



# The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe

*Sydney Anglo*

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## **The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe** Sydney Anglo

Balletic homicide on the duelling field; stabbing and wrestling in tavern brawls; deceptions and brutalities in street affrays; mounted encounters by armoured knights locked in desperate hand-to-hand combat - these were the martial arts of Renaissance Europe. In this book Sydney Anglo, a leading historian of the Renaissance and its symbolism, provides the first complete study of the martial arts from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries. The twentieth century has been captivated by oriental martial arts and their roots within Eastern societies. Yet the West too, as Anglo shows, developed its own styles of ritualised combat, similarly linked to contemporary social and scientific concerns. During the Renaissance physical exercise was regarded as central to the education of knights and gentlemen. Soldiers wielded a variety of weapons on the battlefield, and it was normal for civilians to carry swords and know how to use them. In schools across the continent, professional masters-of-arms were the artists who taught the lethal skills necessary to survive in a society where violence was endemic and life cheap. These ancient masters-of-arms, anxious to advertise their skills and record them for posterity, have left a wealth of evidence to reconstruct and illustrate their arts - much of it used here for the first time: detailed scholarly treatises, sketches by jobbing artists or magnificent images by Dürer and Cranach, descriptions of real combat, and an abundance of weapons and armour. With copious and precise illustration, Anglo explains the significance of martial arts in Renaissance education and everyday life. His book provides the fullest illustrated account of the social implications of one-to-one combat training.

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