

Weapons of Kazakh warriors

Kazakhs were peaceful nation. They appreciated peaceful and relaxed lifestyle, good joke and sharp words. Permanent migration from one place to another, ongoing incursions of enemies, who encroached on steppes, stimulated Kazakh unpretentiousness, faith in fate, determination in the face of approaching danger. Kazakh nomads didn't attack to occupy others' lands. However, as soon as difficulties appeared and enemies came closer to the steppe borders, a breeder turned into a warrior. Equipped with spear, bow and sabre a nomad protected his land and people.



From infancy, ancient nomads learnt the following: people can lose their rich, and property, but not an inch of native land! It means that our ancestors taught us protecting our Homeland. This mission is the most important for all those who live in this place.

There were situations when after devastating wars and bloodying battles only women and olds remained in nomadic settlements (auls). Then teenagers, 12-13-year-old boys became the leaders of their clans, took sabre and spear to protect their relatives. From an early age they know how to be a warrior. Kazakhs paid much attention to education of young generation as life and prosperity of the steppe depended on their strength, resilience, dexterity and courage. They were taught dressage, how to treat horses, make harness, bridle and weapons for rider. That was the time of poet

and warriors. The time when a horse was the closest friend and a sword – blood brother.

Kazakhs had two main types of weapons: weapons for attacks (karu) and for protection (zharak). The whole equipment of a warrior was called “karu-zharak”. Kazakh offence and defence weaponry revealed a remarkable range.

There is a wise folk saying: “A warrior has five types of weapons”. This reflects classification of Kazakh weapons. Each of five main types of weapons is characterized by its own function. A sabre (sword) is a cutting weapon, spear (peak) – stabbing, mace (flail) – striking, and axe (pole-axe) – thrusting. However, besides the main function each weapon had additional characteristics. For example, a cutting weapon (sabre or sword) was given stabbing and thrusting characteristics, and so on. Depending on this, each weapon had various variants and types. These changes also determined the shape of arms.

Describing the military structure of nomadic armies researchers still talk only about the decimal system. But it is just a quantification of the structure. Branches of nomadic army were distinguished by weapons as well. Separate military units of those warriors, who used definite type of weapons best, were established. But this doesn't mean that they were able to fight only with sword or axe. Archers, for example, had sabre and spear.

Warriors who could use all weapons equally well were included into perfect guard regiments. Such division is a qualitative characteristic of the military structure which defined its strategic and tactical opportunities. For instance, in massive battles a fight started with archery at a long distance. In close combat warriors used spear (peak) and then in a hand-to-hand fighting took other weapons.

Each weapon had its own function. Thus, people used burning arrows to provoke a fire; spear and sabre were the best for street fights. Axes and pole-axes helped to destroy gates of buildings and fortresses.



The following feature of fighting weapon is using it as a symbol of military power. The five types of weapons symbolised different military ranks. A sword (sabre) was a symbol of warrior, the sign of royal power. Thus, going to the throne Turkish sultans and Kazakh khans were girded on a sword. Palace guards of eastern rulers held fighting pole-axes. A mace was a symbol of commander's power. Spear was an army symbol; it was also given to commander along with his military post.

Nomadic martial arts were not aimed at killing enemy. The main mission was to depriving it of the opportunity to act and demonstrate his military advantage. The highest manifestation of using a spear was the capacity to unhorse an enemy hooking his clothes by spear. Russian authors of the previous century write that the best Kazakh warriors unhorse riders without causing casualties.

Honesty, nobility and mercy were the main principles of behavior in a fight. Frequently, those warriors who were enemies became friends and even sworn brothers after a match.

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