

A Comparison of Swords

by Duncan Ziegler

I am going to be comparing five swords: the broadsword, the scimitar, the gladius, the epee and the katana. Each one of these swords has a distinctive use. Some are for stabbing through the cracks in a suit of armor, others for chopping straight through, still others for slicing from horseback. The three basic uses of a sword are to stab, cut and parry a blow. Each sword is better at one of these jobs than the others. No single sword can do all of these jobs well.

Gladius

The gladius was a short, straight, double edged sword used by the Roman soldiers, and gladiators, who took the name of the sword for their own. It's main use was for stabbing the opponent. The gladius was made of bronze, or in later days, iron. This was the sword that built the Roman Empire.

Broadsword

The broadsword was a long, straight, double-edged sword used in the Middle Ages by European knights. It was mostly used for hacking and slashing, but could also be used to stab. It was made from iron and later, steel. The larger cousin of the broadsword was the *claidheamh múr*, or claymore, used by the Scottish warriors of the north.

Scimitar

The scimitar was a greatly curved single-edged sword used in the Middle East and India during the Crusades, by Arab cavalry for slashing strikes. It was made of fine

steel. It was later turned into the European sabre.

Epee

The epee is a long thin flexible sword used in the gentleman class in the late Middle Ages and through the Renaissance. It was mainly used for stabbing. Because it was long and thin it could get in the cracks in a knight's armor.

Katana

The katana was a long slightly curved sword with a wickedly sharp single edge that was primarily used for chopping. The katana was only used by the samurai warrior class of Japan. The samurai sword was made of the finest water steel in the world. Folding of the steel made it extra strong. It was made in a unique way that made it very tough yet hard by combining two separate pieces of steel. The core steel was only folded a few times for strength. The skin steel was folded up to 15 times for hardness, with ashes sprinkled along the blade between each fold. The ashes turned the normal steel into much harder carbon steel. The skin and the core then were folded and welded together, making a keen yet resilient blade.

In conclusion, there is no perfect sword. Each sword has a very specific use: to parry, to stab or to slash. Each of the five swords I chose is good at two of the three jobs, but none are good for everything.

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