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Foreword

Claus Frederik Sørensen

The goal of experimental research has always been to use the static data of artifacts, written sources and pictorial evidence to create a dynamic interpretation of their function and use. In other words: we strive for knowledge that broadens our understanding of the past's material culture. It is therefore also of great importance for the field of research in general that such results are published.

The main themes of this book: martial arts, weapons and horsemanship may on paper seem like niche research that only is of interest for a few specialized researchers and enthusiasts. Such is however not the case as long as the process includes serious contextual analysis of both the objects and results. It then becomes clear that the results can deepen our understanding of society's social issues, trends and developments. The results will thus be important pieces in the puzzle posed by past societies.

Among people working with history, both in museums and universities, the value of experimental research is being acknowledged more and more. To better understand the source material/material culture historians and archaeologists are now beginning to work seriously with the subject and also work together with some of the enthusiastic people that have been doing such for many years. In combining practical experience and craftsmanship with archaeological/historical hypotheses, theory and method, the experiments are finally beginning to gain ground as serious scientific knowledge building.

The fascination of material culture, artifacts and how they were used and functioned in the past is not something new and has fascinated people for many centuries. What is new is a scientific approach to the many projects being conducted. These were often undertaken out of simple curiosity without serious data gathering and analyzes combined with hypothetical questions. However, in combination with lacking of written record of the projects or proper publication of the results (if any), it is often so, that far too many projects have been forgotten or made inaccessible.

As experimental research slowly becomes more and more recognized within academic circles so does the need for theory and method. There can be no doubt that these experiments will always be considered testable hypotheses and that one can never achieve a 100% proof match replication of the past. But as more and more applies theory and method, it becomes easier to recognize the difference between strong and weak research experiments.

It must also be recognized that when one talks about experimental research, it is not something that one can just do. It is often a necessity that the actors have worked with the subject for many years and have extensive practical experience with the artifacts used in order to perform the experiments properly. This is perhaps the area where academic researchers and enthusiasts can learn the most from each other and together create cutting-edge research.