

A Pair of Wheel-Lock Pistols Attributed to Wolf Lucz of Mergenthal

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THE RECENT EXHIBITION at the Metropolitan Museum, "Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections," included a display of one hundred and thirty firearms as an evocation of the famous Gewehrhammer, or cabinet of arms, assembled by the princes of Liechtenstein from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century. Among these was a pair of richly decorated German wheel-lock pistols dating to about 1580–90 (Figures 1–5).¹ The heavy construction of the barrels and locks, the sharply down-turned angle of the grips, and the large spherical pommels identify them as belonging to a distinctly German type of cavalryman's side arm, known as *Puffer*, that was used during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. These pistols, invariably made in pairs, were carried in holsters at the front of the saddle, from which they could be drawn in battle and fired at close range. As would be expected of practical, deadly weapons of war, most of these pistols were relatively plain, although highly decorated (and therefore more expensive) examples were also made to satisfy customers of wealth and more demanding taste. The Liechtenstein pair, with their richly etched and gilt barrels and locks, and their intricately inlaid stocks, are among the most elaborately embellished and beautiful *Puffer*-type pistols in existence.

The profusion and variety of figural ornament on the stocks of these firearms set them apart from the majority of late sixteenth-century German pistols. The stocks are inlaid with dense foliate scrolls inhabited by human and allegorical figures, animals, birds, and grotesques. As was noted in the catalogue of the "Liechtenstein" exhibition, much of the decoration was copied from a variety of French and German ornamental prints. Some of the graphic sources can be illustrated here. A number of motifs are based on a

series of allegorical figures engraved by the Paris goldsmith and printmaker Etienne Delaune. The personifications of Theology and Jurisprudence on the backs of the grips (Figure 2) are copied after Delaune's prints of the same subjects (Figures 6, 7); on the left side of the stocks (Figure 3), the reclining river god and goddess between the lock screws are taken from *Dialectique* (Figure 8), and the confronted dogs that frame the forward lock screw are from the print of *Phisique* (Figure 9).² The large curved plaques of staghorn serving as ramrod pipes (on the underside of the stocks near the muzzle) are engraved with equestrian battles; one of these (Figure 4) is inscribed EVRYTI REGIS FILIAM IOLAM OCCISO PATRE ABDVXIT HERCVLES (Hercules abducted Iole, the daughter of King Eurytus, after having slain her father), the other (Figure 5) HERCVLES MVLTI BELLIS LACESSIT TROIAM (Hercules provoked Troy in many battles). Both are copied, with considerable simplification, from two engravings in Hans Sebald Beham's *Labors of Hercules* series published between 1542 and 1548 (Figures 10, 11).³

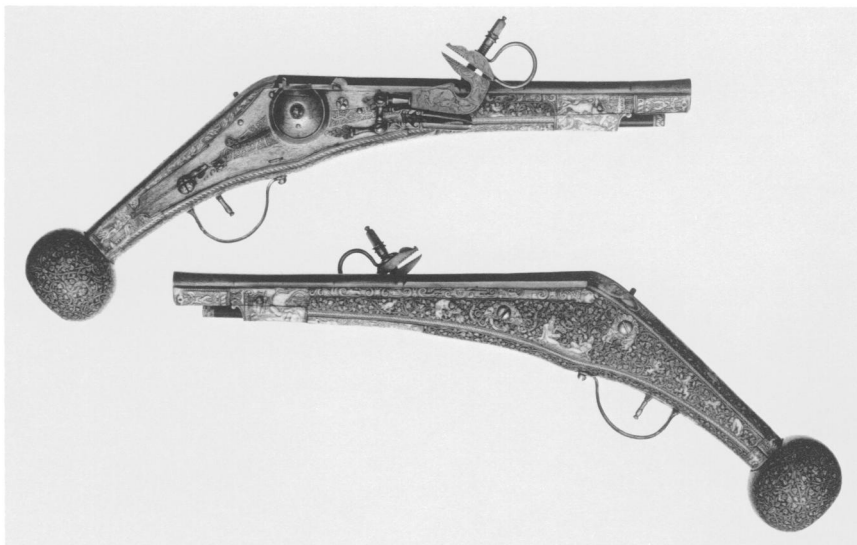
Another graphic source for the stock decoration can be added to those already mentioned in the *Liechtenstein* catalogue. The satyrs within strapwork

1. I have described and discussed these pistols in *Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections*, exh. cat. (New York, 1985) pp. 118–119, no. 77, col. ill. Three color illustrations of the pistols were published in S. W. Pyhrr, *Firearms from the Collections of the Prince of Liechtenstein* (New York, 1985) pp. 10–11.

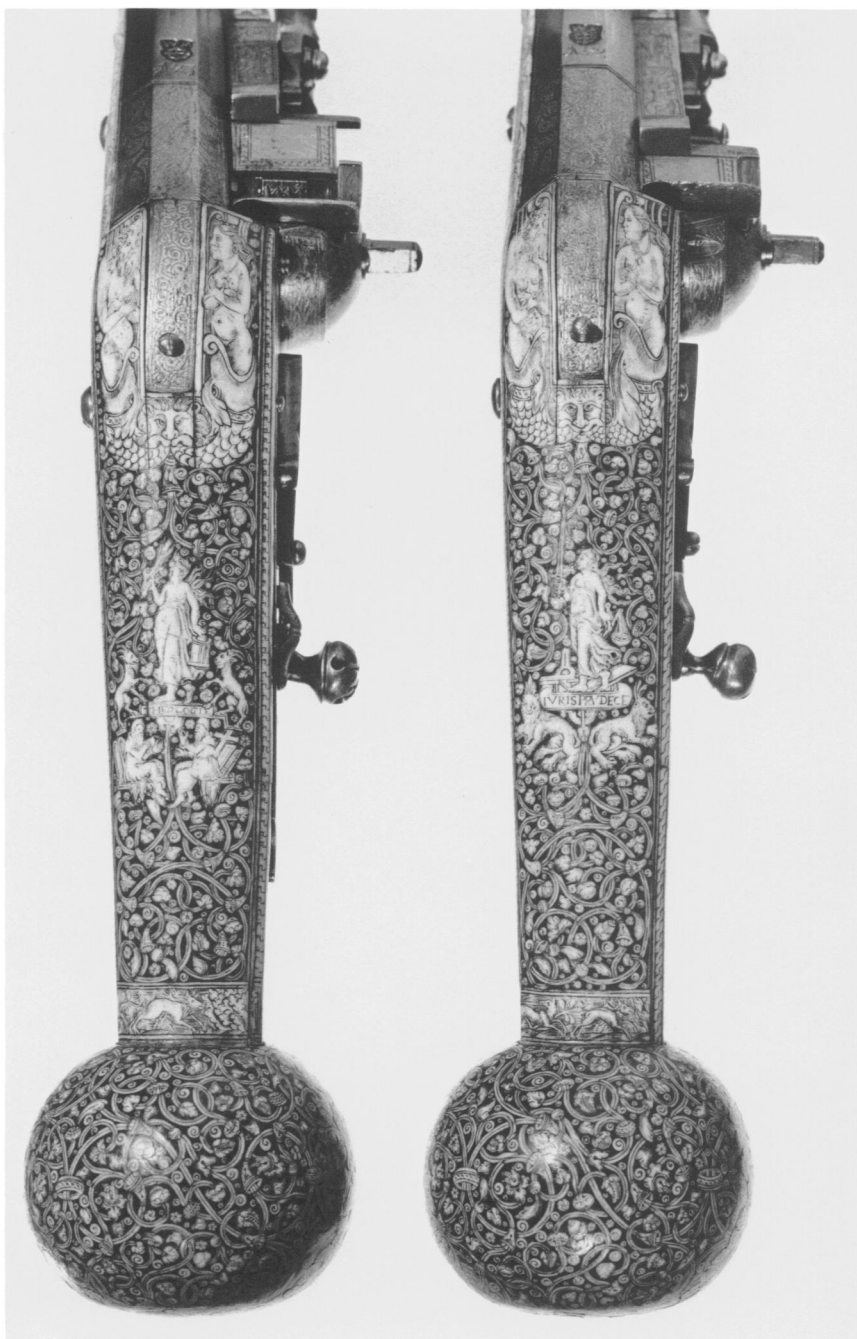
2. For the Delaune series see A. P. F. Robert-Dumesnil, *Le Peintre-graveur français* (Paris, 1835–71; repr. Paris, 1967) IX, pp. 103–104, nos. 340–345.

3. For Beham see F. W. H. Hollstein, *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, ca. 1400–1700* (Amsterdam, n.d.) III, pp. 67–69.

- 1–5. Pair of wheel-lock pistols, German (Mergenthal/Bad Mergentheim), ca. 1580–90. L. 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (51.2 cm.). Vaduz, Collections of the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, inv. nos. 142, 143 (photos: Walter Wachter)



2. Grips of the pistols, showing the allegorical figures of Theology and Jurisprudence





3. Detail of the left (or inner) side of one pistol, showing the decoration around the lock screws

OVERLEAF:

For purposes of comparison, Figures 4 and 5 are shown on the following page.

- 6–9. Etienne Delaune (1518/19–83), engravings of allegorical figures. The Metropolitan Museum of Art: 6–8. Gift of Harry G. Friedman, 62.635.62(5, 3, 2); 9. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 47.139.106



4. Detail of the ramrod pipe beneath the barrel of pistol no. 143, showing Hercules abducting Iole



5. Detail of the ramrod pipe beneath the barrel of pistol no. 142, showing Hercules battling the Trojans



10. Hans Sebald Beham (1500–50), *Hercules Abducting Iole*. Engraving dated 1544. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 17.3.479



11. Hans Sebald Beham, *Hercules Battling the Trojans*. Engraving dated 1545. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 17.3.480

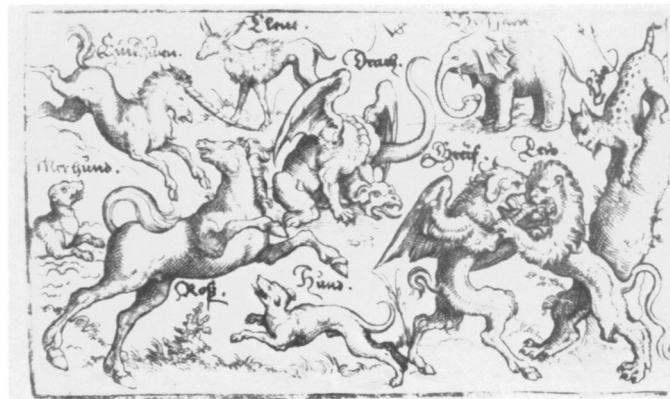


on the plaques at the muzzle come from the decorative borders framing a series of portrait medallions engraved by the prolific Nuremberg printmaker Virgil Solis.⁴ The tiny figures of the bear, cheetah, lion, and griffin, and probably also the birds, that appear on the left side of the stocks were adapted from two series of animal prints issued by Solis in 1557 and 1572 (Figure 12).⁵ The later date also provides a *terminus post quem* for the decoration of the pistols.

While the identification of the graphic sources for the decoration is evidence of the variety of prints available to the stocker and demonstrates his talent for integrating different motifs, it does not provide a clue to his identity or to the town or region in which he worked. The prints were widely distributed throughout Europe and were utilized by craftsmen in all media—goldsmiths, jewelers, cabinetmakers, and potters, as well as decorators of arms and armor. There is in fact no internal evidence to indicate where in Germany these pistols were made. The only mark on the pistols—a shield containing the letters WM above a cogwheel stamped on the breech of each barrel—is presumably the barrel maker's and is unrecorded.⁶

An attribution for the Liechtenstein pistols was, however, suggested in the exhibition catalogue on the basis of a comparison with a matchlock rifle in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (Figures 13–16), which has an identical style of stock inlay. The Munich rifle is signed and dated as by “Wolf Lucz, gunstocker at Mergenthal, 1584.”⁷ This note is intended to explore more fully the relationship between the rifle and the Liechtenstein pistols, as support for the attribution of the pistols to Wolf Lucz.

The Munich gun belongs to a distinctive group of



12. Virgil Solis (1514–62), engraving of animals, including a griffin and lion in combat, 1572 (photo: after O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 87, no. g 103)

snap-matchlock rifles intended exclusively for target-shooting; as luxury sporting arms, they were all elaborately decorated.⁸ The stock is inlaid with scrollwork exactly matching that on the Liechtenstein pistols, including the distinctive bell-shaped pods which appear to be a characteristic of this decorator's style. The rifle's decoration, too, includes a large number of figures derived from identifiable graphic sources. The figures of Adam and Eve on the underside of the stock are copied after an engraving of 1540 by Heinrich Aldegrever,⁹ while the piper and drummer on the cheek are reversed copies after Jost Amman.¹⁰ By far the largest number of figures were taken from the oeuvre of Virgil Solis. The figure of Judith on the underside of the stock is copied from a Solis design for the end of a scabbard (Figure 17),

4. I. O'Dell-Franke, *Kupferstiche und Radierungen aus der Werkstatt des Virgil Solis* (Wiesbaden, 1977) pl. 95, no. h 57.

5. Ibid., pls. 84, 85, nos. g 83–92 (1557 series), and pls. 86, 87, nos. g 93–103 (1572 series).

6. The mark is not found in the standard compendia of gunmakers' marks, J. F. Stöckel, *Haandskydevaabens bedømmelse*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1938–43), and E. Heer, *Der neue Stöckel*, 3 vols. (Schwäbisch-Hall, 1978–82). Claude Blair (letter of June 2, 1984) suggests quite reasonably that the wheel, apparently a miller's waterwheel, may be a canting device for a maker named Müller.

7. For the Munich rifle see A. Hoff, “Late Firearms with Snap Matchlocks,” *Tøjhusmuseets Skifter* 7 (1963) p. 16, where the town of Mergenthal is correctly identified as [Bad] Mergentheim in northern Württemberg. The rifle was subsequently catalogued

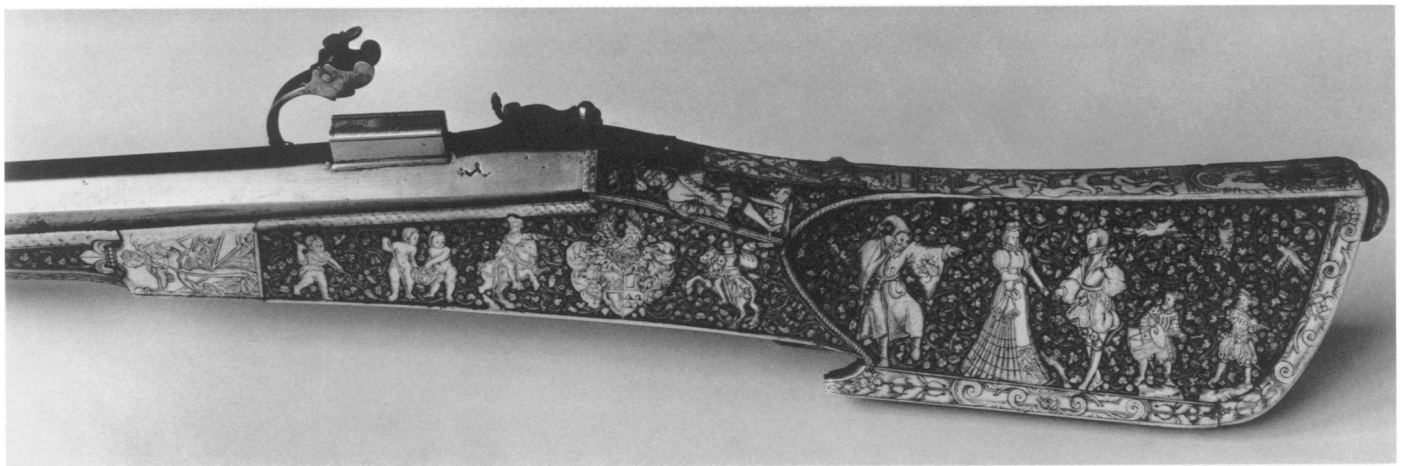
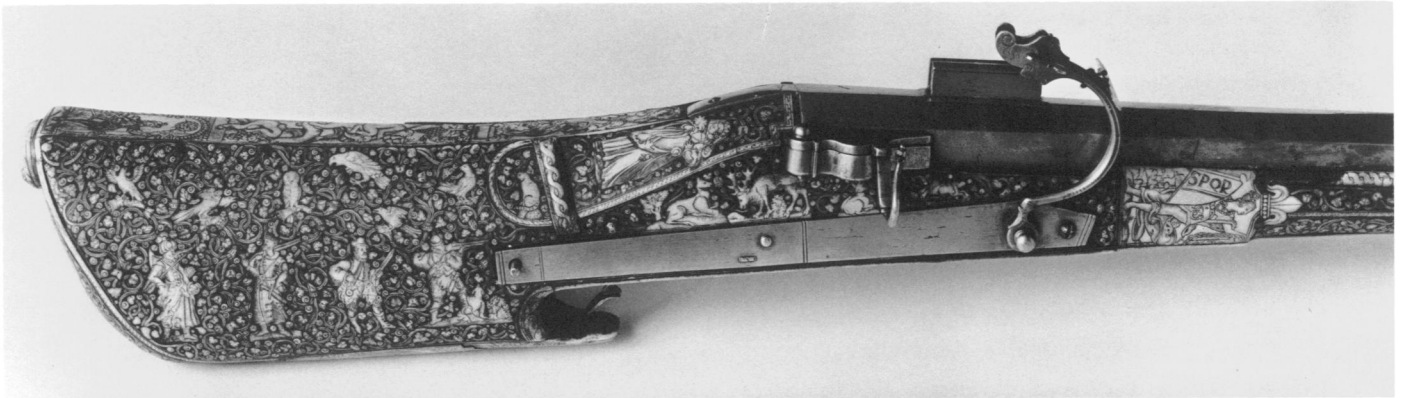
by E. Schalkhauser, “Die Handfeuerwaffen des Bayerisches Nationalmuseums,” *Waffen- und Kostumkunde* 8 (1966) pp. 7–8, where it is inexplicably called “Bohemian.” Following Schalkhauser, Heer, *Der neue Stöckel*, I, p. 731, records Wolf Lucz as active in “Mergendthal(?) Böhmen.”

8. For this snap-matchlock group see Hoff, “Late Firearms with Snap Matchlocks,” p. 16.

9. Hollstein, *German Engravings*, I, pp. 6–7; the Aldegrever source was already noted by Schalkhauser, “Handfeuerwaffen,” p. 8.

10. Leonhard Fronsperger, ed., *Kriegs Ordnung . . .* (Frankfurt am Main, 1564) p. 51v. Similar figures were also engraved by Solis; see O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 53, no. f 12 (piper), and pl. 54, no. f 19 (drummer).

13–16. Matchlock target rifle, the stock by Wolf Lucz of Mergenthal, German, dated 1584. L. overall 52½ in. (132.5 cm.). Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, inv. no. W1447 (photos: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum)



14. Cheek side of the rifle

and the three female figures holding shields at the side and underside of the stock, just forward of the lockplate, can be identified as Veturia, Lucretia, and Brigita from Solis's series of the nine heroines (Figure 18).¹¹ The male and female figures to either side of the barrel tang on the top of the stock are extracted from two prints of dancing couples.¹² The playful monkeys on the butt and those on the top of the stock come from a series of engraved playing cards (Figure 19),¹³ and the many birds and animals that inhabit the scrollwork are, like those on the Liechtenstein pistols, copied from Solis's composite groupings of birds, insects, and animals.¹⁴

A staghorn plaque beneath the stock is engraved with two putti framing the inscription WOLF LVCZ SCHIFDER ZV MERGENDHAL 1584. On the left side of

the stock is the coat of arms of a member of the Cronberg (or Cronenberg) family,¹⁵ for whom the rifle was made. A Walther von Cronberg (d. 1558)

11. O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 122, no. i 116, and pl. 22, nos. c 13, c 14, and c 18 respectively.

12. Ibid., pl. 59, nos. f 56 (female figure) and f 58 (male figure).

13. Ibid., pl. 63, nos. f 90 and f 92.

14. The stag and doe above the lock were copied from Virgil Solis, *ibid.*, pl. 85, no. g 92. The pelican and ostrich on the underside of the stock came from the same series of 1557, *ibid.*, pl. 84, no. g 87 (pelican), and pl. 85, no. g 88 (ostrich).

15. For the Cronberg arms see *Siebmachers Wappenbuch*, ed. A. M. F. Gritzner (Nuremberg, 1878) I, 3. Abt., II Reihe: "Die erlauchten Grafengeschlechter in Deutschland," pp. 6–7, pls. 6, 7. The arms on the Munich gun were identified by Alexander von Reitzenstein as probably those of Deutschmeister Franz von Cronberg (Hoff, "Late Firearms with Snap Matchlocks," p. 16).

15. Underside of the rifle

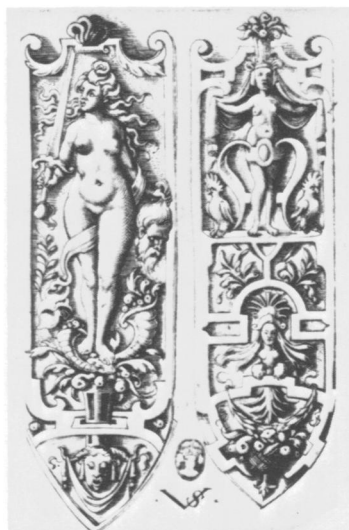


16. Detail of Figure 15, showing the gunstocker's signature



17. Virgil Solis, engraved design for a scabbard chape with the figure of Judith (photo: after O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 122, no. i 116)

18. Virgil Solis, *Brigita*, engraving (photo: after O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 22, no. c 18)



19. Virgil Solis, *Seven Monkeys*, from a series of engraved playing cards (photo: after O'Dell-Franke, *Virgil Solis*, pl. 63, no. f 90)

held the double title of *Hoch- und Deutschmeister* of the Teutonic Order, whose headquarters were transferred to Mergenthal in 1527.¹⁶ Presumably other members of the family can also be associated with that town.

There is little documentation about Wolf Lucz or gunmaking in Mergenthal, a town known today as Bad Mergentheim, in Württemberg, about twenty-five miles south of Würzburg. The town once had a gunsmiths' guild, but the records are preserved only for the period 1700–49.¹⁷ However, a list dated July 16, 1586, of burghers residing in Mergenthal mentions a Wolf Lutz as living in the city's fourth quarter together with his wife, seven children, and a male servant. He is again mentioned, this time without family or servant, in a similar list dated March 11, 1592.¹⁸ Although his trade is not mentioned, this Wolf Lutz is presumably identical with the gunstocker Wolf Lucz. The Munich rifle is the only known gun signed by Lucz, and it appears to constitute the sole record of firearms making or decorating in Mergenthal in the sixteenth century.

In spite of the lack of documentation, some conclusions can be drawn about the gunstocker Wolf Lucz based on the signed gun in Munich and the pair of pistols in the Liechtenstein collection. Lucz was a highly skilled and inventive craftsman, in no way provincial, and was up to date in the latest fashions

of late Renaissance ornament. His workshop possessed dozens, and probably hundreds, of ornamental prints by the leading graphic artists of France and Germany, from which he selected and combined motifs as needed for his decorative schemes. The presence of the Cronberg arms on the Munich gun shows that Lucz enjoyed the patronage of the leading family of Mergenthal, and perhaps attained a wider reputation through his patrons' connections with the Teutonic Order.

The original owner of the Liechtenstein pistols is not known. The pistols unfortunately are not identifiable in the early seventeenth-century inventories of the princely *Gewehrhammer* and therefore cannot be definitely associated with a member of the house of Liechtenstein. The owner was no doubt a man of taste, however, and most likely acquired the pistols not as weapons but as works of art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank especially my colleague and friend Dr. Rudolf Wackernagel, who made inquiries about Wolf Lucz on my behalf in the archives of Bad Mergentheim, the *Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg*, and the *Zentralarchiv des Deutschen Ordens*, Vienna.

16. P. M. Tumler, *Short History of the Teutonic Order* (n.p., n.d.) p. 30.

17. I am grateful to Dr. A. Seiler of the *Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg* for this information about the extant records (B284 Bū40). The only other gun signed by a master from Mergenthal/Bad Mergentheim that has come to my attention is one formerly in the collection of W. J. Bernhard Smith, sold at Sotheby's, London, May 14–15, 1884, no. 96: a wheel-lock rifle bearing the arms of the Kress family, the date 1653, and the maker's signature on the barrel DAVID ARNET A MERGENTHEIM (*sic*). Heer, *Der neue Stöckel*, I, p. 30, records the following gunmakers active in Bad Mergentheim: David Arnet (Arnth), ca. 1653; J. Friedrich Arnet (Arnth, Arneth), ca. 1730; and David Arnet (Arnth), ca. 1800.

I would also acknowledge the help of Mr. Leo Springer, honorary keeper of the city archives of Bad Mergentheim, and Father Dr. Bernhard Demel, O.T., of the *Zentralarchiv des Deutschen Ordens*, Vienna, for their search, unfortunately unsuccessful, for documents concerning Wolf Lucz.

18. *Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg* (B289 Bū69).