

THE NATIONAL SWEDISH COLLECTION OF TROPHIES

Leif Törnquist

Concepts

By trophies we usually mean colours, standards and other banners, kettle-drums with covers, as well as pieces of ordinance captured on the battle field. The National Swedish Collection of Trophies contains all such objects, with the exception of cannons. In addition, there are other objects, which sometimes are considered not to have trophy value, such as drums and keys of fortresses. The collection originates mainly from the beginning of the 17th century until the beginning of the 18th century, but it also contains both earlier and later objects. The oldest piece is a Bohemian banner which may possibly be from the early 15th century. The last objects originate from 1814–15, the last time Sweden was at war.

I divide up the collection as follows:

Country / Region	Number	Total
Denmark [Fig. 1]	256	
Imperial	395	
Saxon (from about 1700)	97	
Other Western Europe	788	1536
Russian	1569	
Polish [Fig. 2]	137	
Courlandian	11	
Other Eastern Europe	299	2016
Unidentified [Fig. 3]	143	
Staffs with remains of cloth	153	296
Total flags		3848
Flags of ships and fortresses	164	
Musical instruments (kettledrums and drums)	214	
Drum covers	46	
Lock covers	189	
Trumpet colours	7	
Fortress keys (4 bunches)	61	
Bartizans	3	
Total other items		684
Grand total		4522

The collection does not only contain trophies in the strict sense (as stated before) but also what should rather be regarded as war booty, i.e. objects removed from a defeated enemy's armoury or other places of storage.

Brief History

Already from the middle of the 16th century details are known of how the conquered banners were dealt with and hung up in churches. Today's collection has its origin in the Thirty Years War. Well aware of the propaganda value of the trophies, Axel Oxenstierna, then chancellor of the kingdom of Sweden, intended to erect a special building in connection with a planned new arsenal. There the «Treasures and Ornaments of the Realm», as Oxenstierna called the collection of Swedish trophies, should be on display. However, the new arse-

nal was never built. Other proposals never came beyond the drawing stage. After the Great Northern War in 1721, the economic possibilities for a hall of trophies did no longer exist. By this time the collection had acquired most of the objects which it contains today. During the remainder of the 18th century and during the Napoleonic Wars some additions were certainly made, but to a much more modest extent. The main items were the ensigns of ships captured at the second battle of Svenskund (Ruotsinsalmi) in 1790. However, throughout the whole period the trophies never received the care and attention they required.

In 1817, after several moves, the entire collection was transferred to the Riddarholm church in Stockholm, the church which contains the royal tombs. There the colours, banners and standards were hung up under miserable conditions such that to many flags an irreparable damage was done. Towards the end of the century the museum staff sounded the alarm. The entire collection was on the verge of decay. In 1906 eventually, the trophies were taken down and a special superintendent was appointed to give the unique collection a competent care. In 1960 the responsibility for the national collection was transferred to the Army Museum. Here it constitutes a separate department with its own supervisor, Mrs. Eva Turek, who has two textile experts to assist her in the restoration and preservation work.

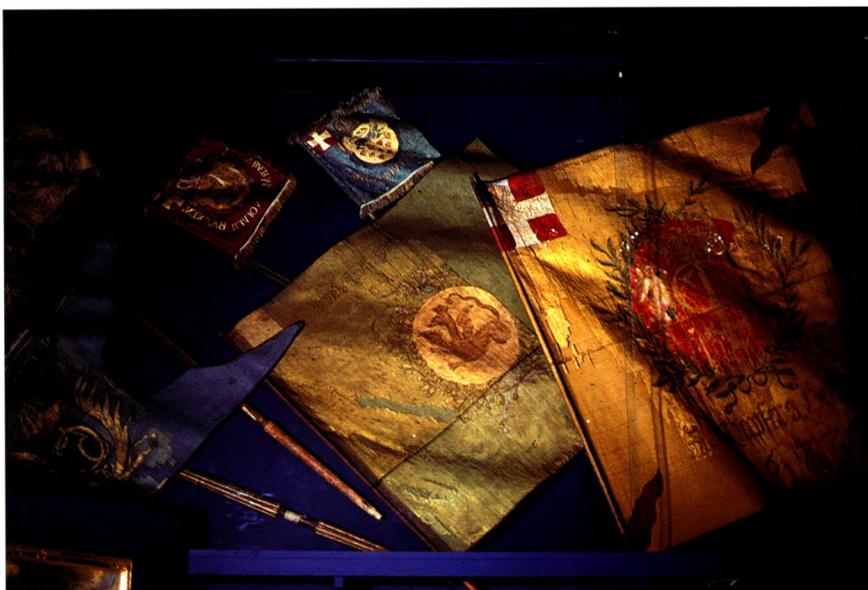
Documentation and Pictures

Today we have a complete documentation for the collection of banners, and this is what I want to deal with now. The collection contains 1962 distinct flags (and many duplicates). We have catalogued all the flags or rather their remains. On the other hand, by far not all items are documented in picture. The biggest number of illustrations of trophies was made by the painter Olof Hoffman in Stockholm during the years 1683–1703 [Fig. 4]. In addition, we have 72 pictures by an unknown hand from 1703 plus 570 pictures from the years 1899–1915, when the collection was finally wrapped up in the store. A few original flags have been photographed. This is the case only for the preserved flags for display, which all together amount to barely 400, i.e. about 10% of the entire stock. This means that more than 1.200 flags have not been depicted. However, it must be admitted that many of these probably belong to series of similarly decorated flags. The present storage is, it must be admitted, not very professional. Only the preserved flags are rolled in tissue paper around a cardboard tube and packed in everyday brown wrapping paper. The great majority of trophies is still lying in the same way they were taken down from the Riddarholm church, i.e. wound around their staff and wrapped in paper. The flags are then piled in boxes, like wood is stacked. It is obvious that this is not good for the collection. We are currently investigating better possibilities for preservation, an improved air conditioning has the highest priority. If possible the flags should be spread out on an even surface and well protected. Moreover, it should be simple to remove them from their storage places.

If we add the Swedish banners and standards to the almost 4'000 flags of the trophy collection we have

about 5'000 items. This requires space which is not easy to find in a capital city with shortage of ground and high rents. In addition to the rich iconographic and heraldic research material of the collection I would like to point out the textile historical aspect. As we understand it, this subject is rather unique but also far too little understood and appreciated. Many kinds of the rich textile material have ceased to be produced. In this connection I should like to mention the damask cloths. There is a rich selection of Chinese damask patterns. We have documented about 170 different patterns. Chinese damask can be found predominantly in Russian colours from the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries. Also European damask, in the first instance from the 17th century, is well represented. As one might expect, these examples can be found among the cavalry standards and dragoon colours. About 150 different European damask patterns are documented. The value of this textile reference material is even higher as most of the items can be dated quite accurately. For the identification and determination of affinities it is an invaluable advantage to have a reliable register of the different damask patterns. To the best of my knowledge the Swedish National Collection of Trophies contains damask cloths which are otherwise unknown to textile historical research.

It is the future ambition of the Army Museum to present to the Swedish and international public a more detailed account of the banners and standards in the National Swedish Collection of Trophies. The time schedule is still too uncertain to allow a presentation. Let me only add that it is Mrs. Turek's and my own ambition to make this happen during our time at the museum.



above: Fig. 1
Trophies from Denmark displayed in the Royal Army Museum, Stockholm.



left: Fig. 2
The banner of king Sigismund III as king of Poland, end of the 16th century. A contemporary picture of the so called Polish roll or, after its return to Poland, the Stockholm roll.

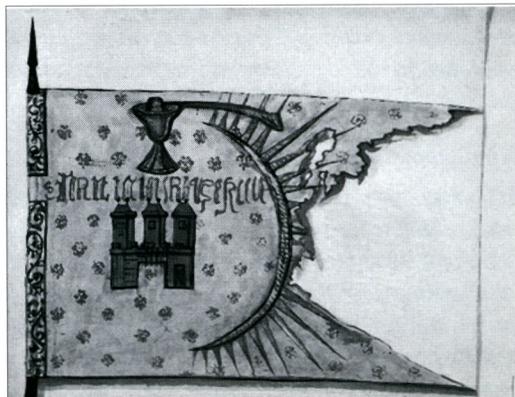


Fig. 4
Bohemian banner, about 1450. Painting by Olof Hoffman. (19:127b)

Fig. 3
An unidentified colour of the National Swedish Trophy Collection. (Royal Army Museum/State Trophy Collection, 28:26)