
Reviewed by Denys Toichkin, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, denisvt68@gmail.com

The last book of Dr. Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani logically continues his previous researches. The publishing of fundamental Arms and Armor from Iran (Khorasani, 2006) and solid Lexicon of Arms and Armor from Iran (Khorasani, 2010) created the basis for the new book that contributes to the popular in modern historical science trends of military technology and anthropology.

The book deals with the vast chronological period—from the ancient Iran to the end of Qajar period. The constancy and succession of military traditions in Iran contributed a lot to this study: thus, several generations of Dr. Khorasani’s family were the native bearers of this military culture heritage as wrestlers and weapon-makers. The author himself is not only as researcher but proficient expert and instructor in Persian martial arts.

The book started with timetable of Persian dynasties (p. 14) and map of Iran (p.15). The main text of book is preceded by four forewords by historian of weapons and experts of martial arts.

The book is well-structured by the topics and consists 12 chapters.

The main part started with analysis of development of warrior codex and principles of Persian chivalry, known as javānmardi or futuwwa.

In this first chapter (39–52 pp.) author also analyzes the training methods of varzeš-e pahlavānī (champion sport), that was a part of warriors training. This traditional martial art still harbors many legacies from the training of ancient Iranian champions by, for instance, using many tools that resemble historical battlefield weapons used for preparing warriors for the upcoming battles. This martial art was and still is practiced in zurxāne (houses of strength).

Second chapter (55–94 pp.) presents the development of the bows and arrows, and their important role in the history of Iran. Author studies the types of bows, based on materials, place of production, length. The chapter also explores the different types of arrows, thumb rings, bowstrings, quivers and bow cases and arrow guides for shooting short arrows.

In chapter author published four Persian manuscripts on archery manuals created from 11 to 16th centuries with translation and annotations. As Persian manuscripts show, the bow was the main weapon used by Persian warriors. Different types were used in Persian martial arts, but the principle was the composite recurved bow.

Next chapter (97–110 pp.) classifies mounted combat and horses according to the Persian manuscripts. It deals with the weapon used in hand-to-hand combat on

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horseback (lance, mace, axe and sword) and the appropriate techniques as well as some disarming and throwing techniques that were applied by Persian mounted warriors. The last part of chapter deals with classification of horses that was necessary to discern which type of horses could be used in a specific situation on the battlefield.

Fourth chapter (112–134 pp.) displays the importance of combat with spears and lances in Iranian history. This weapon reported as the main during centuries in Iran. Chapter started from the describing of some types of spear and lances used in the Islamic period of Iran, then talks about the method of carrying, and finished with explaining the various offensive, feinting and defensive fighting techniques with spear (lance) as documented by Persian manuscripts.

The fifth chapter (136–186 pp.) explains the origin and the techniques of Persian swordsmanship and describes it according to Persian manuscripts and miniatures. The author discusses the development of historical terminology and the main sword types in Iran. Then chapter describes the way of carrying, sheathing and unsheathing of a sword and also the way of carrying and handling a shield. Author offer a lot of detailed information about attacking and defensive techniques using sword and shield, separately and in combinations.

Sixth chapter (188–210 pp.) describes different types of maces and axes and their corresponding combat techniques, based on Iranian martial arts tradition. Persian warriors usually used maces and axes during combat to fight against heavily-armored opponents that could not be fought against with other weapons.

Explaining different terms used by Persian manuscripts to refer to maces and axes, the chapter then shows different types of these weapons. Chapter also analyzes the way of carrying maces and axes and their related fighting techniques, as it demonstrated in Persian written and visual sources.

Seventh (212–231 pp.) and eighth (233–249 pp.) chapters devoted to the combat with short edged weapon (kārd—knife, xanjar and pišqabz—types daggers) and short swords of Caucasian origin—qame and qaddāre. First, chapters analyze the meaning of terms and historical development of these weapons. Then they describe the appropriate fighting techniques.

The ninth chapter (250–304 pp.) again returns reader to the traditional Iranian wrestling. The author studies the history of wrestling as integral part of combat in Iran and describes the fighting techniques on the battlefield. Special attention is paid to the three special wrestling manuscripts of the Safavid period. Using instructions in these texts, Dr. Khorasani revived the old wrestling techniques. The author states that he discovered up to 152 techniques; at least 208 are missing and need further researches.

Tenth chapter is a full color catalog of historical Persian arms, helmets, shields and miniatures.

The last two chapters include references (357–362 pp.) and endnotes (363–392 pp.). Author used the dozens of original Iranian, Arabic, Turkish and European written sources and over the hundred positions of secondary sources.

The book is written in clear and precise manner, the statements are logical and well grounded. Author is very qualified and careful with New Persian phonetics (p. 37).
Book is well-illustrated. Fighting techniques are represented via miniatures that reproduced herein and pictures from training room. The most of movements are divided to small frames, in “cinematic” manner. Pictures are black and white with high contrast that improves the perception of material. The book has very few of the drawbacks. The second chapter illustrated only with Persian miniatures. It is lack of pictures that step-by-step display revived archery techniques. The name of book is too general and does not provide adequate information about it content. Because of the easy style of writing the book is intended for a wide range of readers. It can be used for exploring the history of military culture, traditional weapons and martial arts of Iran. Also this book is the first reference manual on Iranian martial arts in application. But first of all, this is the serious scientific research, where the author put into circulation a lot of Persian historical sources of Medieval and Early Modern Time, studied the different aspects of military culture of Iran, and finally, reconstructed and revived old fighting techniques. However for use this book in scientific purposes, one should use it together with the previous large works of Dr. Khorasani: “Arms and Armor from Iran” and «Lexicon of Arms and Armor from Iran» that complement each other.

References