

## Chapter 10

## READING 4

## SECTION 4

## The Islamic World

## Organization of the Saljuq Armies

The Saljuq Turks developed a powerful military system that enabled them to control a territory that reached from Syria to Central Asia. In the excerpt below, Turkish historian Ibrahim Kafesoglu describes the organization of the Saljuq—or Seljuk—army. As you read the selection, consider how the different categories of troops were paid for their efforts.

In the reign of Malik-Shah, which was the golden age of the Seljuks, the greatest military force of the Middle Ages was created. The Seljuk armies, which served as an example to later Turco-Islamic states, were composed of (1) the *ghulaman-i sarai*, who were selected from various peoples, brought to the palace where they were given special training, learned the principles of ceremony and protocol [diplomatic etiquette], and were under the direct command of the sultan; (2) the special corps that was drilled and trained under the most distinguished commanders and was ready for action at a moment's notice; (3) the troops of the . . . governors, and state officials like the vizirs; and (4) the forces of the subject governments. Members of the *ghulamani sarai*, whose names were recorded in the *diwan* registers, received their pay (*bistgani*) four times a year. The special corps, which participated with its commanders, the sultans, in the great campaigns or was sent on punitive [relating to punishment] operations and which was also assigned to the regular military commanders [*sihnelik*] and had members serve as governors general, was also salaried. Furthermore, there was a great number of cavalry dispersed [scattered] throughout the empire and they were always prepared to go on campaign. They received their livelihood from the *iqta'* lands set aside for them.

However, they were not able to take more in taxes (*mal-i haqq*) from the subjects (farmers, villagers) living on their *iqta'*s than certain amounts specified by the grand *diwan*. Moreover, if an *iqta'* holder interfered with a villager's property or violated the sanctity [holiness] of the family, the villager could go directly to the grand *diwan* and complain to the sultan. Those who were not pleased with their *iqta'* holder could move to another place.

With regard to military organization, this military *iqta'* was one of the most important military innovations in the Seljuk Empire. On the one hand, this system made it possible to maintain rather large armies without placing a burden on the state and, on the other, helped the country to prosper. It . . . apparently resulted from the adaptation of an old Turkish land law to new conditions. This system formed one of the sturdiest pillars of the empire, administratively and legally as well as militarily. The breakdown of order in the Seljuk state of Anatolia as a result of the Mongol invasion turned productive *iqta'* lands into private domains (*mulk*). In this way the state land system deteriorated [grew worse] and the Seljuk army dissolved. Insurrections of cavalry [*sipahis*] who had no *iqta'*s compounded the oppression of the Mongols and were the main reason for the collapse of the state.

Furthermore, when necessary, mercenary troops, *kaser* (?), were also raised from among the people. . . . If we add to the Seljuk armies the Turkmen led by their *begs*, whose major service from the beginning of the Seljuk state, and especially on the frontiers, was as a genuine strike force, we will have an even greater appreciation of the army and military organization.

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Chapter 10, Reading 4, continued ►

1. What were the four groups that made up the Saljuq army?

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2. According to this excerpt, what was the main cause of the collapse of the Saljuq state?

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3. How were members of the cavalry dependent on the *iqta's*?

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