



Research Article

INFORMATION ON ARMAMENTS AND METHODS OF WARFARE OF THE ARAL SEA POPULATION IN ANCIENT WRITTEN SOURCES

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Satimov Bahodir Mangliboy ogli

A teacher of the Department “History” at Urgench State University, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to illuminating the information on armaments and methods of warfare of the Aral Sea population in ancient written sources. Information on the armament and methods of warfare of the Aral Sea tribes was reflected in various sources. In the Avesto, they have ancient roots and describe the growing role of military leaders and warriors in society during marches and raids.

KEYWORDS

Armament, sources, the Aral Sea, Avesto, the Amu Darya, the Syr Darya, Khorezm.

INTRODUCTION

Geographically, the so-called “Aral Sea” includes the lower Syr Darya basin in the northeast and the

lower Amu Darya basin in the south, and the Ustyurt border in the west. The ancient land,

which begins in present-day Darganota and extends to the Aral Sea, forms Khorezm oasis, which divides the Amu Darya River into right and left bank oases. In the scientific literature on archeology, this oasis was called the “Southern Aral Sea”.

Khorezm oasis is surrounded by the Karakum and Kyzylkum deserts. The territory of the oasis is flat and on the right bank of the Amu Darya there is the Sultan Uvays Mountains, which are lower (up to 480-500 meters in height) than the Central Asian mountain system. Due to the betaine of the lower Amu Darya, it has three dried-up old streams. They are called the Akchadarya, Sariqamishoyi and Aral Sea deltas. The stages of human development of the area around these rivers were studied by the staff of the Khorezm archeological expedition. [26]

The Lower Syr Darya Basin is separated from the south by the sand dunes of the Kyzylkum Desert. In ancient times, the Syr Darya flowed into the Aral Sea through separate networks. The old main branch of the Syr Darya delta, Inkardarya, began in the southern part of the present-day Red Horde and connected to the ancient Akchadarya river of the Amu Darya. [32]

Extremely waterlogged, the Aral Sea region has been developed since the Stone Age by tribes and ethnic groups who were primarily engaged in hunting, gathering and fishing, and later in animal husbandry and agriculture.[35]

Therefore, it is advisable to give a brief account of the ancient inhabitants of the Aral Sea and its activities.

The Kaltaminor culture was widespread in the Neolithic period (6th-4th millennia BC) on the Ustyurt Plateau and on the banks of the Uzbay River in the Amu Darya, which begins in Lake Sariqamish and flows into the Caspian Sea, and in the Kyzylkum steppes. They are located along rivers and lakes, where tribal communities have been engaged in wildlife and fishing, as well as collecting edible cereals and fruits found in nature.[36]

In the middle of the second millennium BC, livestock breeding appeared in the Southern Aral Sea region and agriculture became its auxiliary branch.[18]

In the 7th-6th centuries BC, the first Sak tribes were widespread in the lower Syr Darya basin (Eastern Aral Sea). Their material cultural artifacts were found in burial mounds such as

Uygarak and South Tagisken.[33] Also, the first Saks monuments were found in Sariqamishboyi (Sakarchaga burial mounds) and on the southern shore of Khorezm oasis (Meshekli, Uch Ochak).[39] The results of the study of the Bronze and Early Iron Age monuments of Khorezm oasis are covered as a separate topic.[25]

In the 7th-6th centuries BC, on the left bank of the Amu Darya in Sariqamishboyi, there were cattle breeders of the Kuisay culture. [37]

By the end of the 7th century BC, the fortress of Kozalikir was built around the middle part of the old Dovdon river basin of the Amu Darya. (present-day northern Turkmenistan). Archeology has used such concepts as “Eastern Aral Sea Saks”, “Southern Aral Sea Saks”, “Sariqamishboyi Saks” and “Saks – Khorezmians” belonging to the pastoral tribes of the lower Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins. At the same time, the culture of Kozalikir was interpreted in connection with the “Khorasanian” people mentioned in the works of the ancient Greek historians Hecate and Herodotus. [40]

The issues of geography and ethnogeography of the monuments of the Sak tribes of the Aral Sea were also considered.[29]

In the interpretation of written sources on the military activity and armament of the Aral Sea population, their chronological consideration and comparison, expanding the scope of scientific information, additional information (evidence in local ancient Khorezmian writing, fine art, murals and sculptures, pottery it is of great importance to consider the images belonging to the field of armaments reflected on the surface of the vessels) as comparative scientific material.

In chronological order, the oldest information about the history of armaments and armies of the Central Asian region (including the Aral Sea) of cattle-breeding and sedentary farming tribes is contained in the Yasht book of the Avesto. Yasht – “Hymns to the Gods”, (applause) describes the social and political environment of the 9th-8th centuries BC and also contains legends with older historical roots.[8]

In those distant times and on uneasy condition, the tribes quarreled with each other. Leaders marched with their relatives, plundered the lands of other regions and plundered the herds of people.[5] Another book of Avesto, Yasna, entitled “Sacrifice”, describes these invasions and wars as follows: “They cannot imagine their lives without persecuting a peaceful shepherd who is far from

evil intentions towards either animals or humans. They brought poverty and oppression to the home, the settlement, and the country. They must be fought in unity by force of arms”.[20]

The Avesto contains information about weapons, some aspects of military tactics, as well as the owner of metals and the patron of the military class, the protector of the warriors – Khshatra and the goddess of victory Vertragna (Varakhran).[5] In our study, they were revealed based on Avesto translations [1] and chrestomathy materials. [30]

The Yasht hymns begin with the Ahuramazda applause, in which the text mentions stone hammers, arrowheads, knives, and stone cores for firing. The Mihr-Yasht altar, dedicated to the sun-worshipping god Mitra, provides more information on the field of armaments.

The source is based on the following applause: “We cherish Mitra, who has vast pastures, and the rulers of the countries who marched against the bloodthirsty enemy armies turn to him and worship him,” [30] and elsewhere: “Give us the ability to see each and every one of them from afar and defeat them all with one blow”.[2]

Running sharp spears with long handles mentioned in the Yasht book, sharp bows, arrows

with eagle feathers, horses added, and a military chariot with high wheels are mentioned.[3]

There is also information about the notion of “weapons”, a pointed shield and a pointed helmet, a feather arrow and a feathery arrow from the wing of a wild (wild) bird and a battle ax (“ax to strike”) and sharp knives on both sides and a high-flying flag. [3]

For the first time, the Avesto provides important information on the history of ancient Central Asian military affairs and armaments. They point to cavalry and infantry, long-range and military weapons used in the military. The source also mentions such concepts as “rival” and “enemy”, “enemy countries”, “brave warriors” and “brave commanders”, “horsemen with their heads bowed to the horse’s bridle” and “powerful, victorious weapon”.

It is not uncommon for people to reflect their fighting methods and military tactics in practice on the example of the descriptions of the actions of Vertragna, the goddess of victory, depicted in the form of a wind, a mighty bull and a white horse, a mighty camel, a bird of prey, and an evil pig with sharp fangs: “He smashes the ranks of the

army in front of them, and makes the ranks of the warriors squirm”.[2]

So, all of the above information will serve as an opportunity to restore the old military work and armaments sector.

As a result of the travels of the ancient Persian kings Cyrus II and Darius I to Central Asia, the knowledge of the Persians about the Aral Sak tribes and Khorasan peoples was greatly enriched and later introduced to ancient Greek historians and geographers.

The army structure of the Persians was based on cavalry and infantry. During the march of Cyrus II against the Massagets (530 BC) and the march of Darius I to the Saka Tigrahaudas (519 BC), the Persians encountered similar armies.

Herodotus placed massages behind the Araks River “in the direction of Sunrise” from the Caspian Sea.[16] Strabo's Geography tells of the spread of the Days (Dakhs) from the Caspian Sea, followed by the Massagets and Saks in the eastern direction.[31]

The scientific literature concludes that Herodotus' Araks River was compared to the ancient Uzbay River of the Amu Darya, which

flows into the Caspian Sea and that the river was called Arahsha according to ancient Persian inscriptions on the Behistun Rock in Iran.[17]

As a result of a new interpretation of the historiography of the historical ethnography of the Sak-Massagets, the Saka Tigrahaudas mentioned in Behistun's writings and the Massagets in Herodotus' History are “likely to be related tribes under different names”, the right and left coastal steppes are located, and the Saka Tigrahaud tribes were located east of Lake Sarikamish.[26]

In particular, in connection with these regions, the marches of Cyrus II and Darius I against the Massagets and Saka-tigrahaudas are described.[16] Herodotus says that after Cyrus II's armies reached the Araks River, they built a bridge over the river and ships to cross the river.[6] King Darius' armies also crossed the river using the left.[16]

Herodotus 'account of the Massagets' weapons is as follows: the Massagets fought on horseback and on foot, they were armed with bows, spears and battle axes and the spearheads were made of copper with arrowheads and military axes, their hats and belts were decorated with gold, and their

horses were made of copper. covered with armor, horse equipment were decorated with gold water.[22]

In our opinion, Herodotus was not aware that spear and arrowheads were made of bronze among the communities of nomadic pastoral tribes living in the mountains [31] and steppes of Central Asia. Strabo echoes Herodotus 'account of the Massagets' armor like the following: "The Massagets are excellent cavalry and infantry warriors who have weapons such as bows, daggers, armor and copper axes; wear ties in battle; their horses are covered with gold". [16]

It is true that in the works of Greek historians it is said that the horses of the Saks were decorated with gold ornaments. It looks like gold was mined from the Kyzylkum deposits. It is known from sources that the nomads, in turn, were also skilled archers. In particular, Herodotus states that the king of Media, Kiaksar, sent his children to the Scythians to teach them the art of archery.[24]

In the works of Greek authors, the term "Scythians" was used in a general sense to refer to nomadic tribes such as the Dakhs, Saks, Massagets, and Sarmatians. The embossed murals of Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid state,

also depict Saks and Khorezmians from Central Asia, such as the Sogdians and Bactrians. The steps leading to the palace of Darius I and Xerxes in Persepolis depict representatives of the Achaemenid tribes paying homage to the seventeenth-century Khorezm oasis. Similarly, the saks reflected in the eleventh group are leading the horse. They were armed with daggers. [10]

The conquered tribes and ethnic groups within the Achaemenid state were divided into military-administrative provinces (satrapies). In important economic and political areas of the kingdom, Persian rulers built military fortifications. They were present in Egypt, Asia Minor, the Ikkidarya range, and elsewhere. According to written sources, the military units (garrisons) in these fortresses were served by Persians, Medes, Egyptians, Bactrians, Sogdians, Hindus and other peoples, as well as Saks and Khorasans. That is why their terracotta (ceramic) statues were made as soldiers who served in the Achaemenid armies. Such statues depicting Saks and Khorezmians have been found in the ruins of ancient cities in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia.[7] Representatives of Central Asia are also

regions has become a powerful force in suppressing protests and uprisings and in occupying unoccupied countries.

The Saks and Khorasans, along with other peoples of Central Asia and the East who were subject to the ancient Persians, took part in King Xerxes' march to Greece. According to Herodotus, the weapons of the Parthians, Khorasans and Sogdians were similar to those of the Bactrian warriors. The Bactrians were armed with bows and short spears and the saks had daggers, "bows" and battle axes – sagaris. [16]

The Greco-Persian Wars started by Darius I, the Saxons fought steadfastly in the Battle of Marathon, while Xerxes's commander, Mardonius, recruited the Saxons and Bactrian warriors, who were extremely brave, into his army as selected units.[16]

According to written sources, in the 5th-4th centuries BC, compared to previous periods ("Avesto" period), there were certain innovations in the field of armaments of the tribes living in the Aral Sea and adjacent steppe. For example, the war horses of the Massagets were protected by covering them with copper plate covers and the horse equipment was decorated with gold.

It is probable that after the battles of Cyrus II and Darius I with the Sak-Massagets, even in the cavalry armies of the Persians, coated armor was common as a means of protecting the horse and rider. According to Herodotus, the aristocratic Persian commander and leader of the cavalry, Masist, entered the battlefield against the Greeks on a horse of a special breed, a golden cloak. The commander wore an armor made of gold, with which the warrior's arms and legs were also protected. The horse, wounded by a bullet in the side, accidentally stood on its hind legs and threw Masist to the ground. The blows of the Greeks, who hurriedly attacked the Persian commander, did not injure the Masist, who was fighting them, in the first place, for he was dressed in a woolen cloth over a golden armor. Some Hellenic soldier, realizing why the Greeks were trying in vain, stabbed the opponent in the eye. The Masist died instantly.[15]

A chariot with a horse, similar to the high-wheeled light chariot described in Avesto, can be seen in the image on the cylindrical seal of Darius I. It depicts a chariot with two kegel wheels, a galloping horse and a horse driver, and a royal bow with a crown on the chariot aimed at a lion

standing under a tree and on the next two legs.
[44]

Initially, the fighting methods of the Persians and Sak-Massagets were as close as each other. Describing the battle of Cyrus II's army of massacres led by Tomaris, Herodotus wrote: "As far as I know, of all the battles between the barbarians, this battle was the most brutal. At first, both enemy forces fired at each other from a distance, facing each other from a distance. When they ran out of ammunition, they took daggers and spears and attacked".[13]

Herodotus seems to be a great author with knowledge of the military strategy and tactics of the Persians, as well as in the field of armaments of the individual peoples who were part of the Achaemenid state. As an example, Herodotus never visited Persepolis. However, the weapons of the Saks and Khorasans, which are depicted in the embossed images of the Persepolis palace, seem to be a reflection of Persepolis' images in the historian's description of the weapons of this tribe.

Researchers say that Herodotus' narration was based on the oral stories of the Persians and Greeks living in Asia Minor. It is also probable that

the historian used official documents of the Achaemenid office, which were translated into Greek and distributed in the Greek cities of Asia Minor.[14]

Around Persepolis, in the rock "Naqshi Rostam" – there is a carved tomb of the Persian kings Darius I and, approximately, Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II. Images of statues are rising on the entrance roof. Darius I is depicted sitting on a throne. Near the throne, 30 representatives of the peoples conquered by the Persians, the "throne-bearers" raise their arms bent at the elbows. The ethnicity of all of them is marked separately on the inscription next to the statues.[14] The main distinguishing feature is that the landscape depicts more nomadic weapons (Scythians, Saks, Massagetes).

In the Nakshi Rostam landscape, Darius I has a bow in his right hand, while the king's bodyguards are shown holding a spear, bow and battle ax. [38]

Another peculiar aspect is noteworthy. Among the ascenders of the throne from the first statue to the tenth statue were four representatives of the Sak tribes, Khorasans and other Central

Asians (Parthians, Aryans, Bactrians and Margians).

The images of Saks and Khorezmians are shown the same in terms of anthropological appearance and ethnographic features (appearance, top – head, weapons). On the right side of each of them there is a dagger – akinak. [31]

Strabo described the Khorasmians as an ethnic group of the Saks and Massagets like the following: “The the Attachians and Khorasmians also belonged to Massagets and Saks, who hid Spitamen from the Bactrian and Sogdian lands”.

This Greek geographer and historian describes the Saks as ancient warlike tribes that marched to distant lands: “The Saks, like the Cimmerians, organized raids, some at great distances and others at close range”. [21] The Roman Quintus Curtius Rufus also described the Saks as a warlike tribe, accustomed to looting and always armed. [4]

The works of Greco-Roman historians, which cover the march of Alexander the Great against Herodotus, contain information about the military actions of the Saks and limited information about their armament. Khorezmians

are mentioned only once in the works of Arrian and Curtius Rufus.

According to Arrian, the Farasman king of Khorezm (328 BC) [21] came to Alexander's residence with 1,500 cavalry. [27] In our view, the different interpretations of the name of this person are marked by the fact that ancient historians used different sources. After all, sources of different content consisted of stories, memoirs, and written diary information of commanders, historians, and philosophers who took part in Alexander's marches. [54]

Some sources mention the warriors of the Persian king Darius III in the battle of Gavgamella with the Greeks-Macedonians (331 BC), led by the Bactrian satrap Bess, consisting of Indians, Bactrians, Sogdians and Saks, but Khorezmians are not mentioned. In the same year, or even earlier, Khorezm apparently left the Achaemenid state and became an independent kingdom.

In 329 BC, in a battle with the Greco-Macedonians on the banks of the Politimet (Zarafshan) around Morocco, led by Spitamen, a lightly armed Saxon cavalry used a peculiar military tactic. The Saks approached the Macedonians as they approached the banks of the Politimet and crossed the river,

firing on the opponent, as well as chasing the chaotic line of the enemy who had crossed the river and firing arrows.[21]

Alexander of Macedon and later Aral Saks and Khorezm warriors were armed with weapons such as cutters, daggers and swords designed to strike, battle axes, spears and bows. Palaxman had also become a traditional military tool among Central Asian weapons.

Curtius Rufus writes that during the siege of Kurushkata, a stone directed by the defenders with the help of a sledgehammer hit Alexander's neck, and the king "reached the brink of death, he fell on his horse, fainted, and the army panicked, imagining that the king was dead". [19]

In the Khorezmian inscriptions of the 4th BC – 3rd centuries AD on pottery, bone, leather and wooden tablets there were special concepts and personal names related to weapons, wars and warriors. Samples of this inscription were found in such monuments as Tuprok-kala, Koykirilgankala, Kalalikir.

According to the analysis of these inscriptions, in the 5th-4th centuries BC, the adaptation of the Aramaic script to the Khorezm language, which was widespread in the Ancient East, took place, as

a result of which the ancient Khorezm developed its own alphabet system and writing culture.[28]

The Khorezmian script not only helped to study social and economic relations [58] and the history of spiritual culture, but also served as an additional source in the analysis of some aspects of the military sphere.

The word "aspabarak" written in black ink on the surface of the clay pitcher found in the castle Koykirilgankala means "aspa" – from the concept of "horse" means "riding a horse", "riding a horse", i.e. "horse-rider".[23]

It is also possible that the word means a personal name in the form "Aspabarak", as a number of examples of Khorezmian writing, in particular, have personal names in the sense of military campaigns and battles. For example, in the inscriptions found in Tuprok-kala, such concepts as "who has a hundred battles in front of him", "who, whose fame will increase", "glorious", "benefits of warriors" and "have a way to victory", "battle shield", "sword-wielding" and others available.[23]

In conclusion, it should be noted that information on the armament and methods of warfare of the Aral Sea tribes was reflected in various sources.



In the Avesto, they have ancient roots and describe the growing role of military leaders and warriors in society during marches and raids. In such times, the improvement of military work, armaments, and methods of warfare was of great importance. The source is also based on historical legends (applauses of Mihr – Yasht, Vertragna), but they are also echoes of various political events. The Avesto contains the oldest information about the military history of the peoples of Central Asia.

Ancient Persian writings of the Achaemenid period do not contain information on the armament of the tribes of the Aral Sea and other countries of Central Asia. However, the embossed images of Persepolis Palace and Naqshi Rostam rock fill the existing gap in this area. In the landscapes of Persepolis, among the various ethnic groups, for the first time, the image of the Khorasanian people and the Saks, their heads and weapons were reflected. It is noteworthy that the Saks and Khorasmians also led the horse in the images of Persepolis.

The Achaemenid kings used the Central Asian military forces in their campaigns and in the service of state military fortresses. Herodotus described the weapons of the Saks and

Khorasans. Based on this information, it is possible to imagine the movements of infantry on horseback, armed with cavalry and infantry, archers and spears, short daggers – akinak and battle ax – sagaris.

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