

# The Great Pendant with the Arms of Saxony

HELMUT NICKEL

*Curator of Arms and Armor, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

A MAGNIFICENT ARMORIAL jewel from the Green Vaults was widely reproduced at the time of the exhibition "The Splendor of Dresden," appearing as a kind of leitmotif on posters and on the cover of the folder accompanying the exhibit. This gold and richly enameled pendant is almost the size of a hand and is lavishly set with more than a hundred diamonds, rubies, and emeralds (Figure 1). Aside, however, from the preciousness of its materials and the perfection of its workmanship, the special interest of the pendant lies in the ingenious treatment of the complex heraldic motifs in its design.

Arranged around an oval central medallion is an intricately wrought frame of openwork scrolls with jewel settings into which heraldic elements are integrated in such a way as to give the impression of an armorial shield with multiple quarterings, surmounted by three helmets with crests and mantlings. All the heraldic elements—with a single exception—can be found in the full electoral arms of Saxony during the second and third decades of the seventeenth century (Figures 2, 3).

The quarterings of the arms of the electors of Saxony at that time were: 1. Azure, a lion barry of argent and gules,<sup>2</sup> crowned or, for the landgravate of Thuringia; 2. Barry of ten, sable and or, with a *Rautenkranz* (wreath of rue) vert in bend over all, for the duchy of Saxony;<sup>3</sup> 3. Or, a lion sable, for the margravate of Meissen; 4. Or, a lion sable, for the duchy of Jülich; 5. Gules, an escarbuncle or, overlaid with an escutcheon argent, for the duchy of Cleves; 6. Argent, a lion gules with a double-forked tail, for the duchy of Berg; 7. Azure, an eagle or, for the palatinate of Saxony; Inescutcheon: Per fess sable and argent, two swords gules in saltire over all, for the arch-marshalship of the Holy Roman Empire; 8. Sable, an eagle or, for the palatinate of Thuringia; 9. Or, semé

with hearts gules, a lion sable, crowned gules, for the county of Orlamünde; 10. Or, two pales azure, for the county of Landsberg; 11. Azure, a lion per fess or and argent, for Pleissnerland; 12. Argent, a rose gules, for the county of Altenburg; 13. Divided per pale: (1) gules, a halved eagle argent; (2) barry of eight, argent and gules, for the burggravate of Magdeburg; 14. Argent, three *Seeblätter* (waterlily leaves) gules, for the county of Brehna; 15. Or, a fess chequy gules and argent, for the county of Marck; 16. Argent, three bars azure, for the county of Eisenberg; 17. Argent, three chevrons gules, for the county of Ravensberg; 18. Or, a hen sable on a mount vert, for the principality of Henneberg; 19. Plain gules, for the *Regalienschild*, a symbol of sovereignty in the Holy Roman Empire.

1. Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. VIII, 271; Joachim Menzhau-sen, *Das Grüne Gewölbe*, Eng. ed. *The Green Vaults* (Leipzig, 1970) p. 89, pl. 66; *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting*, exh. cat. (Washington/New York/San Francisco, 1978–79) cat. no. 300, col. pl. p. 43. This pendant has been tentatively attributed (by Ulli Arnold, *Schmuckanhänger*, Schriftenreihe der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden [Dresden, 1965] cat. no. 31, fig. 33) to the Dresden goldsmith Gabriel Gipfel (active 1591–1617), but recently Joachim Menzhau-sen, director of the Grünes Gewölbe, has suggested—in private communication—that he is inclined to accept a South German origin for this piece.

2. The lion of Thuringia is normally barry of six, but the number of divisions can vary considerably.

3. The arms of Saxony are usually given as: barry of ten, sable and or, a *Rautenkranz* vert in bend over all. However, the number of bars and the sequence of tinctures—whether or should come first or sable—have been handled very loosely over the centuries, because these arms, like those of Thuringia, are distinctive enough not to be easily mistaken. For heraldic information about the arms of Saxony, see *Siebmachers Wappenbuch*, ed. Otto Titan von Hefner (Nuremberg, 1856) I, 1. Abt.: "Die Wappen der Souveraine der deutschen Bundesstaaten," pp. 17–23, pls. 23–37.

The pendant has the ducal arms of Saxony, enameled barry yellow and black, with a *Rautenkrantz* enameled green and set with four cabochon emeralds, in the central medallion.

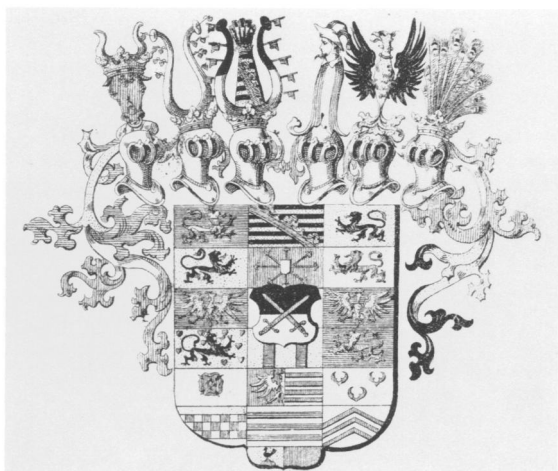
The medallion is surrounded by six lions: the red and white barry lion of Thuringia on blue-enameled scrollwork in the upper dexter, the red lion of Berg on a white-enameled background in the upper sinister (in heraldry a shield is described in terms of the bearer's right and left). The black lions of Meissen and Jülich are enameled into gold scrollwork, flanking the medallion on either side.<sup>4</sup> To the lower dexter is the black lion of Orlamünde, surrounded by tiny

hearts and set against gold scrollwork, while on the lower sinister the gold and white lion of Pleissnerland is set against a blue background.

4. It is a basic heraldic rule that no two arms should be alike. Understandably enough, this was to avoid potentially lethal confusion on a battlefield. However, arms in places that were geographically far apart might happen to be identical. Because the black-lion-in-gold of Meissen at the Upper Elbe and the black-lion-in-gold of Jülich at the Lower Rhine were separated by almost the entire width of the Holy Roman Empire, the repetition was not considered objectionable; it is ironic that they should turn up in the same many-quartered shield of Saxony. The designer of the pendant permitted himself a little heraldic joke, by putting the two black lions mirrorwise opposing each other.



1. Pendant with the arms of Saxony, ca. 1610. 12.2 × 7.3 cm. Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe inv. no. VIII, 271 (photo: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)



2. Full arms of the electorate of Saxony, 1610–35 (after Siebmacher)

Below the medallion is the escarbuncle of Cleves on red enamel. On top, to the right and left in the frame, are the two gold eagles of the palatinates of Saxony and Thuringia.<sup>5</sup> At the bottom, worked into the scrollwork itself, are the fess chequy of Marck at the dexter and next to it the clustered waterlily leaves of Brehna.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, on the sinister are the halved

3. Silver coin (*Taler*) of Elector Johann Georg I, 1629; reverse with arms of Saxony as used between 1610 and 1635. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Bashford Dean, 22.122.25



eagle and the barry field of the burggravate of Magdeburg; the bars are placed on the framework. Below the escarbuncle of Cleves the black hen of Henneberg<sup>7</sup> perches above the red rose of Altenburg, set against a gold background with two blue-enamelled stripes (Landsberg) and encircled by a curved ribbon with a white and red chevron pattern, for Ravensberg.

To the right and left of the central medallion are two large rubies in square settings; they may represent the red *Regalienschild*.

This intricate arrangement in the shape of a shield leaves only the relatively unimportant county of Eisenberg (argent, three bars azure) unaccounted for.

Following German heraldic custom, whereby multiple helmets are to be displayed with many-quartered shields (much to the horror of English heraldists, who claim that more than one helmet could be borne only by a person with more than one head), the shield is surmounted by three helmets with crests.

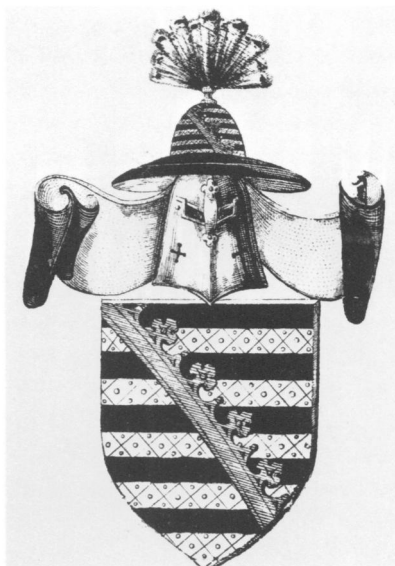
The dexter helmet bears the crest of the duchy of Cleves: a bull's head gules, its horns argent and its nose-ring or, crowned or, the crown encircled with a band chequy gules and argent (for the county of Marck). The sinister helmet bears the crest of the duchy of Jülich: an eagle or, wings sable (here left as gold), gorged argent.

In the center, there is a crested helmet of much more complex design. It combines, in fact, elements from four—possibly even five—different crests, which would have formed part of the full achievement of Saxony in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The tall conical column (rather obscured by the two crossed swords), topped by a small crown from which a plume of peacock feathers emerges, is the crest of the duchy of Saxony. In the fourteenth century it was a cap of maintenance patterned with the charges of the shield: barry of ten, sable and or, with a *Rautenkranz* vert over all and surmounted by a peacock

5. The heraldic beasts in the pendant are jeweled, the lions with oblong, the eagles with square diamonds. This is purely for decorative effect, without any heraldic significance.

6. The trefoil cutout of the *Seebblatt* indicates the water flowing over the depression at the stem of the waterlily leaf. This charge has been often misinterpreted—as hearts, sword chapes, and even stag-beetle mandibles (*Schröterhörner*).

7. An example of canting arms: *Henne* = hen, *Berg* = mountain.



4. Arms of the duchy of Saxony, after the seal of Duke Albrecht, 1329, showing the crest in its original shape as a broad-brimmed hat (after Siebmacher)
5. Arms of the elector of Saxony, according to Grünenberg's *Wappenbuch*, 1483, with the crest of its later "column" shape (after Siebmacher)
6. Arms of the archmarshalship of the Holy Roman Empire (after Siebmacher)
7. Arms of the electorate of Saxony, 1535, with the crests of the duchy of Saxony and the archmarshalship of the Holy Roman Empire combined in the central crest (after Siebmacher)

plume (Figure 4). In the fifteenth century, however, the cap—a broad-brimmed hat—changed its shape so as to become almost unrecognizable; its brim was turned up and transformed into a coronet, and the crown of the hat was elongated into a tapering "column" (Figure 5). Around 1535 this crest was combined with that of the archmarshalship of the Holy Roman Empire: a pair of horns, per fess sable and argent, edged with rows of small pennons.<sup>8</sup> These horns were now placed to flank the "column" (Figures 6, 7).

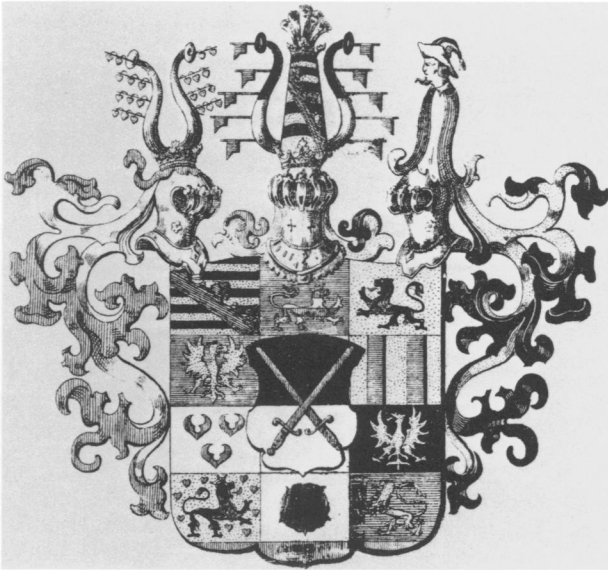
The sixteenth-century arms of Saxony bore two more crests, that of the landgravate of Thuringia (a pair of horns argent, edged with rods or, spangled with linden leaves argent, and that of the margravate of Meissen (a torso of a bearded man clad in a robe

striped argent and gules, with a pointed cap of the same).

In the composite crest on the central helmet of the pendant we find that on the dexter side of the "column" a rod with three linden leaves has been planted, and on the sinister a small black and white pennon; both rods are bent outward to approximate the shape of horns. These are clearly elements from the crests of Thuringia and the archmarshalship. In addition two crossed swords, encrusted with twenty-seven rubies to indicate their tincture gules, have been affixed to the front of the "column." These crossed swords are the main charge of the *Amtswappen* (arms of office) of the archmarshal: per fess sable and argent, two swords gules in saltire over all, normally displayed on the inescutcheon. The remaining crest, that of Meissen, has been transferred to the helmet itself. The bearded man's face now stares wistfully through the visor, which can be raised and lowered (the movable part was doubtless constructed to create a whimsical surprise), and the red and white stripes of his robe and cap cover the surface of the helmet.

The full armorial achievement of the electors of

8. The pennons in the crest of the archmarshalship are gules in most handbooks and rolls of arms, but armorial objects made for the elector himself, such as the jewel with Augustus's portrait on the reverse, dated 1586 (Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. V 614; Figure 10), or the *Grosse Kursächsische Wappen*, before 1610 (inv. no. II 434; Figure 12), show these pennons as black and white; Joachim Menzhausen, *Dresdener Kunstkammer und Grünes Gewölbe* (Leipzig, 1977) figs. 2, 114.



Saxony contained still another, sixth helmet—that of the duchy of Berg: a plume of peacock feathers emerging from a gold crown. It seems, though, that the designer of the pendant thought this would be redundant, because the top of the “column” already consists of just such a plume and crown (duchy of Saxony).

The combination of elements found in this pendant suggests that it must have been designed between 1610 and 1635. The duchies of Cleves, Jülich, and Berg, together with the counties of Marck and Ravensberg, were granted as fiefs to Saxony by Em-

8. Silver coin (*Taler*) of Elector Johann Georg I, 1640; reverse with the arms of Saxony as used after 1635, with the addition of the quarterings of Oberlausitz and Niederlausitz. Private collection



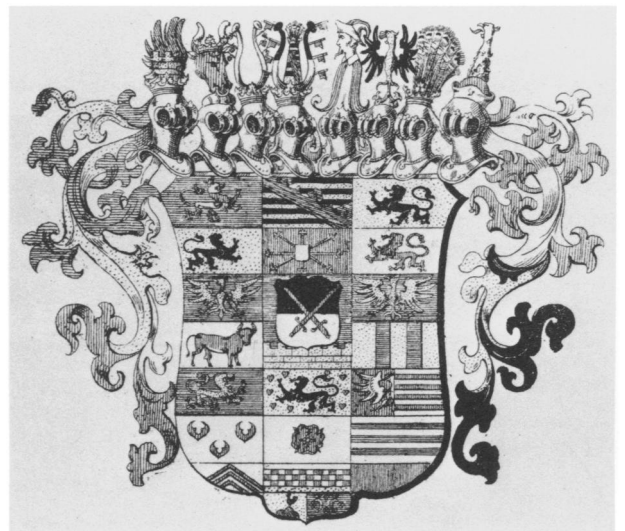
peror Rudolf II on July 10, 1610. It was only after that date that Saxony had a claim to these five quarterings.<sup>9</sup> In 1635 the Saxon arms were enriched by two more quarterings, those of the newly acquired margravates of Upper Lusatia (Oberlausitz): azure, an embattled wall or; and Lower Lusatia (Niederlausitz): argent, a bull gules, armed or (Figures 8, 9).

There are several similar armorial pendants to be found among the jewels of the Grünes Gewölbe. The earliest is the circular portrait pendant, dated 1586, made for Elector Augustus (1553–86), with his arms in *Hinterglas* technique (Figure 10). His successor, Christian I (1586–91), created the *Gesellschaft von der Gülden Kette* (Order of the Golden Chain) for the inner circle of his court, and his son, Christian II, followed suit with a similar order for his boon companions (Figure 11).<sup>10</sup> Their medallion shows the arms of the archmarshalship and of Saxony combined, surrounded by an openwork *Rautenkrantz* frame and surmounted by the *Kurhut*, the ermine-trimmed cap of state of an elector; the links of the chain bear the heraldic charges that made up the electoral arms before 1610, alternating with the enameled monogram C.

9. Though the electors of Saxony had a century-old contract of inheritance with the three duchies of Cleves, Jülich, and Berg, and in defiance of the official sanction by the imperial edict of July 10, 1610, these territories were annexed by Brandenburg; later they became provinces of Prussia. Saxony, however, continued until 1806 to display their arms as *Anspruchswappen* (arms of pretense) to mark its claim.

10. Woldemar von Seidlitz, *Die Kunst in Dresden vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Dresden, 1921) I, pp. 309, 329–330.

9. Arms of the electorate of Saxony, 1635–97 (after Siebmacher)







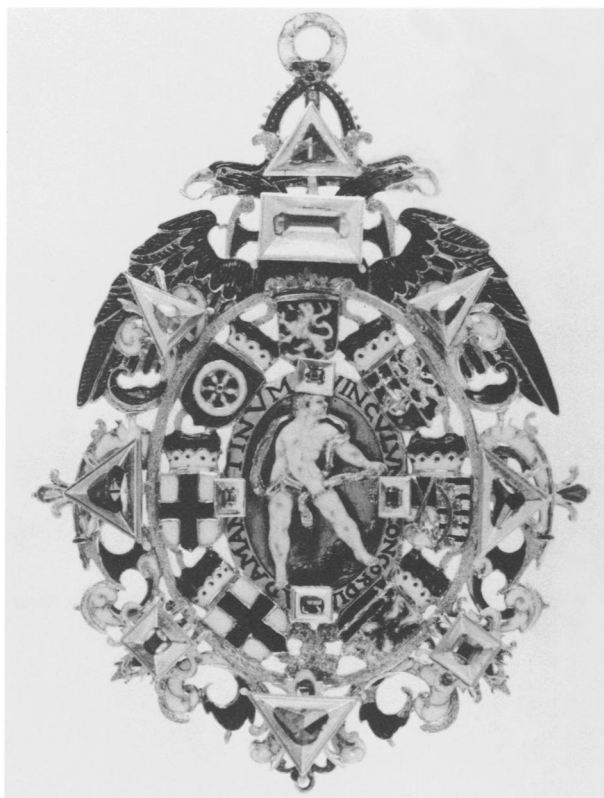
Another such medallion, the *Gesellschaftsstück* of Johann Schweikhard von Cronberg, archbishop-elect of Mainz (1604–26), with armorial shields within a jeweled framework arranged around an oval device (Figure 12), is almost close enough in its conception to have served as an inspiration, if not a prototype, for the great armorial pendant of Saxony. Its central device is a naked man trying to tear a rope in two, surrounded by the motto ADAMANTINUM VINCULUM CONCORDIA (“Concord is an adamantine tie”), which in turn is surrounded by the arms of the seven electors. Its reverse bears the family arms of the archbishop-elect and the date 1608.<sup>11</sup>

The large marble and agate intarsia showpiece called *Das Grosse Kursächsische Wappen* (*The Great Electoral Arms of Saxony*), which was entered into the inventory ledger of the *Kunstkammer* in 1610, is set within an oval ring of seventy-five garnets and offers a certain parallel to the diamond-encircled central medallion of the pendant (Figure 13).<sup>12</sup>

10. Pendant with the arms of Saxony, dated 1586, with name and titles of Elector Augustus (1553–86). Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe (photo: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)

11. Collar of the Order of the Golden Chain of Christian II, with armorial elements as of before 1610; by Michael Botza, Dresden (active 1592–1633). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.879

12. *Gesellschaftsstück* of Johann  
Schweikhard von Cronberg,  
archbishop-elect of Mainz  
(1604–26), dated 1608.  
Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe  
(photo: Staatliche  
Kunstsammlung Dresden)

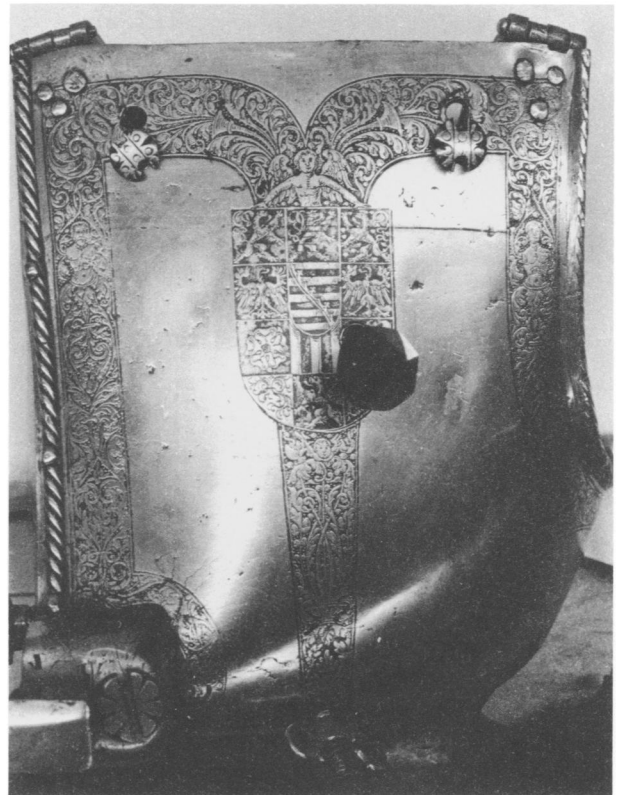


It is worth noting that the arrangement of the heraldic elements in the pendant differs from that in official arms, such as those found on coins (Figure 3). This would indicate that it was designed at an early date, when the “official” version was not yet codified, probably immediately after the acquisition of the three duchies of Cleves, Jülich, and Berg in July 1610.

Furthermore, it is strange that the *Amtswappen* of the archmarshalship, which are not a crest but normally take pride of place on a central inescutcheon, are represented here only by the crossed swords affixed to the central crest. The combination looks suspiciously like an afterthought, and on examination of the object itself it was found that these swords are indeed a later addition. They are screwed into a hole drilled into the “column” after it had been enameled, damaging the enamel in that spot.<sup>13</sup>

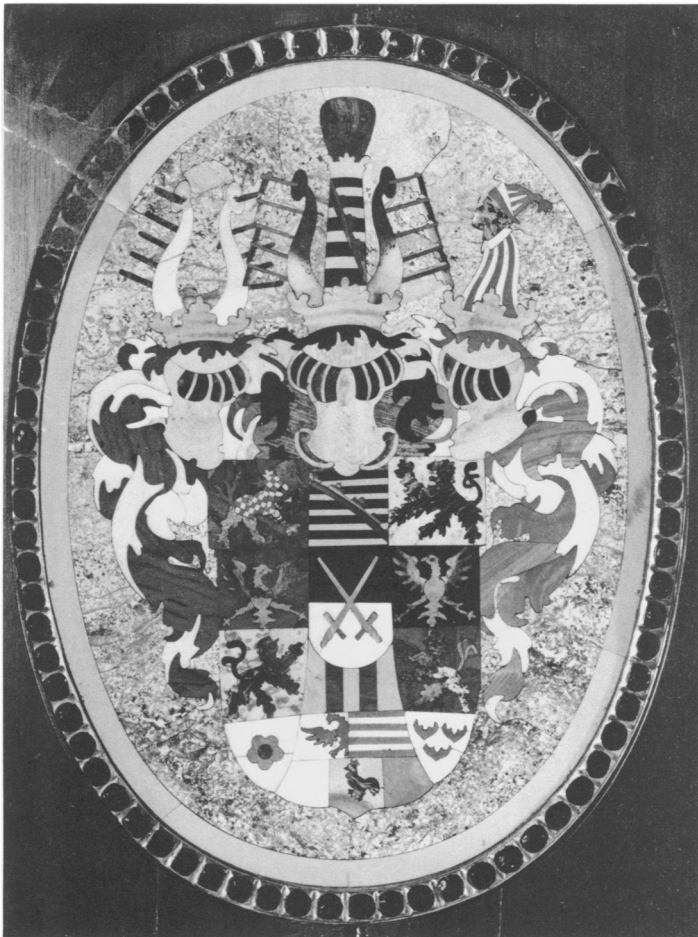
This would indicate that the pendant was not made originally for the elector himself, but for another

13. For this information I have to thank Joachim Menzhau-  
sen, who at my suggestion checked and actually dismantled the  
object.



14. Breastplate of the tournament (*Scharfrennen*) armor of Elector Augustus, showing the ducal arms of Saxony between 1547 and 1553, before Augustus succeeded to the archmarshalship; by Hans Rockenberger, court armorer in Dresden from 1532, d. before 1570. Dresden, Historisches Museum (photo: Historisches Museum)

15. Bevor (chin guard) of the tournament armor of Elector Augustus, showing the three crests of Saxony, Thuringia, and Meissen; by Hans Rockenberger. Dresden, Historisches Museum (photo: Historisches Museum)





16. Silver coin, known as the *Dreibrüdertaler*, Saxony, 1608; obverse with portrait of Elector Christian II and arms of the archmarshalship of the Holy Roman Empire. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Bashford Dean, 22.122.20



17. Reverse of the *Dreibrüdertaler*, with portraits of the two younger brothers of Elector Christian II, Duke Johann Georg and Duke Augustus, as coregents, and arms of the duchy of Saxony

member of the ducal family. The same combination of the *Rautenkranz* arms in the central escutcheon with the crests of the archmarshalship and the duchy of Saxony is found in the arms etched on a set of jousting armor in the Historisches Museum, Dresden (M 14; Figures 14, 15). According to the inventory of the armory,<sup>14</sup> this armor was made for the Elector Augustus, but it must have been at a time when he was not yet entitled to the *Amtswappen* of the archmarshal. He succeeded to this dignity in 1553 after the death of his brother Moritz, who had held it from 1547 to 1553.

Elector Christian II ruled from 1601 to 1611 (dying June 26 of that year), but he shared the administration of his dukedom with his two brothers, Johann Georg I (1585–1656; succeeded 1611) and Augustus (1589–1615). Presumably the pendant was made for one of these brothers, most likely Johann Georg, at some time between July 1610 and June 1611—perhaps as a Christmas present in 1610—and it would

have been brought up to date after he had become elector himself, in 1611.

The close relationship of the three brothers and the official use of these heraldic charges is indicated on the famous *Dreibrüdertaler* of 1608 (Figures 16, 17). Elector Christian II is shown on the obverse, with the sword of state (*Kurschwert*) shouldered and the shield of the archmarshal in the border. On the reverse are Johann Georg and Augustus, with the shield of the duchy of Saxony. The many-quartered full arms, which would not have applied to all three brothers, were wisely omitted.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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14. Erich Haenel, *Kostbare Waffen aus der Dresdner Rüstkammer* (Leipzig, 1923) p. 12, pl. 6, fig. b. The differences between the electoral and ducal arms of Saxony are not recognized by Haenel, and the armor is therefore dated between 1550 and 1560.