

# Dutch Ivory-Stocked Pistols

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**T**oday I wish to talk to you on Dutch ivory-stocked pistols in general and about my own collection of these arms in particular. I do this at the kind invitation of the American Society of Arms Collectors and in fulfillment of the requirements to become a fully accepted member. I should like to emphasize my pride and pleasure to have been admitted to your Society, since I am aware that only relatively few foreign people are members of this internationally renowned circle of collectors.

Before talking about pistols proper, I should like to bridge the gap caused by the necessary introductory remarks by referring to plate A, opposite, an 18th Century map of the entire Netherlands, North and South, which have always been a more or less geographical and cultural entity. This area — roughly the size of your States of Maine or South Carolina — comprises the Dutch Republic, now the Kingdom of the Netherlands (the brown area, plate B, next page), present-day Belgium, the west banks of the rivers Rhine and Ems in Germany, and the north of France from Dunkirk to Sedan.

The language border between Dutch and French ran, roughly (and it still does), from Dunkirk to Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), passing just south of Brussels.

The northern Netherlands became politically independent in 1648, at the Peace of Westphalia, after an eighty year struggle with Spain. The southern Netherlands, however, remained under Spanish, later Austrian, rule until 1795 when the French invaded the entire area.

At the end of this lecture, I will return to the political and geographical situation and try to explain the difficult situation which existed in Maastricht and Liège.

**I**t is with some misgivings that I venture to speak to you on ivory pistols since Dr. Arne Hoff in his great book, *Dutch Firearms*,<sup>1</sup> has fairly recently discussed them at length. Hoff assembled all information available to him at that time and he wrote a long chapter packed with information in his own unmistakable style.

Within the time allotted to me for this lecture I must discuss at least thirty seven pistols with ivory stocks and I certainly cannot go into much detail in every case. Some of the pistols will therefore be shown very quickly so as to enable me to say something essential on the more important pieces. For this reason I will add basic descriptions of all my ivory-stocked pistols to the printed version of my lecture in the *Bulletin* of the Society.



**R**egardless of what I have said above, I want to emphasize that any ivory-stocked pistol, no matter how I will treat it in this lecture, is important for one reason alone: that it is very rare.

I have decided to follow Dr. Hoff's classification: Hoff classifies them by the style of their butt decoration, in particular their pommel shapes. I shall return to this classification later but can tell you now that I will substitute some of Hoff's views with mine. Plate C shows part of my collection of ivory-stocked pistols and other guns.

**I** started collecting at an early age. Initially interested in arms technology, I have collected a sizeable number of international firearms, both antique and modern, over the years. During the last two decades I have become increasingly interested in antique Dutch firearms, as well as in their style and ornament. The ivory pistols are a focal point in my collection now, but this should by no means be interpreted as meaning that the Netherlands did not produce other firearms of high artistic merit and technical excellence.

The goal of this lecture is to add the results of some recent research to Hoff's findings and to correct a number of errors, all with the hope of providing the scholar and collector with the most up-to-date information in order to enable him to do further research.

**I**t must be said right from the start that the single big issue about the identification of the man or the workshop carving the pommels and the stocks still has to be solved. I have had conducted preliminary research in the archives of the town of Maastricht<sup>2</sup> in which the majority, if not all,







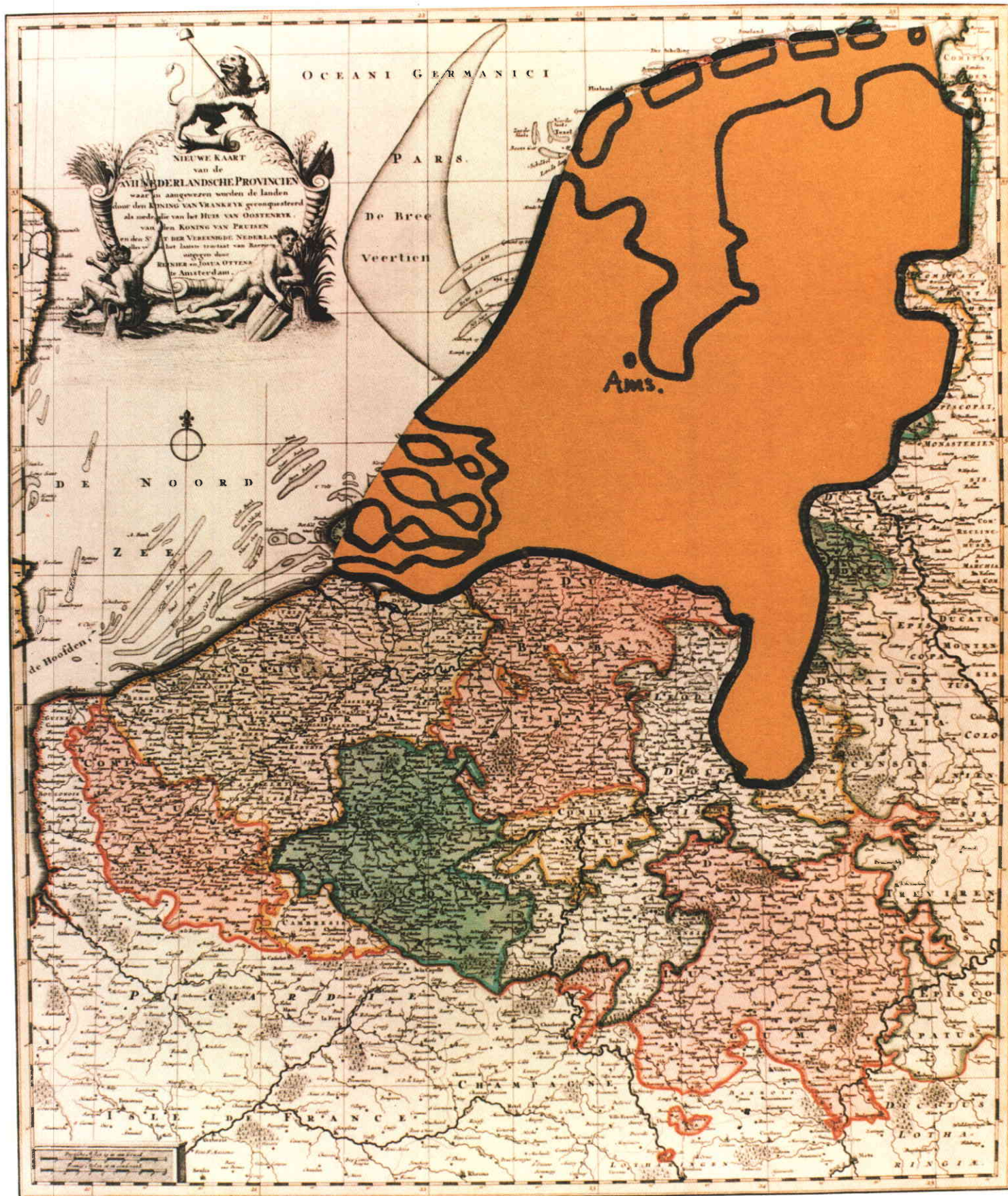


Plate B. The brown shading shows the present-day Kingdom of the Netherlands.





Plate C. The Visser ivory-stocked guns - and others - at home.



of these pistols originated, but no trace whatsoever has been found as yet on ivory carvers and merchants in ivory. However, research continues and the amount of information on firearms production in that town is already so impressive that it entirely nullifies the established opinion amongst some arms historians that the archives of Maastricht "... do not produce much on gunmaking."<sup>3</sup>

So far, approximately a hundred, or slightly less, ivory-stocked pistols are known. Most of them, not all, bear marks or inscriptions connecting them to Maastricht. Many of the barrels are stamped underneath with a combination of four big relief capital letters, a combination practically always starting with "CM."<sup>4</sup> Støckel believed that these were probably intended as some sort of quality mark, a contention which I am inclined to follow for the present. Mr. De la Haye, himself an archivist in the State Archive of Maastricht, suggested that the letters CM stand for *Civitas Mosatrajectensis*, meaning "Municipality of Maastricht."<sup>5</sup>

Støckel also pointed out that these marks were used only during a fairly short period, from approximately 1660 until 1695. It should be understood that they appear on all sorts of firearms produced in Maastricht, not just on ivory-stocked pistols, and I think that it is not difficult to prove that they already appear on pistols and guns from the 1640s.

Discussing these marks we have, at the same time, reached another important feature of the ivory-stocked pistols, namely, the relatively confined period of their appearance, ca. 1650 until some years later than ca. 1675.

It would be fine if the year 1673, when Maastricht was captured by the French and kept in their possession until 1678, could serve as a *terminus ante quem*, and that production of the ivory pistols then ceased, as Hoff suggests<sup>6</sup>, but the fact remains that a small number of such pistols can be dated until well into the 1680s.

The third important feature of the Dutch ivory-stocked pistols is that the majority of them have a pommel carved in a fully displayed man's head. This head can take several shapes, but the main form is a mustached warrior in a classical helmet. The immediate predecessors of the carved, more or less standard, heads date from the 1640s and they are on some pistols described by Lenk in his unsurpassed book, *The Flintlock*, which appeared in 1939.<sup>7</sup>

As it is, ivory was not entirely uncommon on earlier firearms and there are in existence a few ivory-stocked firearms, mostly German, from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>8</sup>

The ivory on these weapons was elephant's tusk or material with a similar appearance, like white stag's horn, but it was applied to the wooden stocks in plates or plaques. Therefore, I propose to call those weapons *ivory-*

*clad* firearms. The Dutch ivory pistols, however, were cut *entirely* from a massive ivory piece, which is why we call them *ivory stocked*.

Hoff states that the ivory-stocked pistols are generally without interesting technical features, save for a few turn-over pistols and a pair of breechloaders with turn-off barrels.<sup>9</sup> These particular pistols may or may not have been designed to have been used in earnest, a fact difficult to believe in view of the vulnerability of the ivory.

On the other hand one can be almost sure that at least some of the ivory pistols were used for shooting. This is the only logical explanation for the astounding fact that at least four pistols are known to have been transformed into percussion, although in this century they have been re-altered into flintlock ignition by collectors.

Be it as it may, we may well agree with most authors that, in principle, ivory-stocked pistols were meant as luxurious display pieces rather than for actual use. They were highly prized presentation objects and were often used as gifts to, by, or amongst royalty. Quite often they were presented as rewards to distinguished high military officers<sup>10</sup> which, incidentally, does not rule out that they may have been carried in the open in saddle holsters by persons in pageants or at other special occasions.

The two pistols in plate 1 (A & B)\* signify the growing popularity of ivory for ornamental purposes on Dutch firearms during the 1640s. This started on a modest scale in the late 1620s,<sup>11</sup> but prior to 1640 the use of ivory increased very much indeed on better quality firearms, mainly pistols.

The upper pistol is a flintlock turn-over gun by Paulus Geurtsen of Utrecht, dated on the barrel 1648. It features an all-ivory pommel.

The lower pistol is a Maastricht-made wheellock of about 1630. The end of the butt is covered by a domed ivory plate. This pistol shows the mixture of French and German wheellock styles which distinguish Dutch wheellocks from the first quarter of the 17th Century.<sup>12</sup>

Plate 1a shows the pommel plate of the wheellock pistol from Maastricht, and plate 1b the pommel of the turn-over pistol dated 1648.

The wheellock pistols shown in plate 2 (C-F) of around 1650 are certainly part of a relatively large contract; two more of this type are in the Tower of London.<sup>13</sup> The barrels are all marked *Lazarino Cominazo*. While this famous name was often counterfeited, implying that the imitation could be cheaper than barrels originally made by that famous Italian craftsman, the presence of those big ivory pommels is not likely on standard horseman's

\*The letters following a plate number refer to notes on these pistols. See page 42.



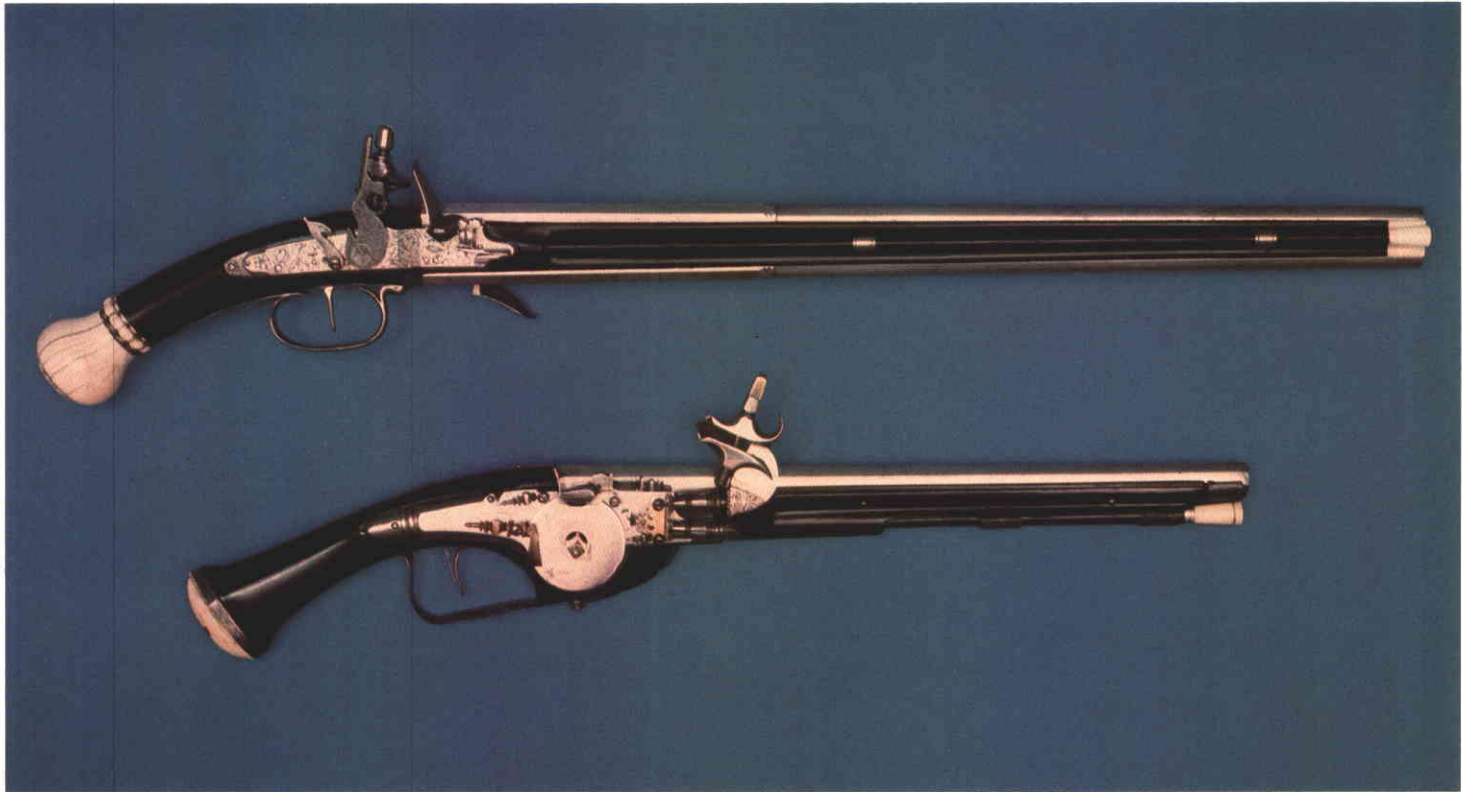
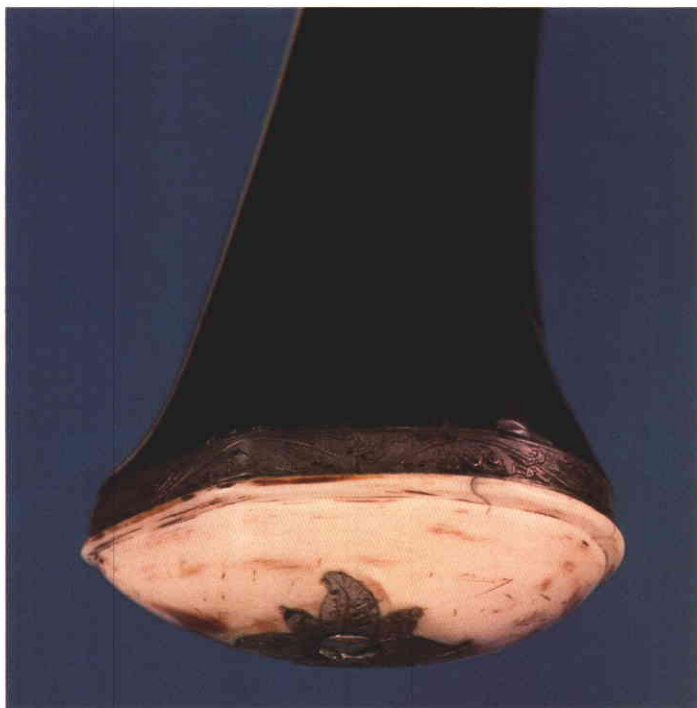
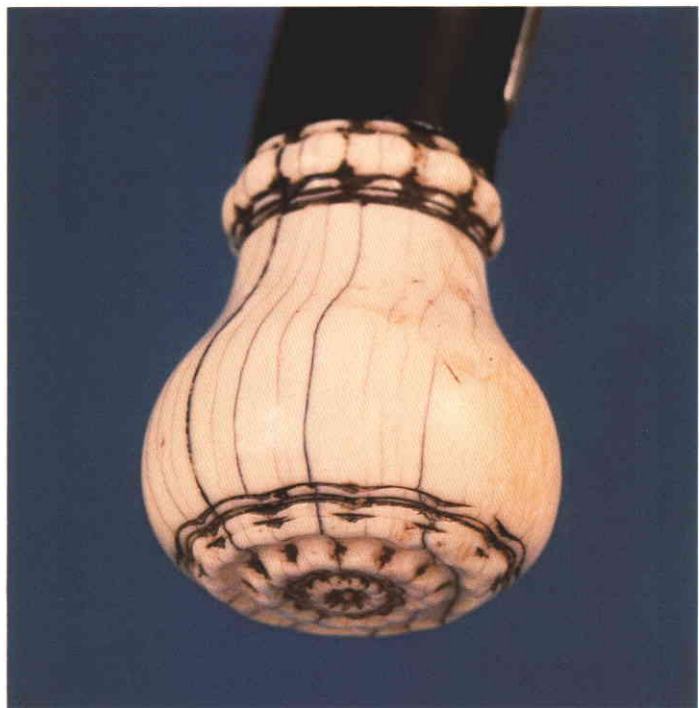


Plate 1. Upper, a turn-over pistol by Paulus Geurtsen of Utrecht, dated 1648, and a Maastricht-made wheellock gun of ca. 1630.



1a. The pommel of the wheellock pistol above . . .



1b. . . and of the turn-over pistol.



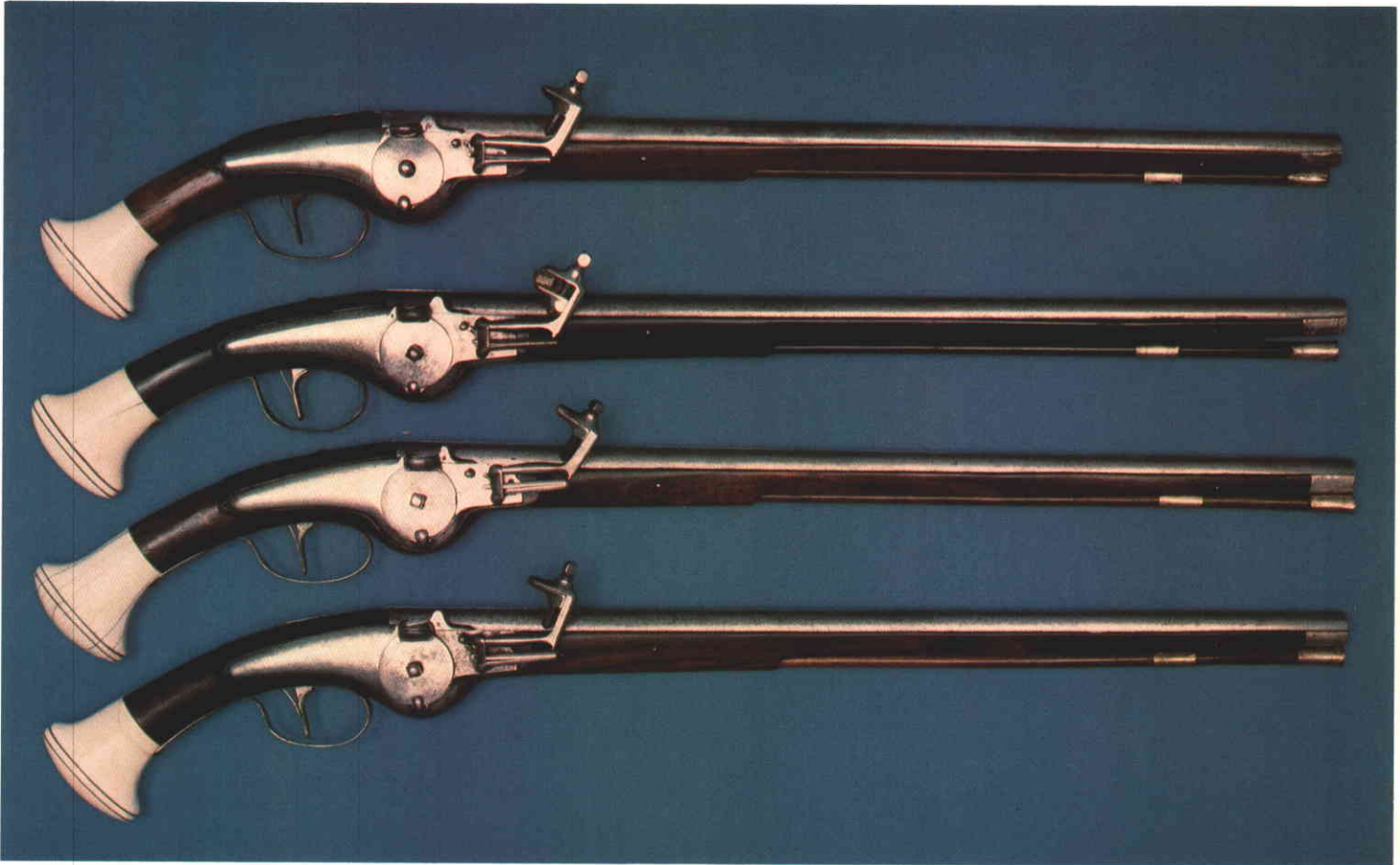


Plate 2. Four wheellock pistols of ca. 1650.

pistols. Presumably, these weapons were destined for some princely bodyguard. The pommels are massive ivory and of pointed-oval cross-section. The two other pistols, plate 3 (G, H), of the mid-1640s, are both from Maastricht. Their pommels are ivory and in the shape of flower calyxes.

The pommel of the upper pistol in plate 3 is shown in plate 3a. It is by Jan Kitsen of Maastricht. The ivory is not one piece: the upper band is a separate disc; the bands and flower petals are inlaid in the ebony stock. The pommel of the lower pistol (plate 3b) is a knob of massive ivory and the petalled effect has been reached by staining some of the areas black.

Another style of pommel enjoying great popularity, especially in the Netherlands, was in the shape of a big fully-displayed head, either natural, caricatural, or grotesque. Such pommels were mostly silver and

embossed out of a plate, but sometimes also of cast brass. The pair in plate 4 (I, J) is Dutch, probably from Bois-le-Duc which is called *'s-Hertogenbosch* or *Den Bosch* in the Dutch language. The locks are Spanish and commonly known as miquelet locks or just "Spanish locks"; the proper name, though, is *patilla* lock.

Another pair, very similar, but with French-type contemporary flintlocks, is in the Skokloster collection forming part of General Wrangel's armoury.<sup>14</sup>

By the way, "Spanish locks" were not uncommon in the Netherlands during the earlier half of the 17th Century. This is not only logical in view of the many contacts we had with the Spaniards, either belligerent or not, but these locks also had a reputation for durability and reliability.





Plate 3. Two mid-1640s pistols from Maastricht.



3a. The pommel-plate of the top pistol above . . .



3b. . . . and the bottom one.



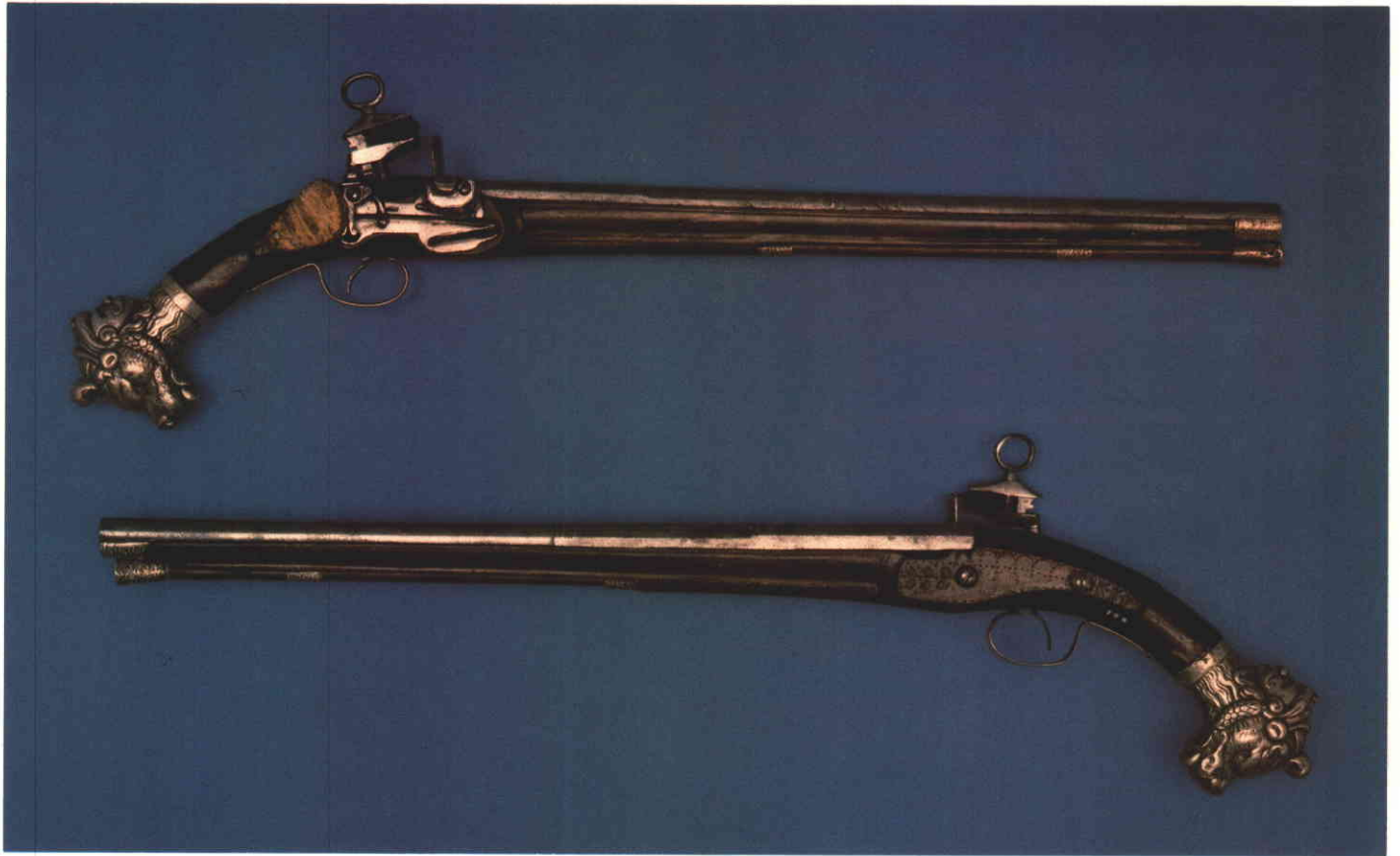


Plate 4. A pair of pistols with pommel heads of silver.



4a,b,c. A close look at the pommels of the pistols above.



I shall now return to the pistols completely stocked in ivory.

Dr. Hoff classifies them according to the shape of their pommels and I propose to follow his lead: he distinguishes five types:<sup>15</sup>

1. Heads with a helmet
2. Heads with a turban
3. Heads with a wreath
4. Rams' heads
5. Ordinary butt caps.

My own collection does not include the ram's head, of which there seem to be in existence only two specimens in all,<sup>16</sup> but from what I am about to demonstrate you will see that this classification could be extended to include at least four other types of pommels:

6. Herculean head
7. Grotesque animal's head
8. Polish Hussar's cap
9. Metal helmet

As to the *lock mechanism*, it is generally believed that practically all ivory pistols are flintlocks and that there are only two pairs known with a *wheellock* mechanism.

These are the much-publicized pair of superb wheellocks with all-ivory stocks in the Metropolitan Museum,<sup>17</sup> and another pair in the Russell Aitken collection. It is not generally known that the Metropolitan possesses yet another pair of almost equally superb wheellock pistols stocked in ivory.<sup>18</sup> To my knowledge, this other pair has not appeared in the more well-known arms literature, although one item of each pair is on display in New York.

The seventh known wheellock with ivory stock is in my own collection, and I will introduce it in a minute.

I might add also two other pistols in my collection which have lock cavities clearly cut out for wheellocks, covered by flintlocks of wheellock shape, making a total of nine known ivory-stocked wheellock pistols.

The interesting fact about the ivory wheellock pistol in my collection (plate 5; J, K) is that it should be one of the earliest made ever in ivory. The two pairs in the Metropolitan feature more round forms indicating a later date of manufacture, possibly ca. 1655-1665. I date my own pistol to ca. 1650 at the latest, at which time the production of ivory-stocked pistols is thought to have started in Maastricht.<sup>19</sup>

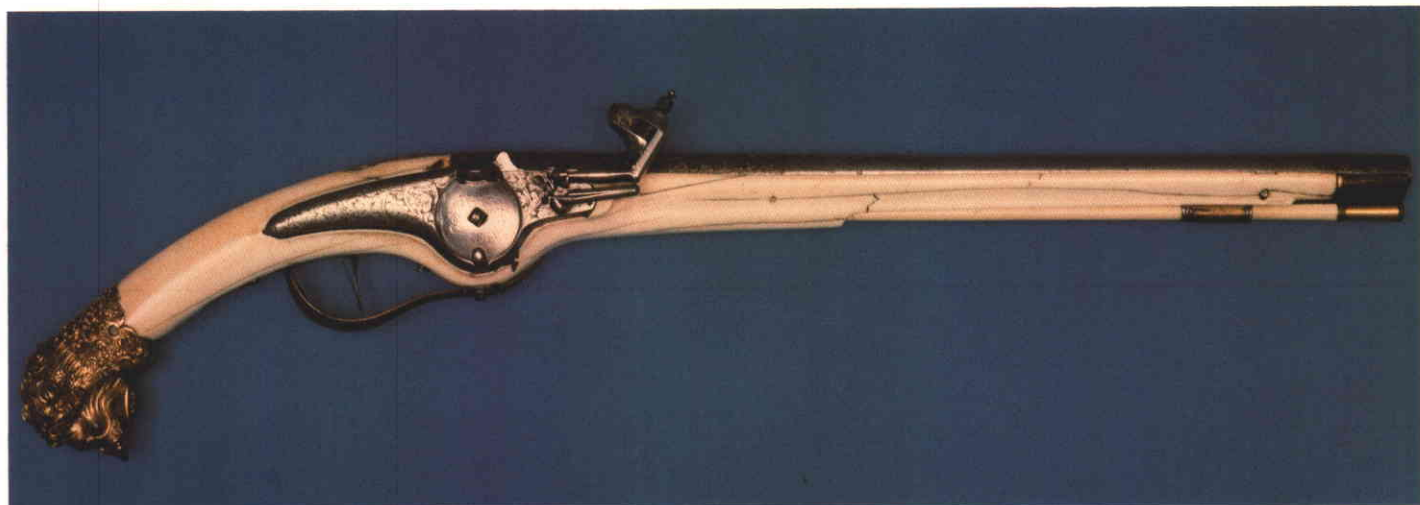
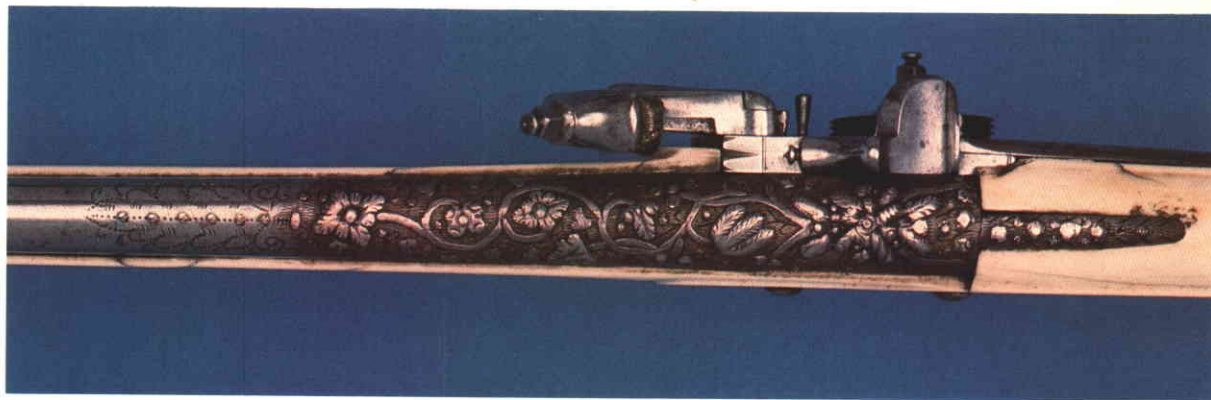


Plate 5. One of the earliest wheellocks with an ivory stock.



The lock of the gun above.





5b. The barrel of the gun in plate 5.



5c,d,e. The head on the pommel.

According to Hoff's classification, this item should be ranged among the series of ivory pistols with *ordinary* butt caps. In my view, however, it belongs to the group with the grotesque animal's heads. The pommel is shaped like a grotesque lion's head and similar pommels, either human or animal, are, as I have said earlier, not uncommon in the decade 1640-1650. Plate 5a shows the lock of the pistol in question.

The barrel (plate 5b) shows a coarse but charming kind of chiselled decoration which is fairly commonly found on Maastricht-made firearms between ca. 1645 and ca. 1660. It consists of big, raised floral scrolls of encrusted silver on a gilt ground. The bottom of the breech is stamped with a big mark in relief: CMLI, which compares well with the Støckel mark 2262.<sup>20</sup>

Incidentally, at this point I should like to emphasize the great value of the *original* Støckel books which, because of the numerical sequence in which the marks are

given, are far more useful than the new edition by Eugen Heer, despite the fact that the latter contains many more marks and references.

Plates 5c,d,e show the pommel. It is cast brass, chased and gilt, and the lionhead is in the Ceylonese fashion, although strongly stylized or grotesque. Ceylon was Dutch territory for about two hundred years and several Dutch weapons are known with Ceylonese decoration.

Plates 5d and 5e are other views of the pommel. It has been doubted by some that this pommel is original to the pistol<sup>21</sup> and that it may have been added later. I, myself, believe that the pommel is indeed the original pertaining to this weapon. I have two reasons for this supposition, *first*, the fact that this pommel fits excellently into the overall shape and curvature of the butt, and, *secondly*, that such grotesque metal pommels were quite common by the estimated manufacturing date of the pistol, as I have repeatedly said earlier.

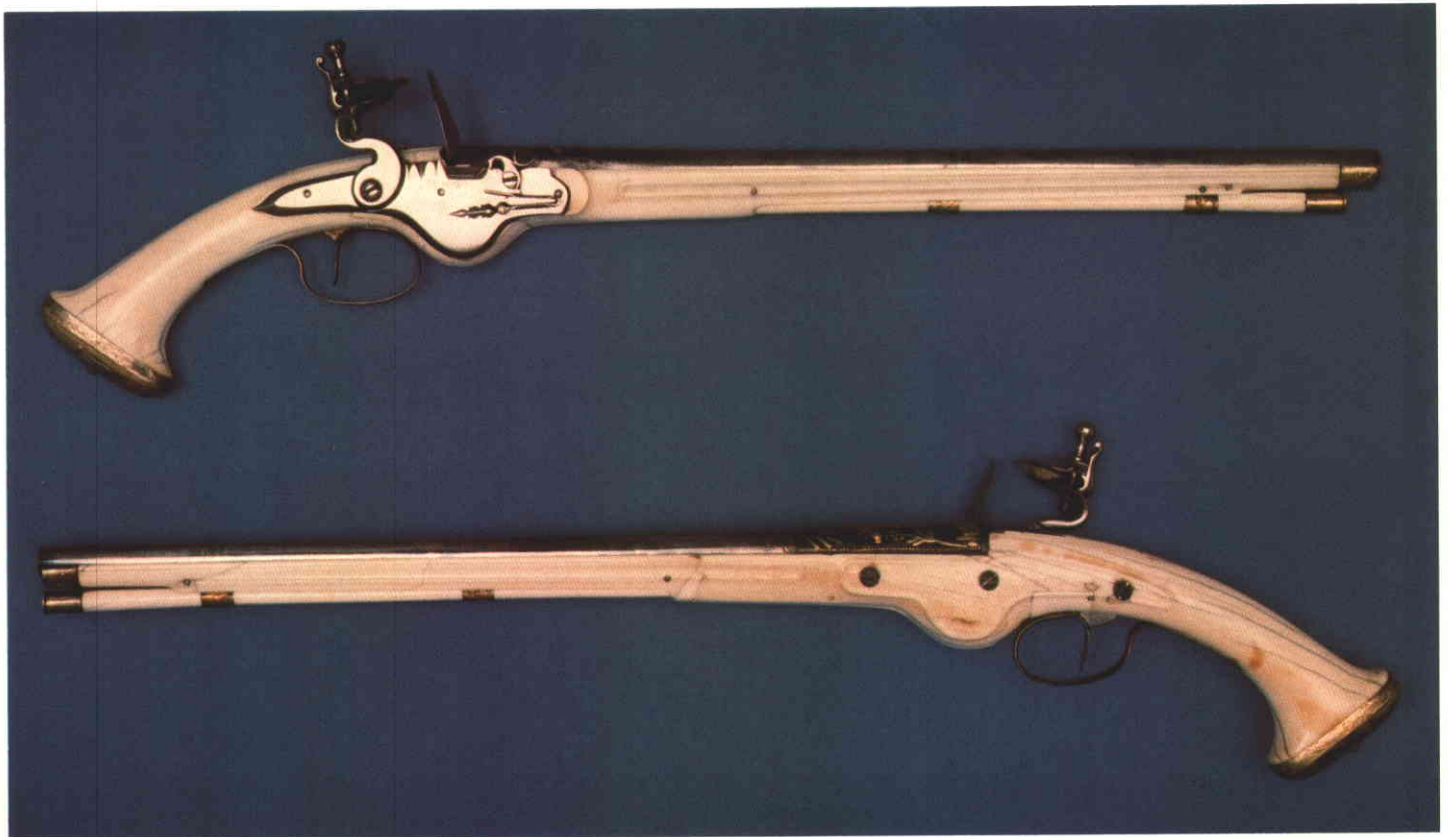


Plate 6. Ivory-stocked wheellocks converted to flintlock.

To show the stylistical link between the lionhead you just saw and the big silver pommels in the shape of grotesque heads, I refer you again to the pair with the Spanish locks discussed earlier, and shown in plate 4. The artistic quality of their pommels is less than the lion head on the ivory pistol, but the design is interesting in featuring two heads in so-called *Janus* fashion, namely, a lion's head at the front and a man's head at the rear.

The next pair of pistols, plate 6 (L, M), are interesting because they started their life as wheellocks. The butt cap is of the ordinary type, a slightly domed gilt brass plate in this case.

The closeup of one of the locks, plate 6a and b, shows a lockplate of a type which is fairly often seen, namely, a flintlock having a lockplate with a big bulge or belly on the lower border in the fashion of the wheellocks.<sup>22</sup> However, the pistols pictured here belong to a very small group having bellied lockplates that are especially constructed to cover the original wheellock recess cut in the stock.

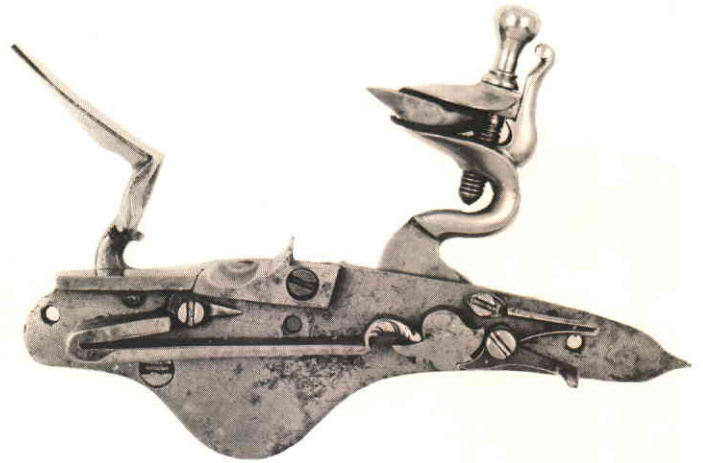
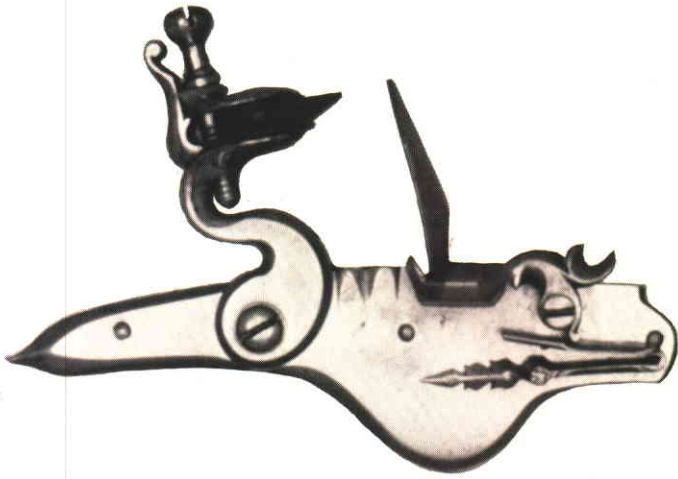
This completes the study of the ivory-stocked wheellock pistols in my collection.

As I have implied earlier, the wheellock pair belongs to Hoff's group with the ordinary pommels. I have two more pairs with ordinary pommels; one is the nice brace of pocket pistols in plate 7 (N, O). They have a band of tortoise shell around the butt; like ivory, tortoise shell was much favoured by Northwestern Europeans, including the Dutch, but one had to be able to afford this expensive and rare material. Like ivory, it came to the Amsterdam market in the holds of the Dutch Eastindiamen.

Unfortunately, these pistols are unsigned and bear no marks. The barrels are chiselled with a chevron pattern, not unlike that sometimes seen on mid-17th Century expensive Italian barrels.<sup>23</sup>

The second pair with ordinary butt caps in my collection are these pistols by Michel de la Pierre of Maastricht (plate 8; P, Q). They are not stocked as usual in elephant's tusk, but in walrus ivory, typified by the relatively heavy weight of these pistols. These are my only ivory-stocked pistols by De la Pierre.<sup>24</sup> I date these pistols to the earlier half of the 1660s, a useful *terminus ante quem* being the death of De la Pierre in 1668.<sup>25</sup>





6a.b. Exterior and interior of the flintlocks on the converted wheellocks.

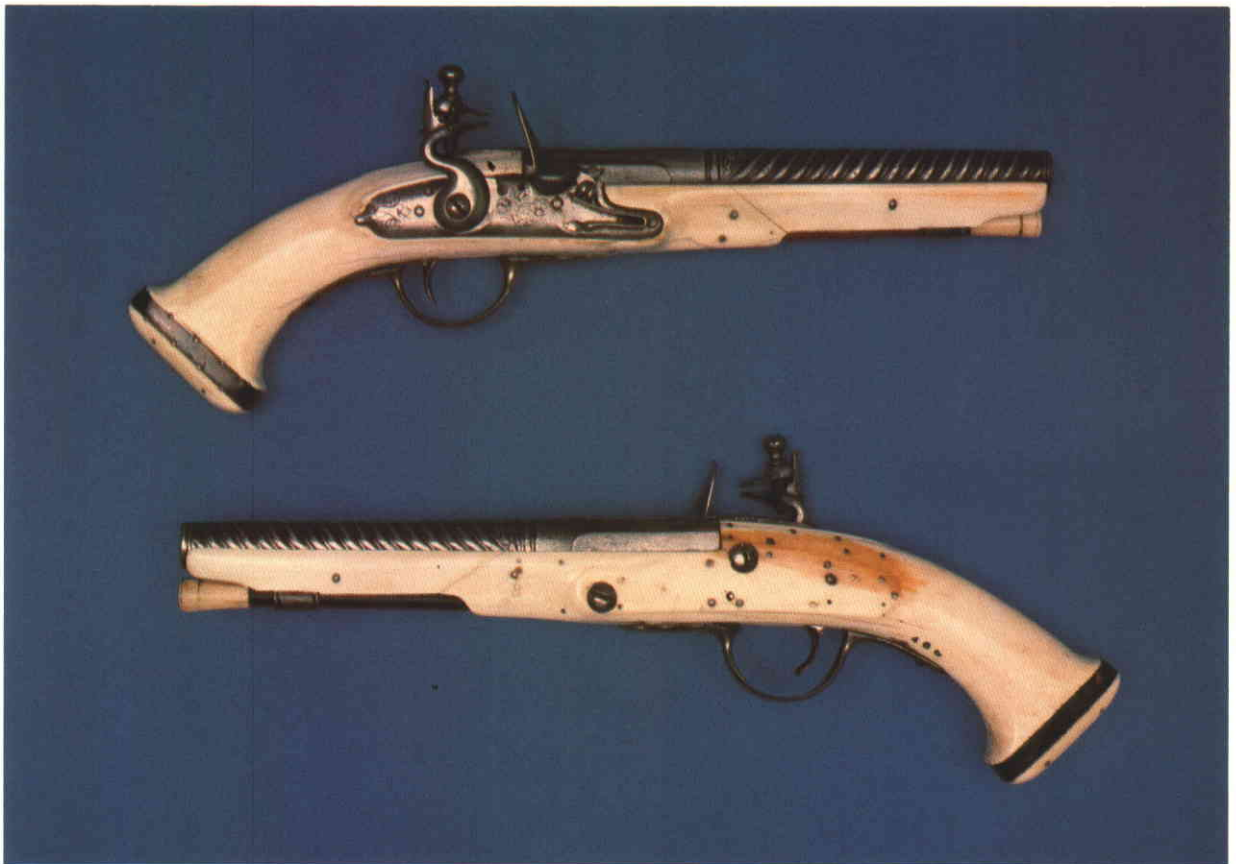


Plate 7. A pair of pocket pistols with tortoise shell around the pommels.



Plate 8. Walrus ivory-stocked pistols by Michel de la Pierre of Maastricht.



I will now discuss the pistols with the most common form of ivory pommel, that of the helmeted head. These helmets generally tend to be named “classical” or *à la classique*, meaning “in the classical fashion.” This implies a Greco-Roman headgear of, and this is important to understand a *late 17th Century Dutch baroque interpretation*.<sup>26</sup>

Essentially, this helmet has the form of a deep skull cap. There is always an upturned brim peaked at the front, and a scrolled brim at the rear; there are always sidestraps as on a real helmet.

The most basic form of the helmet just described is found on the pommels of the pair of flintlock pocket pistols, with the name of Jacob Kesters on the locks, shown in plate 9 (R, S). He and Johan Louroux were the most famous of the Maastricht gunmakers: you will see excellent proof of this in other pistols which I will bring to your attention later.

One source<sup>27</sup> has suggested that these pistols might have been made for a boy, but that would seem unlikely in my view, owing to the full-size trigger guards, which do suggest that these little pistols were intended for a grown

person. I say “person” since the recipient might conceivably have been an important lady.

The closeup of the pommel, plates 9a, b, c, show that the quality of the carving is very high, notwithstanding the basic and simple form of the helmet, and sure to have emerged from the hands of the as yet unknown “master carver,” as Dr. Hoff calls him.

It will be noticed that the cap must be called a helmet because it has cheekpieces or sidestraps, here in the shape of acanthus leaves, but the other elements which constitute a showy helmet, like plumes and a crest, are not present.

The next pair (plate 10; T, U) has slightly more elaborate helmets which I will discuss in a moment. The locks have the signature of the Dresden gunmaker, Christian Herold, who is recorded from 1661 until 1691.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding this non-Dutch signature, the similarity between the carving on these pistols and that on most others which bear Maastricht signatures and stamps is so great that, with Dr. Hoff, I am practically certain that this pair was made in Maastricht on the order of Christian Herold.



Plate 9. Flintlock pocket pistols with helmeted heads by Jacob Kesters.



9a,b,c. The pommel of one of the Kusters pistols.



Plate 10. A pair with the lockplate signature of Dresden gunmaker Christian Herold.





Plate 11. A pair with helmeted heads by Jean Louroux, ca. 1670-75.

The next pair by Jean Louroux (plate 11; V, W) has a helmet even more decorated than that on the former pair. The barrels are blued overall and the mounts are gilt brass. The date is about 1670-1675. The gilt, openwork sideplate is flat and flush with the surface of the stock. The decoration includes a tilted oval shield held by two winged creatures. The portrait of a young man is engraved on the shield and it was once suggested that this is a portrait of the Russian Czar Peter the Great.<sup>29</sup>

In 1697-1698, Peter did an apprenticeship as a carpenter at the shipyard of the East India Company in Amsterdam, an event widely publicized later and hardly kept secret at the time. At any rate, he was a famous personality of his era and he spoke to the imagination of the Dutch people and his portrait was not only frequently published but also widely known.

Major Ilgner, who first introduced the contention that



11a. Part of the sideplate of one of the guns above.

the portrait on the sideplates might be that of the Russian Czar, cannot possibly have been right since the emperor-to-be was only three years old in 1672, the latest estimated date of manufacture of these pistols. It is possible, but unlikely, that the portraits were engraved later.



Plate 12. Another pair of pistols by Jean Louroux, later than the pair in plate 11.



12a. The blued barrel from one of the guns above.

The pair in plate 12 (X, Y) came from the collection of James Ellwood Jones, Jr.<sup>30</sup> These pistols, too, are signed with the name of Jean Louroux, the famous gun-maker from Maastricht,<sup>31</sup> but the flat surfaces of the lock and some other details date them about ten to fifteen years earlier than the former pair.

A closeup of the entirely blued barrel (plate 12a) highlights many arabesques incrustated in gold.

The helmets are covered on the sides by mythological monsters, and a fully displayed little dragon serving as a crest can be seen on top of the skull (plates 12b, c, d).

The face is that of a young to middle-aged man with somewhat Slavian features bearing a cynical expression. There is a big, curved mustache as on most other heads. The back of the helmet is shaped as a grotesque mask, from the mouth of which the feathered plumes emerge.

The carving behind the barrel tang shows the raised mask of a half-man/half-ram with big, scrolled horns on either side of the strap (plate 12e).

The closeup, plate 12f, shows the flat lock. In front of the lock, below and behind the barrel tang, the stock is very elaborately carved as well.





12b,c,d. The pommel of a gun in plate 12.



12e. The carving behind the tang.



12f. The lock, with helmeted head and other figures.

With the pistols in plate 13 (AA, BB), we now arrive at the two best pairs in my entire collection of ivory pistols made by the gunmakers Kusters and Louroux. This is the Kusters pair, dateable to ca. 1675-1680, since it is almost entirely in the so-called Louis XIV style<sup>32</sup> save for the locks which immediately precede that style. The entire stock, including the pommel, is cut from a single piece of ivory.

Closeups of the extremely decorated helmet pommel (plates 13 a, b, c) show much openwork detail to the plumes which are in the shape of big leaves. The nose of the face is excessively drooped, almost in grotesque fashion. The pommel face again suggests Slavian features with a cynical expression; the last photo shows a closeup of the leaves at the back of the helmet.

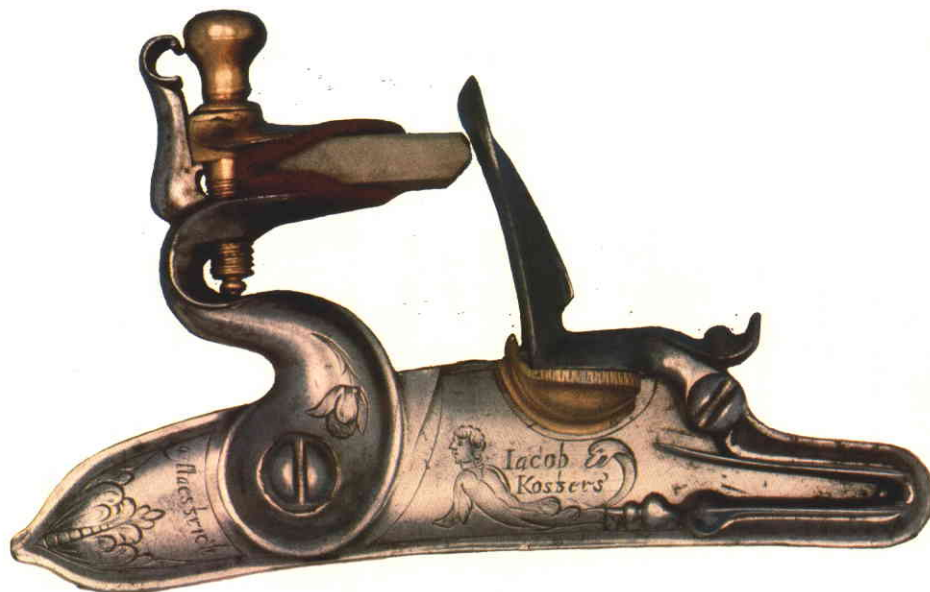


Plate 13. An outstanding pair by Jacob Kusters, datable to ca. 1675-80.



13a,b,c. The elaborate openwork on the pommels of the pistols above.





13d. A lock from the Kossers guns . . .



13e. . . . and a sideplate



13f,g. The barrel markings on the guns in plate 13.

Plate 13d is a closeup of the lock. The pan, the upper cock jaw and the jaw screw are gilt iron. The other mounts are gilt brass.

During the last quarter of the 17th Century we notice an increased use of gilt brass mounts on Maastricht and, in the early 18th Century, especially on Liège firearms. In France, however, a high quality weapon such as this would never have been mounted in gilt brass, but in iron or silver instead.<sup>33</sup>

The flat openwork sideplate, plate 13e, has a decora-

tion of symmetrically arranged scrolls and possibly some monster heads.

On top of the barrels is a flat, gilt raised rib with the inscription *EIN GROSER HELT* on the one pistol (plate 13f) and *ZIGT INS FELT* on the other (plate 13g). This is old German meaning “a great hero goes to war.” A slogan like this might, tentatively, point to the German Field Marshal Count Schwerin, who received a pair of such pistols from his commander-in-chief, the Prussian King Frederick the Great.<sup>34</sup> These pistols formerly belonged in the collection of Dr. Charles S. Hendricks.



Plate 14. Another magnificent pair with one piece stocks, these by Jean Louroux; they are also on the cover.

The second pair, plate 14 (CC,DD), is very similar to the first and of equal magnificence. The locks bear the signature of Jean Louroux of Maastricht. As you can see from the absence of a separation the stocks of this pair, too, are entirely cut from a single piece of massive ivory which includes the pommel.

The decoration of the helmet (plates 14 a, b, c) is slightly more exuberant than the already splashy details on the last-mentioned helmet. The face below the helmet shows a thin, medium-aged male; the magnificent helmet plumes are shaped and carved in the form of feathers in an extremely realistic fashion.

This pair is so much like the former that it is practi-

cally certain that they were made by the same “master carver” and that both Louroux and Kusters were his customers or, rather, his contractors.

The flat, openworked sideplate design, plate 14d, again shows a shield with the engraved portrait of a young man, also interpreted by Major Ilgner, one of the former owners of these pistols, as the head of Peter the Great. As I have said earlier, this could not have been the case.

Incidentally, the German Major Ilgner had the biggest private collection of Dutch ivory-stocked pistols before the second world war and it is fortunate that he published several articles on such items in his own collection and elsewhere.





14a,b,c. Pommel heads from the pistols in plate 14.



14d. The sideplate from one of the Louroux pistols.

The next group is that of the wreathed heads. These heads are bare save for a wide wreath of laurel leaves around them. This is a typical Baroque motif harking back to the Roman emperors and to victorious generals.

This head can be found on the pistols shown in plate 15 (EE, FF), a pair of iron-mounted flintlock pistols with ivory stocks by Kesters, dateable to ca. 1670. The underside of the barrels is marked SIMON, probably the gunmaker from Metz of that name.<sup>35</sup>

The pommel face, plate 15a, is that of a beardless young man with, again, a cynical expression emphasized by the tight lips and strong cheeks. The back of the head, plate 15c, has a neatly knotted wreath.

The downward curve of the asymmetrical tail to the lockplate, plate 15d, marks the style just prior to that of the Louis XIV fashion.<sup>36</sup>



Plate 15. Wreath-headed pistols by Kesters, ca. 1670.



15a,b,c. The wreath-headed pommels from the pistols above.





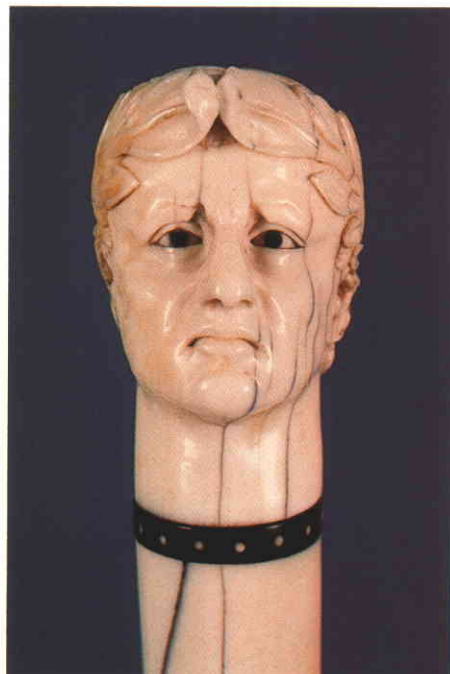
15d. A lock from the Kosters pistols, plate 15.

The next pair with wreathed heads, plate 16 (GG, HH), bears the signature of Charles Fabri on the locks. This is quite a late pair among the ivory pistols because it is dateable to ca. 1675-1680. Fabri is mostly interpreted as a gunmaker in Liège but recent archival research has proved that he worked in Maastricht.<sup>37</sup> I will explain later the common and different features among and between these two famous cities.

The single peculiar fact about these pistols is that the

pommel heads face *backwards*, instead of towards the muzzle as on all other ivory-stocked pistols.

Closeups of the backward-facing pommel head are shown in plates 16a, b. Dr. Hoff suspected that this was probably the result of a faulty restoration,<sup>38</sup> but a thorough investigation shows that the pommels must always have been attached to the grips in this fashion from the beginning. Again the face is that of a fairly young, beardless man.



16a,b, "Backward" heads from the pistols in plate 16.



Plate 16. Pistols by Charles Fabri, ca. 1675-80, with "backward" heads.



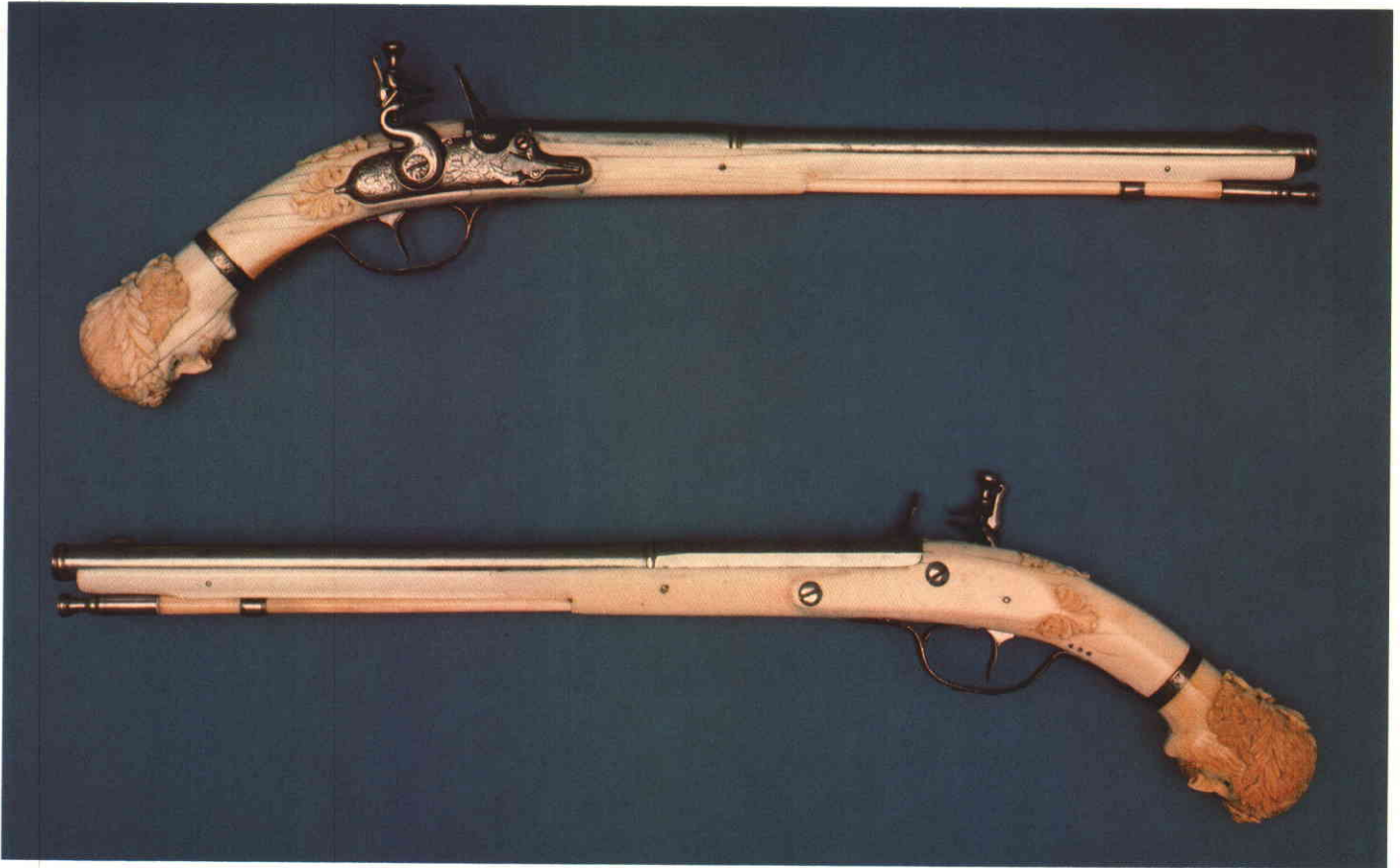


Plate 17. Laurel wreath headed pistols by Jacob Kusters, early 1660s.

**H**eads with a laurel wreath are also found on this excellent pair of flintlocks by the well-known Jacob Kusters whose name is inscribed on the barrel tangs plate 17 (II, JJ). The decoration of the wreath is more elaborate than on the former pair, featuring a big rose on the front centre.

The flat oval on the bow of the trigger-guard (plate

17a) is a typical feature on 17th Century pistols and guns from the Netherlands or in the Dutch style.

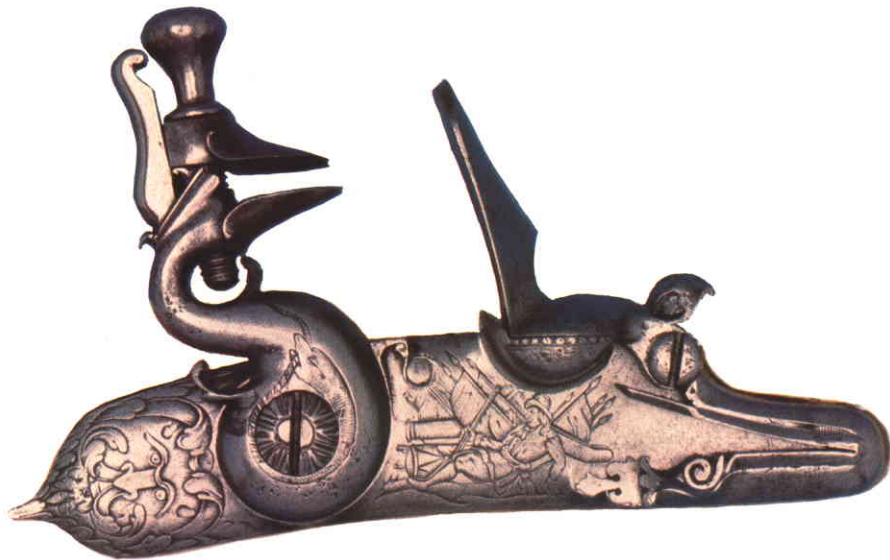
The lock, plate 17b, shows an early shape to the lockplate. It has already a convex surface, but the tail is still broad and symmetrical with the finial exactly in the centre, implying a manufacturing date of the early 1660s.



17a. The oval on the trigger guard and rose on the wreath of the guns of plate 17.



Plate 18. Leonard Cleuter pistols, mid-1660s, described overleaf.



17b. Note the elaborate decoration on this lock from plate 17 (left).





18a,b,c. Pommels of the Cleuter guns in plate 18.



18e. The barrel engraving.



18d. A lock from the Cleuter guns.

The fourth and last pair of ivory pistols with wreathed heads in my collection (plate 18; KK, LL) is also my best among this sub-group. This pair bears the signature of Leonard Cleuter, who was a gunmaker of Liège nationality working in Maastricht from about 1660 until 1700.<sup>39</sup>

The side view of the pommel, plate 18a, shows the beautiful and realistically carved man's head, and the long, thin face is muscular, especially downward from the lower jaw and around the nose, rendering the overall expression a rather severe one (plate 18b). The wreath, plate 18c, is knotted at the back in a big festoon.

Plate 18d is a closeup of the lock with its convex surface; it is entirely relief engraved with foliate scrolls. The tail of the lockplate is beginning to taper off, but is still symmetrical and so dates the lock to the mid-1660s. The relief chiselling on the breech is *en suite* with the lockplate (plate 18e).



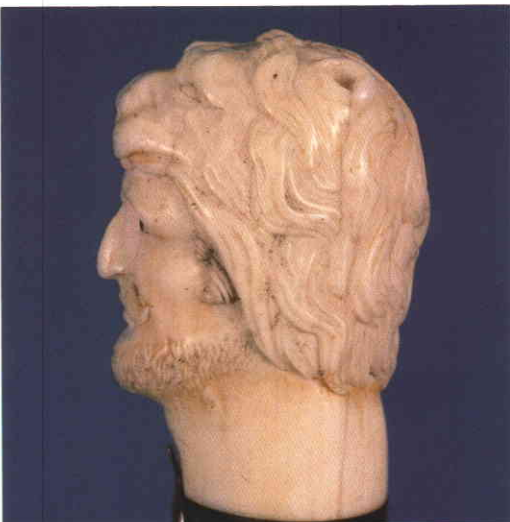
Plate 19. Hercules headed pistols by Charles Fabri.

This next pair, plate 19 (MM, NN), is the only one known with an ivory pommel in the shape of the head of Hercules, but I must admit that there is one other pair in existence with a similar pommel decoration, although in that case the ivory head is covered by a gilt metal cap.<sup>40</sup> This is the second pair signed Charles Fabri in my collection.

The pommel, plates 19a, b, shows Hercules, a bearded

man covered by the upper jaw and head of the Nemean lion. The neck is thick and strong, as one should expect with such a powerful man.

Dr. Hoff interpreted the back of the pommel, plate 19b, as a “thick crop of hair,”<sup>41</sup> probably on the basis of photographic evidence. However, this is not Hercules’ hair, but clearly meant to represent the mane of the Nemean lion.



19a,b. Hercules looks outward . . . and downward to show the lionskin.





Plate 20. A pair of Leonard Cleuter, ca. 1665-70, with grotesque animal's head pommels.

The pair in plate 20 (OO, PP) is representative of the type featuring a pommel with a grotesque animal's head. The locks are signed by Leonard Cleuter.

You will notice that the forestocks are shortened, but instead of adding new fore ends, an unknown 18th Century restorer has neatly finished the breaks by adding some extra carved decorations on his own. At the same time a new ramrod pipe must have been added, neatly shaped and brazed to the underside of the barrel, since it was no longer hidden from sight.

The pommels are really one of a kind. They consist of a camel's head with a grotesque mask in Janus fashion on

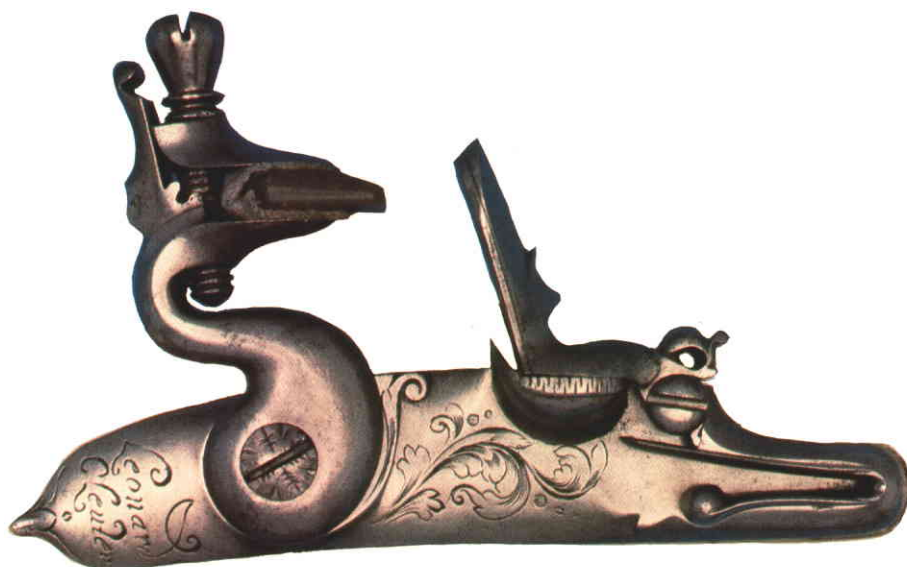
the back. You will also notice on the top an almost fully displayed froglike monster (plates 20 a, b, c,).

The carving on these pistols is of the utmost quality and it was almost certainly executed by the "master carver" too. Nevertheless, this very pommel design was the cause for these pistols to be removed and sold from the collection of the Bavarian Nationalmuseum in Munich in 1933, with the argument that they were considered to be "Degenerate Art."<sup>42</sup>

The locks, plate 20d, with round surfaces, show the beginning of a slight asymmetrical shape to the tail of the lockplate, which puts the date to ca. 1665-ca. 1670.



20a,b,c. The camel face and frog in profile, the camel face, and the man's face, all on the pistols in plate 20.



20d. A lockplate from the Cleuter pistols.





Plate 21. Ivory-stocked pistols with metal helmets by Leonardus Graeff ca. 1665-75.

Pommels with metal helmets are shown on this pair of flintlocks signed *Leonardus Graeff Aquisgrani* and the probable date of manufacture is 1665-1675 (plate 21; QQ, RR).

Aquisgrani is Latin for Aix-la-Chapelle, or Aachen in German, and to those who immediately say that these are “thus” German pistols, I should like to point out that Aachen is only twenty miles from Maastricht and that these pistols are generally in the Dutch fashion. However, they must have been made by a craftsman differing from the elusive, so-called master carver since the style and execution of the carving is entirely different.

Closeups of one of the pommels are shown in plates 21 a, b, c. The helmet is gilt metal. A fully displayed silver lizard serves as a crest. The face shows the good quality of the carving but also a style completely differing from that

we have seen by the “master carver” earlier. On the back of the stock, please note plate 21c, the metal band separating the pommel from the grip moulded in the shape of a silk scarf.

The barrel, plate 21d, completely blued, is beautifully decorated with classical motifs incrustated in gold. The other side of the stock, plate 21e, does not feature a sideplate, which is unusual for the estimated date of manufacture (prior to 1675), but the beaded border will be noticed. A beautifully carved grotesque mask is on the underside of the stock (plate 21f).

The other pair in this style and execution, and signed by Leonardus Graeff as well, is in the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>43</sup> The main difference with these pistols is that the helmet is shaped like the lion’s head of Hercules.



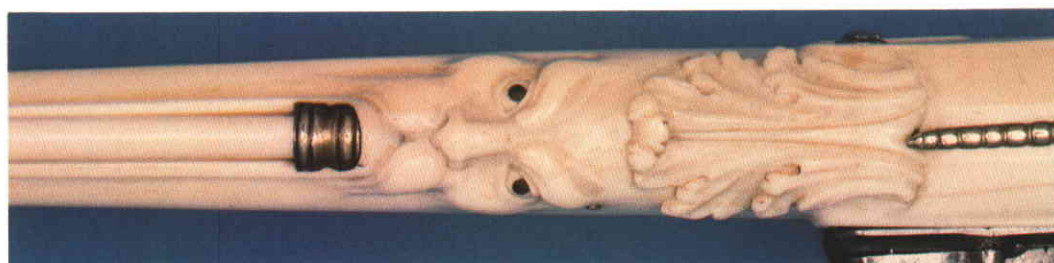
21a,b,c. One of the pommels of the Graeff pistols.



21d. A blue-and-gold barrel from the Graeff pistols.



21e. The stocks do not have a sideplate . . .



21f. . . but the forestock stocks have grotesque masks.



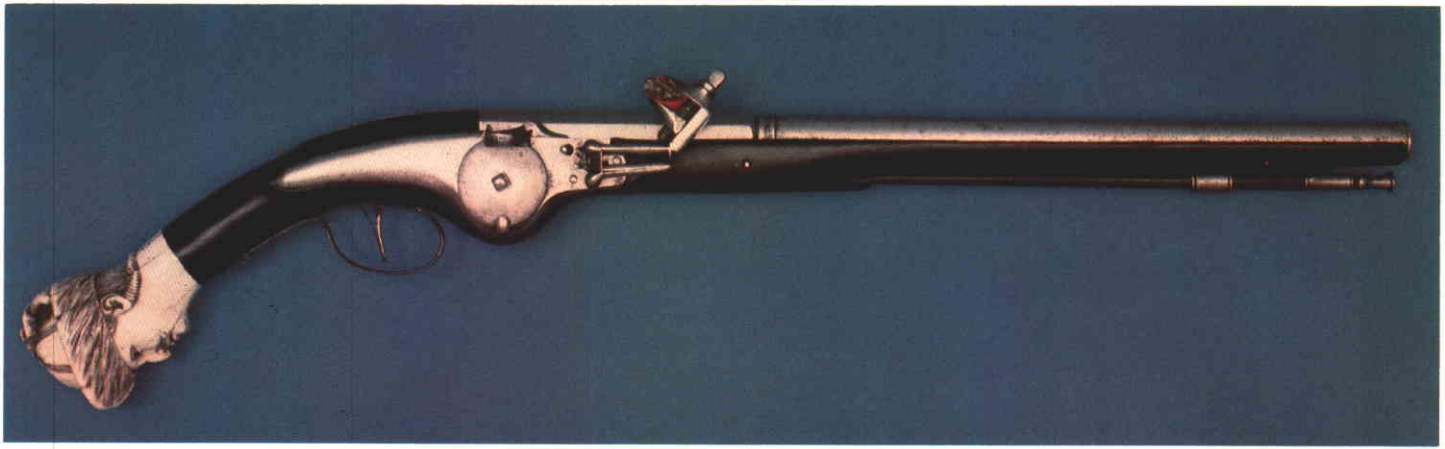


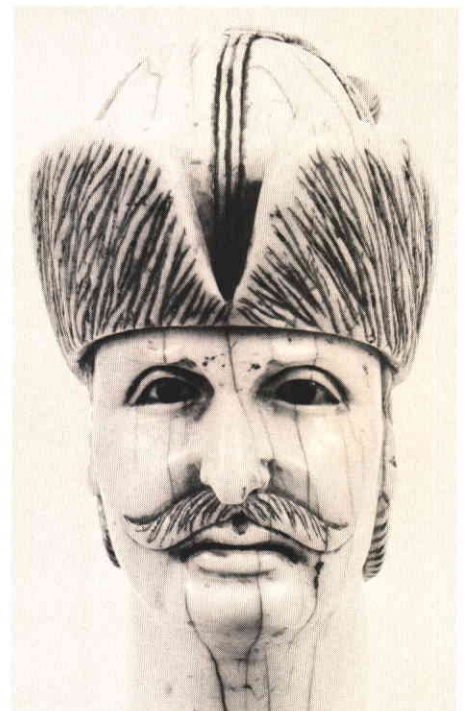
Plate 22. A wheellock with an ivory pommel shaped like a Polish hussar's head.

There are three pistols in my collection which feature ivory pommels in the shape of Polish hussar's caps. They are of such high quality that, again, they could have been made by the "master carver."

As to the carved heads in general, it is very likely that the pommels were carved and sold by one person only and that they were also attached to *wooden-stocked* pistols. This would support Hoff's contention,<sup>44</sup> namely, that the

so-called master carver was an independent craftsman who either made only the pommels or carved both pommels and stocks. It is also possible that there existed a workshop turning out the stocks.

The wheellock pistol shown in plate 22 (SS), has a pommel in the shape of a soldier wearing a Polish hussar's cap.



22a,b. The pommel of the gun in plate 22.



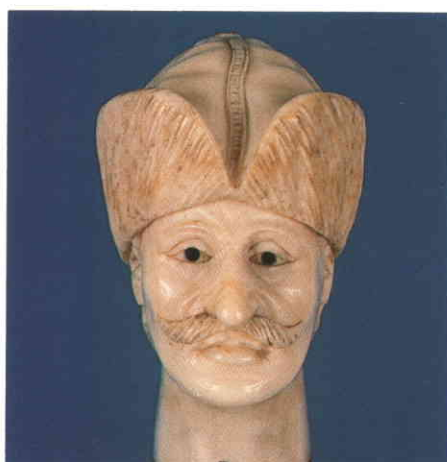
Plate 23. A pair of turn-over pistols with ivory hussar's heads.

Such pommels are also found on the pair of double-barreled turn-over pistols, plate 23 (TT, UU). One of the heads is seen from the side in plate 23a, and the same head is seen from the rear in plate 23c.

The last type of ivory pommel is shaped like a Turk's head. The one in plate 24 (VV) is on a flintlock pistol with

a rifled, turn-off barrel. It was probably made in Maastricht in the early 1660s. Although obviously not made by the "master carver," the head (plates 24a,b,c) is a very realistic Turk's head, albeit a bit grotesque.

The ivory-hilted dagger shown in plates 25, 25a,b, (WW) features a very similar Turk's head.



23a,b,c. Pommels from the turn-over pistols above.





Plate 24. A rifled pistol with turn-off barrel and Turk's head pommel.



24a,b,c. The Turk's head pommel of the rifled pistol above.



25a,b. Close-up of the Turk's head showing its similarity to the one on the pistol.



Plate 25. An ivory-hilted dagger with a Turk's head similar to the one on the pistol opposite.



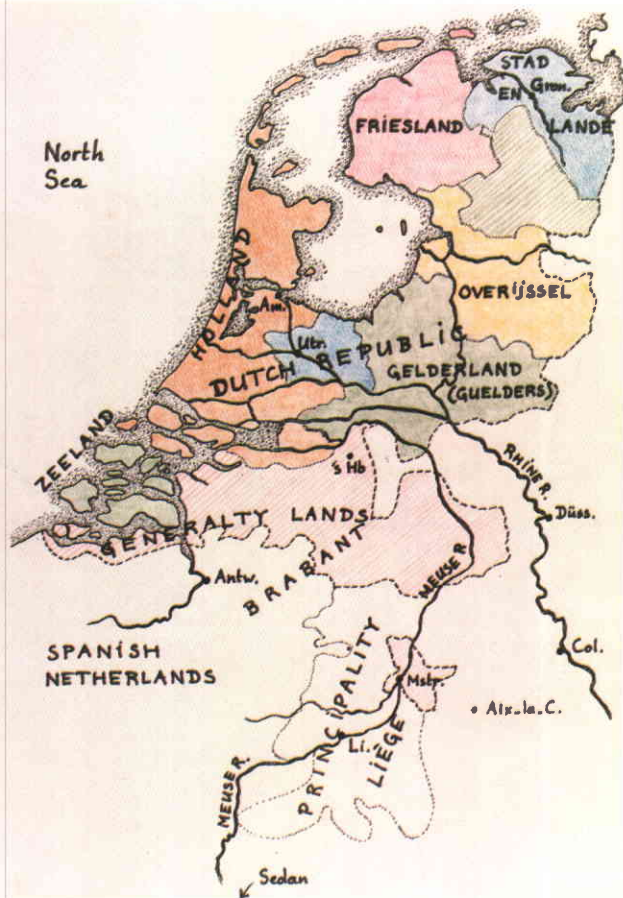


Plate D.

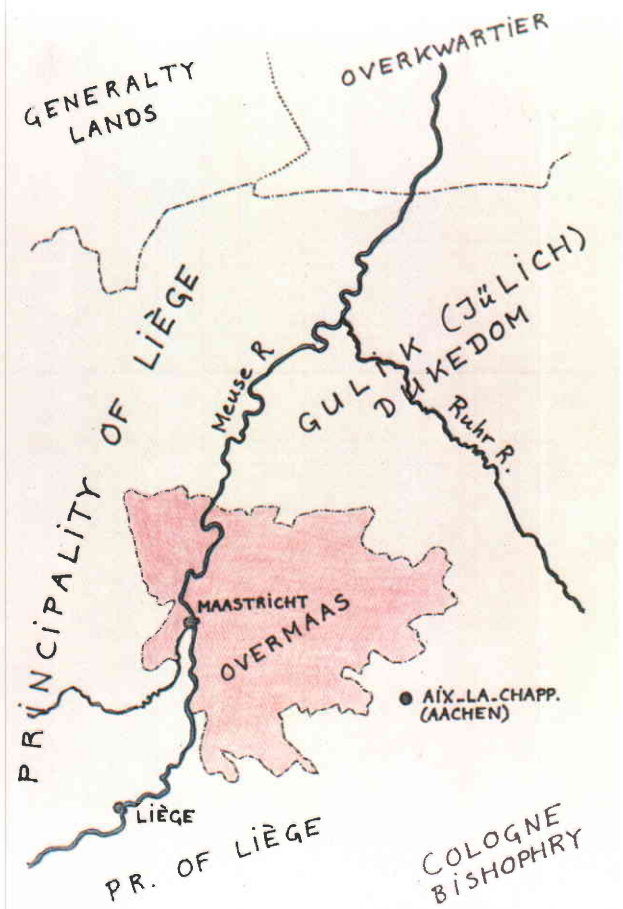


Plate E.

Before terminating this lecture I should like to explain the rather complicated territorial situation around Maastricht.

On the map of the Republic of the Netherlands (plate D) you can see the Seven United Provinces as they were around 1650, just after the peace with Spain in 1648. The geographical Netherlands were far bigger and included in total seventeen provinces under consecutive Burgundian, Hapsburg and Spanish rule. With regard to political, military and cultural radiation beyond the borders, the Netherlands were even bigger. But after the peace in Westphalia in 1648 the Northern Netherlands, the Republic, remained independent and the Southern Netherlands stayed under Spanish and Austrian rule right up to 1795, when the French invaded the Netherlands.

However, despite this geopolitical situation the Maastricht-Liège area was in a more or less different position. There is no question that Maastricht was a Dutch town. The land of Overmaas, of which it was the capital, was chiefly under Spanish influence.

You can see in plate E that Overmaas was separated from the remainder of the Republic and it is this very isolated position of that province and of Maastricht itself that gave this town so much leverage in selling its products to all warring parties in Europe, friend or foe alike.

The case with Liège, plate F, lying only thirty miles upstream on the Meuse, was something similar. Liège was a city under four different rules, and it was simultaneously capital of the Principality or Prince-Bishopry of the same name. It could be considered as a more or less independent land within the territory of the Spanish Netherlands and although French-speaking and Catholic, the Prince-Bishopry and especially the town of Liège were, on the whole, in support of the Dutch struggle against Spain and of the ensuing Dutch Republic.

This situation is by no means unique and quite comparable to small enclaves within or between big political blocks in our own century, where both parties profit from the existence of a centre where certain deals can be made, for instance relating to the purchase of arms.

Some example of tolerance emerging from a keen understanding of the widespread political and economical possibilities at hand!!

To make matters even more intricate, *part of Maastricht belonged to the Principality of Liège*, and quite a number of gunmakers and firearms dealers living in that part of the town were of Liège nationality, as it is literally stated in many birth and marriage certificates kept in the archives of Maastricht. If they had to appear in court, they came under Brabant law which was in force in the Liège area.

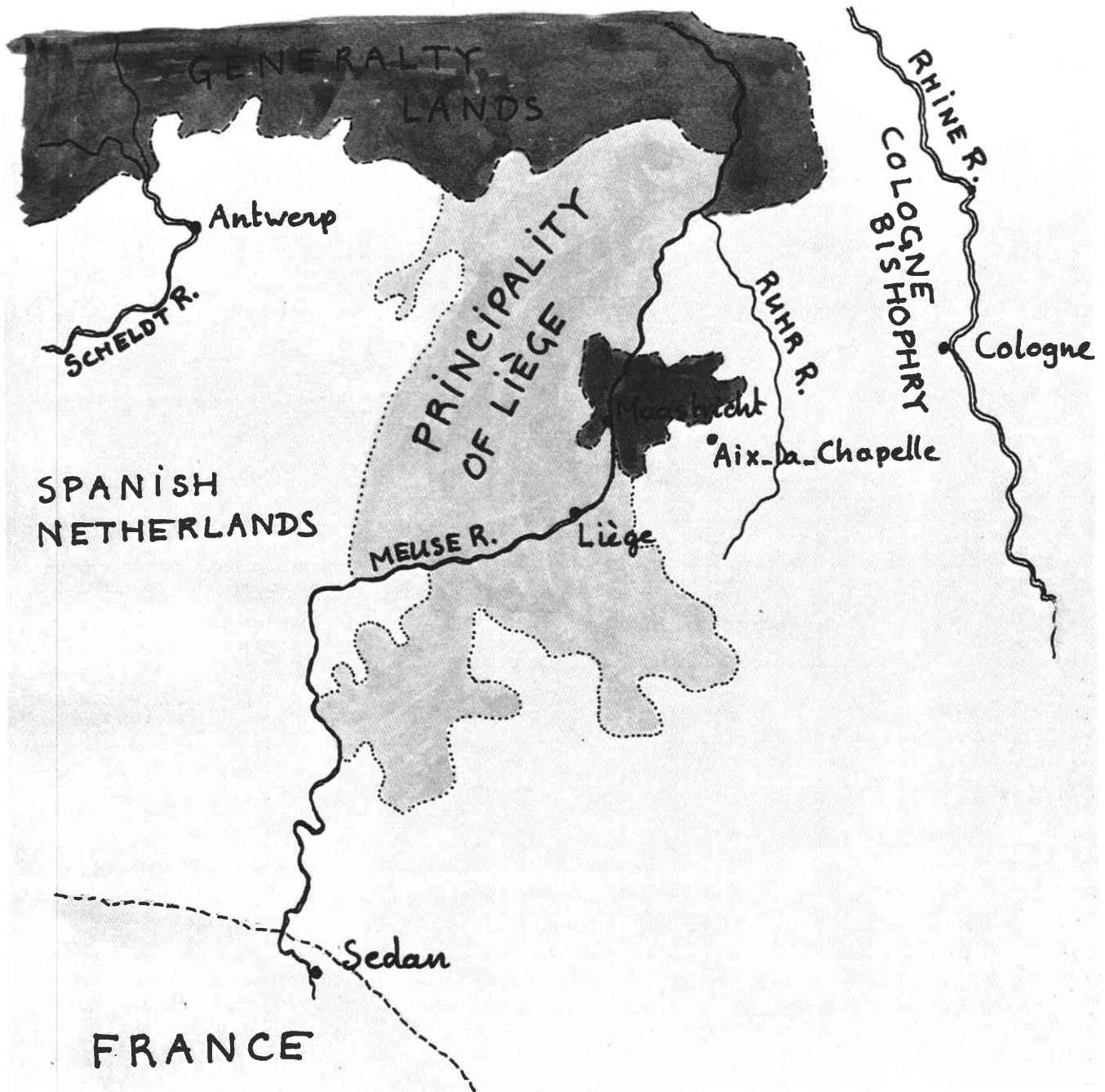


Plate F.

Finally, it may be useful to emphasize the point that before the 1830s, there existed no country by the name of "Belgium," an error quite often made when identifying firearms made before that time in Liège and other present-day Belgian cities.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken too long of your time already, and in order to stop your brains from getting

clogged any further with the intricacies of the Maastricht and Liège history — which even most of the Dutch are quite unaware of — I will bring this lecture to an end, but not before thanking Mr. Puype from the Maritime Museum of Amsterdam for his research and Mr. Van der Mark from the former Army Museum in Leiden for his excellent pictures.

## Notes on the Text

1. See bibliography.
2. I am indebted to Mr. J.H.J. Gulikers, retired archivist of the Maastricht State Archive for his preliminary search of the Maastricht archives for gunmakers of the 17th Century, as well as Mr. J.P. Puype of the Scheepvaart Museum, Amsterdam, for his intermediary in this.
3. For instance, see Haye, De la, p. 67, demonstrating the fallacy of this remark.
4. See Stockel II p. 528-529 for a discussion on these marks.
5. Personal communication by Mr. J.P. Puype.
6. Hoff p. 202.
7. Lenk p. 74-75.
8. Hayward I, No. 112, 113, 140, 145.
9. Hoff p. 203.
10. Hayward II, p. 119, Lenk p. 76.
11. Hoff p. 202 note 2.
12. Hoff p. 36.
13. No. XII: 1267 (Hoff p. 41).
14. Nos. 5745/5746 (Meyerson/Rangström p. 281-282).
15. Hoff p. 203 ff.
16. Hoff p. 216-217.
17. No. 14.25.1432 a & b (Nickel/Pyhrr/Tarassuk p. 152-153).
18. No. 32.75.143 a & b. I thank Mr. J.P. Puype, who investigated these pistols in New York, for this information.
19. Hoff p. 202
20. Stockel II, p. 543. Cf.: St. 2134, 2206, 2259-2264. See also note 4.
21. Lakenhal No. 129 (text by Drs. R.B.F. van der Sloot).
22. For an account on the historical and typological origin of this type of lockplate, see Puype (*in progress*).
23. Compare the barrels on a pair of Brescian wheellock pistols of ca. 1640-1650 in the former Von Kienbusch collection, No. 679 (Hayward I, No. 158), as well as on a pair of snaphaunce pistols from the same city in the Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 2424-1855 (Blair No. 112).
24. For a thorough, recent study on De la Pierre based entirely on archival research, see Haye, De la, *op.cit.* Michel de la Pierre was the stepfather of another Maastricht gunmaker, Joost de la Haye who, in turn, was the ancestor of a whole dynasty of well-known gunmakers in that city.
25. Haye, De la, p. 68.
26. For further remarks on this type of helmet, see Ilgner, *passim*; Philippovich, *pass.*; Hoff p. 203-212 & 220; Sloot, *pass.*, and Hayward II p. 119.
27. Lakenhal No. 136.
28. Heer/Stockel I, p. 524, and Katalog Dresdener Büchsenmacher p. 66.
29. Ilgner (1934) p. 288.
30. Bourne No. 103 & pl. I-III.
31. Recent archival research, however, has brought to light that Louroux considered himself a dealer rather than a gunmaker (information supplied by Mr. J.H.J. Gulikers in a letter dated 8.VIII.1985). It should be realized that this distinction is a rather theoretical one since most, if not all, prolific gunmakers were always dealing in firearms and since, although a given pistol or gun only emerged from his workshop in a finished form, its parts were very frequently supplied by sub-contractors.
32. Lenk p. 103.
33. Hayward II, p. 40.
34. There seems to have been a misunderstanding both by Hoff (p. 208) and by Dexter (p. 41) regarding the proper meaning of the barrel inscriptions, since each of them mentions the other inscription without discussing the complementary text.
35. Heer/Stockel II, p. 1172
36. For a comment on the typological origin of this type of lockplate, see Puype (*in progress*).
37. Information supplied by Mr. J.H.J. Gulikers in a letter dated 8.VIII.1985.
38. Hoff p. 216.
39. See note 37.
40. Metropolitan Museum No. 14.25.1408 a & b. I am grateful to Mr. J.P. Puype for supplying me with this information.
41. Hoff p. 216.
42. Alleged by Dexter, p. 41, and by Lakenhal, No. 134, but so far not yet corroborated by the museum in question.
43. See note 40.
44. Hoff p. 220-221.

## Notes on the Pistols Shown and/or Mentioned

The references A to Y and AA to WW in the text indicate the pistols mentioned below, of which a basic description is given in each case. The marks and signatures are described exactly, i.e. in the way they actually appear on the pistols. The measurements are given in millimeters and denote: overall length/barrel length/bore. When pairs are concerned, the measurements refer to the first item in the pair.

- A Visser No. 82. Flintlock double-barrelled turn-over pistol. Iron mounts. Inscribed on both barrels PAVLVS GVORTSEN TOT VTRECHT AO 1648. 687/492/11.3. Ref.: Hoff p. 92, Lakenhal No. 27.
- B Visser No. 6. Wheellock pistol, 1620-1640, Maastricht. Silver mounts. An S is engraved on the wheel surface. Top of breech: 574 (stamped twice). 531/345/12.9. Ref: Lakenhal No. 230.
- C-F Visser Nos. 15-18. Wheellock pistols, ca. 1650, Maastricht. Silver & iron mounts. Engraved on the breeches LAZARINO COMINAZO. 700/509/13.4. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 11, Hoff p. 41.
- G Visser No. 70. Wheellock pistol by Jan Kitsen, Maastricht, ca. 1650. Silver mounts. An O is engraved on the wheel surface. Top of breech: I and K (H/St. 7740) and crowned rose (cf. St. 5765). 683/489/14.2.
- H Visser No. 85. Flintlock pistol ca. 1645, Maastricht. Silver & iron mounts. Bottom of breech stamped with a pointed leaf. 693/493/12.7.
- I-J Visser Nos. 207/208. Pair of flintlock (*patilla*) pistols ca. 1650, Bois-le-Duc ('s-Hertogenbosch). Spanish locks and barrels, silver mounts. Stamped on face of frizzle: .R./CAS/TAN, on top of breech: COMA. 610/432/13.8. Ref.: cf. Meyerson/Rangström p. 281-282.
- K Visser No. 74. Wheellock pistol with ivory stock, ca. 1650, Maastricht. Gilt brass mounts. Bottom of breech: C.M.L.I. (cf. St. 2262). 611/423/13.8. Ref.: Hermann p. 168 No. 274, Lakenhal No. 129.
- L-M Visser Nos. 441/442. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1655-ca. 1660, Maastricht. Gilt brass mounts 616/429/13 (both). Ref.: Dexter p. 80, Lakenhal No. 127, Hoff p. 220.
- N-O Visser Nos. 485/486. Pair of flintlock pocket pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1655, Maastricht. Iron mounts. 280/160/10.4. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 128.
- P-Q Visser Nos. 481/482. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1660-ca. 1665. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates *De la Pierre/Maestricht*. Bottom of breech: St. 3220 & 2263. 466/304/14.2.
- R-S Visser Nos. 449/450. Pair of flintlock pocket pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1665-ca. 1670. Iron mounts. Engraved on the locks *J. Kesters/a Maestric* ("a Maestri" on 450). 273/150.5/9.6. Ref.: Hoff p. 209, Lakenhal No. 136.



# Bibliography

- T-U Visser Nos. 470/471. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1670, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates *Cherold*. Bottom of breech: St. 3220 & a row of three beads. 451/284/11.5. Ref.: Lavin p. 70-71, Hoff p. 209-210, Lakenhal No. 237 (photographs) & No. 240 (text).
- V-W Visser Nos. 489/490. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1670-ca. 1675. Gilt brass mounts. Lockplate engraved *Iohan Louroux and Maestricht*. Bottom of breech: St. 3220. 446/275/11.8. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 133.
- X-Y Visser Nos. 453/454. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1655-1660. Gilt brass & gilt iron. Engraved on the lockplates *J. Louroux/a Maestrich/t* ("a Maestricht" on 454). 520/344/12.5. Ref.: Bourne No. 103 & pl. I-III.
- AA-BB Visser Nos. 487/488. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1675-1680. Gilt brass mounts. Engraved on the lockplates *Jacob/Kosters and a Maestrich*, and on the barrels EIN GROSER HELT (487) and ZIGT INS FELT (488). Bottom of breech: St. 3220. 489/315/13.2. Ref.: Dexter p. 41, Hoff p. 208, Ilgner (1931) p. 212.
- CC-DD Visser Nos. 447/448. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1665. Gilt brass & iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates IOHAN LOVROVX/MAESTIRICHT ("MAESTRICHT" on 448). 497.5/308/12.2. Ref.: Ilgner (1931) p. 212 & fig. 4, Hoff p. 206.
- EE-FF Visser Nos. 472/473. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1670. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplate *J. Kosters/a Maestrich* ("a Maestricht" on 473). Bottom of breech: SIMON (stamped). 483/306/13. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 135.
- GG-HH Visser Nos. 443/444. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1675-1680, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates CHARLE FABRI. 473/306/12.4. Ref.: Lavin p. 68-69, Hoff p. 216, Lakenhal No. 239, Sloom p. 5 & fig. 3b.
- II-JJ Visser Nos. 455/456. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1660-1665. Iron mounts. Engraved on the barrel-tangs *Coster* (455) and *C (?) Maestricht* (456). Bottom of breech stamped: CMCL. 512/353/12.6. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 237 (text) & No. 240 (photographs), Sloom p. 5 & fig. 3c.
- KK-LL Visser Nos. 457/458. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, 1660-1665, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates LEONARD/CLEVTE' (initials bigger). Bottom of breech: St. 2260 460/293.5/11.9.
- MM-NN Visser Nos. 445/446. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1675-1680, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates CHARLE FABRI (initials bigger). Barrel-tangs with the script-letters *GMA* incrustated in gold. 486/320/13. Ref.: Ilgner (1931) p. 212-213 & fig. 10.
- OO-PP Visser Nos. 468/469. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1665-ca. 1675, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Engraved on the lockplates *Leonard/CLeuter*. 450/282/12.8. Ref.: Dexter p. 41, Lakenhal No. 134.
- QQ-RR Visser Nos. 474/475. Pair of flintlock pistols with ivory stocks, ca. 1665-ca. 1675, Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen). Gilt silver mounts. Engraved on the lockplates AQVISGRANI/*Leonardus Graeff*. Bottom of breech: an orb with three lobes or a cross (cf. St. 5741-5763). 484/308/13.4. Ref.: *The Gun Collector*, No. 38 (Fall, 1951), back cover; Lakenhal No. 137.
- SS Visser No. 73. Wheellock pistol, ca. 1650-1655, Maastricht. Iron mounts. Bottom of breech: C(. . .)L (cf. St. 2262). 576/386/13.6. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 130, Sloom p. 5-6 & fig. 4a.
- TT-UU Visser No. 466/467. Pair of double-barrelled flintlock turn-over pistols, 1660-1670, Maastricht. Iron mounts. 507.5/310.5/13.2. Ref.: Lakenhal No. 131, Sloom p. 5-6 & fig. 4b.
- VV Visser No. 476. Flintlock pistol with turn-off barrel, ca. 1660-ca. 1665, Maastricht. Iron mounts. 426/262/10.9.
- WW Visser No. 520. Ivory-hilted left-hand dagger, the blade in the style of the 1575-1625 period, the iron crossguard in early 16th Century style, ivory hilt of 1650-1700 period. Maastricht. Overall 374.5, blade 240.5 by 17 side at hilt.
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## THAT'S NOT ALL!

As this Bulletin went to press, Henk Visser got another three pairs of ivory-stocked pistols. They will be shown in Bulletin fifty-four.

**Ivory-stocked Dutch flintlock pistols and others  
from the collection of  
Henk L. Visser**



