



ARMS AND ARMOR  
FROM THE  
SAXON ELECTORAL COURT  
PART II



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
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POWDER FLASK	5
Germany, circa 1600.	

A COLLECTION OF RARE AND IMPORTANT SWORD HANGERS	16
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I. CHEVRON PATTERNED	19
Germany, circa 1600-1620.	



II. SILK EMBROIDERED	28
Germany, circa 1600.	



III. SILK EMBROIDERED	32
Germany, circa 1600.	



IV. APPLIED WITH TEXTILES 34

attributed to the Saxon Electoral Court,  
circa 1600.



BROADSWORD 36

of the Saxon Janissary Corps, 1729.



A SAXON MINER'S GUILD AXE 45

from the Erzgebirge region, Saxony,  
dated 1720.

INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTS 49

## FOREWORD

The *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden* show a collection of arms and armor, which is a unique treasure in three regards. It was the incredible wealth of the Saxon Electors based on mining in the Erzgebirge region, that allowed for acquiring arms and armor of breathtaking quality for representative function, for tournament use, hunting and the Electoral guard, alike. Unlike the great majority of courtly collections in Germany, Dresden managed to avoid their inventory from being plundered and dispersed or devastated by war. Even during the thirty years war (1618-48) and the destruction of the city in 1945 it was possible to save the artworks. Last but not least, an utmost diligence in caring for the objects in the course of the centuries, ensured the survival of even highly sensitive exhibits like textiles and leather in nearly flawless condition.

In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries there were several sales of Saxon arms and armor to the open art market. Both their quality and condition make these highly attractive among collectors and museums alike. It is a particular delight for me, presenting to you a number of fine and rare pieces in this second catalogue on arms and armor from the Saxon Electoral Court.

In preparation of this catalogue I have conducted quite a lot of research, which is usually driven by my personal passion for this subject and my relentless desire to find out as much as possible about the background of an object. This task has occasionally required additional information from curators of several European museums. For their friendly support I would like to thank:

Victoria Pisareva, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden,  
Eleanor Wilkinson, Royal Armouries, Leeds,

Dr. Ralf Moffat, Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow,  
Dr. Sven Lüken, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin,  
Dr. Raphael Beuing, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich,  
Holger Schuckelt, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden,  
Gernot Klatte, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

Each object in this catalogue is available and for sale. For any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Lennart Viebahn  
Bremen, May 2024







## POWDER FLASK

Germany, circa 1600.

### **Provenance**

The Saxon Electoral Armouries, Dresden.

Maximum Width: 12,7 cm.

Maximum Length: 12,4 cm.

Weight: 205 g.

Outer Diameter: 99,8 mm.

Inner Diameter: circa 18 mm.

Depth: 41 mm.

*Assembled from several turned ivory parts; three blackened double grooves, the spout composed of three ivory components, screwed to the flask; loops, plug and handle made of brass, decorated with engravings; remains of fire gilding.*

### **Background**

Since the Renaissance the courtly hunt had belonged to the most important diplomatic and social gatherings of the European nobility. Several types of hunting were exclusively reserved for the high nobility, who especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries orchestrated these events as unimaginably luxurious festivities, requiring to spend fortunes of funds. These hunts served not only the amusement of their participants and can by no means be compared to our today's perspective on hunting, but were considered as an instrument of courtly

representation. Especially the Saxon Electoral Court was famous all over Europe for its luxurious sumptuousness at their hunts.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of suchlike events the participants strived to communicate their personal status and rank by an equipment and clothing as splendiferous as possible, which also encompassed presents for the hosting regent. A very popular accessory were individually designed powder flasks, manufactured in all precious materials and involving the most sophisticated crafts.<sup>2</sup>

Since the appearance of handheld firearms in late medieval times vessels became necessary for carrying black powder. But it was the introduction of wheellock guns in hunting and shootings in the sixteenth century that led to the production of luxurious powder flasks as status symbols.

### **Discussion and Comparative Pieces**

The present powder flask can be seen in the context of courtly representation as described before. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century ivory was still a very costly material and the metal components are lavishly engraved and fire gilded. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that its owner was a high ranking and wealthy individual.

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<sup>1</sup> Hollberg, C.: Die Lust am Jagen – Höfische Jagd vom 16. Bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, in: Quaas, G. (2002): Hofjagd, pp. 9-28; Hense., M. (1992): Die gebräuchlichsten Jagdmethoden in der Zeit vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, in: Schloß Moritzburg: Vom Jagen, pp. 29-42.

<sup>2</sup> Fliegel, S. (1998). Arms & Armor, pp. 166-168, Houze, H. (1989): The Sumptuous Flaske, pp. XI-XIII.

Back in 1970 a comparative flask from the Saxon Royal Collections was sold by the administration of the GDR through Sotheby's London.<sup>3</sup> The shape of the body, the three blackened double grooves, spout and engraved handle are exactly the same, the loops are slightly different. These were made of silver in the same design, whereas our piece shows fire gilt brass components.

Today, there do still exist a group of five comparative examples in the *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden*. Some show signs of wear and are fitted with slightly varying mounts. This argues for the group being actually used, which led to damages and losses of loops, that were replaced by spare parts. Two important hunting sets encompass one of these powder flasks, each.

The following page shows the first set, made by Gabriel Gipfel, that was a Christmas present of Elector Christian II of Saxony to his brother Duke Johann Georg I in 1607, bearing the Elector's coat of arms and initials. It originally featured 439 turquoises and cost the fortune of 2000 talers.

Also by Gabriel Gipfel, the second garniture is decorated with emeralds and colorful hunting scenes in enamel. Only one year later in 1608 it was given as a Christmas present from Elector Christian II to Johann Georg I. The powder flask is the only one in the group with an additional decoration at its corpus with emeralds, corresponding to the other items of the garniture. Its loops are exactly the same like those mounted on our present example.



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<sup>3</sup> Sotheby & Co. (1970): Catalogue of highly important Arms from the Saxon Royal Collections, auction on 03/23/1970, lot no. 45.



Set of Hunting Weapons with Turquoises, Inv. No. X144, on view at SKD.





Hunting Garniture with Emeralds, Inv. No. X143, on view at SKD.



While two powder flasks were obviously given to Gabriel Gipfel for manufacturing the two hunting garnitures (if not added at a later date), the other three flasks exist as single items in the inventory. This raises the question about the common background of the whole group, which is unknown today and leaves room for further research. It normally seems reasonable to assume that all comparative flasks were manufactured on a certain occasion for the Saxon court.

Such an occasion might for instance have been a hunt in the context of a wedding or a similar event, where high ranking participants received these flasks as an accessory. A comparative occurrence for instance is known for the wedding of Erdmuthe Sophie of Saxony back in 1662, where hunting swords and troussees decorated *en suite* were used. It is also possible that the flasks were given to the Elector as a gift from a guest invited to a hunt or even as a diplomatic gift, like many other hunting weapons. Of course these hypotheses remain speculative, as is the following one.

It is known that ivory turning was a personal passion of Elector August, who created several objects for his chamber of curiosities.<sup>4</sup> Whether this was also the case with his successors in the 17<sup>th</sup> century would be subject to further research. Since ivory turning was not an unusual leisure activity among members of the aristocracy in these days, it might very well be possible that Elector Christian II himself created this group of flasks, reserving the example with emeralds and a second piece for the garnitures intended as a Christmas gift for his brother and the remaining ones for high ranking members of his personal surroundings.

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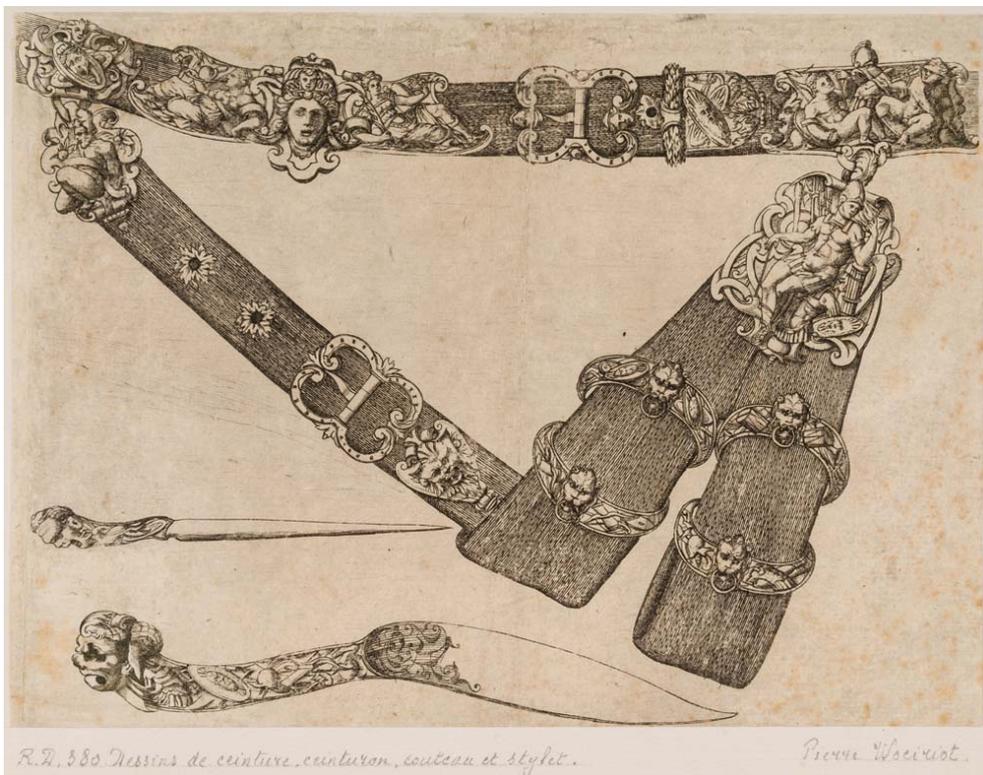
<sup>4</sup> Kappel, J.: Turned Ivory Works, in: Syndram, D., Scherner, A. (2004): Princely Splendor, The Dresden Court 1580 – 1620, p. 176.

### **Ivory Regulations and CITES**

The international trade of antiques containing ivory is regulated differently depending your home country. We have the necessary CITES document for the present powder flask which allows for the free circulation within the member states of the European Union. An export to the United States would be possible, if the object was bought by a museum.

## A COLLECTION OF RARE AND IMPORTANT SWORD HANGERS

A sword hanger served to attach an edged weapon with its scabbard to the dress of its wearer in a position, that allowed both for a convenient way to carry the sword and the possibility of drawing it in a combat situation as quickly as possible.



**Design for a Sword-belt, Knife, and Stylus.<sup>5</sup>**

The drawing above illustrates the way, how a sword hanger was connected to the belt and held the sword at an ideal angle by an

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Woeiriot de Bouzey II (French, Neufchâteau 1532–1599 Damblain), ca. 1555. Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/739608>.

additional strap. At the same time, it shows, that hanger and belt were subject to elaborate decoration.

This was common practice, since sword hangers formed part of the dress of their owners and were often designed as a luxury accessory, reflecting their wealth and status. High ranking clients ordered matching sets of sword, scabbard and an additional dagger, decorated with precious materials and involving all techniques of metalworking, textiles and leathering.

If you visit the *Rüstkammer* at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden today, you will recognize a number of hangers from the personal belongings of the Saxon Electors that impress as precious treasures. Made of gold and silver wire, gemstones and diamonds together with fire gilded and enameled mounts, these objects bear witness of the incredible wealth at the Electoral Court in Dresden.<sup>6</sup>

All the more it astonishes that until very recently there has never been much attention to sword hangers by scholarship. The reason might be, that only very few hangers have survived the centuries due to the fugacity of leather and textiles, the major materials involved in the manufacture of sword hangers. Besides the precious examples made for representation, those intended to be worn in everyday life usually wore off in their time of use. Just think about the fact, how quickly your wardrobe and accessories made of leather deteriorates today. A sword

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<sup>6</sup> Three of these are published in: *Zeitschrift für historische Waffen und Kostümkunde*, Band 9, Heft 4, Tafel IV.

hanger, attached to the side while walking and loaded with the weight of a sword with its scabbard usually had a very limited service life.

Many courtly collections in Europe must once have had fine examples of hangers. The majority got lost and today there are only few pieces left, mostly in the Livrustkammaren, Stockholm, and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. As indicated earlier, the Dresden collections form a notable exception to other ones, since over a period of several centuries the objects have never suffered from mistreatment, but have been taken care for with best diligence. This is the reason, why many extremely fragile sword hangers have survived the centuries to our days there and can be admired in the SKD today.

A number of these have been sold to the art market since the 19th century. Back in 1834 the antiques dealer Klaber acquired a larger number of different sword hangers that subsequently passed through the hands of art collectors or ended up in museums. Sword hangers in the collections of Bashford Dean and Spitzer can be traced back to Klaber, for instance. But there were also several art auctions from the SKD or non-recorded direct sales, even after the second world war by the German Democratic Republic.

It is a particular honor for me that I have the privilege of taking custodial care for four fine and rare sword hangers of Dresden provenance. May these fascinating objects be preserved for future generations by caring clients and their successors.



## I. CHEVRON PATTERNED

Circa 1600.

Length: 33 cm.

Width: 22,5 cm.

Length, strap: 54 cm.

*Leather, formed of three sections, pierced with chevron pattern, hearts and crescents, exposing an underlay of green silk, the buckles and hook made of gilded steel.*

### Comparative Pieces

Once there must have existed a small group of the present model. Our example included, there is evidence of four hangers, two of them are probably lost.

I. Until 1923: Rüstkammer, Dresden. The whereabouts are unknown.

As you can see on the following pages, one example was published by Haenel back in 1923, as part of the armory in Dresden.<sup>7</sup> Earlier it was mounted on the armor of Elector Sigismund of Brandenburg, once on view at the *Königliches Historisches Museum*, Dresden (see the next but one page).<sup>8</sup> The armor was given by exchange to the armory in Berlin back in 1907, today the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*. **The sword hanger is not known any more at the present collections of the**

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<sup>7</sup> Haenel, E. (1923): *Kostbare Waffen aus der Dresdner Rüstkammer*, p. 162, pl. 80, c.

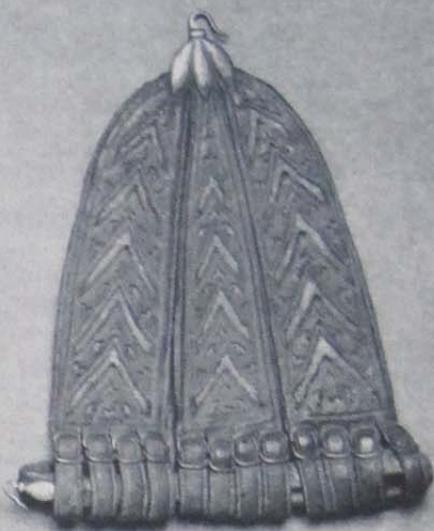
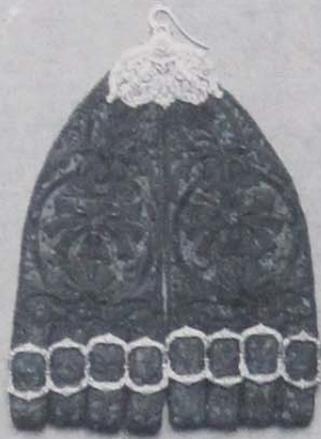
<sup>8</sup> Hettner, H., Büttner, G. (1871): *Photographien nach Gegenständen aus dem Königlichen Historischen Museum in Dresden*, pl. 145.



a



b



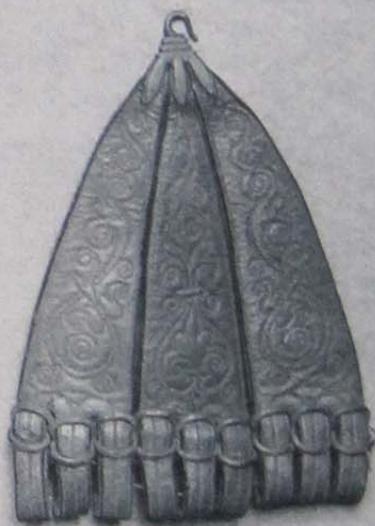
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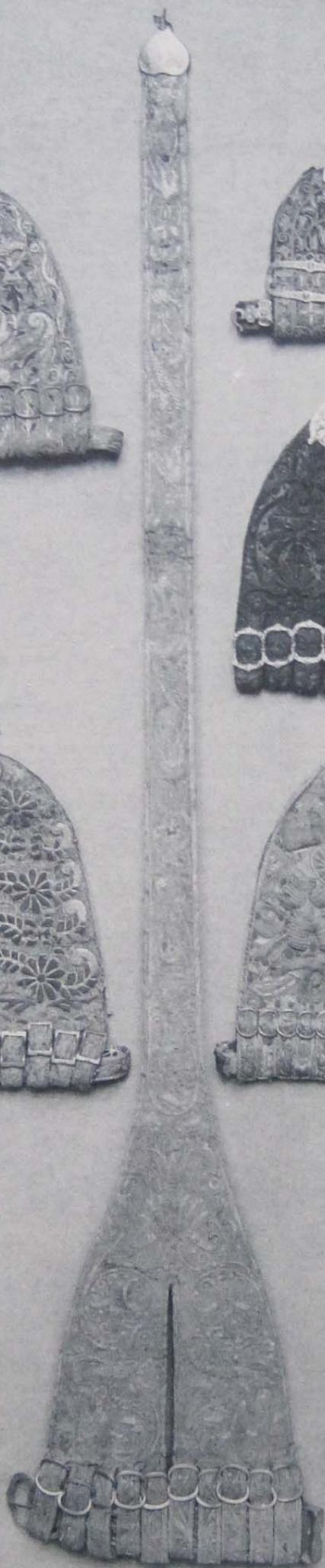
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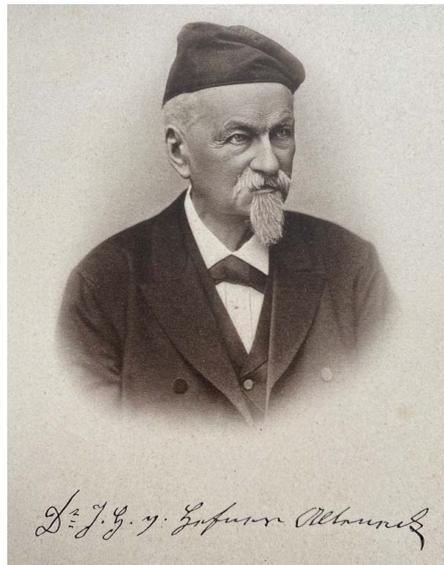
Rüstung des Churfürst Sigismund von Brandenburg.  
gek. 1422, erst. 1859



**SKD.** At least until Haenel published it in 1923 it must have formed part of the museum, but it is currently not possible to trace back any sale, when it left the institution. Since the mounts are described by Haenel as zinc-plated, our present piece with the gilded ones is probably not the one published.

## II. Collection Dr. J. H. von Hefner-Alteneck.

- Acquired back in 1842 in Nuremberg (from Klaber?).
- Sold at auction house Helbing on June, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1904: Kunstsammlungen des Herrn Geheimrats Dr. Jakob von Hefner-Alteneck München, lot 91, pl. XXXIV.
- Current whereabouts are unknown.



The famous scholar Dr. von Hefner-Alteneck (1811-1903), first director of the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, had assembled an important private collection of arms and armor, that came to auction

after his death in 1904. His sword hanger must have been particularly significant to him, since he published a drawing of it in two of his works (see page 27).<sup>9</sup>

III. Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow. Inv. No. E.1939.65.II.<sup>10</sup>

- Collection of Major the Hon. T.G.B. Morgan Granville Gavin, formed by the second Marquis of Breadalbane; Lot 73 in Christie's sale, London 5th July 1917.

- R. L. Scott, bequeathed to the Glasgow Museums in 1939.

Interestingly enough the blackened buckles and hook of this sword hanger differ from those of the three other ones in this group. Instead, these are nearly identical with those, mounted on the silk embroidered model, which is discussed on the following pages in section II and III.

The images on the next page contrast these with details from our second sword hanger. The striking similarity suggests the thesis that both the hanger from Glasgow and our second model were manufactured at the same courtly workshop of the armory in Dresden. Did a belt maker open a worn off sword hanger of the silk embroidered group in order to reuse its buckles and hook for manufacturing the Kelvingrove hanger?

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<sup>9</sup> Hefner-Alteneck, J. v. (1889): *Trachten, Kunstwerke und Gerätschaften vom frühen Mittelalter bis Ende des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts: nach gleichzeitigen Originalen*, p. 6, pl. 660;

Hefner-Alteneck, J. v. (1903): *Waffen; ein Beitrag zu historischen Waffenkunde vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis gegen Ende des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts*, p. 50, pl. 92.

<sup>10</sup> <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=242585;type=101#>.



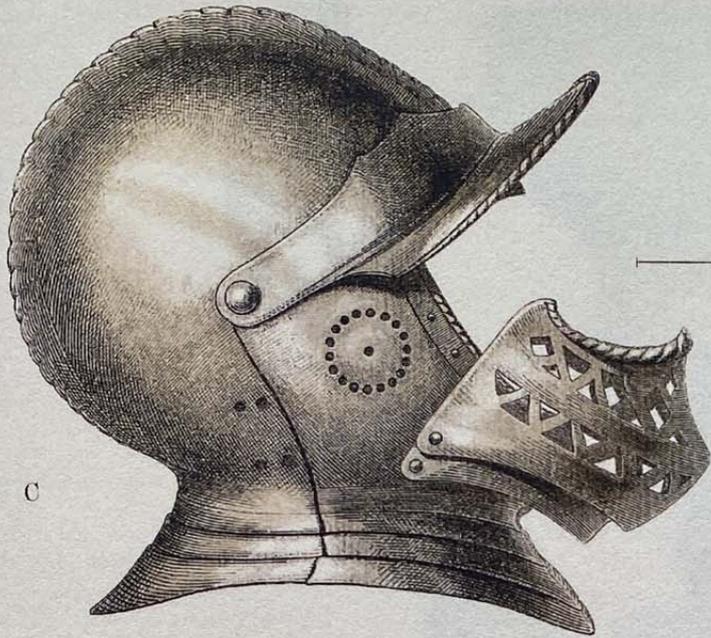
Sword Hanger, © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection.



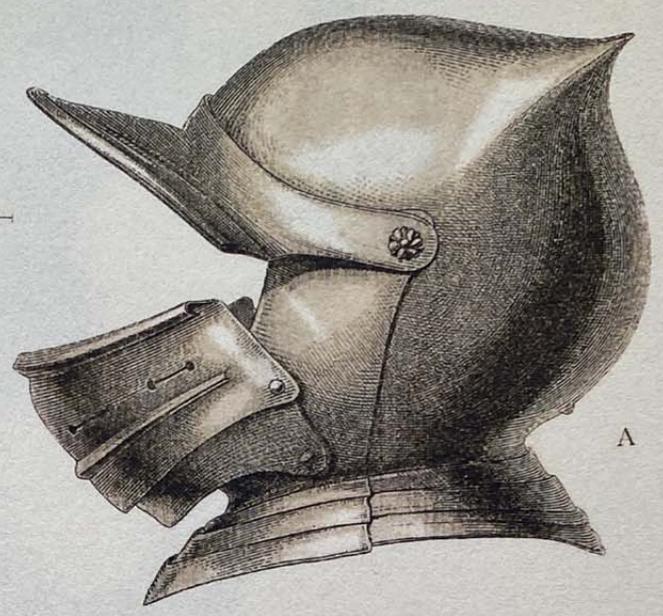
Hook and Buckles, © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection.



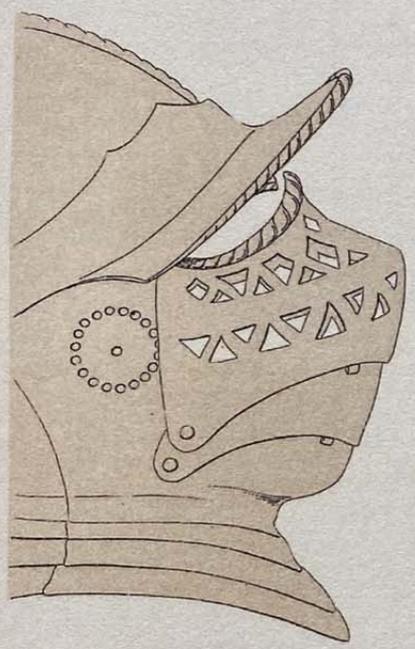
Details from our silk embroidered  
Sword Hanger.



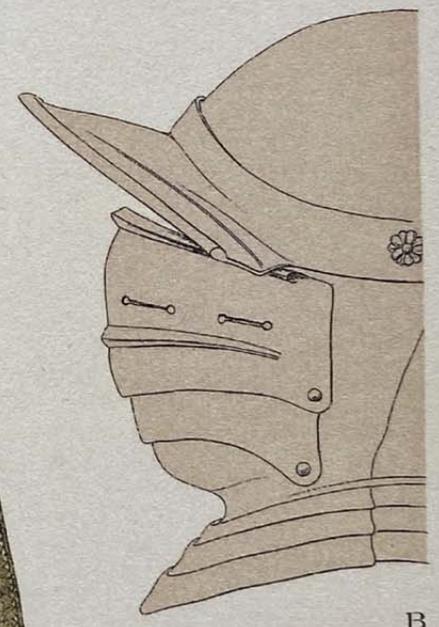
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A



D



B



E

I.H.v.H A.del.

L.K.sc

1590 - 1630



## II. SILK EMBROIDERED

Circa 1600.

Length: 33,5 cm.

Width: 22,5 cm.

*Leather with greenish color, formed of three sections, embroidered with yellow silk thread, buckles and hook made of blackened steel.*

A comparative piece was published by Haenel in 1923 (see page 21).<sup>11</sup> A number of these sword hangers still exist in the SKD, today. There is also a variation with two panels. It seems reasonable to assume that both might have formed part of the equipment for the Elector's life guard, the Trabanten. However, since there is no pictorial evidence, it is currently not possible to verify this.

In the permanent exhibition at the Rüstkammer there is a life-size model of a Trabant, equipped with original helmet, halberd and sword, and a replica costume with sword hanger, made after the design of an original piece. For conservational reasons it was not possible, to place one of the original sword hangers in this position, since the weight of the sword would be too much of a strain for this susceptible exhibit.

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<sup>11</sup> Haenel, E. (1923): *Kostbare Waffen aus der Dresdner Rüstkammer*, p. 162, pl. 80, f.



Model of a Trabant.

### Comparative Pieces

I. Klingenmuseum, Solingen.

II. Royal Armouries, Leeds Inv. No. IX.5428.

III. Collection Sir Richard Wallace (1818-1890), The Wallace Collection, London, Inv. No. A1066.

-before Collection of Llewelyn Meyrick at Goodrich Court,  
Herefordshire,

- acquired from Klaber after 1834?



Sir Richard Wallace.

Possibly this is the hanger delineated in Skelton's unpublished vol. III of the Meyrick Collection, no 543, preserved in the library at Hertford House.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=61563&viewType=detailView>



### III. SILK EMBROIDERED

Circa 1600.

Length: 32,5 cm.

Width: 23,5 cm.

*Another example of the group, comparative to the preceding one.*



Members of the Trabantenleibgarde.



#### IV. APPLIED WITH TEXTILES

Attributed to the Saxon Electoral Court.

Circa 1600.

Length: 28,5 cm.

Width: 18,5 cm.

*Black leather, formed of two panels, applied with strips of yellow textiles, buckles and large belt hook made of steel, with engravings.*

It has not been possible to trace back the present piece to the collections of the Saxon Electoral Court, yet, and there is no comparative example left at the SKD today. However, we do attribute it to this provenance on the grounds of its coloring. Yellow against a blackened ground are the typical colors of the Saxon Electors that can be found on equipment and arms and armor of the Trabantenleibgarde in several instances. This assumption is further supported by the fact, that we bought the collection from one single source. We hope that it is possible to confirm our thesis with pictorial evidence or provenance information in the future.



## BROADSWORD

of the Saxon Janissary Corps, 1729.

Overall Length: 82 cm.

Blade Length: 67 cm.

Weight: 1,025 kg.

Provenance: Turkish Chamber of the Saxon Electoral Court. Swords of this group had been sold in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the sale of Lepke, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1919, lots 598-602, pl. 44.

*Single edged blade with broad fullers on both sides, double-edged for its last third, the cipher "AR" under a crown (King August II. 1697-1755), etched on both sides. Cast brass hilt with more raised ciphers on the languets on each side, closely resembling a Turkish Karabela sword.*

The present sword should not be seen as a pure representative one forming part of the Janissary dress, but indeed as a functional weapon that was designed to deliver cuts.

According to Hilbert, Johann Caspar Clauberg ordered 770 blades for the manufacture of the whole group in Solingen. These were mounted in Dresden by the cutler Gottfried Schmidt with cast brass hilts, made by Lindenwenz, also Dresden.<sup>13</sup> Holger Schuckelt indicates that at least a number of blades probably were manufactured in Suhl. An inventory entry from 1731 clearly mentions a sample being sent to Suhl for the



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<sup>13</sup> Hilbert, K. (1994): *Trag diese Wehr zu Sachsens Ehr!*, pp. 16-17.

purpose of producing further blades there.<sup>14</sup> Currently, it is not possible to trace back the information of Hilbert and clarify this contradiction. Normally, it would have been reasonable assuming Solingen as the origin, since it was the most important center for the production of blades in these days with numerous examples existing in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, today. Suhl on the other hand is famous for the manufacture of firearms. Was it a mistake, made in the inventory of 1731? This might be possible. Another explanation could be, that some pieces were made in Suhl, the remaining ones in Solingen.

### **Background**

Two times in history the Ottoman Empire almost managed to conquer Vienna and defeat the Holy Roman Empire and their allies. Both in 1529 and 1683 the city was sieged. European history would have taken a completely different road if the Ottomans had been successful. However, the Holy Roman Empire survived, while the rigors of war and plundering troops initially let to an in-depth fear of the Turks.

Notwithstanding, the wars also initiated a civilian exchange process that encompassed trading relations and originated a fascination in Europe for the exotic Ottoman culture. After the battles of Vienna an interesting war booty was taken from the tent camp of the besieger. People became acquainted with the previously unknown coffee, for example, and exotic clothing, tents, weapons and other equipment, that was shared among the military leaders. For celebrating their victories in the Turkish wars, it became common practice at the European courts to

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<sup>14</sup> Schuckelt, H. (2010): Die Türckische Cammer, p. 312.

arrange feasts, parades and tournaments, whose participants dressed in Ottoman cloths. Collections with Ottoman artefacts were gathered and the Turkish fashion spread into the arts world. As long as a substantial military threat prevailed, the main motif for celebrating feasts in the Turkish fashion remained real or hypothetical victories, fear dominating the emotions. The more the Ottomans were pushed back east, the more the fear faded and was substituted by an ever growing fascination.

Saxony had played a special role in this regard. Due to its geographical position it had not been threatened directly by the Turks, while it still supported the Holy Roman Empire with troops. So, fascination for the exotic was the main force for the Turkish fashion right from the beginnings. At the courtly festivities in Dresden, the Turks had not necessarily represented the evil and the enemy in parades and tournaments. Instead even Elector Friedrich August of Saxony, King II. of Poland, called the Strong (1670 – 1733), dressed himself in elaborate turkish clothing and played the role of the Sultan! He was accompanied by members of the high aristocracy on horseback, also in Ottoman dress. This is a clear indication for the fascination and adoration August the Strong felt for the Ottoman culture.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Schuckelt, H. (2010): Die Türckische Cammer, p. 228.



August the Strong.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Janissary Corps and the Zeithainer Camp**

Within the Ottoman military the Janissaries formed an elite troop and provided the members of the Sultan's personal guard. August the Strong's admiration for the Turkish fashion not only let him celebrate courtly feasts with members dressed like Janissaries, he also went a step further by establishing a personal Janissary Corp, dressed like he imagined a Janissary to look like and equipped with the present sword.

The inducement for this was a huge military reform. August had recognized during the Nordic wars, how inefficient the Saxon army had been. So, for over a decade he implemented improvements resulting in a well-trained, organized and equipped troop of about 30000 men. August intended to present his new army to the international public in

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<sup>16</sup> Louis de Silvestre (1670-1733): August II the Strong, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland. Circa 1700-1760.

a huge maneuver, encompassing an elaborate feast, that was supposed to take place near Zeihain, circa 40 km northwest of Dresden back in 1730. As early as 1728 preparations for this event started under the responsibility of Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann, in order to construct a camp that was large and attractive enough to accommodate all the international guests. The total need for tents numbered 825, so these were brought there from all over the country, overhauled or newly constructed.



Zeithainer Camp.<sup>17</sup>

August the Strong did not spare any effort and founded a Janissary corps, who were responsible to guard the Zeithainer camp. In June 1729 he ordered his officers to recruit soldiers for this unit in Saxony, Poland and Lithuania. Prospective Janissaries had to be in the optimal

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<sup>17</sup> Thiele, Johann Alexander (1685-1752), circa 1730/31.

age and were not allowed to be married. Of special importance to him was their size, so August paid a bonus for the recruitment of large soldiers. Not enough, he personally drew a Janissary as he imagined these to look like<sup>18</sup>, and ordered the prospective members being dressed this way. As a weapon they carried the present sword.



Broadswords of the Janissary Corps.<sup>19</sup>

There existed four companies under the command of colonel von Unruh with a total of 603 men, including officers and 42 musicians. A costly undertaking, summing up to 1415 Taler per month. This was the

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<sup>18</sup> SHStA Dresden, Loc. 2097, No. 33, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> On View in the Turkish Chamber at the *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden*.

reason, why August the Strong soon scaled down the unit. For some time after the Zeithainer camp the Janissaries served as a personal guard, until the unit was dissolved, their members transferred to a grenadier battalion on August 31<sup>st</sup> of 1731.<sup>20</sup>

Since August the Strong was also King of Poland, some Janissaries served at his residence in Poland. Today there exist comparative examples of the sword in the National Museum Krakow.<sup>21</sup>

### **Literature, Comparative Pieces and further Reading**

Chodynski, A. R. (1978): Zbrojownie Malborskie, Muzeum Zamkowe, p. 64, no. 30, fig. 18.

Diener-Schönberg, A. (1912): Die Waffen der Wartburg, no. 416, pl. 57.

Dziewulsi, M. (2015): 100 Rarities from the Military Collection at the National Museum in Krakow, p. 188, fig. 72a

Kessler, H. J., Schulze, D. (1979): Historische Blankwaffen, p. 12.

Müller, K., Kölling, H. (1990): Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen, item no. 351, image p. 298.

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<sup>20</sup> Schuckelt, H. (2010): Die Türckische Cammer, pp. 248-251.

<sup>21</sup> Dziewulsi, M. (2015): 100 Rarities from the Military Collection at the National Museum in Krakow, p. 188, fig. 72a.

Muzeum Wojska Polskiego W Warszawie, catalogue Zbiorów Wiek XVIII., p. 40, no. 74, pl. IV.

Nadolski, A. (1974): Polish Arms, Side-Arms, fig. 160.

Schuckelt, H. (2010): Die Türckische Cammer, no. 313.

SHStA Dresden, Loc. 2097, No. 33, p. 7.

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## A SAXON MINER'S GUILD AXE

from the Erzgebirge region, Saxony.

Dated 1720.

Unknown maker's mark on the axe head.



*Shaft assembled of nine pieces of bone, polished and engraved with inscriptions and mining scenes full of symbolic meanings, at the lower end the Electoral Saxonian coat of arms and hammer and pick, at the upper end a miner praying in front of the Christian cross, the dating 1720 and a tally sheet.*

The miner's guild axe, in German called *Bergbarte*, is a pure symbolic axe that neither served as a weapon nor as a tool. It is an object that was exclusively carried by senior mining officials in the Saxon Erzgebirge region, unknown in other German spoken lands with a mining tradition. Now, why do we include this piece in a catalogue, that focuses on arms from the Saxon Electoral Court? The reason is, that the incredible wealth of the Saxon Electors that allowed for their sumptuous courtly life and the creation of all the precious artworks, treasures and buildings that we still admire today, was based on the seemingly endless revenues from mining in the Erzgebirge.

The image on the following page shows an extremely precious set of miner's accouterments made for Elector Johann Georg II of Saxony by Samuel Klemm in Freiberg, 1675-77. Johann Georg ordered this set to carry it for a meeting with his three brothers in 1678, celebrated in festive fashion. It was made for the Elector in praise of Saxony's rich

deposits of silver ore and precious stones and of his rank as most eminent mine owner.



Set of miner's accouterments belonging to Elector Johann Georg II.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Image taken in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

## Origins

First pictorial evidence for the *Bergbarte* appeared in the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> It has been subject to controversial discussions, whether the *Bergbarte* had developed from a miner's tool, or from a weapon.

Scholars favoring the latter thesis argue, that it had originated from the Frankonian battle axe, the *Franziska*. As free men, miners were allowed to carry weapons in medieval times, which seems reasonable to protect their precious finds against robbery.

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<sup>23</sup> Anacker, H. (1960): Von Beilen, Barten und Häckchen, pp. 32-52.

## INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTS

In the last years, we have welcomed several museums of international significance among the circle of our valued clients. We are grateful for the confidence these institutions have placed in our services.

**2019**

The *European Hansemuseum* in Lübeck loaned our 15<sup>th</sup> century breech-loading swivel gun for their special exhibition *Störtebeker and Company*.

**2017**

*Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* from Malta purchases a group of rare antiquarian books on artillery and fortification, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**2016**

The *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* in Munich enhances its collection with an important hunting hanger.

**2015**

*Schloss Moritzburg* near Dresden acquires from us a partizan of the lifeguard of Elector Friedrich August I., Saxony 1694 – 1697.

**2015**

We sold the drawing of an unknown bronze barrel by Albert Benningk to the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin.

**2013**

The *Cleveland Museum of Art* secures a savoyard helmet, dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. We were able to trace back its provenance to the collection of Rutherford Stuyvesant.