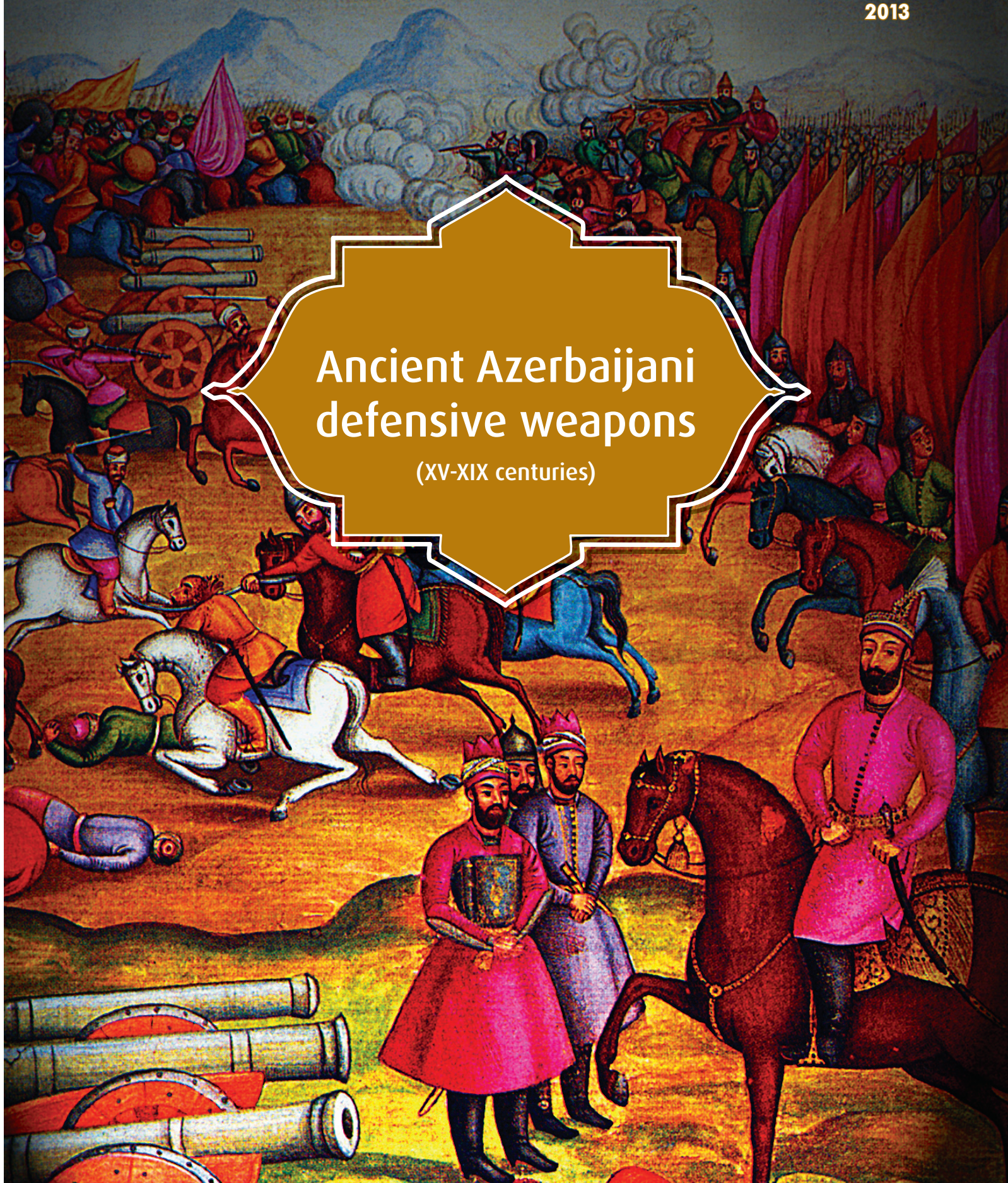


Ancient Azerbaijani defensive weapons

(XV-XIX centuries)



2

The Middle Ages hold a special place in the centuries-old military history of Azerbaijan. Manufacturing various metal products was an important sphere in medieval Azerbaijani cities. Iron extraction was crucial for mastery, especially metal working as it was the main part of urban economy. Azerbaijan is rich with a variety of underground natural resources, metals and minerals. Specialized mastery fields emerged and developed in centers of Azerbaijani states and khanates that frequently replaced one another



1

during this period. One of these fields was armory. For centuries, Azerbaijani weapons have been unique combinations of people's artistic, aesthetic norms with technical thinking and practice.

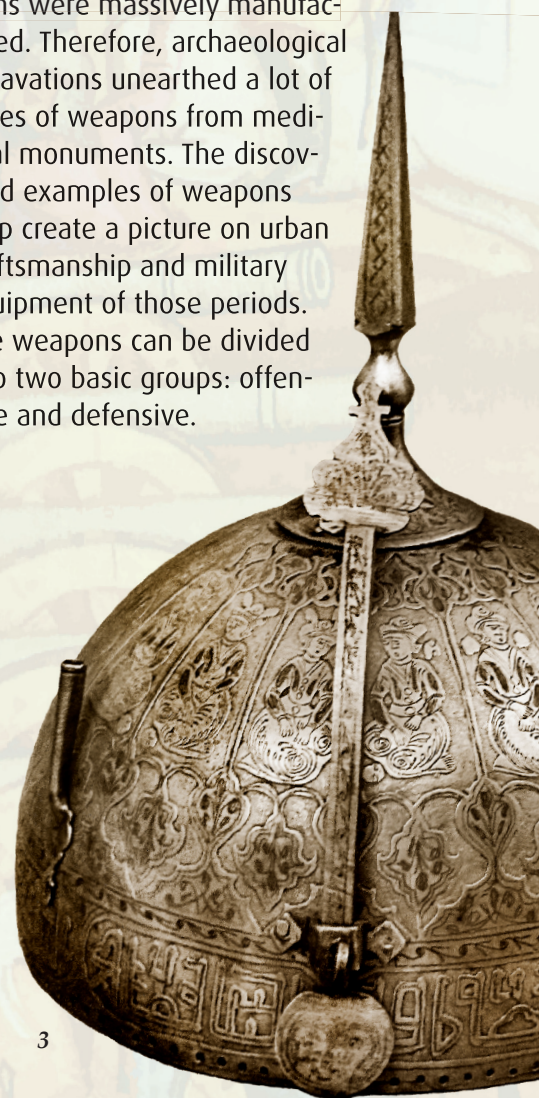
External attacks and internal feudal wars that regularly occurred in the Middle Ages caused the armory to occupy a special place craftsmanship. Skilled craftsmen were involved in production of

weapons and various types of arms were massively manufactured. Therefore, archaeological excavations unearthed a lot of types of weapons from medieval monuments. The discovered examples of weapons help create a picture on urban craftsmanship and military equipment of those periods. The weapons can be divided into two basic groups: offensive and defensive.



2

1. Helmet with gilded ornaments (XVIII century)
2. Helmet. Netted, tubular, steel, plant ornaments and gilded patterns (XVI-XVII centuries)
3. Helmet. Hemispherical, steel, spiked, with engraved plant ornaments and feast scene.



3



4

"Here the local armorers were mostly involved in dagger manufacturing. Blades of these daggers could cut off a silk scarf and a solid steel armor with the same sharpness."

From the diary of Russian writer Count V.A. Sollogub (1850)



5



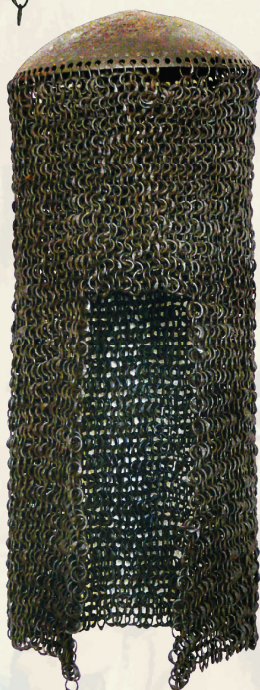
6

Offensive weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, daggers, swords, military knives, battle pitchforks, flails, defensive weapons such as armors, helmets, shields were widespread in the Middle Ages. As samples of Azerbaijani material culture, defensive weapons, cold weapons and firearms are sources that prove our national moral values and roots. These weapons reflect not only socio-political events, culture, military history of a certain historical period, but also development of craftsmanship, high professional level of armorers.

Defensive weapons include helmet, armor, additional protection elements such as shield, golchag (for arms), ayaglig (for legs). Headgears hold a special place among these weapons. The early headgears were made from leather. Metal headgears were already used in Azerbaijani military in the 1st millennium BC. Conical helmets were mostly used in Azerbaijan. The weapon would glide over the conical helmet and the tall spike would not allow straight shot. The surfaces of all kinds of helmets were decorated with various plant and geometric patterns, and in the early Middle Ages with inscriptions in Arabic script.



7



4. Helmet of the Safavid period (XVII century)

5. Spiked, nasal, tubular helmet (early XVIII century)

6-7. Misri helmet (XVI century)

8. Shirvanshah Farrukh Yassar I's helmet held in Istanbul Military Museum (XV century)



8

Ring armors also belong to defensive weapons. They usually consist of a large number of iron tablets with holes to be tied to one another. The armors were initially sewn from thick leather, later metal plates were added. More ancient armors weighed 12-16 kg, armors of later period 5-9 kg. The welding-river technique was applied in technology of manufacturing ring armors. Infantrymen put on long armors, while cavalrymen short armors with shorter low, front and rear sides. Oriental and Azerbaijani armors were also decorated with copper, silver or gold rings. Ring armors were considered more practical in Azerbaijan. Light and flexible, they protected warriors from strikes of cutting weapons, ventilated air well in hot climate, distributed their weight proportionally to human weight. These advantages made ring armors more long-living compared to other armors. Ganja, Shamakhi, Tabriz, Derbend were the centers of manufacturing ring armors.



9

The richest markets I have ever seen are in Baku, Nukha and Derbend. Weapons, bullets, daggers, rifles – everything is produced and sold here.

French writer Alexandre Dumas
(1860)



10



11



12

Additional protective clothing was put on in order to strengthen the protection. Back and chest were protected by chest armors, which consisted of steel plates hanging with belts over chest. They were usually decorated with gilded and silver patterns, plant ornaments and Koran suras.

Golchags, one of the additional protective components, covered the section of arm from elbow to wrist. Golchags consisted of basic and additional parts. Net rings were added to golchags in order to protect the inner side of humerus.

- 9. Armor (XV century)
- 10. Golchag (XVII century). Cutting embroidery, gilded patterns, grid, plant ornaments, Arabic script. 54 cm long.
- 11. Golchag, bronze (XVII century). Engraved designs, depiction of a hunting scene. 35.5 cm long.
- 12. Golchag (XVII century).
- 13. Golchag fragment.



13

One of the most important protection devices of Azerbaijani warriors had been shields since ancient times. They had different types. Initially, large, rectangular shields were used. Pierced into the ground during the battle, this kind of shields was a firm protection for infantrymen. They were mostly made of wood and leather. With their surface covered by metal, wooden shields had a beautifully decorated umbo placed in the center. Deregah is an example of small circular, leather shields, lamt and tarsh big-size shields. Steel shields were convex and effectively protected against various cold weapons. Their small size and heavy weight would keep their thickness. Shields were used by both cavalry and infantry and were carried in the back during military rallies, while on left or right hand during battles. Shields made of Damascus steel by natural cooling were decorated with scenes of ceremony, feast, hunting, as well as with luck and victory ayets of Koran engraved as various patterns and gilded ornaments.

A circular Azerbaijani shield (by master Mahammad Momin, XVI century) decorated with gilded ornaments and precious stones is still preserved in the Armoury Chamber in Moscow.

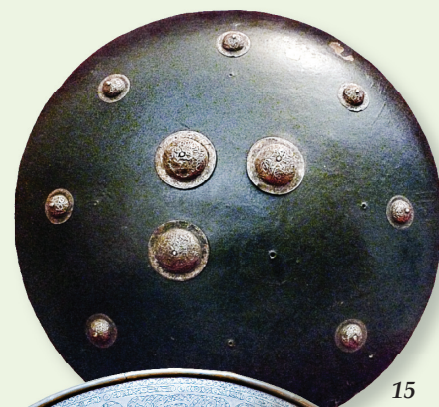


14. Shield, steel (XVIII century). Plant ornament, gilded pattern, Arabic script. Diameter – 44 cm.

15. Shield, steel (XVIII century).

16. Shield, steel (XVIII century). Large-size ceremonial protection arm. Gilded pattern, engraved ornament, human image, Arabic script. Diameter – 75.5 cm.

17. Shield, steel (XVIII century).



15



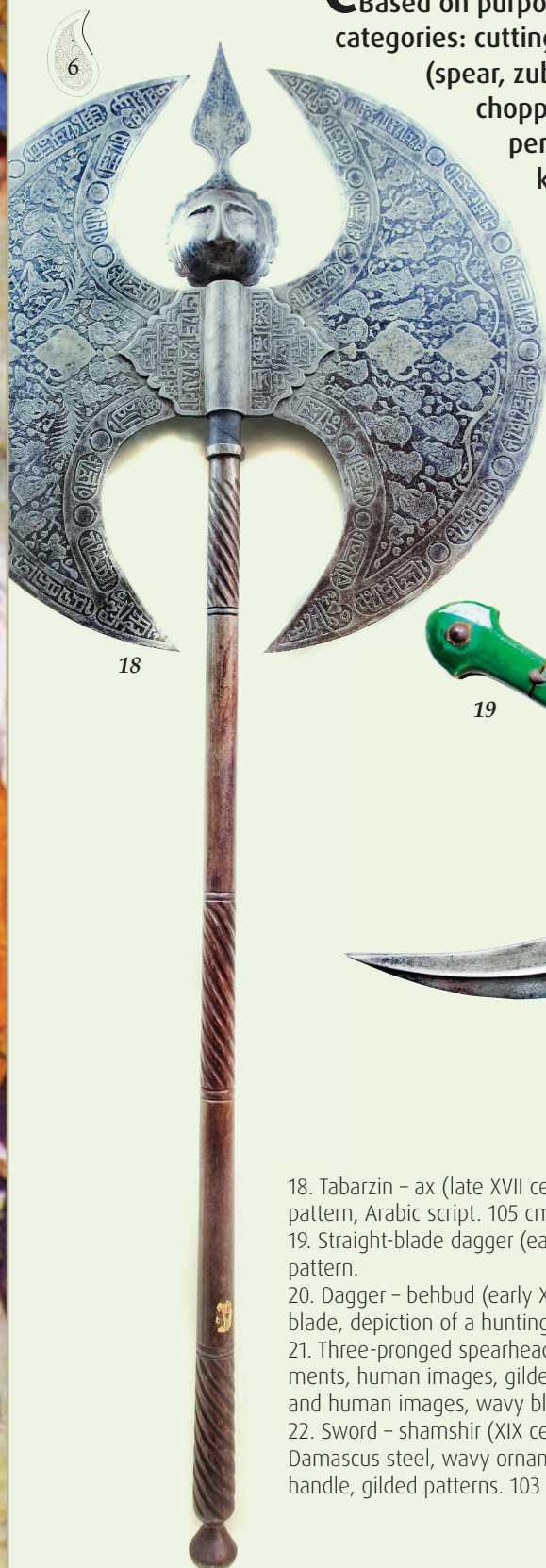
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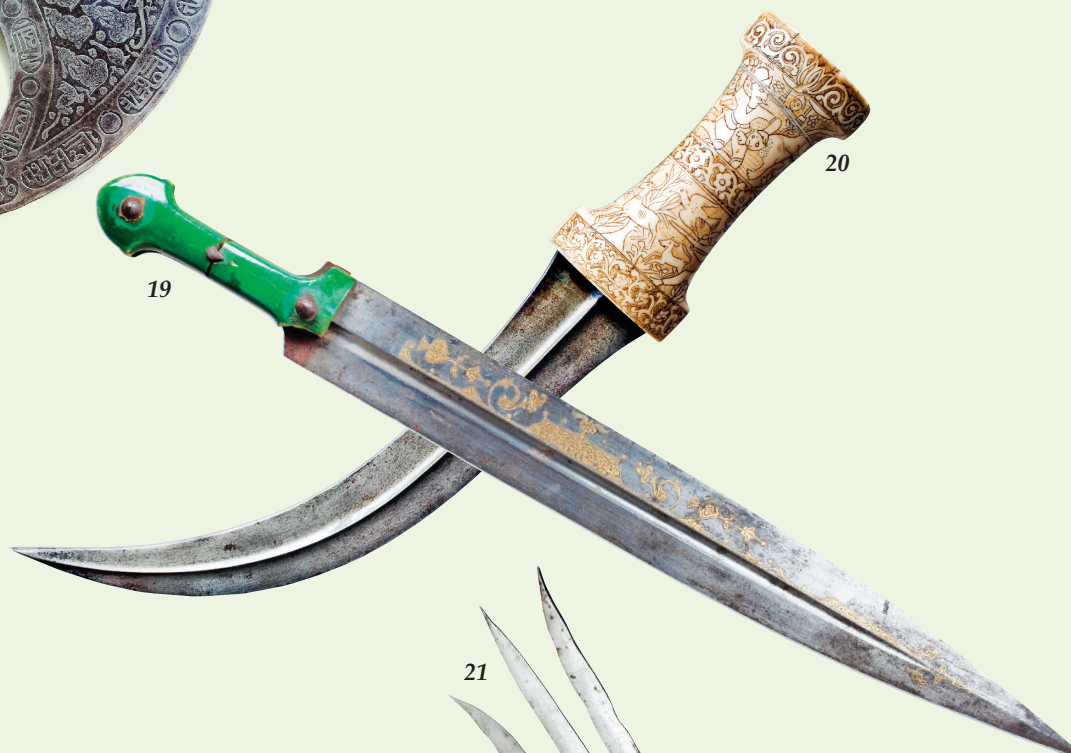
17

Orientalist, historian-ethnographer L.N.Gumilev noted that "the sword, as a weapon of cavalry troops, is an invention of nomads, especially the Turks." Wide, sharp blades, which are considered predecessor of the sword, were known in Azerbaijan during the period of Manna.

Cold weapons held an important place in armament of Azerbaijani warriors. Based on purpose and use, cold weapons can be divided into the following categories: cutting and thrusting weapons (sword, dagger), thrusting weapons (spear, zubin), blowing weapons (mace, flail, sheshpar), blowing and chopping weapons (ax, tabarzin). Different kinds of axes, mace, flail, pernach, triangular and quadrangular, long-blade, very thin, sharp knives were also widely used along with sword, dagger and spear. Cold weapons had not lost their initial importance even at the end of the 14th century, after the emergence of firearms. Swords are the most widely spread cutting and thrusting weapons. A sword called kilic or shamshir was very popular among the Turkic peoples.



18



19

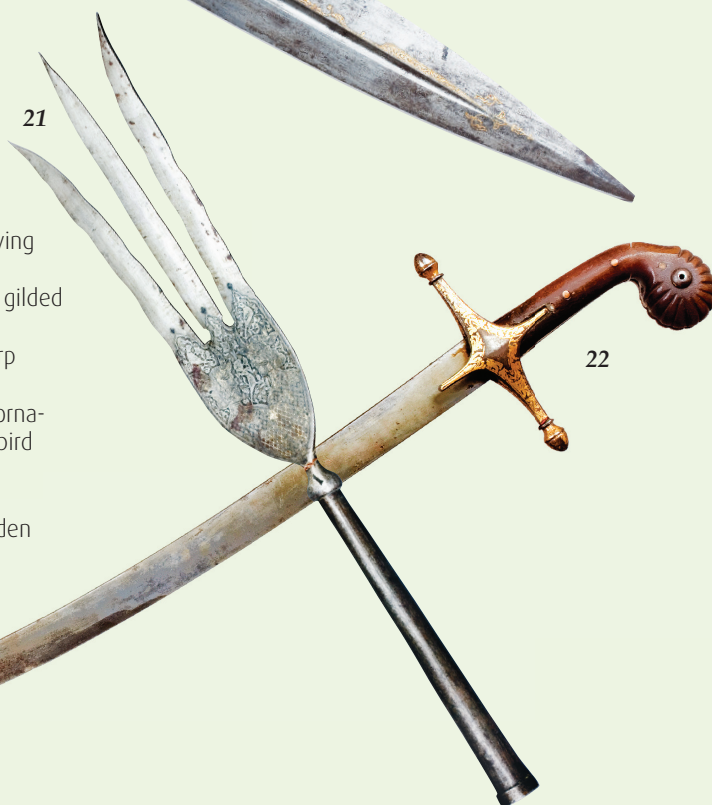
18. Tabarzin – ax (late XVII century). Gravure engraving pattern, Arabic script. 105 cm long.

19. Straight-blade dagger (early XIX century). Steel, gilded pattern.

20. Dagger – behbud (early XIX century). Steel, sharp blade, depiction of a hunting scene. 29 cm long.

21. Three-pronged spearhead (XVII century). Plant ornaments, human images, gilded and silver patterns, bird and human images, wavy blade. 59.5 cm long.

22. Sword – shamshir (XIX century). Blade made of Damascus steel, wavy ornaments on surface, wooden handle, gilded patterns. 103 cm long.



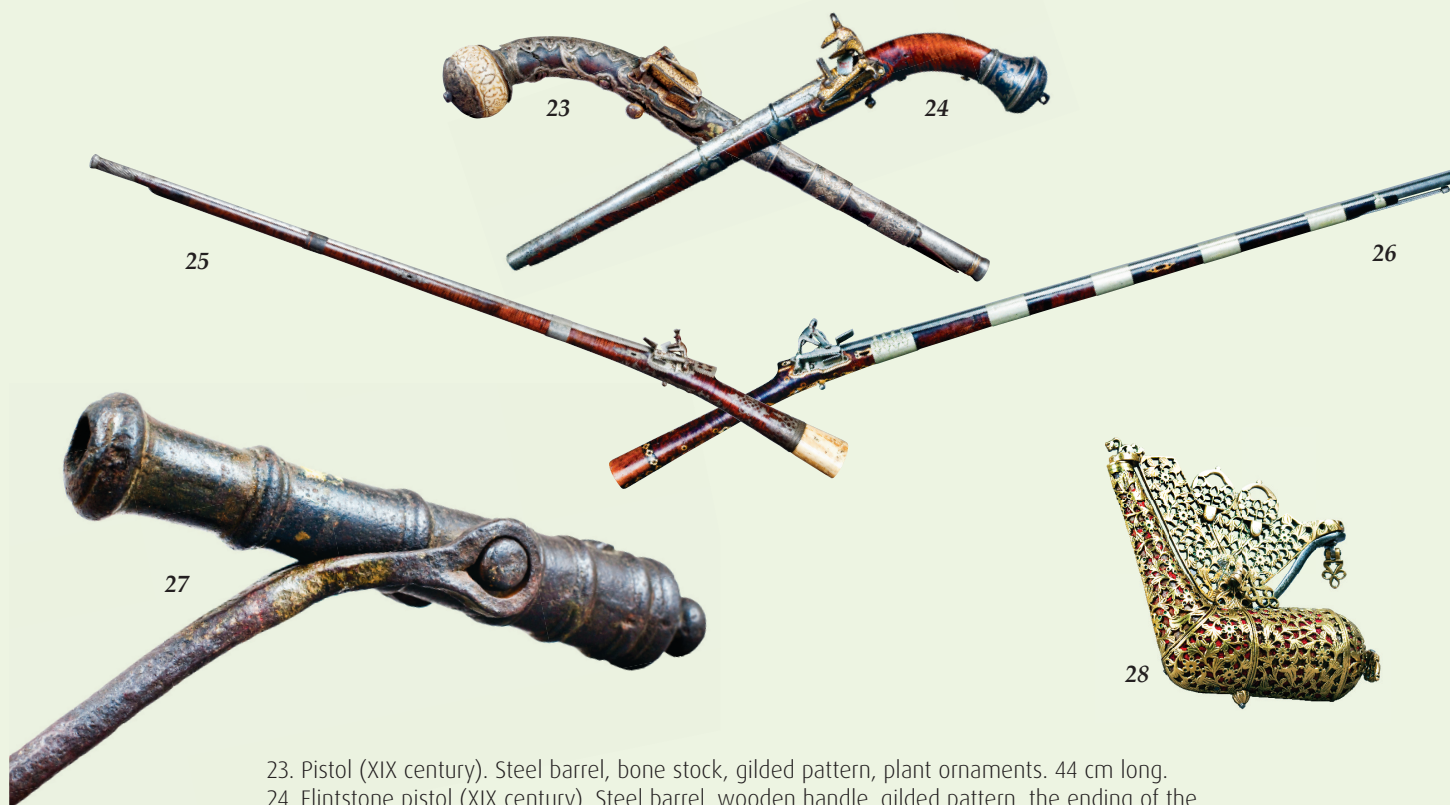
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22

The category of firearms includes cannons, pistols and rifles. The Middle Ages hold a special place in the centuries-old military history of Azerbaijan. The Middle Ages are also marked by emergence of firearms. Firearms and their evolution in Azerbaijan can be studied in two directions: artillery and personal (individual) firearms.

The first examples of firearms (cannons) in Azerbaijan were diverse due to their structure, quality and production method. Weapons were made by different masters who would keep their knowledge in secret. The master, who manufactured the weapon, would usually take care of it during battles. Therefore, gunners were considered masters of a special guild, not cavalry.

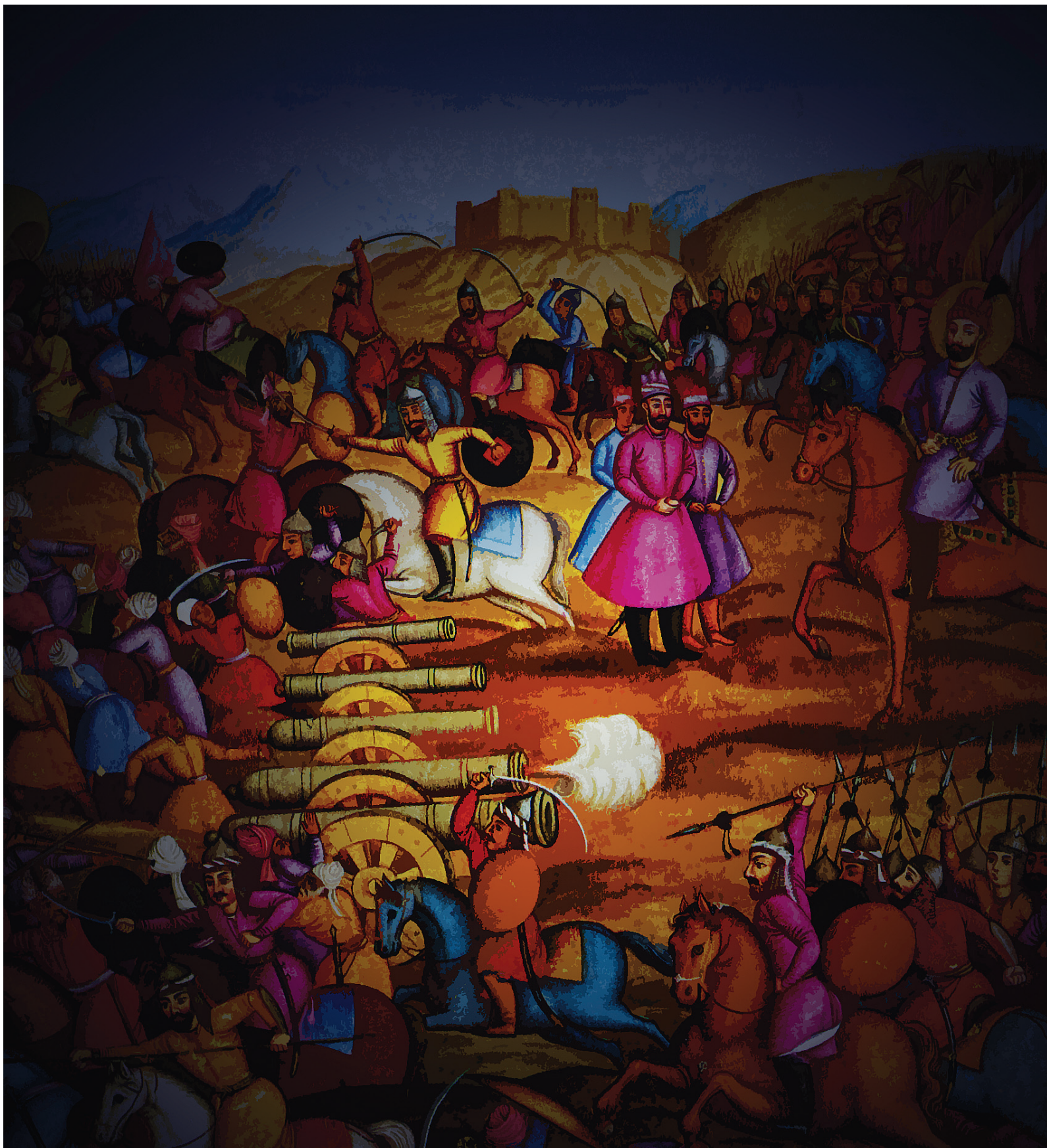
These defensive weapons we presented are brilliant examples of brave pages in warfare history of our ancestors. The Director of National History Museum of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Vice President of the National Academy of Sciences, academician Naila Valikhanli says: "Weapon manufacturing has been one of the leading spheres of metallurgy. Weapon manufacturing is related to folk art and masters. As samples of Azerbaijani material culture, defensive, cold weapons and firearms are sources that prove our national moral values and roots. These weapons reflect not only socio-political events, culture, military history of a certain historical period, but also development of folk craft, high professional level of armorers."



23. Pistol (XIX century). Steel barrel, bone stock, gilded pattern, plant ornaments. 44 cm long.
 24. Flintstone pistol (XIX century). Steel barrel, wooden handle, gilded pattern, the ending of the handle is surrounded by silver sphere decorated with plant ornaments. 55 cm long.
 25. Flintstone rifle (XIX century).
 26. Flintstone rifle (XIX century).
 27. Cannon-Zanburak. (XVIII century).
 28. Gunpowder container. (XIX century).
 29. Fragment of a flintstone rifle

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