Horse Barding



Manesse Codex – Tafel 61v Herr Heinrich von Frauenberg

Horse Barding is a very broad term. It is variously defined as a piece of armor used to protect or armor a horse¹, an ornamental caparison for a horse², horse trappings³, and "sometimes referring to the armour or the cloth decoration that served to identify the owner". It derives from the Middle English and Old French *Barde* and from the Arabic Barda, which is a padded saddle or saddle cloth. It was not unusual during a tournament or when engaged in warfare for horse armor to be used in addition to the cloth decoration. For the purposed of this paper and entry, we will refer only to the cloth trappings as Barding; versus the leather as tack and the armor pieces as horse armor.



Much of what we have are depictions of knights on horse back in one of 3 activities – middle of the battle, middle of the tournament, or on the road to one of these. I was unable to find any extent cloth horse trappings. There are metal bits of tack and armor pieces that have survived.

In the pictures of knights from the Manesse Codex⁶, each is shown with his arms displayed and the horse's barding decorated to further enhance the heraldic display. Similar scenes in other 13th and 14th C. manuscripts, like the Luttrell Psalter⁷, the Maciejoweski Bible⁸, and the Historie du



Luttrel Psalter – Geoffrey being armed

http://www.bl.uk/collections/treasures/digitisation1.html

http://www.medievaltymes.com/courtyard/maciejowski_images_30.htm

¹ Dictionary.com - The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

² http://www.onelook.com/?loc=lemma3&w=bard

³ Websters online – 1828 dictionary

⁴ http://www.onelook.com/?loc=lemma3&w=bard

⁵ Dictionary.com, Encarta.msn.com/dictionary

Manesse Codex c. 1305-1340 http://www.manesse.de/img/025.jpg

⁷ Luttrell Psalter c.1345, page 27

⁸ Maciejowski Bible c. 1244-54



(above) Maciejoweski BibleDavid and the Philistines

Graal⁹, show specific heraldry to identify important people and generic colors and symbols for others.



In Froissart's Chronicles and others, there are illuminations where there are horses with fabric draping around the chest, sides and back, but the fabric does not cover the horses back¹⁰. These smaller bardings have heraldic designs, but not arms.



(above) Histoire du Graal – Horseback Battle Scene (left) Froissart's Chronicles, French 15th C.

Barding – Size and Shaping

In 1460 Rene of Anjou, at that time King of Jerusalem and Sicily, wrote a book on the form and organization of a medieval tournament called *traictié de la forme et devis d'ung tournoy*. In this book he sets out what he describes as customs of France and other countries. In it he describes a straw "hourt" that protects the chest and front legs of the horse. It is to "fall the length of an ell in front of the saddle and wraps around the breast of the horse." Further, the "hourt" is covered with the coat of arms of the lord. No where else is coverings for the participants horses set out. However, in describing the entrance of the judges, he specifically states "And after the king of arms should come the two knights who are judges, side by side, each on a fair palfrey covered with the judge's coat of arms right down to the ground."

¹² Ibid.

⁹ Koch, page 72.

¹⁰ Holme, page 34.

Barrett – Rene d' Anjou

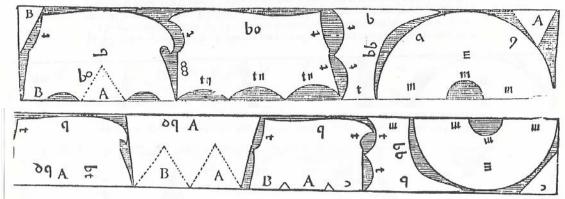


In this picture of a 15th C. German joust¹³, the horses are armored. The barding flares in front as if covering something, like what Anjou describes.

There are several 16th C. patterns for horse barding. 2 are in Acega's Tailoring Book at Plates 50 and 50a. He identifies them as silk saddle trappings for jousting. One is specifically for royal jousts. It is different in that it has an additional piece of cloth to make the fabric hang long. The lesser one requires 8 2/3 ells of cloth and

the royal pattern requires 11 2/3 ells of cloth. Cloth did not come in standard widths and a conversion chart is included in the book ¹⁴. Nor is an ell a set measurement. The book notes that a Castilian ell, a *bara*, shown on the pattern a "b", is equivalent to 84 cm (approx. 33"). Elsewhere in Europe an ell varies from 27"- 48".

For the Alcega patterns there are 4 main pieces – one for the buttocks, one to cover the horse's neck, one for the breast piece and one for the skirts. ¹⁵ Alcega further comments that there usually is embroidery on the pieces and tassels that hang from the points.



In this German engraving of 1577¹⁶, the knights have just completed a joust. Their barding appears to be very similar to the Alcega pieces. There are 2 differences – the barding lacks scalloped edges and the skirting is more rectangular serving as an under blanket, while still being decorated.

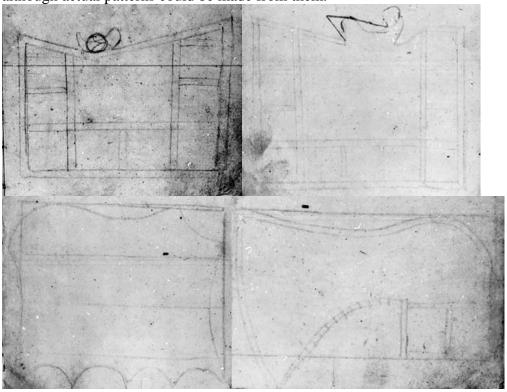
¹⁶ Koch, page 189.

¹³ Koch, page 109.

¹⁴ Alcega, pages 17- 20 – translation section

¹⁵ Alcega page 40 – translation section.

2 more sets of patterns have been dated to 1590 by Ingeborg Patrascheck-Heim. They are in the *Leonfeldner Schnittbuch*, which is in the Stadtmuseum in Linz. Written in german, a copy of some of the pages are on the web¹⁷. 4 of the pages are horse barding. 2 look like a rectangular "blanket" style. One covers the whole horse from neck to rump. The last pattern is for the horses head and shoulders. These appear to be more conceptual in nature although actual patterns could be made from them.



Construction and Decoration

Horse Barding appears to have been made in various fabrics including silk and wool. In talking about household accounts from the 14th C., Staniland states "Amongst the expenses listed are numerous references to artists, the most highly paid group within the workforce and present in some numbers. For the greater part of their time these artists painted heraldic flags and horse coverings for the king's wars or jousts, or stamped the same sort of decoration in gold or silver on fine silk, again for flags or horse coverings..."

In the 15th C., artist Cennino D. Andrea Cennini wrote a book *Il Libro dell' Arte* in which he talks about painting on cloth. In section CLXVII he mentions woolen cloth for use in tournaments or jousts.

Alcega talks about making a pattern of canvas to fit the horse 20 . I started with a "muslin" to make a pattern for the horse keeping the Alcega patterns in mind. My final target was similar to the horses in the 1577 German Woodcut. Thus, there would be 4 pieces – a

²⁰ Alcega, page. 40 – translation section.

¹⁷ http://costume.dm.net/schnittbuch/

Staniland, page 22.

http://www.noteaccess.com/Texts/Cennini/10M.htm

blanket for under the saddle, a piece covering the back portion of the horse, a piece to cover the neck and shoulders, and a piece across the chest of the horse that reached up to the shoulders. The bottom would be parallel to the ground and leave the horses "knees" to move freely.

The barding is made of cotton flannel in lieu of wool flannel (note: it will be used for a child after this competition). It is decorated with heraldic patches similar to those seen in Wagner, Plate 14, Part IX, showing a camparison (see right). The patches were painted and appliquéd. Some of the pictures show that the barding was lined. Unfortunately, with this fabric and on this scale, lining caused the fabric to not fall correctly. The "leather trappings" that came with the model have been reapplied to give an idea of where the leather tack would have been and are not part of this entry.

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