that it is too broad. The end result could always be having two names for the same thing due to evidence supporting one and popular use supporting the other.

## Image Discussion

There is a selection of 23 images which will be discussed in differing levels of depth in this discussion ranging between 1452 and 1623. Most of these images have been selected by the author while three of them have been taken from Norling (2012) "A Call to Arms". The other images have been taken from the Wiktenauer (<http://wiktenauer.com>). Each one of the images is designed to present some aspect typical or atypical of the feder as it has been presented by other documentation. Overall this is designed to give an accurate pictorial presentation of the feder as it was presented in treatises and other places.

Technical terms will be used to discuss the weapons, thus some knowledge of the parts of the weapon is required. A special note with regard to this need to be made in that, the term cross-guard will be used rather than quillons as this is the most period- and weapon-appropriate term, being that quillons is a term which is usually used to refer to later period weapons and also mostly to single handed weapons also.

## General Discussion

### Presence Eastablished

"they [federschwert] go back as far as the mid-15th century at least, and are shown in the "Peter von Danzig"- manuscript of 1452 ..., the Talhoffer Manuscript of 1467 and numerous others." (Norling, 2011)

That there are so many images present in this discussion over such a wide timeline demonstrates a long period of use of this particular weapon. For the moment the commonly used "feder" and "federschwert" will be used, as nomenclature has been discussed in detail in other places. The presence of this particular item was not denied. There are more interesting things to be said of this practice weapon.

### Von Danzig 1452

"the so-called "Von Danzig" manuscript of 1452. There are only two images in this manuscript; one showing the four basic Liechtenauer longsword guards *Ochs*, *Pflug*, *Alber* and *Vom Tag* and the other image, ... portrays a fencing master, which has been suggested to be Johannes Liechtenauer. Both images clearly show fechtschwert." (Norling, 2011a)



Seated figure from von Danzig 1452 (Cod.44.A.8) (Norling, 2012)

The image presented here is from the “von Danzig” manuscript as indicated and will be discussed in more detail. This is the seated figure which may or may not be Johannes Liechtenauer; it will be discussed in more detail. He holds the federschwert or fechtschwert in one hand and a stick in the other, pointing toward other weapons. Clearly this is an image of a teacher or fencing master. This is more interesting in that it is more or less the first image of a feder which we have.

## Style Changes

“We can find examples of these swords in the old Martial Arts *Fechtbucher* (fight books) from the early 1420s up until the early 17th century, but they might have been in use for a longer period of time. We see many varying styles of *Feders* as their designs change from *Fechtbuch* to *Fechtbuch*.” (Wassom, 2016)

Just like any other weapon in existence they change over time and even at the same time due to style and use. Some people will want to make the weapon better or move differently, or even just want to change the look of the weapon to make it their own. The result of this is changes in the blade shape, length and proportions. This is most useful to the historian as it makes it possible to track the weapon through its changes through cultures and groups. This also goes to examination of how they were depicted.

## Blade Depiction

“In the early period sources we almost exclusively see swords that have blades that taper towards the point, with some of them even being illustrated as having ridged blades. The clear majority, however, are depicted as having simple flat blades.” (Norling, 2012)

The blade of the feder is one of the most interesting parts of the weapon in its depiction as it tells us something of the nature of the weapon. It can even tell us if the author had ideas as to whether the weapon intended was actually a more solid weapon than a feder or possibly even that the feder was made in a similar fashion to a sharp sword thus preserving a more rigid blade. On the other hand this may also just be artists’ interpretation. But the blade depiction must take into account more.

## Parallel Edges

Parallel edges rather than tapering edges is a characteristic which the feder shows in the more modern form. In the images, this wavers a little, “Quite a few are shown having near parallel edges, especially in the first and second quarter of the 1500s, but also later,” (Norling, 2012). It is most interesting that some would waver in their depiction and show edges on the feder which were not parallel.

Parallel edges are depicted on those weapons which are somewhat larger than the longsword. It has been indicated that the feder could have been used for practice at two-handed sword work as well, and the depictions which are supplied of the feder, in general, bear this idea out. These weapons have long, parallel edges on them and are often quite a bit longer than the standard longsword which is depicted.

“This seems to coincide with the large, parallel edge, and sometimes quite flexible *zweihänder* used by Kaiser Maximilian I's *Landsknechten*. Other examples are the Goliath treatise of 1510, Paurnfeindt hn236 of 1516, "Egonolph" of 1531, Agrippa of 1553 and Leküchner of 1558.” (Norling, 2012)

### *Narrow Blades*

“Not until the very late 1500s and early 1600s (and onwards) do we see very narrow training swords, for instance in Codex Guelf 83.4 August 8° from 1591 and in Thibault's *Academie de l'Espée* from 1631.” (Norling, 2012)

The narrow blade is one of those characteristics which have been indicated by some that would make the feder lighter. In return it has also been stated that the narrowing of the blade is the simple result of the shift of the weight of the blade back toward the hilt to preserve the correct balance. In the depictions, the narrower blades are seen on the later weapons indicating that these may also have been more toward the time when the longsword was bowing out to the rapier thus the art was being preserved, possibly at the expense of some of its martial capability.

### *Flared Point*

“From about 1540, we see some rare examples of swords that flare somewhat towards the point, for instance in Paul Hektor Mair, and the Anton Rast Fechtbuch.” (Norling, 2012)

The flared point is the clearest indication that this was a practice weapon rather than one which was designed to be used in earnest combat. The flared point is designed to prevent the point from penetrating when practicing a thrust against a partner. This demonstrates that this weapon was clearly designed for practice rather than in an actual conflict.

### *The Images*

The previous discussion has been designed to introduce the topic of the image discussion and give a brief outline of some of the subject material which will be discussed in the following. What will follow is a more in-depth discussion of each of the images which has been selected, focussing on the feder which can be found in the image. At the end an overall discussion will be made highlighting the main points which have been discovered, most of which will support the documentation which has already been presented.

Image from *Fechter Buechlein Ge Duckt* (1594)



(Norling, 2012)

The original image is by Martin Pleginck and Jost Amman held in British Library, Harley MS 5944, f. 57, nos. 175-179. This depicts three individuals parading most likely on the way to a *fechtschule* (fight school) demonstration. The weapon which will be the focus of the discussion is the one held by the individual in the middle. It should also be noted that it is not the only weapon present.

The weapon has a round pommel, the handle is suited for two-handed use, and flares the closer it gets to the cross-guard. The cross guard is simple; it has no rings on the cross, only a small point travelling upward on the ricasso. It has a very small *schilt*, no doubt due to the size of the weapon. The blade is flat with no ridge, it seems to have parallel edges but it is difficult to say as it has a bend in it. The point is definitively rounded. The blade could have a bend due the decoration on it.

The other two figures one who plays a pipe and the other who plays a drum are both armed with a single-handed sword with a complex hilt. These weapons may or may not be rapiers, due to the date of the engraving. From a discussion of the weapon this image is not particularly informative.

## Fencers parading by Balthasar Kuchler, 1611



(Norling, 2012)

The image above depicts three fencers in civilian attire carrying feders across their shoulders parading. This image has many elements in common with the previous image even though they are more than a decade apart. This image actually cements statements which were inferred about the previous image.

Again there are three figures parading, but in this case all three are carrying feders. The weapons are depicted as being of the same shape, having a spherical pommel, relatively simple and straight handle, straight quillons, a small *schilt*, a blade with a ridge in this instance, and a rounded tip. All are also carrying complex hilted weapons, for personal protection, as would be expected of gentlemen of their day. The blades on these weapons are also not particularly long.

Things that could be suggested from this image and the information drawn are that the feder is obviously not being used for defensive purposes, hence the complex-hilted weapon at the hip. The blade is short, and this could account for the smaller *schilt*, just as on the previous example. The suggestion of a ridge on the blade is most confusing as it is indicated to go to the tip and this would make the weapon very solid and dangerous in training, thus it could be suggested that this is an artist's interpretation rather than instruction from the author.

## Fencers from Triumphzug der Kaiser Maximilian, 1526.



(Norling, 2012)

Norling (2012) presents another image of fencers parading. In this case they are all wearing landsknecht dress, which is most interesting as this is military in nature, rather than civilian, which most of the schools of martial arts are most associated with. This may, however have been the artist's choice, though the title of the piece may indicate a "triumph" in the Roman sense. Of course, schools of the period would not exclude military students, merely that they would most likely have had their training elsewhere.

Moving on to the focus of this investigation, the weapons are quite lengthy and clearly have room for two hands on the grips, thus would put them easily in the two-handed category. This lines up with their landsknecht dress, as these mercenaries were famous with the two-handed sword. In similarity to other federschwert examples in images, the points are rounded and the cross-guard is relatively simple. The blade in this case is quite broad, which means that the indication could be of a fuller or a ridge as seen in the previous example, in this case most likely a fuller. The *schilt* on the weapons is quite large and is similar to that found on the weapon from the "von Danzig" treatise, to follow directly after this. This in no way indicates a link, merely a similarity and possibly a trend in formation.

### Image from Cod.44.A.8 “Codex Danzig” (1452)

The image below is present in Norling (2012) however the image chosen was taken from the treatise for a better example. To be more precise, this and all the following images, unless otherwise indicated, were taken from treatises found on the Wiktenauer ([www.wiktenauer.com](http://www.wiktenauer.com)). The captions below the main images will contain their document and the page from which they came, in this case Codex 44.A.8 page 2-verso. In the case of more modern ones they will have the author’s name and page number. Further images, enhancing parts of the original may be included in the text to assist.



Cod.44.A.8 2v

There has been a lot already said about this image in other discussions, most are discussing whether or not it is or is not Johannes Liechtenauer. This is not the focus of this investigation. For the purposes of this discussion, it is only a small portion of the image which is a concern, and that is the weapon which the seated figure is holding in his right hand.

The weapon has a simple pommel, not quite round and a handle which can accommodate both hands. It has a very simple cross-guard, a broad *schilt*, and a blade, with tapering edges, which ends in a rounded point. This would seem to be an adequate description of the weapon, but more needs to be said. The blade and *schilt* are of particular interest.



In the previous two images the blades were depicted, in the first case, with a ridge in the blade, and in the second case, with a fuller in the blade. The blade here is depicted as being flat. This makes the blade in this image of interest as it demonstrates how the blades may change in their presentation as images. Blades may also be depicted with a taper as is the case in this image or simply rounded when merely parallel. The depiction, it is often stated, is up to the artist, but some credit must be given to the author or authors as well. The same can be said of the length, in this case being longsword, rather than two-handed sword, length. Such depictions may also allude to the use of the weapon.



The *schilt* of this particular weapon is of interest because it is not particularly common. While Norling (2012) managed to present images of federschwert all with similar kinds of *schilt*, this is not actually the case if a closer look is taken. This broad, sloping backward type which is present in this image is not typical of the type which is present. Most of the *schilt* which will be presented will either be squared-off, or have lugs pointing outward or forward toward the point of the weapon. This type is indicative of a minimalist style trying to achieve the same end with the least disruption to the use of the weapon. Changes in type of *schilt* will be noted in the feder which follow.

While other aspects of the weapon, such as the handle and pommel shape, and cross-guard size are note-worthy, it is the blade and the *schilt* which are of most note in this investigation, and it is they which most stand out. These parts of the weapon decide really how the weapon handles as the handle needs to be balanced against them, thus need more of the focus. This is especially where a part may interfere or add to the use of the weapon and thus change its characteristics.

Image from Cod.Guelf.78.2 Aug.2° “Wolfenbüttel Sketchbook” (1465 – 1480)



Cod.Guelf.78.2 Aug.2° 7r

The image above comes from Cod.Guelf.78.2 Aug.2° also known as the “Wolfenbüttel Sketchbook”. It depicts two combatants in civilian attire engaged in a sword fight. For the purposes of this discussion it is the weapons which are of interest as they are using *feder*. This is actually a very good depiction of the weapon because in both cases the weapons can be clearly seen and thus easily discussed.

The weapons have a relatively large, tear-drop-shaped pommel, a handle which accommodates the use of two hands as can be seen in both figures. The cross-guard is simple aside from a slight point in the middle extending toward the *schilt*. In this image the *schilt* is relatively small, especially if compared to the previous image discussed. It should also be noted that this *schilt* has lugs or wings extending outward and forward; possibly used to hinder the opponent’s weapon.



The blade on this weapon is tapered just as with the previous example, and tapers to a rounded point. This rounded point indicates a practice weapon. Unlike the previous example there is the indication of a fuller the middle of both blades which have been depicted. This is less likely to be a ridge as it does not extend all of the way to the tip as can be seen by the weapon in the hands of the figure on the right hand side.

The length and size of the weapon, even with its clearly two-handed grip still indicates a weapon in the longsword class, rather than a weapon in the two-handed class. This is something which is in common with the previous image from the “Codex Danzig”. What makes this codex interesting is that it stretches over a fifteen year period, and as will be noted there are changes in the shape of the weapons over time which will make this seem almost ahead of its time.

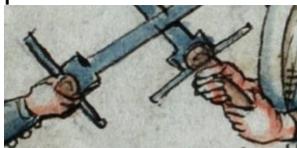
## Image from Cod.S.554 “Solothurner Fechtbuch” (1470)



Cod.S.554 fig.77

The image above comes from Cod.S.554 known as the “Solothurner Fechtbuch” of 1470. It depicts two individuals in civilian clothing engaged at the longsword. This image is of note for several reasons which will be made clear in due course. What should be noted is that the weapons are the focus rather than their handling.

The pommels of the weapons are obscured as such nothing can be said of them. The handles can clearly accommodate two hands, and the cross-guard is of very simple design. One point of note, which will be discussed later, is the presence of a *chappe* known as a “rain guard”. The *schilt* is square, and the blades taper to a point.



The *schilt* has been noted to be square, more accurately it is oblong, and quite small as compared to previous examples. This would imply that the unseen pommel would have to be relatively large to keep the balance of the weapon. It should also be noted that while it lacks the lugs of the previous example the square shape could serve the same purpose possibly to hinder the opponent’s weapon.

Due to its location it is appropriate to talk about the addition of the *chappe* to these weapons. The first thing that should be noted is that this is atypical for German weapons and especially so for feder and even German weapons in general. Of the examples collected there are only two where this is present. This could be seen as an enhancement to the assumed protective capabilities of the *schilt*.

The blade of the weapon is extremely simple. It is flat with no markings at all. The artist is clearly indicating that the figures indicated here are using practice weapons which have no edges or points.

From MS Cl. 23842 “Cluny Fechtbuch” (1480s – 1500)



MS Cl. 23842 12r

The above image is from the MS Cl. 23842 known as the “Cluny Fechtbuch” it is dated as 1480s to 1500 and depicts two individuals in civilian clothing combating with longsword. The weapons, which are the prime concern of this investigation, have round pommels and handles with two-handed grips. The cross-guard is simple but with round ends. The *schilt* is long and rectangular and the blade of the weapon is simply depicted as flat with parallel edges and a rounded point.



The *schilt* of the weapon is rectangular. In this case it is a long rectangular section, large and square at the top. This is markedly larger than the *schilts* on the previous examples which have been presented thus far. This would seem to indicate a longer blade, but it is not.

The blade has parallel edges which come to a rounded point. There is no tapering in the blade at all. There are no markings on the blade to indicate fullers or any other blade features. This indicates a very simple practice blade with no sharp edges and a blunt point. The blade length is within the standard longsword length, despite the larger *schilt* present.

## From MS KK5012 “Kunste Zu Ritterlicher Were” (1495)



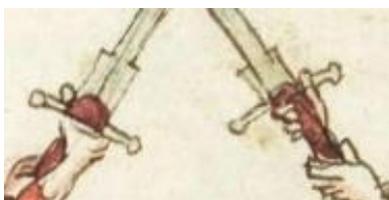
MS KK5012 2r



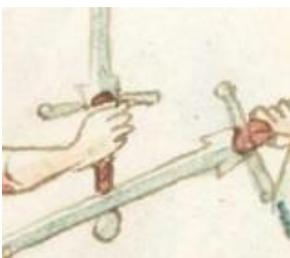
MS KK5012 16v

The first thing that will be noted is that two images have been selected from this treatise rather than a single one as in previous treatises. This is because the images which have been presented above depict different things which are of importance. Both images depict two combatants in civilian clothing contesting at the longsword and come from the MS KK5012 dated to 1495. While you cannot see the pommels on one image, on the other they are clearly round. The handle is suited to fit two hands, and the cross-guard is very similar to the previous treatise being straight with spherical ends. Both blades are depicted as simple parallel blades with rounded ends, the *schilts* are different and this is of interest.

The blades are depicted as very simple parallel with a rounded point, with no taper at all. There is no marking on the blade to indicate fullers or ridges of any kind. This is definitively indicating a practice weapon with a blunt edge. The blade seems to be the standard length for a longsword.



The *schilt* which is found on the first image is rectangular and quite long. This makes it quite similar to the *schilt* found on the swords found in the previous treatise. In this case there is some indication of narrowing on the sword on the right side on the sides of the *schilt*. Overall, it is quite large, as in the previous treatise. This would indicate that the blade should be longer, but as previously indicated it is not. What is most interesting is that this is different to the *schilt* depicted in the second image.



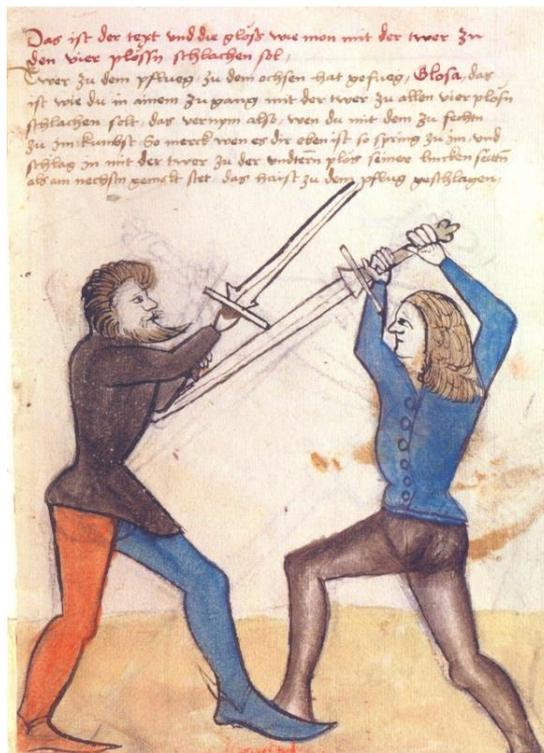
In the second image the *schilt* shape has changed and seems to be more like that found in Cod.Guelf.78.2 Aug.2<sup>o</sup> 7r which was discussed previously. This type is smaller and has wings extending outward and forward toward the point of the weapon. This would beg the question as to why there was a

change in the shape of the *schilt* shape in the treatise, and whether or not it was the author's or the artist's decision.

Another curious note to make about the second image is that the combatant on the left side is holding the blade of the opponent in his grasp, securing the weapon while preparing to strike the opponent. This would indicate that this is a legitimate technique for both practice weapons as indicated by those depicted and also for sharp ones, as that is what they would be practicing for.

The final point of note for these images is the re-appearance of the *chappe* in both cases. This was a feature found in the Cod.S.554 fig.7. This is the other treatise where it was indicated these were present. They are rarely used on these swords.

## From MS E.1939.65.341 "Glasgow Fechtbuch" (1508)



MS E.1939.65.341 2r

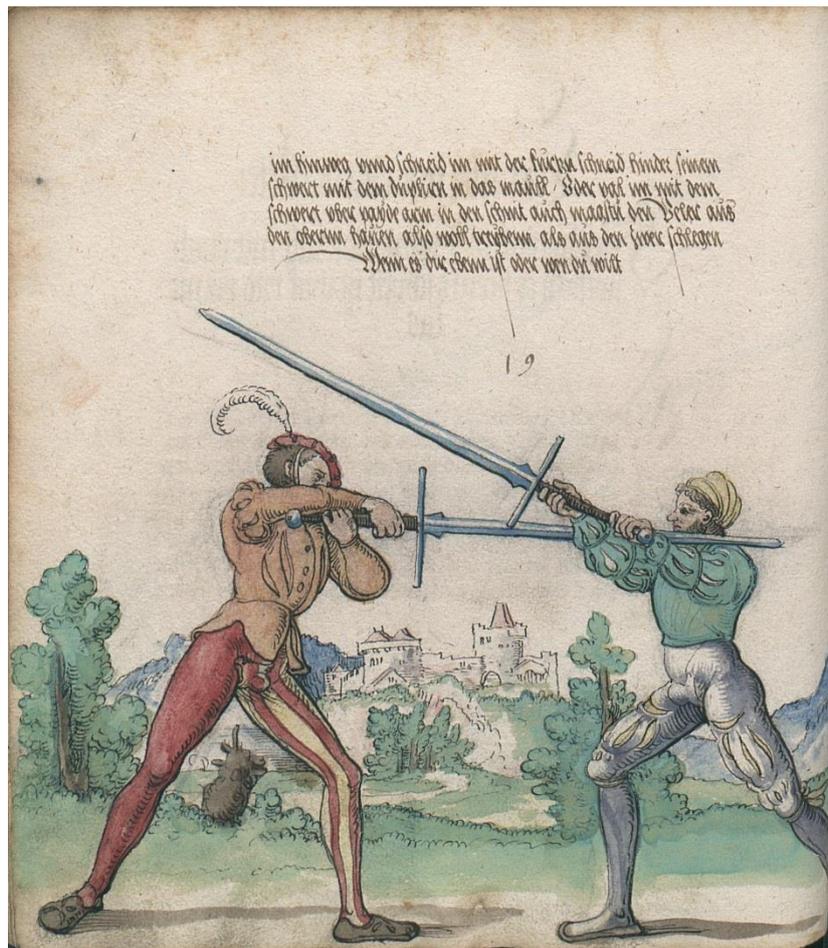
The image which is presented above is from MS E.1939.65.341 of 1508, also known as the "Glasgow Fechtbuch". It depicts two combatants in civilian attire contesting with longswords. The pommel of the sword which can be seen is not the standard round pommel, but a more pointed and complex one. The handles on the weapons can clearly accommodate two hands comfortably and the cross-guard is very simple. The *schilts* on the weapons are of the winged type, and the blades of the weapons are slightly tapered and come to a round point.



The type of *schilt* which is presented in this image has been seen before in previous images which have been already been presented. The two examples of these presented previously can be found in the "Wolfenbüttel Sketchbook" and the previously examined image MS KK5012 16v. This style of *schilt* becomes especially prevalent from the 1540s onward to about the 1590s.

The blades on these weapons are slightly tapered and come to a rounded point. There is a single line drawn up the middle of each weapon which seems to stop before the point, most likely indicating a fuller rather than a ridge. These are clearly practice weapons. The length of the blades indicates a standard longsword length.

From MS Germ.Quart.2020 “Goliath Fechtbuch” (1510 – 1520)



MS Germ.Quart.2020 31v

The image above from MS Germ.Quart.2020 known as the “Goliath Fechtbuch” dated 1510 to 1520, depicts two combatants in civilian clothing contesting with weapons which have proportions which are quite a bit larger than longswords. The weapons have spherical pommels, handles easily fitting two hands, and simple cross-guards. The *schilt* is of the winged kind, but relatively small, the blade is long, parallel and has a round point. The blade is marked with a fuller down the middle. This is most interesting as it depicts a two-handed feder.

The feder has been indicated most predominantly as a practice weapon for the longsword, but it can, and has, also been used as a practice weapon for the two-handed sword as well. This image clearly demonstrates this particular use of the feder. The weapons in this image are clearly larger in proportion to the individuals using the weapons.



The *schilt* of the weapon is quite small, even when taking into account the rest of the weapon, and the enlarged size of the weapon. For a much larger weapon it would almost be expected that the *schilt* would be larger. It is of the winged type which was seen previously, though the extended parts are quite small.

The blades on these weapons are quite long. They are parallel and have rounded points. There is

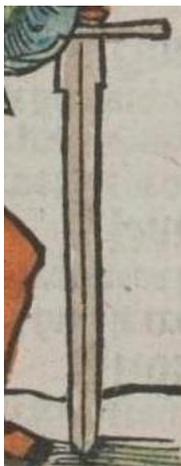
a marking for a fuller down the middle of the blade as has been indicated previously. The most striking feature of these blades is the length of them, which in combination with the extended handles clearly makes them practice weapons for two-handed swords rather than longswords. Practice weapons more so indicated by the rounded point and lack of impact indicated by the blow indicated across the opponent's arms.

From *Ergründung Ritterlicher Kunst der Fechterey* (1516) by Paurñfeyndt



“Paurñfeyndt 3”

The image above from *Ergründung Ritterlicher Kunst der Fechterey* in 1516 depicts two combatants contesting with longswords in civilian attire. The weapons have spherical pommels, and handles which can accommodate two hands. The cross-guard is very simple. The *schilt* is square as in some of the previous examples, and the blade is quite broad and parallel and comes to a point at the end. There is the indication of a ridge down the full length of the blade.



The blade of the weapon is not exemplary aside from it being somewhat broader than most of the previous examples shown. It is parallel all the way until it terminates at the tip of the weapon which is less rounded than in some examples. There is also a single line which has been drawn down the centre of the blade in the image which is likely been used to give the blade some character, thus as indication of a ridge along the blade.

The *schilt* is rectangular and relatively long, but does not stick out very much at the sides. This would seem to be more similar with the earlier depictions such as those found in earlier treatises such as the “Cluny Fechtbuch” and some of those found in the MS KK5012. This may have something to do with the shape of the blade which is broader than later examples of *feder* presented. What can be said is that this style of *schilt* refers back to previous examples of *schilt* rather than presenting a contemporary style, as compared to the examples already presented.

From Cod.icon. 393 “Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica” (1540s)



Cod.icon. 393 48r



Cod.icon.393 37v

The images above depict two combatants contesting at the longsword. Both are from Cod.icon. 393 entitled “Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica” dated to the 1540s. The weapons in both cases have spherical pommels, and grips which can easily accommodate two hands. The cross-guards are very simple in nature. The *schilts* are of a modest winged design. The blades have parallel edges and no point at the end at all; there is some indication of a fuller in the blade. What is most interesting is that one is indicated as drawing blood. This is significant for a practice weapon.

The *schilt* on the weapons is the winged type again, though it is less pronounced as later examples will demonstrate. This will become more standard as the following images will demonstrate. The smaller *schilt* would imply that more of the weight is contained in the pommel and handle to counter-balance the blade.



More of the focus here is on the blade. In this case, the focus is on the image 48r where the blow has drawn blood, yet in 37v there is no blood drawn. This would imply that the blade is not sharp, yet can draw blood if it strikes flesh where it is closely located near the bone. Clearly the blade is not sharp otherwise the individual in 37v who was struck would have also been cut. The blades are parallel and terminate sharply, meaning that they have flat, not rounded ends meaning that there is no chance of a thrust doing anything at all, these are clearly practice weapons. This is one of the few images of feder where the impact draws blood.

From MSS Dresd.C.93/C.94 “Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica” (1542)



MSS Dresd.C.93/C.94 23r

The image above is from MSS Dresd.C.93/C.94 dated 1542, interestingly, like the previous entry the document is also entitled “Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica”. Needless to say both treatises display similar things. Depicted here are two combatants engaged with longswords in civilian dress. The weapons’ pommels are obscured, but can be assumed to be spherical by the way they are gripped. The handles can fit two hands comfortably, and the cross-guards are simple with spherical ends. The *schilt* are of the winged type, and the blades are parallel with rounded points.



The *schilt* which is seen on the weapons found in this image is similar to that found in the previous image except that the wings are more accentuated. This form of *schilt* becomes more the standard which is found on *feder* as time progresses. The *schilt* itself is also somewhat enlarged as compared to the previous example.

The blades have parallel edges and come to a rounded point, unlike the previous example where they seem to be simply cut off. Again this demonstrates a weapon without a point. There is no marking on the blade to indicate any fuller or ridge marking of any kind.

From Cod.I.6.2<sup>o</sup>.4 “Jörg Breu Draftbook” (1545)



Cod.I.6.2<sup>o</sup>.4 16v

The image above is from the “Jörg Breu Draftbook” dated to 1545 its reference is Cod.I.6.2<sup>o</sup>.4 and it depicts two combatants combating at the longsword in civilian attire. The weapons’ pommels are spherical and there is room for both hands on the handles of the weapons. The cross-guards are of simple construction. The *schilt* are of winged construction and the blades have parallel edges and have rounded points.



Again the winged *schilt* is present in this image as is expected, and noted previously. The wings on the *schilt* in this case are not as large as the previous example but are not as small as in the Cod.icon.393 examples. This places them somewhere in between the two of them.

The blades of the weapons have parallel edges and rounded points as previously indicated. These are more like the previous example than those found in the Cod.icon.393. This clearly indicates that they are a practice weapon. There is some shading indicated on the blades of these weapons which could indicate a ridge or fuller on the blade, as with a line, but this is not clear so a flat blade could also be possible.

From MS A.4<sup>o</sup>.2 “Joachim Meyers Fäktbok” (1560’s)



MS A.4<sup>o</sup>.2 18v

The image above depicts two combatants contesting at the longsword. It is from MS A.4<sup>o</sup>.2 dated to the 1560s, known as “Joachim Meyers Fäktbok”. The pommels of the weapons are obscured, but the handles can clearly accommodate the use of two hands. The cross-guard is of simple construction. The *schilt* is of winged construction and the blade is parallel with a rounded point.



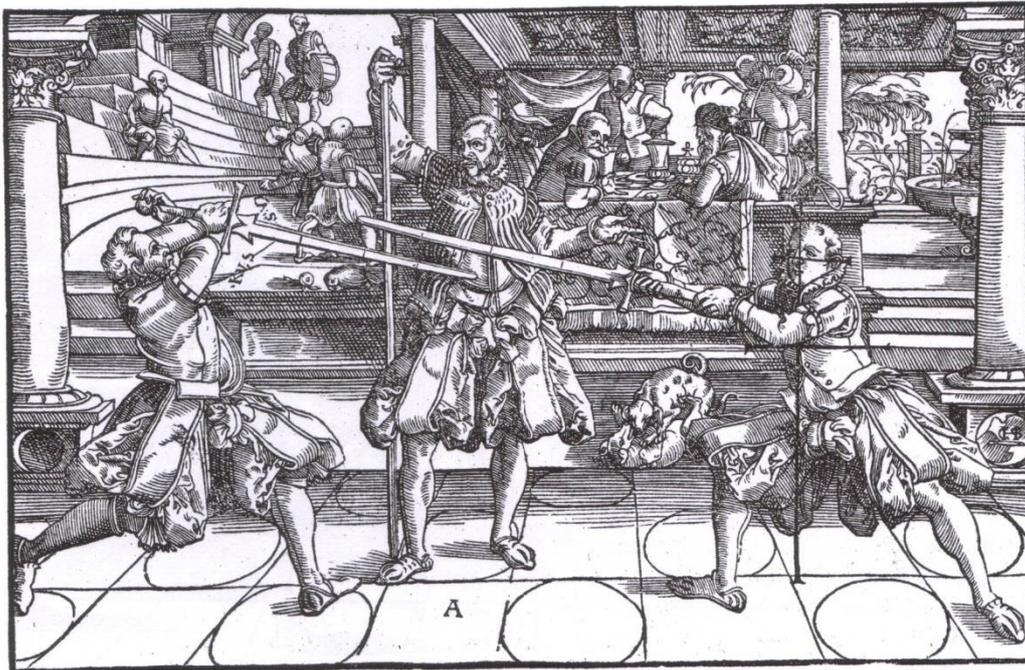
The *schilt* is of the winged type as several of the previous ones have been. What will be noticed about this one is that it is rather short, but broad and that the wings of the *schilt* extend a bit forward. This is something that will be noted especially in Meyer’s works.

The blades of the weapons are parallel and they have rounded points, this has already been noted. They also lack any sort of marking on the blades



themselves indicating any sort of fuller or ridge on them. In this case the most remarkable point to be made is the bend depicted in the blade of the weapon on the combatant on the left. There has been an addition of a red line to the image to demonstrate the angle of the bend in the blade. It could almost be said

that the action used is designed so that the blade will bend to strike the opponent, thus using the characteristics of the weapon. This could also indicate some tendency of the feder toward being somewhat bendy in nature.



Longsword A

The image above comes from *Gründtliche Beschreibung der Kunst des Fechtens* which was originally published in 1570 and then re-published in 1600. The image is determined to be “Longsword A” because it is the image that he refers to as “A” when he is discussing the images about longsword. The “A” can be found in the foreground centre.

The image depicts two combatants in civilian clothing in a school scenario combating with longswords. The weapons have spherical pommels and handles which easily accommodate two hands. The cross-guards have a point in the middle toward the *schilt* and also flare towards the ends. The *schilt* is of the winged type, the blade tapers to a rounded point.



This image presents one of the classic examples of the winged *schilt*. It is broad at the top and narrows toward the base and comes in at the top toward the blade giving it its winged shape. The points of this *schilt* extend forward somewhat from the body of the *schilt*. It is a more robust design of the winged *schilt* than found in the previous examples of the same.

The blade is depicted as tapered, and tapers to a rounded point. This is unlike Meyer’s previous example of the blade which is parallel. This blade is different and would have different characteristics due to its nature. There is no indication of any fullers or ridges marked on this weapon, and the rounded point clearly points out, along with the setting that this is a practice weapon.

From Cod.Guelf.83.4 Aug.8<sup>o</sup> “Das Ander Theil Des Newen Künstreichen Fechtbüches” (1591)



Cod.Guelf.83.4 Aug.8<sup>o</sup> 2r

The image above is from Cod.Guelf.83.4 Aug.8<sup>o</sup> also known as “Das Ander Theil Des Newen Künstreichen Fechtbüches” dated 1591 which depicts two combatants contesting at the longsword in civilian clothing. The weapons in this image have spherical pommels, two-handed handles and simple quillons. The *schilt* found on the weapons are of the winged type. The blades are parallel and have rounded points on them. What is remarkable about this image is the cut which has taken place that has drawn blood and the variation in *schilt* shape.



The *schilt* on these weapons is different to the previous winged types seen previously. The *schilt* itself is thinner and the wings are more rounded at the ends. The wings of the *schilt* also start quite a bit later and extend somewhat further toward the point, but this does not necessarily make the *schilt* wider, in fact the whole thing is quite slender. This, it could be assumed to result in a more over-balanced weapon, but as will be seen in the description of the blade, which is to follow, this is not the case as it compensates in its own way for this.



The blades on these weapons are definitely thinner than previous examples of feder, this accounts for how the *schilt* can be thinner also, as previously indicated. The weapon has a definitively rounded point, indicating that it is a practice weapon, yet it is depicted as drawing blood on one of the combatants. There are a couple of possible answers to this particular question. The first answer is that it could be thrown to artistic license, to give the image more impact. Another answer is that it is striking on the outside of the forearm so possibly striking flesh over bone, thus the possibility of

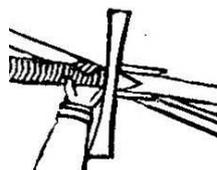
drawing blood in this scenario. The only other example of a bleeding wound in these images is presented in Cod.icon. 393 48r, where the blade has struck the head, a likely place where bleeding would occur. In this case it is more likely that it is artistic license, possibly attempting to depict what the sharp weapon would do while depicting the practice weapon in the image.



Sutor (1612, p8)

The image above is from *New Künstliches Fechtbuch* which was published in 1612 and written by Jakob Sutor. It depicts two individuals combating with what longswords. The weapons are not particularly well-drawn. The pommels are spherical and the handles can easily support the use of two hands. The cross-guards are of a relatively simple design flaring at the ends. The schilt on the weapons is of a design not seen in the previous images. The blades of the weapons are depicted as parallel but taper to a point.

Sutor is known for his simple plagiarism of other sources and his not particularly good reproduction of other sources which are then claimed as his own work. This image is a perfect example as the proportions of the weapons demonstrate. The pommels of the weapons are distinctively too small for the weapons to be an effective counter-balance, and the handles are very much too thick for the combatants to hold properly.



The *schilt* presented in this image is unlike any other which is presented in any other image which has been presented previously. This could be an attempt at reproducing the the *schilt* found in Cod.S.554 or similar, with the rectangular shape and *chappe*, simply misinterpreted. It is more likely from MS KK5012 2r due to the presence of the *chappe*, the rectangular shape of the *schilt* and also the shaping present in the *schilt*.

The blades present in this image are just as badly represented. There is one with no markings on the blade at all and there is one which does have marking on the blade. The blades are both parallel which come to a tapered and then rounded point. This means that the artist is representing them as blunted sharp weapons. One has a marking which extends part way down the blade which could represent a fuller and the other has no markings on it at all.

From Cod.10799 “Büech von fechter Vnnd Ringstückhen zū Ross vnnd Fuoß”  
(1623)



Cod.10799 19r

The image above depicts two individuals in civilian clothing contesting with longswords. The image is from Cod.10799 entitled “Büech von fechter Vnnd Ringstückhen zū Ross vnnd Fuoß” dated to 1623. The pommels on these weapons are spherical and the handles accommodate two hands. The cross-guards are straight but have the ends slightly curved toward the point and are enlarged. The *schilt* of the weapons has returned to the simple rectangular shape of earlier designs. The blades are parallel with rounded points. One of the things that make this depiction of the weapons a little odd is the short length of the weapons, and that they are also so small in comparison to the figures, almost as though the figures are more important.



The *schilt* of these weapons has returned to the very simple design that was seen in the much earlier images which were presented. If the whole weapon were to be scaled exactly as it is presented, the *schilt* would barely be required due to the thin

nature of the blade. The closest shape to this is found in the “Codex Danzig”, Norling or in the Kuchler examples. In this case it almost seems as if the *schilt* is present as a matter of form rather than function.

Of the blades there is nothing remarkable to say. The blades are parallel from *schilt* until they round to the point. It could be claimed that there is some sort of ridge going along the blade going by the shading which is present by the artist, but this would more likely be merely representing the shadow of one figure over another as this is present elsewhere in the image. The thinness of the blades is the only real remarkable thing that could be pointed out being that they are quite thin and thus represent a distinct image of a practice blade rather than any sort of blade for cutting.

## Characteristics – Old and New Weapons

“At this point perhaps I, to avoid further confusion, should clarify that when I speak of "fechtschwert" I do not necessarily mean swords with *flexible* blades, but rather speak of the *shape of the blade*, with a broad ricasso and narrower blade.” (Norling, 2011a)

The examination here focuses on the characteristics of the feder, in this case both the extant examples and also the new reproduction examples as they both fall into the same category. Both should carry the same characteristics if the modern practitioner is to be using the correct weapon. The ricasso which is spoken of here is the “schilt”, the broadened and blunt section of the blade near the hilt on the feder, which is one of its striking characteristics and makes it stand out from other weapons.

### Few Extant Examples

The problem in discussing and examining extant examples of the federschwert is that there are so few examples been found, “However, only 23 confirmed swords are known to be preserved in various collections” (Norling, 2012). For weapons such as the smallsword, or sabre, there are many fine examples of these weapons for curators to examine and for researchers to gain data about however, as indicated there are few examples of the feder available.

“The sword consists of a very thin, rounded blade with a large ricasso and a heavy hilt and pommel. Because of this, it has the same weight and center of balance as a real sword, and handles identically. This odd construction also has the effect of moving the sword's center of percussion to a theoretical point beyond its tip. The tip of a *Federschwert* is spatulated and may have been covered with a leather sleeve to make thrusting safer, though no direct historical evidence exists of such use.” (Wikipedia, 2016)

The description above has been cobbled together out of descriptions of multiple weapons no doubt to give a final general description of what feder in general look like. It is most interesting that the *schilt* is referred to as a *ricasso* as in the case of a rapier, the ricasso is often the place where a finger is wrapped to gain more control over the weapon. Clearly the idea of it being a blunted part of the blade is the part of the concept which is being presented here.

### Physical Differs From Depicted

With a description based upon the extant examples the characteristics of the feder in its original period should be covered, actually this is a little more complex a problem than that. “The designs of most of the preserved fechtschwerter are quite different from what we see in the period sources of the *fechtbuche*,” (Norling, 2012). This means that the primary source material being used to reconstruct the fighting arts for the weapon do not depict weapons which are the same as what are left behind even though they are the same category of weapon. This could seem a mere artist issue, but different aspects of a weapon will change its abilities.

“In the early period sources we almost exclusively see swords that have blades that taper towards the point, with some of them even being illustrated

as having ridged blades. The clear majority, however, are depicted as having simple flat blades.” (Norling, 2012)

There is a change in the depiction of the weapons, from those which have a rigid blade to those having a simple flat blade. The question the reader needs to ask is whether this was an artist change, or whether the weapons themselves changed. Were earlier feder more rigid and did they have more of a point than the later ones? There is also a question of the form of the blade and the *schilt*, in the depiction, but all of these really need answering in a more specialised discussion. Needless to say, even in the case of the original examples of the feder, their characteristics are well and truly not established.

## Modern Production

“Modern production of *Fechtfedern* has been revived in the 21st century for use as sparring weapons and for competition in the context of the Historical European martial arts revival.” (Wikipedia, 2016)

Modern productions and reproductions of the feder are based on the extant examples of the weapons which have been left behind in museums and collections. The weights and measurements have then been interpreted by modern smiths for construction and use by modern swordsmen. What is most interesting is that the use of the weapon has changed a little, but for a different purpose in most cases. The weapons themselves should be designed to act like their original counter-parts.

“The characteristics of a *good* federschwert include a very lively and agile *point control* and it feels much like a *sharp* sword designed for blossfechten, but due to the design has a little *less punch*, since much mass has been moved closer to the cross. This design causes the often spoken of *centre of percussion (c.o.p.)* to be moved to a theoretical point beyond the actual point of the sword. You simply cannot strike as hard with a federschwert as with a "normal" sword. It should be noted that some federschwert also have flex in the *wrong* part of the blade. Preferably, the blade should flex in the last third or so, but several makers have stretched this flex too close to the cross, causing wobbling in the blade. Also, some federschwert have problems with vibrations in the hilt upon impact.” (Norling, 2011)

Norling (2011) describes the characteristics of a “good” feder and points out some of the important aspects which the sword should have. He also notes some of the issues which some of the other swords may have with them should they be constructed without due diligence. The characteristics which have been discussed here should be kept in mind as the discussion proceeds.

## Sport Sword or Not?

“commonly are associated with *sports fencing* in late 16th century fechtschulen, rather than proper training for combat and duelling. They are simply not seen as "real" swords. Is this really a fair assumption?” (Norling, 2011a)

Often is the case that the feder is often seen as a sort of “sport longsword”. A comparison is often made between the feder and the foil, as in the feder is a sport version of the longsword, just as the foil was the sport or practice version of the smallsword. This is often related to their being seen in primarily school situations, and out of armour. This perspective also comes from the change in dimensions due to the narrower blade and the supposed lighter weapon.

“Of the manuals that show *both* regular longsword and fechtschwert, there is a clear tendency to use fechtschwert *without* armour, and *in* armour, regular longswords are used. Fechtschwert are, with one exception (Ms.Germ.Quart.16), used in blossfechten, i.e. *unarmoured* fencing.” (Norling, 2011a)

Could this situation not merely be that the situation was that the feder was used in unarmoured combat, civilian combat, rather than armoured combat? This could be a relevant alternative to it being a merely sport weapon. The other alternative is that it was exactly that the feder was fulfilling its role exactly as a practice weapon, thus did not require the weight of the regular longsword, but did require the characteristics of one.

Clearly rigorous practice and art was being practiced as the manuals indicate. The longsword may have been pushed aside by the rapier in prominence for self-defence but the arts were still being taught. Indications of this can be seen in the reprint of longsword manuals in the late sixteenth-century.

## Not Just for Longsword Training?

The feder is most often used for longsword training but it has been indicated by some researchers that they may also be used and have been used for training for other weapons of similar shape, namely the two-handed sword, “some fechtschwert are very close to the bidenhänder with their parierhaken and there may be more connections here than we have realized.” (Norling, 2011a). Clearly a lighter weapon of similar proportions would be a god-send to those practicing to use the two-handed sword with its larger form and increased weight, and the feder does demonstrate marked characteristics in similarity to its larger cousin.

“After having studied all the illustrated manuals I have access to, ... it is my belief that some fechtschwert, with widely flared ricassos/schilt, may actually be precursors and/or training versions of the complex-hilt longswords and the bidenhänders, since these three types of swords all offer similar protection for the fingers if you put them over the cross, or for the hands in a bind at the strong, by keeping the opponent's blade a few inches from the cross.” (Norling, 2011a)

There is further evidence for this supposition in the images which are present in some of the manuals where the weapons seem to be somewhat larger than the standard sort of length a person would expect of a longsword. In further reference to such similarities between the feder depicted in such images and other weapons, there is much similarity to be discovered and discussed in these images and others.

“It is also very interesting to compare regular 14th century longswords with leather "rain guards" and early 15th century fechtschwert to 16th century bidenhänder with parierhaken and complex-hilt bastard swords from a functionality perspective. All four types offer similar applications of use and perhaps this is no coincidence?” (Norling, 2011a)

Not only does this suggest a similar usage of weapon but it also indicates a longer pedigree for the use of the longsword and other weapons of a similar kind. It may even indicate a similar ancestral location for all of these weapons but this may be taking things a little too far. The most important point raised here is that the feder may indeed have been used for practice with more than just the longsword.

## Renaissance Practice Weapon

“The *Feder* (plural *Federn*; also *Fechtfeder*, plural *Fechtfedern*), is a type of training sword used in *Fechtschulen* (fencing schools) of the German Renaissance. The type has existed since at least the 15th century, but it came to be widely used as a standard training weapon only in the 16th century (when longsword fencing had ceased to have a serious aspect of duelling, as duels were now fought with the rapier), shown extensively in the fighting manuals of the time, particularly those of Paulus Hector Mair and Joachim Meyer, and it remained in use in such *Fechtschulen* well into the 17th, and in some cases for much of the 18th century.” (Wikipedia, 2016)

The most useful thing about the Wikipedia is its relatively complete and relatively comprehensive explanation of any subject which is examined when it is sought. The above gives the plural and optional naming conventions for the weapon. The focus here, however is that the feder was a Renaissance practice weapon. It was used in fencing schools for practice so that the art of the longsword could survive, as the above indicates the rapier had taken over in aspects of serious duelling.

## Renaissance Practice Weapons

“In practicing any form of weapon-based martial art, a student must naturally use some form of weapon simulator. The medieval and Renaissance martial artists who trained with the longsword sometimes used wooden swords (known as *wasters*) for their training, but it was not uncommon for them to also use blunted steel swords. Many of these swords still exist in museums and private collections. They also frequently appear in period fencing treatises from the 15th and 16th centuries. Such swords often had blades with narrow profiles, which was to compensate for the fact that the blades were created thick enough to have a safer edge. In this way the blades did not become too

heavy. At the base of the blades there is a wider, winglike ricasso (known as the *schilt*, or "shield"), which ensures that the tang is not too thin. It also provides a degree of hand protection for practicing certain techniques." (Grandy, 2003)

Grandy's (2003) introduction to Renaissance practice weapons is most useful as it demonstrates that the feder was not the only practice weapon in existence, which is sometimes forgotten. There were other options which were also commonly used. Wooden swords (wasters) were also a common practice tool, which actually goes back to the Roman period. Grandy also notes the formation and change in the shape of the blade thicker to be safer, but narrower as a result. The *schilt* is used to protect the hands and also reinforce the tang of the sword. These are all important notes to be taken into account.

"The Federschwert, or Feder sword, is a training sword that was used in fencing schools during the Renaissance. Perfectly designed, the Federschwert served to safely practice full speed combat among practitioners, while reducing the risk of injury. The Federschwert greatest attribute is their similar weight and balance to real swords of the same period. The Federschwert is shown extensively in the fighting manuals of the 16th century, particularly those of Paulus Hector Mair and Joachim Meyer." (Imperial Swords, 2017)

Again, the presented evidence demonstrates that the idea was to produce a sword which could be used with relative safety, thus reducing injury at full speed. These were obviously practice weapons. Their similar weight and balance attributes to real weapons allowed them to act like real ones for more accurate practice. This documentation also indicates some of their documented presence in manuals.

## Documentary Evidence

"We can find examples of these swords in the old Martial Arts *Fechtbucher* (fight books) from the early 1420s up until the early 17th century, but they might have been in use for a longer period of time. We see many varying styles of *Feders* as their designs change from *Fechtbuch* to *Fechtbuch*." (Wassom, 2016)

There are many different examples of the feder found in the manuals, and they also demonstrate a long history of use in these manuals. The designs of the weapons change over time. In some cases the blade profile will change to a shape and then revert back, the *schilt* shape also changes over time as well, with various different shapes being demonstrated.

## Practice Weapon – Historical Basis

“we can look to the fencing manuals and see what was used by our predecessors. After all, they ought to have had a good grasp on what tools one should use for good and solid, traditional training that leaves you well-equipped for actual combat. As we shall see later, the fechtschwert have been commonly used for practice since the early 1400s, so there is clearly some merit in practicing with them.” (Norling, 2011a)

What is most useful is that not only can the manuals be followed as indicated by their authors but the correct weapon can be used for that manual. Thus the practice weapon has an historical basis presented in the manual itself. This needs to be examined very carefully and the use of the tool also taken very carefully and reminded that the feder is a practice weapon, as the evidence has presented, and that the weapon be used as such. While techniques may be performed with martial intent, the results should not be expected to be the same due to the nature of the weapon.

## Conclusion

There have been a lot of theories proposed in this investigation. Some of which have results to examine, and some of which will never really have results due to their nature. The important thing with regard to all of these theories is that they have seen the light of investigation and had some time to be dealt with. Many are not afforded the same opportunity.

The investigation into the federschwert can be simply divided into two sections. The first is “Words”, in which the meanings and origins of the words which are associated with the weapon are discussed. This was what was discussed in the first half of the investigation. The second is “Objects”, in which the feder as an object is discussed, which started with the image discussion and then discussed the more physical aspects of the weapon. While the introduction separated the image discussion from the “Objects” that the images were of the objects and discussed them made them part of the “Object” discussion rather than something separate.

The organisation of the text allowed the separation of the words from the physical nature of the weapon but the nature of the argument meant that there was still links between the two during the discussion. This approach led to a better overall discussion of the weapon. The separation allowed focus where it was required to disentangle items from one another while still addressing the weapon as a whole.

## No Short Answer

“The Short Answer” opened the discussion first with the literal translation of the meaning of the word and then more discussion of the weapon it describes from a usage point of view. The second half of this part discussed and opened into the next part of the investigation that the term federschwert and its diminutive feder were terms not used historically and therefore cannot be evaluated from this point of view. This also highlighted one of the arguments central to the discussions to follow, the discussion of the use of the term feder and how it was used.

## A Word in Common Usage

The term “federschwert” is a neologism, a modern word invented to fill a hole in the language. The term itself is quite commonly known, especially the simpler more common “feder”. This means that it is a word in common usage which refers to a particular thing. When it is said, people know what that thing is that the person is talking about. This means that regardless of its historical background, or lack thereof, it fulfils an important purpose, thus there should be no issue in its use.

## Every Man and His Theory

What followed this in the investigation were some interesting points where the term had been used previously, including a claim where the feder was a rapier. Evidence has clearly been put to the contrary with regard to this. Various theories have been placed as to why or why not a particular group may or may not have referred to the practice weapon of the longsword known in the current period as a feder. These were presented to simply present the arguments so that all were clear. Did it refer to the quills that they were using to write their arguments, or the lightness of their weapons? It is hard to tell. Such arguments are tenuous at best and it is best to move on to arguments better founded.

## Another Name?

There were two other candidates to replace “federschwert” for the naming of this particular weapon, these being “paratschwert” and “fechtschwert”. The first discussed was “paratschwert”, as indicated by the order above. This was found to be a parade or ceremonial sword more than one which was actually used, thus not actually really accurate for use or replacement for feder. “Fechtschwert” would seem to be a better option being that its literal definition is a “fight sword”, however for some this would seem to be a little broad in its understanding, not indicating a practice weapon specifically, nor the weapon described by feder in particular. The result of this is that federschwert still remains as the more popular and understandable choice for naming of this weapon.

## Worth 1000 Words

What is the largest section of this investigation, purely by volume, is the investigation of images from various treatises depicting feder being used. Each one of these images is then scrutinised for how the weapon is depicted and in what sort of scenario. In all cases the combatants are depicted in civilian clothing, which is of note as it leads to the weapon being most noted for being used in unarmoured combat and another weapon being used for armoured combat.

Following this is an examination of the weapons which are being used by the figures which are present in the images, the focus of this investigation. The various pieces of the weapon are noted, pommel, handle, cross-guard, *schilt*, and blade. Basic details are given at first, but then more detail is given about the *schilt* and blade as it is these two items which most determine the status of the feder.

In the case of the *schilt*, it varied in shape from a simple block near the cross-guard to a more extensive winged type in some cases. What was noted in all cases is that it was present in all cases in some form, thus being the purpose of selecting these images. The varying sizes and shape of the *schilt* would have varying effects on the use of the weapon, and this should be noted, as would the shape and make of the blade. To state that there would be any standard form of *schilt* would be far-fetched as the images present.

The blades vary from tapered to parallel edged. From simple flat-bladed depiction to also those which depict fullers and ridges marked on them. This presents an idea that there were various different ideas about what the blade of the feder should be like, and thus how it should act. What is most interesting is that in two cases (Cod.icon. 393 48r and Cod.Guelf.83.4 Aug.8<sup>o</sup> 2r) the feder is depicted as drawing blood. In the first case it could be logical as it strikes the head where flesh is close to the bone; in the second, not so much. In both cases it could be merely an artist's license or author's emphasis for the impact of the action. This is especially the case as these weapons are considered to be blunt, practice weapons. In all cases the point is rounded or flat, thus the thrust was not an option or, was considered dangerous resulting in extra caution needed.

The result of this pictorial inquest was designed to give an idea of the various shapes of the feder and ways it was presented. Ideas of its use and its physical characteristics can also be formed from these pictures also. They lead the observer to be informed that this weapon did not come in a standard form and that their use was not confined to one area.

### Physical Characteristics

The investigation next moved to looking at the physical characteristics of the feder. This discussed both some of the museum examples and also some of the modern reproductions. The intention was both to compare their characteristics and also to demonstrate the overall characteristics of the weapon as a physical object.

One of the biggest problems for the researcher is that there are few extant examples available for research. Norling (2012) points this out quite clearly. With only a small sample of the weapon to go off there are certain biases which are likely to manifest in the data-gathering and this can be detrimental to the research. In some cases there is a stark contrast between those weapons found evident in treatises and those found as examples, artistic impression or survivor bias could easily explain this. Needless to say the researcher should beware any general statements made on such evidence.

Modern reproduction weapons are often based on a few examples of the weapon. This leads to a particular bias toward how the weapon is created and what the final product results in. With the weapons actually in use, the swordsmen give feedback to the swordsmiths and good ones thus change the weapons, just as they would in the period in which they were used formerly. This result in better weapons which actually act how they are supposed to.

### A Question of Use

The feder has been accused of being a "longsword foil" or a "sport longsword" by some and it is in the use of the weapon that the true answer to this accusation that we find the answer to this. The longsword in the late sixteenth-century had been replaced by the rapier as the prime weapon for duelling. Thus it was associated as a weapon out of its time, so as a blunt weapon it could only be used for sport, or could it?

The actual case as can be seen by the reprinting of longsword manuals in the late sixteenth-century is that the practice with the feder was actually for longsword combat with sharp longswords. It was still being practiced as a martial art not as some mere sport. It fulfilled its role as a practice weapon for the longsword.

What is also demonstrated especially in the "Goliath Fechtbuch" is that the feder was also used for practicing the two-handed sword. The extended handle of

the feder meant that it was in a position to be used for both longsword and two-handed sword training, thus making it a practice weapon of great utility. Further, certain feder were actually constructed for this exact purpose.

Regardless of any other information which is gathered about the federschwert it is determined to be a Renaissance weapon for the practice of longsword and also two-handed sword, should the owner choose. This is the purpose of the weapon and what it was designed for. For the modern martial artist seeking information about European martial arts, the feder is an excellent tool for investigating the martial arts of the Renaissance period, especially with regard to the German region. Should the eye tend toward another area on the other hand, maybe a weapon better suited to this should be chosen. Match the tool to its purpose.

## Bibliography

Amberger, J. C. (1999) *The Secret History of the Sword: Adventures in Ancient Martial Arts*, Multi-Media Books Inc.,

Castle, E. (1885) *Schools and Masters of Fence: From the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century*, George Bell & Sons, London (pdf used from Google Books)

Grandy, B. (2003) "Hanwei / CAS Iberia Federschwert Training Sword", [https://myarmoury.com/review\\_casi\\_feder.html](https://myarmoury.com/review_casi_feder.html)

Imperial Swords (2017) "Federschwert Sword", <http://imperialswords.com/shop/federschwertsword/>

Meyer, Joachim (2006) *The Art of Combat: A German Martial Arts Treatise of 1570*, Greenhill Books, London, UK, Translated by Jeffrey L. Foreng

Norling, R. (2011) "Sparring Swords – Introduction", HROARR, <http://hroarr.com/sparring-swords-introduction/>

Norling, R. (2011a) "Fechtschert or a Blunt Longsword?", HROARR, <http://hroarr.com/federschwert-or-a-blunt-longsword/>

Norling, R. (2012) "A Call to Arms", HROARR, <http://hroarr.com/a-call-to-arms/>

Norling, R. (2013) "The Whatchamacallit-schwert", HROARR, <http://hroarr.com/the-feder-whatchamacallit/>

Shackleford, S. (2010) *Spirit of the Sword: A Celebration of Artistry and Craftsmanship*, Krause Publications, Iola, USA

Wassom, D. (2016) "Some Historical Swiss Swords Examined", The Association for Renaissance Martial Arts, <http://www.thearma.org/spotlight/swiss-swords.html#.WPge4PmGPIU>

Wikipedia (2016) "Feder (fencing)", Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Feder\\_\(fencing\)&oldid=713532938](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Feder_(fencing)&oldid=713532938)

Wise, A. (2014) *The History and Art of Personal Combat*, Dover Publications Inc, Mineola, USA

Wiktenauer (<http://wiktenauer.com>)