

“IN DEATH GROUND”: ADDITIONAL ARMY LISTS.

PART 3). “ PRE-COLUMBIAN AMERICA, c. 1200 to 1520 AD”.

This time, a rather more exotic subject for the next batch of army lists for “In Death Ground” – the Native American armies of the three centuries before the European conquest. It might seem to be well outside the mainstream, both geographically and chronologically, but these are some of the most colourful and interesting wargames armies imaginable, and there is a lot of scope for both historical American-versus-American clashes and “what if?” games involving various conquerors from the Old World. Although the time span of the rules officially ends in 1300, it seems more sensible to extend these particular lists up to the eve of European contact, or even the early part of the “Conquistador period”. After all the technological advances of the 14th and 15th centuries left America unaffected, and most of our evidence for these armies comes from the contact period or just before.

A Note on Weapons and Fighting Styles.

Most Native Americans still relied on flint or obsidian for their blades and spearpoints (though a few peoples had a limited amount of copper or bronze), and this put them at a disadvantage when fighting Conquistadors using steel swords and armour. However there is no reason to penalise them in games against other stone age armies, which is the main purpose for which these lists are designed, so points values and weapon effectiveness remain the same as in the standard rules. A scenario which pits them against metal using opponents (not just medieval Europeans but possibly Arabs or Ming Chinese) is of course an interesting possibility, and in this case we recommend ignoring all Native American armour when in close combat, and classifying all armoured Old World troops as Heavily Armoured, regardless of the actual extent of their protection. The Mesoamerican spear thrower or “atlatl” enabled spears to be thrown further and with greater force than by hand, and when used by Skirmishers these weapons are classed and costed the same as bows.

Most descriptions of American fighting methods imply that, although they deployed in very impressively organised battle arrays, they usually fought in loose order, with a lot of skirmishing, advancing and retreating rather than slugging it out in shoulder to shoulder formations. Therefore the default classification for most of them is Skirmishers, which reflects their mobility and propensity for surprise attacks, as well as putting them at a realistic disadvantage against Europeans. Note that Elite Skirmishers are actually fairly effective in close combat anyway. There are, however, a few exceptions for people described as unusually steady in close combat, or unusually dependent on a single ferocious charge to decide their battles.

Aztecs and other Central American armies were historically just as interested in taking prisoners for sacrifice as in winning in a more conventional sense. If you want to reflect this in your games we suggest comparing points at the end of the game, awarded on the following basis. A player gains 2 points for each opposing base destroyed in close combat, and 1 for each destroyed by shooting or which has retired or been removed from the table due to accumulated disorder. The winner doubles his points total if at the end of the game his opponent has no units left on the table. Each point represents a number of captives seized in close combat or wounded and picked up later, hence the bonus for the side which ends up as master of the field.

LATER TOLTEC, AZTEC, TLAXCALAN OR TARASCAN (Disciplined).

These were the centralised agricultural states of central Mexico, who all shared a common military culture inherited from the Toltecs. The latter had controlled the area until the beginning of the 13th century, when a series of invasions from the north overwhelmed them, but their cultural influence remained strong. “Later Toltec” covers successor states such as Colhuacan and Cholula, which were mostly conquered by the new powers in the region by the early 14th century. These new powers were the Aztecs and their relatives, of whom the most powerful were the people known to us as the Tlaxcalans and Tarascans. These fought and were organised in a similar style to the Aztecs, although they made greater use of bows, and the Tarascans were noted for their ferocious charges which frightened even their Aztec enemies.

Jaguar or Eagle Knights or similar elites: Elite Skirmishers with atlatls (10 points)	2 - 4
Quachicqueh or Otontin: Furious Elite Skirmishers with atlatls (10 points)	0 - 1
Followers or mercenaries: Skirmishers with bows, slings or atlatls (6 points)	2 - 8
Chichimec mercenaries: Elite Skirmishers with bows (10 points)	0 - 2

- Any or all Elite troops may be Armoured, with wooden or textile protection worn beneath the war suits (+2 points).
- After 1450, any or all Elites in a Tarascan army can be Furious.
- Only Later Toltecs before 1350 can use Chichimec mercenaries.

Home terrain is Cultivated.

MIXTEC AND ZAPOTEC (Organised).

The Mixtecs and Zapotecs occupied the mountainous region of what is now Oaxaca in Mexico. The former were invaders who subjected the native Zapotecs in the 13th century, but by the late 15th they were fighting side by side against the Aztecs. The Zapotecs fought with very long spears, which are considered to justify treating them as Warriors. However the Spanish regarded them as “devious”, and alleged that they preferred to let their more warlike Mixtec allies bear the brunt of the fighting.

Zapotec spearmen: Raw Warriors (4 points)	1 - 4
Mixtecs: Skirmishers with bows or atlatls (6 points)	1 - 4
Local highlanders: Skirmishers with bows or slings (6 points)	2 - 4

- Before 1400 an army must, and before 1450 it may, consist entirely of either Zapotecs or Mixtecs, in which case the maximum and minimum number of units allowed for that nationality is doubled, and the other cannot be used.
- Up to half the figures fielded may be Armoured (+2 points).
- Up to half the Mixtecs fielded may be upgraded to Elite (+4 points).

Home terrain is Mountain.

MAYAN (Organised or Tribal).

The Mayans were located in the Yucatan Peninsula, and in what is now northern Guatemala. Their ancient civilisation was already in decline by the beginning of the 13th century, and its various successor states had come under the control of Toltec invaders from the north. Another wave of Toltecs, known to the Mayans as Itza, arrived around 1224, and although they were unpopular with the local people the Toltec-controlled city states often employed them as mercenaries. They probably introduced the bow and possibly the atlatl, which remained in use among the Mayan professional warrior class, the Holkan, after the Itza were thrown out in 1461. Against the Spanish the Mayans employed skirmishing tactics with considerable success, some groups holding out in the jungle until the 17th century.

Holkan: Elite Skirmishers with spears (8 points) 2 - 6
Commoners: Skirmishers with slings or bows (6 points) 2 - 6

- Up to half the bases fielded may be upgraded to Armoured with cotton body armour (+2 points).
- Between 1224 and 1461 only up to 2 Elite units may be classed as Furious, as Itza Jaguar or Eagle knights. If this option is used these units may also be re-equipped with bows or atlatls (+2 points).
- Any or all Mayan Holkan may be re-equipped with bows or atlatls after 1461 (+2 points).

Home terrain is Forest.

HUAXTEC (Organised).

The Huastecs were a Mayan people who were unlucky enough to find themselves isolated in central Mexico, where they attracted the relentless hostility of the Aztecs. Nevertheless they were a tough bunch who impressed both Aztecs and Spaniards with the ferocity of their attacks, and also their steadiness and ability to rally after a setback, on one occasion awaiting the Spaniards in close order in complete silence. On this basis they are classed here as Warriors rather than Skirmishers. They fought mainly with bows, but apparently also had Aztec style military orders armed with spears and shields.

Jaguar or Eagle Knights: Furious Armoured Warriors (8 points) 0 - 2
Warrior Bowmen (8 points) 4 - 8
Skirmishers with bows (6 points) 0 - 2

Home terrain may be Cultivated or Mountain.

CHICHIMEC (Tribal).

The Chichimecs or “Dog People” of northern Mexico were the despised country cousins of the Aztecs, but they put up a much better fight against the Spanish, resisting throughout the 16th century. They were famous as swift runners and deadly archers, using exceptionally powerful bows.

Elite Skirmishers with bows (10 points)	4 - 10
Youths: Skirmishers with bows (6 points)	0 - 4

Home terrain may be Mountain or Desert.

COLUMBIAN (Organised or Tribal).

The peoples of what is now Columbia included the Muisca, Paez, Pijao and Popayan. The characteristic weapon of the region was a long spear, often wielded in two hands. Despite the great lengths reported for some of these spears they do not seem to have been used in the sort of drilled formations which would qualify their bearers as pikemen, but classification as Warriors seems reasonable. Most men appear to have fought naked, but chiefs were spectacularly arrayed in helmets and breastplates of gold, giving rise among the Conquistadors to the legend of El Dorado.

Warriors (6 points)	3 - 8
Skirmishers with bows or atlatls (6 points)	1 - 3

Home terrain is Mountain if Muisca, otherwise Forest or Mountain.

CHANCA, c. 1200 to 1450 AD (Organised).

The Chanca were the leaders of a loose confederation of Andean peoples who provided the main opposition for the Incas until the 1440s. The Chanca themselves seem to have fought mainly with very long spears, and their allies with clubs, shields and throwing spears. As in most of the mountain districts, slings were presumably also popular.

Spearmen: Warriors (6 points)	2 - 6
Skirmishers with spears (4 points)	1 - 4
Skirmishers with slings (6 points)	1 - 4

- Up to 4 units of any type may be upgraded to Armoured (+2 points).

Home terrain is Mountain.

CHIMU, c. 1200 to 1466 AD (Organised).

The Chimu were a people of the Peruvian coastal desert, whose once powerful kingdom was conquered by the Incas in the 1460s. Not much is known about their military methods but they seem to have fought mainly with clubs, spears and atlatls, and some may have worn textile armour.

Skirmishers with atlatls (6 points)	4 - 10
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- Up to a third of the bases fielded may be upgraded to Elite (+4 points). Any or all Elites, and up to half of the remainder, may be Armoured (+2 points).

Home terrain is Desert.

INCA, 1438 to 1520 AD (Disciplined).

The enormous Inca empire which occupied most of the Andes Mountains when the Conquistadores arrived was a relatively new phenomenon, having been created by the conquests of Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438 – 1471) and his successors. Its core consisted of the Quechua speaking peoples of present day Peru, but it incorporated a great diversity of neighbouring tribes, some of which contributed troops fighting in their traditional styles. The empire was highly centralised, however, and Quechua culture was routinely imposed on everyone within reach. Inca armies were well organised, and could be extremely large even by European standards.

Warrior “Bowmen” with slings (see Special Rule below) (7 points)	3 - 8
Skirmishers with slings (6 points)	1 - 3
Chanca subjects: Warriors (6 points)	0 - 1
Chimu subjects: Skirmishers with atlatls (6 points)	0 - 1
Forest tribes: Skirmishers with bows (6 points)	0 - 1

- Up to 1 Warrior unit may be upgraded to Elite and Armoured (+4 points) as an Inca’s bodyguard.

Home terrain is Mountain.

Special Rule:

The Inca combination of close order troops armed with slings is unusual, and we class them here as Warrior Bowmen, but with a shooting range of 6” instead of the usual 8”. Their points cost is reduced by 1 to compensate for this.

AMAZONIAN (Tribal).

Before European intervention the floodplains of the Amazon and its tributaries were occupied by numerous farming tribes, while the drier forests in between were roamed by smaller bands of hunter-gatherers. Both seem to have relied mainly on their bows, with which they were exceptionally skilled. Although apparently a rather obscure subject, suitable figures for these and the Tupi (see below) are available in 28mm from Copplestone Castings.

Skirmishers with bows (6 points)	4 - 10
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- If representing the Botocudo of Brazil, whose desperate courage so intimidated the Portuguese, any or all Skirmishers may be upgraded to Elite (+4 points) and/or classed as Furious.

Home terrain is Forest.

TUPI (Tribal).

The Tupi occupied the coastal regions of what is now Brazil, a fertile territory from which they had driven out the original occupants about three centuries before the Europeans arrived. They kept their population in check by means of ferocious wars among neighbouring Tupi tribes, in which opponents were either slaughtered and eaten, or taken prisoner to be fattened up for future feasts. They fought with powerful bows and two-handed wooden clubs, and were noted for their courage and the ferocity of their charges. Although much of their warfare consisted of exchanges of arrows from a distance, they are classified here as Warriors because of their skill at hand-to-hand fighting and their notorious lack of tactical subtlety.

Veteran Warriors: Furious Warrior Bowmen (8 points)

4 - 8

Youths: Skirmishers with bows (6 points)

1 - 2

Home terrain may be Forest or Coastal.