

Knight Rudolf

The Middle High German word "knight" initially meant simply "horseman" and was used in the Middle Ages to refer to heavily armed mounted warriors. As a rule, these knights were noble.

The first knights appeared in France in the 8th century after wars against the Moors. They were supposed to provide better defence because the popular army that had been common until then was no longer sufficient. During wars against Hungary, Henry I decided on an official army of knights at the Imperial Diet in Worms. This also led to an increase in the building of castles. Soon knighthood was widespread throughout Europe.

In the late Middle Ages, descent from knightly ancestors was a prerequisite for admission to the knighthood. Apart from that, however, one also had to have appropriate characteristics and an education. There were also people who were knighted for special merits, but in most cases this was more comparable to the awarding of orders.

In order to be accepted into the knighthood, a person began several years of training as a page at the age of seven. At the court of a prince, the future knight learned the customs and manners and received the usual intellectual and spiritual education of the time. The focus was on legends, biblical stories and music. Reading and writing, on the other hand, were not yet common. Great importance was also attached to physical training. This included lessons in horse riding and the use of weapons. At the age of fourteen, training as a squire began. A squire was subordinate to a knight and had to serve him. After passing his knighthood, he received his knighthood at the age of twenty-one.

A knight's armour consisted of several layers: Over his underwear of wool or linen, the knight wore chain mail made of movable rings. On top of this came the armour on the whole body from head to toe and also on the hands. To protect the face, the helmet often had a movable visor with air holes. The knight fought with lance, sword and battle axe and protected himself with the shield.

In the 14th century, the first firearms were used. Therefore, the knight's armour had to be built more solidly. The more the development of new weapons progressed, the more immobile the knights became. Often they had to be lifted onto the horse by their squires with their armour weighing up to 25 kg. This armour was therefore only used in tournaments. Lighter armour was used in war. This model is based on representations from the 15th century.

In the late Middle Ages, princes and kings wanted to be more independent of their subjects and used mercenary armies, which included well-organised foot troops. As a result, the knighthood lost importance and was gradually displaced. Many knights were able to adapt to the new circumstances and joined the mercenary units. Others became robber barons out of economic necessity. unités de mercenaires. D'autres sont devenus des chevaliers brigands par nécessité économique.