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AXES AND MACES IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN KHANATES DURING THE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY: WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF POWER

This article examines the varieties of axes and maces that existed in the khanates of Central Asia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It provides a typology for these short-range weapons and a description of their use in combat based on historical sources. In addition, special attention is given to the role that axes and maces played pertaining to status and their significance in the khanates as symbols of power.

Key words: *short-range weapons, axes, maces, Bukhara, Khiva.*

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THE AXE is a short-range weapon for striking and hacking an opponent and one of the oldest types of close-quarter weapons. Due to its high efficiency in association with its relative weight and large-sized blade combined with a small surface which concentrates the striking force and the handle which acts as a large lever; the axe was initially the most common weapon in short-range combat (Gorelik 2003: 53). This weapon consists of a piece of iron (typically a blade) mounted on a shaft, thus creating an axe. Axes could possess a tipped edge which was stretched out into the shape of an elongated spade, such as the *berdiche*. The blade could be straight, convex, or concave. The lower edge, from the shoulder to the heel, is sometimes elongated like a barb with various lengths. The plane of the axe, often called the cheek, could be smooth, decorated, or have perforation holes. The narrowing of the cheek at the junction with the eyelet is called a neck which joined with the handle's shoulder. The head can be smooth and have a hammer or a thorn-shaped butt or poll opposite the blade (Beheim 1995: 549).

Axes were a fairly widespread weapon in the East (Irvine 1903: 80–81; Pant 1989: 90). Battle axes of various forms existed until the end of the 19th to the early 20th centuries in India (Bashir Mohamed 2008: 268–271; Hales 2013: 302); Persia (Khorasani 2006: 603–612; Hales 2013: 303); as well as in Afghanistan (Egerton 1896: 144; Miloserdov 2019: 396–403). The khanates of Central Asia were no exception. The local population used three types of battleaxes whose differences will be discussed below.

In most Russian language and foreign sources of the 19th century, all Central Asian axes are described using one term – *aibalta* or *ai-balta* (Lyko 1871: 35–36; Zaitsev 1882: 34; Zeller, Rohrer 1955: 369). The first mention of axes as weapons in the khanates of Central Asia appear in the 16th century in an ambassadorial letter from the Khivan ambassador Khoja-Muhammad written to the Russian Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich dated November 11, 1585. The letter listed the gifts brought by the ambassador. An axe is named among the gifts destined for the Tsar from the ambassador himself: “I am the ambassador, swear: A Damascus saber with gold filigree, a *saadak* [quiver] with gold inlay and all types of painted designs, a Damascus *tulunbas* painted with gold and various pigments, a Damascus saber and scabbard painted with gold and various pigments, as well as a Damascus axe with gold filigree” (Trade Relations 1932: 99).¹ The “filigreed” Damascus ax, that is, decorated with gold, was undoubtedly a noble person's weapon.²

Subsequent references to this type of axe from the region, considered as a status symbol as opposed to a combat weapon, can be found three centuries later in the book by Russian scholar and statesman Mikhail

¹ **Ed. note:** “Damascus” in this case is a description not of the location of forging (i. e. Damascus, Syria), but rather the forging technique that had a distinct pattern which appeared to be like flowing water. A Damascus blade is considered high quality and can hone to a very fine edge. It may also have taken its name from Damask fabric patterns of specific woven images.

² **Ed. note:** The quote from the Khivan ambassador used the

Galkin-Vraskoy, *Ethnographic and Historical Materials on Central Asia and the Orenburg Region*. He states: “The armament of the *mir-okhurs* (officers) from the infantry consists of two pistols, a piston gun, a Bukharan saber, and a small hatchet with a silvered handle. The *karaul-beshi* (security guard) has the same armament with the only difference being that the handle of the hatchet is covered with red cloth” (Galkin 1868: 222). Participants of the Turkestan (Central Asian) campaigns from the 19th century also wrote about local axes (Lyko 1871: 35–36; Zaitsev 1882: 34; Essay 1888: 221).

Battle axes were noted as a weapon during the second half of the 19th century as a part of the weaponry for the Bukharan army: “The second line of infantry battalions is armed with *batiks* [club], *aibaltas* and pikes. An *aibalta* is a small axe head mounted on a shaft” (Lyko 1871: 35–36). It was also attributed as being among the nomadic tribes of the Kirghiz and Turkmen: “The sabers were heavy with a wide blade and extremely sharp. A significant number of the defenders were armed with small axes” (Essay 1888: 221). “They have completely abandoned bows and arrows but from their ancient national weapons they preserved the chisel [i.e. *aibalta*] which is a small axe head attached to a long handle” (Zaitsev 1882: 34).

By the early twentieth century, the axe became exclusively a weapon signifying status. This can be found in the work of the Danish ethnographer Ole Olufsen. He mentioned large knives, with scabbards, whose metal parts were covered with a thin sheet of silver and gold and decorated with turquoise and other precious stones, he notes that “now they are worn only by courtiers, for which they are a sign of their status, a kind of ceremonial weapon, the same as the *ai-balta* axe, which was previously used in battle, but now is only worn by the *mirshab* before the procession of the emir or his prime ministers” (Olufsen 1911: 477). But judging from the few observations of the writer and artist, Nikolai Karazin, this tendency actually appeared in the second half of the 19th century: “The hatchet (*balta*) – which is worn behind the belt and, depending on its handle, is gold, silver, or simply covered with colored velvet – serves as a sign of dignity and position” (Karazin 1874: 234). Moreover, axes were becoming a status symbol in Bukhara: “The emir’s departure from one province to another takes place with great ceremony. He is accompanied by commanders (*sorvars*) and soldiers (*askars*). The *mirshab* rides in front with a ceremonial axe, then the riders with banners and drums follow the *sorvars*” (Olufsen 1911: 581–582). This was also fully recog-

nized by the modern Danish explorer, Torben Flindt, who had thoroughly studied such weapons brought by Olufsen from the expedition (Flindt 1979: 28). Olufsen noted the same in Khiva: “He [the Khivan official] wore ordinary Khivan clothes, a saber and a dagger hung at his belt, and in his hand, he held a battle axe with a silver handle. It was exactly the same ceremonial axe as those used in the procession of the emir in Bukhara” (Olufsen 1911: 194).

Now it is appropriate to consider the types of axes used in the khanates of Central Asia. An excellent and accurate description is taken from Kazakh samples of this weapon by Dr. Leonid Bobrov, who distinguishes between the following types:

- narrow-bladed axes with a triangular axe head or hatchet (*shakan*),
- wide-bladed axes with a triangular axe head or hatchet (*balta*),
- axes with a triangular axe head with a moon-shaped blade (*aibalta*),

Bobrov also indicated numerous intermediate forms (Bobrov 2014: 256).

While in complete agreement with the above typology, it should be noted that the term *shakan*, which, according to the Kazakh researcher Kaliolla Akhmetzhan comes from the verb root *shaku* (shagu) meaning “to stab or split” (Akhmetzhan 2007: 114), in my opinion, the word actually comes from a distortion of the Russian term for *chisel* which identified a “hand weapon that in earlier times indicated a sign of status which included an axe head with a hammer on an arshin handle.”³ This term for *chisel* is also found in Central Asia (Dal 1866: 536). However, even more likely, the name comes from the Türkic Chagatai *čakan*, the term for “battle axe” (Fasmer 1987: 324). Nevertheless, given that the term *shakan* in relation to narrow-bladed axes with a triangular blade, which was called by Bobrov a *hatchet*, has already been introduced into the scientific literature and used in several publications (Akhmetzhan 2007: 114; Bobrov, Pronin 2014: 256; Bobrov 2015: 106–113). Thus, this terminology can be considered quite legitimate.

The typology for Kazakh axes, proposed by Bobrov, is absolutely applicable to the battle axes that were used in the khanates throughout Central Asia. First, because Kazakhs constituted a significant portion of the population of those khanates. Second, is the need to take into account the opinion of the 18th century German ethnographer Johann Gottlieb Geor-

literal term “manured” as in “fertilized with dung” to describe the decorating or filigree process.

³ Ed. note: An *arshin* is a now obsolete Russian unit of measurement that is 71.12 cm in length. Thus, an “arshin handle” was an axe handle with this approximate length.

gi. He worked in Russia and claimed that blacksmiths among the Kazakhs were “not skilled, and therefore they mostly [bought] axes, knives, weapons, flint, etc.” (*Georgi* 1799: 128) from Bukhara, Khiva and Tashkent merchants who supplied them with weapons, while Russian merchants were prohibited from doing this (*Georgi* 1799: 137). Moreover, the descriptions of Kazakh battle axes and the inhabitants of the khanates appear very similar. For example, Major General Semyon Bogdanovich Bronevsky, analyzing the military affairs of the Kazakhs at the early part of the 19th century drew attention to the design features of the Kazakh battle axes: “The armament of the Kirghiz [Kazakh] people consists of arrows and *aibalta*, or an axe with a specially modified long handle with an iron blade on it ...” (*Bronevsky* 1830: 174–175).⁴ The historian, ethnographer, and one of the founders of the Russian Geographical Society, Aleksei Irakliyevich Levshin, in 1820 was appointed to the Orenburg Border Commission. He engaged in the analysis of the archive of the Kirghiz-Kaisak [Kazakh] affairs and mentions *chakans* as a long-handled axe: “The Kirghiz-Kaisaks [Kazakhs] fight with spears, sabers, arrows, guns and *chakans*. The *chakan* has an axe head attached to a long handle. The wounds they inflict in the head are, for the most part, lethal” (*Levshin* 1832: 49). Another description is also mentioned: “They also use the *chisel* or a type of hammer set on a long handle; one end of the axe head is blunt, the other one is sharp. A blow strongly inflicted with it is lethal” (*Muravyov* 1822: 117). However, another description, published ten years earlier, refers to the weapons of the Khivans stating that they use the *chisel* against armored opponents (*Muravyov* 1822: 116). There is no doubt that, in this case, the reference specifically concerns axes and not a special weapon for piercing armor, since it was noted above that Karazin used the term *chisel* specifically in relation to the Central Asian axe (*Karazin* 1874: 234). In addition, it is noteworthy that when considering weapons of the Kazakhs “in ancient times,” Chokan Valikhanov does not mention battle axes among the other weapons he considered in detail (*Valikhanov* 1904: 37–40). In this regard, it is possible to assume during that time the battle axe was probably borrowed by the Kazakhs from the inhabitants of the khanates of Central Asia.

Shakan (*chakan*, *chekan*) is an axe with a small piece of iron with an elongated triangular or trapezoidal shaped axe head which is often decorated on the cheeks, or plain, of the axe head, with floral and (or) geometric designs (Fig. 1, 1). The butt of the axe head is most often flat. The axe head was mounted on a long

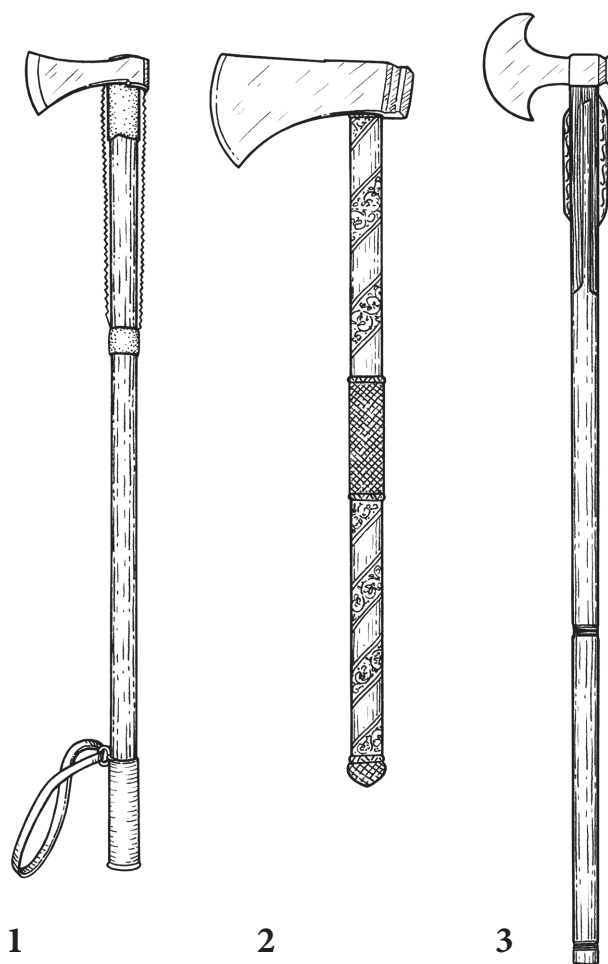


Fig. 1. Illustrations of battle axes such as the *shakan* (1), *balta* (2) and *aibalta* (3). Drawing: A. S. Dementiyeva

wooden handle, honed and rounded in the cross-section and narrowed into a trapezoidal shape at the axe head which gradually tapered towards the end of the handle. The wooden handle could be covered with leather or overlaid with metal and embossed with floral designs. In many instances with this type of battle axe, metal strips, often decorated with geometric and floral patterns, were placed on the side of the blade and butt of the handle. At the lower end of the handle, a lanyard ring could be attached, as seen on an axe from the collection of the Swiss traveler, Anri Moser, which he acquired in Bukhara (*Moser* 1888: 147). In some cases, the tip of the axe had a loop for the purpose of attaching a leather lanyard. In addition to the usual flat plated metal strip which served a protective function for the shaft, this front metal strip could be thickened with its protruding edge forming a face with sharp teeth. Similar sharpened plates on battle axe handles of the 18th century were called “cutters” by Russian Cossacks. These plates were riveted directly under the axe head and, according to Bobrov, could

⁴ Ed. note: During the 19th century, most Russian imperial publications and correspondence would refer to Kazakhs as *Kirghiz* or *Kirghiz-Kaisak/Kazakh*.

also be utilized during an attack, capable of inflicting serious injury on an enemy. In some cases, another “cutter” was located on the opposite side of the handle, under the axe head butt. As a result, the weapon possessed not one, but three sharpened combat blades. The sharp edge of the “cutter” prevented an opponent from intercepting the upper part of the axe with his hand and thereby halting or parrying a blow from the axe. In certain circumstances, this “blade” feature could also be used to inflict chopping blows to the head, shoulders and limbs of the enemy, as well as to the enemy’s sharp shafts and pikes. As noted above, in some cases this feature’s sharpened edge was provided with acute-angled (sometimes curved) teeth, which turned the “cutter” into a type of saw that inflicted deep lacerations on the opponent (Bobrov 2015: 108, 112).

Balta is a Türkic word that is simply translated as *axe* (Dal 1866: 536). With this typology, the axes are similar to the typical Persian *tabars* in which the hilts are decorated by local craftsmen to imitate the Persian style (Fig. 1, 2). This axe head was forged from a powerful piece steel, most often Damascus steel. The thick neck was only slightly pronounced which was in contrast to the barb. The butt of the axe head was always flat, taking the form of a wide hammer (Flindt 1979: 26 27; Lyutov 2006: 212 216; Anisimova 2013: 274 275; Buryakov 2013: 164 165; Bobrov 2015: 109, 112). The wooden handle of this type of battle axe was usually shorter than that of the *shakans* and always rounded or slightly oval in the handle’s cross section. It was almost always lined with precious metals and decorated with turquoise stones. This type of axe was the most common ceremonial weapon used during the second half of the 19th century, and a common part of an adjutant’s uniform for the emir of the *mehrems* (Moser 1888: 147 148) and the symbol that was solemnly carried by the *mirshab*,⁵ who led the procession of the emir. It was also common to see them carried for processions of dignitaries such as prime ministers. These axes, which were commonly decorated in Bukhara, are quite recognizable (Fig. 2). Their handles were usually covered with silver (Olufsen 1911: 477 478) or gold leaf with embossed floral designs and decorated with bands of square-shaped turquoise stone settings (Olufsen 1911: 478; Lyutov 2006: 213). Some axe heads are also decorated with double strands of turquoise cabochons mounted in S-shaped holders. Although these latter types are considered to have come from the collections of the Bukharan emirs (Lyutov 2006: 214-216), I believe that these examples were made in the Khivan Khanate.

⁵ Mirshab is the head of the city police in the cities of the emirate (the name of the police chief is “miri shab” –literally “night ruler”) (Abduraimov 1970: 100).



Fig. 2. Axe made in Bukhara. Private collection. Denmark

In Khiva as well as in Bukhara, the ruler's dignitaries and officers possessed ornamental axes as evidenced by extant photographs (Cagatay 1996: 44-45) and descriptions from European travelers. One observed: "When we arrived, the craftsman at were making, by order of the khan, the silver hilt to a battle axe, which was to serve as a symbol of status" (Lansdell 1885: 287). It is probable that some of the axes from the Russian Ethnographic Museum collection whose handles are either decorated with a large and roughly embossed floral design or a smooth silver and gold combination with double strands of small turquoise cabochons attached in S-shaped mountings were made in Khiva (Lutov 2006: 214-216). This assumption finds support from an almost identical axe known in the collection of the Artillery Museum in St. Petersburg. It was presented in 1911 to Nicholas II as part of diplomatic gifts from the khan of Khiva. The butt of the axe contains a gold inscription: "World of Islam, Khorezm" and the date 1329 AH (1911 AD) (Anisimova 2013: 274-275).

Aibalta type axes usually possess a small, usually finely shaped axe head resembling a crescent, with a long, round handle. The name *aibalta* comes from two words that describe this type of axe: *ai* meaning "moon," *balta* meaning "axe" (Semenyuk 1969: 266) (Fig. 1, 3). Bobrov believes that such small axes with a wide semicircular blade allowed the combatant to inflict not only chopping strokes, but also cutting blows, which were extremely dangerous for soldiers with no protective armor. The blow of the axe not only cut and crushed the bones, but also cut the skin, leaving a deep wound that led to profuse loss of blood (Bobrov, Ilyushin 2015: 251). It should be noted that Russian-language and foreign authors have often called any small hatchet or axe with a long handle by the term *aibalta*. That is, when the term *aibolta* which includes the spelling variations found in different texts, one must understand that the authors may be referring to *aibalta* axes with a half-moon blade (as defined above) or the *shakan* axes (Lyko 1871: 35; Zaitsev 1882: 34; Moser 1888: 147). For example, in the article "Conquering Tashkent" from the *Military Collection for 1865*, an anonymous author describes the assault of the city and notes that "there were cases when one or two people of Kokand with *aibaltas* (a type of axe with a long handle) rushed at a entire troop."⁶ But, since there is no description of the axe head, we cannot assert that the defenders of Tashkent used the exact crescent-shaped *aibalta* axes.

However, while in the previous case it was at least possible to assume that the combatants described above used the *aibalta* axes as delineated by our modern typology; the axes mentioned by writer and journalist Vsevolod Krestovskiy⁷ clearly demonstrates that by the end of the 19th century foreigners



Fig. 3. Henry Lansdell in Kokand armor with saddle cloth presented by the emir of Bukhara. Photo on the frontispiece of the first volume of his book "Russian Central Asia" (Lansdell 1885)

could not discern the differences between the various Central Asian battle axes. In his book *Visiting the Emir of Bukhara* he writes: "At the parapets, on both sides, standing in a row were court *chelyadins* in festive robes, *udaichi* with staffs, and officials with *aibaltas* along with other signs indicating their [social] distinctions" (Krestovskiy 1887: 415). At the same time, it is definitely known that the emir's dignitaries, as a sign of their status, wore Persian-type axes decorated with local designs and attributed, according to modern typology, as battle axes of the *balta* type. This is confirmed both by Ole Olufsen's ethnographic collections (Olufsen 1911: 478) and old photographs depicting Central Asian dignitaries (Cagatay 1996: 44-45).

⁶ Voennyi sbornik [Military collection]. Vol. 45 (No. 9, September). St.Petersburg, 1865. p. 75.

⁷ In 1882-1884 Vsevolod Krestovskiy served as an official for special assignments under the Governor-General of Turkestan, Michail Chernyayev.

Judging by currently available data, battle axes which, according to Bobrov's proposed typology, refer to the type of *aibaltas* used to a greater extent among the nomads, although they could have been used sporadically by the warriors of the khanates. Some evidence indicates that this type of battle axe was a Kazakh weapon. For example, Colonel Mayer, in his article "The Kyrgyz Steppe of the Orenburg Department," writes: "The weapons of the Kirghiz [Kazakhs] are following more and more of a European pattern, but their national ancient weapon was a small axe with a long handle, called a *chekana* or *aibalta* (an axe in the shape of a moon)" (*I-ch* 1866: 23). In an edition of the following year, the *aibalta* axes, similar to a halberd [a crescent axe head], are also referred to by the authors as a Kazakh weapon.⁸ The aforementioned Anri Moser notes that the *aibalta* axe with its curved cutting edge and crescent shape were the favorite weapon of the Kirghiz [i.e. Kazakh] people and he acquired one of them during a trip to the Kirghiz [Kazakh] steppes in 1883-84 (*Zeller, Rohrer* 1955: 369). Moser's catalog provides a description of these axes and their drawings which testifies to their Kazakh origin (*Zeller, Rohrer* 1955: 373, Taf. CII). An *aibalta* is also mentioned as being a Kazakh weapon by modern authors (*Semenyuk* 1969: 266). The existence of such axes in the khanates is confirmed in a photograph of Henry Lansdell, a British traveler and member of both the Royal Asiatic Society and the Royal Geographical Society, in which he holds an *aibalta* purchased in Bukhara (Fig. 3) (*Lansdell* 1885: 548).

From this brief description of battle axes, it can be concluded that if axes of the *balta* type were mainly status symbols, then the *shakan* and *aibalta* axes were weapons actively used during armed conflicts by the population of the khanates and their nomadic neighbors.

Maces were characterized as a short-range weapon consisting of a relatively short, usually straight shaft, or handle, with a large striking element, or head. It is a weapon utilizing a blow-crushing action meant to cause severe soft tissue injuries as well as fractures and crushing of the bones. Despite the fact that the mace was a very ancient and primitive weapon, its use was widespread in Central Asia (*Gorelik* 2003: 57).

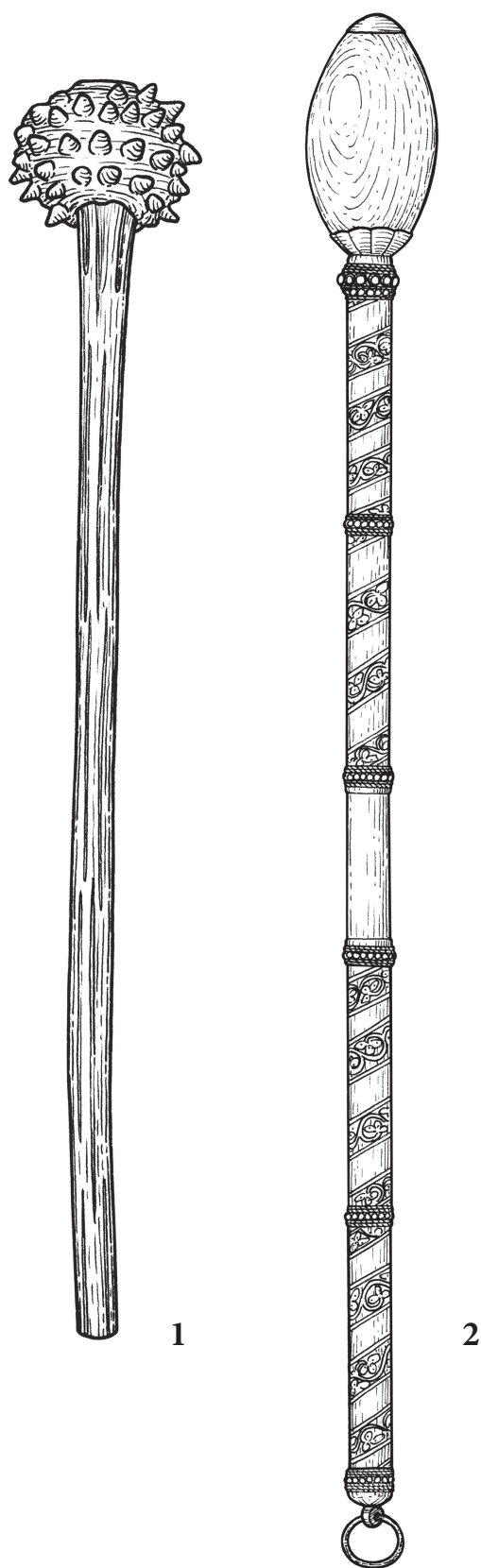
None of the travelers and diplomats who visited the khanates of Central Asia in the 18th and early 19th centuries and who provided descriptions of the armies of these khanates mention maces in the com-

plement of arms worn by local soldiers (*Volovnikov* 1986; *Russov* 1840; *Burnashev* 1818; *Muravyov* 1822; *Meendorf* 1826). Thus, it seems logical that these weapons were used by the militias who were enlisted only during large-scale hostilities. The first known mention of maces in the khanates dates to the second half of the 19th century. Lieutenant Colonel Martin Vikentiyevich Lyko, in his note on the military operations of 1868 in the Zhavshan Valley states that among various weapons of the Bukharan *sarbazes* "the second line of [Bukharan] battalion infantry is armed with *batiks*, *aibaltas* and pikes." And the author also specified that what is meant by a *batik* is a mace: "A *batik* is a long, rather thick stick, which is a person's height, with an iron ball or ellipsoid attached at the upper end. The surface is covered with many conical or trihedral, sharp projections. A thick stick with a large thick knot whose surface is pierced with nails, is a primitive *batik* with which poor people [use as a tool] to go to work" (*Lyko* 1871: 35). Perhaps, then, *batik* is a simplified name for a mace. This assumption is also based on the fact that another name for this weapon is *syuil-batik*, with the clarification that it was "a strong thick stick with a heavy cast iron or copper knob, a terrible weapon in dexterous and strong hands" (*Zaitsev* 1882: 34) (Fig. 4, 1).

Thus, based on the above sources, it can be assumed with a high degree of confidence that the mace was a weapon for irregular units. Confirmation that the mace was a weapon of non-professional warriors can be found in the memoirs of the battle-scene painter Vasily Vereshchagin who took part in several of the battles in the Central Asian khanates. In his account about the defense of Samarkand's citadel from a sudden attack by local residents, he writes that most of them were armed with *batiks* described as a stick with an iron ball with teeth on the end (*Vereshchagin* 1894: 38). The use of maces with a cast iron spherical top being used by the townspeople is also confirmed by another source. Also, one of them mentions that the Khasabardarian, cavalrymen drafted into the Bukharan Emir's army during wartime, came to their place of service with their personal weapons which were heavy *batiks* with an iron top (*Arandarenko* 1889: 560).

In fairness, it should be noted that the aforementioned Lyko, when describing events from the battle on the Zerabulak heights on June 2, 1868, noted: "The *Sarbazes* lined up, began a correct retreat, shooting back and repelling the strikes of Cossack lances, sabers, pikes and *batiks*" (*Lyko* 1871: 195). The effect of a mace is described in the memoirs of the artist and writer Nikolai Karazin: "The most basic, antediluvian weapons are the various maces, here they are called *batiks*, weapons which despite all their savagery are quite impressive in hand-to-hand combat, especially,

⁸ Index to the Russian Ethnographic Exhibition organized by the Imperial Society of natural science amateurs at the Imperial Moscow University. Moscow, 1867, pp. 110-111.



displaying a rather heavy cast-iron bump and set on a thin shaft which was flexible like a whip, reed or beech branch. This bump cuts the air with a whistle, in concentric circles, and woe to the body that turns up under this destructive span” (Karazin 1874: 234). In the Central Asian khanates, the sacred-representational role of the mace was also significant. According to many scholars, the mace symbolized its owner’s masculinity representing the main external attributes of power (Khudyakov, Akmatov 2019: 137-145), personifying the continuity of its civil, military and sacred-magical essence. That is why these types of maces were made of stone. A mace head made from stone, as a ritual material, took significantly more effort to create than a similar one made of metal. This process itself contributed to the appeal of the ritual significance of such weapons (Gorelik 2003: 57). Apparently, by the 19th century in Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand, the mace was undoubtedly the oldest symbol of power (Reunov 2019: 18–31) which over time, for some reason, began to be replaced by elaborately decorated axes. This probably explains the extremely scant information concerning maces as symbols of power in the khanates. One brief reference mentions the “honorary mace of the commandant of the Bukhara fortress Ura-Tyube, taken [as a trophy] on October 2, 1866” in the publication of Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, who was the art department’s senior curator of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at the Hermitage at the time. Kondakov clarifies that it was “covered with embossed gold sheets, with corundum” (Kondakov 1891: 60), that is, the handle of the mace is encased with gold or gilded leaves with embossed or stamped designs and decorated with rubies.

These maces are known thanks to the ethnographic collections of the previously mentioned Danish researcher, Ole Olufsen, and the publication of the Danish researcher Torben Flindt (Fig. 4, 2). In his article, Flindt claims that although the maces discussed came from Bukhara, their design originated from Persian prototypes. These maces, in his opinion, which is completely valid, were too fragile for use as weapons. They served exclusively as distinctive insignia of rank and were presented to Olufsen by the emir from his arsenal. In former times, these maces were carried on the solemn processions of the emir as a reminder to his subjects of his power over their life and death (Flindt 1979: 28). Most of these maces had a wooden shaft covered with a rather thick silver sheet with a roughly embossed floral design. If any part of the handle remained uncovered with metal, it was wrapped with velvet, which in most cases is not preserved. In some instances, silver was additionally overlaid with lines of turquoise stones. The oval-shaped mace heads were made of brown jasper and, according to Flindt, white onyx (Flindt 1979: 28).

Fig. 4. Drawing of the batik mace (1) and the ceremonial mace (2). Drawing: A. S. Dementiyeva



Fig. 5. Ceremonial mace heads. Private collection. Denmark

However, it is likely that alabaster served as the material for the white mace heads (Bubnova 1975: 40, 85). Polished stones with drilled holes and fastened with a metal pin were additionally stabilized from above and below with silver mountings resembling petals (Fig. 5). At the end of the handle there was almost always a thin, adjustable ring, probably for a silk lanyard.

Thus, at least four types of maces from the Central Asian khanates can be identified:

- A mace on a long thick wooden shaft (up to two meters in length) with a massive spherical metal mace head (smooth or with protruding elements) and/or its more primitive version represented by a thick handle with an extension for the mace head whose surface bristled with nails (Lyko 1871: 36; Zaitsev 1882: 34). This mace type was used by foot soldiers.

- A mace on a long, thin and flexible wooden shaft with a massive percussive metal round mace head (Karazin 1874: 234) which also served as a weapon for infantrymen.

- A mace on a short wooden shaft (50 cm) with a small metal mace head and equipped with projections (Zeller R., Rohrer E. F. 1955: 370). This was a weapon used by riders (Arandarenko 1889: 560).

- Ceremonial maces on a short (50-60 cm) wooden pole lined with gold or silver and decorated with turquoise with an oval-shaped mace head made of stone (often decorative).

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