



(Wikipedia)

Good day Worthy Knights

In this part 11, 1 of 2 we concentrate on the Gladius, carried at Conclave Enthronement Ceremony by the Divisional Sword Bearer.



Gladius is the Latin for sword. The Roman gladius was generally double-edged. Along most of its length, the width of the gladius remained constant.

Gladii were two-edged for cutting and had a tapered point for stabbing during thrusting. A solid grip was provided by a knobbed hilt added on, possibly with ridges for the fingers. Blade strength was achieved by welding together strips, in which case the sword had a channel down the centre or by fashioning a single piece of high-carbon steel, rhomboidal in cross-section. The owner's name was often engraved or punched on the blade.

Stabbing was a very efficient technique as stabbing wounds, especially in the abdominal area, were almost always deadly. However, the gladius in some circumstances was used for cutting or slashing, as is indicated by Livy's account of the Macedonian Wars, wherein the Macedonian soldiers were horrified to see dismembered bodies.

Early Roman swords were similar to those used by the Greeks. From the 3rd century BC the Romans adopted swords similar to those used by the Celtiberians.

This kind of sword was known as the Gladius Hispaniensis, or "Spanish sword". It was once thought that they were similar to the later Mainz types, but the evidence now suggests that this was not the case. Rather these early blades followed a slightly different pattern, being longer and narrower, and were probably those that Polybius considered good for both cut and thrust.

In the late Roman period Vegetius refers to swords called semispathae (or semispathia) and spathae, for both of which he appears to consider gladius an appropriate term.

A fully equipped Roman soldier would have been armed with a shield (scutum), several javelins (pila), a sword (gladius), probably a dagger (pugio) and perhaps a number of darts (plumbata).

Conventionally, the javelins would be thrown before engaging the enemy, at which point the gladius would be drawn. The soldier generally led with his shield and thrust with his sword. Contrary to popular belief, all types of gladius appear to have also been suitable for cutting and chopping motions as well as for thrusting.

The gladius was sheathed in a scabbard mounted on a belt or shoulder strap, some say on the right, some say on the left. Some say the soldier reached across his body to draw it, and others affirm that the position of the shield made this method of drawing impossible. A centurion wore it on the opposite side as a mark of distinction.

Types

Several different designs were used; among collectors, the three primary kinds are known as the Mainz gladius, the Fulham gladius, and the Pompeii gladius. More recent archaeological finds have uncovered an earlier version, the gladius hispaniensis ("Spanish sword") as mentioned earlier.

The differences between these varieties are subtle. The original Spanish sword had a slight "wasp-waist" or "leaf-blade" curvature. It was used in the Republic. The Mainz variety came into use on the frontier in the early empire. It kept the curvature, but shortened and widened the blade and made the point triangular. The Fulham was a compromise, with straight edges and a long point.

Roman scabbards were made of wood covered with leather and were decorated with a frame made of brass or iron. The hilt of a Roman sword was the capulus made of wood, ivory or bone. It was often ornate, especially the sword-hilts of officers and dignitaries.

Symbolism

During the Empire, the gladius was part of the emperor's insignia.

The gladius is frequently depicted in coats of arms, especially of military corps.