









## HUNTING SWORD

dated 1662, made for an important hunt on the occasion of the wedding of Erdmuthe Sophie of Saxony, the daughter of Elector Johann Georg II.

Length,

overall, inserted in sheath: 99 cm (38.98 in.),

blade: 79 cm (31.10 in.),

knives: 19 cm (7.48 in.), 17,2 cm (6.77 in.), 15,7 cm (6.18 in.),

sheath: 86,7 cm (34.13 in.).

*Bright tapering blade double-edged at the point and cut with a narrow fuller along the back over most of its length on one side. Two cross marks on the outer side, three on the reverse. Hilt with original blueing. Steel grip incised with foliage and cusped along the back. Natural staghorn grips secured by four dome-headed fluted steel bosses on the outside. Original wood-lined black leather scabbard with blued steel locket pierced with the date 1662 and chape, each embossed and chased with foliage. Three pockets for two by-knives and a combined bodkin, rasp and file.*

*One knife struck with the crossed swords of the Archmarshalship of the Holy Roman Empire and three small cross marks<sup>1</sup>, the second blade with three unknown marks. Four half-moon marks on the back side of the locket.*

The present hunting sword formed part of a garniture. It was carried together with a hunting trousse, decorated *en suite*.<sup>2</sup> While the sword bears the dating

---

<sup>1</sup> There is a rapier with a knife in the SKD with the identical mark. Ehrenthal, M. (1899): Führer durch das Königliche Historische Museum, No. 707 a,b.

<sup>2</sup> Dufty, A. R. (1974): European Swords and Daggers in the Tower of London, p.26, No.57, pl. 57.



*Fig. 1*

of the marriage of Erdmuthe Sophie of Saxony, the corresponding trousse shows the initials of her father, who was hosting the extraordinary splendid wedding: HGHZSGCVBC Hans (Johann) Georg Herzog zu Sachsen GÜlich (Jülich) Cleve und Berg Churfürst.

The figure on the left shows how such a garniture was worn, usually the trousse on the right and the sword on the left side. A very similar trousse to the one of the present saxon garniture can be observed on the right of the hunter in front. He points with a finger on a stag outside the image section. Behind him the man on horseback has unsheathed his sword and seeks to deliver a thrust to the animal.

Troussets like those under discussion were handled like a butcher knife. They served not only for gralloching but, probably more important, for cutting off the trophy of an animal. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century this was the hoof of a stag and not the antlers like in our days.

### **Provenance**

Thirty garnitures were originally manufactured for the wedding in 1662. Even back in 1821 all of

them still existed in the hunting room of the Saxon Electoral Armory. The last inventory of this room from 1838 mentions 21 swords and 19 troussees. It is known that between 1917 and 1923 seven swords were auctioned (Many thanks to Viktoria Pisareva for her friendly information). Today 14 hunting swords are recorded by the *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden*.

### **Comparative Pieces outside the SKD:**

I. Royal Armouries, former Collection of the Tower of London.<sup>3</sup> This garniture was sold by the authorities of the GDR through the auction house Sotheby & Co. in 1970.

II. The Kretzschmar von Kienbusch Collection.<sup>4</sup> In the publication of this collection from 1963 there is a complete garniture of sword and trousse. After the collection was bequeathed to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1977, there is only the trousse that can be found in the museum today. So the sword must have left the collection by sell, exchange or as a gift between these years. It is very well possible that our example is exactly this piece, but this question can not be clarified to the full extent.

### **Condition**

During the centuries the inventories of the Saxon Electoral Armory was taken care for in a very conscientious manner. These fortunate circumstances led to

---

<sup>3</sup> Dufty, A. R. (1974): *European Swords and Daggers in the Tower of London*, p.26, No.57, pl. 57; Blackmore, H. L. (1971): *Hunting Weapons*, p. 60, fig. 10; Auction Catalogue Sotheby & Co, March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1970: *Highly Important Arms from the Saxon Royal Collections*, Lot 26.

<sup>4</sup> Kienbusch, C. (1963): *The Kretzschmar von Kienbusch Collection of Armor and Arms*, No. 440, pl. CXII.

the extraordinary condition of many items, like our sword, which is in near mint condition. The blade has apart from smaller areas never suffered corrosion and looks as being manufactured only very recently. On the hilt you can observe the original blueing and last but not least, the leather scabbard with its mounts (original blueing) does still exist and has never been restored, which is truly outstanding after more than 350 years. There is a crack to the wooden core of the scabbard at the upper end of the chape and some minor surface losses to the leather. We might arrange some conservational measures of highest museal standards for our prospective client. The blades of the knives have been cleaned a little bit, one blade shows a minor crack as you can observe on the images.

### **Background**

During antiquity the most popular hunting weapons were the bow and spear that could keep the animals at a distance. However for the personal protection the hunter often carried an additional sword. This weapon was not specifically designed for hunting but actually the same that would have served in combat situations. Until medieval times this principle had not changed so much. During the thirteenth century blades adapted to the improvements in the design of plate armor and were intended more for thrusting than cutting. Forged with a flattened diamond or hexagonal section swords like these were also used for hunting.

Soon people started to use a version of this with a longer blade, the great hunting sword. On horseback the hunter tried to thrust it into an animal, mostly when it was attacked by his dogs, sometimes as a trial of courage, without this support. Notwithstanding its length of about 120 cm this



procedure still was a very dangerous undertaking, since a boar hardly was killed by a single hit on the grounds of its doggedness and the comparatively small wound. The ferocious animal could also easily get into striking distance and hurt horse or rider. Hence hunting a boar that was not held by mastiffs in this manner was seen as a very noble and chivalrous fashion.



*Fig. 2*

By the end of the fifteenth century a well-defined class of riding sword had developed which was used in the hunt. The most splendid example of this type is the sword of Maximilian I at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (No. D11), comprising of a double edged blade straight quillons and a large grip allowing to handle it with two hands. Other swords of this group have single-edged blades of triangular section, suited for cutting and thrusting. The hilt shows quillons, occasionally a forefinger and thumb guard, one side-ring and an arm of the hilt, the pommels being of fish-tail form.

In the sixteenth century swords of one and a half hand were very common. Usually a group of dogs tried to chase and corner a stag, boar or bear while the hunters followed on horseback and sought to thrust with their sword. However, a huntsman with a stout spear usually delivered the final blow, at least when it came to a boar or bear, since using a sword would have been very dangerous as mentioned above. The painting by Lukas Cranach from 1544 below shows a hunting scene at Torgau castle in Saxony illustrating this very well.



Fig. 3

*In the upper left corner a hunter on horseback is attacking a boar from behind with his hunting sword. Left of the latter an injured or dead huntsman lies on the ground, his sword next to him. The scene in the front shows a boar which has killed several dogs and overwhelmed a hunter lying beneath it, holding his boar spear in its jaws. Two other men approach in order to help, while three dogs lock their jaws in this ferocious animal. They are also equipped with the boar spear, a weapon that has a crossbar just below the blade keeping the wounded animal at a healthy distance.*

*The second scene below on the same painting illustrates very well the use of the sword for one and a half hand. During the chase it is held in one hand while at the moment of thrusting the hunter uses the second hand at the end of the grip to increase the power of impact.*



*Fig. 4*

The hunting scenes on the Cranach painting of 1544 would probably have occurred very similarly in 1662 when a very gorgeous hunt formed part of the marriage events in honour of Erdmuthé Sophie of Saxony (1644-1670), daughter of Elector Johann Georg II, and her husband Christian Ernst of Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1644-1712). Cranach still being alive and painting, it would have been our sword depicted on his painting. Of course during these 118 years the fashion

of clothing had changed like the design and decoration of hunting arms, which was always influenced by contemporary arms for field use.<sup>5</sup>

### Figures

1. Le Livre du Roy Modus (1486), Huntsman using thrusting sword.
2. Engraving by Joseph Anton Zimmerman (1705 – 96) after designs by Peter Candito (1548-1628) for the tapestries of the Twelve Months by Hans van der Biest (1604-15), now in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.
3. Scene from a painting of Cranach the elder (1544): Hunt at the Castle of Torgau in Honor of Charles V.
4. Scene from a painting of Cranach the elder (1544): Hunt at the Castle of Torgau in Honor of Charles V.

---

<sup>5</sup> Blackmore, H. L. (1971): Hunting Weapons, pp. 1 - 7.



Richard-Wagner-Str. 17 · 28209 Bremen · Germany  
T+49 (0)421 4093 6994 · [info@lennartviebahn.com](mailto:info@lennartviebahn.com)  
[www.lennartviebahn.com](http://www.lennartviebahn.com)