Early 16th c German Men's Paltrock

Date: Imperial War West, Sept. 2002

By Dame Juliana Hirsch, Mundanely Julia Adams - Knights List

Subdivision: The Archduchy of Brandenburg

Period/Date: 1515 - 1530   **Country of origin/Style:** Germany

Description of entry: This is German Men's Cavalry coat from about 1520, called in German a "Paltrock" or "Ritterrock". Modern costume historians also call it a "Waffenrock", particularly when it is a military garment. This is a civilian garment, because it is not padded. It has a crossover opening with an organ pipe pleated skirt and bell oversleeves. It is made from a rich brocade with velvet bands. Decorative knots of cord with aiglet tips hold the panes of the oversleeves together. Assymetrical undersleeves tie to the inside which are typical in men's clothing of the era.

It is different from the previous Masterwork received for a Waffenrock because it has different doublet pattern (crosses over and closes at the front side, rather than straight down the front), different style under and over sleeves, and a different pattern of decorative banding.

I chose materials that would replicate a period garment as much as possible. The style of crossing over in the front was based on the painting by Barthel Beham and some others that indicate a front side opening was used. The cross over is a style seen in several period paintings, and since no clear closure is seen in most woodcuts, it seemed likely that this was a popular cut. In many of the depictions of the rock, the opening is not clear, though in some cases it is definitely not the center front. I chose to try the side front overlap in this paltrock to make the closure less obvious.

I chose the square necked and longer skirt style shown predominantly in the Triumph of Maximillian, created from approximately 1515 to 1520. Several of the "rock"s in the Triumph also show the belled oversleeves with the heavily slashed undersleeves.

The organ pipe pleating shown in some extant English bases that are diagrammed in Blanche Payne's History of Costume. This technique was expanded to replicate the German examples from the same period to make it look like the woodcuts shown below. More details are described in Attachments 1 - 3.

Materials used:

Coat:

Period Materials	Substitution	Reason
Silk Brocade - Coat body	Cotton/Poly Brocade	Silk Brocade not available in period patterns
Linen Lining	None - used Linen Linings	
Linen or Silk Thread	Polyester Thread for some portions, used Linen thread for tacking tapes down.	Availability in the right colors on short notice. Linen thread doesn't machine sew well.
Silk Velvet	Cotton Velvet	Modern Silk Velvets are not pure Silk and do not have the same richness of pile. The cotton velvet makes a better visual substitute.
Silk Cord	Polyester Cord	Not available
Brass Colored metal	None.	Cheap metals were used in period for decorative

Period Materials	Substitution	Reason
Aiglets		findings.
Handmade Metal hooks and eyes	Commercial Hooks and Eyes	Metal hooks and eyes of this design were used in period.
Linen Ties	Cotton Ties	Linen Tape in this color and width not available.
Linen Tapes	None	
Gum Arabic or Wax	Fraycheck	Not Readily available. No appreciable differences in look or function. No danger in use or flammability after application.

Undersleeves:

Period Materials	Substitution	Reason
Wool outer fabric	None	
Silk Cord	Polyester Cord	Not available
Brass Colored metal Aiglets	None.	Cheap metals were used in period for decorative findings.
Linen Lining	None - used Linen Linings	
Linen or Silk Thread	Polyester Thread for some portions, used Linen thread for tacking tapes down.	Availability in the right colors on short notice. Linen thread doesn't machine sew well.
Linen Ties	Cotton Ties	Linen Tape in this color and width not available.

Processes/Techniques used:

Coat:

Period Technique	Substitution/Modern Technique	Reason
Drafted Pattern	None.	
Handsewn Seams	Machine Sewn Seams	Speed, convenience, no appreciable visible difference
Tape D ring Attachment	Hand Tacked Tapes down with Linen Thread	Small welded closed D rings not available
Handsewn attachment of Skirt	None.	
Handsewn application of velvet Banding	Used blind hem stitch to simulate hand stitching and avoid the obvious look of machine top stitching.	Speed and appearance.

Period Technique	Substitution/Modern Technique	Reason
Knotted decorations	None.	
Handsewn tapes and ties	None.	
Internal finishing/lining	Bag Lining, machine sewn lengthwise pleat markers	Period linings were often a mix of what we think of as flat lining and bag lining. I used modern lining techniques coupled with hand finishing the edges to simulate a period construction. The Bag lining with handsewn edges simulates the look of period internal finishing.

Undersleeves:

Period Technique	Substitution/Modern Technique	Reason
Slashing	None.	Period slashing did not have finished edges for this type of garment. It is correct to have some small raveling at the slashes.
Application of Cording	Machine sewn	Not visible.
Application of knotted decoration	None.	
Handsewn Seams	Machine Sewn Seams	Speed, convenience, no appreciable visible difference

Lessons Learned:

I might have used a slightly heavier linen lining. This was somewhat fragile, especially when turning corners and it had a tendency to stretch and not lay flat with the outer fabric, especially on the skirt where the bias made a difference. I chose it because I didn't want to add weight to the garment, which was heavy enough already. The inside of the skirt ended up not as "neat" as I prefer, though it is perfectly functional.

References/Sources:

See references and pictures for the Waffenrock from Attachment 1: Waffenrock

See references and pictures for the sleeves from Attachment 2: Doublet and Sleeves

See references and pictures for the organ pipe pleating and waffenrock in attachment 3: Organ Pipe Pleating article.

All the above were written by myself.

Additional Notes:

See attachment 1 for original MW entry documentation.

Complexity

This is a highly advanced costuming project with a very high degree of difficulty. It took approximately 3 months of evenings and a number of full days to complete, probably 200 hours.

Rock - Main Coat: The coat has 6 costume primary pattern pieces and 6 banding pattern pieces.

Primary Pattern pieces: skirt, waistband, back, left side front, right side front and oversleeve.

Banding: Skirt, oversleeve, left under band, left over band, top front band, right band

The pattern was hand drafted from scratch.

Special complexity additions - Instead of top stitching to hold lining down, the lining was all handstitched inside the edge.

The tapes were hand tacked in place.

The oversleeve decorations were hand made.

The organ pipe pleating is an especially complicated pleating technique. To find out the exact pattern, I had to use basic geometry. First I had to find the radius of the diameter of the skirt at the waist. This meant finding the dimensions described in the Organ Pipe Pleating article. Then I determined the length of the skirt. By adding the radius of the waist and the length of the skirt, I figured out the radius of the skirt and the total circle. From that I could determine how many pleats, how wide they were at the bottom and how wide they were at the top.

Brocade pattern is symmetrically matched.

Undersleeves: These were entered once before under the old judging system and are added as part of the composite piece.

Complexity: The sleeves were made of 5 different pattern pieces - cuff, uppersleeve left, uppersleeve right, armsceye band

The patterns were hand drafted from scratch accounting for puffing and slashing.

The slashing patterns for each sleeve were hand done.

The trim and tie decorations were hand done.

A great deal of time had to be spend tying down the inside of the multiple row puffed sleeve so that it would hang properly.
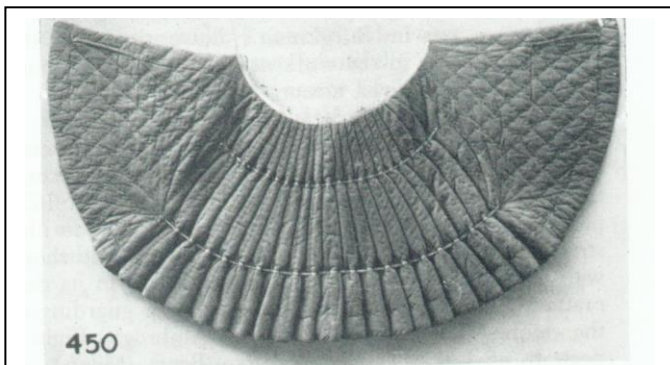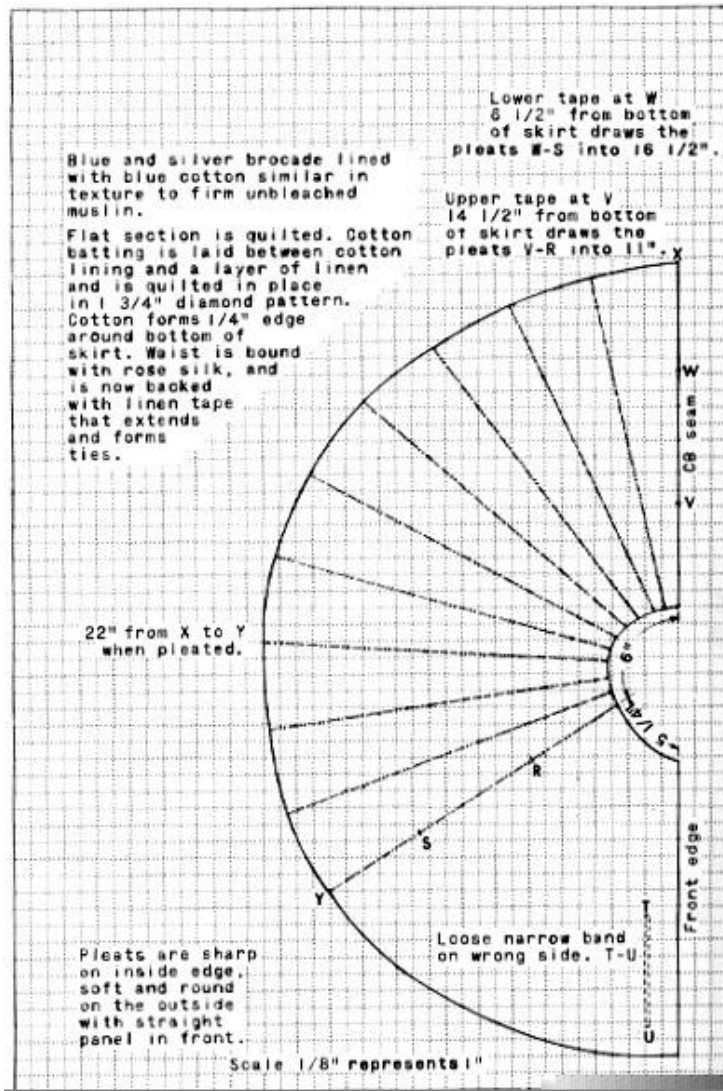

These are the backside of some extant period bases. In these the pleats are held by D rings, but sewn tightly. The above is a quilted military version of an organ pipe pleated skirt. These are from the 16th c.

This picture shows a man in a paltrock with a right side front opening. It is by Barthel Beham painted in 1529

Triumph of Maximillian: Single band, belled sleeves with knotted strips, fancy undersleeves   Brocade Rock

Blue and silver brocade lined
with blue cotton similar in
texture to firm unbleached
muslin.

Flat section is quilted. Cotton
batting is laid between cotton
lining and a layer of linen
and is quilted in place
in 1 3/4" diamond pattern.
Cotton forms 1/4" edge
around bottom of
skirt. Waist is bound
with rose silk, and
is now backed
with linen tape
that extends
and forms
ties.

Lower tape at W
6 1/2" from bottom
of skirt draws the
pleats W-S into 16 1/2".

Upper tape at V
14 1/2" from bottom
of skirt draws the
pleats V-R into 11". x

22" from X to Y
when pleated.

Pleats are sharp
on inside edge,
soft and round
on the outside
with straight
panel in front.

Loose narrow band
on wrong side. T-U

Scale 1/8" represents 1"

This diagram is from History of Costume by Blanche Payne, first edition, it is patterned from extant bases.

Not the best picture of the entry, but this is Sir Arion wearing the Waffenrock.