

## THE FRENCH LIGHT CAVALRY SWORD 1822 MODEL

**A Classical Taste - Author : N.Vasse.**

The French light cavalry consisted of about 21,000 troops in 1845, 30,000 in 1856, 18,000 in 1870 and 28,000 in 1914 [8] - the model 1822 light cavalry was used by all these horsemen in European conflicts and 'Overseas (Crimea, Mexico, North Africa ...) for nearly 150 years.



*Photo 1: The 1822 pattern in Action - The 4th Hussar Kanghil by Janet-Lange - During the Crimean War, Sergeant Bourseul who was wounded several times in fighting against the Russians - we see the French mdle 1822 engage with a Russian AN XI with its typical quillon (retrieved or copied from the French model manufactured by the arsenal Zlatoust = Russian 1829 model for light cavalry)*

### **The birth of a model**

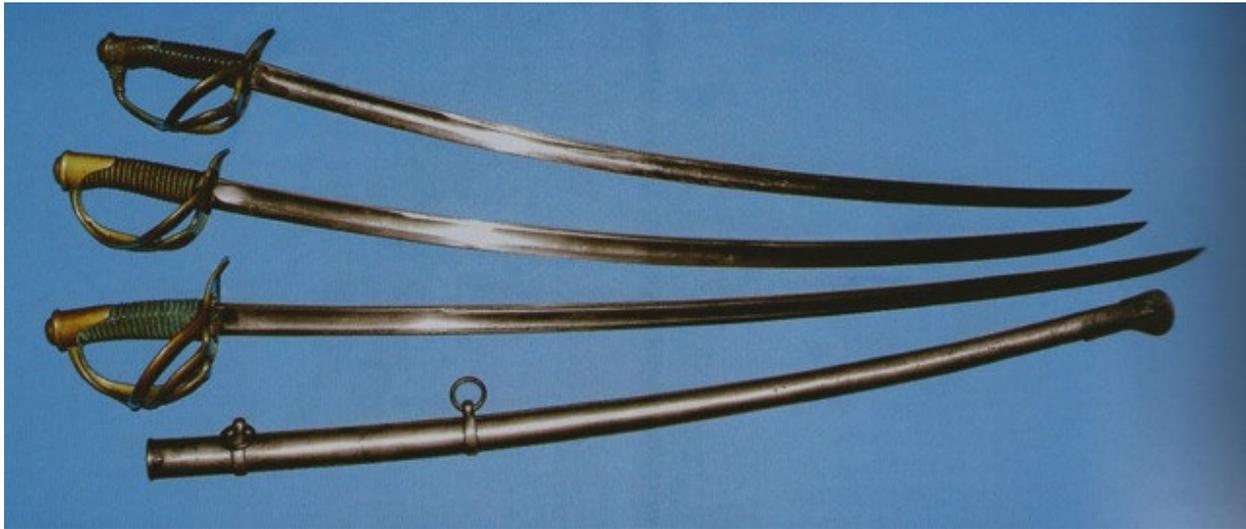
On January 18, 1822, the Committee of cavalry decide unanimously in favour of a curved sword for the entire cavalry. The blade called a "Montmorency" (blade assigned to 2nd "Chasseur " (1799), old regiment of Dragoon Montmorency and the Evéché (1788), this regiment gained regulatory authorisation to wear the blade after the battle of Marengo - Decreed on 18th August 1802 [1]) is preferred to the blade of the sword model An XI which was considered too broad [2].

This option for a curved blade was chosen on the assumption that this blade was also effective in the thrust and to minimize the number of regulatory model, which was the goal of the reform. After the 1816 models (photo 2) , 1822 models (as 1816) were created by differentiating the model for heavy cavalry (Dragoons / Lancers and the reserve with Cuirassiers / Carabiniers) and model of light cavalry. The hilt and blades are nearly identical. The light cavalry loses the "quillon" for a "beak" like the heavy cavalry sword . The heavy cavalry, unique in the world, gets a curved blade. However, as always, most models co-existed for decades ( 25,000 swords model year XI and 3000 1816 model swords were still available in July 1870 [6]).



*Photo 2: Model 1816 light cavalry, with its quillon (the last). The saber was deemed too fragile.*

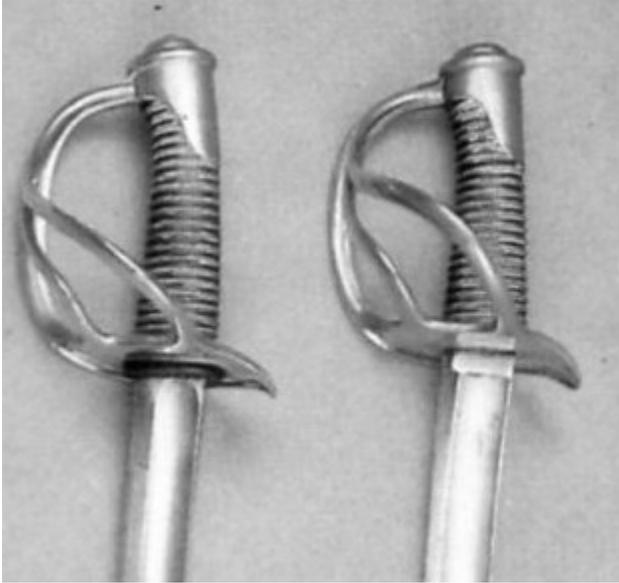
Thus emerged a new model, the Duke of Bellune, Minister of war, approved it in April, and in July the model (mdle) 1822 was adopted [2]. We will mention here only the sword of light cavalry (CLe) but you should recognize the heavy cavalry saber 1822 (CL) which had a less curved blade and a four branch hilt (picture 3). It was replaced by a new model in 1854, with a straight blade. The heavy cavalry sword in 1822, is not the subject of the article, it was called "bancal" because it was considered as poor in points and weak in size, like a wobbly chair [7].



*Photo 3: From bottom to top - mdle 1822 heavy cavalry "bancal" - mdle 1822 Light Cavalry - Officer mdle 1822 [6]*

### **The Troopers sword**

The construction of the sword, from July 1823, will be changed in July 29, 1851 and October 10, 1922, with tiny modifications. In cast steel, curved blade (photo 7) , 2 gutters and flat back. Blade 92 cm, 3.1 cm wide at the heel . The blades before 1860 haven't the same fuller ending on the ricasso - the fuller ends in a curve after 1860 and a straight line before 1860 (photo 4) . The blade washer is buffalo leather after May 20, 1840.



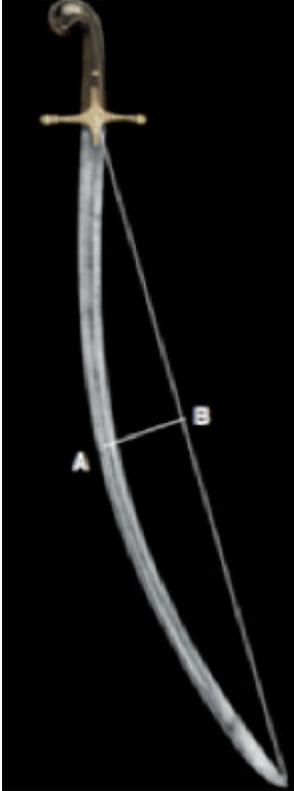
*Photo 4: 2 mde 1822 – (left with the leather washer) after 1860 with the fuller ending with a curve at the ricasso ( right) Before 1860 with the fuller ending in a straight line.*

Three bar hilt moulded in one piece for extra strength. Brass hilt including a main branch with two lateral branches converging on the bare arch joint, short-tailed pommel cap [3]. Shell guard ending like a "beak" without a quillon.



*Photo 5 and 6: brass hilt, 2 side branches bare converging, cap short tail.*

Grip is cord covered with leather. Bound with about twenty loops of two twisted wires. Steel Scabbard with wood liner set by two rivets, two bracelets. Asymmetric drag . Total weight 2.1 kg (2.3 kg to 1.8 kg and an XI model 1816).



*Photo 7: The curvature of blade is evaluated by measuring the arrow (A => B), the arc is formed by the curvature of the sword and the rope is the drawn line [3]*

- 38.9 mm The CLe saber model 1822
- 51.9 mm Year XI (more curved)
- 24.8 mm model 1816 CLe
- 23 mm for the 1822 CL.

### **The officer's Saber**

The Duke of Bellune, minister of war , wrote on May 25, 1822, "Now that the model sword for soldiers is <defined>, I beg you to establish a similar model for the officers. This will differ from the soldier's sword by gilding and ornaments." The botanical forms of decoration have evolved over time on the shell and on the branches (E.g. on the shell - starting with half lilies flowers ,half lilies and roses from 1831 to 1840, after 1840 only the leaves remain [3]), we also see some fantasy models. A grip of blackened buffalo horn is common during the Second Empire for officers.



*Photo 8 : On the left 2 "roses" between 1831 to 1840 - On the right , classical aspect after 1840*

### **The markings for troopers**

Markings of manufacture: After the final defeat of Napoleon 1st, France is forced to abandon many jurisdictions. Consequently, the manufacture of Klingenthal, Maubeuge, Charleville, Mutzig are very vulnerable to any renewed conflict. Also in 1816, the Committee responsible for artillery arsenals looked for a more central city, Chatellerauld was chosen to install a weapons factory - since 1830, the 1822 CL and CLe model was produced in this factory, which closed in 1968. Until 1830, Klingenthal manufactured mdles 1822 and continued after 1830 for the private market for officers, the markings for this type were "Klingenthal Couleau frères (brothers)" or "Klingenthal & Couleaux" for example. On the flat back of the blade, the markings follow the usages of the arsenals, the name changes depending on the political change. Marking the arsenal of origin, date and from October 6, 1855, the model is provided too. Marks of the inspector and the director on the ricasso of the blade and on the hilt are also visible.

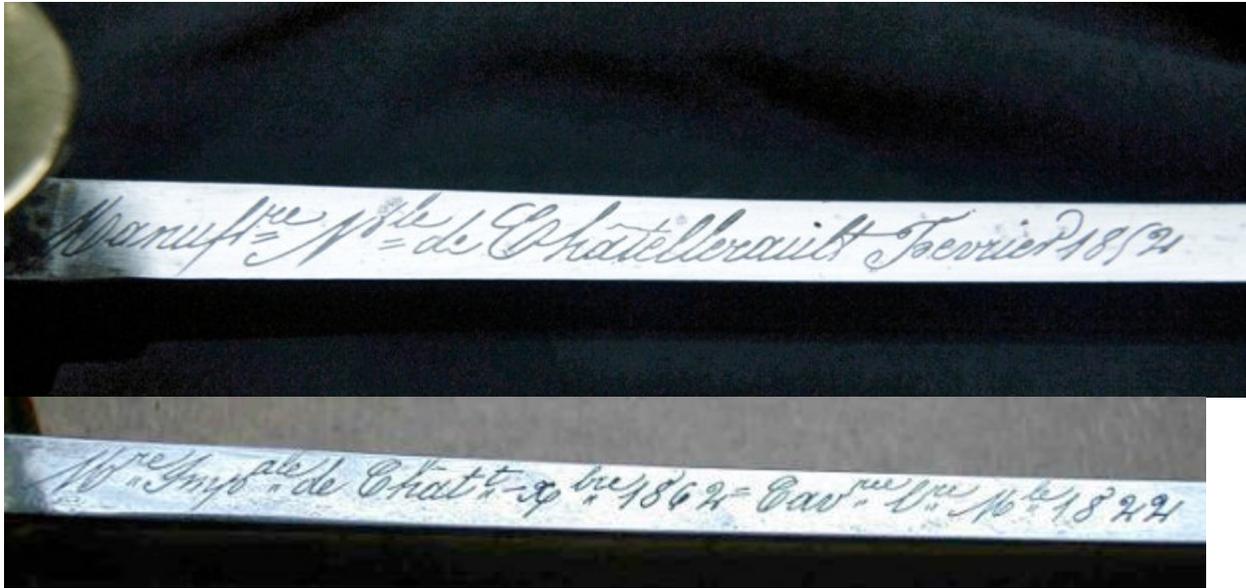


Photo 9 : Manufacture nationale de Chatellerault fevrier 1854 before October 1855

Photo 9b : Manufacture Impériale de Chatellerault septembre 1862 - Cavalerie mdle 1822 after October 1855

Note that many officers of the late nineteenth century bought their sword at "Manceau" manufacturer in Paris, which is the great manufacturer of the time. This signature is placed on the scabbard ( before the first ring) "MANCEAU / A PARIS", these swords were made with blades from Klingenthal or Chatellerault manufacturer . Some other private manufacturer are seen for officers swords (G. BARRE A PARIS (1873-1910)...). The mark JH on the blade is for the exportation [3]

Regimental Markings: Sword models are numbered by each military unit until March 1854, after 1854 - swords are numbered by species of weapon. Serial numbers are located on the inner side of the main branch in figures 3 mm in height (fig. 10), the scabbard upper ring receives an identical number . In 1887, 330 swords by regiments are identified as sabers for exercise and instead of the serial number are marked the letters SM [2].

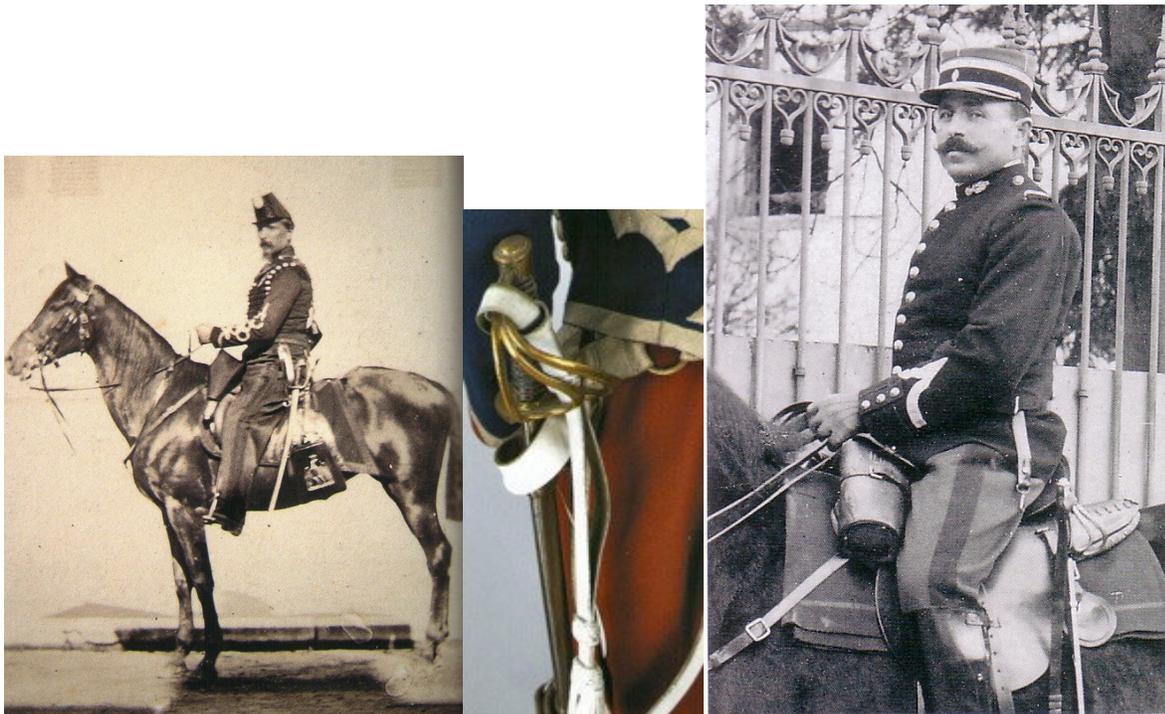


*Photo 10: Regimental Marking of 1833 sword has probably suffered the renumbering of 1854 – seen the marks of inspectors on the right*

The inscription "Donné par le roi - Donated by the King" is present on some swords, this was established for students of military schools. Upon leaving when they received their assignment, it was a sign that their new role was offered to them by the King during the monarchical periods. Some swords of officers including those for African Chasseurs or Spahis (Algerian Chasseurs) have a blade acid etched, blued and with gilded carved patterns [3]

### **A long and capiciously history**

Under the Restoration (1816-1830) the cavalry started to be equipped with the sword, the hussars, horse artillery until 1829 (date of adoption of the sword for gunner model 1829).



*Photo 11 and 12 : left , "Chasseur" in Tarbes - look at the way he wears his saber on the horse, you can see too the "sabretache", leather bag here with an Second Empire eagle - Right - way to wear the sword on the hook belt [8]*

From the monarchy of July 1830 the police, the guards of Paris, the Lancers (photo14), Spahis (Algerians Chasseurs), African Chasseurs, the Genius (they take the artillery model

1829 in 1845) and the Royal Cavalry school use the model 1822.



*Photos 13 and 14: left - Heroes back from Mexico in 1865 and right a Lancer with light cavalry model*

The Second Empire saw the reconstruction of the Imperial Guard: guides, artillery and "garde du corps". They received the model 1822. On October 6, 1866, saber CLe 1822 is awarded to any horse corps except the Dragons, the Cuirassiers and the Carabiniers, but that regulation will be implemented in 1875 due to War. By the time of the Third Republic the sword is more than 50 years old, suffering from Staff ideology, the fashion is now for a straight blade. Carrying the saber in a belt also became outdated in favour of wearing the sword in the saddle which became regulatory .



*Photo 15 and 16: Examples of carrying the sword on the saddle – right, saddle mdle 1904 .*

On August 22, 1882, a straight shorter sword with a one bracelet scabbard is adopted - the model 1882 is born. The light cavalry, the cuirassiers and the Dragons were equipped with the new mdles 1882, other corps were not affected. But this model is not distributed quickly and the staff decide to straighten and shorten (5 cm) the blades of 1822 Models , the bracelet is removed from the scabbard also : This is the model 1822 - transformed (T) (decision August 29, 1883). In 1887, all bracelets below of 1822 mdle are simply removed in all corps, these are known as the one bracelet 1822 model (Photo 17).

The officers have a choice in the models because their equipment is at their own expense, an officers model of Sabre 1882 is defined from July 21, 1883 – henceforth referred confusingly as the 1883 model, it is a mdle 1882 for officer, it is not really a new model!



*Photo 17: Hussar in the 1900s with one bracelet mdle 1822*

In 1896, because of the fragility of the 1882 model, the model 1896 is created - it will have no more success than the previous model - these two models 1882 and 1896 swords are regarded as "born dead" - as nothing is lost, the hilt will be used to repair some swords, especially in 1915, blades mdle 1854 heavy cavalry will be fitted with remaining 1882 and 96 hilts, it's the reason why in some period pictures, we can see this equipment for cuirassiers (1854 transformed mdle 1915) [5].

The officers are not required to wear a sword of any defined model, except for the blade, hence the emergence of many fantasy swords from private manufacturers (Nancy and Saumur for mdle 1882 (1883), Prével and Derué mdle for 1896 ...). In the early twentieth century, the sword 1822 mdle curved blade is worn, theoretically, by the officers of artillery, under the model name of 1822 mdle - modified 1899. This is a 1822 pattern officers sword with one bracelet with 3 different sizes (950, 900 and 850 mm), this sword is identified with accuracy on the back edge and was later distributed to all officers [5].



*Photo 18: Chasseurs in camp - mdle 1822 one bracelet (Autochrome 1910 Jean-Baptiste Tournassoud)*

And finally, at the start of the Great War, the saber model 1822 with one bracelet is in service with all the cavalry troops with the exception of Cuirassiers and Dragons.



*Photo 19: 1822 mdle used during WW1 in his Camouflage bag .*

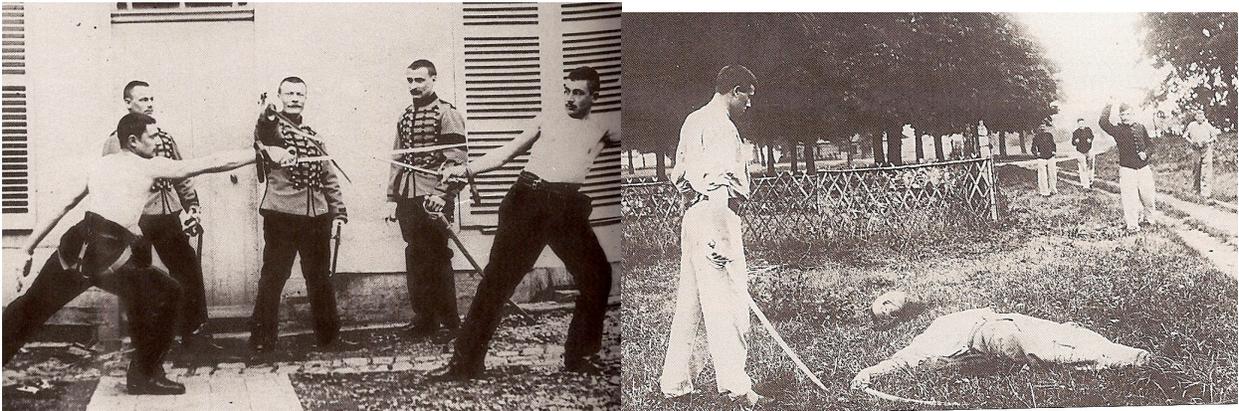
After 1914, the officers kept a straight blade and the troopers a curve one. On August 14, 1937, the 1822 mdle one bracelet is given to all the cavalry regiments including Cuirassiers and Dragons. More recently, the last Spahis (Algerian Chasseurs) during the conflict of Algeria (1954-62) will have this sword under their saddle during operations [2]



*Photo 20: Resting Spahis 1915 (Jean-Baptiste Autochrome Tournassoud) -the sword 1822 mdle is not worn hanging from the saddle but on the left side under the saddle.*

## Concluding

The saber model 1822 light cavalry, was widely used and appreciated by its users, the most tangible evidence is certainly its use in duelling, a dark and secret part of the private lives of the XIXth century. The duelling code established by Chateauvillard in 1835, stipulates that the smallsword and gun are the only weapons allowed. The sword was allowed within the military but could be rejected by a civilian or a military retirement. Military dualists were often from the cavalry, so it is not uncommon to see the 1822 light cavalry model in imagery of the period .



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**Thank you**