



AD SIGNUM!

THE NEWSLETTER OF LEGIO IX HISPANA

Volume VI—Nr. 1, January. 2023

Speaks He... the Prefect

by **Gaius Vorenius**
Prefect Legio IX

January derives its name from the Roman god Janus, the spirit of doorways (*januae*) and archways (*jani*), which has led some scholars to regard him associated with endings and beginnings. This is due to his image with two faces: one forward and of the other looking backward. The month of January is named after him, and his festival celebration, the Agonium, was held on January 9.



Therefore, it is appropriate we look backward and forward for our unit. The past year provided opportunities for us we participated in the **Virginia Scottish Games** at The Plains, Va and **Across the Centuries in** Ft. Loudon in Pennsylvania. We also participated in **SwordFest** which is held in Columbia, SC. Our focus this year should be on building upon these successes by adding additional opportunities for the unit, one of which would be an immersion event!

In part, such events would allow us to train and improve our impressions, as well as build unit cohesion. It also would provide the opportunity to invite interested people to experience what we do.

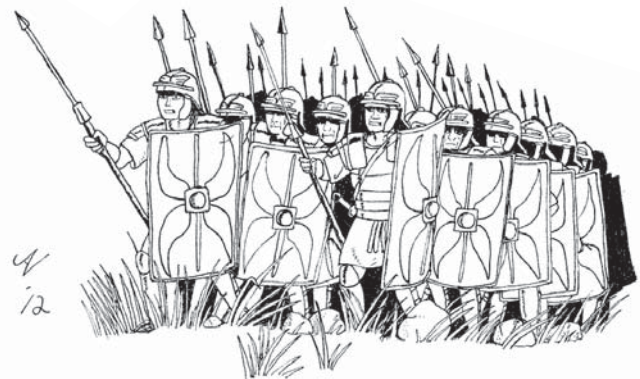
We also need to improve follow-up with people who have indicated an interest in the unit. This needs to involve the entire unit. Each member is an important part in recruiting. As we receive inquiries, they should be referred to the closest unit member. This seems practical and sensible. It would be great to see the formation of 8-man groups (*contubernium*).

I hope to see more opportunities for activities and events for the unit. This takes support by ALL members. Our goal is to not only to develop excellent personal impressions, but the future leadership of this unit.

Ad Victorium,

GAIVS VORENVS

Prefect
COHORS III
CENTURIA CASSIVS MARTIALIS





Legio IX Commandments

- I. Thou shall not engage in actions that harm or embarrass the unit, bring shame to the unit, or let the unit down.
- II. Thou shall respect the rules and wishes of the planners and organizers of all events in which you participate as a member of Legio IX.
- III. Thou shall not appear in modern garb, or visible modern items, at a Legio IX event, encampment, or presentation after the official start time of said event.
- IV. Thou shall learn all other Legio IX members' ROMAN names and use them.
- V. Thou shall not publicly degrade other units or their members in a public setting or forum.
- VI. As a member of Legio IX, you shall always help other Roman reenactors in need if you are able to do so.

At events where you are representing Legio IX to the public, you shall use the utmost discretion when discussing anything modern in front of the public. For example, when asked about where to buy, or how to make, our kit, you can respond on the modern topic, but lengthy discussions on what sort of modern undergarments you are disguising under your tunic shall be forbidden.

Roman Holidays in this Month:

The Romans celebrated many different holidays, just like we do. The festivals of ancient Rome included many customs which have been carried over into later holidays. The main significance of ancient Rome in relation to modern holidays is that many of these customs still continue today. These were on the old Roman calendar.

- 3-5. **Compitalia**. Observance day could be moved by order of the praetor urbanis. Celebrated the lares, or local guardian spirits, of the crossroads. Shrines were set up where crossroads met. Marked the end of the agricultural year.
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- 5. **Birthday of the shrine of Vica Pota**, ancient goddess of victory.
- 9. **Agonalia**. Sacrifice of a ram by rex sacrorum to uncertain god, possibly Janus.
- 11. **Juturnalia**. Festival of Juturna, river nymph and goddess of healing.
- 15. **Carmentalia**. Festival to honor Carementis, river nymph and goddess of prophecy.
- 24-26. **Sementivae**. Offerings to Tellus and Cerus (agricultural goddesses) to protect the spring sowing.
- 27. **Festival of Castor and Pollux**, Greek demigods who were patrons of cavalry, athletes and sailors.



Ramblings from Atop the Soapbox...

by D.M VARIANvS

Signifer Legio IX

Wow, 3 months in
a row... :-o
Holy Hydraulics,
Fudgeman...



What's really happening? Things are afoot. We're hoping to have this year's first event in February. Prefect Gaivs Vorenvs will be able to fill you in on this event down South.

Next up, a timeline event: **Across the Centuries 2023** at Fort Loudoun, located near Fort Loudoun PA... We go as guests of our frater in Legio XXIV and I can tell you, it's a good, laid-back event. We try and recruit. I know, we say this all the time. Recruiting is hard. Harder yet without someone to "fight"... When we ask for **your** input, we mean it.

Our Signum

To the right is a virtual mockup of a new unit signum I am having made. Read the article in this issue and see **why** it needs to be "fine" and not like most reenactor versions (cheap or crudely-made). The real things were considered to be deities - ours needs to be so also. I'm selling WWI and WW2 things to pay for it. Silver and metal parts cost lots of *denarii* and you get what you pay for.

Other stuff

What gear or kit do you need? Let us know. Feel free to give me a call. My number is at the end of this newsletter if you don't have it. Right now, the Prefect (who could normally help outfit new members) is under the kind ministrations of the healers. He is being showered with *radiis solis* and often is tired from consuming this mighty *curatio*. He assures me that he will be ready for the February event.



New Legio IX Signum
First look



Celts!?

What else can we do? Certainly an actual **reenacting event** at Fort Loudon would be nice. For anything like this to succeed, **we need Celts**. And we need to nurture the birth of such a unit. I don't care what anyone says, Marcvs is right in that you cannot keep members around for "stand and preen" events. Sure, it can be fun, but only once in awhile. Young guys especially, want and need action. I am open to suggestions as to how to help the Celts get started. I know that we have some good info on RomanTimes.Org on how to build a Celt impression:

<<https://www.romantimes.org/index.php?page=Enemies-of-Rome>>

Spread the word. **They don't have to be perfect to start.** This kind of thinking has killed many attempts to start an impression before. You do not have to have custom, hand-woven wool for your clothing. Simple garb, even plaid pajama pants would work, as most of them are of a decent-looking, light-weight material.

By Jupiter's cock, you must sit up before you can stand and you must stand before you can walk. Obviously, no modern footwear, eyewear, or other weird crap (oddly-coloured hair comes to mind). In the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism), they use fake leather and duct tape and such. We need to get them onboard to try and do it more correctly.

I know that some of us have talked to Celt/SCA types in the past. And, we need to work to keep modern political discussions from happening – these will be the death of this venture.

Events

Sure would be nice to do more than a couple of public events. Even if I can't breathe (stay tuned for info on that)... We had talked about renting Fort Loudon. Be nice to find Celts (Wow, I say this a lot)...

Ad terminus, est victoriam!

J. M. OARLANUS

Signifer, Legio IX

PS: Citizens, please don't get all puffy and hyperventilate if something DOESN'T happen like we post here, it'll not be the end of the world, but we're sure gonna try to get these things done!!! Your help is always welcome.



ON SEWING

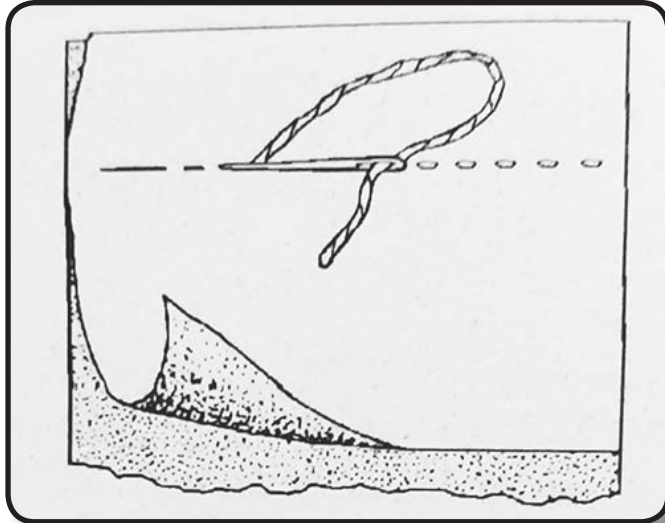
by, well, Me

So, this article is just a bit from a cool booklet called: *The Lady's Guide to Plain Sewing By a Lady*. When I was first getting started in reenacting, a friend gave me a photocopy of this book as she thought it would help me – and it did! It's pretty cheap and I can tell you, it really helped me to actually be able to sew some of my own stuff and do repairs without messing it all up. Give it a look. Yes, Sextus, this means you – buy this book.

This book is published by **William Booth, Draper** at: <https://www.wmboothdraper.com/product-category/books/page/3/>.

Running stitch

Point devant



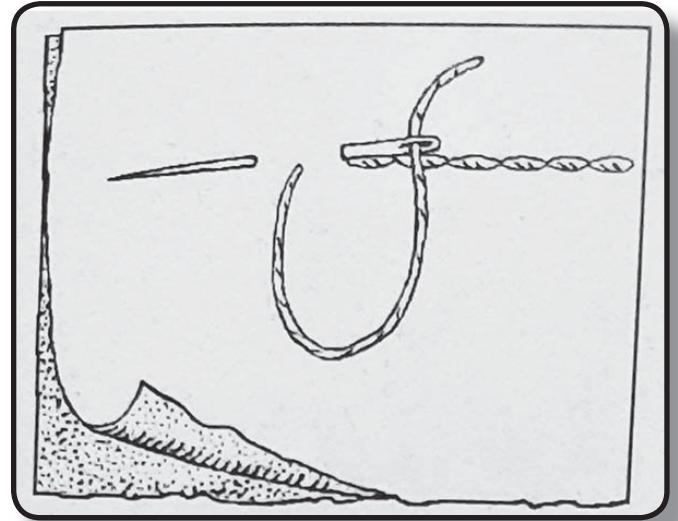
This is the first and simplest stitch. It is often the first taught to children.

Running stitches are used for plain seams and in making gathers. Long running stitches can be used to baste, or temporarily hold, pieces together while sewing.

Pass the needle in and out of the material in an even, straight line, parallel to the edge. Take up three or four threads of material per stitch. Several stitches may be taken at a time and the needle then drawn out.

Back stitch Point

de piquê



This is usually the second stitch taught to children.

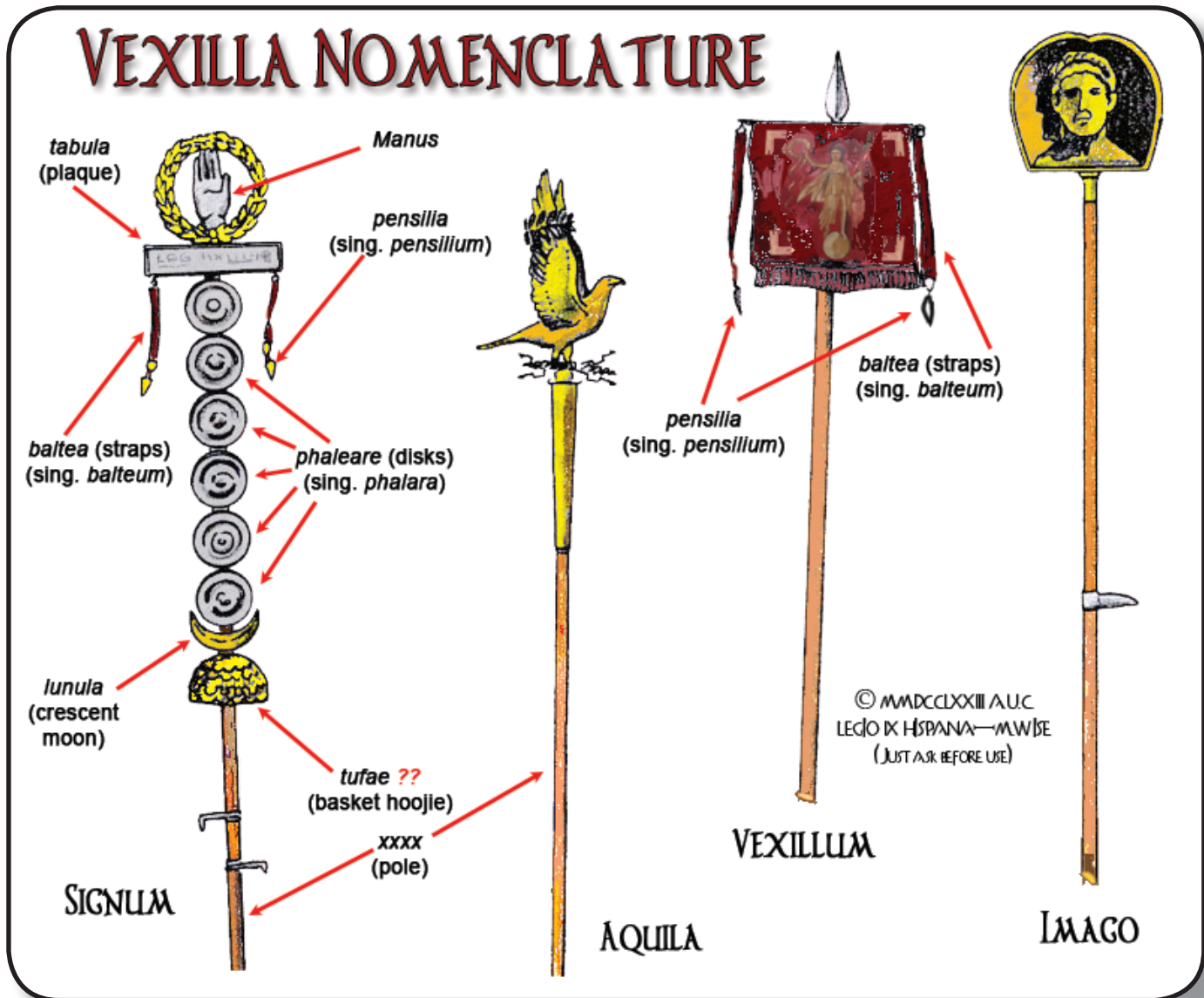
Back-stitch is used for stronger plain seams, and occasionally for hems and top-stitching.

Insert your needle and exit six threads of material away, in the straight line of your intended seam. Draw out the needle. Insert the needle three threads behind the first exit point and exit three threads beyond the first exit point. Draw out the needle. Insert the needle three threads behind your last exit point, being the end of your previous stitch, and exit three threads beyond last exit.

If you require a different length stitch, you may work in even numbered groups of threads. For example: under eight threads, back four threads, and out four threads beyond the first exit point. Always make stitches touching end to end. When used on a visible seam, this will be the right side of your work.



ON ROMAN STANDARDS



By **D. Mercativs Varianvs**
Legio IX Hispana

In this article, I will try and discuss the many different types of standards and the standard-bearers of the Roman army, from the time of Emperor Augustus until the end of the Principate.

When discussing things like Roman Standards, you have to remember, like with *anything* about the ancient Romans, that this was **2 millenia ago**. There are no photos and no real records. Only old

many-repeatedly copied books (that means scrolls hand-copied by monks), statuary and murals. There is information, but it has to be distilled from fragmentary sources. We also have to work with, and around, educational prejudices and reenactor/collector myths.

The Types

There were three main types of standard: The **aquila**, the **vexillum** and the **signum**.

While many reenacting units have all three standards, and some more than



that, we have a signum and a vexillum. A small detachment such as we portray would not be toting around a legion's aquila.

The centuria, cohort and auxiliary units of a Roman Legion, carried several different styles of vexilla (banners), signa (sing.: **signum**) and other types of standards. I will just use the word "standard" or "standards", when generally referring to all of the pole mounted unit identification symbols.

Sacred Objects

These various standards were considered as **sacred objects** representing the spirit and soul of the unit. They were decorated with garlands and sacred oils on special days and occasions.

The Romans were a pretty superstitious bunch, and saw the influence of the gods in all aspects of their lives. Life was ruled and punctuated by rituals of one sort or another. If you think of someone with a bad case of OCD, you're probably not far off from the way the average Roman citizen behaved. Many Romans would be unable to get through the day without performing all sorts of little rituals to placate the gods.

The Roman Army wasn't a whole lot different, despite our inclination to think of them as a "highly disciplined, effective", rational, military force, they were extremely superstitious.

The standard bearer

The honor of carrying these Standards was entrusted to veteran legionaries who generally had completed 20 years of a typical 25 year enlistment in the legions.

The position of standard bearer was extremely dangerous, as the soldier had to stand in the front row and could only protect himself with a small round shield called a *parma*. Not only that, he was usually **the** focus of the enemy attack.

Most standard-bearers were *duplicarii*, which meant that they received double pay (i.e. twice as much as an ordinary legionary) – 450 denarii in the mid-First Century AD.

Loss of Standards

The loss of the standard was a **huge** disgrace to the soldiers, the effected legion and to Rome. In the event of a inevitable defeat, the signifer would make every attempt to retain the standard intact, and in dire straits, may try to remove the eagle or other unit symbols from the pole to make these prized symbols easier to quickly carry from the field of battle when a legion had been over-run and routed.

After the Kalkriese disaster (also called "*clades Variana*" by the Romans and by the Germans "*Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*" or "*Hermannsschlacht*" or "*Varusschlacht*"), the legions involved – Legios XVII, XVIII, XIX were destroyed and were **never** reformed. Years after their loss, Germanicus' army recovered many of these lost standards. The recovery of these lost standards was seen as a great victory, but, the "disgraced" legions that lost their





Prima Porta armor showing the return of the standards scene

standards were never re-instituted. In fact, on the famous Augustus statue called the *Prima Porta*, the central image seen on it, is that of Tiberius accepting the returned Roman standard from the Parthians or the Parthian King. This was one of Augustus' highest points of his rule and documented on countless coins. Not only did Augustus' diplomacy get the returned lost standards of Crassus, but, also those lost by Mark Antony. When the standards returned to

Rome, Augustus had a magnificent brand-new temple built to place them in. The temple itself was dedicated to Mars Ultor.

Stored in Safety

In the *Castra* (fort) or other unit encampment, the standards of the legion and

its sub-units were housed in the Temple of Saturn or Treasury portion of the *Principia* (headquarters) building; where they were guarded day and night. During the campaign the standards were stored in the little temple within the camp.

The Aquila

Each legion had an eagle, or **aquila**, which was carried by a standard-bearer called the *aquilifer*.

The legion's aquila was presented by the Emperor himself and as such, was very important. Loss of the aquila was the highest disgrace.

The aquila was carefully guarded and did not leave the camp unless the whole legion marched out.

The aquila was made of silver and gold in the time of Julius Caesar, but is thought to have been made so by Marius earlier. Later they were made entirely of gold (on a wooden pole). Very finely-made, the eagle was often shown with a thunderbolt in its claws or around its wings.





Original vexillum from Pushkin Museum

The Vexillum

The vexillum was a flag vertically-attached to the top of a pole. One type had the name and number of the legio on it – others had an icon of an animal or some other figure or design. Some were used by detachments serving away from the legio.

Legio IX's vexillum is modeled on the only original vexillum left existing in the world. This Roman vexillum was discovered in Egypt in 1911. A red linen flag that identified a cohort or detachment of soldiers that were away from the main legion. This one is dated to the 3rd century and is literally, the only one to survive from the ancient world. It is now housed in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.

In describing the vexillum, it is a vertically-hung banner that would identify the legio and the individual legionary or auxiliary units serving

away from the main body of the legion or cohort. Such detached units were termed "vexillations". The vexillum is generally thought to have designated the unit type of "LEG" (legio) or "COH" (cohort) and the unit number in Roman Numerals "IX" along with an abbreviation representing the *Cognomen* (honorary title) such as "Hispana" that the unit may been awarded or had adopted. From statuary, etc. it is believed that the icon of an animal or effigy was often frequently placed on the vexillum as well. The boar and bull were quite popular as icons. Ours is decorated (as is the original) with the representation of the Victory Goddess, Nike on a red background. It has Nike standing on an image of the spheroidal world under the feet of the human figure. Inside the seam or cloth tube, in the upper part, still exists today, the

supporting bar. The records also report an important detail: in the lower part there is a trace of the fringes, though mostly lost, they are a part of the "warp" and not, as done in modern times by reenactors, made by the application of separate trim. That means it part of the vexillum body – made from the ends left over, not sewn on later. A small, but interesting detail.

Well, some other Vexilla

There is another discovery of a well-known vexillum is one that was found on the Palatine Hill in Rome and hypothesized as the "Imperial banner of Emperor Maxentius". This find has come down to us rolled up and in very bad condition. The fabric that it was made of was found to possibly be silk woven with linen fibers and the cloth was found to have traces of red pigment.



Vexillum depicted on the Duras fresco which is today kept at the Yale University Museum (USA). The fringes of the same color of the fabric are clearly

Other colored representations are equally rare and often indecipherable, only in one case is a vexillum clearly distinguishable and it is a famous fresco on one of the walls of the Dura Europos synagogue in Syria. The fresco is interesting for several reasons, but (hard to do) concentrating on the vexillum in the art, we can see that once again the red is the color that serves as background. The border is enriched by a thick yellow-gold frame that differs from the one found in Egypt that has only the four corners with the characteristic yellow "L" in the four corners. Very important is the presence of equally **red** fringes on the lower edge just below the frame. One can easily conclude that the fringes derive directly from the warp of the red-dyed fabric – imagine, just like the Pushkin vexillum. Furthermore, it is also possible to pin it to the rod with a single lace on two distinct points of the horizontal tensioning stick (wonder what **that** puppy is called?), as also evident from many examples found on statuary (Trajan's Column for one).



Baltea

Tassels or straps, called **baltea**, hung from the crossbar (On vexilla and signa) – and generally flanked the banner on



An example of how the baltea were attached. This one does not have bulla. Photo courtesy of Terry Nix



each side with a fringe decorating the bottom margin of the vexillum itself. The baltea were like on the cingulum belt, decorated with **bullae** (studs) and **pensilia** (pendants).

The Pole

The poles for the various standards would have had a spike point butt called a *cuspis* which was made of iron, to allow them to be stuck in the ground and many had a handle or "grab" to extract them from the ground and to more easily carry them while on the march.

When a Roman camp was packing up to leave, and if the aquilifer was not able to pull the aquila up out of the ground on his first try, it was a bad omen for the legion to depart that day. Yes, they thought that way. When Crassus was crossing a river on his

Right: A beautiful signum made by Terry Nix for our friends of Legio XXIV. Photo courtesy Legio XXIV and George Metz



way to make war with the Parthians, a wagon full of vexilla was washed away. This was obviously seen as a bad omen (and, it was – Crassus was an ass and got his command destroyed). The Roman historian however writes that they were "purple vexillums".

The Signum

Each centuria in a legio had its own standard, called a **signum**, which was carried by a standard-bearer called a **signifer**.

The signum standard, is probably more widely recognized as an icon of ancient



Rome than the aquila; and is thought to have been carried by the individual legionary and auxiliary centuria units of the legio. The

"massed" signa were generally carried at the head of the legio while on the march. Each signum was unique to its "centuria" and was composed of a number of *Phalarae* (disks), along with a number of other elements mounted on a pole, topped with a leaf-shaped spear head (*hasta*) or a "**manus**" (human hand) image. The manus is believed to have designated the "**prior**" (first) centuria of a two-century *maniple* formation; while the spear top would indicate



Above, a manus in a wreath (probably a corona—something that I cannot find yet) and below it, a closer view of a silvered manus. Notice the quality I am stressing.

Photo courtesy of Terry Nix



the *posterior* or second century of the maniple. The maniple formation, composed of two 80+ man century units, was used during the Republic; but fell out of favor in deference to the full cohort formation of six centuries during the Empire Period. The *manus* however continued to be displayed within Imperial legions.

Phalerae

One to six phalerae were displayed on a signum and the number of disks is thought to represent the number of the century unit within the cohort, as six century's composed a cohort and not more than six phalerae have been found in representations of signa from Roman times.

A Main Communication Tool

The signum played a very important role in the legion. It was a rallying point, a symbol of pride, and allowed for organized movements on the battlefield. Orders were given **to the signum**, not to the sub-groups or the men. In the case of a signal (a trumpet sound, etc.), all the soldiers looked to **their** standard as **its** movements showed them what the orders were. It was used almost as a signal flag, being manipulated around to show direction and orders. The signum also served as a rallying point, or



Assorted phalare, some awards, some conjecture, etc. Some units had simple disks that looked like hub caps. As you can see, these were finely made. Much like betls, they were well-made and did not look like belts from a Tijuana flea market or made in an arts and crafts class.



A photo of a small part of Trajan's Column showing signa.



focus – the men would know the appearance of their own signum, and so could easily locate it in the confusion of the battlefield.

Other decorations

And these are not all, by any means of the attachments and decorations that were on signa. We just don't have space in this one article to cover them all.



Other standards

In addition to the aquila, vexillum and signum, there were other standards. One, called an *imago*, had the image of the Emperor (and often his family too) and this was carried by a standard bearer known as an *imagnifer*.

Cavalry

Cavalry had a neat standard called a *draco* (dragon) draco standards were adopted during the Late Empire, 250-400 AD and were generally carried by

cavalry units. The hollow head, in the form of a toothed dragon, or snake head was formed from metal and when carried by a rider at a gallop, the wind passing through it would extend a cloth tube tail attached to the neck of the head. There is some indication that the air-stream passing through a Draco head carried "at speed" could create a hissing, whistling or droning sound. The draco was carried by the so-called *draconarius* rider of a cavalry unit. draco standards were also used in cavalry *gymnasia* (games), such as the *hypakka* where points were scored for strikes (from dummy pilum javelins thrown by another team of "aggressor" riders) on the tail piece of the Draco standards being carried by the Draco Team acting as targets.

Auxilla standards

Little is known about auxiliary standards. Auxiliary centuries probably carried Signa, like their legionary counterparts. Auxiliary cavalry also seem to have used vexilla.

So Much...

As you can see, one can go down a rabbit hole very easily with Roman standards. And to think, I was just gonna write about the signum. 😊

Works Cited and Used

- "Signum (Military Standard)." *Legion XXIV Media Atlantia website* — and correspondence with *George Metz*. <<http://www.legionxxiv.org/signum/>>
- "Correspondance with." *Terry Nix* <<https://www.legionten.org/>>
- "Roman Standards & Standard-Bearers (1): 112 BC–AD 192 (Elite)." *Raffaele D'Amato*
- "Roman Standards". Imperium Romanum Website. <<https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/roman-army/roman-standards/>>
- "Roman Coins website". <<http://www.romancoins.info>>. So MUCH good stuff!!



A photo of Legio XXIV's magnifiCENT Draco! As you can see, it would stream out behind and stand out..



Guidelines for Submission of Material to Ad Signum

We encourage, in fact, absolutely need, contributions of material to this publication if it is to continue. This includes, but is not limited to, articles, letters, fiction writing, practical tips, reports on events, historical research, original or duplicated art work and photographs. Just about anything to do with the Roman Army, The Roman Empire, and its enemies and Allies and/or the Ancient World can be used (try to go light on Greek stuff).

The editing, design, layout and pre-press production of *Ad Signum* is done by Decimvs and now sometimes, Josephus. We have been using desktop publishing software since the olden days (right after Caesar died), in this case both PC and Mac platforms Adobe InDesign and Photoshop, MS Word is used for much of the editing and Adobe Illustrator and CorelDraw are the primary applications used to produce this publication. This allows for a lot of different options in submitting material.

The following is a list of our submission guidelines and policies. These will give you an idea of how to best prepare stuff before you send it, and what will happen to it after we get it.

Written Material

General: It is the policy of *Ad Signum* to proofread all articles or letters and edit them for length, accuracy, grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and taste where necessary. We appreciate receiving material that is as finished as possible, however, do not worry about getting everything perfect—just get it done, and we will take care of the polishing! If you are concerned that our editing might affect something important or sensitive, we will be glad

to e-mail you a proof galley of your article if requested.

Electronic Format

The following are the preferred media and software for the transferal of articles written with word processing, in order of preference:

1. In M.S. Word: **doc** or **docx** format
2. In any other software
3. An e-mail with formatting.
4. Text files written in notepad or wordpad or whatever app you use on your phone.
5. In any other software that we can import or access.

Articles may be E-mailed to us, through one of our emails listed.

Paper Format

The following is the preferred format for articles submitted on paper (in order of preference):

1. Typed, double-spaced using upper and lower case style (not all capital letters)
2. Neatly hand printed.
3. Cuneform writing on clay tablets.
4. Written in legible handwriting

Artwork

Photocopies of line drawings will work fine. Pen and ink (with black ink) drawings work best; pencil sketches don't reproduce as well. Artwork will be returned on request.

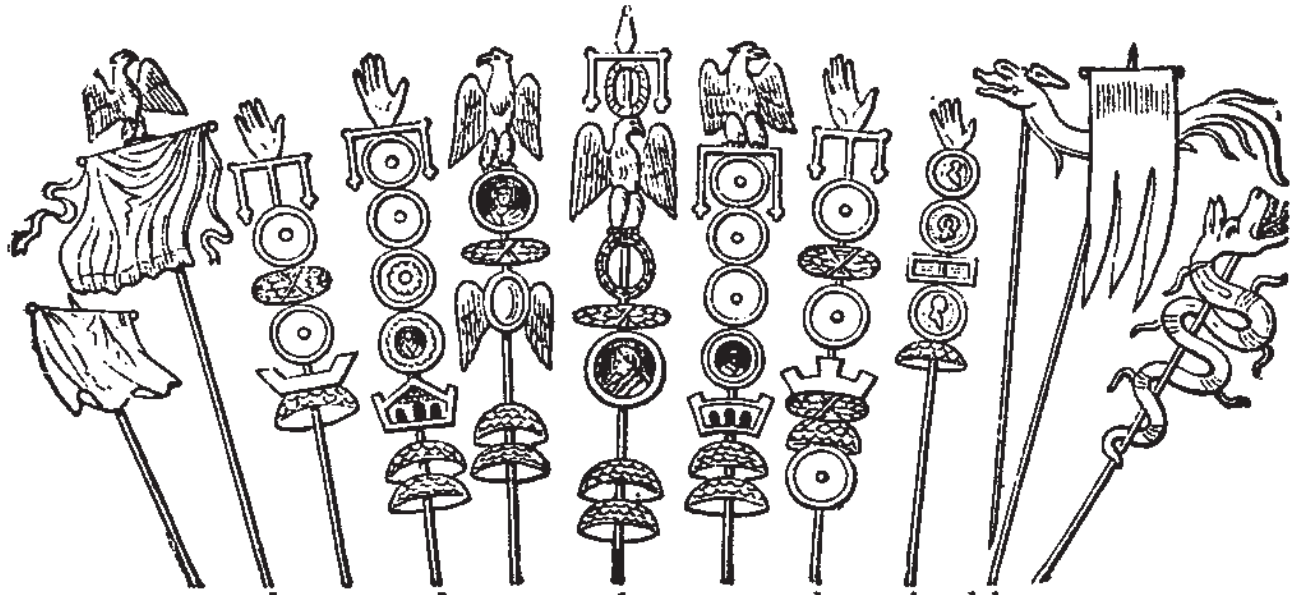
Photographs

Preferably something scanned and/or from a digital camera (or where you stole it on the 'Net). We prefer NOT to get photos that we have to scan, but will do it **if** we have to, but you'll likely be cleaning the latrines or peeling fava beans next week.



Upcoming Events

- February 2023. **SwordFest** at Columbia, SC
- May 20-21. 2023: **Across the Centuries 2023** at Fort Loudoun, located in Fort Loudon, PA
- September 2-3, 2023: **Virginia Scottish Games**: Great Meadow, The Plains, Va
- *More to come...*



Unit Contacts

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The Fine Print...

AD SIGNUM! is the Official Newsletter of **Legio IX Hispana**. **Ad Signum** is (supposed to be) published monthly (but rarely is). Please submit any articles you'd like published to the editor, Marsh Wise at dmvlegix@gmail.com (sorry, electronic format only), as text file or M.S. Word document or really, most electronic format.

The Legio IX website is: <https://www.legioix.org/>