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## Military art in Avar Khaganate

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### Abstract

The Avars, who moved to Eastern Europe in VI-VIII centuries not only altered the ethnic composition of the local population, but also made a change in their social life, customs, and military tactics.

The purpose of the article – to research the influence of military tactics of Avar Khaganate who ruled in the wilds of Eastern Europe in the early Middle Ages to the art of war of the Europeans.

Theory and research methods are based on the prominent theoretical works of major Kazakhstan and foreign researchers. It was used historical-comparative analysis and methods of system analysis.

The practical significance of the study is the importance of its educational process. The practical significance of the study is the importance of its educational process. Problems of military art of Avar Khaganate as part of the Turkic world is important in teaching such courses as the course "History of the Middle Ages in Western and Eastern Europe", "History of Kazakhstan in the Middle Ages", etc.

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### 1. Introduction

In YI-YIII AD Avar Khaganate moved to the territory of Eastern Europe. Avars once created their own state and the ethnic structure are considered as a unification of the Turkic speaking tribes. Founder of Avar Khaganate was Bayan Kagan. As information on the history of the Avars occur not rare in the hagiography of early medieval Europe as Menander Protector, Theophylact Simokatta, Prokopyy Caesarea, Gregory of Tours, etc. The main relevance of our topic is "Military art of Avar Khaganate". It should also be noted that this issue requires serious

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study. Kazakh people regard as one of the branches of Turkic speaking countries, through doing research on the history of the Avar Khaganate, which existed in VI -VIII AD. Also it is important to explore the history of the Kazakh people and Turkic world more deeply. Through exploring the history of the Avars and doing a review of their political and diplomatic relations among the Turkic countries, which inhabited in Central Asia and Europe, it is able to supplement the Turkic world. Also, it should be noted that in VI -VIII AD Avar Khaganate regarded as connecting link between East and West. As a result of relocation of the Avar Khaganate in Europe was inevitable cultural impact.

Just now the story of Avar Khaganate is considered as one part of the history of Kazakhstan. Although the Avar Khaganate did not consider as direct ancestor of the Kazakh people, but still Khaganate played one of the main role in the development of the Kazakh people. It is for this reason that the relevance of our work increases. Unfortunately comprehensive works on the history of the Avar Khaganate still has not been released. But it should be noted that foreign and Kazakh scientists' medievalist paid attention to this disclosed issue. Among them should be emphasized scientists as: Wolfram (Wolfram, 1990), Godlowski (Godlowski, 1992), A.N. Bernshtam (Bernshtam, 1949), edited works (*Ranne feodalnye gosudarstva na Balkanakh VI-XII vv*, 1985), S.A. Pletneva (Pletneva, 1982) considered one of the best historians, who had contributed to research of nomads, and her work is "The nomads of the Middle Ages". It is important also to note the work of S.G. Lukin which devoted to "The history of Avars". Among Kazakhstan scientists, as the specialist-medievalist can be emphasized the works of the Professor K.T. Zhumagulov (Zhumagulov, 2009).

As methodical and theoretical grounds were the theoretical opinions of national and foreign scholars, and in the process of research have been used historical comparative and historical sequence methods.

### **1. The influence of cavalry troops of Avar Khaganate to Europe**

In Byzantium writings were mentioned details about Avar Khaganate as the tribe which owned the best martial arts and military tactics. Moreover Avars run their rules in the land of Europe for 2000 years. One of the main achievements of the Avar Khaganate in politics and the art of war considered armed and cavalry troop. In consequence Avars were able to confront and compete with the great empire as Byzantium, which in those days was one of the hardened and great empires. These factors contributed to the rise of the political authority of the Avar Khaganate. In VI -VIII AD Avar Khaganate continued Turkic traditions as Saks, Huns and also was under the cultural influence of medieval Europe.

In the Middle Ages Period in the history of Europe, Byzantium Empire controlled all political equality, diplomatic relations and trade ties in Eastern Europe. That was one of the main reasons why; Avar Khaganate in order to settle in Eastern Europe had to have a strong political relationship with Byzantium Empire. Relocation of Avar Khaganate from Eurasian continent more precisely from Asia to Europe, contributed to the deterioration of equality in the Northern part of the Black Sea, and to update the way of life in western Eurasia. With the arrival of the Avar Khaganate to Europe ant tribe was threatened. As a result, in Bessarabia territory ant tribe was broken and lost their independence (Menander Protector, 1860, p. 313). After losing ant tribe participated in all subsequent attacks which were organized by the Avars. As part of the Avar Khaganate, Slavs tribe surpassed all others. The reason for this was a battle in 558 in which the Avars defeated the Slavs, and Slavs also participated in all the attacks. About the inequality of the Slavs, you can see from the information which stated that Avar Kagan at first tried to release from captivity Avars' warriors then the rest of the Slavs. This tribe had the art of wood, so they enriched army with boats "monoksil" or "odnoderevki" as they were called, and with these types of transport they attacked (heavy ships could raise 20-40 soldiers). With Slavs Hagan strengthened his army including infantry. From ancient times Slavic tribes settled in the clay areas, and possessed different kind of military tactics, so Avars used them in the infantry. In the battle that was in 600, in the area between the rivers Tees and Byzantium, we could determine the ethnic of Avar Khaganate from troops and prisoners of battle. During the battle a large number of Slavs were killed due to the fact that the number of their adversaries (Rome Army) exceeded them by quantity. The number of killed and captured Avars composes 3000, 6200 of the soldiers belonged to other ethnic groups (proto bolgar, Gepids, Huns), 8000 of the soldiers were Slavs. Percentage of soldiers which participated in battle was: 17.5% of the Avars, 46.5% of Slavs, and other tribes made up the remaining 36% (*Ranne feodalnye gosudarstva na Balkanakh VI-XII vv*, 1985, p.155.). The above data can be found in the works of T.Simokatta (*Theophylacti Simocattae*, 1957, p. 13). The presented data were

refers to VII century and this period is marked as a prosperity period of Avar Khaganate. While the number of prisoners had grown, also Avar Khaganate increased the number of Khaganate several times. As given above, the relocation of the Turkic tribe Avars in the VI-VIII century to Eastern Europe had not only changed the ethnic composition of the population, it also affected on their social life, traditions, and made a change to their military tactics.

In particular, it should be noted as cavalry troop. About military tactics, and weapons of the Avar Khaganate were listed in the archaeological and written evidence. Chronicler of Byzantium, G. Tursky mentioned in his writings, martial arts of Avars, and appreciated their military tactics that they led in the forest valleys and plains. He also mentioned that their troops were like magicians who held great sword and bow, also described the mastery of Avars archers (Turskiy, 1987.p 127). He informs that the limb of arrow was triangular, could reach long distances. Even according to some sources says, that the arrow at 200 meters could pierce iron or leather shield of enemy. In Avar period in Eastern Europe, there was not any state that could withstand to Avars. Also successful attacks of Avars could have a positive impact on their political authority in Europe. As the basis of good military organization served their armament, heavy and light cavalry troop, and as the most important weapon to use was a bow and arrow.

Given the fact that the Avar Khaganate was originally founded as a military army, then in the future in Europe, this military social society operated on the same principles. To serve as an evidence of archaeological relics in the form of tools equipment, weapons and various that were found in excavation. Also in the tombs were found warriors which buried with their weapons, once these traditions were beliefs of Asian people, and this action served as worship to the other world. Fortress of Avars period was rich with equipments. The burial where buried leader Boche were found many quivers. Most of the bows were 10. Also it could be sign that a bow could belong to ten rulers of the warriors. Because, according to the Asian standards Avar military society created by tens system.

Burials which related to the early and middle periods were found in the middle part of Hungary. Unfortunately burials which belonged to the last period of Avar Khanate have not met yet. But often met burials with equipments. So society was divided into groups, that is, dependent, and we can see that the amount of dispossessed people had met frequently. Besides, Christian religion also influenced on this. During these periods, in Christianity was illegally idolatry and burial of a warrior with his horse and weapons. These dates provide evidence that Christian religion was superior. (Sidneva, 2002, p.28). In written information, especially if consider the below listed securities arguments of Pseudo Mauritian Strategikon, we can note that Avar tribe consisted of large clans. In particular, the chronicler praised their military society. The author informs the political relations of Avar Khanate, and noticed their system of government. As the Huns, Avars were excellent horsemen and could pierce the enemy with only one bow. Weapons of Avars consisted from sword, a bow and arrow. (Das Strategikon des Mauricians Einführung, 1981, pp. 2 - 3.).

In everyday life of Avars the main role had played horse. The study found that the residual bone of Avar horses were descendants of eastern horses. Horses were also sensitive and adapted to nomadic on sandy valleys and plains. Masters of early medieval period engraved these horses from silver or bone. After the Byzantine Empire realized that they could not resist to Avar's warriors, Empire decided to use an unknown diplomatic way regarding the Asian nation. However Byzantine Empire learned military tactics from Avars, possession of weapons and stable ride on horses. Before the Avar Khaganate moved to Europe ranches, but paid special attention to the breeding horses. On the above information, we can pay attention to archaeological material. For example: in the Russian Hermitage Museum Turkic preserved clay sculptures depicting a falcon. (Gumilev, 1949, p. 98). Even if still have not figured that these sculptures belong to (VII end and VIII beginning), but all the same light weapons that they depict, as compared to the VI century did not subject to change. Because, for these periods cultural traditions have not changed. These sculptures were found closer to the territory of the Turf in burial of Chinese aristocrat. This finding A. Steyn found near to territory of Turf in Astana winter camp. Infantry and military troops wore clothes suitable for fighting. On this information we can see that, among the Turks infantry was not particularly kind. Military headdress consisted of dosni. The surface of this type of headdress was made of metal, and it was decorated with the red-brown colors, that are the main similarities with present Kazakh national earflaps. The soldiers wore Chekmenev with high collars reaching to the chin. Chekmenev hems covered knee, buttoned on the right side, and his left side was hanging outside. Atop Chekmenev wore armor which made of metal and was decorated with brown and red colors. Armor reached till the knees and was

fastened by a short thin belt, the sleeves were short reached only to the elbow. Probably they wore armor over the head. This type of armor had similarities with cataphract of Sarmatians, and basically it was suitable for equestrian troops. Armor plates were connected between each other with small straps. In early times, this type of armor had spread widely, but later was replaced by orderly; it was easy and convenient to wear. Bottom wore yellow pants with black tag (most pants were from leather of leopard). Boots embroidered with a soft felt mat, and nowadays, these kinds of boots are worn in Tibet and East Turkestan. Even if these types of clothes are similar to Tibetan, but they differ in that the Tibetan version of the top was not concealing any frills.

Image of weapons preserved only in the form of a soldier coming down from the horse. These types of swords were long and belonged only to cavalry troop. Also obvious that the Turkic army lived not only in the plains, but among them was the army that tried to adapt to the high place (Bichurin, 1998, p.390). We argue that, the cavalry troop of Avar Khaganate once bore arms, was one of the troops that have influenced to the emergence of chivalry of the middle Ages in Europe. Turk troop cavalry which wore armor was the main legacy of Saka-Sarmatian period. The above arguments are further proof that the Avars were descendants of the Turks.

So Avar society influenced to the development of Europe particular has made discoveries in the field of military equipment. Among them, cavalry troop bore armor, horse harness, bridle which made of iron. Listed equipments at that time were a great discovery for mounted troops. Horse equipments from initial helped to keep riding stable, and metal bridle helped to rapid mastery of distance. Accelerated connection, if argue in terms of present time horse equipments were as the main innovations of that time. Avars also made discoveries in the armory sphere. They were bow and arrow embedded in a triangular quiver. Boom which belonged to Avar period were uniquely long and large. During the excavations from burial were saved triangular limbs of bow which were made of bones and iron. These weapons which belonged to Avar were one of the main weapons which from long distance could pierce the shield of the enemy. One of the regular discovers was unilateral dagger, which was convenient for the war. For Europe another discovery was the ultimate sword and shield of war with specific forms. By weight, the Avar sword was hard, to do the right conditions to win opponent with ease. According to archeological data information was written that the Avars were from East Central Asia, exact from edge of the Altai Mountains. Menander and Theophylact Simokatta described Avars as the villains, and assumed that they were sadists. Although in fact the Avars were a connecting link between East and West, were the medium of culture, synthesized material and spiritual wealth.

Want to note that in YI -YIII Avar Khaganate in Asia and Europe were indispensable place in history. Avars were duration of Turks in Europe, and influenced to the cultural development of Europe. Armed forces of Avars were as example for large empires as Byzantium and Frank, and in the future would be to the development of chivalry. That is why light and heavy weapons cavalry troop of Avars preserved the traditions of Turks and promoted further. Bridle and stirrups which made of iron was beneficial used during the war, and expedited communication between states. Communication, that is, getting quotes, took a step forward to development mail. According to the factual information of Avars, they once owned all kinds of weapons. Weapons were divided by type of relative military. More precisely to the infantry belonged a shield with a sword, cavalry troop owned bow and spear. At that time when the Avars overcame strategically important objects like fortresses Fessalinka which belonged Byzantine Empire, used held weapons.

In connection with weapons of innovation, changing military tactics and cavalry troop better updated (Zhmagulov K.T, 2009, pp. 221-226). In facts, Avars owned all kinds of techniques of that time, by which it was possible to capture the fortress. Suppose, according to Menander, during the war with the Byzantine Empire Avars used car which called "Spallion" for attack fortresses and cities. To facts can bring here such information; spallion-played role as military machine, its height was the as height of 6 people, roof clad with skins and predatory animals. With spallion warrior could move closer to the fortress through hiding under the car and destroyed the fortress, or digging tunnels to find way how to enter to the fortress. The next kind of technology was the destroyer of forts "Taran" - it is a heavy military machine, and with this kind of technique they to throw stones. Even in earlier times, the taran was used as the main destroyer of the fortress. Wielding with different types of weapons and military equipment, warriors of Avar Khaganate occupied Europe, exactly the cities which belonged to Byzantine Empire, even two times Avars tried to occupy the fortress of Constantinople.

## **2. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the martial art developed in the Avar Khaganate, influenced to the development of the state in Eastern Europe. Because of the hostility to the franc Avar Khaganate came upon assimilation with local residents. That is, with the arrival of the Avars to Europe 1) entrenched political and cultural relations, 2) in the history of the world has a new formational period - firmly settled feudal relations, 3) affected the process of geographical location, 4) an example of the Avar army of the cavalry troop with armor caused the formation of Frankish knights in the community in the Middle Ages.

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