

The Echoes

“A Newsletter for the Principality of the Summits”

A.S. XLVI

May, 2011

This is the May, 2011 Issue of The Echoes, a publication of the Principality of the Summits of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA, Inc.). Copies of The Echoes may be obtained by emailing the Chronicler at Summits-Chronicler@antir.sca.org. It is not a corporate publication of SCA, Inc., and does not delineate official SCA, Inc. policies. Copyright © 2011 Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. For information on reprinting photographs, articles, or artwork from this publication, please contact the Chronicler, who will assist you in contacting the original creator of the piece. Please respect the legal rights of our contributors.

Greetings unto the populace of the Principality of the Summits!

I hope you will forgive the brevity of this issue. I had hoped to include much more in it but it was of importance to publish the information regarding the upcoming Coronet Tournament at Summer Investiture.

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Greetings from your Seneschal ~

What a wet and muddy spring we've had! Thank you for your patience during the unusual situation of having to reschedule our Coronet tournament. We like to keep things lively around here! I am looking forward to Coro/Investiture.

We have a few offices that are transitioning, a few that are still open and a few coming open very soon. If you are interested in serving your Principality please speak to the current officer or myself for more information. I REALLY need a contingency deputy ASAP. Please contact me if you're interested at all.

Let's hope for a dry and mild summer.

In Service to Crown and Coronet
Viscountess Acacia Gryffyn, Summits Seneschal

Open Offices

We have some offices coming open very soon within the Principality and some that are still standing open.

If you have any interest in any of the following please contact myself and/or the current officer ASAP.

Seneschal (I am looking for a contingency deputy)

Exchequer (he is willing to extend his term but we need to know if there are others out there interested in the position)

Chatelaine

Youth Combat (this has been sitting open for a very very long time...)

Minister of Arts&Sciences (this will be filled ASAP so if you have not made your interest known to HL Vasa please do so ASAP!)

Minister of Children (this has been sitting open for a very very long time...)

Rapier Marshal
Herald

Spring Coronet (Rescheduled) and Summer Investiture

Their Alpine Highness's Durin Oldenmoor and Ceridwen ferch Morgan are seeking their rightful heirs to the Thrones of the Summits

We of the Shire of Myrtleholt do bid welcome to all for Coronet/Investiture!

We will be holding Coronet tourney so come ye with thy honor and thy concert and enter if you dare to try and be heirs to their Highness's thrones.

If yea can nay bring, bribe or kidnap thine a consort then come and proclaim your skills and fight for the honor to be Summits next Defender!

Their Highness's will invest the Tanist and Tanista on **Sunday** so bring your court garb as you never know when it will be needed.

There will be much much more happiness so Come enjoy the festivities!

Schedules are subject to change.

Gate Schedule:

Gate opening: 10:00 am **June 17**, 2011

Site closes: 6:00 pm **June 19**, 2011

Site Fees:

\$15.00 weekend per person

\$45.00 Family cap

\$10.00 kid's 10 to 17

Free kid's 9 and under

\$5.00 NMS fees apply

Article

SCA Combat – Sport or Martial Art?

By Sir William Brannan

For the last couple years I have maintained a casual quest for knowledge. In the search for this knowledge I have taken every opportunity presented to ask a question of the fighters of our region. This question is simple in form, but oh so complex in answer. “Is SCA combat, as you pursue it, a sport or a martial art?”

It seems an easy enough question. It certainly is for me. When I originally joined the S.C.A. back in A.S. VIII; my primary reason was the study of the martial skills of the medieval warrior. At that time, the Society was the only path to such study, at least the only one I was aware of. As time has passed, SCA combat has evolved and changed differently from one region to the next. These regional differences have been codified by tradition and convention into styles so different from one another that sometimes the practitioners of one hardly recognize the accepted practices of another as the same activity. This in spite of the fact that there exists Society wide rules intended to make the game the same everywhere.

Today there exists numerous groups where one can seek out “sword fighting” training, of one form or another. From LRRPer group and recreationists, to Western Martial Arts groups and modern fencing clubs, the choices are many and varied. For some it is a game, others an educational pursuit and for some it is a martial art and for another group a sport.

As we all know, the SCA has much more to offer than just the combat; despite the fact that it is the “sword fighting” that

most see as the primary draw of the group. Because of this, the SCA appeals to participants seeking more than just sword fighting, whereas most members of many of these other groups tend to be more focused on more singular goals.

It was not surprising to me therefore, that when I asked my question of SCA fighters, some state with great certainty that SCA combat is a sport and some say with just as much certainty that it is a martial art. What I did find surprising was how many who answered that they had never thought about it and that they only did what they were taught. For them, SCA combat is a thing unto itself, not sport or martial art. It is just “what we do.” The interesting thing about this position is that there is really no such thing as “what we do” because “we” do not all do the same thing.

The position held by some is as follows; “I practice a martial art because while I am fighting, I use only techniques and forms consistent with ‘real’ combat and build my weapons to approximate the weight and balance of actual weapons.” However the conventions of SCA combat, by limiting the target area and approved attack methods, has given rise to the evolution of techniques that are wholly dependent on these conventions for effectiveness. Few there are indeed who give any thought to the defense of their lower legs, because in SCA combat attacks directed at them are not allowed. Just as no other groups would consider developing techniques for combat from ones knees against an opponent who must attack only from the front.

So by this argument, it would seem “what we do” is a sport right? But can it not be said of any full contact martial art that some safety conventions must be put in place, just to make it possible to keep doing it. Eastern martial arts forms have done this for centuries to allow students of these arts to contest one against another without either being gravely injured. As long as the participants are mindful of the artificial nature of the imposed limits on the techniques allowed and mindful also of those not allowed, it remains a martial art. Does this not mean that they can train in techniques that are not allowed as well as in the defenses against them? In this way one may study a martial art, learn all the facets of said art, even when the full contact forms forbid their use.

In my mind a martial art becomes a sport when it is distilled down into its most basic components and then focus on these basic forms is taken to such an extreme as to lose its martial use. Modern sport fencing is a fine example of this. In its current form it bears little resemblance to a martial art of rapier use it evolved from. The more refined and codified a form becomes, the more sport like. It could be argued that SCA rapier combat is certainly more like a martial art than modern fencing because we fight in the round and use secondary weapons, but less martial than the ways of other western martial arts groups that have even fewer limitations. Much the same can be said of rattan combat, but in both cases it is what the participant has in his/her mind while taken part that determines whether what they are doing, personally, is a martial art or a sport.

The great thing about SCA combat is that the sport fighter can contest with the martial artist on a fairly level field. While conventions tend to give a slight edge in tournament combat to the sport fighter, the martial artist can still prevail and improve their skills, at the same time the sport fighter is honing theirs. The difference between them is a matter of their frame of mind and what they seek to get out of the encounter.

It is not my goal to convince others one way or another. For me it is the question that is important. I know what I seek from sword fighting and that is my path. While this path has lead me, for the most part, in directions other than combat in the SCA, this is still where I can from and I feel there is much for the student of western martial arts to learn from it. I do not fault those who treat it as a sport and wish to follow that path. I only ask the question to spur thought and conversation, with the hope the each fighter will gain some enlightenment into what their path actually is and to make people aware that “what we do” is very different to different people.