

# Organized Armies

Sumerian armies had excellent organization, weapons, and leadership. Sumerian kings first organized armies to fight other city-states over water usage and land boundaries. The armies included professional soldiers and temporary citizen-soldiers. The citizen-soldiers were farmers whom the king forced to serve in the army during wartime. If they refused to serve, scholars believe they may have been punished with death.

Sumerian armies were made up of different military units. First into battle were the chariots, which were ancient “tanks” pulled by donkeys. These vehicles were square, had a wooden frame, and had two or four wheels. Armies also had two groups of *infantry*, or foot soldiers, who marched into battle in a tightly organized formation. The heavy infantry wore copper helmets and carried short-handled spears. The light infantry wore light helmets and carried axes. All soldiers wore shields to protect themselves from the enemies’ arrows. However, large numbers of soldiers still died in army battles. One king claimed that his army killed 12,650 soldiers in a single battle. After the fighting was over, the winning side celebrated their victory by beheading prisoners from the losing side. They also kept some prisoners as slaves.