

HALBERD

For a member of the *Trabantenleibgarde* of Duke Johann Georg I. of Saxony as administrator of the bishopric of Merseburg, dated 1609.

Overall length: 231,5 cm.

Head, measured to beginning of the upper tassel: 72,5 cm.

Maximum width: 28 cm.

A long spike, at the base of flattened hollow diamond section, becomes square sectioned while tapering towards the point. Near the center the edges swing out into several cusps and flukes that serve purely ornamental purposes. Typical for 17th century halberds the blade of the present example is relatively small, so this weapon was mainly used for thrusting instead of delivering blows with the axe. Accordingly the beak on the back side is shaped more like a down pointed hook, which would not have a significant impact against plate armour. Instead this feature would have been used to pull an enemy off his saddle.

The blade on the other side shows decorative cusps and a concave winding outline near the base, two times on the upper and one on the underside, which reflects the shape of the spike's edge on the opposite. Towards the outer points it is widening with straight contours. The edge is concave.

Both sides of the head are etched with polished foliate strapwork on a blackened ground in the center and parts of the spike. The axe shows cartouches with the ducal coat of arms, on one side those of Saxony, on the other the cross of Merseburg.



Below both crests there is the dating 1609, above you can find the inscription SVMC (Scopus Vitae Mihi Christus, *My life's goal is Christ*), which is the device of Johann Georg. Another abbreviation can be found on the beak: HGHZS, meaning Johann (Hans) Georg Herzog zu Sachsen. In 1609 Johann was still duke and administrator of the bishopric of Merseburg. He became prince elector in 1611 and ruled until 1656.

The socket is covered by a tassel made of silk velvet and fixed by nails. Below four langets reach down and serve to attach the head firmly to the haft. They enclose remains of a textile. Two additional passaments of the same type follow in the middle of the langets and at their end. Below the haft is bound with criss-crossed leather thongs for its entire length, secured by nails.

Comparable Examples

Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Inv. No. W73.¹

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Acc. No. 14.25.294.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1977-167-373.²

Condition

It is very positive that the three tassels of silk have survived the centuries, which are lost at the example in New York. However the fringes which would have been attached to these have decayed as well as the textile covering of the upper part of the haft where the langets are nailed to it. Still the criss-cross leathering is preserved with the exception of minor damages. There is some corrosion on the head and wear to the etchings. The wooden haft is the original one but shortened.

The present halberd is offered in unrestored condition. We might arrange a professional restoration if desired.







S.V.M.C.



1609

H.G.H.Z.S.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Notes

- 1) Müller, H., Kölling, H. (1990): Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen, No. 255, p. 255 and 392.
- 2) Kienbusch, C. O. v. (1963): The Kretzschmar von Kienbusch Collection, No. 573, p. 252 and pl. CXXVI.

Figures

- 1) Trabanten equipped with halberds on their way to guard a tournament on foot in 1614.
- 2) Elector Johann Georg I. of Saxony with his second wife Magdalena Sibylla.





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