

## Collecting engraved Luger Pistols or caveat emptor !

by Klaus Leibnitz

In the last years decorated Luger pistols have appeared on the market, mainly in the US, but also in Europe and they all appear to be forgeries. This does not mean that the pistols themselves are forgeries, but it looks as if the engraving or decoration had been done many years later in order to increase the value of these guns. The following paper tries to approach the problem of increasing the value of old military weapons by decorating them from an analytical point of view. After having done this, the fakes are clearly shown for what they really are, old service pistols nicely made up.

What is called Luger pistol here in this paper refers to the gun which, in Europe, is also known as the *Parabellum Pistole*<sup>1</sup> or *Pistole 08*.<sup>2</sup>

1. The problem of faked weaponry is not a recent one. It is as old as people collect, for a multitude of reasons, arms and armour. Also, the problem is not only confined to Europe exclusively, but appears in old Japan, in Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and later in the US as well.

The reasons for this were not for monetary gain alone. The nimbus attached to a sword blade by Masamune,<sup>3</sup> Muramasa<sup>4</sup> et al automatically did transfer itself to the new owner, who rose in status as an effect of such ownership.

The same holds true to sword blades made by Azzad Ullah of Isphahan, whose blades were imitated in very large quantities, some of them of such a high quality that it is even nowadays a problem to separate the real from the fake. As it is, there are so many swords in existence bearing the Azzad Ullah seal, that he would have to be more than 200 years old to have produced that many blades.<sup>5</sup>

In Europe of yore, the problem was a different one. Old weapons were mainly kept in arsenals, armouries and gun rooms of the noble families and there they were mainly kept for sentimental reasons (i.e. this was the sword with which our ancestor slew the dragon, the famous robber NN etc.) The problem started when, during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century many an armoury of a noble house, which was impoverished in the course of the Napoleonic wars and the following revolutions and upheavals, was sold and their treasures became available and were purchased mainly by rich British and American

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Parabellum Pistole* (from the Latin phrase *for war*) was derived from the telegraphic address of the manufacturer DWM

<sup>2</sup> This meant the year in which the gun was officially accepted by the Imperial Armed Forces as a service pistol by an Imperial Cabinet Order.

<sup>3</sup> Muramasa was a 11<sup>th</sup> century Japanese sword smith considered in Japan to have been the best of his craft

<sup>4</sup> Masamune of Ise, one of the top Japanese swordsmiths who produced superiour blades which however were considered unlucky.

<sup>5</sup> See G.C. Stone's Glossary.....

collectors.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, a nicely decorated suit of armour fetched a better price than a simple utilitarian one and some dealers were ready to supply what was demanded. The Parisian dealer Spitzer comes to mind in this connection. The same held true when in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many a nouveau riche industrialist started to collect arms and armour. This was a time, especially in Germany, when many a princely armoury was sold and when many a State Museum had to sell pieces from their collection of which they had duplicates, just in order to stay in business. The Dresden Museum is a very good example of this. Unprincipled dealers being ready to supply the demand, they together with a few first class craftsmen sold a lot of faked weapons to the US and Britain which nowadays fetch even more money than the originals would. The affaire Kahlert - Konrad is a good example of this kind of trickery.<sup>7</sup>

One thing becomes apparent when considering fakes: The faker and/or falsifier is a person of the time in which he lives and thus his fakes reflect the taste of the time in which the faking is done, i.e. what people nowadays think people in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, or 17<sup>th</sup> century or later might have thought.

From this point it is quite easy for the trained eye to separate the real from the false.

In recent years collecting machine made weapons, such as the Mauser C96 and the Luger pistols, early Colt revolvers and the like has become fashionable. And thus the faker adapted his trade to this new type of collectors.

Obviously, it was not possible to economically build these guns anew, so trade marks, military unit markings, longer barrels, engravings, dedications and the like were substituted.

It is now the time to look a little closer at such guns, especially the Luger pistol, which were so "improved".

2. The history of the Luger pistol is too well known to need any repeating here. There are many excellent books on the market, most of which are highly recommended.<sup>8</sup>

The Luger pistol as such came into being when the Imperial German Armed Forces, at the end of the 19th century, looked for a modern military sidearm. It has been jokingly said that most states have an army, but Prussia (and, in consequence modern Germany, of which Prussia formed the nucleus) the army had a state. The need to be a strong military power was without doubt due to the central location of Germany in Europe. The Imperial General Staff concluded quite rightly that an eventual war would have to be fought on two fronts and against two very mighty power blocks and the only way to be victorious in such a conflict was, amongst other things, to have the best weaponry available for their

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<sup>6</sup> The Wallace Collection in London thus came into being.

<sup>7</sup> see *Sachsens größter Fälscher* (Saxony's greatest forger) about this affair

<sup>8</sup> No doubt the most concise work on the Luger pistol is Goertz, *Die Pistole 08*, for those who read German, but also Datig *The Luger Pistol*, Walter *The Luger story*, Kenyon *Lugers at random* etc. contain a wealth of information

soldiers. Thus, the Maxim gun was introduced and with this machine gun, a pistol for the self-defence of operator and crew. Artillery gun crews were also issued with long barrelled Luger pistols. The same considerations applied to the German Imperial Navy, because when boarding a ship a rifle is not a particularly handy weapon, nor is a cutlass. Thus the Navy Luger came into being, an accurate short side arm for boarding crews.

The German Imperial Armed Forces existed in an era when the nobility supplied a very high percentage of the officers and chivalry was at that time not an empty phrase. Officers wore swords and had to purchase their own side arms. Therefore, small calibre automatics were the norm - the higher the rank the smaller the sidearm.

My own grandfather, a naval officer in the German imperial navy told me once that most of his time in the Imperial service he never even owned a handgun, but always wore his naval dagger or sword, as demanded by naval regulations for this particular occasion. He purchased his first handgun in the US, during the time when a German naval squadron went on a good will visit to the US, about 1910 or thereabouts and strangely it was a Colt Automatic in calibre .32 ACP he purchased, a gun which I still own.

After the end of the First World War a lot of Luger pistols were arsenal reworked, their barrels shortened to comply to the "less than 10 cm barrel length" rule of the Versailles treaty and when rearmament started in Germany about 1935 a lot of them were newly built.

In the Wehrmacht the Luger Pistol became the sidearm of the NCOs and specialized formations, such as paratroopers, tank crews, pilots etc.<sup>9</sup>

It was, however, never an officer's weapon. Officers in the German Armed Forces received a *Kit and Clothing Allowance* and had to supply their own uniforms, equipment and also their own sidearm, and this was mostly the Walther PP and PPK, the Mauser M 1930 or HSc and the Sauer & Sohn, mainly in calibre .32 ACP or 7,65 mm as the German term for this cartridge was.

As in the old army, machine gun and mortar crews were also equipped with this gun. It was worn by the police forces of Germany, all sorts of semi- and para- military organisations and the Waffen-SS. Till replaced by the Walther P38 pistol the P08 was the standard sidearm of the Wehrmacht. It was produced until virtually 1943/44 and in large amounts. It seems that more than 2 million of such pistols were produced during the 50 years it was the official service pistol. But just that, it was a tool, not an object of veneration and definitely not a collectors item. Even after the end of the second world war the Luger story does not end, several foreign police forces kept on using the Luger as a service handgun, as did for instance the East German "Volkspolizei"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For more information who was entitled to wear a sidearm in the German Armed Forces see Reibert, *Der Dienstunterricht im Heer*, printed since 1935 to 1944, which list which rank or position was entitled to wear a pistol.

<sup>10</sup> literally "peoples police"

3. The Luger pistol was always a gun which was very popular in the US, due neither to price nor size. There were better, cheaper and handier locally made pistols available in the US. (*This is just my personal opinion!*) It was the design, the engineering and the very high quality of the commercial Lugers sold in the US which attracted American gun enthusiasts.<sup>11</sup>

After World War II large amounts of military Luger pistols were imported into the US and sold just about anywhere, by mail order and at very low prices. I still remember the time, it was in the early 1960ies, when they were offered thus for sale : *Genuine German Lugers, including holster , spare magazine and tool for \$ 39,90*. What a happy time! The availability in great quantities of these pistols was the root of Luger collecting, because it was found that Luger did not necessarily equal Luger, they were made by several manufacturers and in different qualities, they came in several barrel lengths, and of course, they had different unit markings.

Once this was researched and found their way into books and became thus generally known it was found that there were scarcer models and models with more desirable features and so the value of certain guns was closely linked to their scarcity.

Somehow, the market saturated and collectors craved for the unique piece, the crown of every collection, the gun which others would dream about.

This problem was overcome by linking individual guns to famous persons. It is true that a lot of famous military men lavished a lot of attention on their personal weaponry, see for instance the 2 revolvers worn by General George Patton. But this was a one way street, because Patton only owned 2 guns during all his time in the service. Attempts were then made to ascribe certain guns to historical persons by inventing a spurious history for the weapon, a particularly cheeky attempt was to ascribe to a late model Walther PPK the history of being the gun with which Herr Hitler killed himself, albeit belatedly, in 1945. But here the faker had not done his homework properly, especially when researching the history of the last days of the *Third Reich*, made a series of mistakes in his documentation and was thus discovered.<sup>12</sup>

4. Recently, a number of Luger pistols have appeared on the market pretending to be presentation pieces. One of them is supposed to have been a present from the German foreign minister to v. Papen, ex-Chancellor and later Ambassador to Turkey. The other being a present of Dr. Robert Ley to somebody who is unfortunately not named in the inscription, being the personal gun or a present of Heinrich Himmler and some came with a multitude of Japanese inscriptions.

They have appeared in all shapes, models, sizes and engraving styles and all have one thing in common, they are all fakes.

Admittedly, beautiful and very well made fakes but fakes nonetheless. And it can be very easily explained why they must be fakes.

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance the old Stoeger Arms catalogues for engraved Lugers!

<sup>12</sup> See Der Spiegel 8/1999 "Trophaen des Sieges"(trophy's of victory) p50-54

I have said in section two that the Luger pistol was a gun used exclusively by the other ranks and to them it was a tool, not an item of veneration. This alone explains why there was never any official presents of “de luxe” Lugers to anybody, with the exceptions of a very few pieces which were marked in the factory as being , for instance, the 100.000<sup>th</sup> piece of a certain production run or to commemorate the visit by high state dignitaries to mark the visit. These factory presentation Lugers are very well documented, which means that they have a pedigree which can be very easily verified.

In Germany, as well as in most other European states and also in Japan there was a very clearly established system to reward merit, either by the state, the ruler, or the military. In Germany the military rewarded military merit with orders and other decorations and there was a very clearly established system of such awards.<sup>13</sup> As miniatures of such decorations were worn when in mufti it was easy for the so decorated person to show that he was a person of a certain importance, standing and distinction. In addition to orders and the like there were other presents to persons of merit such as the silver cups, “*Dem Sieger im Luftkampf*” which were presented to ace fighter pilots in the first World War as well as during the second. Ruling houses in Europe and of the individual German States had their own orders, the so- called House Orders<sup>14</sup> which they could bestow on persons of merit, some of the higher classes of orders raised the recipient in rank or even ennobled them. Often merit was also expressed by valuable presents, rings, watches, cigarette cases, signed photographs in silver frames etc.

In Japan during the Shogunate<sup>15</sup> merit was usually rewarded by the presentation of a sword, or a valuable piece of sword fittings or pottery. Also it was known that persons of merit received additional tracts of land. As the rank of a daimyo was known by the yield of the land over which he ruled this was eo ipso at the same time an increase in rank.

In Third Reich Germany similar rules applied as had during the time of the German Empire.

The state, the military , the party and the many paramilitary organisations had a multitude of orders and badges of merit and the like. Very popular also was the gift of swords or daggers of honour.

The head of the government, Adolf Hitler was known to give to persons who had rendered outstanding service either to him, the party or the state a silver framed, signed

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<sup>13</sup> See Mericka und Marco *Das Buch der Orden und Auszeichnungen*, i.e. *The book of orders and decorations for merit* , Prag, 1976,

<sup>14</sup> The Royal Victorian Order in the UK is a good sample of this kind of House Order , an Order which the ruler could bestow on anyone who was thought to have performed a service to his house. It is still awarded to day directly by the Queen without approval of the Prime Ministers office, as is the usual practice with all other orders in the UK. The higher classes raise the recipient to the knighthood.

<sup>15</sup> The shogun was the de facto ruler in Japan and this post was hereditary to the Tokugawa family from the mid-seventeenth century onwards till the mid-nineteenth century, when the emperor Mutsuhito ended this system and resumed direct imperial rule.

photograph of himself. The head of the German Air Force Reichsmarschall Goehring did likewise, but also gave valuable cigarette cases, watches etc. He, by the way, wore a Colt revolver, never a Luger! The chief of the SS, *Reichsführer* Himmler usually gave an especially designed ring, called “*Ehrenring*”, or ring of honour as well as porcelain figurines from the SS owned porcelain manufactory Munich-Allach.

As far as is known to this writer there are only 2 recorded occasions when firearms were officially presented, and this was either as a prize at shooting contests<sup>16</sup> and from time to time to high ranking officials. In style with the time, these were fairly under-decorated pieces. I have seen one which was taken by an US Army CIC member from the body of an ex-secretary of state ( *Reichsleiter* ) after his suicide in 1945. This is a Walther pistol model PPK, very sparsely decorated on the slide with oak leaves and with an inset in the left grip of a small silver plate with an inscription “*The Führer to Reichsleiter Eckl*”<sup>17</sup>

However, it is unknown whether this was an award for merit or exceptional services or just one of the presents which were given every now and then at certain occasions, the day of the Nazi-Party coming to power 30.01.1933 or the birthday of the *Führer* , and it is so far undocumented whether such a gift was a gift of the party or the state as such. Nevertheless, such presentation pieces do exist and were given.

But there never was a Luger pistol which could be proved without doubt to have been awarded during the period in question.

A look in the catalogues of auction houses specializing in collectables of this era will prove my point.

5. Before looking a little closer at some of the pistols which recently have appeared on the market and sold for quite large amounts let us look first and foremost at a point generally overlooked.

The Luger Pistol is one of the few military sidearms whose individual parts were hardened, i.e. heat treated after manufacture, thus it would stand to reason that, when selecting guns for presentation and consequently for engraving they would be assembled, but after being fitted together would neither be heat-treated nor blued prior to engraving, as is the usual practice. This is , by the way, the reason why all parts of this pistol are individually numbered, so there would be no problems in fitting them together after heat treatment.

None of the spuriously decorated Lugers have ever been tested whether or not they have been reheated to soften the metal parts, then engraved, re-hardened and re-blued and then re-assembled, a test which can very easily be carried out with modern scientific tests methods and could thus verify the genuineness of the decoration.

As an additional warning, all of these made up Lugers should never be fired with modern high speed and high power ammunition because they may be structurally unsound if the

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<sup>16</sup> See Rankin Walther pistols models PP and PPK 1929-1945 p 35 ff

<sup>17</sup> See Ib Melchior Case by Case Presidio Press 1993, where this gun, a Walther PPK No. 211013K is shown in the pictorial section between p. 190 and 191

heat treatment was not done according to factory specifications. Luckily, all these German Armed Forces production specification still exist, thus it is very easy to test doubtful Lugers for proper hardness and proper blueing, i.e. whether the hardening was done the correct way and whether the original blueing process was used, tests which can be very easily accomplished. As the microstructure of steel changes during repeated heating and can never ever be restored to the original degree of crystal structure it is possible to say with certainty whether such a gun was decorated, at the factory or on behalf of the factory or half a century later.<sup>18</sup>

6. In the following I shall dissect a few examples of guns which were apparently made up after the event and then given a spurious pedigree.

6.1 The so called von Papen Luger is a very good example of sloppy research of the history of the donor and the recipient, combined with omitting an analysis of tool marks and metallurgy. ( I am indebted to Mr. Reinhard Kornmeyer for the following information )<sup>19</sup>

The first thing which should have raised the hackles of anyone knowing the Luger pistol well is the presence of the so-called Schiwly –Safety, which was in use only on the guns issued to the police forces of Germany. It was never used on guns issued by the military, but was fitted later on by police armourers after the guns were issued.

The second thing which should have set the alarm bells ringing was the misspelling of the word “ Aussenminister” which is wrong from 2 points of view, because this was a purely colloquial version of an official title. The proper term was “Reichsminister des Äußeren” or “Reichsaußenminister”, whereby the latter is more colloquial than the former. According to an expert this is a very common mistake fakers make, the use of wrong or colloquial titles.

Another point so far overlooked is the date. Apart from the fact that research has so far not revealed any special importance in the history of Hr. v. Papen on that date on which the gun was supposed to have been presented. The way the date is written is absolutely unusual in Germany. Normally, dates are written thus, either *am 11. November 1940* or *...am elften November 1940....*, or *den elften November 1940* adding ten to the date to give *11ten* is a way used in English, ( 11th ) but hardly ever in German.

This alone shows quite clearly that someone has been improving the gun. Research has furthermore revealed that that the relationship between v. Papen and v. Ribbentrop was by no means a friendly one and that a deep hatred existed between them.

Also the supporting papers show a lot of deficiencies. I will list them as they appear. A paper issued by a certain Egbert v. Papen, states that he received the gun from his uncle.

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<sup>18</sup> I am indebted to my friend Dr. Alan Williams, scientific officer of the Wallace Collection, London and one of the great experts on the microstructure of steel used on arms and armour for these information.

<sup>19</sup> For a thorough analysis of the mistakes the fakers made see VdF Vol. 3 Sept. 1999,P 4-5 and Gazette des Armes No. 351 Febr. 2004 in which the evidence is dissected in more detail

Unfortunately, the paper does not show an address and later research showed that there was never such a person in the v. Papen family. An interview with the daughter of v. Papen confirmed that there never was such a gun in the v. Papen family and nor a relation with the name of Egbert.

I would be very wary when spending in excess of \$ 40.000.- for a gun with such scant and deficient documentation. A potential buyer should have had the gun analysed by a qualified tool mark examiner and metallurgical expert to see whether the gun has been re-heated to soften the steel and engraved later on. The expenses for such an expertise would have off-set the potential disappointment and financial loss by the factor 100.

6.2 The so-called Admiral Hasegawa Luger is another point where sloppy research and sloppy faking shows from beginning to end that here another fake is to be put on the market.

Already the prehistory of this gun shows a lot of mistakes and caveats. The gun was supposed to have come from a family in California, the man to whom the gun initially was given was a *civilian* on General McArthur's staff, but he used the rank of *colonel*. His job was to teach English to Japanese government employees and industrialists.

Already here one should have been cautious, a colonel teaching English stretches the credulity of the buyer to the utmost.

According to the story it was given to him by a Japanese lady.

After the surrender of Japan the very first order which the US Military Government for Japan issued was that any and all weapons were to be handed over without exception to the US Occupation Forces, this also included what is in loose generic general terms known as Samurai swords, and this again also included votive swords which had been kept in museums, shrines and temples. The Japanese people being of an obedient sort complied without exception. This also accounts for the fact why there were more Nippon<sup>20</sup> in the US up to the 1970ies than in Japan. Non-compliance of this law was punishable by severe penalties.

So from what is known up to this moment the gun would appear to have not come from a seller of solid standing and one would normally have been very wary to buy a cheap used car from such a person, let alone an expensive gun.

Next, look at the gun. It has a grip safety, a feature not in use on German military guns. Another point is the engraving which is deficient in several points. The main point being that the Japanese Imperial Navy crest on the gun and on the case shows a crest which was used as a cap badge by petty officers, but not as an official naval badge.<sup>21</sup> It was at no

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<sup>20</sup> Japanese Swords, the famous Samurai Swords although not all Nippon are really samurai swords

<sup>21</sup> See Imperial Japanese Army and Navy Uniform and Equipment, Sankei Shimbun S.K., Tokyo and Osaka 1973 P 87

time the official emblem of the Japanese Imperial Navy. I do not believe that one would have done a vice- admiral a great favour by using this badge on a gift to him. The date on the dedication also shows no special importance in the life and carrier of Admiral Hasegawa. Another point overlooked so far is that the Hasegawa family crest does not appear anywhere, which would have been usual in Japan.

The proof that the gun has definitely been worked on can however be found in the extractor. Normally, on the German Luger pistol this is a very tightly fitted metal part which bears on the left side the inscription “*geladen*” i.e. loaded. On the faked Luger under discussion it seems also very tightly fitted but instead of the word *loaded* bears only a red dot. This is obviously due to the fact that the Japanese word for loaded, as in a loaded weapon, consists of three kanji which state “*cartridge in chamber*”, very complicated kanji which could not easily have been put on one side of the extractor and still be legible. Thus the faker substituted a red dot instead. But the real proof that the gun has been made up is in the metal of the extractor itself. As can be seen the extractor fits the gun like a hand fits a glove, which excludes that an original extractor was used and the word “*geladen*” removed, because had this been done the extractor would not fit the extractor slot tightly but very loosely. Thus it is almost certain that a new piece has been made and fitted, which could be subjected to a metallurgical analysis and would have to consist of a steel type St C 60.61 with a carbon content of 0,6 % and would have to be hardened, according to the Mauser metal treatment instructions at 800°C in oil and tempered 5 minutes at 400-420°C in molten salt. If the extractor is not this type of steel and heat treatment, then most certainly it is a modern replacement and the whole gun a fake. If it is not a fake then why not use a regular old extractor?

In conclusion, the engraving on the gun was almost certainly added later to a regular old Luger pistol and the gun as such is thus a fake.

At this time I think it would be appropriate to digress somewhat and before analysing the next gun look at 2 very important points as regards guns masquerading as Japanese Lugers.

The first is the script used in Japan. Generally there are two kinds, one called kanji and originating in China, later being adapted to the Japanese language.<sup>22</sup> The other is called kana, of which more than style is in use. The Japanese attach a lot of importance to the proper script and the style thereof. Each kanji can properly be written only in a certain way and with a certain amount of strokes and the way these are set. Another point is that Japanese calligraphy puts much importance on balance, proportion and evenness, thus the trained eye can very easily see when writing is out of balance in any of this points. A very important point is the direction of writing. Originally, Japanese writing, as Chinese, runs from top to bottom and from right to left. During the early era of modernisation this changed and started to run from left to right like our way of writing. This again changed in the 1930s to go from left to right and from top to bottom. It is well worth to keep this in mind when examining Japanese inscriptions!

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<sup>22</sup> For information about the Japanese script see Koop and Inada Japanese Names and how to read them, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1961, also very good examples are given in Tantum and Hoffschmidt Japanese Combat Weapons, We 1968.

The second point is the way arms development, especially gun development went on in Japan.<sup>23</sup> This was organised by the Chief of the Ordnance Bureau of the Japanese Forces, who issued a so called development order. This was studied by the first section of the Army Technical Research Institute, located then at Koganei, Tokyo which also produced drawings and specifications. According to this drawings prototypes were produced by one of the arsenals, upon production of an advance series these were tested by Army or Navy officials also at one of the arsenals and modified and improved if necessary. The thus modified weapons were then again produced in a small advance series and forwarded for a more comprehensive testing by the services involved. As regards small arms, development was done mainly by the Army and the testing under field condition took place at Futsu proving facility located in Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo. When these tests were satisfactorily completed eventual modifications deemed necessary were recommended, modifications incorporated and new test models produced. These were again tested under field conditions. When at last the model performed according to specifications drawings were appropriately modified and then sent to the Chief of the Ordnance Section for final approval. After obtaining this production drawings and specifications were then drawn up by the first section and production was started. Generally it can be said that the Japanese military was very reluctant to have complete weapons produced in toto by companies outside direct military control. Most small arms were made by army owned arsenals such as Kokura, Tokyo and Nagoya in central Japan. The Army also produced small arms for the Navy in their arsenals.

Keeping the above well in mind, we shall now look at the so-called GTE Luger.

6.3 The GTE Luger is another example of an attempt to deceive. I will point out only the most important mistakes, which are the inscription “test purpose pistol”, and the Japanese script “Tokyo Gas and Electric Company”. Although the Japanese writing is correct as regards Kanji and language, the engraved Kanji are by far too large, and thus are not well balanced. Also one can clearly say that the engraving was faked by a younger engraver, who went to school after the second World War, because before the war, in the Taisho and early Showa period, as stated above Japanese writing runs from right to left. After the war it was changed from left to right, and nowadays it comes natural for anyone educated after the war to automatically write from left to right. The Cherry Blossom with the inscription GTE is an anachronism because the Cherry blossom was the symbol of the Samurai, used by the Army and the Navy and TGE would not have dared to use it together with their company logo.

Furthermore the inscription *test purpose pistol* would have been in Japanese only *for test purposes* . Why write the obvious ?

A very important point is that, as stated above private sector companies were never involved in arms research and development, thus there was no need nor reason for TGE to own and mark a Luger as “Test Purpose Pistol” and to perform tests with such a pistol.

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<sup>23</sup> General information on the Japanese arsenal system and arms development can be found in Handbook on Japanese Military Forces TM E 30-480, 1944, also in Honeycutt & Pratt Military rifles of Japan 1897 - 1945, published by the authors 1977

Actually, the pistol can be very easily proved to have been modified. Firstly by testing the microstructure of the metal and its hardness. The other proof is when one measures the depth of the place where the safety lever is located. The kanji for safe and fire are not stamped as was the custom, but engraved which presumes that this was done later. Most likely the words *gesichert* and *Feuer* were milled out, they are normally only about 1/4th of a mm deep and the new inscription was engraved. Thus the right side where the safety lever normally moves should be about 1/2 – 1 mm lower than on a regular unimproved Luger pistol. In order to do any milling this part would have to be heated to soften the metal, so a crystal structure test would show the fake.

6.4 Another Luger pistol with spurious Japanese markings appeared in 2001 on the marked and was tried to be sold at auction by a well known German auctioneer.

The pistol is a standard P08 made by Mauser, stamped with the code 1940 above the chamber and 42 on the toggle, with a WaA 655 stamp.

On the barrel there is a series of partially unrecognisable kana-?- i-tsu or ?-i-shi-shiki 14 nen, the first 3 kana very badly written, surely not by a Japanese hand, because the strokes start all in the wrong position. Translated this would mean ?-?-? *type 14 year* , which makes absolutely no sense in the case of a Luger pistol. The 14 year type was the Nambu pistol.

But the main proof why this is a fake is the use of the imperial crest, the chrysanthemum above the chamber. Here a few words about the use of family crests may be in order. Japanese noble families, as their European counterparts have their own family crests. The premier family crest in Japan is the chrysanthemum, reserved exclusively for the use of the Imperial family.<sup>24</sup> It has 16 petals and may not be used by anyone except a member of the Imperial family or with permission of the Imperial family. It was stamped on the rifles of the Japanese armed forces to show that this was Imperial property and entrusted by the Emperor to each individual soldier. When the chrysanthemum is used in any other context it must be with less than 16 petals. As this is not the case then there is only one conclusion. Clearly a fake.

6.5 The ( for the time being ) last example of faking a Luger by engraving is the so called Dr. Ley Luger.

But this statement is to be taken with a pinch of salt, because while this paper was being completed another Luger fake appeared on the market, which need to be discussed in the next section. A never ending story unfortunately.....

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<sup>24</sup> See W.M.Hawley and Kei Kaneda Chappellear Mon, the Japanese Family Crest published by the authors 1976 Page 1 and G. Appert Ancien Japon, Mon Tokio 1888

The Dr. Ley Luger cont.

This is a DWM Luger beautifully engraved with scrolls and gilded. Along the barrel runs an inscription in pseudo-gothic script “Dr.Robert Ley” and on the left side of the receiver the inscription, likewise in pseudo-gothic script which, because it is important and points clearly to a fake, I shall quote it here in full and literally: “Für Hervorragende Leistungen Britische Kanalinseln”<sup>25</sup> and is supposed to have been a present from Dr. Robert Ley, the leader of the “Arbeitsfront”, the unified Nazi labour union, to someone who was somehow engaged at the German occupied British Channel islands.

The first thing one notices is that the name of the donor is clearly given, but not the recipient. But would it not be obvious that the name of the receiver ought to appear on the gun as well, so he could show it to his friends: “ look what I got”?

Another thing which jumps in the informed eye is that there are spelling and writing mistakes in the dedication. Correctly the inscription in correct and proper German ought to run thus : “Für hervorragende Leistungen (auf den) besetzten Kanalinseln” , because the Channel Islands were at that time no more the British Channel Islands but the German occupied Channel Islands. Official German terminology of this period spoke only of Channel Islands, never of the British Channel Islands.<sup>26</sup>

A very beautifully engraved gun, but plain rubbish.

## 6.6 The Aviators Luger

The story begun when a friend pointed to a website of a well-known dealer of firearms, in which under catalogue no.D-80 the following entry , together with a series of photographs, appeared:

DMW 1917 Military; 9 mm; 95 % blue; 80 % straw, excellent bore, very good grips; with a 1918 dated holster, matching magazine and tool, with medal bar with 5 imperial medals. [...]

Accompanying the gun and accessories were 2 pages of documentation which were supposedly to give credence to the gun and to link it to a famous name.

The first paper reads as follows:

*1918 May 5*

*I crawled over enemy line where I saw two aeroplanes which had been shot down. In the enemy aircraft was the badly wounded body of the airman. I took from him his pistol no.*

<sup>25</sup> This inscription contains 2 mistakes. In the German language the Word *ausgezeichnet* (excellent ) is an attributive adjective to Arbeit , (work) which is never written in capital letters. The same applies to Britische before Kanalinseln where the word British is likewise an attributive adjective and thus not written in capitals.

<sup>26</sup> See the official magazine Signal issued by the German High Command. For the Channel Islands, the only part of Britain ever occupied by the Wehrmacht this magazine was especially issued in English until 1944.

693, his wallet, belt and holster, as well as a row of metals.( sic) One metal(sic) being the iron cross. His name was Lothar von Richthofen, rank Oberleutnant.

*Lt. Louis T. Donahue*  
*US Army*

The second has the following to say :

*This page was taken from the journal my father kept during his time in the army 1917 and 1918. This note has been with the gun, belt and holster since that time. The wallet has long since been lost. This is the only page left of his accounts in the war. The journal too has been lost in time.*

*I have dictated this to my friend who is writing this for me. I am eighty three years old and cannot do it myself as I have a difficult time seeing.*

*My father told me of this account and only after the war he found this pilot to be the brother of the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, and told me to keep the captured items together as they would be valuable some day.*

signed: *Patricia Donahue Wilson*  
*Patricia Donahue Wilson*  
*May 10, 1997*

Accompanying this set is a row of medals consisting of the Iron cross second class, as well as 4 memorial medals issued long after the first world war. The row of medals is of the formal style ( Grosse Ordensspange) which is worn only socially or with parade uniform. The strange thing is that most of these medals were issued a very long time after the end of the first world war. The medal following the Iron Cross is a memorial cross issued to all members of the German Armed Forces who saw combat in WW I. It was instituted by the then president of Germany, Field Marshal von Hindenburg on the 13. July 1934 ! in three classes, bronze with swords for those having seen combat, without swords for non-combatants and in black for war widows and dependants. The other memorial medals were issued by Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, all of them issued long after the war ended.

Another point is, that orders and medals in this configuration were not worn when in service uniform when on active service, where only a row of medal ribbons was worn, the so-called kleine Ordensspange.

So this row of orders and medals as it is could not have been taken in the field 1918.

Next lets look at gun and holster. As I have already said it would have been very unlikely that v. Richthofen would have worn a Luger. He was an officer and as such had to provide his own sidearm, which would most likely have been a Mauser M 1910 in calibre .32 ACP. Strange also is the condition of gun and holster. The gun was dated DWM 1917 the holster 1918, the gun is in almost pristine condition, the holster is very scruffy, especially the strap and buckle part of it. As it was allegedly taken in May 1918

it has seen only at maximum 5 months field service, yet it seems to have seen more rough usage than the gun, a very unlikely story as the gun of an aviator was unlikely to have seen the kind of rough service as the gun of an infantry soldier in the trenches.

Very likely the gun and holster were mated at a later date when the v. Richthofen story was concocted.

A look at the first paper shows a lot of deficiencies. This is supposed to be a page from the war diary of Lt. L.T. Donahue, US Army.

Lt. Donahue was the son of the founder of a prominent Chicago newspaper, yet he shows such a poor knowledge of the English language in syntax and spelling, note medal was written metal and the bad syntax in the first sentence. Quite correctly the person who wrote the Donahue letter wrote aeroplane, but lapsed later on into aircraft, and airman, expressions then not in use. The proper term at that time would have been "pilot".

Also it seems that Lt. Donahue was not particularly well acquainted with US Army regulations, which does only recognise the word Lieutenant in correspondence, it should properly have been either 1<sup>st</sup> Lt or 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt as the case might have been.

Finally, why would Lt. Donahue sign only a single page in his diary, especially the page with the entry of the v. Richthofen Luger?

The second paper is a statement by his daughter in which she confirms the authenticity of the gun and the first paper. Apart from a very strange use of the English language the signature is much too neat and clear for an eighty three year old lady who has a difficult time seeing. A signature is usually a scribble but not such a clearly readable signature.

Another point generally overlooked in this story is that at the time v. Richthofen already wore the order "Pour le Merite" the coveted "Blue Max". Strange that Lt. Donahue took all sorts of things, even his belt and wallet, but missed the blue Max.

The history of Olt. v. Richthofen shows that he was wounded in action on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1918 and was hospitalised till June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1918 so he could not have been shot down on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918. He survived the war but was killed in a flying accident in 1922.

How could one explain this story if not an attempt to deceive?

The only other explanation is that perhaps Lt. Donahue was the innocent victim of some enterprising soldiers<sup>27</sup> who sold him these items together with a story, who knows?<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the papers which are supposed to go with the Luger are nonsense.

Thus for the time being ends the story of Luger and paper faking. And surely this paper will be amended when more material sees the light of day.

One of the great experts on the Luger Pistol in Germany, Mr. Reinhard Kornmeyer once wrote,<sup>29</sup> that there were not more than a handful of factory engraved Lugers which were made at the time in question and by the company which produced the gun and for the purpose of presentation, a statement I do not doubt.

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<sup>27</sup> This is not an unknown phenomena, it is known that many Japanese flags have been produced by enterprising Marines and sold to pilots and naval personal in 1945. The same was true with Vietcong flags later in Vietnam.

<sup>28</sup> I am indebted to Mr. K.Schad for these information.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication to the author

Most dedication Lugers were clearly made afterwards and made for one purpose only, to deceive and cheat. The pity is that these guns are really excellently engraved and would be worth quite a lot without the spurious inscriptions, dedications and suchlike. The sooner this is realised the better.

Caveat emptor !!<sup>30</sup>

Concluding this paper I owe thanks to my friends Dr. Claude Blair for pointing out places where improvements and corrections were in order and to Dr. Alan Williams who showed me how the micro structure of steel can be used to prove that metal parts were not made in the time they were supposed to be made. Another vote of thanks goes to Mr. Reinhard Kornmeyer, *Mr. Luger Pistol* for helping me with all sorts of material on that gun.

I would be very interested to hear about decorated Luger pistols, or Lugers which have a story attached to them. Please send all such material to [klaus.leibnitz@t-online.de](mailto:klaus.leibnitz@t-online.de)

#### Bibliography:

About the faking of works of art there are quite a few good books available. In my opinion the best in English is: *Fake? The Art Of Deception* edited by Mark Jones, British Museum Publications 1990. In German there are also some quite good books, one of them which touches the reproduction of arms and armour is: *Faszination Fälschung* by Georg Kretschmann, Publisher Parthas, Berlin 2001, another book which deals especially with the affair Kahlert-Konrad is Georg Kretschmann: *Sachsens größter Fälscher*, Tauchaer Verlag 1997, a monograph about the arms which Konrad made and Kahlert sold is: *Gefälschte Blankwaffen*, K&A Verlag 1980.

About the Luger Pistol many a book has been written. In German there is Joachim Goertz, *Die Pistole 08*, unfortunately long out of print and as far as I know never translated into English. The books in English are too numerous to list all of them here, but I have found Fred Datigs book *The Luger Pistol* quite good, also Kenyons: *Lugers at Random* and Walter: *The Luger Story*.

About Japanese swords, as far as they concern us here, I think John Yumoto's *The Samurai Sword*, Tuttle, Tokyo 1962 answers all questions.

As far as Islamic weaponry is concerned there is no better book to deal with the subject in a general way as G.C.Stone's: *Glossary on the Construction, Decoration and Use of Arms and Armour in all countries and in all times*, The Southwork Press 1935

For the data on heat treatment and blueing I have relied very heavily on the *Härtevorschriften* (Instruction for hardening) issued by the Mauser Company in 1935, which were supplied by Mr.Reinhard Kornmeyer.

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<sup>30</sup> Buyer beware

On the German Armed forces and their use of the Luger I have relied upon Reibert: *Der Dienstunterricht im Heere*, Mittler & Sohn, which was issued from 1935 to 1945 for all branches of the armed forces.

Most other works consulted are given either in the text or in the footnotes.