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Türk Sanatı Tarihi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi

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Kemal İbrahimzade*
Irene Gusach**

Rusya'nın Rostov Bölgesindeki Müze Koleksiyonlarından Yazılı Türk Kılıçları

Turkish Swords with Inscriptions from the Collections of Museums of Rostov Region (Russia)

Özet

Rusya'nın çeşitli müze koleksiyonlarında çok sayıda ateşsiz silâh bulunmaktadır. Bunların içinde bir zamanlar Türklerin kullandığı ve Türk ustaları tarafından yapılmış olan silâhlar da yer almaktadır. Silâhların bir kısmı, bölgeye Türk-Rus savaşları sırasında ganîmet olarak getirilmiştir.

Bu silâhların çoğu savaşlar sonrasında özel koleksiyonlarda yer almış, fakat daha sonra kurulan devlet müzelerine devredilmiştir. Rusya'nın St. Petersburg ve Moskova gibi önemli müzelerindeki ateşsiz silâh koleksiyonlarının bir bölümü araştırmacılar tarafından ayrıntılı bir şekilde çalışılmış ve yayınlanmıştır. Ancak taşra müzelerindeki eserlerin büyük bir bölümü bugüne kadar araştırılmamıştır.

Rusya'nın güneyindeki Rostov vilâyeti, Don bölgesinde, Azov Tarih-Arkeoloji ve Paleontoloji Müzesi ile Novoçerkask Don Kazakları Tarihi Müzesi'nde ateşsiz Türk silâhlarından örnekler bulunmaktadır. Bu örneklerin büyük bir kısmını farklı türden kılıçlar oluşturmaktadır.

Söz konusu çalışmada yukarıda belirtilen müzelerdeki ateşsiz Türk silâhları tanıtılacaktır. Bu silâhların birçoğu 18. ve 19. yüzyıllara aittir. Ele alacağımız kılıçların bir kısmı süsleme özellikleri açısından dikkat çekmektedir. Yaptığımız çalışmalarda kılıçların üzerinde farklı üslûplarda kaleme alınmış Arapça, Farsça ve Osmanlıca yazılar tespit edilmiş ve bu yazılar çözümlenmiştir. Kılıçların bir kısmının, bulunduğu müzelerde yanlış tarihlendirildiği görülmüş ve bu hususta yanlışlar düzeltilmiştir. Kılıçların bazılarında kaliteli işçilik görülürken bazılarında da daha özensiz bir işçiliğin olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, yurt dışında bulunan ve daha önce Türkiye'de bilinmeyen Türk silâhlarının tanıtılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı, Türk kılıçları, Rostov Bölgesi, yazıt, koleksiyon.

Key Words: Ottoman, Turkish Swords, Rostov Region, inscription, collection.

In the 15-18th centuries, part of the Rostov region (South of Russia) was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Fortress of Azak (modern town of Azov) was the northernmost mili-

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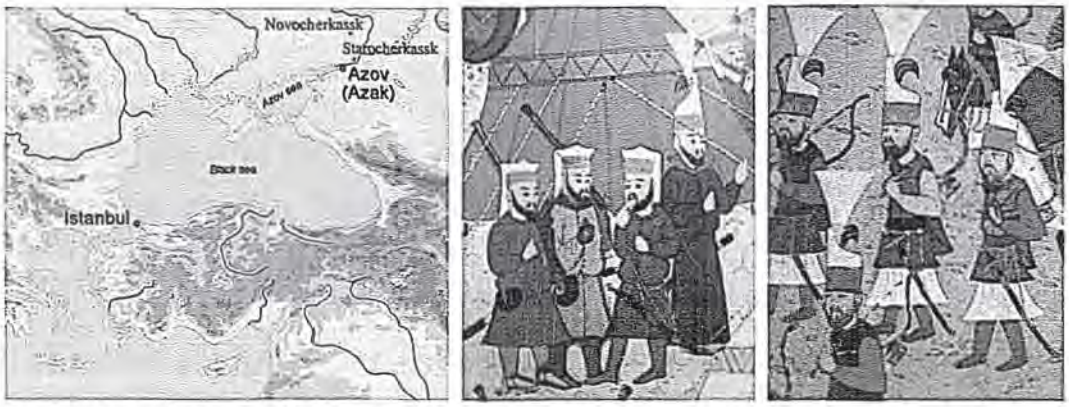


Figure 1: *Location of Azov and Novocherkassk (Russia).*
Figure 2: *Fragments of "Turkish miniatures", 16th century.*

tary fortification at the time conquered by the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror in 1475. And all the land around the fortress belonged to Azak sanjak, a part of Caffa eyalet whose center was in Caffa (Crimea)[1].

That is why in the collections of Rostov regional museums there are things of Turkish origin (mostly weapons and items of everyday life). Most of them were found during the excavations regularly conducted in the Rostov region. Some of the exhibits are related to trophies of Don Cossacks who participated in numerous Russo-Turkish wars of the 17-19th centuries. Some of the items were given to museums by local collectors.

Among the variety of things special attention should be paid to Turkish cold weapons with inscriptions on blades stored in the funds and the exhibition rooms of two major museums in the Don region: Azov History, Archaeology and Palaeontology Museum (town of Azov) and Novocherkassk Museum of the Don Cossacks history (town of Novocherkassk) (**Figure 1**). In contrast to central museums of Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg) where all the collections of bladed weapons from the East have long been published and widely known[2], the Muslim Blades from these southern Russian museums are only partially studied[3] and are still waiting to be researched.

To get acquainted with these collections we have selected, in our opinion, the most interesting Turkish blades with inscriptions belonging to five sabres and three yataghans. As it is known, the saber was the main type of Turkish bladed cold weapons. The 16th century miniatures often portray sabres of the Ottoman army soldiers[4] (**Figure 2**). There are several varieties of Turkish sabres. Sabres with which we were able to work in the museums belong to the two most common types, "kilij" (called by the Cossacks "klich") and "shemshir" (or "shamshir", in Persian language it means "sabre"). In general, they are dated to the 18-19th centuries.

Characteristic features of the "kilij" are a rather broad blade (typically 4 cm), presence of "yalman" (typical widening to the end of the saber blade) and one or two "fullers" (longitudinal grooves on the blade, needed to reduce its weight.) The length of "kilij"

1 O. V. Burlaka, ***Azov - A City with a Thousand Years of History,*** Azov 2009, p. 86-87.

2 J. A. Miller, ***Artistic Manufacture of Cold Weapons in Turkey in 16-18th Centuries (According to the State Hermitage)***, Abstract of thesis for the degree of candidate of historical sciences, Leningrad 1953; E. G. Astvatsaturyan, ***Turkish Weapons,*** St. Petersburg 2002; G. E. Vvedensky, ***Janissaries, History, Symbolism, and Weapons,*** St. Petersburg 2003; M. Kullanda, "Ottoman Scimitar", ***Oriental Collection,*** No. 4 (15), Moscow 2003, p. 111-116.

3 Walid Ali Muhammed, "Four Islamic sabres stored in the Novocherkassk Museum of History of the Don Cossacks, Russia", ***14th Conference of the Union of Arab Archaeologists,*** 15-16 October, Vol. 2, Cairo 2011, p. 1536-1576.

4 Feher Geza, ***Turkish Miniatures Fated to the Conquest of Hungary,*** Corvina 1980.

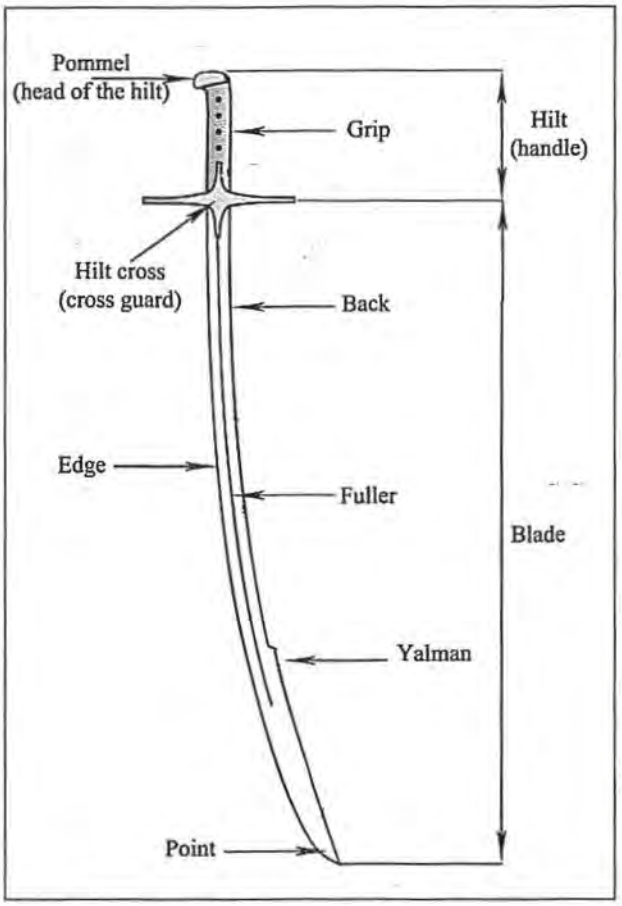




Figure 3: *Construction of the Ottoman sabre "Kilij".*
Figure 4: *"Shamshir" sabre with scabbard, 1840-1841 (NMIDK KP 3413).*

ranges from 70 to 90 cm, but usually it is 70-75 cm (**Figure 3**). The "shamshir" differs from the "kilij" due to a large curved blade, its width (2.5 to 3.5 cm) and a complete absence of "yalman". The "fullers" are sometimes present. The "shamshir" blade length varies from 79 to 81 cm.

Our attention was first drawn to two "shamshirs" from the collection of cold weapons in the Novocherkassk Museum of the Don Cossacks. The blade of the first "shamshir" (ref number: NMIDK KP 3413) is made of damask steel. The hilt is made of bone (horn), the hilt cross is made of copper. The "shamshir" has a wooden scabbard covered with leather, with brass plates (**Figure 4**). On both sides of the blade, inscriptions are made in three languages: Arabic, Persian, and Old Ottoman. On one side of the blade, a prayer with quotations from the Koran is written in Arabic (**Figure 5**):

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم اللهم أقو قلوبنا وقلوب المجاهدين الكرام البررة بحرمت سورة الفتح، إنا فتحنا

The second part of the text is written in Persian with some errors (**Figure 6**):

أيها البارئ الحق قصدك لقهر أعداء الإيمان ولراحة وإسعاد عباد محمد

On the back side of the blade, an inscription is made in the Old Ottoman language mentioning the name of the famous «Seven sleeping youths of Ephesus» and their dog



Figure 5: *A fragment of an inscription on the blade (Arabic).*

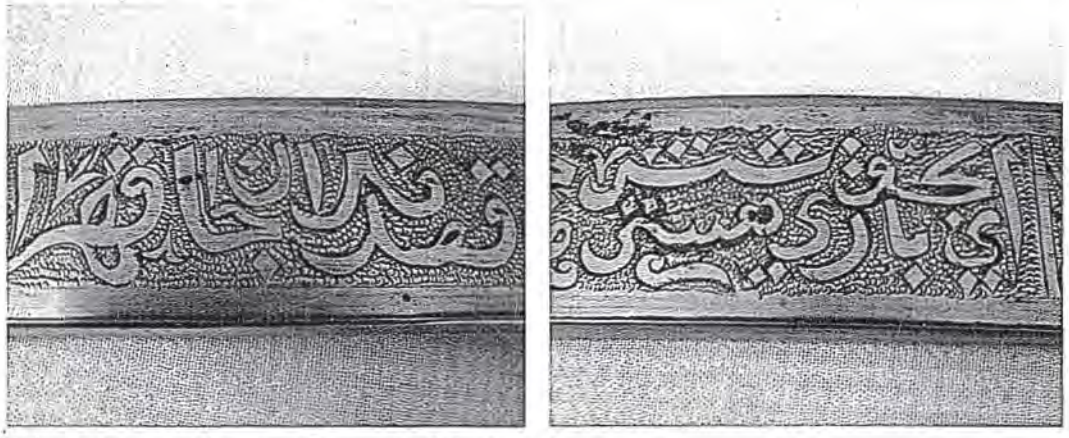


Figure 6: *A fragment of an inscription on the blade (Persian).*

Kitmir. Moreover, the name of one boy - Dabarnush - is somehow missing (perhaps in order to save space) (**Figure 7**):

يمليخا مكثمليا ميشليا مرنوش ساذنوش كفشططيوش قطمير

Then the year 1256 (1840-1841) is shown perpendicularly to the entire text and highlighted by stripes with in-cut lines (**Figure 8**).

Next an inscription in Arabic follows: "Made by Mohammed, the owner and proprietor is Mohammed Beq". After which there are words of prayer mentioning the name of Allah, Prophet Muhammad and the righteous caliphs - Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali (**Figure 9**).

The blade of the second "shamshir" (NMIDK KP 3183) is made of damask steel, too. It is slightly longer and wider than the blade of the first "shamshir." It has a wooden scabbard covered with leather, with silver ornamented plates. The blade, apparently, refers to an earlier time (18 c.) than the sheath decorated in the technique typical of the mid-19th century. The hilt is made of horny plates (**Figure 10**).

On one side of the sabre, there is a circular medallion with a quote from the Koran in Arabic in the technique of gold notches on shaded field (**Figure 11**):

نصر من الله وفتح قريب وبشر المؤمنين يامحمد

Below the medallion on the blade another strongly worn out Koranic inscription in Arabic survived (**Figure 13**):

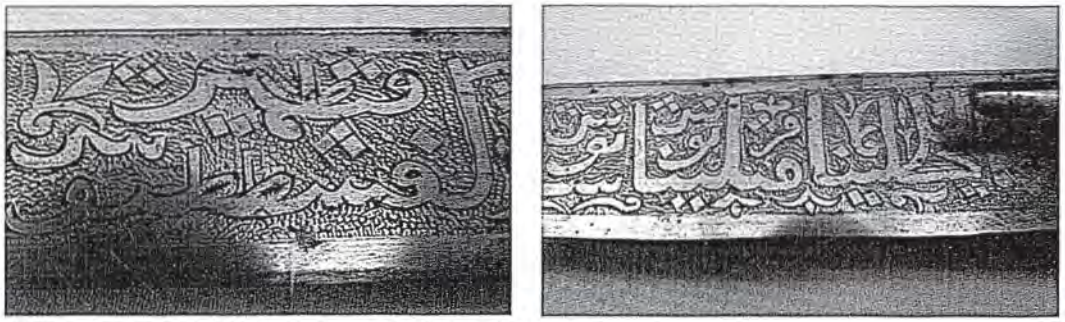


Figure 7: *A fragment of an inscription on the blade (Old Ottoman).*

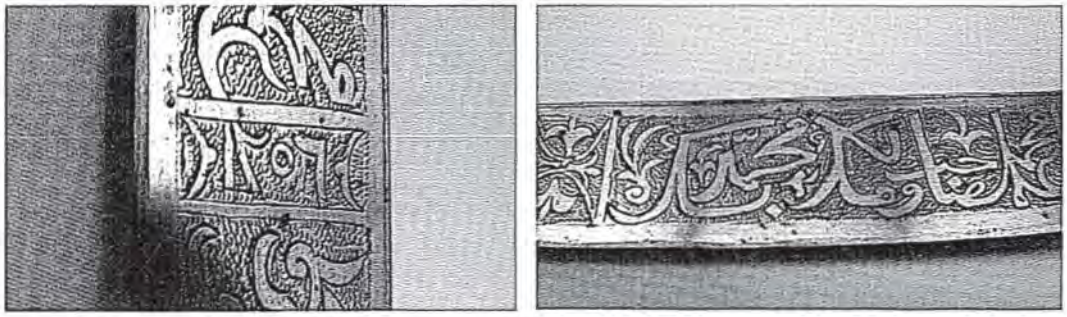


Figure 8: *Date on the blade (Arabic).*
Figure 9: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*



Figure 10: *"Shamshir" sabre with scabbard, 18th - mid 19th centuries (NMIDK KP 3183).*
Figure 11: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*

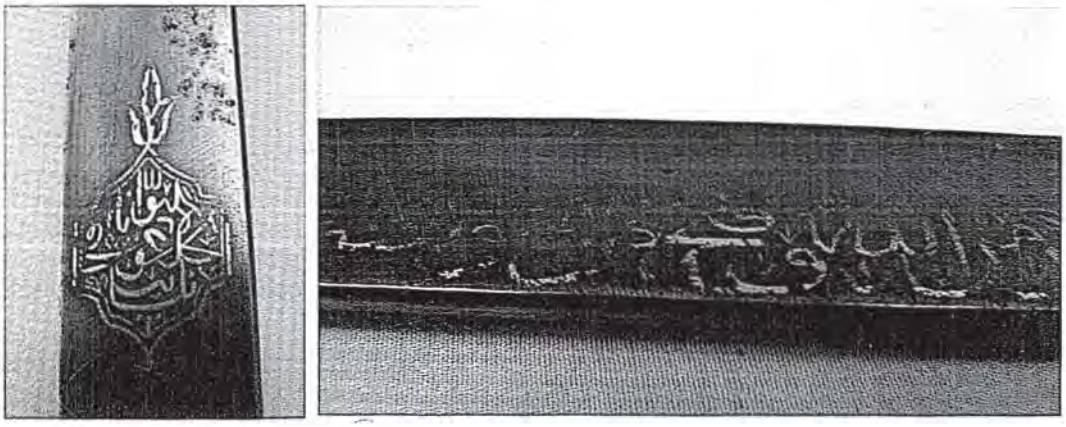


Figure 12: *Inscription (Old Ottoman).*
Figure 13: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*

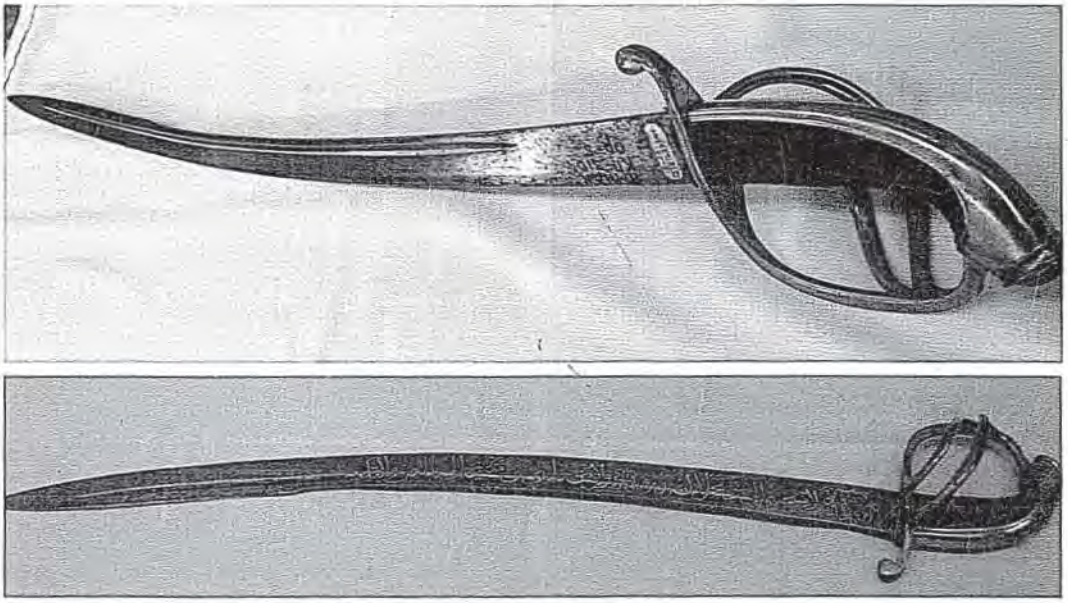


Figure 14: *"Kilij" sabre, 18th - 1st half of 19th century (NMIDK KP 3104).*





Figure 15: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*
Figure 16: *Inscription (Arabic).*

نعم المولى ونعم النصير نصر من الله وفتح قريب وبشر المؤمنين

On the back side of the blade in a figured cartouche, an inscription is made in the same technique in the Old Ottoman language, which, unfortunately, cannot be read (**Figure 12**). The "shamshir" sheath is somewhat unusual: its metal parts are made in different styles and different techniques. Obviously, they were attached to the sheath at different times (in the process of its repairs).

The "kilij" from the collection of the Novocherkassk Museum (NMIDK KP 3104) is interesting to us because its blade is Turkish and the hilt is Russian (**Figure 14**). The Russian army often did so to the captured weapons: if they liked the martial qualities of the oriental sword they kept it attaching to it a Russian hilt according to the Army Charter. Judging by the small curving of this steel blade and presence of one "fuller", it can be dated to the 18th century. The Russian handle (or hilt) with a similar structure applies to the first half of the 19th century.

There is an inscription on the hilt in Russian: "V. Skosarev". It is known that a person with that name lived in the middle of the 19th century. He was a well-known merchant and owner of a shop selling weapons and things for officers. Apparently, he owned this blade for some time. The merchant's heirs passed the "kilij" to the museum at the beginning of the 20th century.

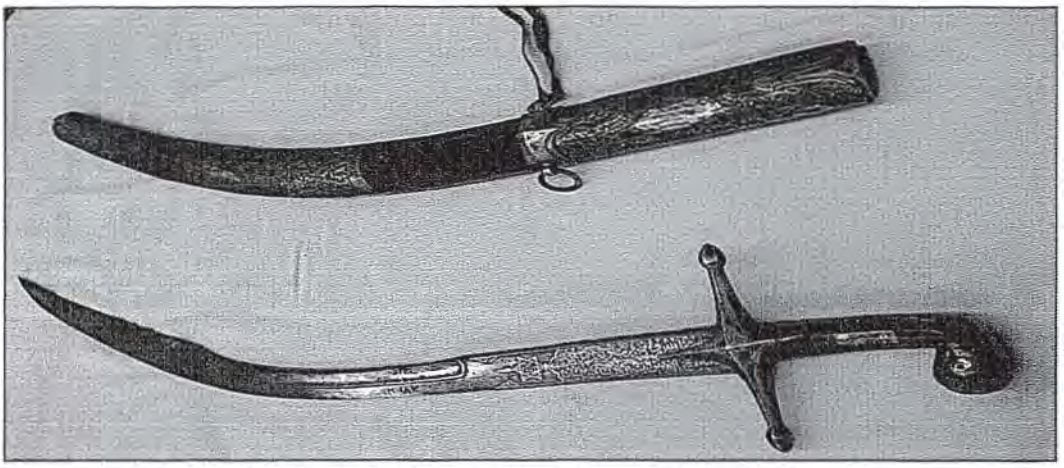


Figure 17: *"Kilij" sabre with scabbard, 18th - beginning of 19th century (NMIDK KP 3121).*



Figure 18: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*



Figure 19: *Inscription on the blade (Russian).*

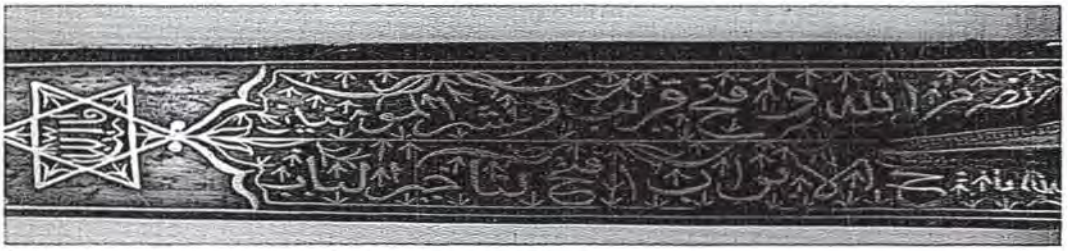


Figure 20: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*

The inscription on the blade is made in Arabic in gold inlay technique (**Figure 15**):

لاستحبنى إلا فى محل الضرورة ، ولا تجعلنى فى مكانى إلا بالعز والتكريم ....

It is translated as: «Take me out only when necessary and put me back with greatness and respect». In Russian there is an old proverb with a similar meaning: «Don't take out without need, don't put back without glory». The inscription is made with grammatical errors (either it was written by an illiterate person, or it was done in order to save space). The unusualness of this inscription is that it is done in two lines, as an Arabic poem.

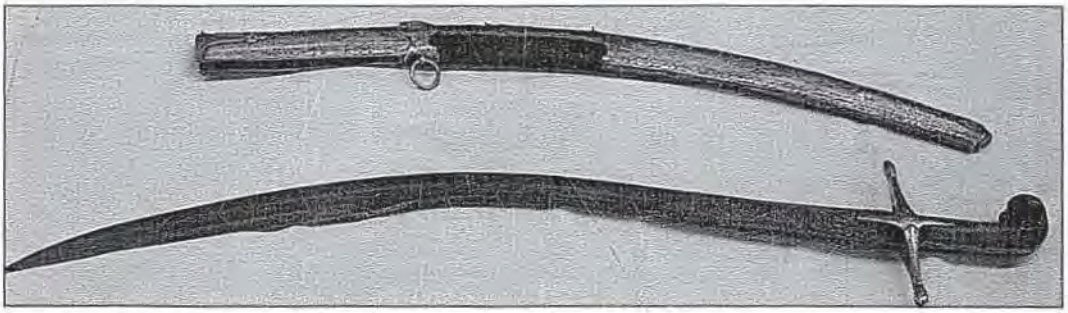


Figure 21: *"Kilij" sabre with scabbard, late 18th - early 19th centuries (NMIDK KP 3386).*

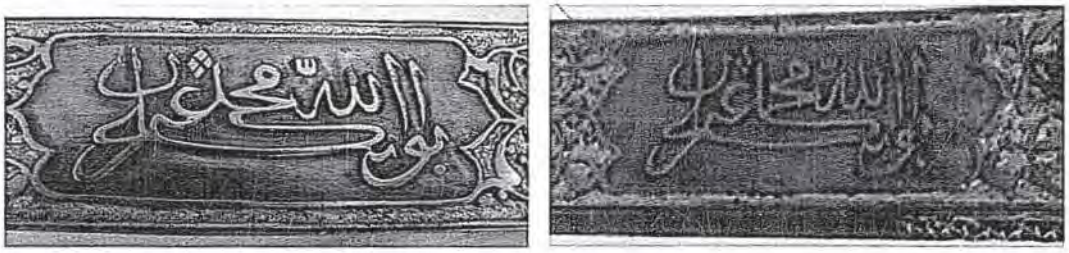


Figure 22: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic) from Novocherkassk (NMIDK KP 3386) and Moscow (inventory number 374*

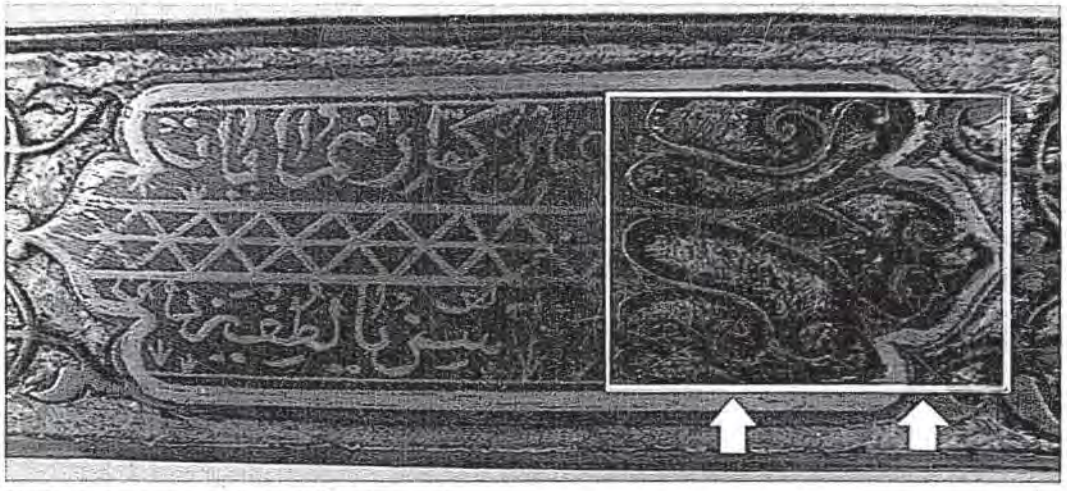


Figure 23: *Inscription on the blade (Old Ottoman).*

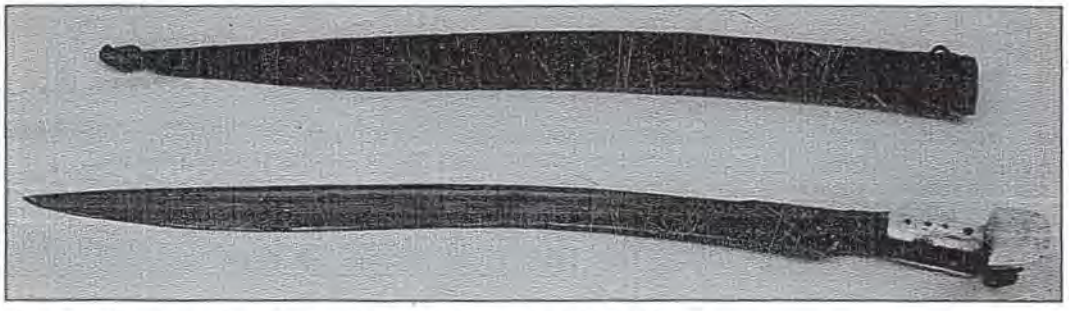
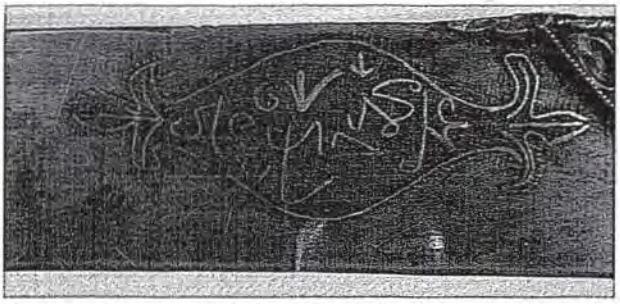


Figure 24: *Yataghan with scabbard, 18th - early 19th centuries (NMIDK KP 2720).*

Above this line, on the top of the blade, there is a decorative cartouche with an inscription in Arabic: «With the help of Allah», performed by the master in the same technique (**Figure 16**).



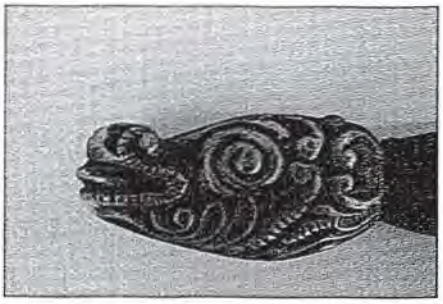


Figure 25: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*
Figure 26: *The tip of the yataghan scabbard.*

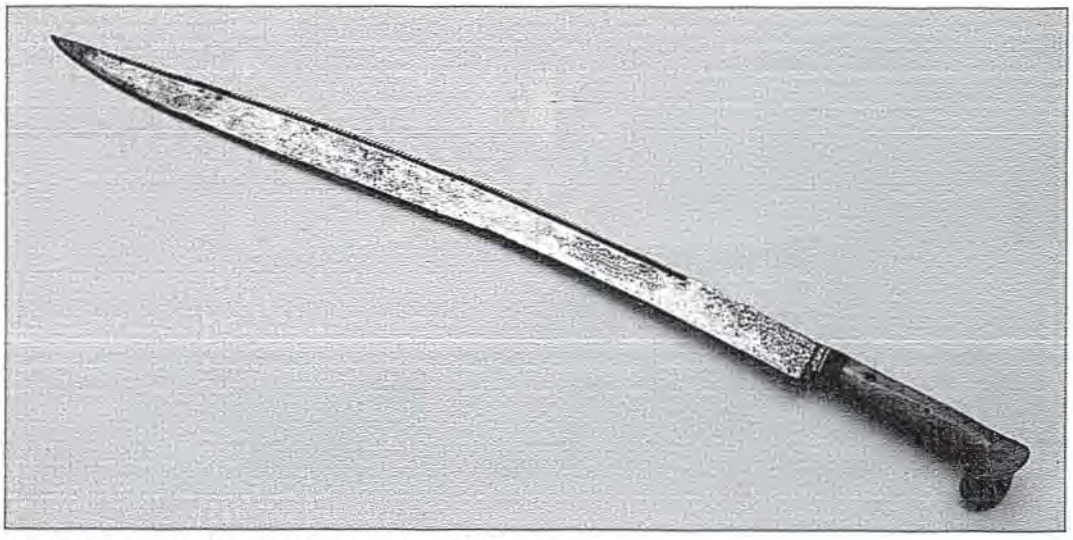


Figure 27: *Yataghan, 18th - early 19th centuries (AMZ KP 337).*

Another Turkish "kilij" with a scabbard from the collection of the Novocherkassk Museum (NMIDK KP 3121) is dated to the 18th - beginning of 19th century. Its blade has an "yalman" and two "fullers". The handle is made of black wood. The sabre was repaired (part of the blade is lost), and the silver hilt cross was installed on top of the inscription on the blade (**Figure 17**).

The inscription on one side of the blade is made in Arabic. Such the text was often put on Islamic blades. It reads: "There is no hero but Ali, no sword except Zulfakar" (**Figure 18**).

Below this inscription, another inscription was made in Russian: "Vasily Mitrofanov, 1829, June 27, the city of Arzerum" (**Figure 19**). Judging by it, this Turkish sabre was a trophy gained by the Cossack Vasiliy Mitrofanov, who participated in the battle for the city of Arzerum (Erzurum) in 1829 during the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829.

The reverse side of the blade is decorated with Koranic inscription in Arabic placed in two lines in a large figured cartouche (**Figure 20**):

نصر من الله وفتح قريب وبشر المؤمنين.... يافاتح الأبواب افتح لنا خير الباب

Below it, a six-pointed star is "attached" which is placed inside another inscription in Arabic: «For all is the will of Allah».



Figure 28: *Inscription on the blade (Old Ottoman).*

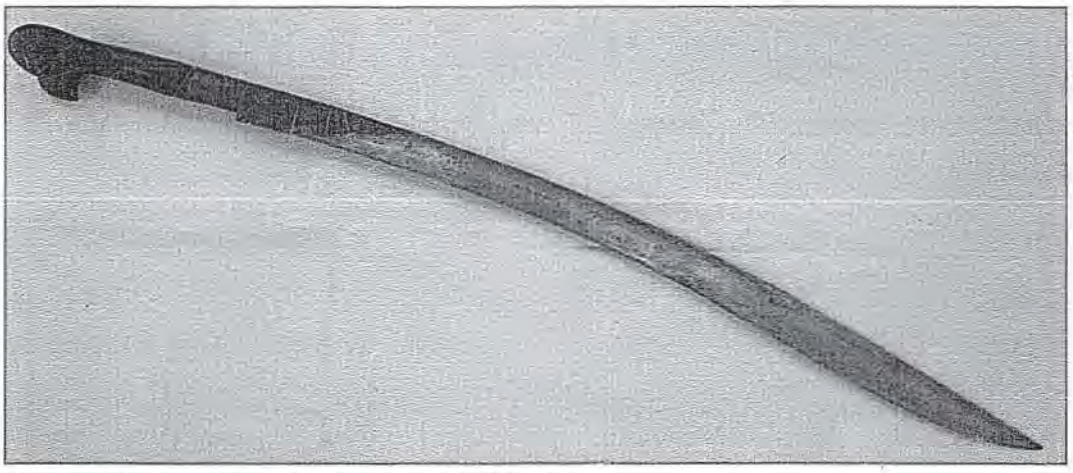


Figure 29: *Yataghan, 18th - early 19th centuries (AMZ KP 336).*

The third Turkish «kilij» in a scabbard from Novocherkassk (NMIDK KP 3386) is dated to the late 18th - early 19th century. Its blade is made of steel, strongly curved, wide (4.5 cm), with one «fuller» and «yalman». The hilt is made of horn. The hilt cross is made of brass (**Figure 21**).

One side of the blade is decorated with a shaped cartouche inscribed in Arabic with the name of Allah, the prophet Muhammad and the four righteous caliphs. This inscription is made in a difficult technique of relief carving, apparently, by an experienced master (all the three names are spelled with the same capital letter). A "kilij" with the same inscription on the blade is stored at the State Museum of History (Moscow, Russia)[5] (**Figure 22**).

On the back side of the blade, in a figured cartouche, an inscription in the Old Ottoman language is made. The text is put in the technique of golden notches, split into two lines. Later, on top of this text, another gunsmith applied a floral pattern with incomprehensible goal which destroyed its opening lines (**Figure 23**).

Another kind of Ottoman cold bladed weapons is yataghans. They have a peculiar double curved blade (the length ranges from 50 to 75 cm) and a handle, which has a very

5 E. G. Astvatsaturyan, ***Turkish Weapons***, St. Petersburg 2002, p. 107.

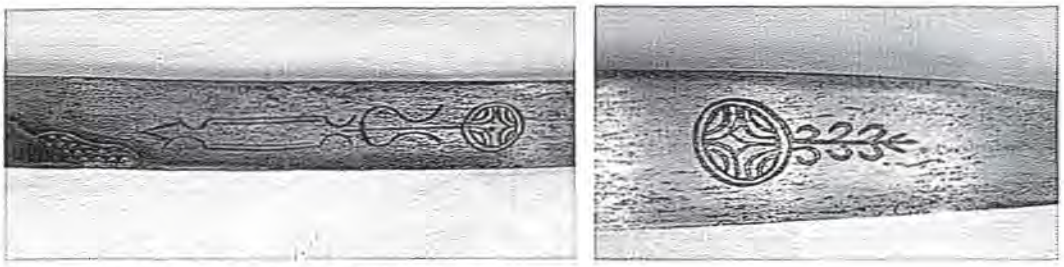


Figure 30: *Medallions and a cartouche on the blade.*

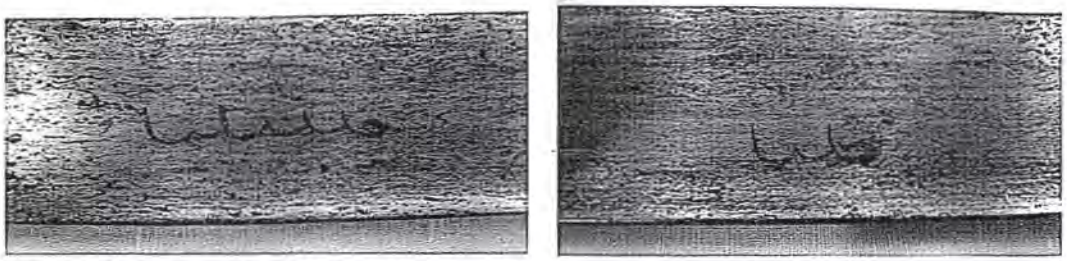


Figure 31: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*
Figure 32: *Inscription on the blade (Arabic).*

specific form of two "protuberant ears." Yataghan handles were made of bone and often richly decorated, including inlays of corals and semiprecious stones. As an example, the handle of the yataghan from the Novocherkassk Museum (NMIDK KP 2720) which is dated to the 18th - early 19th centuries (**Figure 24**).

On the blade of this yataghan, there is an inscription in Arabic placed in a decorative cartouche, "Made by Muhammad, the owner is Ali". The inscription is made in the technique of deep inlay with silver threads (**Figure 25**).

The yataghan sheath is made of leather-covered wood with bronze ornamented overlays. The bronze scabbard tip is shaped as an animal head (possibly a dolphin) (**Figure 26**).

The yataghan from the Azov Museum-Reserve (AMZ KP 337) is obviously dated to the 18th - early 19th centuries, too. Its blade and bronze plates on the bone hilt are decorated with ornaments in gold incision technique (**Figure 27**). The sheath is missing. On the yataghan blade, there is an inscription in the Old Ottoman language in two lines placed in a decorative cartouche which is not legible (**Figure 28**).

The second yataghan from Azov (AMZ KP 336) has the same dating. Its handle is made of black wood decorated with ornamental bronze plates (**Figure 29**). One side of the yataghan blade is decorated with circular medallions and figured cartouche made in the technique of engraving. Judging by the quality of the engraving, it was made by an inexperienced craftsman (probably an apprentice). The inscription in the cartouche is absent (**Figure 30**). On the other side of the blade, in its central part, a short distance from each other, two names are written in Arabic: "Musalama" (**Figure 31**) and "Ali (ya)" (**Figure 32**). The inscriptions are also made in the technique of engraving. We can only guess now what they mean. Perhaps they are the names of the master and the owner of the yataghan.

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