

*Turaev Sarvar Tulkinovich,***MILITARY HISTORY OF THE STATES OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE ERA OF ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES**

Abstract: The article reveals the issues of statehood and military art in the era of antiquity and the early Middle Ages among the ancient peoples of Central Asia, provides an example of the warriors of Sogdiana, Bactria, Khorezm, and their martial skills.

Keywords: Ancient peoples of Central Asia, Khorezm, Kangyu, Ancient Fergana, Chach, Kushan, ephthalite. bactria, sogd, military equipment, sarissa, kantos.

In the 4th century BC, Khorezm was an independent state. The Khorezmians managed to free themselves even from formal dependence on the Persian state. In 329 BC, the ruler of Khorezm, Farasman (Khvarazman), arrived with 1,500 cavalry to Alexander the Great and offered him an alliance against the Colchians and Amazons (the peoples of the North Caucasus). Alexander, busy fighting Spitamenes, rejected the offer, but concluded a friendly alliance with Farasman. Thus, diplomatic means were used to preserve the independence of Khorezm.

After the collapse of the state of Alexander the Great, Parthia, Ares, Bactria and Sogdiana became part of the Seleucid state, and Khorezm retained its own local dynasty.

From the 3rd century BC, waves of nomads from Eurasia moved to the oases of Central Asia one after another. As a result, several states were formed in this territory, the ruling dynasties of which came from nomadic clans. This was the Parthian kingdom led by the Arsacids from the Parn tribe, who were part of the Dahae union of tribes from the Aral Sea region. From the 2nd century BC, the dynasty in the Khorezm kingdom also changed, which subsequently ruled here for several centuries.

The ruler of Khorezm minted his own coin, on the reverse side of which was depicted a mounted warrior.

The largest confederation of tribes became the state of Kangju or Kanju (in Chinese sources), which according to Persian written sources (Avesta) is known under the name Kanghi.

Sources note the semi-nomadic nature of this state, which occupied a vast territory from Fergana in the east to the Aral Sea region in the northwest. According to Chinese sources, the tribes of the steppe and forest-steppe from the Volga to the Uruga were also subject to Kangyu.

Kangju included five small holdings. As the Chinese call them, they included Khorezm, Chach (Tashkent oasis) and the lands of western, central and southern Sogd to the mountains of Baysun and Kugitang. The state existed until the 5th century AD, then broke up into a number of small holdings, most of which became part of the Hephthalite state. Kangju had a large army, sources cite a figure of 125 thousand people, mainly heavy and light cavalry. The ancient Greek historian Strabo wrote the following: "They are good mounted and foot warriors, armed with bows, swords, armor, copper axes, in battle they wear gold belts and gold armbands."

The warriors of Kangyu were dressed in plate or scaly armor (a leather jacket with rather large metal plates sewn onto it) that covered the entire body, tied with a golden belt, and an armored skirt, the hem of which reached down to the ankles. The entire body of the horse was also covered with plate armor.

The horsemen, the cataphracts, wore round or conical helmets on their heads, topped with high, columnar cones rounded at the top. The helmet's browbands descended in the middle onto the forehead in a triangular projection. The helmets had backplates made of chainmail mesh. The neck was often protected by high armored collars.

The warriors carried small round shields. The swords were long and straight with a cross-shaped hilt. Some warriors were armed with clubs, which were used as a throwing weapon.

All the warriors of the Kangyu army had firearms - a bow. Arrows were stored both in hard quivers, closed with a lid on top, and in special compartments of the goryt (bow case) together with the bow.

The riders were also armed with a spear, which was used for throwing and hand-to-hand combat, as well as a battle axe - a chekan, a long (Sarmatian) sword, often two-handed. They sat on saddles adapted for heavily armed horsemen. A special type of offensive weapon was a long spear (up to 6 m) of the sarissa type, called a cantos, which the rider held with both hands.

The heavily armed cavalry, clad in iron armor on horses covered in the same armor, fought in close formation. The enemy was subjected to a massive barrage of arrows. After the enemy's battle formations were disrupted, the horsemen - cataphracts - surrounded them from both sides, continuing to shower them with a hail of arrows.

The enemy's attempts at counterattack were stopped by a deliberate retreat and a decisive blow that followed – envelopment from the flank and rear. With a hail of arrows, throwing clubs and using long spears, the warriors did not bring the enemy closer to their line. At the decisive moment, after encircling the enemy, the army finished him off in close combat with long swords.

This tactic was very convenient for use in the defense of an oasis located in the middle of the desert. The Parthians, who also mastered this tactic, successfully used it in the fight against the formidable Roman army. It should be noted that many nations adopted the tactics of fighting with



Battle of the Kangyu Cataphracts

heavy cavalry from our ancestors.

Ancient Fergana was a separate state, which in Chinese sources is called "Davan" (Taiyuan). It bordered on Kangyu to the west.

In ancient Davan, agriculture, crafts and construction were developed. Ancient Fergana was especially famous for its horses - argamaks, which the Chinese called "heavenly horses".

The army of ancient Davan, according to Chinese information, reached 60 thousand people, armed with bows and spears. The ancient Fergana warriors were especially skilled in shooting from horseback. The main part of the army was made up of mounted warriors. Fergana warriors, as well as the warriors of Kangyu, put on armor on themselves and their horses. The Chinese, perhaps, became familiar with this weaponry in ancient Fergana.

To defend their state, the Fergana people built fortresses. The capital of ancient Davan, the city of Ershi (on the site of the modern city of Markhamat in the Andijan region) was surrounded by double walls - internal and external. Warehouses and buildings for storing food, weapons and other necessary equipment were built inside the city.

The ancient Fergana people were especially careful with their horses. The refusal of the Fergana ruler to sell horses to the Chinese ambassador was the reason for the Chinese army's invasion of Davan. In 104-101 BC, the Chinese army, numbering more than 60 thousand horse and foot soldiers, invaded Davan.

The first campaign ended with the defeat of the Chinese troops, who were unable to break the resistance of the fortified settlements.

During the second campaign in 101 BC, the Chinese besieged the city of Ershi. Since they could not take the citadel, they diverted water from the city, but the defenders of the citadel began to collect water from wells they had dug. Having received several thousand horses, the Chinese stopped the war, but were unable to enter the inner city and went back.

The third Central Asian state of this period included the territory of southern Uzbekistan, a significant part of modern Tajikistan, as well as neighboring regions of Afghanistan; it was created by the Yuezhi, who are identified with the Tocharians of ancient authors.

After defeating the Greco-Bactrian rulers, the Yuezhi settled on the right bank of the Amu Darya. The Yuezhi were nomadic tribes driven out of Eastern Turkestan. Around 140 BC, the Yuezhi invaded Sogdiana and Bactria. According to Chinese sources, the number of Yuezhi troops reached 100,000 to 200,000 people. The core of the army was made up of horsemen.

In 124-123 BC, the Tokhars fought with their neighbors, the Parthians. In the battle that followed, the Parthian ruler Artabanus was seriously wounded. Only thanks to the prompt actions of the next Parthian king, Mithridates, were they able to stop the Tokhars (Yuezhi).

In the 1st century AD, one of the five Yuezhi tribes managed to seize control of the Yuezhi state. The Kushan state received its name from the name of this tribe - Guishun (Kushan).

Later, the Kushan rulers managed to capture all of Bactria and the northeastern part of India. The most powerful ruler of the Kushan state was Kanishka (approximately the end of the 1st century and the first quarter of the 2nd century AD). During his reign, the borders of the Kushan state reached Central India. In addition, the power of the Kushan rulers was recognized by the population of Fergana and eastern Turkestan.

The Kushan state was supported by a large and well-armed army. It is assumed that the total number of troops of the Kushan rulers reached 150-200 thousand people.



Kushan kings in battle dress
(from coins of Kanishka III and Vasudeva)

During the war in eastern Turkestan, 70 thousand troops of the Kushan state fought against the Chinese army. The army consisted of mounted and foot soldiers, the cavalry entered the battle in armor.

Warriors used products from local weapons workshops. Long-range weapons – the bow – were significantly improved in this era. A special type of composite bow, having a five-part shape and covered with bone or horn plates, became widespread. The birthplace of this powerful weapon is Central Asia, and later it spread to Sasanian Iran.

From Central Asia, this type of bow penetrated to the Sarmatians and further west as far as Scotland, in the south – to Iran and India, in the east – to China. During excavations of Central Asian monuments, bone and horn plates were found, which covered the

surface of the bow, and in several cases – whole or reconstructible composite bows.

Arrows were wooden or reed, arrowheads were iron, of several types. The most common were arrowheads with a stem and three triangular projections - blades. By the end of this period, arrowheads with a complexly profiled combat part appeared.

Warriors were armed with daggers and swords. In Central Asia in the first centuries AD, large (up to 1.2 m long) iron double-edged swords without a crossguard and with a long rod-shaped handle predominated. Of other weapons, the spear, battle axe, and sling should be mentioned. Central Asian fortification engineers also achieved great achievements. Mighty fortress walls, reinforced with projecting towers, complex gate structures, frequent loopholes - all this stood at the level of the best achievements of fortification of their time. Fortresses, as a rule, were surrounded by high and thick outer walls. In addition to the outer walls, there were also inner walls protecting the citadel of the city ruler.

The crisis of the Kushan state is in many ways similar to the historical fate of the Greco-Bactrian and Roman states. All these states were forced to wage endless wars on the eve of collapse. These states, weakened by external clashes and internal strife, could not find the strength to fight the new external enemy. By the 4th century AD, the Kushan state had lost its main territories and disintegrated into several small possessions.



Kushan warriors

In the 5th century AD, the Hephthalite tribes entered the political scene. They played a leading role in the life of the region until the middle of the 6th century.

There is no consensus on the origin of the Hephthalites. The sources provide different versions of their origin, including some identifying them with the Turkic peoples, others with the Yuezhi, and others considering them to be the indigenous inhabitants of Bactria - Tokharistan.

The Hephthalite army was a great force. The warriors were armed with a club, a bow, but the main weapon was considered to be a sharp sword. During battles, the cavalry played a decisive

role. The traditions of military-tribal democracy were preserved in the Hephthalite society. The rulers surrounded themselves with supporters - "dying together". If a ruler died in battle, then all the supporters guarding him had to die.

In the 5th century AD, the military forces of the state created by the Hephthalites clashed with the army of Sasanian Iran. Some events of this confrontation are described in the poem "Shahnameh" by Daqiqi - Firdausi.

The Hephthalites managed to capture significant territories. Most of Central Asia, Eastern Turkestan and some provinces of Northern India became part of this state.

The Hephthalites managed to stop the invasion of Sasanian Iran to the East. In 453-454 they defeated the army of the Iranian Shah Yazdegerd II. In 457 the Hephthalite king Vakhshunvar conquered the provinces of Chaghaniyan, Tokharistan and Badakhshan.

Shah Peroz of Iran (459 – 484) even attracted the Byzantines to his side in the fight against the Hephthalites. But, having suffered a defeat, Peroz was captured by the Hephthalites. Freed for a large ransom, Peroz again began a war against the Hephthalites. In 484, the Hephthalites defeated the

Persians again. According to some authors, the Hephthalites had carefully camouflaged a deep ditch (according to some historians, filled with water) before the battle – a wolf pit (pit – trap). Peroz, like most of the Iranian army, died in the wolf pit.

The military strength of the Hephthalites is evidenced by the successful wars they waged against the Iranians. Sassanid Iran, which had repeatedly defeated the Roman army, trembled with fear before the Central Asian nomads – the Hephthalites.

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