

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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OGHUZ HISTORY - Military

The limited surviving historical sources describe the Oghuz army as consisting entirely of cavalry and organized into right and left wings, and the commander with his forces in the center. Like other Eurasian nomadic armies, the strength of the Oghuz was mounted archery. Oghuz skill with the bow on horseback, combined with the inherent speed and mobility of cavalry forces, made the Oghuz a formidable foe.

Although the composite bow (made of wood, horn and sinew laminated together) and quiver carrying 80-90 arrows was the primary weapon of the Oghuz, swords and maces were also carried for close combat. In addition, for personal protection sources mention the Oghuz warriors having helmets, shields and upper body armor.

Typical tactics were hit-and-run attacks to harass and wear down an enemy, swarming (simultaneous attacks from numerous directions) that could be either sustained or hit-and-run, and the feigned retreat. Feigned retreats were primarily carried out to either draw part of an enemy force away from the main body of the army until the retreating cavalry could turn and destroy their pursuers, or to lead a large enemy force into a prepared ambush by the main Oghuz army.

Readings

Agajanov, S. G. "The States of the Oghuz, the Kimek and the Kipchak", in Asimov, M. S. and Bosworth, C. E. (eds.). *History of civilizations of Central Asia*. Vol. 4, Part One. Paris, 1998.

Golden, Peter. "The Migrations of the Oğuz", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 4 (1972), pp. 45-84.

Discussion Question

1. Why did the Oghuz army not develop some of the shared characteristics of the armies of the Qarakhanids and the Seljuqs of Rum?