

Marcin Z. Paszke

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**FROM SARGON TO NARĀM-SĪN:
SOME REMARKS ON AKKADIAN MILITARY ACTIVITY
IN THE II ND HALF OF THE III RD MILLENNIUM BC.
THE EXAMPLE OF EASTERN CAMPAIGNS**

ABSTRACT The present article discusses the phenomenon of Akkadian eastern military activity in the times of four consecutive Akkadian kings – Sargon, Rīmuš, Maništušu and Narām-Sîn. The author of the present investigation describes the course of Akkadian military expansion and attempts to characterize its cultural background by emphasizing that its economic and religious foundations constitute a part of the imperial strategy. It has been suggested that the religious – and associated with it – the ideological factor, both embodied in the powerful image of the warlike goddess Aštar seem to be largely underestimated in the current academic discussion of the phenomenon of Akkadian expansion.

Keywords: The Persian Gulf, Akkadian warfare, Akkadian empire, Mesopotamia, Iran

ABSTTRAKT Niniejszy artykuł omawia fenomen akadyjskich działań militarnych na wschodzie w czasie panowania następujących władców akadyjskich – Sargona, Rīmuša, Maništušu oraz Narām-Sîna. Autor artykułu opisuje przebieg akadyjskiej ekspansji militarnej, próbując scharakteryzować jej tło kulturowe. Zwraca uwagę na jej podstawy ekonomiczne i religijne, które stanowiły element strategii imperialnej. Prezentowany materiał sugeruje, że w tym procesie istotną rolę odgrywała wojownicza bogini Aštar, pojmowana w kategoriach czynnika religijno-ideologicznego konstytuującego akadyjską ekspansję. Rzeczona wykładnia zdaje się być niedoceniana we współczesnej literaturze przedmiotu.

Sargon's military activity

According to Mesopotamian tradition, the Akkadian empire was founded by Sargon (c. 2234-2279 BC.), who conquered and united the lower Mesopotamia under Semitic leadership. Sargon was originally the cupbearer of the king of Kiš Ur-zababa, against whom he revolted, sat on his throne, and took control over the land covering Babylonia.¹ Perhaps the echoes of those events are somehow related to his name, written in Akkadian sources as Šar-ru-GI or Šar-um-GI, which may be translated as – *The King is legitimate*.² Thus, it may be considered as a throne name, however as pointed out by Westenholz,³ its meaning is still subject to academic debate.

The fall of Sumerian city-states led by Lugalzagesi of Lagaš,⁴ under Sargon's military power was followed by a campaign against Elam, Arawa and Parahšum. Elam was a cultural entity covering roughly the land of Khuzistan, as well as some highland components towards the north.⁵ It was also, at least for some period of time, an integral part of the Uruk culture,⁶ which dominated Mesopotamia in the IVth millennium BC. At least from the ED period onwards, Elam served as a fierce adversary of Sumer, threatening the eastern borders of the Mesopotamian alluvium, therefore both the Sumerians and later the Akkadians used to trigger swift military drives against it.

This policy is present in the famous Sumerian King List under the En-me-barage-si of Kiš (c. 2700 BC.) who, according to the text *carried*

¹ Kuhrt 1995: 48-49; Frayne 1993: 7; Cooper, Heimpel, 1983: 68-69.

² Sommerfeld 2009: 44-45.

³ Westenholz 1999: 34; Cf. also Frahm 2005: 46-47.

⁴ Frayne 1993: 7, 10, E2.1.1.1: 12-31.

⁵ Carter, Stolper 1984: 4.

⁶ Nissen 2001: 162.

away as spoil, the weapons of the land of Elam.⁷ However, the Akkadian victory over Elam would not have been possible without the defeat of Arawa – a local and powerful political identity located in the north-western Khuzistan, west of Elam.⁸ Finally, the conquest of Parahšum, identified in all probability with the Fars province of modern Iran, brought Sargon's eastern campaign to an end. This expansion towards the east gave him some booty⁹ and – as one may expect – not only the control over the riverine route between the ancient Sumerian shoreline cities and the city of Susa, but also the supervision over the riverine routes linking the city of Susa with the Gulf via the rivers of Karkheh, Dez and Karun.

Rīmuš's military activity

Sargon's successor Rīmuš (c. 2278-2270 BC.) faced a huge rebellion in Sumer, which spread throughout many important Mesopotamian cities such as Ur, Umma, Uruk, Lagaš, Kazallu, as well as Adab and Zabalam. According to Foster¹⁰, this revolt was crushed with unprecedented ferocity. Thus, some of Rīmuš's Royal Inscriptions list many defeated Sumerian governors, demolished towns and witness a broad-based retaliatory campaign, including the expulsion and annihilation of thousands of people.¹¹ The numbers are intimidating. For example, 8.900 men were "struck down" and 3.540 taken captive in the military action against Umma and KI.AN.¹² Similarly, 8.040 men were killed and 5.460 taken captive during the struggle with Ur and Lagaš,¹³ whereas the clash with Adab and Zabalam resulted in 15.718 killed and 14.576 taken captive.¹⁴ It is hard to imagine the total number of victims, but repressive measures were massive, since in one of Rīmuš's inscriptions we read about 54.016 victims who were "struck down", taken captive and annihilated.¹⁵

Perhaps, due to the political struggle in southern Mesopotamia, Rīmuš launched a military ride to the east, towards Zaḥara, Elam and Parahšum.

The southern rebellion apparently encouraged the most powerful local entities to trigger some joined military actions, threatening the Akkadian interests in the region. Therefore, Rīmuš was forced to face the forces of Zaḥara and Elam, as assembled in Parahšum.¹⁶ This example is indeed intriguing, since amongst the military powers mobilized in Parahšum, we surprisingly come across the land of Meluḥḥa,¹⁷ usually defined in Akkadian texts as a peaceful overseas business partner. Similarly to Sargon, Rīmuš defeated the coalition of all the enemies and took an impressive booty from Elam and Parahšum, consisting of 30 minas of gold, 3.600 minas of copper, 300 slaves,¹⁸ and an unidentified amount of diorite and dušû-stone.¹⁹ The latter may be identified with chlorite or steatite.²⁰

The data present in Rīmuš's inscriptions harmonize with the collection of some fragmentarily preserved stone bowls and vases discovered in Mesopotamia. The vessels bear not only the inscribed name of Rīmuš, but also an inscription which informs their user or owner that they were taken to Mesopotamia as the booty of Elam.²¹ If the identification of Parahšum with Marḥaši is correct,²² the latter could be identified with an archeological entity known as the Jiroft culture (IIIrd millennium BC.), with its center located on the Halil-rud alluvium, in the modern Kerman province of Iran.²³ In Steinkeller's opinion, Marḥaši and Magan (the coast of Oman) were close economic- and cultural- and perhaps even political – partners,²⁴ which is suggested by some similarities in the ceramics from the Umm an-Nar and Jiroft cultures. In this partnership, Magan might have played the role of a commercial center redistributing various goods, including chlorite vessels, carnelian and lapis-lazuli, first through the Straits of Hormuz and next across the Gulf to southern Mesopotamia.²⁵

All the above data suggest that there exists a connection between the outbreak of the southern Mesopotamian rebellion and the subsequent Rīmuš's military ride to the east, which was

⁷ Jacobsen 1939: 83, 85, Col ii: 35-27.

⁸ Steinkeller 1982: 244-246.

⁹ Frayne 1993: 23-24, E2.1.1.8: Colophon 2, Caption 3-18.

¹⁰ Foster 1985: 27-28.

¹¹ Westenholz 1999: 41-42.

¹² Frayne 1993: 44, E2.1.2.2: 14-13.

¹³ Frayne 1993: 45, E2.1.2.3: 4-13.

¹⁴ Frayne 1993: 41, E2.1.2.1: 4-13.

¹⁵ Frayne 1993: 48, E2.1.2.4: 64-72.

¹⁶ Frayne 1993: 52, E2.1.2.6: 9-23.

¹⁷ Frayne 1993: 58, E2.1.2.8: 4-11.

¹⁸ Frayne 1993: 55, E2.1.2.6: 131-144.

¹⁹ Frayne 1993: 58, E2.1.2.8: Caption 1-5.

²⁰ Steinkeller 2012: 266.

²¹ Potts 1989: 126-127, 149, Tab. 1.

²² Westenholz 1999: 91; Cf. Steinkeller 1982: 246-254.

²³ Steinkeller 2012: 262; Over the Jiroft culture cf. also Muscarella: 173-198.

²⁴ Steinkeller 2012: 262.

²⁵ Potts 2005: 72-76; Steinkeller 2012: 262.

apparently brought to the end at Parḥšum. We may only speculate that the Sumerian rebellion triggered some far-reaching political disturbances, probably affecting the shape of transport and trade in the Persian Gulf basin.

Maništušu's military activity

Maništušu's (c. 2269-2255 BC.) interest in the Gulf is of extraordinary character. It is known that he exercised control over Elam, which apparently fell into a much deeper dependence on the Akkadian king since in that time Ešpum is called the servant of Maništušu and the governor (ensí) of Elam.²⁶ According to Maništušu's "Standard Inscription", the king shortly thereafter conquered Anšan (Tell Malyan) located further east in the Fars province²⁷, and also Šeriḥum, lying somewhere on the northern coast of the Persian Gulf.²⁸ But this time, the further action taken by Maništušu was unheard of for the Akkadian kings. It is so due to the fact that, according to Maništušu's "Standard Inscription", the king went across²⁹ the Persian Gulf with his army and launched a military ride over the coastal cities located somewhere in Oman. The inscription which describes these events is only fragmentarily preserved, but clear enough to gain some detailed insight into this remarkable overseas campaign. Thus, its key passage is as follows: *when he conquered Anšan and Širiḥum had... ships across the Lower Sea.*³⁰ We do not know how long the Akkadian invasion lasted, but we may guess that the local coastal cities might have been warned about the upcoming threat. The text indicates that the coalition of many local cities stood against the Akkadian invaders – *The cities across the Sea, thirty-two, assembled for battle.*³¹ Nevertheless, they could not resist the Akkadian military power, so they were defeated, plundered and vanquished *as far as the Silver Mines.*³² Some believe that the people buried in the mass burial of Umm an-Nar date in the tomb A at Hilli North were the victims of the Akkadian invasion.³³

The overseas campaign was a great opportunity to acquire a booty of rare and valuable stones. This time we know that all the goods were loaded onto ships and sent to the capital city of Agade via the Persian Gulf – *He quarried the black stone of the mountains across the Lower Sea, loaded on ships, and moored at the quay of Agade.*³⁴ It is hard to imagine the real reasons which prompted Maništušu to trigger an overseas campaign, unless this action was taken in consequence of the military events at Parḥšum in the times of Rīmuš.

Narām-Sîn's military activity

At the beginning of his reign, Narām-Sîn (c. 2254-2218 BC.) faced the "Great Revolt", a massive and forceful uprising led by Iphur-Kiš of Kiš, Amar-Girid of Uruk and Enlil-nizu of Lagaš. Almost all the lands rebelled against Narām-Sîn but the complete lack of military coordination between the self-proclaimed rulers of Kiš and Uruk allowed him to crush the rebellion.³⁵

It seems that this political confusion affected the eastern regions, which lay awaiting any sign of Akkadian weakness. Thus, some OB literary compositions mention Marḥaši, Elam and Meluḥḥa among the powers against which Narām-Sîn went into battle. In this context, it is important to note that the Elam of that time was under permanent political control of the Akkadian empire, which is indicated by the fact that the successive rulers of Susa were appointees or political subordinates of Narām-Sîn. Furthermore, bilateral relations between Narām-Sîn and the Elamite ruler might have hinged on a kind of a diplomatic treaty.³⁶

After the victory over all the eastern political powers, Narām-Sîn, just like his predecessor Maništušu, crossed the Lower Sea, and *conquered Magan and captured Manium, the ruler of Magan.*³⁷ Furthermore, it is well-known that *"In their mountains he quarried diorite stone and brought it to Agade"*.³⁸ Magan's campaign is also mentioned in two OB tablet copies from Nippur in the following passage: *Further, he crossed the (Lower) Sea and conquered Magan, in the midst of the sea, and washed his weapons in the Lower Sea.*³⁹ This spectacular campaign is attested by a series of stone

²⁶ De Graef 2013: 265.

²⁷ Carter, Stolper 1984: 13.

²⁸ Steinkeller 1982: 265, Fig. 2.

²⁹ Cf. Potts 1994: 104-105 who points out some translation difficulties regarding this part of the "Standard Inscription".

³⁰ Frayne 1993: 75, E2.1.3.1: 9-12.

³¹ Frayne 1993: 75, E2.1.3.1: 13-19.

³² Frayne 1993: 76, E2.1.3.1: 25-30.

³³ Potts 1990: 138.

³⁴ Frayne 1993: 76, E2.1.3.1: 31-41.

³⁵ Frayne 1993: 84; Westenholz 1999: 53.

³⁶ Carter, Stolper 1984: 13-14.

³⁷ Frayne 1993: 117, E2.1.4.13, ii 1-4.

³⁸ Frayne 1993: 117, E2.1.4.13, ii 8-14.

³⁹ Frayne 1993: 97, E2.1.4.3. iv 19-32.

vessels bearing the name of Narām-Sîn and the phrase *the booty of Magan*.⁴⁰

It is striking that Narām-Sîn followed the footsteps of his predecessor Maništušu by crossing the Persian Gulf and attacking the land of Magan. Thus, we may raise the question of how justifiable and sensible this action was. The answer to this question, beside acquiring booty is apparently gaining political control over Magan. One of the OB texts lists the political entities which rebelled against the Akkadian king. The text mentions “Mannu, king of Magan”⁴¹ among the rebel leaders. One may speculate, basing on some Akkadian texts, that the land of Magan was responsible for the export of copper and some bronze finished goods to the Akkadian empire, moreover it is known that a courier of Magan was present in the Sargonic Umma.⁴² Therefore, the military campaign against Magan, as launched by Narām-Sîn aimed to protect the Akkadian trade interests in the Persian Gulf.

Trade and natural resources

A dynamic military campaign triggered by the victorious Sargon towards the south, at that time politically dominated by Lugal-zagesi of Lagaš,⁴³ granted him open access to the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf) and should be regarded as a strategic step towards a greater economic stability of the newborn empire, since the majority of Southern Mesopotamian economy hinged on the Sumerian trading seaports, at least from the times of Urnanše of Lagaš (c. 2500 BC.).⁴⁴ In other words, free access to the Persian Gulf not only enabled the Akkadians to maintain a regular flow of goods from Meluhha, Magan and Tilmun to the capital city of Agade,⁴⁵ but also to establish profound economic stability in the country. However, Akkadian dominance over the pivotal Sumerian heartland was not of peaceful nature, which is indicated by the firm and brutal military actions triggered against the Sumerian insurgents during the rule of Rīmuš (c. 2278-2270 BC.) and Narām-Sîn (c. 2254-2218 BC.). Suffice it to recall king Rīmuš, who

crushed the rebellion killing tens of thousands of people or putting them in captivity or into forced labor camps.⁴⁶

The military drive towards Simurrum,⁴⁷ Mari and Ebla as far as the *Cedar Forest and the Silver Mountains*⁴⁸ in the times of Sargon delineated the north-western limit of Akkadian influence while demonstrating the high mobility of the Akkadian light troops and showing their advantage over the neighboring military powers.⁴⁹ The advantage of the Akkadian army hinged on a few military improvements, with particular emphasis on the application of projectile weaponry such as slings and the composite bow. The latter was used with arrows equipped with bronze arrowheads.⁵⁰ The draw weight of the Akkadian composite bow could oscillate around 65-80 pounds,⁵¹ thus characterizing the Akkadian bow with a comparatively long range.⁵²

The conquered political entities, permanently controlled by the Akkadian empire were supervised by governors. However, contrary to the north-western policy, the eastern military conquests were probably missing this praxis, with the one explicit exception of Susa.⁵³

The northern direction of the Akkadian military expansion was carried out in the times of Narām-Sîn, who conquered the areas of the Habur Basin and the Upper Euphrates.⁵⁴ This part of northern Mesopotamia was usually recognized as the hub of copper trading routes, which can supply reasons for the location of Narām-Sîn’s palace at Tell Brak. Nevertheless, even though there exists evidence of the existence of substantial copper deposits in eastern and central Anatolia at Ergani Maden, there is no clear textual or analytical evidence of the presence of Anatolian copper in Mesopotamia.⁵⁵ Thus, the means of copper transport along the north-south trading routes need further investigation since – as pointed out by Potts⁵⁶ – we lack any written documents from the lost

⁴⁰ Potts 1989: 131-137.

⁴¹ Potts 1990: 137.

⁴² Potts 1990: 137, 141.

⁴³ Frayne 1993: 7, 10, E2.1.1.1: 12-31.

⁴⁴ Leemans 1960: 11; Cooper 1986: 22-23, 28-30, La 1.2, La 1.17, La 1.20, La 1.23.

⁴⁵ Frayne 1993: 28, E2.1.1.11: 9-13; Postgate 1992: 218.

⁴⁶ Foster 2016: 6; Foster 1985: 27; Westenholz 1999: 41.

⁴⁷ Mercer 1946: 5, Sargon 10.

⁴⁸ Frayne 1993: 30, E2.1.1.12: 13-21.

⁴⁹ Westenholz 1999: 66; Postgate 1992: 246.

⁵⁰ Gabriel 2002: 56-57; Foster 2016: 167; Hamblin 2006: 89-95; Watkins 1989: 25.

⁵¹ Westenholz 1999: 66.

⁵² Hamblin 2006: 89, 95.

⁵³ Potts 1994: 99.

⁵⁴ Frayne 1993: 86.

⁵⁵ Potts 1994: 150.

⁵⁶ Potts 1994: 150.

capital city of Agade, documents whose existence could disclose the mechanisms of the imperially organized trade. The same difficulty concerns the silver trade – the *Silver Mountains* encountered in Sargon’s royal inscriptions, usually identified with the silver mines at Keban in the Taurus mountains on the Upper Euphrates, are here the best example of the topic.⁵⁷

The southern frontier of Mesopotamia was delineated by the Lower Sea, which according to Sumerian texts served as a busy trade route since the ED period, or even earlier (the *casus* of Tilmun tax collector ZĀ DILMUN encountered in the archaic lexical context), providing the Sumerians with access to some rare and valuable goods.⁵⁸ Sumerian harbors were part of a much longer trading route, connecting the Arabian Peninsula with north-western Syria and the Mediterranean coast,⁵⁹ which is indicated by the names of various goods (i.e. copper, tin, wood coming from Tilmun) to be found in Ebla,⁶⁰ located close (approx. 50 km) to the modern Aleppo. Perhaps it is also worth to note the discovery of 37 kg of unworked lapis-lazuli in the Palace G at Ebla in this context since it can be seen as evidence of a long-distance trade between Syria and the East.⁶¹

It seems that the Akkadian policy towards the surrounding countries was somehow altered. Thus, Potts⁶² argued that the north-western expansion was likely triggered to secure trade routes, whereas the eastern one, covering mainly Iranian highlands, sought to pacify the eastern political powers mitigating the risk of any hostile military rides and getting impressive booty. However, it must be pointed out that the Akkadian eastern policy towards the Gulf, that is Tilmun, Magan and Meluḥḥa was of a different nature, since these overseas political entities were traditionally regarded by the Mesopotamians as profitable business partners. It seems that Sargon and his successors were interested in maintaining a regular flow of goods via the Persian Gulf free from unneeded struggle. The stake was high, because at least from the ED period onwards, the overseas trade gave the Sumerians and later the Akkadians an easy access to a wide range of commodities including wood, lapis-lazuli, cornelian, copper, tin, hard stone, silver

and gold.⁶³ Simultaneously, the Mesopotamian overseas export involved some agricultural crops such as barley, emmer, flour, pork fat, wool and some oil varieties.⁶⁴

Religion and ideology

Politics and economy played an important role in Akkadian empire but there exists another crucial feature which might have been the driving force of Akkadian expansion. It was the Akkadian religion, with the central position of the goddess of war Aštar. Although the beginning of Sargon’s political career remains unclear,⁶⁵ it may be tentatively reconstructed on the basis of the much later ‘Sargon Legend’ (Ist millennium BC.). This text is striking, establishing apparently a clear and intimate relationship between the future king Sargon (described in the text as a gardener) and the goddess Ištar. Sargon’s extraordinary status is clearly emphasized, since the text points out that Sargon was able to hold his kingship for a very long time because he was a favorite⁶⁶ or even a lover⁶⁷ of the goddess Ištar. It is not known if all the other Akkadian rulers were in the same kind of a close relationship with the goddess as king Sargon known from the “Sargon Legend” was, but it is clear that Sargon bore the title of the *deputy of Eštar* (MAŠKIM.GI₄ dINANNA).⁶⁸ What is more, the fourth Akkadian ruler Narām-Sîn is named, at least in one of his royal inscriptions, *the spouse of the goddess Aštar Annunītum*⁶⁹ or as has been proposed by Kienast *the warrior of the Ištar- Annunītum*.⁷⁰ In this context, it is worth nothing that during Narām-Sîn’s military Magan campaign, the king calls himself *the mighty, (who is) on a mission of the goddess Aštar*.⁷¹

Indeed, in the context of the IIIrd millennium BC. Mesopotamia we come across a new phenomenon of the Semitic goddess Aštar/Eštar (called Ištar from the OB period onwards) which was officially introduced into the Sumerian pantheon

⁵⁷ Potts 1994: 163.

⁵⁸ Heimpel 1987: 39-41.

⁵⁹ Moorey 1999: 6-10.

⁶⁰ Heimpel 1987: 41-42.

⁶¹ Genz 2012: 620.

⁶² Potts 1994: 282-286.

⁶³ Heimpel 1987: 49, 70-76; Abb. I; Potts 1990: 85-89.

⁶⁴ Heimpel 1987: 65, Tab. 2.

⁶⁵ Heinz 2007: 67.

⁶⁶ Westenholz 1997: 41, Text 2: 12-13.

⁶⁷ Lewis 1980: 25, col. i: 12-13.

⁶⁸ Roberts 1972: 147.

⁶⁹ Roberts: 1972: 147; Frayne 1993: 88, E2.1.4.1: Col. ii 8-9.

⁷⁰ Kienast 1990: 201-202.

⁷¹ Frayne 1993: 97, E2.1.4.3: Rec. col. iv: 33-36.

by the Akkadian invaders. It seems that it was a deliberate action since her divine nature was more or less akin to that of the Sumerian goddess Inanna.⁷² However, the Akkadians, in contrast to the Sumerians, were more interested in the goddess's warlike nature by glorifying her involvement in military struggle and warfare. As a result, the Akkadian period witnessed the phenomenon of an extraordinary embodiment of the goddess Eštar, called in literary texts Eštar-annunītum- *Eštar-She-Who-Continually -Skirmishes* or *Eštar-The-Skirmisher*.⁷³

Her impulsive and sanguinary nature is best expressed in the Mesopotamian hymnic tradition. For example, in one of the hymns composed, most likely by Enḫeduanna, the goddess is characterized as the one who “*In her joyful heart she performs in the plain the song of death*”⁷⁴ whereas in a hymn dedicated to her temple in Ulmaš she is the one who washes the tools in the “*blood of battle*” and opens the “*door of battle*”.⁷⁵ In another hymnic composition she is said to be a *speeding carnage*⁷⁶ for whom the battle is an amusement, which she tirelessly enjoys: *It is her game to speed conflict and battle, untiring (...)*.⁷⁷ In the same text she is also characterized as the one who *brings about the destruction of the mountain lands from the east to the west*.⁷⁸ She punishes severely those who are against her will, as in the case of recalcitrant mount Ebiḫ, described in the literary composition known as *Inana and Ebiḫ*, which is usually interpreted by modern scholars as a poetic description of Sargon's military activity or perhaps Naram-Sin's ride against a hostile political entity located in the area of Jebel Hamrin.⁷⁹ In a further example of Enḫeduanna's hymnic poetry, Inana is called the *destroyer of the foreign lands*.⁸⁰ Thus, Sargon's daughter persuades the reader that Mesopotamian enemies are terrified, and humble themselves before her divine mistress: *At your battle-cry, my*

lady, the foreign lands bow low,⁸¹ whereas elsewhere in the same text we read: *Let it be known that you destroy the rebel lands! Let it be known that you roar at the foreign lands! Let it be known that you crush heads!*⁸²

It is interesting that in one of the Mesopotamian tigi songs, Inana is praised as the goddess who seated her lover and husband Amaušumgalanna as a king upon her holy dais. She is also apparently the source of the king's strength.⁸³ The king Amaušumgalanna in turn is the one who conquers the rebel lands: *When he goes to the rebel lands, to the distant mountains, he spends his time in the mêlée of battle*.⁸⁴ He indeed enjoys the battle just as his wife does, since in the subsequent lines we read *he who for you stands complete in his manhood rejoices in battle as at a festival, and for you he destroys the rebel lands and houses*.⁸⁵ Finally, the reader is informed that the king's conquests are dedicated to his spouse Inana: *For you Amaušumgalanna, the mighty hero, kills everyone with his shining šita mace*⁸⁶, and several lines further *Amaušumgalanna competes majestically for you in battle, cutting a swathe like a dragon*.⁸⁷

Thus, the warlike goddess Aštar might have been considered an ideological instrument used firstly by Sargon and later by his successors, not only to fuse and unite the Sumerian and the Akkadian cultural tradition⁸⁸ in order to give the newborn empire a firm ideological foundation, but also to give a religious justification to the aggressive Akkadian conquest policy. One could assume that the Akkadian military expansion was founded on the religious imperative of relentless combat embodied not only in Aštar's warlike nature, but also in her close relationship with the figure of the Akkadian king, who advocated for bloodshed in order to charm his mistress. This ideological factor of religious origin would explain why in some

⁷² Asher-Greve, Westenholz 2013: 60-62.

⁷³ Roberts 1972: 147.

⁷⁴ Sjöberg 1975: 183, col. 43-44.

⁷⁵ Sjöberg, Bergmann, Gragg 1969: 47, TH no. 40: 515-516.

⁷⁶ Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 93; 18-28.

⁷⁷ Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 93-94; 18-28.

⁷⁸ Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 94-95; 60-72.

⁷⁹ Delnero 2011: 136-137; Limet 1971: 13.

⁸⁰ Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 316; 13-19; Cf. Hallo, Van Dijk 1968: 17, iii: 17.

⁸¹ Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 316: 20-33; Cf. Hallo, Van Dijk 1968: 17, iii: 20.

⁸² Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi 2004: 319: 122-138; Cf. Hallo, Van Dijk 1968: 31, XV: 125-125a.

⁸³ ETCSL t/c.4.07.5: 5-8, 21- 24; cf. Falkenstein 1953: 73.

⁸⁴ ETCSL t/c.4.07.5: 25-26; cf. Falkenstein 1953: 74.

⁸⁵ ETCSL t/c.4.07.5: 31-32; cf. Falkenstein 1953: 75.

⁸⁶ ETCSL t/c.4.07.5: 33; cf. Falkenstein 1953: 75.

⁸⁷ ETCSL t/c.4.07.5: 41; cf. Falkenstein 1953: 75.

⁸⁸ Hallo, Van Dijk 1968: 6-7; Asher-Greve, Westenholz 2013: 60, 62.

Akkadian poems written by Enheduanna and dedicated to Aštar, the goddess of war seems to be elevated to an extraordinarily divine status, which allows her to compete with the highest-ranking gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon – Anu⁸⁹ and Enlil.⁹⁰ However, as pointed out by Westenholz,⁹¹ this topic needs further detailed studies due to the exceptional character of Enheduanna's poetry.

It is not yet clear enough which factors prompted Sargon and his daughter Enheduanna to set up the goddess Aštar as a pivotal divine figure shaping Akkadian cultural identity. However, it is well-known that Aštar is present as an important divine protector devastating the enemies of Akkadian kings in some stereotyped Sargon's, Maništušu's, Narām-Sîn's and Šarkališarri's⁹² curse formulas. Her impulsive nature and some unique warlike properties⁹³ might have been the driving force of the fierce Akkadian military policy, including foreign military rides carried out in very distant lands, which had never witnessed direct Mesopotamian military presence before.

Conclusions

The eastern military expansion of the Akkadian state stemmed from a prudent policy hinged on the aim of gaining total control over southern Mesopotamia, allowing direct access to the Sumerian seaports. The violent military actions undertaken by Akkadian kings in the Sumerian heartland, directed towards rebellious governors and their supporters, crushed the hostile forces and secured the Akkadian trade interest by keeping an undisturbed flow of goods via the capital city of Agade, between Akkadian overseas partners (Meluhḫa, Magan and Tilmun) and the north (Syria and the Levant). Sargon's northern campaign towards Mari and Ebla demonstrated the improvement and the high mobility of the Akkadian army. Sargon, as well as his successor Rīmuš (with the exception of Arawa), struggled with Elam, Zaḫara, Arawa and Paraḫšum. Additionally, their campaign to Paraḫšum is of special importance, since if correctly equated with Marhaši, it may be seen as an example of a far-sighted policy of gaining control over a hostile and distant political entity,

which might have had a crucial impact on the Gulf trade. The involvement of the Akkadian interests in the east is vivid in the reigns of Maništušu and Narām-Sîn, who launched military rides against hostile political entities located somewhere on the Oman peninsula, which required a greater organizational involvement since the Akkadian army was obliged to cross the Persian Gulf.

The far Akkadian military rides towards the east may be seen as an example of a thoughtful foreign policy protecting the imperial business, but the eager commitment of Akkadian kings looking for a military clash might have been based on ideological grounds and rooted in their religious beliefs. These beliefs hinged probably on the powerful image of Aštar, who was perceived as a skirmisher, exhilarated by battle. Thus, her will and passion, on an earthly level, was satisfied by the Akkadian kings who, just like their divine mistress, spread destruction over the foreign rebelled lands.

Abbreviations

- AAE Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy, Copenhagen, Oxford
 BAI Bulletin of the Asia Institute Nova Series, Bloomfield Hills, Detroit
 ETCSL The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, University of Oxford – <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>
 JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven
 NABU Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires, Paris, Rouen
 NIN Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity, Groningen
 OBO Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Freiburg, Schweiz
 OrNS Orientalia Nova Series, Rome
 RLA Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie, Berlin, Leipzig
 ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie, Berlin

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⁸⁹ Hallo, Van Dijk 1968: 23, (vii) 59.

⁹⁰ Sjöberg 1975: 179, 187; col. 3, 6, 14, 97.

⁹¹ Westenholz 1999: 38-39.

⁹² Roberts 1972: 147.

⁹³ Abush 2000: 24.

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Marcin Z. Paszke
ORCID 0000-001-5815-1467
Institute of Archeology
Department of Mediterranean Archaeology
University of Gdańsk
marcin.paszke@ug.edu.pl