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PECULIARITIES OF CONDUCTING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN ANCIENT TRIBES OF KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the genesis of military affairs in the early period of formation of society in Kazakhstan. The paper examines a number of socio-economic factors of the Bronze Age, which influenced the evolution of the military art. Moreover, it describes the military caste of the early nomads and the participation of women in the military and political activities of nomadic groups. The authors conclude that the development of the military art is based on socio-cultural phenomena that occurred in high antiquity and is closely related to the psychological, physiological, and behavioral characteristics of the human species.

Keywords: military affairs of nomads, nomads, military estate, ancient tribes of Kazakhstan

PECULIARITÀ DELL'ISTITUZIONE DEL SETTORE MILITARE NEI POPOLI ANTICHI DEL KAZAKISTAN

SINTESI

L'articolo analizza la genesi del settore militare nel primo periodo della formazione della società in Kazakistan. Lo studio prende in esame vari fattori socioeconomici risalenti all'età del bronzo che influenzarono l'evoluzione dell'arte militare. Inoltre, descrive la casta militare dei primi nomadi e la partecipazione di donne nelle attività militari e politiche dei gruppi nomadi. Gli autori concludono che lo sviluppo dell'arte militare si basa su fenomeni socioculturali che si verificarono in tarda antichità e sono strettamente connessi con le caratteristiche psicologiche, fisiologiche e comportamentali della specie umana.

Parole chiave: questioni militari dei nomadi, nomadi, tenuta militare, antichi popoli del Kazakistan

Gaukhar BALGABAYEVA et al: PECULIARITIES OF CONDUCTING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN ANCIENT TRIBES OF KAZAKHSTAN, 433–440

INTRODUCTION

The study of the history and the development of armed forces is not only scientifically, but also socially and politically relevant, because the solution to this problem contributes to the scientific patriotic education, and further improvement of military affairs.

The peculiarities of the development of military affairs in the territory of Kazakhstan in ancient times (from ancient times to the fifth century CE) were determined by the following reasons:

Firstly, while studying the military affairs of nomads, an important fact is completely overlooked – the fact that nomadism developed on the basis of its predecessor, the sedentary farming and cattle husbandry economy of the Bronze Age; therefore, the elements of culture, including military affairs, were to a certain extent influenced by the previous period.

Secondly, the so-called "nomadic" economy is characterized as multi-structural; at that, the balance of its various elements and characteristics (cattle breeding, agriculture, handicrafts, nomadic intensity, level of involvement in regional trade, etc.) at different stages of the genesis of nomadism was different, which definitely affected the development of military affairs.

The history of studying the problems, related to the development of nomads' military affairs is inextricably connected with the general history of nomad studies. In the second half of the 19th century, Russian and Eurasian oriental studies began to develop the military-historical subject in relation to Eurasian nomads; at that, the research objects were the military organization, strategy and tactics of medieval Mongols and their successors (Dienera, 2013). The researchers of this period focused on the relationship between the peculiarities of nomads' military affairs and the peculiarities of their economy. However, an in-depth analysis of the latter was not carried out, while the studies were superficial, which was caused by a poor source base (Ivanin, 2003).

A significant contribution to the study nomads' military affairs was made by Valikhanov's (1985) ethnographic and source-studies works, devoted to specific aspects of military and historical problems. A wide range of materials on the armament of ancient and medieval nomads, and fortification was accumulated. The main written sources were introduced into the scientific use in the same period.

At present, there exists a developed and successfully tested analytical model of weapon-studies researches, which includes the systematization of various weapons types, the typological classification of armaments, the consolidation of the analysis results into a single set of combat equipment, and the reconstruction of the structure of the military organization and the peculiarities of the art of war (Kushkumbayev, 2001). This allowed

systematizing the sets of arms of many Siberian and Central Asian cultures of the Hun-Sarmatian time, tracing the evolution and identifying the regularities of the development of military affairs of Central Asian peoples (MIAA, 2003)¹.

Taking into account the insufficient knowledge of the genesis of military affairs in the territory of Kazakhstan, this paper is the first to consider the military affairs from its very origin in the prehistoric era, in the period of sedentary mixed agriculture and the formation of the nomadic society, which allows identifying the historical origins of many characteristics of weapons, military organization and military art of nomads, which were not predetermined directly by the nomadic lifestyle. This concerns the role of infantry in the early nomad period, the development of fortification art, the widespread occurrence of original weapons of foot soldiers - combat knives, daggers, heavy armor, etc. This approach allows reconsidering the role of external borrowings in the development of the spiritual and material culture of nomads and recognizing its many phenomena as a genetic continuation of the traditions of the previous period of social development from ancient times to the Bronze Age.

RESEARCH METHODS

The main cognitive and research methods used were the historical-comparative method, based on the analytical and inductive approach, and the historical method, which provides for establishing the cause and effect relations and the dynamics of the object under study. In addition, the systems method was used, considering the object of study as a unity of interconnected elements. In this case, we examine military affairs as a system comprised of individual elements, i.e. weapons, military organization, and military art. Each of these elements in turn consists of separate components.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mechanism of appearance of the military stratum in the ancient society was relatively simple. The accumulation of excess products in the productive economy inevitably led to the possibility of engaging not in production, but in a forced redistribution of accumulated excess products of the neighboring communities (Bichurin, 1998).

The high social significance of the performed function for the protection of the community determined the higher social status of soldiers, compared to commoners. Especially high was the status of the military leader – the chieftain, who managed community resources during frequent military clashes. The appearance of a special group of military professionals laid the founda-

¹ MIAA, A. Margulan Institute of Archeology Archive. Report on work of the Central Kazakhstan expedition for 2002. Almaty, 2003.

Gaukhar BALGABAYEVA et al: PECULIARITIES OF CONDUCTING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN ANCIENT TRIBES OF KAZAKHSTAN, 433–440

tion for the establishment of the art of war, as it became possible to continuously and purposefully accumulate and pass on the experience in this field of human activity (Allaniyazov, 1996).

The development of military affairs was closely related to the establishment of potestarian relations, and, subsequently, the state. This period witnessed the distinguishing of a class of people, who managed and coordinated the work of commons. Emerging power relations – subordination, i.e. potestarian relations, inevitably assumed the form military-potestarian ones, since the only support of tribe rulers was the social stratum of soldiers with necessary skills and competence.

This military stratum initially served as internal security, preventing the disintegration of weakly economically-consolidated military-potestarian unions during crises (Akhmetzhan, 1996).

The most important impetus to the further development of military affairs was given by the development of bronze smelting, which led to a qualitative leap in the development of military affairs in the territory of Kazakhstan. The development of bronze casting led to the appearance of new tools and a radical increase in labor productivity, which in turn led to further differentiation of social strata, and the distinguishing of the warrior estate (Kaydarov, 1973).

War and military affairs became one of the main spheres of life in ancient societies. Weapons, being an ethnic feature at the early stages, lost their ethnic distinctness by the early Iron Age. A very important role in this process was played by the Silk Road, which spread items, new scientific ideas and technologies over great distances (Khudyakov, 1980; Akhmetzhan, 2007).

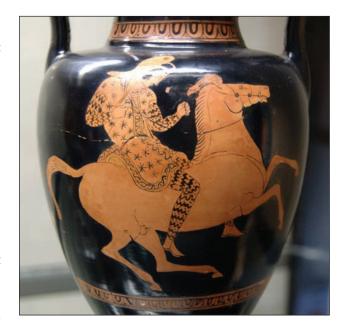
The presence of sedentary and semi-sedentary population in the steppes led to the presence of foot soldiers in Scythians' and Sakas' armies. This is evidenced by ancient sources – works by Herodotus, Lucian, and Quintus Curtius Rufus.

The role of infantry is confirmed by archaeological sources. Another interesting aspect of the social prerequisites for the development of military affairs of nomads is the participation of women in the war. Ancient sources emphasize their role in the Scythian and Sarmatian societies. This is associated with the legends of the Amazons – female warriors, who formed a separate tribe.

According to legends, the tribe lived on the farthest shores of the Euxine Pontus (Black Sea) (Mayor, 2014). Their capital city was Themiscyra. Since childhood, the Amazons were taught to handle the spear, sword, throw darts, and to be skilled riders. The tribe allegedly solved the problem of reproduction as follows: once a year, they met with men from the neighboring tribe, and then they gave all born boys to those men and kept the girls. Hercules confronted the Amazons to take away the magic belt of Hippolyta, their queen, given to her by Ares, the god of war (ninth labor of Hercules). Amazons were on the side of the Trojans in the Trojan War.

The historical basis of the myth about the Amazons is the confrontation with belligerent tribes. It is interesting to analyze the information provided by Herodotus. He talks about the origins and customs of Sauromates' gender equality (if one were to use modern terminology) in their environment. Sauromate women, he says, uphold their ancient traditions: along with their husbands, and even without them, they hunt and ride on horseback, and wear the same clothes as men do. No female could marry before she killed her first enemy, and some died without ever marrying (Historians of Rome, 1969, 110-117).

The significant role of women in the military organization of the steppe is evidenced by materials of burial grounds along the middle reaches of the Don River. An example of this is mound 16 of the Durovka burial ground, which belonged to a woman aged 30-35; the analysis of skeletal remains "gives reason to believe that she was a horse rider (an Amazon)" (Puzikova, 1997). Women's burials in the Ternovoye burial ground "always included weapons, therefore, there is reason to believe that women were involved in the practice of military actions..." In mound 6, horse remains were found among the accompanying inventory of the burial of a young woman aged 20-25. 3 out of 4 times, the investigated mounds were the resting places of young women from relatively wealthy families; in two cases, the women were also armed. The presence of expensive jewelry of Bosporus production, Greek amphorae with oil or wine,



Mounted Amazon in Scythian costume, on an Attic redfigure vase, c. 420 BCE

Riding Amazone. Side B of an Attic red-figure neck-amphora, ca. 420 BC. By Aison (Hahland); perhaps Shuvalov Painter (Diepolder). File:Amazone Staatliche Antikensammlungen 2342.jpg. From Wikimedia Commons.

the large size and splendor of the funerary structures "are comparable to the known mounds of military aristocracy". Referring to this, Gulyaev and Savchenko (1995) also drew attention to the fact that many burials of young women with weapons belonged to the upper strata of the Scythian society. Gulyaev and Savchenko assumed the existence of "certain conscription as lightly armed auxiliary units for certain age and social groups of Scythian women" (Gulyaev and Savchenko, 1995, 87-101).

The social status of "Scythian Amazons" was quite high in most cases. In this sense, an interesting observation is made by F. Balonov: "in Scythian times, funeral carts were mainly associated with buried women (70%) with a special social status" (Balonov, 1984, 16).

At the same time, it is possible to ask whether this was a relic of matriarchy, or the relatively high status of women in military affairs was a phenomenon of different nature.

Arguments in favor of the existence of matriarchy are based on several forms of evidence: information about modern societies, in which a woman provides the basic means of subsistence; information about the societies, in which there was a matrilineal system of inheritance; ancient myths about the rule of women; archaeological evidence that allows interpreting the existence of female deities - heads of pantheons, queens who ruled tribes and states, killings of boys at birth, etc. The reconstruction of the matriarchal stage at the initial step of the primitive society is generally based not on ethnological data, but on the messages of ancient and medieval authors regarding any exotic orders, detached from the general system of social life. Such messages can be divided into three main groups. The first one includes the information about matrilineality or matrilocality, for example, Herodotus' information about Lycians, Polybius' information about the Italian Locri, G.-T. Sagara's information about the Wyandot people, etc. They are in no way equivalent to the evidence of matriarchy. The second one includes reports of equitable, dignified, even honorable positions of women, for example, those of Plutarch about the Celts, of Tacitus about the Germans, etc. They do not prove the existence of matriarchy as the domination of women either. The third one consists of direct references to the fact that men are ruled by women, for example, the records of Sauromates by Scylax, information about Indian Pandaeans by Pliny the Elder, Al-Masudi's and J.-B Tavernier's mentioning of the inhabitants of some Indonesian islands. They can be quite reliable, but evidence matriarchy not more than the reign of empresses in Russia or the reign of queens in Western Europe. However, modern anthropological evidence suggests that in most societies, at least those that are known to anthropologists, a certain degree of male dominance existed, irrespective of their kindred organization.

While some anthropologists believe that truly egalitarian societies exist or existed in the past, and all Western experts agree that there are societies, in which

women achieved significant social recognition and authority, nobody, however, described a society, which would publicly acknowledge the power and authority of women that was superior to that of men. Everywhere women were excluded from certain types of important economic and social activities; their social roles as mothers and wives were associated with a smaller set of powers and prerogatives than the men's social roles of father and brother. Therefore, it is concluded that gender asymmetry is a universal phenomenon of the social life of mankind (Muravieva, n.d.).

As one can see, the participation of women in the military and political activities of nomadic unions was not a "relic" of matriarchal relations, but an entirely new phenomenon, caused by an increase in the social importance of women in the life support system of the nomadic society. Archaeological data show that women had a special status in the priest estate; at that, the priestly functions assumed the "androgyny" of their performer. This is clearly seen from the materials of the Scythian society, where priests were effeminate in appearance and clothing, and the Sauromate society, where women priestesses were granted attributes of masculinity - acinaces and swords. There are commonly known examples of women performing higher military-political and priestly functions - the so-called "empresses" Tomyris and Zarinaea (Gumilyov, 1967).

The military estate of early nomads was heterogeneous in terms of both gender and age. The status of the warrior and his place in the social hierarchy within the military class directly depended on his experience, luck and the number of enemies he killed. As an independent and very important activity of the nomadic society, military affairs of nomads had their patron – the god of war (Kun, 1947).

Ancient authors, by analogy with the Greek pantheon, called him Ares or Areus; his embodiment was an iron sword. The special role and even the deification of the sword is understandable. This weapon type appears among the inhabitants of the Eurasian steppe in the early Iron Age, in the 1st millennium BCE. Its appearance and common use is most likely related to the mass use of metal armor and iron that reduced the weight of the blade.

The swords had two types of blades. The Karasuk-Cimmerian tradition led to the production of lenticular or diamond-shaped in the cross-section blades with parallel edges, gradually converging at the very end of the tip. The Caucasian tradition, commonly found among the Scythians, led to the production of blades converging towards the tip of the handle, i.e., in the form of an elongated triangle.

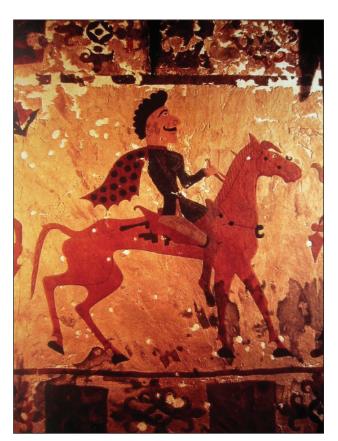
Acinaces were a type of bladed weapons that was more common than swords. In 7th-6th centuries BCE, they were made primarily of bronze, from the end of 6th century BCE there were iron and bimetallic daggers, and from the 4th century BCE, iron became the only material

used to craft combat daggers. Forms of acinaces were virtually indistinguishable from those of swords, except their length. Many acinaces were found in Kazakhstan, while their original form was the local daggers of the late Bronze Age.

Ways of wearing swords and daggers were diverse. The Scythians had acinaces hanging from a belt on the abdomen, on the right or left side, while the sword was fastened to the belt on the right side. In the east, including Kazakhstan, a common way to wear an acinaces was not only to fasten the sheath to the upper part of the belt, but also to tie its lower part to the leg, with a dagger worn on the right side. However, petroglyphs found in East Kazakhstan show images of soldiers with daggers, attached to the belt on the right side only by their upper part.

It should be noted that swords and daggers with luxurious gold-trimmed hilts and blades were both combat weapons and symbols of power.

The traditional weapon type for the steppe was the battle-axe that was developed on the basis of the late Bronze Age traditions and remained the most power-



Horseman, Pazyryk felt artifact, c. 300 BC. Pazyryk horseman. Circa 300 BCE. Detail from a carpet - 5-4 th s.- in the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. File:PazyrikHorseman.JPG. From Wikimedia Commons.

ful and effective means of dealing with a heavily armed enemy. At the early stages, until the 7th century BCE, axes were massive, with short blades and hammer-head butts. Over time, people developed lightweight and elegant hatchets, with cleaving rather than bludgeoning functions. Double-edged axes were also found.

Another polearm for close combat was the pick. They were formed in the east of the Eurasian steppe in the 7th century BCE, where the pick rapidly spread across the entire area. Very interesting is the Sagyr petroglyph that shows a battle between foot soldiers armed with picks. It depicts soldiers, hitting each other over the head with picks, which is confirmed by finds in the Gorno-Altaysk burials of Scythian skulls with marks of blows with weapons with a narrow sharp head. Many researchers believe that the Sakas' upgrading of picks is related to the appearance in the eastern Eurasian steppes of such protective armor as a thick helmet, which no other weapon could pierce.

The early Iron Age witnessed a significant reduction in the use of such a common Bronze Age weapon as the mace. The hammer-head butts of axes or picks were generally used to deliver blows. However, the abovementioned petroglyphs of the Sagyr tract featured an image that depicted the scene of battle between two warriors, armed with clubs on long shafts.

Apart from short-range weapons, nomads commonly used medium-range weapon types – spears and darts. Judging by the finds, the length of the spear was equal to the height of the warrior. Spears had a large tip with a long bearing. A relatively short shaft indicates that the spear was used in both mounted and foot combat. Archaeological finds also discovered tips of darts with a long bearing and a short triangular blade. The accuracy of dart-throwing is reflected by Greek images of a Scythian, depicted hunting a hare with a dart.

Thus, it is obvious that the set of weapons of both foot and mounted warriors of early nomads included both advanced forms of conventional weapons – daggers, spears, axes, battle-axes, and maces, and relatively new types – swords. However, the most common and effective weapon of the nomads was the bow and arrows – the main long-range missile weapon. The "Scythian bow" was often depicted as asymmetrical, with a long upper half. The bow was composite; the upper horn could be crafted separately out of bone, horn or bronze, and decorated with "animal" ornaments. This type of bow was the pinnacle of the development of ranged combat weapons in ancient times, and was widely spread among the peoples of the Near East and Middle East, and Southeastern Europe.

The special type of bow was matched by distinctive arrowheads, which, along with other elements of the "Scythian triad" – the "animal" style and horse bridle, became the "trademark" of the early nomads.

The specific and very convenient "Scythian" form of the case for the bow and arrows was the gorytos – a quiver that consisted of two compartments – one for the bow and one for the arrows. It was worn on the belt on the left side.

Nomads' armor of the 1st millennium BCE can be divided into several types in terms of their method of armor plating:

- Plate armor, when the armor plating was performed by sewing on metal, bone, or horn plaqueplates on a soft base, leaving gaps between them for flexibility. A great example of plate armor is the ceremonial dress, found in the Issyk burial mound.
- 2. Scale armor, when plates were sewn only on the upper part of the soft base, so that the lower part of the upper row of plates covered the lower part of the lower row of plates. This type of armor was common among the Black Sea Scythians. An example of this armor is the armor from Chirik-Rabat.
- 3. Lamellar armor, when plates were fastened directly to each other without a soft base.
- 4. Laminar armor, when the armor plating was arranged in long horizontal metal strips, fastened together with cords or straps.

The cut of early nomads' armor was diverse. The most common types were the armor in the form of a poncho that protected the back and chest of the warrior. Another frequently encountered armor was the breastplate with shoulders covered by wide rectangular flaps. This armor type was common among ancient Greeks, but Scythian armor differed in a number of features. For example, the Black Sea Scythians attached long neckpieces to the armor, which covered the upper part of the arms; furthermore, this armor was worn with armored scale skirts or belts with stripes that covered the legs down to the hips and sometimes down to the foot

One of the most important elements of protective armor were helmets. In the early Scythian period, the most common type was a hemispherical helmet cast in bronze with an edge along the top of the head, a rectangular cut on the back of the head and a deep facial cut in the form of brow ridges that converged into a triangular point at the nose. Most helmets had holes in the side plates and the back part for attaching earpieces, neckflaps or aventails. Sakas wore similar helmets hoods with thick horizontal pads at the forehead.

The set of protective armor was supplemented with a shield. Most shields were rectangular, but oval shields were found, as well.

An original element of nomads' protective armor was a flexible back-mounted shield with scale armor. It was mounted in a way that did not prevent the rider from using both hands when shooting the bow or slashing out while on horseback, when one hand was used to steer the horse. Such shields were depicted in the petroglyphs of Eastern Kazakhstan.

Based on the above set of weapons, it is possible to reconstruct with a certain degree of confidence the combat tactics of early Eurasian nomads. The battle began with a barrage of arrows fired at the enemy from a great distance. A large reserve of ammunition allowed maintaining this combat phase for a long period of time, while the shape of arrowheads caused significant damage even to armored soldiers. If the enemies failed to withstand the onslaught and fled from the battlefield, they were ridden down by the cavalry that cut down the fleeing soldiers with swords, axes and picks. In this case, the losses of nomads were minimal.

If the opponent was resilient and withstood the barrage of arrows, the nomads, after running out of ammunition, proceeded to the next combat phase – the melee phase.

Both the cavalry and foot soldiers took part in the melee. Since melee weapons for mounted combat were overall imperfect, one can assume that some riders dismounted during the melee. This is why the main melee weapon type in the steppe was not the sword, but the acinaces. This can also explain the existence of massive short spears that are convenient for melee combat. Another factor that limited the possibility of close mounted combat was a poor horse harness, in particular, the absence of a hard saddle with stirrups. Under these circumstances, the warrior was forced either to fight with one hand while holding on to the horse's mane, or to tie himself to the horse, which also limited his actions. In the second case, the transition to hand-to-hand combat was impossible. This method was apparently used by lightly-armed horsemen, who did not participate in the melee. These were the "gimmiri" squads, which attacked settlements for pillaging and retreated without engaging the enemy if faced with heavy resistance.

Thus, revolutionary changes took taken place in the development of defensive weapons of the inhabitants of Eurasian steppes. In the 1st millennium BCE, peoples of the Eurasian steppe regions rapidly developed defensive armaments, which were equal to and sometimes superior to that of their sedentary neighbors. This was caused by the development of metallurgy, statehood and related military-political activity of the nomads, their familiarity with all the technological skills of military affairs (Kiselev, 1994).

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding the analysis of early nomads' military affairs, it is worth stressing the main characteristics of their development during this period. Firstly, the basis of their genesis was not hunting, but the military affairs of the previous era – the Bronze Age. Secondly, along with the tactics of mass ranged combat, nomad archers introduced the tactics of mounted assault in close order on heavily armed horsemen. The merit of early nomads was not only the spreading of the powerful composite bow, but also a set of heavy armaments for riders, in-

Gaukhar BALGABAYEVA et al: PECULIARITIES OF CONDUCTING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN ANCIENT TRIBES OF KAZAKHSTAN, 433–440

cluding armor for both warrior and horse. Moreover, the elements of the nomads' armaments even surpassed in terms of diversity and quality the weapons of surrounding states of the ancient world.

However, these armaments and effective tactics did not secure the military and political dominance of early nomads over the neighboring nations, which was caused by the specifics of military organization, in particular, the lack of state institutions. While gaining victories in short-term raids and repelling the attacks of Persians and Macedonians, Scythians and Sakas could not organize long-term military operations, while their unions were temporary military alliances between tribes, which fell apart after both defeat and victory.

The research allowed concluding that:

- Aggressive armed actions of early humans were quasi-military, since they were not preconditioned by social reasons;
- Real military activity emerges with the productive economy and is related to the processes of production, protection and redistribution of excess product;

- The transition of the population of Kazakhstan to the nomadic mode of production led to major changes in the military affairs; cavalry appeared in the Scythian-Saka era, but, contrary to popular belief, infantry remained important;
- Military affairs in the Scythian-Saka era remained the prerogative of a special military class; its membership was gained by special rituals; a special layer of spiritual culture appeared, which was associated with the concept of elitism of military activities;
- In the Scythian-Saka period, the phenomenon of gender equality appears in the field of military activity; the spread of warrior women among nomadic societies was not a "relic" of matriarchy, but an entirely new phenomenon, related to the specifics of the nomadic society;
- The emergence of the state caused radical changes in the social structure, reduction of the importance of the military class, and the replacement of its functions for the organization of military activities by state institutions.

POSEBNOSTI V OSNOVANJU VOJAŠTVA PRI STARODAVNIH PLEMENIH KAZAHSTANA

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POVZETEK

Zavedajoč se pomanjkanja podatkov o razvoju vojaštva na ozemlju Kazahstana, avtorji v članku raziskujejo umetnost vojskovanja od njegovih začetkov v prazgodovinski dobi, v času sedentarnega kmetovanja in oblikovanja nomadske družbe. Raziskava vključuje pregled in analizo številnih družbeno-ekonomskih dejavnikov v bronasti dobi, ki so vplivali na nastanek temeljev vojaštva. Članek opisuje tudi vojaški stan zgodnjih nomadov ter soudeležbo žensk v vojaških in političnih aktivnostih nomadskih združenj, v študiji pa so predstavljene še bojne taktike zgodnjih evrazijskih nomadov. Od poglavitnih kognitivnih in raziskovalnih metod so se avtorji posluževali zgodovinsko-primerjalne metode, ki temelji na analitičnem in induktivnem pristopu, ter zgodovinsko-genetske metode, ki omogoča določanje vzročno-posledičnih odnosov in dinamike obravnavanega predmeta. Avtorji v zaključku ugotavljajo, da je razvoj vojaštva temeljil na družbeno-kulturnih pojavih iz starejših obdobij zgodovine in je bil tesno povezan s psihološkimi, fiziološkimi in vedenjskimi značilnostmi človeške vrste.

Ključne besede: vojaštvo nomadov, nomadi, vojaški stan, starodavna plemena Kazahstana

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