

**ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD 1788-1931
(24)
SABER USED BY THE BRIGADE OF “TIRADORES”
OF THE ROYAL CORP OF “GUARDIAS DE LA PERSONA DEL REY”
AND OTHERS INSPIRED BY THE FRENCH MODEL OF 1822**

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)

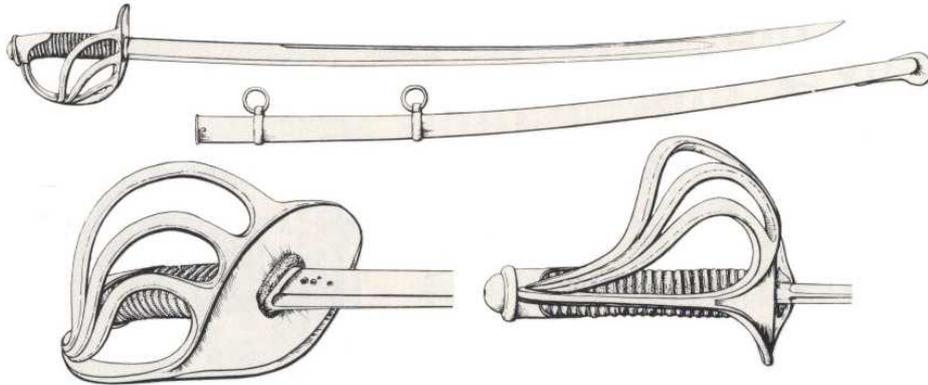


Cavalry saber of the model made for the Brigade of “Tiradores” of the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey”; Slightly fullered, 890x30 mm curved blade, inscribed “RI. Fa. D. TOLEDO / AÑO D 1834” on both, obverse and reverse; Rounded spine, single edged on its second third and double edged on its final one third; Hilt derived from the French model of 1822 for the Cavalry of the Line, marked “YBARZABAL” on its guard and individualized “B^a. T^s. N^o31” (Brigade of Tiradores, Number 31); Iron scabbard with oversized mouthpiece marked “YBARZABAL”; This specimen is missing its leather cover and wire wrapping.

As previously explained, in May of 1831, the creation of a Brigade of “Tiradores” to be attached to the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey” was decreed; The model of cavalry saber shown above, according to the inscription that it bears, was made for this Brigade, just as their “tercerola” and pistol were, but the 1834 date on its blade tells us of a delay in its construction which was completed after the Corp had changed its name to that of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey”, making the saber superfluous as the formation of the Brigade of “Tiradores” was abandoned in 1833 and its members were dispersed among the Brigades of the other four existing Squadrons.

During the period 1824-41 the only unit of this Royal Corp to be equipped with sabers was the Brigade of “Tiradores”; Its strength was to be the same as that of the other Brigades, each one with 66 members, 56 of them Guards; We can logically deduce that a minimum of 56 sabers would be needed, but the specimen shown is the only one I am aware of.

This saber's blade differs from the blade of the riding sword model made for the Royal Corp in 1831 only in its slight curvature and rounded spine; Its hilt is similar to the French model of 1822 for the Cavalry of the Line which had a curved 975x30 mm blade and was nicknamed "bancal" (lame) by its users upon its replacing the French model of 1816 for Cavalry of the Line which had a straight 1000x33 mm blade.



"Bancal" French saber, model of 1822 for Cavalry of the Line, as illustrated by Michel Pétard in the work "Armes Blanches Militaires Françaises", by Christian Ariès (1967).



"Commercial" riding sword with hilt derived from the French model of 1822 for Cavalry of the Line, lacking any maker's marks, with engraving of the pommel cap, the two extremes of the hand guard, and the quillons; Straight, 878x35 mm blade, with a full length fuller, single edged, flat spine in its first two thirds inscribed "Real Fabrica de Toledo, Año de 1825", with a short terminal double edge; Iron scabbard with no maker's markings; Victor Krenn collection.

Being aware of the existence in Spain of riding swords with hilts derived from the French model of 1822, I wondered whether the ones made for the Royal Corp of "Guardias de la Persona del Rey" after their restoration in 1824 may have been of this type; I further pondered whether the model with an 1828

Toledo made blade, specimen number 1752 in the Catalogue of the “Museo de Artillería” (1856) may have had this type of hilt, although this was not the case with specimen number 23301 of the Collection of the “Museo del Ejército” made in 1831.

I have seen a few domestic specimens with this type of hilt, some of them Officer’s models of different corps of the Royal Household, bearing a badge with the Royal Arms on its guard; I know of one specimen of riding sword with a hilt similar to the saber shown below, although much more elaborately engraved, with an 860x27 mm blade, also lacking a date or a Toledo inscription.



“Commercial” cavalry saber with a hilt derived from the French model of 1822 for Cavalry of the Line, engraved and bearing a badge with the Royal Arms and lacking maker’s markings; The curved, 800x28 mm blade has the general characteristics of the saber made for the Brigade of “Tiradores”, also lacking maker’s markings as is also the case with the iron scabbard with its leather campaigning cover.

On the 24th of March of 1833 the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey” was given new Regulations where the two “Saxon” Squadrons ordained in 1824 were already discarded, and the components of the General Main Staff, Legal Staff, and the Squadron’s Main Staffs were given in detail: The Brigade of “Tiradores” was not included and the respective strengths of the four Squadrons was given as two Brigades each, with 2 “Exentos”, 2 “Brigadiers”, 2 “Sub-Brigadiers”, 8 Cadets, 63 Guards, and 2 Buglers; On the 9th of May Fernando VII ordered that the 4th Squadron be a “Light” cavalry Squadron and therefore those who applied to be admitted into it could be allowed to be one inch less in stature than the other ones.

Once the King died (9-29-1833) and his widow, the Queen Governess Maria Cristina became Regent in 1834, the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey” became the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Real Persona” (Guards of the Royal Person) with two Squadrons of Grenadiers and two of Light cavalry; In

August of 1838 its strength was reduced to only two Squadrons, wearing the uniform of the Light cavalry until their final extinction in 1841.

The military writer Don Jose Almirante was very critical when he referred to the actions of the "Guardias de la Real Persona" during the Carlist War of 1833-1840 and their dissolution in 1841 as follows: "They died as they had lived; One squadron which took the field arrived near Burgos almost spent; However, the "Guardia Real" (Royal Guard) rapidly and vigorously took its side, as it understood that "the best way to guard the palace gates was to fight it out in the fields of Navarra".

There were probably more than a few members of the Royal Corp of "Guardias de la Persona del Rey" who deserted and pledged their allegiance to Don Carlos: In August of 1835 Don Carlos proclaimed the Virgin of the Dolores "Generalissima" of his troops and she was pictured in a standard embroidered by his wife known as the "Estandarte Generalísimo", and an escort known as the "Escort of the Estandarte Generalísimo" was created composed of 40 men and one "Exento", all from the Royal Corp of "Guardias de la Persona del Rey"....."who were otherwise unemployed and having no placement in those battalions worthy of their class".

Juan L. Calvó
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