THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF COSTUME AND ARMOR

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During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the dress was much more an aesthetic matter than it is today, and the designing of clothes occupied the attention of leading artists. Another difference from modern custom is that men, not women, were the innovators of fashion. It is with the styles and adornment of clothes and armor that this article is mainly concerned—a subject with so many facets that one can only touch lightly on it in the Bulletin.

Armor was a development of dress. Armor and costume were always worn together, and it was inevitable that their forms and ornamentation should influence each other. This close relationship is presented convincingly and effectively in one section of the current exhibition Adam in the Looking Glass, in the Costume Institute, where there has been assembled an extraordinary collection of rare costumes, armor, and illustrated documents which show how features of material, style, and ornamentation passed from one to the other.

One sees that the coifed hauberk of the twelfth century was the woolen dress of the period translated into mail. In the beginning of the thirteenth century the hauberk of mail was made with continuous coif and gloves and reached nearly to the knees. As an additional protection, the gambeson, a quilted garment stuffed with cotton or other material, was worn under the mail; for the infantry and some horsemen it was the sole defense. From about the beginning of the thirteenth century a surcoat bearing heraldic arms was usually worn over the mail, a practice corresponding with the use of heraldry.

Above: Arming points from the emblem of the Cracow glovemaker's guild. Polish, 1505

This garment not only identified the wearer but was also in a sense a defense, for the insignia indicated the ransom which the knight could afford to pay for his life. When the knight's mail was removed a loose robe of cloth, the tunic, generally of wool, was worn. This robe, originally a sleeveless garment which was the chief article of clothing, was a survival from early times.

Not only were textiles used with the knight's armor; they also formed a colorful part of the horse equipment. This is illustrated in a rare document for the study of early military equipment, a small stone bas-relief of a Spanish chevalier in this Museum, which was formerly believed to come from the royal monastery at Poblet and which was evidently once painted. Here one can see the housings, or trappings, which pass over the horse's head and hang nearly to the hoofs. The knight is fully clad in banded mail, his hauberk extending down the thighs half way to the knees, and the legs and feet are encased in mail chausses. Over the mail is a surcoat, close-fitting but slashed at the skirts for the saddle. The modeling clearly shows that a heavily padded garment was present underneath the mail.

A striking feature of costume during the early centuries of the Middle Ages was the similarity in cut of the garments of men and women. This similarity disappeared in the fourteenth century, a period which saw the gradual transition in armor from mail to a complete defense of plate. The development of plate armor caused great changes in men's dress. As first the lower legs and then the thighs were encased in plate, the surcoat was shortened. (Particularly foppish knights used to have the long surcoats dagged, a piece of vanity which cost the English knight Sir John Chandos his life, for he stumbled over the points, fell, and
Relief showing the colorful surcoat and trappings of cloth used with armor in the thirteenth century in the equipment of the knight and his horse. In the Metropolitan Museum
Armor from Chalcis, showing a decorative fabric covering riveted to the plates. Italian, about 1400. In the Metropolitan Museum

was slain before he could recover his footing.) Since plate armor afforded effective protection only when its elements fitted accurately, it was essential that the costume worn beneath it be tight-fitting. For this reason the tunic was ultimately eliminated as the daily dress of men, and two garments, the doublet and trunk hose, took its place. Originally the doublet was drawn on over the head, but later it fitted so closely that it was buttoned down the front. A belt was worn with the doublet, not round the waist, but loosely over the hips, and to it were attached a purse and dagger. With the complete development of plate armor the cuirass acted as a corset and emphasized the waistline. Once men had been dressed as tight as possible it was recognized that only a minimum number had figures that conformed to the ideal; fashion therefore proceeded to emphasize breadth of shoulders along with slimness of waist in dress and periodically has continued to do so ever since. It is said that Frederick I, Count Palatine, ordered the extravagant Burgundian dress to be worn by his court fools to make it unpopular with his courtiers. However, the shoulder padding which characterized this style was not entirely due to foppery but arose from a practical need for the doublet to act as a cushion for the armor.

The military costume of the fourteenth century offers the most striking and brilliant combinations of materials, and the mail, plate, embossed leather accessories, and rich heraldic decoration show great variety of form and color, the taste for bright colors in dress influencing the use of color in armor. Everyone recalls references in the old romances to the colorful knightly equipment; Sir Gawain’s opponent, for example, “was clothed entirely in green.” At important tournaments knights and their attendants graced the scene with an endless wardrobe of costumes and horse trappings of brocade and embroidery embellished with jewels, gold fringe, and plumes. Part of a horse trapping of about 1337, in the Cluny Museum in Paris, is embroidered in gold with the leopards of England against a background of red velvet covered with delicate sprays of foliage with knights and ladies playing among them. No doubt this trapping matched the knight’s surcoat. Although there are no jeweled helmets extant, we know from contemporary documents that in their day they were plentiful.
Linen and other fabrics were used extensively for soft armor. As few such defenses have survived, their widespread use is not generally appreciated. Textiles were also used as decorative coverings for armor. Covering armor with fabric was practiced only by the Linen Armormers, who were also tailors. In Paris the tailleurs (cutters) were distinguished from the couturiers (sewers). In 1296 the Paris Tailors' Guild split up into pourpointiers and doubletiers, the first of whom produced the common articles of apparel while the others made only the quilted doublets worn with armor. Fourteenth-century armormers were designated armuriers-brodeurs, as the steel plates and the applied embroidered coverings they made formed an integral item, not two separate items, armor and dress. In 1322 the Armourers' Company of London had a regulation that no armorer should attempt to sell basinetts covered with fabric, but should show them uncovered, so that the workmanship might be seen and approved.

Surviving examples of fourteenth-century armor are very rare. Among these is the earliest extant homogeneous half-armor, of Milanese workmanship, dating about 1390, in the Churburg Castle in the Tyrol. The central element of a backplate from Chalcis, dating from about 1400, is in the Metropolitan Museum. This piece still retains its original linen damask covering. The earliest armor (composite) in the Museum, also made about 1400, is from the same source. It has a fine globose brigandine with deep skirt, built of large, shaped plates. The red velvet with which it is covered is a restoration, but the rivets which hold the covering in place are original. Of the same period is a breastplate with skirt, in the Bavarian National Museum at Munich, entirely covered with red velvet secured by golden studs.

The few existing examples of early armor are supplemented by contemporary documents. These frequently present a brilliant contrast between the sword belts, which were often studded with gems or enriched with enamel, and the colored or mirrorlike armor. A painting of Saint Michael and the Dragon, by an unknown Valencian artist of the early fifteenth century, and a tapestry representing the Arm-
portioned body of the medieval knight expresses his cult of slim beauty and hard physique, and his dress reflects the same ideal. Throughout the fifteenth century armor followed the excellent outlines of costume; it is therefore more shapely than that of any other period, and it is free from any grotesque ornament.

Great importance was attached to the perfect fit of a suit of armor, just as in clothes. In the armor of this period the anatomical knowledge and sculptural skill of the armorer is clearly evident. He used patterns similar to those used by tailors in order to see the shape of the various pieces in the flat and to get the true outline before beating the plates into final shape. When making a cuirass to measure, a pattern of the patron's doublet would be sent to the armorer. In January 1512 “Herzog Carl's hosen und jopfen” were sent to the court armorer Konrad Seusenhofer so that he could make an armor. In the accounts of the royal house of Spain in the time of Charles V there is an entry “for wax for making a model of His Majesty's legs, to be sent to Master Desiderius Colman for the armor he is engaged on.” The album or sketchbook of the Augsburg etcher Jörg Sorg, in the Stuttgart Library, is similar to a tailor’s pattern book.

At the end of the fifteenth century a change, corresponding to a change in civilian dress, took place in armor. Discarding slenderness and grace of outline, the new style sacrificed the lines of height for those of breadth and was ornamented with parallel or almost parallel rows of fluting. This fluting, which developed gradually from about 1425 and which is related to the pleating of the costume, was not without practical purpose; it not only presented a glancing surface to weapons, but gave increased strength and rigidity without extra weight. As the Emperor Maximilian I was actively interested in the making of fluted armor, this type was named after him in modern times.

The padded skirts worn by knights in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were imitated in armor. Many harnesses with steel skirts are still in existence, a famous one being the equestrian harness of Henry VIII in the Tower of

The Duke of Bourbon in combat. The horse trappings match the heraldic surcoat, and the helm, with a fleur-de-lys crest, is covered with a lambrequin, or scarf, bound on with an orle, or wreath. Detail from an illumination in the Tourney Book of René d'Anjou. French, 1460-1465. In the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
London. Military skirts are represented in the publications of the Emperor Maximilian I. In the Weisskunig the emperor is shown wearing a skirt of figured stuff the design of which is similar to that etched on a skirt of steel in the Museum. Maximilian is known to have had armor made with steel skirts of this type; since the Augsburg armorer Lorenz Colman worked for the emperor, and Burgkmair, who etched armor, was a neighbor of Colman’s, it may be that our skirt was etched in Burgkmair’s workshop.

The mutual influence of costume and armor is seen not only in line and form but also in decoration. The etched decoration of armor often imitated the designs woven into textiles; for the artists who decorated armor sometimes copied or adapted the designs of dress materials. One harness in the Museum has a tonneau which imitates in steel the cloth skirt of the civil dress. Not only is the heavy fluted pleating of the cloth skirt imitated, but the etched bands simulate a brocade pattern; the pile, gold threads, and loops of the bouclé weave are also represented. The portrait of Lucio Foppa by Ambrogio Figino in the Brera Palace, Milan, shows armor etched with the same motive that is embroidered on the trunk hose, and a similar etched motive appears on a helmet in the Museum. A half-suit in the Museum’s collection, dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, is closely etched with a design of tree and crescent in so formal and compact an arrangement as to suggest the pattern of a damask. This design was at one time believed to represent the repeated badge of the Strozzi family; in reality, it is only a stereotype motive, for it appears on other extant armor as well as in portraits, for instance, that of the Connétable de Lesdiguieres in the Museum of Grenoble. The armors of Francis II and Henry III, in the Musée d’Artillerie in Paris, are etched with repeat patterns which imitate the designs of textiles, and the armor of Charles IX, also in Paris, is embossed with inverted chevron ridges which suggest the stitching of the doublet.

During the first quarter of the sixteenth century armor was used more on ceremonial occasions than in battle, and into its construction and ornamentation were introduced features
Giovanni Francesco Aquaviva, Duke of Atri. His trunk hose and helmet, or burgonet, are studded with ornamental rivets that correspond to the structural rivets in his brigandine. His sleeves of finely woven mail, interlinked like the rings of a women's metal purse, were as flexible as sleeves of silk. This portrait, painted by Titian in 1552, is in the Picture Gallery, Cassel.
simulating the fantastic costume of the period which lessened its protective value. The eccentric dress it imitated is familiar to all of us from Burgkmair, Cranach, Dürer, and Holbein drawings showing puffings and slashings. The fashion of slashed decoration, which appeared about 1470, was invented to give freedom to the limbs. Thus, at first, only the close-fitting arms and knees were slashed, but gradually the entire costume became so ornamented. In 1523 Matthaus Schwarz had a fustian doublet made with, according to his own statement, 4800 slits, through each of which white velvet showed.

Extravagance in dress often centered on the sleeves. In this Museum, from the armory of Prince Radziwill, is an unusual pair of sleeves en suite with a backplate and its hougan (buttock defense). The sleeves simulate the wide puffed sleeves that were compressed to form a cushion when worn under armor. The slightly recessed ornament of the etched pattern represents the slashes which were introduced into contemporary costume in simulation of wounds, indicating the valor of the wearer. The slashed motive appeared also in women’s clothes. The costume usually followed the needs of the armorer, but in the case of these exaggerated sleeves the patron, in commissioning his armorer to imitate cloth sleeves in metal, was apparently indulging in a little popery. The design with which our backplate and sleeves are enriched appears in two woodcuts by David de Necker, one showing it on costume, the other on armor.

With the puffed and slashed dress was often worn a tailored cape of mail, known as a bishop’s mantle. It was usually fashioned of small links of riveted mail with collar and vandyked lower borders of latten rings, and it was worn either over or under the cuirass or over the costume without other armor. Over such capes was sometimes worn a cloth cape which followed the contour of the mail. Many of these mail capes are represented in the drawings, dated 1545, of Hans Döring, a Hessian artist.

Shields often had richly woven linings that matched the fabric of the knight’s costume. The shield which hangs above the tomb of Henry V in Westminster Abbey retains its figured silk damask lining. The shield of the Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol which will be exhibited here with the treasures from Vienna also has its original lining, which was worked by Catarina Leuca Cantona, a Milanese embroideress at the Tyrolean court.

How costume served as an accessory of armor is shown effectively in a portrait of Sir James Scudamore, whose armor, made about 1585, is in this Museum. The knight wears a lace collar; a broad sash over the breast- and backplates falls diagonally from the left shoulder, whence two streamers flow from the knot; and his fringed skirt is patterned with diagonal lines which are in harmony with the etched and gilded design on the armor. The embroidered sword belt from which the sword is suspended is a common accessory of both costume and armor of this period, swords having been part of the everyday costume of every gentleman from about 1525. A splendid German
A quilted jacket, or jack, reinforced with pieces of metal, bone, or leather was the typical defense of the infantryman for centuries. Such armored jackets were worn by archers, musketeers, and pikemen when plate armor was worn by their superiors. They were less costly than plate armor and far more comfortable to wear, as they allowed more ease of movement. An Elizabethan jack, in remarkable preservation and in form exactly like the contemporary cloth doublet, is exhibited in the Armor Hall. Quilted jackets are worn by soldiers today. Such jackets, either with or without sleeves, are also worn by women.

The brigandine (literally armor for brigands, or foot soldiers) was merely of more intricate construction than the humble jack and made of richer materials. It was what a dandy in armor regarded as the last word in comfort and fashion. The brigandine of the sixteenth century is a jacket of velvet or other rich material with an interlining of rows on rows of small plates, overlapping like roof shingles and riveted to the inner face of the jacket instead of to the lining. A fine Italian sixteenth-century brigandine covered with red velvet is exhibited in the Costume Institute. (Cosimo de' Medici used to say that two ells of red cloth made a fine man.) Our brigandine is simply a rein-

**Costume worn with armor, about 1600.** The helmet, quilted doublet, or pourpoint, and trunk hose are original, but of slightly different date and provenance. Similar associations, however, occurred at the time. The boots are reconstructed. In the Metropolitan Museum
George Clifford, third earl of Cumberland, in a wide-sleeved doublet with a long skirt made specially to fit over his armor. Another harness that belonged to the earl is on display in the Armor Hall. Miniature of about 1590 by Nicholas Hilliard. In the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.
forced civil costume. We learn from contemporary documents, for example, Cellini’s Autobiography, that the civil costume, which obviously was more comfortable than armor, was often made to simulate the brigandine simply to give the impression that the wearer was protected; for this was a period when everyone was armed and, even then, when on the highway one was not certain of reaching one’s destination in safety.

Brigandines were, of course, custom made. Their coverings include buckskin, silk, velvet, even cloth of gold. Metallic textiles, it may be noted, were not always rare materials; after the battle of Granson (1476) a hundred embroidered coats of cloth of gold, which Charles the Bold considered indispensable in the field, were found in his tent.

Numerous instances could be given of the influence of the hat on the form of the helmet and vice versa. The counterpart of the chapel-de-fer, or war hat, of the fifteenth century may be seen in the contemporary beaver hat. In the Royal Armory in Madrid is the steel hat of Philip the Handsome with a wide brim, turned upwards and outwards, like the cloth or velvet caps worn in Flanders and France in the late fifteenth century. Similar caps appear in the Museum’s Unicorn tapestries. In the early sixteenth century the head covering in vogue was the large, flat, very fantastic beret. This is simulated in the steel beret of the Emperor Charles V in the Royal Armory in Madrid; a second steel cap, North Italian of the early sixteenth century, is in the Clemens collection in Cologne. The triple-crested burgonets of the guard of Cosimo de’ Medici, of which the Museum has two examples, were founded on the contemporary civilian velvet bonnet. Helmets of the sixteenth century—the burgonet, cabasset, and morion—were copied as hats. Often such helmets were covered with embroidered textiles: the burgonet in the Royal Armory in Stockholm, for example, which was probably worn by a spear page at the marriage of Gustavus Adolphus in 1620. Many helmets based on the seventeenth-century cavalier’s hat are extant; one in this Museum, a cavalier’s helmet with upturned brim, is an example of the
influence of the familiar Pilgrim's hat. In our cavalier's helmet the hat cord, a survival of the fillet which tied the cloth headdress, is simulated in metal. At this time it was not entirely unusual for a gentleman to wear his wife's diamond necklace as a hatband! It may also be of interest to note in passing that the cap of the Soviet soldier is copied from the conical helmet of the son of Ivan the Terrible.

We shall now refer briefly to some features of costume which have survived in armor. Shoes with pointed toes were characteristic of costume in the fifteenth century and earlier. The points grew ridiculously long, and finally their length marked the degree of rank of the wearer. Since with such footwear it was impossible to walk, the points were bent up and secured to the knee with fine chains. The style was introduced in armor in the second half of the fifteenth century when the sabatons had long points which could be removed by means of turning pins. A pair of such sabatons forms part of the armor of Frederick the Victorious in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Early in the sixteenth century shoes were as absurdly broad at the toes as they had previously been pointed, and the style was also adopted in armor. With the development of hose in a single garment, or "tights," the codpiece made its appearance. This was first reproduced in mail and later in plate armor. A number of codpieces are exhibited in the Armor Gallery, and a brigandine with its codpiece is shown in the Costume Institute. That doublets were simulated in steel is known from numerous extant examples. These are usually hinged on either side and open in front, where there is a row of rivets in imitation of buttons. The tabs which appear on doublets to act as a cushion and to prevent the cuirass from shifting were also simulated in the cuirass itself. Sometimes the richly embroidered caparisons were reproduced in metal, as in the horse's bard of the "Burgundian cross" armor of Philip II of Spain in the Royal Armory in Madrid.

A few survivals from armor may be noted in costume of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ladies and gentlemen wore lace collars identical in style, and the style was influenced by the soldier's neck defense. The pierced lacelike steel guards of the cup-hilted rapiers were in keeping with the contemporary lace collars. Especially to be noted is the shape of the doublet, which changed to conform with the changes in the cuirass. The slits in the doublets served the practical purpose of facilitating freedom of movement when armor was worn. Accessories of doublet and hose were the arming points, or metal-tipped laces, which were always used to truss up or support the elements of armor. Arming points were also
used to secure mail sleeves to a close buff jerkin, as they are in a portrait of a young man by Giovanni Battista Moroni in the National Gallery, London. The vogue for amply padded hose developed in the seventeenth century to serve as a cushion for the exceptionally broad thigh defenses worn by pikemen. Buff leather coats, often decorated with stitchery, were also worn as a cushion under the heavy bullet-proof armor, and when the armor was discarded the buff coat served as the normal dress.

*Anyone interested in the fashions of the soldier courtier will find an abundance of valuable information in the current exhibition in the Costume Institute. For additional information the reader is referred to an article on “The Mutual Influence of Costume and Armor: a Study of Specimens in The Metropolitan Museum of Art,” which was published in Metropolitan Museum Studies, vol. III, part 2, June, 1931.*

**BELOW:** Helm of the Duke of Brittany showing the lambrequin and crest (out of a coronet, a golden leopard between ermine horns). From an illumination in the Tourney Book of René d’Anjou. French, 1460-1465. In the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris