



A Parade Partizan of the Life Guard of Duke August Wilhelm, of Brunswick-Lüneburg in Wolfenbüttel, Dated 1718, Etched and Fire Gilded.

Overall length: 258 cm.

Head length without socket: 42,6 cm.

Head width maximum: 30 cm.

The blade is of flattened diamond section, its edges run almost parallel tapering to a point in a rather flat angle. On the base it is shaped following the contour of the ducal crown, below the edges swing out widely to the sides and form four flamboyant flukes resembling stylised leaves on each side. At the origin of adjoining leaves there are circular through holes. In the centre of the head the ducal arms and crown is etched and fire gilded in the recessions. Below you can find the date 1718, on the side the inscription *August Wilhelm* and *D. G. Dux Bruns Et Luneb* (August Wilhelm, by the Grace of God, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg). The edges of the flukes are decorated with scrollwork, also etched and fire gilded. Above the ducal crown on the lower part of the blade the horse of Brunswick is depicted below another crown. Contrasting the other ornaments the etching of this figure is blackened like the waved background surrounding the horse.

On the other side of the head the horse, the scrollwork on the edges and the ducal crown with the dating 1718 are repeated. Instead of the arms there is a shield that contains the monogram *HAW II* for Herzog August II Wilhelm and below the inscription *PARTA TUERI* (knowing how to preserve your acquisitions).

Below the impressive head the blade is forged into a tapering socket decorated with turned mouldings, one wide and two narrow. Covered by the original passaments the socket extends into two langets, riveted to the octagonal wooden shaft. You can find the etching NO:12 on one of these, which might have been a number for this particular weapon. Another one is located on the edge of the head: XXV. It was common practice to number the weapons of a live guard in order to assign each one to a particular member.¹

¹ Mann, J. (1952): Exhibition of Arms, Armour and Militaria lent by HRH The Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg at the Armouries of the tower of London, p. 30, no 107 – 110 (Other examples of this group had been exhibited here).

On the lower end the shaft terminates in a conical metal ferrule that prevented the wood from wearing off when putting it on the ground.

Background

The partizan belongs to the group of polearms and originates in early 15th century Italy. *Partizan* is a term that has its roots in the Italian word *partigiana* for party supporter. Obviously mercenaries of the Italian wars of the 15th and 16th centuries had been equipped with the early types of this weapon. Its period of usage lasted until the 18th century. As a rudimentary form the so called spontoon was prevalent well into the 19th century, being an officer's sign of rank.

Like other types of arms the partizan underwent technical changes in the course of time. The original form that was also called oxtongue features a blade of arm length tapering evenly to an acute point with straight edges. At the base it was about a hand wide. In order to reinforce the head it was often forged with a midrib. While early examples predominately lacked parrying devices soon two hooks were molded at the base of the blade. In this way it became feasible to parry the opponent's attacks and a skilful combatant could also clamp the enemy's weapon and snatch it away. Like other polearms an advantage of it was keeping the adversary at a distance. In the course of the 16th century the parrying hooks became larger and the blade shorter. Officers now carried partizans as signs of rank.

An important function of this polearm was its usage by live guards of European monarchs. Suchlike pieces were flamboyantly adorned and meant to express the status and wealth of the ruler. By the 18th century these polearms served a more representative and ceremonial purpose since their practical value for the protection of the sovereign became rather limited.²

Condition

The condition of this partizan is extraordinary well. It is a stroke of luck that the passaments are preserved completely and undamaged and the head shows only slight traces of oxidation. All the etched and fire gilded ornaments and inscriptions have survived the centuries unblemished. Compared to the majority of preserved polearms our example still has the original

² Seitz, H. (1968): Blankwaffen II, pp. 216.

Müller, H., Kölling, H. (1990): Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen, p. 44.

unshortened wooden shaft that even has the ferrule. This untouched condition is owed to the provenance Schloss Marienburg, where the object had been preserved until a few years ago.

Provenance

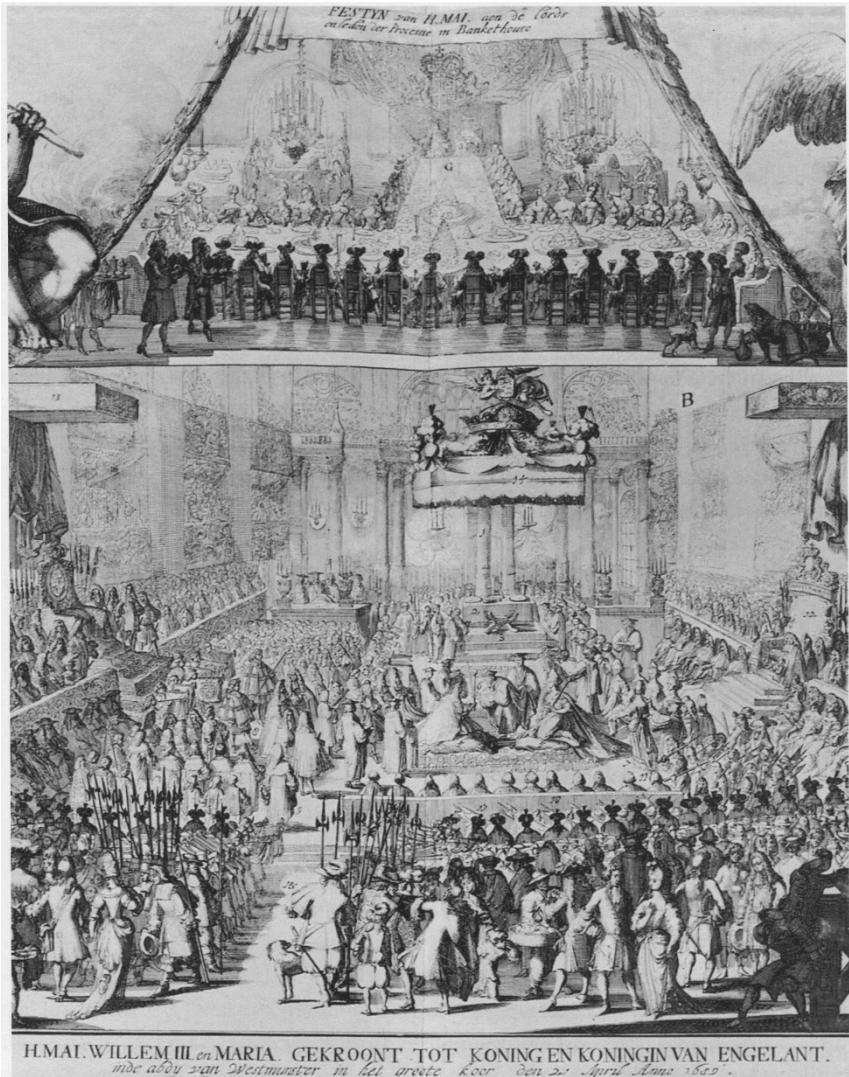
Collection of the Royal House of Hanover at Schloss Marienburg, before Schloss Blankenburg.



Assassination of Wallenstein in Eger with a partizan, 1634.

Source: Merian, M. (1639): *Theatrum Europaeum*, 1. Edition, vol. 3, pl. 7.

Examples for the use of representative polearms at courtly banquettes



Coronation banquet of William III. in London, 1689.³

³ Source: Vienna, Albertina HB vol. 17 (Wilhelm III.), 42.



Accession to power of Karl XI. of Sweden in Stockholm, 1672.⁴

⁴ Source: Das große Carrousel.



Public feast by Ferdinand I. at the Hofburg of Vienna on the occasion of a tournament in 1560.⁵

⁵ Source: Francolin, H. (1561): Thurnier Buch warhafftiger ritterlicher Thaten, pp. 25-29.



Knightly feast of the Fraternity of the Holy Spirit in Fontainebleau.⁶

⁶ Source: Bosse, A. (Tours 1604 – 1676 Paris), Paris 1633.

Literature

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