

## MILITARY AND POLITICAL RELATIONS IN THE CITY STATES OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

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### Abstract

This article examines the history of military-political relations in the city-states of Mesopotamia in the 3rd-2nd millennia BC. The role and activities of rulers in military-political relations are revealed.

**Keywords:** Mesopotamia, Sumer, Akkad, Ur, Uruk, Lagash, Kish, name, ruler, king, ensi, lugal, army.

### Introduction

The military and foreign policy history of Mesopotamia in the 3rd–2nd millennia BC is, first and foremost, the history of relations between the states that existed within its territory. At the end of the Pre-Written Period and the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period, there were about twenty "nom" cities-states in Mesopotamia. Claims for hegemony in Mesopotamia were initially linked to the title "King of Kish." The title "Kish Lugali" became the traditional title of the king-hegemon.

### The main part

The ruler of Kish, Menbaragessi (c. The earliest known military clashes involving the Elamites (2600 BCE) were related to Elam. Throughout the following centuries, Elam remained the most dangerous enemy of the Mesopotamian states. It was at this time that Mesopotamia entered a period of ceaseless military conflict. In addition to the rulers of Kish, the rulers of Ur, Uruk, and Lagash also began to call themselves "kings of Kish." Kings belonging to Akkadian dynasties later included this title among their own titles. A number of texts have survived, shedding light on the clash between two major "names"—Lagash and Umma—which lasted for more than two centuries, as well as the role played in this conflict by the "king of Kish," Masilim [1]. The events here took place on a "double level": Enlil (the supreme Sumerian god) established a boundary between Ningursu (the god who patronized Lagash) and Shara (the god who patronized the city of Umma), that is, he resolved the dispute between them. The conflict between the "noms" is thus expressed as a conflict between the gods of these "noms" and is resolved between the gods. Thus, in one of the oldest known treaties, we can see many elements of modern international legal practice: a dispute arising from claims for ownership of clearly defined lands, a court of arbitration, the recognition of the sovereignty of the first party to the dispute over the disputed lands, and at the same time, information about the lease of these lands to the second party. The clashes, now fading, now intensifying, lasted until the Umma ruler Lugalzagesi inflicted a decisive defeat on Lagash (c. 2312). Lugalzagesi assured that he had no conquering goals and emphasized that he had only restored "justice."



The emergence of a new title, the "Lugali of the Country," testifies to the trend toward the unification of the country. In the 3rd–2nd millennia BCE, centrifugal forces were stronger than centrifugal ones, and as a result, a state of political fragmentation was characteristic of Mesopotamia at that time. Sargon was the first to create a state that encompassed all of Mesopotamia. In terms of its internal structure, this state resembled both a confederation and a centralized state. The state created by Sargon was the first "great" state in Asia, and in the Middle East it was the second (after Egypt). The international situation in Western Asia is characterized by the confrontation between city-states and the "great" state that directly threatened them. Campaigns to the east (Elam) and west (Syria) became traditional for the rulers of Mesopotamia. The first known international treaty between the "king of the four climes," Naramsin, and the Elamite ruler Chith, dates back to the time of Elam. Under this treaty, the obligations of the King of Elam were as follows:

1. Full loyalty (sincerity) toward Akkad (preventing hostility toward Naramsin in Elam, providing military assistance to him in actions against any enemies of Akkad);
2. The surrender of the fugitives, i.e., the refusal to grant refuge to those hostile to Naram-Sin [2].

Large-scale excavations were conducted in Sumer in the second half of the 19th century. Archaeologists have discovered the ruins of the oldest Sumerian cities here, dating back to the late 4th millennium BCE. De-Sarzek and Heze discovered the remains of the ancient Sumerian city of Lagash (Shirpula) on the site of modern Tello; in the ruins of Lagash, they discovered numerous works of Sumerian art and several ceramic tablets written in Sumerian cuneiform, including valuable documents related to economic affairs [2]. It should also be noted that the ancient artist who created the Victory Monument depicted a battlefield filled with the corpses of slaughtered enemies and flocks of vultures circling over them. The same painting depicts the burial of the slain, the sacrifice of the prisoners, and finally, the victorious Eannatum himself, riding in a chariot at the head of a group of warriors armed with heavy weapons. The inscription on this monument indicates the victory of the Lagash troops and the real results of this war [2]. The defeated inhabitants of Umma swore not to invade the borders of Lagash anymore and to pay tribute in grain to the Lagash gods. It can be noted that Ur was not the only wealthy and powerful state in Lower Mesopotamia; alongside Ur, there were other states that engaged in a fierce struggle to establish their influence and power in Southern and partly Central Mesopotamia. Lagash, whose history is somewhat better known to us, occupies a prominent place among these states.

Under King Eannatum, who waged fierce wars with neighboring cities and conquered vast territories, the power of Lagash increased significantly. Not only did Eannatum liberate Lagash from the yoke of Kish, but he also annexed the Akkadian state to Lagash. Subsequently, Eannatum conquered Ur, thereby ending the rule of the kings from the first dynasty of Ur. Eannatum subjugated Uruk, Larsa, and Eridu to Lagash, thereby capturing the entire southern part of Mesopotamia [2].

Eannatum waged a particularly fierce struggle against the neighboring city of Umma. The ruler of Umma, relying on the help of the kings of Ush and Kish, attacked Lagash. However, the war ended in the defeat of the Ummah. Eannatum defeated the troops of Ush and his allies and invaded the border of Umma. Eannatum's victory over Umma has been preserved to this day.



Continuing Eannatum's military policy, Entemene managed to consolidate Lagash's dominance over Umma, Ur, Erida, and Nippur, as well as repel the Elamite attack. Among the historical documents of that time, the oldest diplomatic document, the Entomena inscription, is very important. This document vividly depicts the initial diplomatic relations and subsequent wars between Lagash and Umma. This document emphasized the terms of the peace treaty concluded and the established territorial boundaries following the victory of Enthemenus over Umma. Enthemene threatened severe punishments if the defeated violated the treaty. The continuous struggle between the Sumerian south and the Semitic north ultimately ended in the victory of the Semitic north. Sargon I, the founder of the Semitic state of Akkad, subjugated Sumer and united a significant part of Mesopotamia under his rule.

In connection with the development of military policy in Akkad, Sargon formed a standing army of 5,400 warriors[3]. This regular army was the core of the large armies at Sargon's disposal, which allowed him to carry out several major conquests. Sargon first set himself the task of strengthening his power in Akkad.

In a later text, it is reported that representatives from the Assyrian trading colony of Ganish in Asia Minor came to Sargon with a request for Sargon's support in the struggle of the Ganish population against the Pasha of the city of Burushkhanda. After discussing this matter at a military council and carefully weighing the difficulties of the long journey and the prospects for victory, Sargon sent his troops into distant Asia Minor. He provided great assistance to Ganesh and conquered many lands in the northwest. Thus, Sargon created a vast military state claiming sole hegemony over the entire Fertile Crescent.

During the reign of Naramsin, who significantly expanded Akkadian borders, the Akkadian kingdom reached its peak of prosperity. Like other kings of Akkad who preceded him. At the beginning of his reign, Naramsin also had to suppress a number of uprisings. Naramsin proudly spoke of his victory over 9 armies and 3 kings (the rulers of Uruk, Umma, and Nippur, who rose up against the Akkadian king). Subsequently, an uprising broke out in Akkad itself, which was also suppressed by Naramsin.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that in the 3rd–2nd millennia BC, military-political relations in the city-states of Mesopotamia were shaped by the policies of the rulers and were directly linked to military affairs. The status of city-states was also assessed by the victories of their rulers in battles.

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