

About 150,000 years ago humans created a tool that, without exaggeration, is considered to be the most important invention in the history of mankind - the stone knife. For a long time humans used this tool for hunting or other household chores. When wars came into the life of mankind, the knife changed from being a household tool into an instrument of war. After a while, man came up with the idea of making an elongated knife blade, and so conceived the first weapon that was invented and used exclusively for war - the sword.

Comment [RR1]: Would "flint" be more accurate?

The oldest sword found dates back to about 3300 BC. It was found in Arslantepe, Turkey, and was made of arsenic bronze. This sword was 24 inches (60 cm) long. This invention sparked the imagination of blacksmiths. Whatever forms this weapon took, the most important task for blacksmiths has always been the same - to improve the fighting qualities of weapons.

Even in Ancient Egyptian times, man understood that if a blade is curved, its cutting properties are significantly improved. An example of such a sword is the **Khopesh**. However, this curvature had a downside, because it was almost impossible to stab with such a blade. The loss of stabbing ability of the sword did not play a significant role back then, but in the late Middle Ages in Europe, when warriors were dressed head to toe in iron armor, without stabbing ability a sword was almost useless.

Blacksmiths solved the problem thanks to the high quality steel and forging tools of the 15th Century when perhaps without exaggeration, the ideal blade for warfare was made. The pinnacle of sword evolution was the **Flamberge** or **flame-bladed sword**.

This sword has a distinctive wavy blade style. The indentations on the blade can be parallel or zigzagging. Because of these ripples, the sword was able to cut through a soldier's armor and the multi-layered garments and still deliver a very dangerous jab.

As modern tests of this sword show, the stabbing blow could pierce even light metal armor without getting stuck in it. This problem was often observed with straight blades. Cutting blows made the blade cause very wide and deep wounds that rarely healed, which gave rise to legends of "poisoning" the sword and led to the Church banning it on the battlefield. Though, similar to the ban on the crossbow, no one actually listened to the Church on the battlefield.

This sword gained maximum popularity in the late 15th Century, when mercenary infantry, condottieri and landsknecht, who were often armed with two-handed swords, entered the war arena. They brought glory to the flamberge, having quickly assessed the merits of the wavy blade. Very soon the flamberge gained the reputation of being a formidable weapon.

Let's be clear about one thing, **Flamberge** is not the name of the sword, but the type of blade. It was most commonly used on the two-handed sword, the **Zweihänder**, and the **rapier**. Some sources say that warriors with **flame-bladed rapiers** were not taken prisoner, but executed on the spot, because of the insidiousness of their weapons. Often the enemy, even if he defeated such a warrior in battle, often died from even the most minor wounds.

Nothing is perfect in the world, and physics cannot be cheated, so by improving its cutting and stabbing qualities, the sword sacrificed strength and was heavy. The wavy shape of the blade created many stress zones in the metal which, combined with the unevenness of the load on the blade, gave a much greater risk of breaking the blade when striking or deflecting a blow. Of course, the blacksmiths tried to fix this problem by making the blade from the highest quality steel they had, which significantly increased the price of the blade, and consequently decreased the number of buyers.