AN ESSAY ON AFGHAN JEZAILS and SINDH AFGHANS

By Marc Gorelick

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.
Rudyard Kipling, excerpt from The Young British Soldier

AFGHAN JEZAILS

Afridi picket near Jumrood, Khyber & Rotass in distance. *Photograph of a group of Afridi Afghanis taken by John Burke in 1878. Burke accompanied the Peshawar Valley Field Force, one of three British Anglo-Indian army columns deployed in the Second Afghan War (1878-80). The Afridis were a powerful, independent Pashtun tribe inhabiting the Peshawar border of the North West Frontier Province, who defended their mountainous strongholds with tenacity and courage, impressing the British who took them on as troops. They had a reputation for being first rate soldiers and particularly good skirmishers. The Afridi soldiers are pictured with their jezails, with which they were excellent sharpshooters.*

Afghanistan, which is located between Persia and India, was influenced by both her neighbors when it came to weapons design. Despite this, Afghanistan developed its own indigenous type of firearm, called the jezail. This was a distinctive long gun that fit the Afghan terrain and irregular type of warfare of ambush, skirmishing and sniping. The Afghan jezail was an unusually long firearm, often over six feet long, with an arched narrow butt of oval section.

The first Afghan jezails were matchlocks with internal mechanisms and cocks (serpentines) that operated in a slit in the stock. The actions were often reinforced with side plates. With the advent of the flintlock many existing matchlocks were converted to flintlock as well as being new-built. While Damascus barrels from Turkey and Persia were often used, the Afghans valued British flintlocks. Thus, you will find Afghan jezails with British marked locks, either obtained through trade or capture, given the frequent

raids and wars between the British and Afghans during the 18th and 19th centuries. Indeed, British punitive expeditions were still being made into Afghanistan in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Some jezails were also made with percussion locks (or converted to percussion). However, because flints were easier to obtain than percussion caps, flintlock jezails remained popular.

No two jezails are alike; Afghan jezail production was primarily decentralized at the local level, all were handmade and personalized to the owner's specifications. Jezails were seen as very personal weapons, and unlike the typical European military weapons of the time, which were very plain and utilitarian, jezails tended to be well crafted and were usually intricately decorated. Thus, they vary widely in their construction, form, quality, and decoration. Despite this, they do have a few defining features. As stated, one is their long length. The long barrel ensured accuracy and long range. Because of the weight of the long barrel, they were often used with A-shaped or forked rests made of horn or metal. The other defining feature is their arched buttstock with its deep downward curve of narrow cross section that flared out toward the butt. This type of but is similar to some found on Persian and Indian Sindh guns. Several theories have outlined the reason for this stock design, but likely, the design is purely stylistic in nature and is comfortable to fire from the shoulder like traditional Western rifle stocks.

Mir Alam, a Koistaun foot soldier in summer costume. *Note his flintlock jezail and the marksman in the background using an A-shaped metal rest. This lithograph is taken from plate 12 of the book 'Afghaunistan' by Lieutenant James Rattray. This Kohistani is Mir Alam, formerly one of a band of noted robbers on the road to Turkestan, north-west of Begram. Rattray wrote: "Coistaun has always been remarkable for the war-like character of its inhabitants, who average some forty thousand families famous for the efficiency and excellence of their Pyadas (foot-soldiery). As light infantry they are unrivalled, and from their numbers and determined courage, are of considerable importance in the event of any revolution in which they may take part." James Rattray (1818–1854) was a British soldier and artist. At the time of making his notable sketches he was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Grenadiers, Bengal Army, serving in Afghanistan.*

Afghan percussion jezail with octagonal barrel, chiseled with flower on top flat. The flat percussion lock plate is scroll engraved and the stock is decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays and incised carved designs. The barrel is retained by four brass capucines. Photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, Denver, PA.

Afghan jezails were designed for warfare, and therefore tended to have large calibers, with .50 to .75 caliber being common. They typically weighed around 12 to 14 pounds, compared to the approximately10 pounds of a British "Brown Bess" Long Land Pattern musket. Jezails were both smoothbore and rifled and were perfect for the Afghan method of fighting.

The ornately decorated flintlock jezail pictured below has been identified as being from Afghanistan. It has a .60 caliber, 40 ½" long octagonal Damascus steel rifled barrel with a flared muzzle and some relief chiseled designs on the top flat, with an integral rear sight and large brass front sight. The octagonal barrel is secured by 4 engraved sheet brass capucines and features a large sheet brass triggerguard with a hand forged steel trigger. The stock is decorated with inlaid ebony, brass wire, and mother of pearl, in a series of repeating designs.

The stock practically covered in inlaid ebony, brass wire and mother of pearl.
Photos above courtesy of Morphy Auctions, Denver, PA.

As is often the case with jezails, the lock apparently came from an East India Company musket. The round-edged lockplate is clearly not original to the jezail. It is marked at the tail with the property mark (also called the "bale mark" or trademark) of the East India Company, a segmented heart quartered with the letters "**VEIC**" for United East India Company, under the number **4**, and is dated "**1804**". The

lockplate is also marked **REA** in the center in front of the cock. **REA** stands for John Rea (the elder), a London gunmaker who was a contractor supplying arms to the East India Company from 1778-1804. The cock has a "swan neck," which is correct for the period. The lock has a modified cock screw and the cock is missing the top jaw and top jaw screw.

*British flintlock lock in the ornate jezail. The stamp of a heart quartered with the letters **VEIC** under the number **4** was the "bale mark" or trademark of the **United East India Company**, the letter **V** standing for the Roman letter **U**. The stamped name **REA** is that of John Rea who supplied arms to the East India Company. Photos courtesy of Morphy Auctions, Denver, PA.*

According to eye witness accounts written by British officers who survived the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842) when an entire British Indian army was wiped out, their jezails gave the Afghans considerable advantages over the British and Indian sepoy soldiers. The East India Company sepoys were armed with smoothbore flintlock muskets that were often old with worn barrels and had little range or accuracy. Lieutenant Vincent Eyre of the Bengal Artillery related one fight in which "the Afghans unflinchingly received the discharge of our musketry which, strange to say, even at the short range of ten

or twelve yards did little or no execution." The Afghan jezails far outranged and were more accurate than the British muskets, some could "throw their bullets nearly half a mile."

'Afghaun foot soldiers in their winter dress with entrance to the valley of Urgundeh', 1842. *Note the jezails that the two tribesmen are holding. This is a colored lithograph by James Rattray, 2nd Bengal Native Infantry, 1842. From a set of lithographs entitled, 'Scenery, inhabitants and costumes of Afghaunistan', published by Hering and Remington, London, 1847. The men shown here belonged to a British irregular unit raised in Kohistan, a region to the north-east of Kabul. Under the command of Lieutenant Richard Maule, Bengal Artillery, the so-called 'Kohistan Rangers' were part of Shah Shuja's force during the First Anglo-Afghan War. Maule, his subaltern and sergeants were murdered by the troops under their command on 3 November 1841.*

The Afghans also used better tactics than the British during the British retreat from Kabul. They knew how to take advantage of natural cover and, according to an eye witness, "until they commenced firing not a man was known to be there. They were concealed behind rocks and stones" which provided concealment, cover, and aiming rests for their long guns. The British reported that they were "marksmen who seldom missed their aim" and "they appeared to pick off the officers in particular." Eyre further wrote that the Afghans were "invariably taking steady deliberate aim, and seldom throwing away a single shot; whereas our men seemed to fire entirely at random, without any aim at all."

Of course, the Afghans were assisted by incompetent British leadership.

Afghan tribesmen at target practice with their jezails. *Note the A-frame rest that the shooter is using. A lithograph from the book* Character & Costumes of Afghaunistan *by Captain Lockyer Willis Hart, 22nd Bombay Infantry Regiment, published in 1843.*

SINDH AFGHAN STOCKED GUNS

The modern Pakistani province of Sindh was once part of the British India. Before that it was independent. Today it is bordered by the Pakistani provinces of Balochistan to the west and north-west and Punjab to the north. It shares an international border with the Indian states of Gujarat and Rajasthan to the east and is bounded by the Arabian Sea to the south. Sindh's landscape consists mostly of flat alluvial plains flanking the Indus River, the Thar Desert in the east, and the Kirthar Mountains in the western part of the province.

Sindh's strategic location between Afghanistan and India meant that it was on one of the main invasion and trade routes between those two regions. There are two main passes between Afghanistan and India, the Khyber Pass in the north and the Bolan Pass in the south and the Bolan Pass leads directly into Sindh. In the 1700's the Afghan empire founded by the Durrani tribe of Pashtuns under Ahmad Shah Durrani wrested Sindh from the crumbling Moghul Empire.

The Afghans looked upon the Bolan Pass and Sindh as a highway to India. The British East India Company looked upon Bolan Pass and Sindh as threats to their possessions in India; Ahmad Shah Durrani and his Afghan armies had invaded India eight times and even sacked Delhi. The British also looked on Sindh and the Bolan Pass as routes that their armies could take to Afghanistan, and as potential bulwarks against Afghan or even Russian invasion of India. At that time the British were worried about Russians crossing Central Asia and invading India – thus the "Great Game" between Britain and Russia in Central Asia. The British were determined to eliminate the threat to India. When the British invaded Afghanistan in 1839 during the First Anglo-Afghan War they pressured the rulers of Sindh to allow their army to traverse Sindh and entered Afghanistan through the 50-mile long Bolan Pass.

The government of the East India Company also coveted Sindh because it controlled the lower Indus River. They had secretly surveyed the river as early as 1831 and found that it was navigable (at least by

flat bottomed boats) for 700 miles, from the ocean to Lahore, capital of the Punjab, then part of the Sikh Empire of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. As a historical note the East India Company also coveted the Punjab, partly for the same reasons it want Sindh. After Ranjit Singh died in 1839, the Sikh Empire fell into disorder and the Company fought two wars with the Sikhs (1845-1846 and1848-1849), and succeeded in ending the Sikh Empire and annexing the Punjab and the region that later became known as the North-west Frontier Province..

In 1843, after the British defeat and follow-up punitive expedition in Afghanistan, the East India Company decided that it wanted Sindh under direct Company control. The Baluchi Talpur Dynasty had ruled Sindh under the Afghan Durrani Empire from 1783 until Sir Charles Napier and his East India Company army defeated the Talpur Amirs at the Battles of Meeanee (Miani) and Dubbo (Hyderabad) and conquered Sindh in 1843. It should be noted that although the Sindhi were heavily influenced by the Afghans, even to the forms of their weapons, because the Sindh terrain was mostly flat in the east and central regions, the Baluch Sindhi armies fought differently than their Afghan cousins. Instead of marksmen shooting their long jezails from mountain tops, the Baluch Talpurs relied on massed charges by part-time undisciplined cavalry and infantry levies armed mostly with sword and spear, such as during the Battle of Meeanee. This was less than effective against massed volley fire followed by bayonet charges by trained and disciplined British and East Indian Company Sepoy troops.

The Battle of Meeanee, 17 February 1843. *Painting by Edward Armitage, 1847. Note that only a few jezails are shown being used by the charging Sindhi army.*

After the British annexed Sindh to British India it appears that they seized most firearms. The richly decorated weapons and armor in the Talpur royal armories were probably dispersed (as war booty) and many found their way into private European and museum collections. Further, after the Sikh Wars and the 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny, the British government instituted a general disarmament of the Indian population in which a large numbers of ancient and contemporary arms were seized and destroyed. However, Indian craftsmen subsequently made copies of old arms for sale.

Indian Sindh long guns were called "Afghan" by the British when they first entered the region because at that time Sindh was ruled by Baluchi Afghans. Their shape, design and form were heavily influenced by the Afghan jezails. Long guns from Sindh (or Sind/Scind) that have an "Afghan" style butt are often confused with jezails from Afghanistan, and have on occasion been misidentified as Afghan jezails because of their several common features. Like the Afghan jezails the butts of the Sindh guns are also deep and narrow in the wrist with a strong downward curve at the neck of the stock. However, the Sindh guns' downward curve is often much more pronounced and deeper than the Afghan curve. The major difference in the buttstocks is that although the Sindhi "Afghan" style wrist is also narrow and deep, it typically flares out to a wide triangular shape at the butt that some say resembles a fish tail, while the typical Afghan jezail butt is narrower and has a smaller and more oval shaped cross section.

Like their Afghan cousins, the Sindh jezails went through several iterations. First was the matchlock, then the flintlock, and finally there are a few examples of percussion jezails, but most of these last possibly date from after the British conquered Sindh.

The finest Indian Sindh "Afghan" firearms often have finely watered Damascus steel barrels that are inlaid with gold and elaborate gold mounts. These were part of the treasures of the Talpur Amirs of Sindh and predate the British conquest. The Sindhi use the term Banduk Jauhadar for a long gun with a watered pattern steel barrel. Earl Egerton, in his 1880 *An Illustrated Handbook of Indian Arms* noted that "In the character of their ornament, rather than in their shape, the Sindian arms approach more closely the Persian than the Afghan type. The coloured enamels, the embroidered leather accoutrements, and the chased silver mountings which characterise their swords are of a more decorated style than is usually met with in India."

*Left – **A Baluchi soldier and Hindu trader of Sindh**. Note the Afghan jezail carried by the soldier. Lithograph from the book Personal Observations on Sindh by Thomas Postans, an East India Company Army and Political Officer, published in 1843. Postans had a deep interest in the ethnology and archeology of India and was the author of several books about his observations in India. He died in 1846.*

Egerton then quoted Thomas Postans, a British East India Company army officer who "visited" Sindh and described the Sindh "Afghan" jezails as being of "superior quality." Postans went on to elaborate: "particularly the matchlock barrels, which are twisted in the Damascus style. The nobles and chiefs procure many from Persia and Constantinople, but nearly as good can be made in the country. They are overlaid with gold, and very highly finished. The European lock is attached to the Eastern barrel, and our guns and barrels are only prized for this portion of their work. The best of 'Joe Manton' and 'Purdy' guns, of which sufficient to stock a shop have at various times been presented to the Sindian chiefs by the British Government, share this mutilating fate. The Sind matchlock is a heavy, unwieldy arm, the stock much too light for the great weight of the barrel."

Postans's observations echoed to an extent the earlier observations and report by James Burnes, a Scottish doctor who became Physician-General of Bombay with the East India Company and visited the Talpur court in Hyderabad on a diplomatic mission in 1830. Burnes wrote, "The Ameers have agents in Persia, Turkey, and Palestine, for the purchase of swords and gun-barrels, and they possess a more valuable collection of these articles than is probably to be met with in any other part of the world." He went on to

relate that, "They seemed to be fully sensible, however, of the superiority of our gun-locks, a number of which they entreated me to beg the government to procure for them. I saw several expensive and highly finished fire-arms which had been presented to them from time to time, by our authorities in India, thrown aside as useless, without their locks, which had been removed to be put on their own fowling-pieces. For the shape and appearance of the latter I must again refer to the frontispiece of Colonel Pottingers Travels in Bellochistan. Those belonging to the Ameers resemble the two there delineated, with the addition of being highly ornamented. The barrels, which are all rifled, are chiefly brought from Constantinople; they are about double the length of ours, and of a very small calibre. The Sindians never use small shot, and they place no value on pistols or detonating locks."

Historical Note: *The Colonel Pottinger that Postan refers to is Sir Henry Pottinger. In 1810-1811 then Lieutenant Pottinger in the East India Company's service, along with a friend and fellow officer, Captain Charles Christie, disguised as Indian horse traders, undertook a secret reconnaissance mission through India, Sindh, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and Persia, about which the East India Company at that time had little knowledge. Pottinger's book, TRAVELS IN BALOOCHISTAN AND SINDE, is a first-hand account of his journey. He went on to have a distinguished career with the East India Company and the British government and in 1843 was appointed the first British governor of Hong Kong.*

Thus, many of the finest Sindhi jezails coming from the Talpur royal armories share the trait of some of their Afghan cousins of having an Indian, Persian or Turkish barrel married to a European flintlock.

The next two examples of Sindhi jezails, or Sindhi guns with Afghan stocks, are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The first is a matchlock rifle that belonged to a Talpur Amir. The second is a flintlock gun with an English action. Both were ostensively hunting guns.

The matchlock rifle belonged to a member of the ruling Talpur family, Sarkar Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur, whose name is inscribed on the barrel and who died while a British prisoner in 1845. The deeply curved butt of this gun which turns up to a wide, flaring triangular butt of flattened oval section is characteristic of firearms made in Sindh. The fine workmanship, particularly the forge-welded barrel with its complicated twist pattern and delicate gold-damascened ornamentation, reflects the decorative arts sponsored by the Talpur dynasty. The .53 caliber rifle is 60 inches long with a 44 3/8 inch long round barrel of pattern welded steel and weighs 7 pounds 4 ounces, lighter than the typical jezail in Afghanistan.

Matchlock rifle of Sarker Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The barrel has eight groove rifling and is divided into three sections by transverse gold-damascened moldings. The short breech section is damascened overall in gold, with a dense floral pattern cut through the gold, and framed by a border with a leaf-and-petal scroll. The iron pan has a pivoted, domed pan cover with baluster finial. The steel plate trigger is of recurved shape pierced with foliate scrolls and the jaws of the serpentine, or match holder, are shaped like an openwork, turned-back tendril. The barrel tang is damascened in gold with flowers and an Arabic inscription that is the owner's name, ***Sarkar Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur***. The barrel's long middle section has a raised sighting rib down the center and is chiseled in low relief at each end with gold-damascened panels of flowers and leaves and with a square medallion containing an Arabic inscription that translates as, ***O 'Ali, help!***. The muzzle end is decorated with flowers against a gold ground, has a slightly belled muzzle chiseled in relief with leaves and a copper bead front sight. The edge of the muzzle is also damascened in gold with eight sprays of leaves.

Matchlock rifle of Sarker Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur. Note the distinctive shape of the butt stock and the pierced steel trigger at the bottom of the butt stock. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Matchlock rifle of Sarker Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur. Top Photo:Top of the breech section and barrel showing the matchlock serpentine and exquisite gold damascene decoration. With silver. Middlle photo: Close up of the gold and silver decoration. Note the notch rear sight and the matchlock pan and cover. Bottom photo: Close up of the decorated area. Note the beautiful pattern of the barrel's steel and the raised sighting rib. Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The mounts are of silver and consist of a butt plate with simple raised moldings; a flat circular medallion set into the center of the butt on each side; a narrow molded band around the neck; a flat band along the underside of the butt, through which the steel trigger projects; the shaped surround for the match holder, a

cap at the end of the forestock, and five barrel bands pierced with foliate scrolls. The rearmost band fits over the rear sight, the second from the muzzle has a sling swivel; and there is a rear sling swivel attached through the stock in front of the trigger. The gun has an iron ramrod with a shaped and flattened tip and the fore-end is damascened with gold.

Matchlock rifle of Sarker Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan Talpur. Front of barrel and muzzle. Note the steel barrel pattern, the raised sighting rib, the silver foreend cap and barrel band and the gold damascened floral decoration on the barrel and muzzle. Also note that the shaped iron ramrod has what can be called tiger stripped coloring. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The second gun from Sindh, also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection, is a flintlock rifle and is typical of Sindh with its with sharply curved flaring butt and mounts in enameled gold of Iranian manufacture. It is also from the Talpur royal armories. It has a British made lock which is marked "**H.M.**" on the inside. The richly decorated rifle is 58 7/8 inches long with a .56 caliber 42 ¾ inch long barrel, and weighs 9 pounds 11 ounces. It dates from the second quarter of the 19th century.

Flintlock rifle with HM stamped lockplate. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The round barrel of pattern-welded steel is rifled with eight grooves. It is either locally made or imported from Persia or Ottoman Turkey. The surface of the barrel is deeply etched to bring out the spiral-twist design and is divided into three stages by gold-damascened transverse moldings. The breech segment has a slight median ridge and is damascened gold with a band of repeating painted enamel floral motifs along the edges. The edges of the slotted rear sight, breech tang, and the forward molding are all gold. The long middle section of the barrel is damascened in gold at each end with shaped enamel medallions enclosing flowers painted in various shades of red, pink, blue, white, yellow, and green, and toward the breech, an Arabic inscription that translates into English as *"**O 'Ali, help!**"* There is a flat sighting rib that extends down the center of the barrel.

The muzzle is entirely covered with gold and is shaped like a stylized tiger head. It is engraved with fur and S-shaped strips. The eyes are set with red glass (possibly originally rubies, the ears are set with green glass (possibly originally emeralds), and a copper blade front sight is inset into the tiger's forehead.

Gilt stylized tiger head muzzle of the flintlock Sindh rifle with HM stamped lockplate. Note the spiral twist etching design on the pattern welded steel barrel and the gilded end of the ramrod. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Butt, breech and lock of the Sindh flintlock rifle. Note shape of the butt stock with its deep downward curve and broad butt. Note also the gold enameled medallion in the butt, the gold mounts and gold damascene on the breech and barrel. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The flat English flintlock has a friction-reducing roller between the frizzen and its spring. The surfaces are blued and engraved with foliate scrolls within a notched border. The upper part of the cock, including the jaws, has broken off. The outer face of the frizzen is inlaid with gold leaves, the pan retains traces of its former gold surface, and the screw head for the cock pivot is also gilt with leaves. Inside the lock plate are the stamped initials "**H. M.**" One can conjecture that these initials are possibly those of well-known London gunmaker, Harvey Walklate Mortimer (1753–1817).

British lockplate of the Sindh flintlock rifle. Note the damascened gold design and opulent enamel decoration on the breech. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The stock of dark wood curves sharply downward before it flares out to a fishtail shaped butt. Unfortunately, the butt lost its separately applied upper butt end, the entire top section, and its mounts. The remaining mounts are of enameled gold. There is a large U-shaped mount surrounding the barrel tang at the top of the stock; a narrow band around the neck; a circular rosette set into the center of the butt on each side; and four barrel bands. The small, elliptical side plate, the trigger and trigger guard, and the sling swivel are all of gilded iron and the iron ramrod has a gilt fore-end. A gilt-iron prick to clean the vent and a small pad covered with woven fabric are attached to the rear sling swivel by a gold chain.

Photos above and left: Breech and upper tang of the Sindh flintlock rifle. Note the damascened gold and opulent enamel floral decoration. Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Sindh flintlock rifle with HM stamped lockplate. Top of the barrel. Note the gold decoration and the spiral twist etching design on the pattern welded steel barrel. Also note the wide flat sighting ridge. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The enamels on this rifle draw on both Mughal and Iranian designs. The thin willowy green leaves that are part of the decoration of this gun are characteristic of Mughal motifs while Iranian enamelwork is distinguished by designs incorporating large flower heads, often closely packed together in a lush brocade, such as also found on this gun. Thomas Postans reported that the Amirs of Sindh employed one or two Persian goldsmiths at the Talpur court who "are engaged at court in enameling and damascening, in which arts they have attained great perfection." According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it is possible that they or their students were responsible for many of the enameled mounts on this rifle.

Sindh flintlock rifle with HM stamped lockplate. Gold barrel band with painted enamel floral decoration combining both Moghul and Persian flower designs. Also note the spiral twist etching design on the pattern welded steel barrel. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Just like Afghan jezails, there are a few examples of Sindhi Afghan stocked guns with percussion locks. The example (photos below) dates from after 1850, after the East India Company annexed Sindh and appears more roughly made than the previous two royal Sindh jezails. It also displays heavy Indian influence in its decoration. Practically the only thing that links it to Sindh is the shape of the butt stock which has a deep drip behind the breech that curves and flares out to a wide triangular shape. It has a relatively short .41 caliber octagonal barrel that is 29 inches long. The swamped barrel flares a bit at the muzzle and has a brass front sight and a fixed rear sight. The barrel is held in the stock by six thin brass barrel bands, the second of which carries a sling swivel. The lockplate is engraved in a floral pattern with a fence on the borders. The hammer displays similar style engraving. The Afghan shaped stock is overlaid with ornate Moghul Indian style brass sheet decoration.

Percussion rifle with Sindhi "Afghan" style stock. Photo courtesy of Joh. Springers Erben, Vienna, Austria.

APPENDIX: A NOTE ON STUDYING AND IDENTIFYING ISLAMIC FIREARMS

The study of Islamic weapons, including forearms, presents a number of challenges for the western student or collector. Islam covers an immense geographical area comprising many different cultures, requirements and designs and each had its own national type of weapons. It would be helpful if one studying Islamic arms has knowledge of the history, geography, politics, cultures and religions of the different regions that produced and used the weapons, as well as tactics and how the arms were used. War was common and craftsmen often worked far from the region where they originally learned their trade. Craftsmen were valuable spoils of war. And during peace, they could be transferred or given by their rulers to a neighboring ruler as a gift or tribute. For example, English visitors to the courts of Sindh reported that the Sindh Amirs employed Persian goldsmiths to decorate their arms.

While there has been much research, and books and articles written in Europe and America about American and European firearms, there has been less research and less written in the west about Islamic firearms and weapons in general. Record keeping varied in the Islamic world. While the Ottoman Empire may have kept good records in its armories and official manufactories, none were kept in Central Asia, Afghanistan or North Africa. In the absence of extensive centralized manufacturing records, proof marks, manufacturers' marks, patent dates and other records, very often the collector or student of old Islamic arms (17th through 19th centuries) has to identify the weapon by stock or lock design, decoration style or material. Even if there is writing on the weapon, the student first has to identify the language or script, and then be able to translate it or find a qualified translator. And with Islamic arms, instead of date, model number, manufacturer or name of famous historic owner, the inscription will often be a religious invocation.

Weapons, including guns, were often personal weapons. As such they were central to the owner's survival and existence and thus often tend to be very personalized. Mass production of a standard design and specifications was not common, especially in tribal areas, and many reflect the owner's taste in embellishment.

Another issue is that the material in a gun may come from different regions. This higher quality Afghan or Sindh jezails may contain have barrels from Ottoman Turkey, Persia or India with British or Ottoman locks. Also, the materials that made the gun were widely traded between regions. Thus, the steel used in Indian or Afghan gun barrels could be Damascus steel from Syria. And Persian gunsmiths were celebrated for their watered steel barrels, which were widely traded throughout the East.

And absent date marks, the dating of firearm sometimes presents difficulties because of the extensive reuse of components. Gun barrels and locks were often reused multiple times. Valuable gun barrels were often remounted many times as weapons were handed down from one generation to the next in families. Changes may have been made in mechanisms, decoration, design or configuration by different craftsmen so that any inscriptions on the barrel or lock may not relate to the rest of the gun. Thus, an Afghan jezail that was originally a matchlock, could be modernized with a flintlock and the decoration changed by the new generations of owners. Or if the stock was broke, it would be replaced by a newer stock, sometimes of different design and decoration.

Determining whether an Afghan or Sindh jezail is a genuine antique or a modern reproduction can be difficult. After the British East India Company confiscated native arms after seizing Sindh and after the Sepoy Mutiny, Indian arms makers almost immediately began making copies of older weapons, and haven't stopped. Many have been sold to westerners. Plus, the gunsmiths of the Khyber region are quite expert at making copies of old "exotic" weapons. Some of these jezails use genuine old parts and are often hand made with the same techniques that were used in the 1700's and 1800's. And then remember

that jezails could have been updated over the years, so they could have some parts of different ages. Many an American serviceman stationed in Afghanistan has brought home what they thought was a genuine antique jezail or antique gun, but wasn't.

There are on-line resources that can assist in determining whether a jezail is genuine or not. One such website is Old Guns from Afghanistan---or are they? at https://www.armscollectors.com/darra/afghanold.htm. The website provides tips on things to look for to determine if a gun from Afghanistan is genuinely old or is a replica made for the tourist trade. Another resource is Ian McCollum's Forgotten Weapons video where he shows an Afghan zezail and explains why he believes that is a genuine antique (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-aEWZrTibE).

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