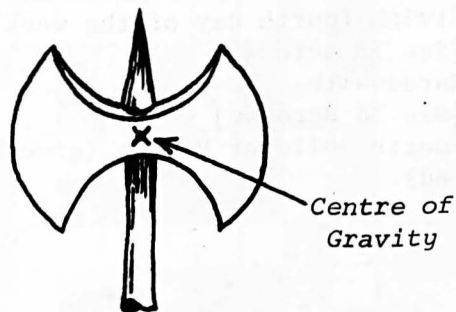
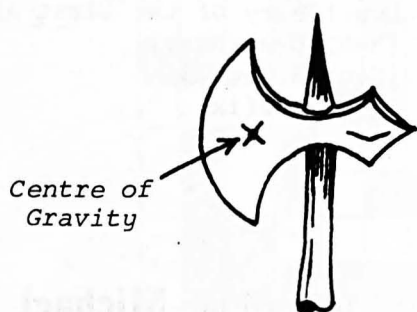


he SUBJECT of Dwarvish axes and their design and construction is of real importance to me, in particular. My own costume design (made for Sweden, but visible at Oxonmoot) shows a stylised axe, which is double-headed (known properly as a Cretan labrys).

However, this is for ceremonial usage, and would pose severe problems in combat.

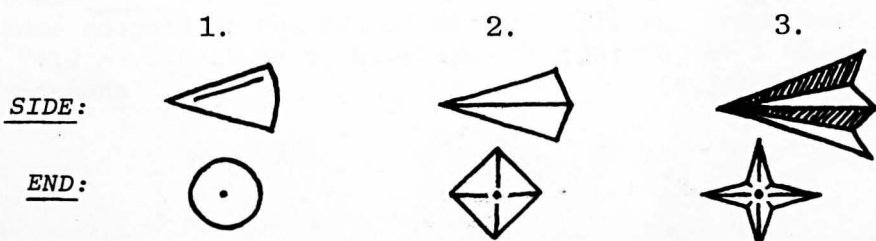
An axe is only as efficient as its *momentum* allows. A double-bladed weapon does have the sheer weight of metal, but it lies on both sides of the shaft: the centre of gravity will therefore lie inside the shaft. However, the single-bladed axe has the centre of gravity (of the head) *between* the shaft and the edge:



This means that the single-bladed axe will, by itself, 'topple' in the direction of the edge if held by the very end of the shaft and 'balanced'; whereas the labrys is stable. Obviously if the blade is going to swing itself in the direction of the business end, it will require less effort by the wielder - a very important consideration if serious orc-neck hewing is being contemplated.

The 'short' battle axe, capable of one-handed use, is, based on human dimensions, rarely more than about three feet long overall. Apart from the main chopping blade, there are two other useful bits for lethal action:

On the 'back' of the axe, where on a common or garden hatchet the metal is flattened, a battle or war axe will have a short or medium-length beak or punch about 3 or 4 inches long, but broad at the base, and conical or pyramidal in shape, thus:



The purpose of this bit is to punch through armour, or a thick skull, where the sharp edge would not be as effective.

The second 'extra' is a continuation of the shaft above the level of the axe blade. This is normally a plain sharp spike, or it can be the crossed-blade type (see No.3 above). This give a measure of effectiveness in thrust, rather than cut or hammer, and increases the axe's range (the tip being further away than the cutting edge).

When not in combat, an axe, or any other weapon, has to be carried safely, yet ready for quick use. A double-bladed axe has, naturally, two edges to lacerate its user if stuck in a belt or carried over a shoulder. A sword or dagger has a scabbard, but can be 'drawn' very quickly, since the balance of the thing puts the handle at hand's reach. An axe scabbard or cover protects the heavy head - usually leaving the shaft *below* - look at a fireman's axe and you'll see what I mean. Getting that into action could be a slow, and therefore dangerous, procedure.

On the other hand, a single-bladed axe can be carried more safely just stuck through the belt. A right-handed user would normally carry the axe on the left, with the cutting edge turned to the front. The natural balance will cause the shaft to swing backwards/outwards. To bring the axe to bear, the left hand would grab the armour-punch on the back of the axe-head, or possibly the shaft itself, and raise the axe in the belt until the right hand can get a grip on the main shaft. A quick movement of the left hand to the very end of the shaft as it leaves the belt produces a double-handed grip with the cutting edge raised to shoulder level or thereabouts, facing outwards. All very efficient, you see, and no danger of grabbing a sharp edge when drawing the axe for use.

Gimli's axe is described as 'wide-bladed', and the orc neck-band causes a notch in the edge. Gimli says, "My axe is notched, the forty-second had an iron collar on his neck" (Book III, Ch.8, 3rd paragraph). Note the expression "my axe" - not "one blade" or "a blade", etc. This suggests that Gimli had one edge only on the axe. And in Fangorn's presence, Gimli bows, and the axe slips out of his belt - obviously carried 'ready for action'.

Has anyone further ideas on this?

