

RuneQuest

Bronze Age Rules Sourcebook

1.0 Version (2005 AD)

Compendium of rules from my RuneQuest campaign set in the Ancient Middle East.



By Eduardo Chamón

Cover image: Standard of Ur, scenes of war c.2700 BC

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1. Introduction

This file is just a compilation of house rules of my own to set my RQ games in the times of bronze weapons and chariot warfare. It is my intention to cover all Bronze Age period, but here I only provide rules from 3000 to 1300 BC. This age includes the Sumerian and Akkadian Empires, Old and Medium Egyptian Kingdoms and the Hammurabic Babylonian Empire.

As this work is just some new rules I haven't written a full description of every culture and important day-life information to run a roleplaying campaign. This is not a full sourcebook like "Vikings" or "Land of ninja" (although I would like to have the knowledge and time to write it), just some useful rules that I hope will help you.

The Cults in the religion chapter are not really in depth developed, but for quick character creation will give a reasonable guide.

This rules assume the use of RuneQuest III system, the phalanx combat rules appeared in "Sun County" and the chariot rules of "Monster Coliseum", that even include sumerian, egyptian and hitite chariots!

Much of the information and inspiration come from the Warhammer Ancient Battles book "Chariot Wars" and of course "RuneQuest".

This work is dedicated to that rulebooks and to their designers.

Enjoy!

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Victory stele of Naram-Sin c. 2300 BC

2. Peoples and cultures.

3000 BC – 1300 BC

PRIMITIVE

- 1- Kush
- 2- Nubia

NOMAD

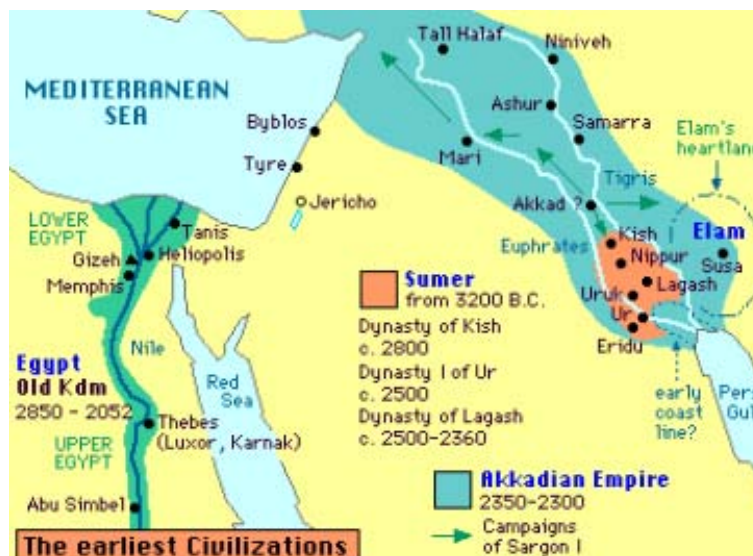
- 1- Amorites
- 2- Kassites
- 3- Lybia

BARBARIAN

- 1- Gutium
- 2- Hattic States
- 3- Makkan
- 4- Minoans
- 5- Syria
- 6- Subartu

CIVILISED

- 1- Akkad
- 2- Elam
- 3- Egypt
- 4- Hammurabic Babylonia
- 5- Sumer
- 6- Empire of Ur

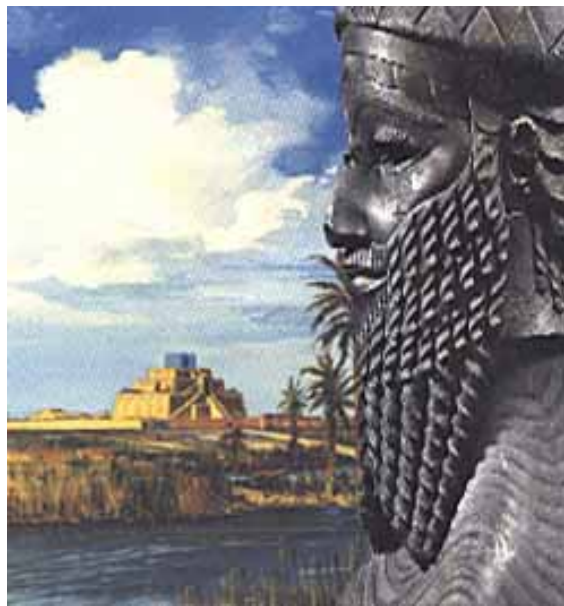


3. Character creation

Characters may access to the profession “Chariot driver” of Monster Coliseum if they belong previously to the profession “Soldier”.

No horse or camel riding until circa 900BC. Nobles, soldiers and suitable professions will have “Drive chariot” instead. Nomad professions will change their hability points of “Ride” to “Hide” or “Sneak”.

No Iniciate of any cult learn to “Read/Write” except priests and nobles, instead PC get points in one additional language or “Human lore”. Scribes of course gain points as described in their profession, but no through Iniciate experience.



Sargon of Akkad



Sumerian soldiers from Lagash bearing shields, spears and copper helmets

4. Cultural weapons

These are the weapons and starting percentages most used by each culture, and that will be worn by a typical soldier with his appropriate armor. In civilised armies there will be warriors with less armor (slingers, skirmishers), and in any army nobles and officials will often wear better armor.

Note that some cultures lose points compared to RQIII rules, you can balance PC creation letting Amorites characters to have points in shield for example, but it won't be listed as initial equipment.

KUSH / NUBIA

Spear 1H 25
Mace 1H 25
Short bow 25
Small shield 20

Armor: None

Notes: Chieftains wear animal skins capes of 1 armor point in chest, abdomen and arms.

AMORITES

Spear 1H 20
Javelin or Short bow 20

Armor: None

KASSITES

Mace 1H 20
Composite bow 20

Armor: None

LYBIA

Short sword 20
Javelin or Short bow 20

Armor: animal hide cloak (1 AP in chest, abdomen and one leg.)

GUTIUM

Spear 1M 25
Javelin 25
Axe 2H 15
Bow or throwing stick 25

Armor: 1AP animal hide on chest, abdomen and one leg.

HATTIC STATES

Spear 1H 25
Axe 1H 25
Axe 2H 15
Comet shield 25

Armor: None

Notes: They used large shields, use the norman/comet shield stats.

MAKKAN

Spear 1H 25
Short sword 25
Javelin 25
Dagger 25

Armor: None

MINOANS

Spear 1H or 2H 25
Short sword 25
Short bow or Javelin 25
Comet shield 25

Armor: Helmet made of boars' tusks (3 AP)

Notes: They used huge bull-hide 'tower' shields or 'figure of eight' shields, use the norman/comet shield stats.

SYRIA

Spear 1H 25
Bow or Javelin 25
Dagger 25

Armor: None

SUBARTU

Spear 1H	25
Mace 1H	25
Short bow	25

Armor: None

AKKAD / SUMER / EMPIRE OF UR

Short sword, axe or mace 1H	25
Spear 1H or 2H	20
Composite bow (Akkadians)	25
Javelin or stick (Sumer, Ur)	25
Great rectangle shield	25

Armor:

Akkad: Copper helmet (4 AP), leather or felt cross straps in chest and abdomen (1AP)

Lagash: Copper helmet (4 AP), leather or felt cross straps in chest and abdomen (1AP)

Ur: Copper helmet (4AP), thick felt or leather cape reinforced with copper discs (2AP in every Hit location except head)

Other cities: Copper helmet (4 AP), thick felt or leather cape (1AP in every Hit location except head)

ELAM

Short sword	25
Spear 1H	20
Composite bow	25

Armor: Copper helmet (4 AP)

EGYPT

Axe, mace or khepesh	25
Spear 1H	20
Composite bow	25
Comet shield	25

Armor: None

HAMMURABIC BABYLONIA

Short sword, sickle sword or axe 1H	25
Spear 1H	20
Javelin or throwing stick	25
Herald shield	25

Armor: Copper helmet (4AP), felt cross straps supporting a bronze or leather breastplate (3 AP on chest and abdomen)

Notes: Babylonians used medium size hide shields with a vague shape of diamond, use the herald shield stats.

Use the Khepesh stats for the sickle sword. Axes were more common.



5. Weapons

In Ancient Times men only worked one metal to make tools, the copper; but copper is too soft to make solid weapons, so for many centuries men fought each other using weapons made of stone, bone and wood. No doubt that battles were violent, but weapons were not very powerful.

When men discovered that alloying copper and tin they could obtain bronze, they could make more resistant tools and weapons, giving more militar advantages to the cultures with access to that technology. That cultures were mainly the ones in the Mesopotamian state-cities, being able to defeat the threats of the nomad peoples of the Two Rivers peripharia. Egypt for example was an isolated culture in the times of the Old Kingdom, settled in the Nile and with a relative state of peace and natural resources. Mesopotamian regions on the other way had been fighting invasors and each other for centuries, so when the Hyksos invaded Egypt wearing bronze weapons and chariots it was an easy conquest. Egypt lands up the Nile had to learn these new technics to fight for a hard and long time to recover their old Kingdom.

This advance also started the use of some kind of body armor, a technic that will be hand to hand with the weapons improvements until our days.

The next step was the use of iron, discovered by the Hititites, but used for first time in great armies by the Assyrians, because of the destruction of the Hitities in the Sea Peoples invasions. These new iron weapons matched no rivals against the bronze armors and weapons, and the Assysians had a way to ensure their own reign of terror (even in the Bible they are the “bad guys”).

Eventually the forge of better steel was able, and by the times of the Peloponnesian Wars we can use the weapons stats given in RQIII rulebook.

Forge of weapons is in deed more complex and techniques vary in the following centuries, but is not my intention to enter in so much detail.



Mycenaean bronze sword and spear point.

5.1. Weapons Rules

When I read RQIII for my first time I understood that the weapons stats were given for use in some medieval enviroment (Cormac Saga still fascinates me), being able to be used from Antiquity (a RPG with gladius and pilum !!) to Reinascense (halberds, double handed swords, warhammers), and I assumed that those stats were based upon steel weapons.

Then I discovered Glorantha, just to find that in Glorantha weapons are made mainly of Bronze using the above stats. In “Gods of Glorantha” are some rules to introduce iron/steel weapons, increasing Armor points in 50% and increasing damage to some non-human creatures.

But in Alternate Earth supplements (Vikings, Land of Ninja and Monster Coliseum) is obvious that the RQIII weapons stats are based upon steel, so I have used them as steel weapons as I play usually in Alternate Earth.

In this campaign I wanted bronze weapons different from the RQIII “steel” weapons:

Less damage: Bronze lose its sharp edge more easily, although is easy to resharp.

Less armor: Bronze is softer than steel.

Same Encumbrance points: These points are calculated based on the weight and the encumbrance due of the size. A short sword of bronze is of the same size that one of steel.



Copper axe from Ur, Southern Iraq 2600-2400 BC

HAND TO HAND WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	BRONZE	IRON	STONE
Axe, combat	1D8+1	7	7	-
Axe, hand	1D6	5	5	-
Dagger	1D4	4	-	-
Dagger	1D4+1	-	5	-
Knife	1D3	-	-	3
Mace, heavy	1D10	8	9	-
Mace, light	1D8	5	5	-
Sword	1D6	8	9	-
Khopesh	1D6+1	8	9	-
Javelin	1D8	7	7	-
Spear, short	1D8	9	9	8
Spear, long	1D10	9	9	-
Pike	2D6+1	11	11	-

Notes:

The table above gives damage and armor points stats.

As metal weapons were expensive stone tools were still used for long time before metals were common. I have assumed that knives, spear and arrows points were made also of stone.

Weapons made mainly of wood have more similar armor points to steel weapons.

Swords were small, broadswords and “long” swords didn’t exist. So all swords are RQ short swords. In fact you can assume the use of daggers and call it also “swords” in the game. The metalsmith from that ages were not sophisticated to make broadswords, so it was very common to use daggers or short blades as main weapon.

A Khopesh is a sickle-sword used by mainly by egyptians.

Pikes were used in primitive phalanxs by Sumerians, Akkadian and Mycenians.



MISSILE WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE
Bow, short	1D6
Bow, composite	1D8
Javelin	1D8
Sling	1D8
Stone, hand thrown	1D3
Throw stick	1D6
Whip	1D4

Notes:

Arrow points were made of stone, bronze or iron.

Sling and hand thrown stones do not impale.

Throw sticks were a traditional amorite weapon similar to a boomerang. They were used as a throwing club before engaging in hand to hand combat. Use the War boomerang stats, obviously it doesn't returns to the thrower's hand.



Hammurbi stands before Shamash



6. Cults in ancient Middle East

In the beginning of the cities, each city had its own protector deity of the city. With the birth of the first empires several cities were under one ruler but the local gods were added to the rulers cult. Soon there was overpopulation of gods, so they started some kind of specialization making one god ruler of the air, other god of the water, etc. That was the birth of the pantheons in the religions. When an empire fell down, the new rulers carried their new gods, inserting them in the conquered pantheon usually as the new main god. Priests had then to 'rewrite' old legends and beliefs to include the new gods, usually through familiar bonds like son, daughter, wife, etc

This a rough guide to the Meseopotamian pantheons; just use the description, magic and religion skills of its equivalent RQIII rulebook or Gods of Glorantha cult.

The column 'city' refers to the city in which that god was originally worshipped so it is the place with more influence for his religion. In that city is usually the Main Temple of the cult.

SUMERIAN PANTHEON

NAME	DESCRIPTION	CITY	RQ III CULT
Anu	God of the sky, main god	Uruk	Main god
Enlil	God of the earth	Nippur	God of the agriculture
Ea	God of the water, giver of life	Eridu	Goddess of the earth
Tiamat	Goddess of chaos and dark seas		Krarsht

AKKADIAN PANTHEON

NAME	DESCRIPTION	CITY	RQ III CULT
Sin	God of the moon	Ur	Goddess of the moon
Shamash	God of the sun	Sippar	God of the sun
Ishtar	Goddess of love and beauty. Daughter of Anu	Uruk	Uleria
Ada	God of the storms		God of the storms

HAMMURABIC BABYLONIAN (AMORITE) PANTHEON

NAME	DESCRIPTION	CITY	RQ III CULT
Amurru	Old main god		God of the hunt
Marduk	God of the sun, main god.	Babylon	Main god
Nabu	Son of Marduk	Borsippa	God of the sun
Asur	God of war	Asur	God of war



Marduk killing Tiamat

7. MAIN REFERENCES AND OTHER RELATED WORKS I LIKE :

- “RuneQuest deluxe” by Greg Stafford, published by The Avalon Hill game company

The Game, a nice RPG masterwork.

- “Warhammer ancient battles” by Jervis Johnson, Rick Priestly, Alan & Michael Perry, published by Games Worksop and Warhammer Historical wargames.

A very good game, with lots of History and fun. It includes nice artwork. I use plastic 1/72 historical miniatures for playing the battles.

- “Chariot Wars” by Nigel Stillman, published by Games Worksop and Warhammer Historical wargames.

A supplement book for Warhammer ancient battles, it gave me the idea and inspiration to run a campaign in Bronze Age with RQ system. Really impressive.

- “Mythic Egypt, roleplaying in the Land of the Pharaohs” by Earl Wajenburg, published by Iron Crown Enterprises.

A Rolemaster sourcebook in the Campaign classics series. The historical Rolemaster books are very good, and this one is historic accurate and full of information.

- “The Near East” and “The Land of Canaan” by Isaac Asimov.

Who said History was boring? Fun, easy to read and well explained events and facts. Maybe too general for people with great knowledge, but ideal for learners and all kind of readers.

- “La Pharaonne de Thèbes” (The she-Pharaoh of Tebes) by Francis Fèvre.

An historical novel/essay. Shows the way of life in the begginig of the New Kingdom Egypt, through the history of Hatsepsut, the only woman who became Pharaoh.

- “ The Holy Bible, Genesis” Various authors

Chronicles directly from Antiquity, full of references to Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt. Umberto Eco said: “I can read the Bible, Homer or Dylan Dog for days and days without being bored”

- “Age of Bronze” (Comic book serie) by Eric Shanower, published by Image Comics.

The Iliad made comic through an Historical point of view. RuneQuest flavor in every page. A real good work.

-“Slaine” (Comic book series) by Pat Mills and Simon Bisley.

Celtic fantasy Bronze Age in Europe, a bronze setting not related to the Middle East, but worth to read and enjoy.

-“King David” (movie) by Bruce Beresford.

Featuring Richard Gere, is about David king of Israel. Very nice to see the costumes and places, and the movie works for me.

I discovered this movie recently, and it is an example why I like a lot cinema of the '80. Well balanced movie between old Peplums (roman, Jesuschrist movies) and actual historical-lots-of-action-poor-screenplay-and-acting movies.

-“A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum” (movie) by Richard Lester.

*Ok, no bronze, but fun, fun and fun. And there are chariots!
Apart from “Spartacus”, the RuneQuest adventure I would have like to be able to run as GM...*

I would like to thank my brother Jorge for his help and support, over all in the Bronze weapons and metals info, and for playing RQ with me all these years.

Of course lots of thanks to my usual (wild) bunch of RQ players and usual patient playtesters of my every new campaign project!!

Alvaro (the Jarl), Javi (JAG), Jorge (Persians are invencibles!!), Pablo (Ridley rules!) and Raul (Keep the unit's ranks in good order!!!)



“I am very pleased with RuneQuest, for its flexible system, full of realism and appropriate to recreate these times in any campaign. It is my will that one copy of that rules shall be written on stone, so every one of my vassals can use them, and endure until the End of the Times”

Hammurabi. King, Emperor and satisfied customer.

Translation of the Hammurabi's games code, written on diorite stele, found in Sippar.

Source: Miskatonic University, Ancient Studies department.



Now you're one step closer to run a RQ campaign in ancient Mesopotamia,... it's Sumer time!!