

MEDIEVAL AZERBAIJANI WEAPONS IN EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

While studying medieval Azerbaijani weapons, it is necessary to take into account exhibits kept and displayed at world museums as material and cultural artifacts. Along with production aimed at meeting mass demand, medieval craftsmen also fulfilled orders from the military-political leadership of the state and made weapons that stood out not only for their combat properties, but also artistic design. Such weapons were always looked after, protected and handed down from generation to generation. In the course of historical events, these weapons were taken out of Azerbaijan in various ways and are now on display in the world's leading museums and private collections.

Medieval Azerbaijani weapons are kept at a number of European museums that have rich collections of weapons.

Medieval Azerbaijani weapons in German museums. Among German museums, the largest collection of weapons of Turkic peoples is kept in Dresden. Kur-furst August II began to collect Muslim weapons of the



Fragment of the front part of the armor of the Aqqoyunlu state. The Turkic Chamber, Dresden Museum

Armor of the Aqqoyunlu state. The Turkic Chamber, Dresden Museum



museum in the 18th century (10, p. 314). For example, among the more than 600 exhibits kept at the Turkish Chamber (Türkische Cammer), which is an integral part of the Dresden Armory (Rüstkammer), there are weapons belonging to the Azerbaijani Aqqoyunlu and Safavid states and made by Azerbaijani craftsmen.

One of the unique exhibits of the Dresden Turkish Chamber is armor belonging to a 15th century Aqqoyunlu fighter. This chainmail-type armor is based on a shirt made from steel rings joined together. In the belly part of the armor, there are eight steel pieces joined together and decorated with silver and gold inscriptions. In the back of the armor, there are small pieces in three rows from the collar to the waist. There are 15 pieces in each row. On the right and left sides of the armor, there are four pieces placed vertically from the waist to the armpits. The armor has its own arm protectors stretching to the elbow, hems stretching to the knees and a collar protecting the throat and the neck (3, No 3, p. 43).

The horse armor on display at the Dresden Turkish Chamber is believed to belong to the 15th-16th centuries, and according to German specialists, it was used in the Aqqoyunlu and Safavid states (3, No 2, p. 42). The armor consists of steel parts joined together: head, neck, chest, sides and back. The part that protects the head consists of a steel forehead and cheek parts made from pieces and rings hanging from it.

There are also offensive weapons belonging to the Safavid state kept at the Dresden Turkish Chamber. It must be noted that although these weapons are known as those of 16th century Safavid fighters, they are shown as "Iranian" exhibits.

The arms of the bows of 16th century Safavid fighters were made from wood and the central part from horns and tendons and painted in different colors (3, No 14, p. 50). The tips of the combat axes of 16th century Safavid fighters have an elongated cutting part and a wide strong back (3, No 63, p. 80). There are delicate gold patterns on the axe. The blade of the 16th century Safavid sword is slightly bent. In the small decorative cartouche on the blade there is an inscription saying "The servant of Shahi Shams, Shukrullah" and "Shukrullah, the servant of Shahi Shams" (3, No 140, p. 150)

A 15th century Aqqoyunlu sword kept at the Dresden History Museum stands out for its uniqueness. The sword consists of a smooth bone handle and a slightly bent steel blade. The entire surface of the blade is decorated with gilded flowery patterns (6, p. 253). Another exhibit that belongs to the Safavid state is a shield. It

was made of branches and has a steel umbo fixed in the middle (6, p. 243).

Medieval Azerbaijani weapons in British museums. Azerbaijani weapons are kept at the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal Armory. The collection of Islamic art at London's British Museum, one of the largest museums in the world, includes more than 40,000 exhibits. Among them are quite a few historical artifacts made in Azerbaijan (1, p. 74-80). A study revealed medieval Azerbaijani weapons in the British Museum, including weapons belonging to the period under review.

A veil-type steel helmet belonging to the end of the 15th century is shown as an exhibit made in the Aqqoyunlu state. There are two semi-elliptic slots for the eyes in the front of the high mouth circle. The sides of the mouth circle and eye slots are reinforced with a metal frame. Between the eye slots, there is a reinforcement piece to protect the nose. The bottom part widens towards the mouth circle and gradually moves towards the crest. In the bottom there are vertical narrow frets. A protuberant rivet can be seen on the right and left sides of the trunk. It is believed that earplugs (metal pieces protecting the ears) were hung from these rivets. The crest gradually becomes narrower and turns into a crown towards the top. The crown consists of two parts. The lower part consists of a board decorated with a baklava motif; the "baklavas" look in four directions, and a hole was made in the middle of each "baklava".

Another veil-type steel helmet kept at the British Museum is shown as an exhibit made in northwestern Iran (in other words, in South Azerbaijan) at the end of the 15th century. In the front of the high mouth circle there are two semi-elliptic slots for the eyes. Both the mouth circle and the edges of the eye slots are reinforced with a metal frame, but unlike other helmets of this type, the frame is extremely wide and has a flowery pattern with holes. There are also patterns on the frame that covers the mouth circle. There are protuberances with holes in the mouth circle. A metal net made of rings hangs from the metal cable going through these protuberances. The net is long enough to protect the neck completely and the sides of the throat from blows. In the trunk there are curve-like wide diagonal stripes. The trunk becomes wider towards the mouth circle and gradually turns into a crest. The crest gradually becomes narrower and turns into a crown towards the upper part, but the crown itself has not survived to this day. Specialists of the museum managed to read not the whole text, but different



Horse armor of the Aqqoyunlu state. The Turkic Chamber, Dresden Museum



***Helmet of the Aqqoyunlu / Safavid state.
Military Museum, Leeds***

expressions on the helmet: "Al-Alim al-Adil", "al-Muiz", "al-Mavlana", "al-Sultan al-Azam", "Khagan", "al-Muazzam Malik al-Umam".

The British Museum also keeps a helmet of the kulah-khud type made in the Safavid state on 1625-26. The height of the main part of the helmet handed over to the museum by John Henderson is 25.4 cm and the height together with the net made from rings is 42 cm. The spherical cone-shaped helmet has a crown on top, a nose protector on the forehead and two pipes for feathers in the front. A net made from rings hangs from the lower part of the helmet. A long net protects the back and sides of the head while a short net made from rings protects the forehead.

Specialists of the museum read the following inscrip-

tions on the helmet: "This gold helmet was completed in 1035. May the head wearing it remain safe." "This gold helmet with jewels on my head under the rule of the conqueror of the world and pillar of the world, Shah Abbas. His helmet looks like a shining moon, how can I describe him." "This gold helmet was completed under the rule of Shah Abbas, a king of kings like Darius, generous, glorious and well-known, conqueror of the world and a king who has influence from China to Sham. Such a helmet is becoming of a shining fighter. May those who wear this helmet be happy..."

A greave kept at the British Museum is believed to belong to the end of the 15th century. The exhibition which displays the greave says that it was made in the Aqqoyunlu state. The greave consists of three steel pieces and metal rings that connect them. The central piece follows the shape of the leg and sticks out in the lower part – in the ankle. There are holes for rivets on the small pieces in order to fasten it on the leg.

The collection of the museum also has a kneepiece belonging to the end of the 15th century. This additional defensive element, which has a traditional design, consists of a knee pad, metal pieces that protect the thigh and a hanging ringed net.

The museum also has the head of a combat axe made in the Safavid state in 1550-1600. The head of the combat axe is made from steel and is decorated with animal and flowery patterns. The axe was bought by the museum from E. Begyan. The surface of the head, which is 16.3 cm long, is straight and the lower part is shaped as a crescent. It was possible to hit with the back of the head.

Prominent Egyptian researcher A. Zaki notes that there is the name of Shah Abbas on one of the kulah-khud type helmets in the British Museum (9, p. 28).

Among the weapons kept at the British Museum, a sword belonging to the 12th-13th centuries and its sheath stand out for their uniqueness. The sword has a straight handle and a slightly bent steel blade. A reinforcement stripe goes through the middle of the blade.

Another British museum which keeps oriental weapons is the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds. The museum, which has more than 70,000 exhibits, has five galleries: Military, Knights, Self-Defense, Hunting and East. A 12th century bronze mace kept at the Leeds museum and found in Iranian territory (region not defined) weighs 800 grams and is 11.5 cm long. The weight of the behtar-type Safavid weapon kept at the museum is 8.1 kg. The weight of the Safavid sword kept at the



Helmets of the Aqqoyunlu / Safavid state. British Museum, London

museum is 0.6 kg and length – 81 cm (8, p. 75, 170, 186).

London's Victoria and Albert Museum, one of the world's largest applied art museums, has a major collection of oriental weapons. Among them are 15th and 16th century veil-type helmets (4, pp. 274-276). However, since there is no scientific research in this field, the clear origin of a number of oriental weapons in the museum is not known and the weapons are displayed as "Iranian weapons" or "Turkish weapons".

Nasser D. Khalili, a prominent art critic and collector living in the United Kingdom, has a collection of 25,000 artifacts. The Khalili Family Trust unites five independent collections, including a collection called the Arts of the Islamic World. The collection includes weapons, including those belonging to medieval Azerbaijani states.

A combat mask kept in the collection has a unique design (2, cat. 25, p. 55-57; 5, cat. 221, pp. 186-187). The mask is attached to a helmet with six rivets along the upper edge. The mask was made in the form of a human face. The mask is elongated and has a wide forehead, a sharp elongated nose, wide dense eyebrows, almond-shaped eye slots, convex cheeks and a narrow moustache stretching from the chin to the ears. There are small holes under the nose and in the mouth of the



Leg protector of the Aqqoyunlu state. British Museum, London

mask for the fighter to breathe. The eye slots are circular. The nose has a straight shape and there are gilded flowery patterns on the cheeks. The mouth is shaped as a straight line. The moustache is straight and its tips are bent towards the ears. The mask with a size of 20x16.5 cm is made of steel while its hanging details are made from copper. According to D. Alexander, an orientalist and author of a catalog dedicated to Nasser D. Khalili's collection of weapons, the mask was made at the request of Aqqoyunlu fighters in Derbend at the end of the 15th century and is believed to have been used by Ottoman fighters later.

A helmet kept in the collection belongs to veil-type



*Leg protectors of the Aqqoyunlu state.
Furusiyya Art Foundation collection,
Museum of the Institute of the Arab World, Paris*

helmets (2. cat. 27, pp. 68, 70). The steel helmet with a height of 31.4 cm has a classic veil structure. The veil-shaped helmet has a high mouth circle, a wide trunk, a rising crest and a two-part crown. In the front of the mouth circle, there are two semi-elliptic slots for the eyes. Protuberances with holes were attached to the mouth circle. A metal net was hung from cables going through these protuberances. The net protected the neck and the throat.

A padded-ringed armor kept in the collection belongs to the type of chain mails (2, cat.26, pp.68–69).

The chain mail belonging to the end of the 15th or early 16th century is 86 cm long. In the front of the armor, eight square steel pieces and four steel pieces on the right and left sides are connected to the ringed base. The chain mail was usually used as a protective weapon by heavily-armed horsemen and the command of the troops.

A 15th century horse cap kept in the collection carried the name of Huseyn b. Alikhan Jahangir. According to D. Alexander, Huseyn b. Alikhan Jahangir (killed in Tabriz in 1497) was a brother of Aqqoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan, and the horse cap was made in the tradition of Aqqoyunlu weaponry (2, cat.40, pp. 86–89).

Medieval Azerbaijani weapons in French museums. Exhibits brought from the East have a special place in collections of French history and archaeology museums. Azerbaijani weapons are kept at the Louvre Museum, Army Museum (Musée de l'Armée) and the Museum of the Arab World Institute.

The Furusiyya (knighthood) collection of the Museum of the Arab World Institute (Musée de l'Institut du monde arabe, Paris) displays not only weapon samples of the Arab world, but also of the Turkic peoples. Among the 8th and 9th century exhibits of the collection, there are weapons of Azerbaijani fighters as well.

It has been established that a helmet kept in the museum's Furusiyya collection was made in the State of the Shirvanshahs. It is known that the helmet was made by Azerbaijani craftsmen in the middle of the 15th century and has an inscription saying "Sultan, Sultan's son Amir Khalilullah" (7, No 310, p. 323). It is indicated that the helmet belonged to Shirvanshah ruler Khalilullah I (1418-1463) (According to some researchers who cite the name "Khalil" on the helmet, the helmet may have belonged to Aqqoyunlu Prince Khalil ibn Hasan (1441-1478), Uzun Hasan's son). The part of the inscription that was read is as follows: "Sultan, Sultan's son, Sultan Amir Khalilullah... May our ruler be glorious, may the great sultan and wonderful khagan be glorious, prosperous and wealthy... Glory is in obedience. Wealth is modesty." The helmet's mouth circle and slots for the eyes are reinforced with a metal frame. Along the mouth circle, there are protuberances with holes, but the ringed net hanging from them has not survived. The nose protector has not survived, and only connecting holes are there. The trunk is divided by wide diagonal stripes; flowery stripes turn into written stripes. The crest is divided into two horizontal stripes: the upper stripe has a flowery pattern and the lower stripe has inscriptions.

*The frontal part of the horse armor of the Aqqoyunlu state.
Furusiyya Art Foundation collection,
Museum of the Institute of the Arab World, Paris*

There is no doubt that another sample of a veil-type helmet was made by Azerbaijani craftsmen, and researchers note that it was made in South or North Azerbaijan (Shirvanshah or Aqqoyunlu state) (7, No 311, p. 324).

A kneepiece, which belonged to a fighter of the 15th century Qaraqoyunlu or Aqqoyunlu states, kept at the museum's Furusiyya collection, is one of the rare exhibits. The kneepiece was designed to protect the knee and the part from the knee to the waist. The 60-cm long kneepiece has three parts. The central part is an elliptic convex kneepad decorated with patterns and inscriptions. The part covering the thigh consists of pads and rings. Elongated steel pieces form nine rows here and are connected with rings. Leather belts (two pieces) are attached to the sides of the thigh part with rivets. There are several metal rings in order to connect the upper part of the thigh protector to the belt. The ringed net that was attached to the lower part and sides of the kneepiece and to the lower part of the thigh protector hung below the knee. The kneepiece is decorated with silver and gold patterns and inscriptions (7, No 291, p. 303).

The Furusiyya collection has a second kneepiece too. It differs from the one described above only with its length (55.5 cm) and silver patterns and inscriptions (7, No 292, p. 304). Such a kneepiece was made in Iran, Anatolia and Shirvan and was common in the 14th-16th centuries.

A greave belonging to a fighter of 15th-16th century Azerbaijani states (Aqqoyunlu or Safavids) belongs to the padded-ringed type. The main part of the greave is three pieces made from steel. The pieces protect the part from the knee to the foot. The fact that the central piece is long allows us to assume that it was attached from the sides as the ankle sticks out at the bottom. The pieces are connected with steel rings. The greave, which has a total length of 39 cm, is designed for the leg (7, No 294, p. 306). The catalog of the collection notes that a similar greave is kept at the Los Angeles County Art Museum (7, p. 305).

It is noted that an arm protector kept in the Furusiyya collection was used in the Aqqoyunlu, Shirvanshah or Safavid states in the 15th, 16th or early 17th centuries and was made in South Azerbaijan or in the Caucasus.



The arm protector is made from steel and decorated with silver patterns. The arm protector with a length of 28.5 cm consists of three steel pieces (one long piece from outside and two small ones from inside) and rings that connect them. According to researchers, the gold parts on the arm protector were made in the Caucasus (North Azerbaijan) in the 18th century (7, No 296, p. 308).

The Furusiyya collection also has two horse caps belonging to Azerbaijani states. One horse cap carries the name of Qaraqoyunlu ruler Qara Yusif (1410-1417) (7, No 326, p. 340). The steel piece shaped as the forehead of a horse has slots for the eyes. The rivets along the edges of the piece allow us to assume that a cloth was attached to the cap from inside. Such horse forehead armor was used in the Aqqoyunlu and Ottoman states.

The horse cap belonging to the 16th century Safavid state kept in the collection is complete. For example, cheek parts are added to its forehead steel part (7, No 327, p. 314). The 63-cm long forehead piece is not different from the piece used in the 15th century. The padded-ringed cheek parts consist of upper and lower bits connected with rings. The bits, for their part, are made from elongated pieces.

The collection also has several offensive weapons connected with 15th-17th century Azerbaijani states. A 16th-17th century bow kept in the collection belonging to the Safavid state is made from steel (7, p. 384). The upper and lower edges of the 94-cm bow are shaped like the head of a crane. In most cases, arms were made from bone and wood and connected with tendon and thread. The arms of the steel bow depict the pads and lines of wooden bows of earlier periods.

The Furusiyya collection has three archer's rings belonging to the 17th century (7, p. 395). The narrow ring has a string shaped like a bird's beak.

The Furusiyya collection includes a type of sword owned by fighters of Azerbaijani states in the 15th-16th centuries (7, p. 159). For example, the slightly bent steel blade is wide and is reinforced with a convex stripe in the middle. The handle is made of bone and has a square cross-like head. The blade was decorated with gold flowery ornaments in the 18th century.

Although one sword kept in the Furusiyya collection resembles an Ottoman sword, its blade was made in Azerbaijan (7, p. 62). The blade was made in the second half of the 16th century, but the gold patterns and inscriptions on it were made in the 18th-19th centuries. The handle of the sword has a straight cross-like and round and flat head, and these elements were charac-

teristic of Ottoman swords. However, studies by museum employees revealed that the blade of the sword belongs to a sword used by Safavid troops in the second half of the 16th century. The slightly bent blade ends with a crest closer to its tip.

Thus, the study proves that Azerbaijani weapons made in the 15th-17th centuries have particularities that make them different from other Eastern countries. The establishment of these particularities makes it possible to identify Azerbaijani weapons kept in European museums. ❁

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