

Introduction

In the middle of last year I decided to build a new allied contingent for my 15mm DBM Mongol Conquest army. This was meant to be a simple addition to an existing set of figures rather than sorting out a new army.

After looking at the DBM army lists [1] adding a Cilician Armenian contingent emerged as a strong favourite. The only proviso being that I could successfully "morph" the Mongol Conquest army into the core of an Ilkhanid army. A little more checking showed this was a very easy step. So all I needed was some Cilician Armenian figures, a rough idea what they looked like and the time to paint them.

As you might expect things did not work out that straightforward. So I thought I'd pass on a little of the fun I had finishing this project; share the information I found and fulfil a promise to Tony Barr who was a major help on condition I write an article for Slingshot.

Finding figures

For a Cilician Armenian ally I needed figures to represent knights, spearmen, archers, auxilia and psiloi. As they are classed as irregular troops I aimed for a fair degree of variety in poses, shields etc. This is where the fun began.

Initially, my main sources for dress and appearance were Ian Heath's book on the Crusades [2] and the Middle Ages [3].

Few manufacturers offer Cilician Armenian figures and I had a classic problem matching scales and styles. Finding a wide enough range or compatible mixture had me scratching my head at more than one show. I began to realise that I probably wasn't going to get exactly what I wanted.

A hard day's (k)night

For the knights I had settled on round helmets, mail, surcoat, unbarded horses, and round shields to give them a different, more eastern look [2]. Heater and kite shields were also used [2,3].

Finding figures like this proved a bit time consuming. Essex offered the best choice given that I wanted variation: CRU 28 therefore formed the bulk of the knights with variation from MID 93a, MID80a and CRU 29 for command figures. The only adaptation required was the removal of some shield adornments and

the odd central boss, with the latter mainly for variety.

Once I began to paint the figures the main choices I faced were the colour of the surcoat and the colours used on the shields. White and other light colours seemed an obvious choice for the surcoat given the hot climate etc. I wondered if there were other choices due to an eastern influence and the availability of silks.

I was taken by the simple dark and light striped pattern shown in the Crusades book [2] but wondered what colour combinations were most common; more on these points later.

Poor b**y infantry**

For the vast bulk of spearmen Heath's [2] book gives an excellent start: soft hat, long coat to just above the knees, trousers, pointy shoes and a large round shield without a central boss. In the text turbans are mentioned, as is a near universal beard.

I intended to use the same type of figures for spearmen, auxilia and psiloi with the latter differing only in having more dramatic poses. Once again Essex came to the rescue, but I have to say that I was not totally satisfied with what I found.

The best fit to me was MER 32: a Celtic Islesman! The shield is a little too large, the helmet is not soft - but is the right shape - and the coat is below the knees: even so it still looks right en masse. I found MER 32 after painting 50% of the spearmen and after I'd decided to go for figures wearing turbans from the CRU and AEA ranges!

The main difficulty was making sure they have beards etc. Sadly, the best looking figures were nearly always clean-shaven. Overall, there always seemed to be something missing.

The archers were much easier. I found MID 86 almost ideal.

As for painting problems the only thing I was missing here was a guide as to the basic colour ways and shields colours: if any. The fallback options were browns and various greens to represent a low class irregular militia with leather shields.

The Internet and Slingshot

At this stage I was beginning to go off this idea. I had lots of figures - not cheap - some half-painted and five outstanding key questions. I

turned to the Internet to see what others knew and if they would help.

I posted a short message on the wargaming newsgroup. This attracted a lot of replies after some poor soul criticised my use of the word research. I was amazed at how the newsgroup readers ripped the guy to shreds. Unfortunately, none helped me with the specific questions.

Tony Barr offered to ask the members of the DBM list for me and to post the message on the Society web-site. The web article was also published in Slingshot 201 [4].

This concerted effort brought in a small number of substantive replies over a period of months. Each had either a view or piece of new information:

- Brendan Moyle confirmed the near universality of the beard and suggested that any clean-shaven figures could represent Frankish mercenaries.
- A brief response in Slingshot 203 [5] by R. A. Jacombs pointed me to various Osprey books [6, 7] and suggested that the stripes might be red/white or blue/white.
- Duncan Head also pointed out these Ospreys and to a third [8] which contained one infantry figure with a round brown leather shield.

Something else

In the meantime I had found all sorts of other useful information on the Cilician Armenians.

The best source I came across came courtesy of a second hand bookshop: Runciman's third volume in his history of the Crusades [9]. This contains a lot of information on the co-operation between the Armenians and the Ilkhan during the decline of the Kingdom of Acre: excellent for a general overview.

Nicolle's medieval source book [10] has a brief and introductory section.

There is a considerable amount of detailed Armenian history texts on the Internet if you look hard enough.

Final outcome

I decided to get on with the job of painting the figures so I made some decisions.

Knights:

- Mainly white surcoats, with creams, off-whites, mid-greens and reds for variety.

- I also used some figures without surcoats.
- Shields were mainly stripped red/white, blue/white, and yellow/black.
- Some shields were segmented with solid colour where figure detail gave little option.

Infantry:

- Brown leather shields some with metallic bosses and "decorative" discs if necessary.
- Coats in all shades of brown with the occasional blue and light natural colours for variety.

In many instances the figures dictated embellishments: when quarters were scored into the shield or the shield discs were too difficult to file off.

Conclusions

After all the effort and searching I have a Cilician Armenian contingent for my Ilkhanid army. Until this adventure I had had little trouble deciding on colour schemes for my armies. This small project was very different.

It has shown me a new side of wargaming and I would like to thank all those people who helped me along the way by freely sharing what they knew. I would also like a pound for all those, not mentioned in this article, who couldn't resist a little dig before quoting the obvious.

Looking back I feel that I achieved about a 50:50 result. The knights look very eastern if not exactly Armenian. The infantry are a mixed lot but if anything they look a bit too generic.

The one thing I do know is that few people will be in a position to know otherwise - unless they've read this article.

One completely unexpected plus point is that I have begun to appreciate one of the major advantages of fantasy wargaming.

References

1. DBM army lists, Book 4, 1st Ed June 1994, Wargames Research Group.
2. Page 73, Armies and Enemies of the Crusades 1096 - 1291, Heath, 1978, Wargames Research Group.
3. Page 123, Armies and Enemies of the Middle Ages, Volume 1, Heath, 1982, Wargames Research Group.
4. Slingshot 60, 201, 1999.
5. Slingshot 57, 203, 1999.
6. Byzantine Armies 1181-1461 AD, Ian Heath, 1995, Osprey.
7. Saladin and the Saracens, David Nicolle, 1986, Osprey.
8. Crusades, David Nicolle, 1988, Osprey Elite.
9. A History of the Crusades, Volume III, S Runciman, 1971, Pelican.
10. Medieval Warfare Source Book, Volume 2, David Nicolle, 1996, Arms and Armour.

Infantry figure Essex codes

CRU	3, 4, 5, 7, 10.
AEA	9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 23.
MER	32.
MID	86.