Saddle blanket

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	52.2781.1
Date of production:	1575-1600
Place of production:	Spain (presumably); Prague (presumably)
Materials:	precious stones; velvet
Techniques:	metal thread raised embroidery
Dimensions:	height: 74 cm width: 116 cm

The gala horse furniture of a led horse on festive occasions consisted of expensive embroidered or gem-studded saddle, stirrups, harness and a saddle-cloth on the rump, the caparison. The ornate saddle-cloth in the former Esterhazy collection is an extraordinary specimen of European cafrags. The once red (now brownish) velvet ground fabric is adorned with sixpetalled flowers in mandorlas composed of “S” shaped serrated leaves the middle of each flower is marked by large gems and the free surfaces feature tiny silver stars with garnets in the middle and silver-gilt crescents as well as silver sequins. The motif decorating the middle of the saddle-cloth is a large silver-gilt sun with human features, surrounded by rays. The Esterhazy sources make mention of a “very fine, cherry-coloured, gem-studded czafrag” in 1685 which, together with other horse furniture, “used to belong to emperor Rudolphus”. Researchers presume after its embroidered ornamentation that it is either of Spanish origin, or it was made in the Prague court of Emperor Rudolph II (1576–1612). Its Prague provenance is supported by another saddle-cloth of identical shape, its closest analogy, which is adorned with enameled plates as well as moons and stars, made by the court goldsmith of Rudolph, Johann Michael in Prague in 1612 (Dresden, Rüstkammer). There is a breast-collar in Oruzheynaya Palata in Moscow embellished with similar enameled plates, also produced by master Michael and presented by Rudolph II’s envoy to the Russian tsar Boris Godounov (1598–1605) in 1604.

Literature

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