



## **A Renaissance Mace, South Germany, circa 1550**

Weight: 1,19 kg (including dagger; 1,03 kg without).

Length: 58,7 cm.

Length dagger blade: 25,5 cm.

Sigmaringen Inventory Number in red lacquer: 2463 7.

As a knightly weapon this mace is very richly adorned. The haft shows a spiral ornament at the grip which is similarly reflected in a second zone above. Separated by horizontal lines a third intercept follows, decorated by diamond shapes. This type of ornament is rare. A comparable piece is shown at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds (Inv. No. VIII.76).

Having a closer look at the construction, this weapon can be compared to typical 16th century all metal maces. Its haft is forged from a plate of iron, turned into a tubular shape and soldered by copper at the overlapping ends. Seven massive flanges, skilfully shaped in several swings and tapering to an acute point, are hanged into slots at the haft and also soldered. The top end is closed by a double ball finial ornament.

The haft carries inside a dagger of hollow diamond section, suitable to penetrate plate armour. This obviously was meant to serve as a so called *misericorde*, in order to deliver the death stroke to a seriously wounded opponent. However it cannot be determined whether this feature was a later addition.

According to the design of the haft and the head in particular this mace can be assigned to Oakeshott type M2 that was in use in the middle of the 16th century. However the classification by Oakeshott is not to be considered strictly selective. Many maces with varying forms of decoration are known to exist and there are transitional pieces, showing characteristics of two types.<sup>1</sup>

## **Background**

The history of the mace reaches back very far. Its forerunner was the club, having been used since the origins of humanity. In the course of millenniums it slowly developed further, finally

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<sup>1</sup> Oakeshott, E. (1980): European Weapons and Armour, pp. 62.

becoming the mace. As early as 4000 BC mace heads made of stone were used in Egypt and from about 3000 BC onwards the existence of cast bronze heads is evident.

Also in the European cultures this weapon had been very popular from the beginnings. The Bayeux tapestry dating from the 11th century shows combatants equipped with the mace at the battle of Hastings in 1066. In the course of Medieval times the mace became a highly sophisticated knightly weapon, often elegant and handsome. After riding against the opponents with the lance knights often preferred fighting with the mace instead of the sword, when the mobility was limited due to a crowded combat situation. Particularly since the introduction of plate armour the mace had proven very effective. It was now often made entirely of steel with a head constructed of several forged flanges, each tapering to an acute point at the side. The energy of a thrust thus concentrated on a small point and penetrated the iron plates.

When riding the mace was suspended from the saddle bow, hanging with the grip upward. For this purpose a ring was often fixed into the haft just above the grip or at the bottom in order to attach a wrist thong. Alternatively it ran through a thrilled whole.

Paralleling the declining importance of plate armour in battle during the late sixteenth and seventeenth century the mace came out of usage. However in its function as a truncheon it continued to be used in a simplified design until very recently.

### **Condition**

Corresponding to its high age the surface shows traces of oxidation and especially the mace head bears signs of wear and usage. It is covered by remainings of a black paint that we kept unchanged in respect of the history of this object. The iron pommel holding the dagger blade is later, the blade of hollow diamond section appears old but might be added to the mace in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Provenance**

- I. Collection Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen at Sigmaringen Castle The old Sigmaringen inventory number 2463 7 is written in red lacquer on the haft.
- II. Museum town arsenal Überlingen (Collection Friedrich Hebsacker)





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