







PARTIZAN

of the Swiss Guard of Friedrich August of Saxony (reigned 1694–1733) ca. 1725.

Length of head: 47 cm (18.5 in.).

Width of head: 19,2 cm (7.56 in.).

Overall length: 193,5 cm (76,18 in.).

An impressive crowned double eagle, adorned with etchings and fine steel cutting, extends into a blade of hollow diamond section. A pair of long straps, wearer's mark J4 at one end. Original wooden haft.

Johann Georg I. decided to deploy the Swiss Guard as an addition to the *Trabantenleibgarde* at the Electoral Court in Dresden in the year 1656 shortly before his death. He needed this supply of mercenaries since the number of *Trabanten* had shrunk to 50 members only. Among a special uniform and other belongings the Swiss Guard used the present partisan from 1725 on until 1806.

The double eagle might refer to the Holy Roman Empire since the Electors of Saxony officiated as vicars back in 1711 and later from 1740 to 42. It might also relate to the Polish eagle, because Elector Friedrich August III. reigned as King of Poland from 1732 – 1763. Thirdly it could have combined both meanings, like it had been the case earlier with the partisans of the Polish Noble Guard of Friedrich August I. in 1719.¹

¹ Nickel, H. (1980): Unter den gekreuzten Schwertern, pp. 14 – 15.

Condition

Tassel missing, wooden shaft slightly shortened. Etching and surface on both sides very well preserved.

Comparative Pieces

Eight examples exist in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

In the United States there are the following:

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 14.25.345.
- Art Institute Chicago, Reference Number 1982.2759.

Provenance

The armoury of the Electors of Saxony, transferred to the Historisches Museum Dresden about 1832.

Background

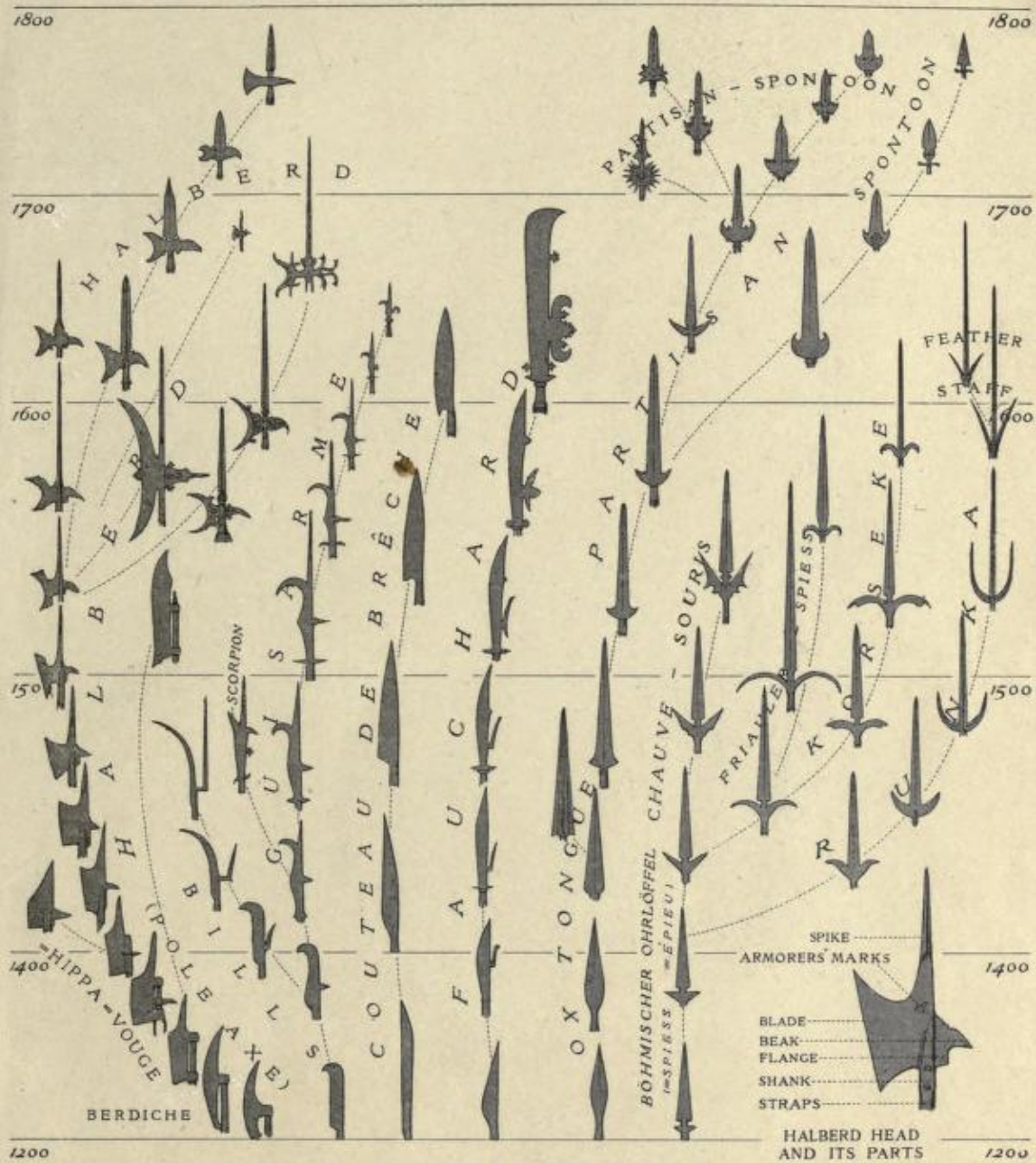
The partizan belongs to the class of polearms and originates in early 15th century Italy. *Partizan* is a term that has its roots in the Italian word *partigiana* for party supporter. Obviously mercenaries of the Italian wars of the 15th and 16th centuries had been equipped with the early types of this weapon. Its period of use lasted until the 18th century. As a rudimentary form the so called spontoon was prevalent well into the 19th century, being an officer's sign of rank.

Like other types of arms the partizan underwent technical changes in the course of time. The original form that was also called oxtongue features a blade of arm length tapering evenly to an acute point with straight edges. At the base it was about a hand wide. In order to reinforce the head it was often forged with a midrib. While early examples predominately lacked parrying devices soon two hooks were molded at the base of the blade. In this way it became feasible to parry the opponent's attacks and a skilful combatant could also clamp the enemy's weapon and snatch it away. Like other polearms an advantage of it was keeping the adversary at a distance. In the course of the 16th century the parrying hooks became larger and the blade shorter. Officers now carried partizans as signs of rank.

An important function of this polearm was its use by live guards of European monarchs. Suchlike pieces were flamboyantly adorned and meant to express the status and wealth of the ruler. By the 18th century these polearms served a more representative and ceremonial purpose since their practical value for the protection of the sovereign became rather limited.²

² Seitz, H. (1968): Blankwaffen II, pp. 213-225.

Müller, H., Kölling, H. (1990): Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen, p. 44.



POLE ARMS
 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COMMONER FORMS
 DURING THE CENTURIES

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Fig. 1.

Examples for the use of representative polearms at courtly banquettes

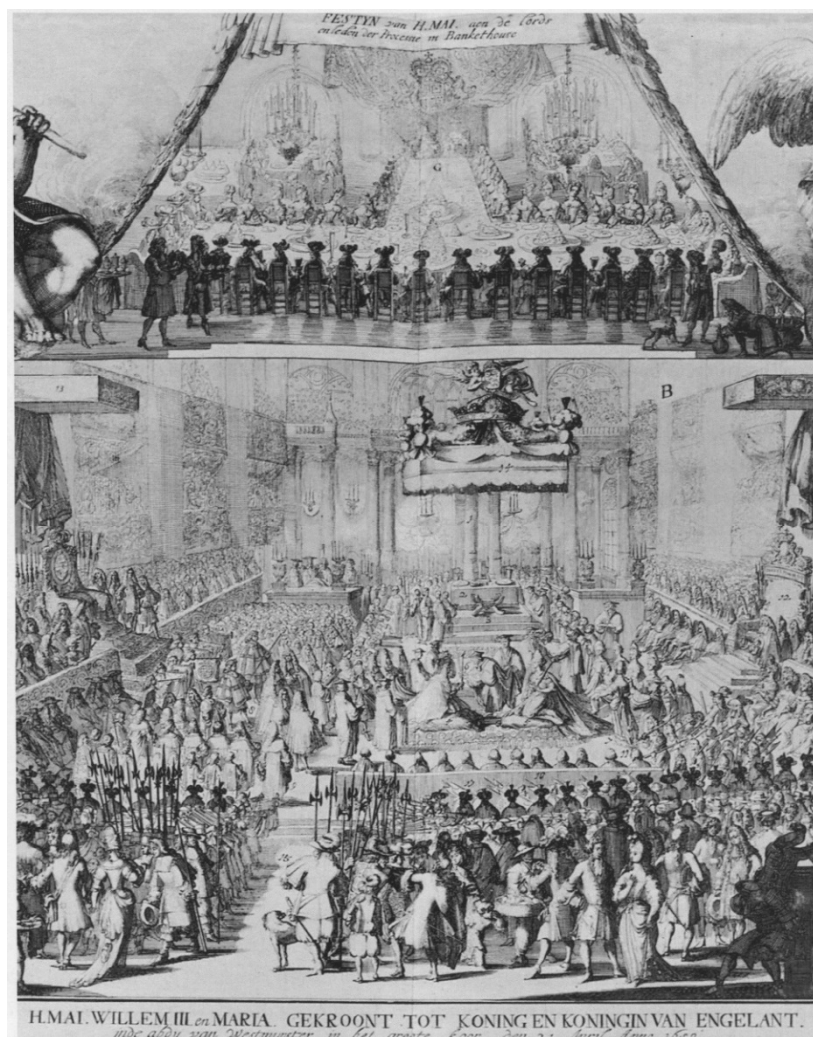


Fig. 2.

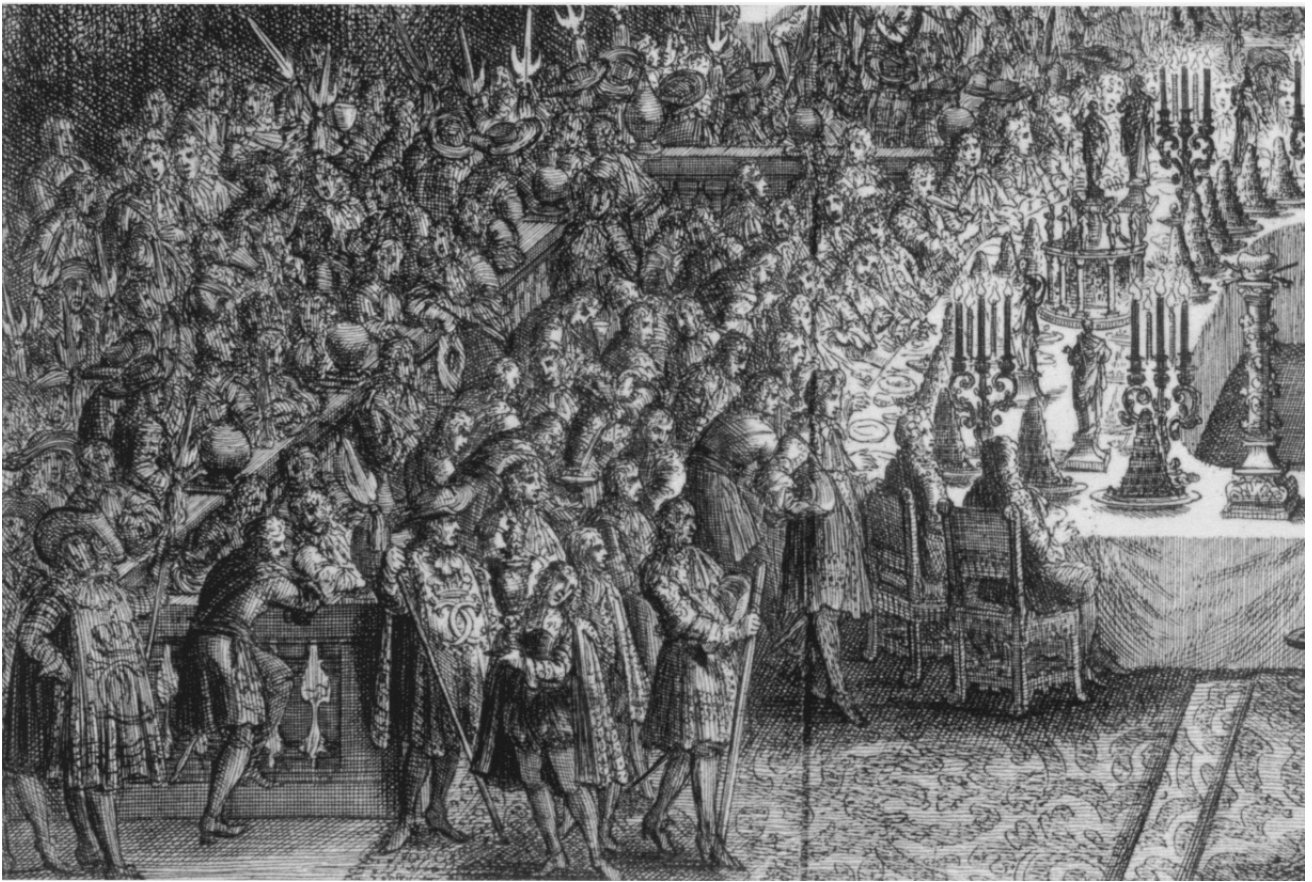


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

References

Diener-Schönberg, Alfons. *Die Waffen der Wartburg: Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Waffen-Sammlung S.K.H. des Grossherzogs Wilhelm Ernst von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach*. Berlin: Historischer Verlag Baumgärtel, 1912. pp. 121–122, no. 475, pl. 62 (a similar partisan).

Haenel, Erich. *Kostbare Waffen aus der Dresdner Rüstkammer*. Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1923. p. 142, pl. 70, fig. b (a similar partisan).

Grosz, August, and Bruno Thomas. *Katalog der Waffensammlung in der Neuen Burg: Schausammlung*. Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1936. p. 151, no. 34.12/13 (similar partisans).

Schneider, Hugo. "Eine Partisane aus der sächsischen Schweizergarde." *Jahresbericht / Schweizerisches Landesmuseum* (1944), pp. 70–78, ill. (a similar partisan).

Kienbusch, Carl Otto von. *The Kretzschmar von Kienbusch Collection of Armor and Arms*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Library, 1963. p. 256, pl. CXXVII (a similar partisan).

Müller, H., Kölling, H.: *Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen*, Berlin 1990.

Seitz, Heribert. *Blankwaffen: Geschichte Und Typenentwicklung Im Europäischen Kulturbereich: Ein Waffenhistorisches Handbuch*. Vol. II. Brunswick: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1967. p. 218, fig. 227 (two similar partisans).

Thomas, Bruno, and Ortwin Gamber. "Die Polonica der Wiener Waffensammlung." *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 67, no. 224 pp. 96–98, no. 25, fig. 90 (three similar partisans in Vienna).

Nickel, Helmut. "Unter den Gekreuzten Schweren. Bemerkungen zu den Blankwaffen der Kursächsischen Schweizergarde zu Dresden, 1656–1814." In *Blankwaffen: Festschrift Hugo Schneider zu Seinem 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Karl Stüber, and Hans Wetter. Zürich: T. Gut, 1982. pp. 178–79, 184, fig. 24.

Figures

1. Assassination of Wallenstein in Eger with a partizan, 1634. Merian, M. (1639): *Theatrum Europaeum*, 1. Edition, vol. 3, pl. 7.
2. Coronation banquet of William III. in London, 1689.
3. Accession to power of Karl XI. of Sweden in Stockholm, 1672.
4. Public feast by Ferdinand I. at the Hofburg of Vienna on the occasion of a tournament in 1560.
5. Knightly feast of the Fraternity of the Holy Spirit in Fontainebleau, 1633.



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