

SWORD

Netherlandish/Swedish type,
circa 1620-1640, designed for an officer.

Overall Length: 104,5 cm.

Blade Length: 87,5 cm.

Weight: 1,16 kg.

Engraved Inscriptions on the blade, outer side:

SOLI DEO GLORIA (Glory to God alone. A typical phrase of the Christian reformists in the early modern age.).

GLORIA VIRTUTEM [SEQUITUR?] (Glory follows Virtue).

VINCERE AUT MORI. (Win or die).

Engraved Inscriptions, inner side, partly faded:

[...]ABIS [...]L]OCIS

[...] SUPERSTES

FIDE SED CUI VIDE (Trust, but be careful whom).

Blade of hollow diamond section, tapering to an acute point. S-curved flattened crossguard, nearly heart-shaped pommel and outer side ring of hollow diamond section with floral engravings. Shell, outer side, thumb ring, inner side.

Its nearly heart-shaped pommel and the s-curved crossguard with flattened ends immediately identify the present sword as the so-called



Netherlandish Swedish type, dating from circa 1620 to 1640.¹ Also the thumb ring is considered as a feature typical for northern Europe.² The presence of detailed engravings on the blade and the hilt suggest that it was designed for an officer. This assumption is also supported by traces of silvering at the grossguard. Presumably, the complete hilt was once silvered, which must have contributed to an impressive appearance of this sword, underlining the rank of its owner.³



In about 1620 there were intense trading relations between Sweden and Netherlands. Large numbers of similar swords had been imported by Sweden from there in order to supply their troops for the campaigns against Denmark, Poland-Lituania and, from 1630 on, the thirty years war against the Holy Roman Empire. Generally, these were equipped with blades from Solingen in Germany.

Today there are comparative examples preserved in old Swedish armouries, like the Brahe-Bielke at Skokloster castle. Other pieces have survived the centuries in churches or have been recovered from graves, for example Yttergram, Uppland, now in the Livrustkammaren Stockholm.⁴

¹ Seitz, H. (1965): Blankwaffen II, pp. 36-42.

² Norman, A. V. B. (1980): The Rapier and Small-Sword, 1460–1820, pp. 149-150.

³ Comparative Example: Livrustkammaren, Stockholm, Inv. No. 5084_LRK, ex Oxenstierna Armoury, Tidö Castle. <https://samlingar.shm.se/object/D2A89FE2-5ACE-4CAF-B023-24EF28A572D1>.

⁴ Seitz, H. (1965): Blankwaffen II, pp. 36-42.



Wallhausen.⁵

The design of the present sword clearly suggests that it was not to be used in a civilian context, but intended for the battle field, as a secondary weapon. Every unit back in the early seventeenth century carried some kind of sword as an additional side arm. However, the blade of the present piece is particularly useful for fighting armoured enemies on horseback. The blade's hollow diamond section ensures a high rigidity, being light at the same time. So, it is the optimal choice for delivering heavy thrusts riding on horseback, the energy being concentrated in its acute point. Like a can-opener the sword could penetrate plate armour at the weaker plates or the gaps between them.

Back in 1616 Johann Jacob von Wallhausen published an elaborate work for the training of cavalry soldiers, encompassing numerous plates. It was fundamental for drilling them in the use of various weapons and techniques. Wallhausen's book became an important source for military leaders all over Europe, especially for the upcoming thirty years war (1618 – 1648).

⁵ Wallhausen, J. (1616): *Kriegskunst zu Pferd*, part 1, chap. I, fig. 8, no. 3.

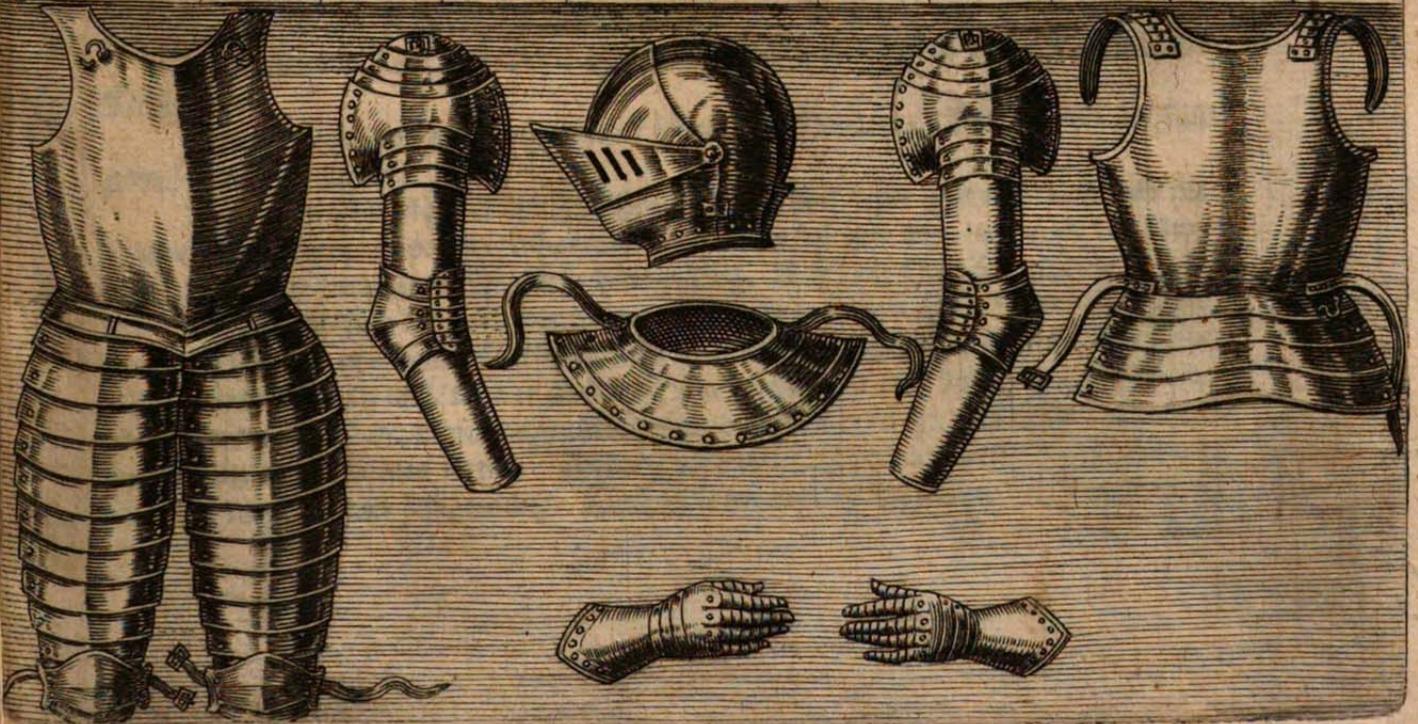
The figure above shows the attack with a sword similar to our present example. The heavily armoured riders typically carried two wheellock pistols in holsters attached to the horse, which they fired first at the enemy.⁶ If possible, they retreated in order to reload. However, this process was time consuming and complicated, so in a combat situation often impossible. When it could not be avoided, cavalry combatants drew their swords instead and continued the fight.



Ibidem, no. 4.

⁶ For the typical equipment see the following two pages, taken from Wallhausen, J. (1616): *Kriegskunst zu Pferd*, part 1, chap. 2, fig. 9 and 10.

Fig: 9.
Par: I.
Cap: 2.





Excursus: The Thirty Years War

was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history, lasting from 1618 to 1648. Fought primarily in Central Europe, an estimated 4.5 to 8 million soldiers and civilians died as a result of battle, famine, and disease, while some areas of modern Germany experienced population declines of over 50%.

The war was traditionally viewed as a continuation of the religious conflict initiated by the 16th-century Reformation within the Holy Roman Empire. The 1555 Peace of Augsburg attempted to resolve this by dividing the Empire into Lutheran and Catholic states, but over the next 50 years the expansion of Protestantism beyond these boundaries destabilised the settlement. However, while modern commentators accept differences over religion and Imperial authority were important factors in causing the war, they argue its scope and extent were driven by the contest for European dominance between Habsburg-ruled Spain and Austria, and the French House of Bourbon.

Its outbreak is generally traced to 1618,[when Emperor Ferdinand II was deposed as king of Bohemia and replaced by the Protestant Frederick V of the Palatinate. Although Imperial forces quickly suppressed the Bohemian Revolt, his participation expanded the fighting into the Palatinate, whose strategic importance drew in the Dutch Republic and Spain, then engaged in the Eighty Years' War. Rulers like Christian IV of Denmark and Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden also held territories within the Empire, giving them and other foreign powers an excuse to intervene. The result was to turn an internal dynastic dispute into a broader European conflict.

The first phase from 1618 until 1635 was primarily a civil war between German members of the Holy Roman Empire, with support from external powers. After 1635, the Empire became one theatre in a wider struggle between France, supported by Sweden, and Emperor Ferdinand III, allied with Spain. This concluded with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, whose provisions included greater autonomy within the Empire for states like Bavaria and Saxony, as well as acceptance of Dutch independence by Spain. The conflict shifted the balance of power in favour of France, and set the stage for the expansionist wars of Louis XIV which dominated Europe for the next sixty years.¹



Soldiers plundering a farm.²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War#cite_note-FOOTNOTEParker1997189-31 [January 2024.]

² Sebastiaen Vrancx, Soldiers plundering a farm, circa 1620.



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