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Roman Iron Pugio

An ancient Roman iron dagger or pugio blade of long tapering form, waisted in the middle.

Ca. 1st - 2nd century AD.
Length: 15 in. (38 cm).

The Iberic short sword or Gladius Hispaniensis was adapted by the Romans as early as the second century BC, and was the direct predecessor of both the Mainz-Type gladius Romanus and the shortened, broad bladed pugio dagger. As a close quarters weapon, the pugio was able to deliver a mortal blow in a single thrust. In the later empire, the pugio grew larger with a more pronounced mid-rib.

cf.: Bishop & Coulston, Roman Military Equipment from the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 83-87.

Published: J. Eisenberg, Art of the Ancient World, vol. XXI (2011), no. 71. M. Saliola & F. Casprini, Pugio - Gladius Brevis Est, History and Technology of the Roman Battle Dagger, (Oxford, 2016). no. 44.

Formerly in the collection of Axel Guttmann, Berlin, (1944-2001).

inventory number: 9229

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