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Abstract. This article presents analytical information about the military art, weapons, and defensive structures of the ancient Central Asian peoples, including the Sakas and Massagetae , Bactrians, and Khorezmians .

Keywords : Sakas , Massagetae , Dakhs , cigars, axes, spears, lances, bows, spears, helmets.

In the 7th–4th centuries BC, Central Asia was inhabited by sedentary agricultural peoples who irrigated the land through canals and ditches, and by nomadic pastoralist tribes who settled in the deserts and mountain slopes, and on the edges of agricultural oases.

Written sources include the Bactrians, Sogdians, Parthians, Khorezmians, and Margianas as settled agricultural peoples. They gave names to large regions in the valleys of the main rivers of Central Asia: the middle reaches of the Amu Darya (Ox) were called Bactria , the valleys of the Zarafshan and Kashkadarya were called Sogdiana , the Amu Darya delta was called Khorezm , and the Murghab valley was called Margiana [1].

The vast desert zones of Eurasia are home to *the Sakas* , *Massagetae* , and *Dax* tribes.

In the ancient agricultural regions, cities began to rise early. BC. Early cities are known from the end of the 7th century BC in Bactria, Margiana, Sogdiana. It was here that the statehood of the peoples of Central Asia first began to take shape. BC. with its capital in Bactria in the 8th century BC **ancient Bactria** The first information about **the kingdom of the** 1st century BC has reached us. The sphere of influence of this state included Margiana and Sogdiana.

At the beginning of the 6th century BC, the first cities began to appear in Khorezm on the left bank of the river, where, according to assumptions, the cultures of the tribes that migrated from the south from Bactria and the slopes of the Kopetdag Mountains began to take shape. The development of local statehood of the Bactrians and other peoples was stopped by the invasions of the Achaemenids in the middle of the 6th century BC. The nomadic peoples, united in confederations and tribal associations, put up quite fierce and successful resistance to the invaders under the leadership of their elected leaders[2].

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus, in his famous book "History", wrote about the Massagetae tribes who lived in the area from the right bank of the Amu Darya to the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. Herodotus described them as skilled masters of infantry and cavalry, and as numerous warriors, and described the Sakas' cavalry as the best fighting horsemen.

Many centuries later, the Greek traveler Dionysius Pereegitus confirmed Herodotus's ideas, describing the Sakas who lived in the lower reaches of the Yaksarts (Syr Darya), and writing that they were the best archers, their arrows always hit the target without fail.

The military equipment of the peoples of the ancient Bactrian kingdom was greatly improved due to the achievements of the military art of the ancient Eastern states.

In the 4th century BC, Central Asian weaponry reached its highest level of development. Warriors skillfully wielded offensive weapons and widely used daggers and swords made of iron (sometimes bronze) with richly decorated handles. In hand-to-hand combat, Central Asian warriors

7	ISSN 2277-3630 (online), Published by International journal of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Research., under Volume: 13 Issue: 12 in December-2024 https://www.gejournal.net/index.php/IJSSIR
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used short swords known as akinaks. They wore akinaks on the right side. They also had long (up to 1.2 m) swords. Battle axes, also known as *sigaris*, were often used in battle. Such battle axes, sharpened on both sides, have been found in large numbers during excavations of graves.[2]

Herodotus and Strabo report that the Massagetae's axes (long-handled crescent-shaped axes) were made of copper. Long spears with bronze and iron tips were of great importance. The role of clubs was much less important. Herodotus called the Massagetae "spearmen".

As a long-range weapon, first of all, bows were used. From the 5th century BC, a bow with a more complex structure than that of the Scythians was used in Central Asia. It was distinguished by its increased shooting range and efficiency. Several types of it are known: the Bactrians and Sogdians, Parthians and Khorezmians used reeds to make bows. The tips of the bow arrows were made of iron (or copper). The sources of Herodotus, Xenophon, and Arrian mention the "archers" and "horse archers" of the Sakas and Massagetae. Complex "Scythian" bows had good combat qualities. The bow shaft was made of leather and thin wood. Central Asian warriors were able to skillfully use a scythe.

Warriors were protected by protective armor. According to Quintus Curtius Rufus (a historian of the campaigns of Alexander the Great), the steppe warriors of Central Asia had armor consisting of "iron plates." According to Arrian, warriors were "well covered" in iron armor in battle. Iron helmets and shields of various shapes and sizes were also used.

Herodotus wrote that the Massagetae horses were protected by breastplates. According to archaeological data, Central Asia was the first place where protective equipment for horses was introduced.

This important innovation, discovered in Central Asia, spread west to Iran, south to India, and east to China.

The warriors of Sogdiana, Bactria, and Khorezm were brave, fearless, and excellent horsemen. The riders of the nomadic peoples of the steppe and the steppe used light saddles or saddles without stirrups, and their boots had spikes on the sides for reining in the horse. In many cases, the saddles were decorated with gold. Nomadic armies consisted of cavalry warriors. Even special detachments were formed from women. According to the Greek historian Claudius Hellen, before the groom could get married, he had to fight with the girl. If he won, he married her, if he lost, he became her prisoner.

This tradition contributed to the upbringing of not only male warriors, but also female warriors. It was considered a sacred duty for women to stand and fight alongside men.

During the period under consideration, each ruler had a detachment of well-armed hired warriors. In addition, the leaders of tribes or gangs led their tribesmen or clans, who fought with arrows, spears and swords. Each warrior of the tribe carried with him on trips food (flour, flour), boiled meat, and water jugs.

The art of building fortifications was introduced in Central Asia as early as the Bronze Age. By the time of the Greco-Macedonian invasion, Central Asia had become a state with cities strongly defended by fortifications. In addition to city-wide fortifications, large cities also had powerful fortification networks in the form of moats.[3]

Ancient cities and fortresses were surrounded by high walls. The walls were built of solid bricks and had towers. Special loopholes were made in the towers, from which the city defenders could shoot arrows from bows at the enemy. The defensive walls were surrounded by deep ditches filled with water. Such fortresses were built in ancient Bactria, Sogdiana, Margiana, Khorezm, Fergana, and Chach. The largest city of Sogdiana was *Smaragdan (now Samarkand)*, the Greeks called it *Marokanda* . The period of the Macedonian conquest consisted of two parts: the fortress, surrounded

by walls and ditches, and the length of its walls was 70 stadia, that is, 12–12.5 km (according to Quintus Curtius Rufus).

With the development of the Khorezm state, new cities and fortresses began to rise. An example is Jonbas-Kala, which was built in the shape of a regular rectangle and surrounded by a double strong wall. Great attention was paid to its entrance, five turns were built, and the inner walls were equipped with additional loopholes for shooting. Since there were no towers, special loopholes for shooting were arranged in a fan-shaped system, and the walls had semicircular arcades with three loopholes for shooting on the sides of the walls. For better shooting from a bow against the enemy, the loopholes were deepened and grooved walls were built, sloping downwards. Therefore, the walls give the impression of being fenced with half-columns.

The presence of numerous loopholes in the fortress walls leads to the conclusion that the entire population was involved in the defense. The entire fortification system of the city indicates that a single defense system was created to protect against nomadic raids.

Khorezmians, Bactrians, and Sakas formed the majority of the military contingent of the Achaemenid army. For example, during the Greco-Persian War, the Sakas' *cavalry, together with the Iranian infantry, at the Battle of Marathon, were distinguished by their heroism, forcing the center of the Athenian battle formation to retreat*. The Sakas also showed examples of heroism and fortitude at the Battles of Plataea and Thermopylae. The Iranian commander Mardonius included Bactrians and Sakas in his selected detachment, along with Iranians and Medes, to conquer Greece. Sakas warriors were included in the ranks of ship crews. Terracotta and plates depicting Sakas warriors have been found on the territory of the Achaemenid state. The armies of Central Asia knew how to be divided into separate types of troops [4].

The formation of the battle line was used in units, the attack was sometimes carried out by compact units with deep echelons along the length. At the same time, another **tactical rule** was also known - strategic retreat, in which cavalry sometimes attacked, sometimes retreated to deliver a fierce blow from another direction. In general, the offensive battle began with a " **covering** " attack, in which, moving rapidly on horseback, arrows and spears were poured on the defenders, when the enemy was close, a decisive attack was launched, then hand-to-hand combat began and the attack was completed by **pursuing the retreating enemy** , and at the decisive moment, reserves were brought into the battle[5].

Central Asian warriors skillfully implemented cooperation. In many cases, variants of joint actions of cavalry and light infantry were developed: a rider sitting on a horse, two people - When approaching the enemy, the Dakhs acted as both cavalry and infantry - one of them would dismount and continue the battle on foot.

Ancient historians highly valued the qualities of the Scythian warriors, which the Greeks were convinced of during the Greco-Persian Wars. Alexander the Great later had to admit this on several occasions.

Researchers of the military affairs of the peoples of Central Asia have come to the following conclusions:

1. The weapons of the Central Asians were among the most advanced of their time, even surpassing the weapons of the Greco-Macedonian armies in some respects.
2. Various tactical rules of attack and defense were developed and used in Central Asia.
3. Due to the participation of the Achaemenid state in the wars with the Greeks, including the battles against Alexander the Great (outside Central Asia), the warriors of the peoples of Central Asia, like the Achaemenid and Greco-Macedonian armies, showed that they were well acquainted with weapons and the tactical rules of warfare.
4. In the 7th and 8th centuries BC, the military potential of the peoples of Central Asia was very high, which in turn created an important factor in the fight against foreign invaders.

9	ISSN 2277-3630 (online), Published by International Journal of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Research., under Volume: 13 Issue: 12 in December-2024 https://www.gejournal.net/index.php/IJSSIR
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In many cases, our ancestors defeated the enemy not only by force, but also by military cunning. In this, they used numerous ambushes and tactical methods of distracting the enemy. The main advantages of the ancient Sakas, Massagetae and Sogdians were mobility and skillful maneuvering. The weak point of their military training was their inability to take well-defended fortresses by storm.

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