



Go, Go Guti!

Wargaming in the Early Bronze age with Zagros Highlanders

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Slingshot 222, May 2002



Slipping out of being editor of Slingshot, I can now confess that I wargame with Zagros Highlanders! It's true and a continuance of my obsession with more obscure and infrequently seen armies. Now, I'm sure many of you are saying "Zagros who?" so maybe not so much a "forgotten army" as a totally unheard of one. Well, for those of you brave enough to venture into the alternative world that is the early Bronze Age - where men were men and horses were just asses - the Zagros Highlanders is list 4 in Book I of the DBM army lists.

One of my personal historical heroes is Sargon of Akkad. This man is a legend, so much so that legends are based around those who tried to emulate him. His influence lived long after his Empire ended and, in the words of the DBM army list comments accompanying the Akkadian army, he was for all Mesopotamian rulers the "paradigm of a military conqueror, the 'King of Battle' and the most illustrious and revered monarch of the ancient Near East". Quite a testimony for a bloke who is over 4000 years old! In fact, I would rate his legendary status up there with other larger than life characters such as Alexander, Charlemagne and Genghis Khan. All that is missing is the Hollywood blockbuster...

Back to the plot. If you are going to wargame the amazing exploits of Sargon, then Zagros' Highlanders are an essential victim for Sargon's mighty armies to trample over. For coverage of just who the Zagros Highlanders were, their events and contemporaries in Mesopotamia in the Bronze Age, I recommend having a look amongst the following:

Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the light of archaeological discovery* (Weldenfeld and Nicolson, 1963).

Amélie Kuhlt, *The Ancient Near East c.3030-330 BC* (Routledge, 1995).

Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (Penguin. 3rd edition 1992).

The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume I, Parts 2A & 2B (Cambridge University Press 1971).

Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* (Equinox, 1990).

Ross Burns, *Monuments of Syria* (Tauris, 1992).

Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (Yale University Press, 5th Edition 1996).

Gwendolyn Leick, *Mesopotamia: The invention of the City* (Penguin Press, 2001).

Gwendolyn Leick, *Who's Who in the Ancient Near East* (Routledge, 1999).

Julian Reade, *Mesopotamia* (British Museum Press, 2nd Edition 2000).

Nigel Stillman & Nigel Tallis, *Armies of the Ancient Near East 3000BC to 539BC* (Wargames Research Group, 1984).

Nigel Tallis, *Chariot Wars* (Warhammer Historical Wargames Ltd., 1999).

Phil Barker & Richard Bodley-Scott, *D.B.M. Army Lists, Book I: 3000 BC to 500 BC* (Wargames Research Group, 2nd edition 2000).



These are good places to start on the early Bronze Age armies. The defeated forms of the Lullubi (led by their leader Satuni) are well represented on the 'Stele of Naram-Sin' (grandson of Sargon) being soundly thrashed in the mountainous terrain of the Zagros homeland by this all-conquering Akkadian successor of Sargon assisted by his well-armed Guards.

In 15mm there are a good range of figures available from Chariot Miniatures. Their multi-posed Gutians are fine figures and amongst my favourites from their ranges. The range also has all the necessary Sumerians and Akkadians to complete the army plus there are many other suitable figures that can be plundered from their other ranges. Falcon Figures (now handled by Chariot Miniatures) also do some and these can be used judiciously, but beware that they may look a little on the tall side against the Chariot Miniatures stuff. Also, plunder figures such as archers and javelinmen from ranges of Libyans, Nubians and even Elamites – Chariot Miniatures also produce excellent ranges of these and Essex Miniatures also have some suitable figures. The Zagros Highlanders were very much a tribal/village folk so I would suggest as much variation as you can achieve amongst them, with some tribes or individuals heavily influenced by their neighbours, which will give generous scope to some figure converting. It's also possible that their descent into the plains for the century (c.2200-2100 BC) after the collapse of the Akkadian empire changed the appearance of some or introduced other peoples into their fighting forces. Let your personal taste in figures be your guide.

In 25mm, QT did a range of Sumerians (now stocked by Falcon) and Foundry are possibly releasing a range in the future which could be supplemented with some of their lovely Libyans and Nubians plus it's also worth dipping into their range of Mycenaean javelinmen, slingers and archers.



Fig 1 : Soldiers armed with spears and socketed axes from the side pane of the 'Stele of the Vultures', a victory stele depicting Eanatum of Lagash's victory of Umma c.2450 BC, now in the Louvre, Paris (see Kuhrt pp.36-8, Frankfort p.72 and Roux Plate 6)

As for painting them, this is one of the advantages of these armies as often they can be simply dressed in white kilt (with or without coloured borders and fringes) or animal skins and their own skin is tanned shades of brown. See the Stillman and Tallis book for further details.

It's not size that's important...

If playing DBM, this army is going to be BIG. Its troops are cheap and plentiful - even the elite elements are bargain basement. It's not the sort of army that improves with size either. Thus I wouldn't take it into a 500 Army Point (AP) doubles competition for example unless you have a small truck to transport it all. Deployment takes about an hour; in a competition environment you will then be ridden down by the inevitable mixture of knights and light cavalry by about turn 3, leaving you with piles of figures to put away on your own as your partner would have well and truly deserted you for the coffee or the bar in retribution for you convincing him to use this useless pile of lead. My advice here is to stick to nice gentle and friendly 300-350 AP encounters by the fireside at home, whilst supping on a glass of port and some fine cheese. I believe it's what Sargon would have done....

Likewise with Warhammer Ancient Battles (WAB). The warriors are cheap and will be clumped into very large warbands for staying power. Being unarmoured and unshielded you can expect them to die in large numbers to missile fire and then get chewed up in melee; best advice is to build very large units!

if you wish to soak up some points then you have to revert to the period of Gutti-dominated Mesopotamia after the collapse of the Akkadian Empire (c.2200-2100 BC). Inclusion of some Akkadian City militia troops during the period of Gutti domination gives the army an extra dimension of some relatively more solid heavy infantry for fighting on the river plains. Such troops aren't that much more expensive than the tribal riff-raff but it all adds up!



Akkadian archer by Daniella Carisson

Zagros Highlanders for Warhammer Ancient Battles

Whilst the army would have its one general, probably leading the unit of elite warriors, the other warriors would be bolstered by a number of tribal leaders acting as ‘officers’ or ‘heroes’ of slightly better leadership (probably Ld = 7) than the average tribal warrior. The morale of the army is brittle, so I would suggest including some two to three of these judiciously positioned to keep the lads in the field. I don’t know of any use of standards by these tribal armies.

Tactically, use the warriors aggressively, otherwise you will only give your opponent time to shoot your shieldless warriors to pieces. In attack, and in big units, the Zagros may be able to sweep away stronger opponents, most especially when gaming in-period — there are few, if any, troops rated as “stubborn” in this period.

Your own volume of skirmishers may help you whittle casualties off an unprotected opposition but keep them away from contact as they just aren’t equipped for hand-to-hand combat and will be easily scattered.

The Akkadian spearmen are militia from the city-states taken over by the Gutti after the fall of the Akkadian Empire. They will bring a colourful element to the army but will also provide a contingent of solid heavy infantry that will fight well in melee.

Typical statistics for Zagros troops under WAB would look something like:

	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Pts
0-1 Elite warriors	5	4	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	10
Tribal warriors	5	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	5
Equipment: Elite warriors have double-handed weapons and bow. Tribal warriors have mixed weapons and javelins.										
Special Rule: <i>Warband</i> . Tribal warriors are Light Infantry.										
Tribal warriors must be more than 50% of the army.										
Skirmishers										
- javelinmen	5	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	4
- archers	5	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	5
- slingers	5	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	5
Equipment: Logically, javelins or bow or sling										
Special Rule: <i>Skimishers</i> , <i>Warband</i> .										
0-1 Akkadians	4	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	7
Equipment: Thrusting spear. Can have large shield (+2)										
Special Rule: <i>Phalanx</i> .										
0-1 Makkanites	5	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	5
Equipment: Sword and thrusting spear. Can have javelins in place of thrusting spear.										
Special Rule: <i>Warband</i> .										

Zagros Highlanders for Armati

If using Armati, suggested troops and command ratings would look something like the table below:

Zagros Highlanders CR: H3; L4; PB 2 Init 4						
Units	Type			Prot	Weapons	Pts
1	Elite Warriors*	WB	5(1)3	+1	Bows/various	5
6-15	Warriors*	WB	4(1)3	0	Various	3
2-4	Javelinmen	SI	3(1)1	+2	Javelins	1
2-7	Archers	SI	2(1)1	+2	Bows	1
2-4	Slingers	SI	2(1)1	+2	Slings	1
0-3	Akkadians*	PH	6(0)0	+2	Spears	5
0-1	Makkanites	WB	5(1)3	+1	Various	3

The high +2 Protection (Prot) for the Akkadians represents their use of the large rectangular body shield. An asterisk (*) beside a unit Type indicates a key unit for calculating breakpoint.

Whilst the Akkadians can form one strong heavy command, especially if teamed up with the Elite Warriors, it will be the two large commands of Warrior warbands that will have to bear the brunt of the fighting. Use the large volumes of skirmishers to soften the enemy up and harass a flank. Whilst heavy units stand up well to skirmishers in Armati, if enough of these can be brought to bear on a single unit, it can be only a matter of time before it can be destroyed by a sheer persistent volume of missiles. However, don’t throw away your skirmishers if you don’t have to — exercise a bit of caution as if they are not on the table they can’t be a threat to anyone.

This army should be at home in the hills and woods of the Zagros Highlands.

Fighting in-period with DBM

A major point about these early Bronze Age armies is that they prove at their best and most entertaining when used “in-period”.

I’m sure many wargamers have looked at the early lists in DBM’s book lists and just skipped over them due to the useless first impressions they give. In a game dominated by bone-crunching knights, immortal light cavalry and well-drilled warbands, piles of men in loin cloths armed with sticks just don’t make it in the cut and thrust of competitive wargaming. But when pitted against each other they make for entertaining games. Watching two long lines of inferior Bowmen play last man standing as they decimate each other makes for quite competitive dice rolling. It’s the only time I’ve seen commands break in DBM without hand-to-hand combat.

The bulk of the army of the Zagros Highlands are the javelin-armed warriors. These will flesh out (i.e. “pad”) the army but have little staying power if caught in the open. The DBM version 3 amendments have given them a double rank against most other foot and being “inferior” is somehow less inferior than it used to be. However, don’t

rely on them to charge their way to victory!

Why is this mob graded as relatively harmless Inferior Auxilia under DBM and yet I list it as being 'warband' for WAB and Armati? It's a matter of what choices are available against relative opponents. They could operate as massed Light infantry under Armati I suppose but I'm not sure the rules would allow the option for this. It would suit as they could skirmish, shoot and outfight true skirmishers whilst struggling themselves to hold off heavier troops if caught in melee. If they were graded as Warband under DBM then no civilised Bronze Age army would be safe. The warband would power its way through the Akkadian/Sumerian pikemen as if they weren't there — I've tried it and it's a slaughter. As second- or even third-rate tribal infantry (i.e. Inferior Auxilia), it's a factor-even fight against two ranks of pike (I know the rules allow three but this is a gaming fiddle rather than based on any evidence). The grading of the troops (the Superior pike(X) versus Auxilia and the Inferior Auxilia Zagros Highlanders) tilts the advantage in favour of the civilised phalanxes as it should do. Experiment for yourself.

The useful part of the warrior contingent are the small number (8 elements) of "Bodyguards". Take them all, put the minimum number (1 element) with the tribal ally-general, and place the rest with the C-in-C (henceforth known as the "Glorious Leader"). The reasoning is that it is more effective for melee to have them classed as axemen (Fast Blades) rather than as archers (Ordinary Bowman) and being "irregular" they will be impetuous and may well need the Glorious Leader's free PIP to avoid recklessly sprinting off alone and being wiped out. Best to hold them with the Glorious Leader ready to strike when the opportunity presents itself. It's not worth using them as archers as this army won't win battles with firepower, something it can already have in plentiful supply if the skirmishing archers are taken as massed Inferior Bows. Fast Blades, however, have the combat factors and speed necessary to get to grips and roll the scores required for 'instant kills' on other early Bronze Age troop types

Auxiliary archer by
Daniella Carisson



Fig 2 : A group of figures from a fragmentary Akkadian stele in the Louvre, Paris (Yadin p.151) Parts of the archer and helmeted figure's weapon are damaged.

(mainly, Bows, Auxilia and Pike and often inferior ones at that). The only dilemma with these troops is just how they should be classified — by their armament of long-handled axe and bow they fit both DBM's categories of Blades and Bows but if you choose the former they can't shoot and if the latter they don't fight very well. A tricky one for DBM but I think the melee option of Blades overrides the bows if a choice has to be made for the sake of the gaming mechanism.

Also, don't crowd the board with difficult terrain, as rough going is more useful. Occupy what terrain is there if possible and use ambushes to keep the enemy guessing to protect your flanks, but you don't want to dissuade the enemy from coming to get you. Entice the enemy in and then attempt to surround him whilst skirmishing and using flank attacks. Watch out for massed archers as these will tend to blow holes in your ranks and then cheekily outfight you!

The Pike(X)/(I) combination is reasonably effective in melee (i.e. rated as Superior) against the majority of things it will face in early Bronze Age armies, such as Auxilia, Bowmen and Psiloi, and at least on evens against other pikemen. However, to go on like a broken record, DBM's rule for 'spontaneous' combat follow-up by victorious pikemen is lethal for Pk(X)/(I) combinations especially. For games set in the early Bronze Age I would suggest dropping this rule as the large shields carried by the front ranks probably makes spontaneous advances somewhat difficult! What I would replace the rule with is that "At the end of the melee phase, pike of the same grade and frontage and command will follow-up recoiled enemy if all enemy are defeated". This means that the **whole** pike block in a command is either recoiled, stands or follows-up.

What about the city militia troops as the Auxilia(X) option? Regular Ax(X) used to be quite useful in these armies under version 2 of DBM. Unfortunately, they are now absolute rubbish and for gaming in the early Bronze

Age period they will be in real trouble, counting Inferior against nearly all they will have to face - Pike, Auxilia, Bowmen and Psiloi. The best pictorial evidence we have for these shieldless spearmen is from the stele of Naram-Sin (mentioned previously) where the god-king himself is seen climbing into the mountains aided by his Guards who have (perhaps) left cumbersome tower shields behind and armed themselves with shorter spears and a rather nasty looking long-hafted hand axe. Similarly armed troops are also seen on the victory stele of Eanatum of Lagash (the so called 'Stele of the Vultures') where some troops armed with spears and socketed axes are marching behind the chariot of the king who is charging into battle. Shades of Alexander the Great's Hypaspists here? Elite troops whose training, professionalism and elan allows them to be converted to any campaigning role their master so desires? Difficulty here is that neither of these appear to depict 'militia' troops so how widespread this practice was is impossible to tell.



Akkadian spearman by Daniella Carisson

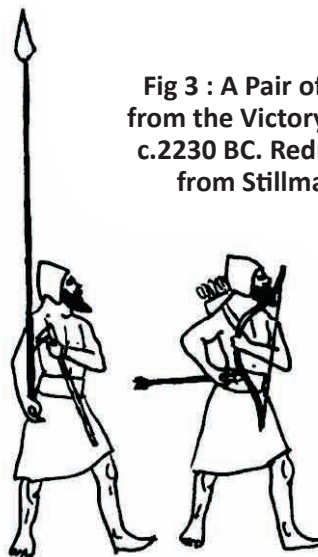
As for fighting outside the early Bronze Age with Zagros Highlanders, it's really not worth saying more than "die as slowly as you can". Armies generated for maximum 'kill' for competitions will most likely tear the plucky lads from the Zagros apart. However, in-period, you will give any other early Bronze Age army a run for its money and that is the best performance indicator.

The Tribute Convoy - A DBA Scenario Game

Just to get you started in the early Bronze Age, here's a quick scenario that needs few figures to play.

The table is two 2x2 foot terrain boards put together. Put a one-element wide road down the centre which gives 4 feet of road (i.e. short board edge to edge). At one end of the road the Akkadian convoy will come on the table. At the other is the city of Ur (just off table). On the 2x2 board where Ur is located scatter some fields - these count as rough going. On the other 2x2 terrain board scatter 3-4 hills around the road (two small and one large or four small ones), with at least two of them steep and counting as difficult going.

Fig 3 : A Pair of Akkadian soldiers from the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin c.2230 BC. Redrawn by the author from Stillman & Tallis p.127



The scenario is an Akkadian tribute/tax convoy under the command of a captain returning to Ur to deposit the booty with the city's Governor prior to going to the Akkadian King. As this captain, your superiors don't take kindly to their loot not arriving. However, the Gutians have got wind of this and their chieftains like nothing better than getting their slice of the loot as well as sticking one up the nose of the King! Thus, a coalition of local tribes is going to try and seize its 'fair share'.

The Akkadian forces are as follows:

Convoy Escort	Garrison of Ur
6 elements of baggage (carts, mules, etc.)	1 Governor leading a squadron of battle-cars (Knights)
1 captain as Blades	8 militia spearmen as Pike
8 militia spearmen as Pike	4 mercenary Zagros as Bows
2 mercenary Zagros as Bows	1 skirmishers as Psiloi

The first move of the convoy escort will be to deploy on the road heading toward Ur. The baggage initially moves in single file and its movement rate is that of the pikemen, even when on the road. For subsequent turns the Captain rolls his PIP D6 and moves his troops. The baggage will always move without expending PIPs if the Captain player chooses to move it - it is not compulsory.

The Garrison of Ur will only come out to help once a baggage element is attacked by Gutian tribesmen or Gutians are seen deployed on the road between the city and the convoy. The garrison has its own general and PIP dice.

The Captain achieves maximum points for getting the baggage into Ur with himself. Posthumous maximum points (of any total) are awarded if all the baggage makes it into Ur but the Captain is killed defending them. Otherwise, it's 10 points for each baggage element making it safely, 2 points for each militia spearmen making it safely (don't waste the citizen manpower!), 5 points for destroying any Gutian chieftain and 1 point for each element of Guti destroyed. Unfortunately, it's a big minus 20 for each baggage element lost.

Now, where are the Gutians in all this? They can either be played by a second player or put on remote control. To do

this, number six points around the board. One will be on the hill closest to the road where the convoy comes on, two will be the field nearest the city of Ur and three to six will be the centre edge of each 2x2 gaming board to left and right of the road. To determine which band of Gutu arrive, roll a D6 to discover arrival location as set out in the preceding paragraph. Once a location has been selected it cannot be rolled again. Thus only one band of Gutu can arrive at each location. Reroll the dice if an already selected location gets scored again.

Now roll a second D6 to decide who is in this 'warband'. Each spot on the dice is equal to one element of warriors (Auxilia) and one element of skirmishers (Psiloi). For example if you roll a four there are four elements of Auxilia and four elements of Psiloi at that location. If a five or six is scored then one element of Auxilia is exchanged for an element of Blade and represents a chieftain and his retinue.

The Gutians, except for any chieftain element, will attack towards the nearest baggage element and attempt to loot it.

They achieve this by winning a combat against the baggage element. A baggage element fights as factor zero plus a D6. The baggage cannot destroy an enemy element! If the baggage repulses an attack it merely represents the Gutu fumbling, stumbling or squabbling in their enthusiasm for the loot. As mentioned above as an exception, any Gutian chieftain will make a direct line towards the nearest Akkadian leader element (the Captain or the Governor) with the aim of fighting what he interprets as his social equal and a victory which in his eyes would bring him the greatest glory and strengthen his leadership. The Gutu will continue to attack until all baggage elements are looted or they themselves are destroyed. If a Gutian chieftain is destroyed then his 'own' warband (i.e. those elements only that arrived with him) will disperse off the board in rout at the sight of their leader being brought low. Any Gutian 'warband' that does not have a chieftain will fight on whatever its losses.

And, if you think that this game can be altered in any way to improve it or make it more interesting, then please do so. Go you Gutu!



Lullubi warrior by Daniella Carisson

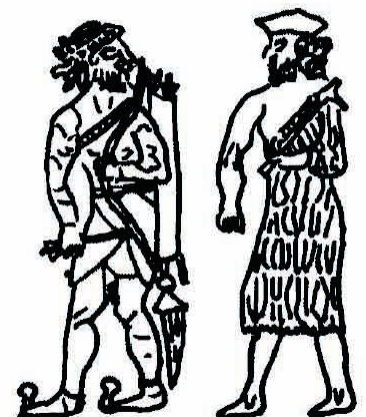
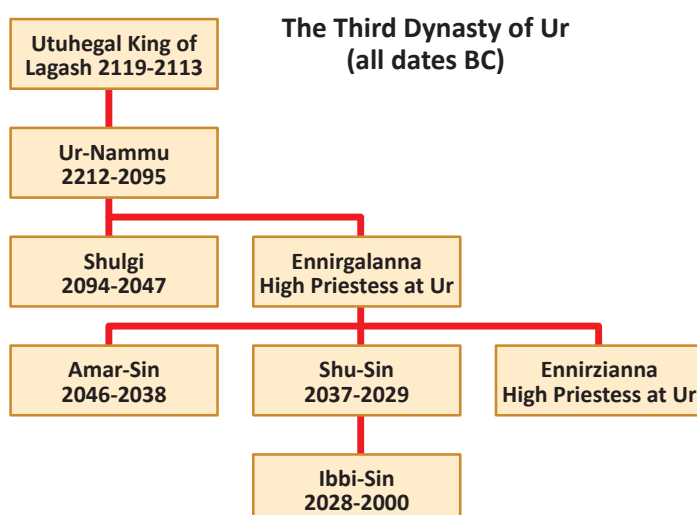
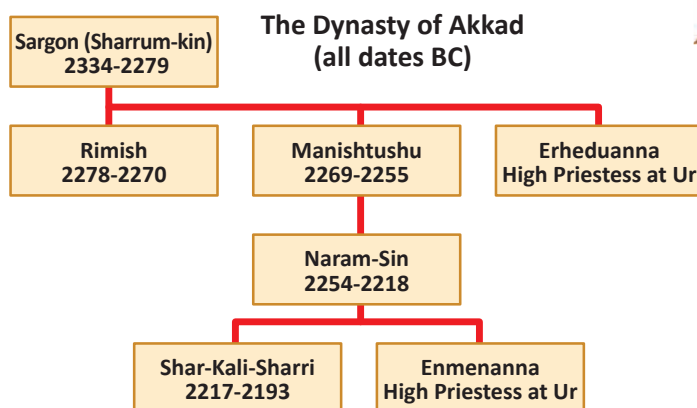


Fig 4 : Two figures from an Akkadian cylinder seal c.2100 BC in the British Museum. The archer is probably a mercenary Zagros Highlander in an Akkadian Governor's retinue. The right hand figure is the Governor himself, suggested as the brother of the king by Reade p.63. Sketched by the author.