



Ottoman Ceremonial Mace (Bulawa)

Ottoman Transylvania, early 17th century

Silver gilt, silvered metal, wood

83cm long

Stock no.: A5914

Provenance: Italian noble family by descent.

A long ceremonial mace or *bulawa* made in the Principality of Transylvania (1570-1711), an Ottoman vassal state ruled by Hungarian princes. The round shaft is decorated with a fine silver mesh, creating a braided effect. Four silver gilt plaques are wrapped around the shaft, decorated with floral arabesques.

Unlike the traditional Ottoman flanged mace or *buzogan* (see, for example, accession no. [36.25.2958](#) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), the head is a upturned pear shape.

Comparative examples are held in several Northern European Royal collections, suggesting that such maces were given as diplomatic gifts or looted on the battlefield. An example in the National Museum of Denmark (accession no. [94491](#)) was held in the Royal Danish Kunstkammer founded by King Frederik III in c. 1650 until its dissolution in 1825. It measures 74.5cm long and dates to c. 1600 to 1650. Another dated to c. 1600 is held in the Dresden Armoury (accession no. [Y0388](#)), which contains the collection of the Dukes of Saxony. This example, though only 59.9cm long, shares similarities such as the textured handle and the palmette shape of the applied silver gilt panels. Two are held in the Livrustkammaren, the Royal Armoury of Sweden. One is dated to c. 1600 and attributed to Eastern Europe (accession no. [10016_LRK](#)). Its final owner was Axel Gustafsson Oxenstierna (1583-1654), Count of Södermøre and Lord High Chancellor of Sweden. The other is dated to 1575-1600 and was used in the coronation of King Karl X Gustav (accession no. [8998_LRK](#)) and was used in his coronation. A mace in the State Museum of Baden, Karlsruhe (accession no. [2006/1001](#)), belonged to the Margraves of Baden, southern Germany. has a near-identical shaft. Though the head of the mace was replace with a crown in 1811, the shaft is similar, with four gilt plaques and the mesh-covered shaft. The base of the mace is stamped with the mark of Bartholomäus Igell, a goldsmith working in Braşov, Transylvania, in c. 1625.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links