



# The Urartian Army on the Battlefield: Strategy and Tactics

## Urartu Ordusu Savaş Meydanında: Strateji ve Taktikler\*

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### ABSTRACT

The Urartians, founded in Eastern Anatolia during the Iron Age, are one of the most important states that shaped the history of Anatolia. They became the most powerful state in the peripheral region by dominating the kingdoms and cities. Despite challenging geography, rebellious vassals, and constant pressure from the Assyrian empire, the Urartians were able to establish and sustain a state of great power. This study explores the methods of warfare, strategy, and tactics the Urartians used to achieve their success.

**Keywords:** Urartians, War, Strategy, Tactic

### ÖZ

Demir Çağı'nda Doğu Anadolu'da kurulan Urartular, Anadolu tarihini şekillendiren en önemli devletlerden biridir. Bölgedeki krallıklara ve şehirlere hükmederek çevrenin en güçlü devleti haline gelmişlerdir. Zorlu coğrafyaya, isyana meyilli vasallara ve bölgeyi sürekli baskı altında tutmaya çalışan Asur imparatorluğuna rağmen böylesine büyük güce sahip bir devlet kurmayı ve sürdürmeyi başarmışlardır. Bu çalışmanın temel sorusu Urartuların hangi savaş yöntemleri, strateji ve taktikleri kullanarak bunu başardıklarıdır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Urartular, Savaş, Strateji, Taktik

## Introduction

Generally, when we try to find books on strategy from the ancient ages, the works primarily focus on commanders or kings from Europe (the West), such as Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus, Caesar, or those related to Europe like Hannibal and Attila. The manifestation of this point of view was evident in the *Cambridge History of Warfare*, a book written from a European perspective (Eurocentric point of view) that claims war strategy begins with the Greeks and defends this decision even in later editions<sup>1</sup>. In this context, academics who share this view believe that there is limited or no strategy in the East. However, this is an easily refutable claim because even in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, the first epic in history, Gilgamesh used some tactics or “trickery” against his enemies<sup>2</sup>, the famous Stele of the Vultures being one of the first visual evidence of similar tactics to the phalanx<sup>3</sup> or wars of king Sargon the Akkadian<sup>4</sup>. Thus, we can assert that advanced strategies existed in the Near East even during the emergence of city-states and the first empires. This study aims to shed light on the strategies employed in one part and one time of Eastern Anatolia during the Iron Age.

Similar to the *Cambridge History of Warfare*, the main reason for neglecting the study of strategy in the Near East must have been the lack of direct records compared to the West. Herodotus on Persian Wars<sup>5</sup>, Polybius, and Titus Livy on the Second Punic War<sup>6</sup> provide detailed accounts of these wars by comparing the Near Eastern texts. In contrast, the works of Near Eastern kingdoms were written on tablets and inscriptions that were sometimes repetitive and not as detailed as the Western accounts. Therefore, extracting data from these sources seems complicated, or a new method needs to be developed. One of the aims of this study is to bring a new perspective to the methods mentioned earlier and distinguish data on warfare and strategy among these records. Indeed, in Western studies, a soldier’s or king’s biography is accompanied by his strategies. However, applying this method to the states of the Ancient Near East does not seem possible. The available data makes it difficult or impossible to extract information using such a method. From this perspective, instead of a commander- or king-oriented strategy narrative, we propose a method that refers to the strategies and provides examples of the commanders or kings who implemented them. In this context, the study method is based on the Urartian inscriptions and Assyrian texts, which constitute the primary sources, as well as the kings who implemented the identified strategies.

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- 1 Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2022, p. vii.
  - 2 Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin Books, London 2000, p. 39-46.
  - 3 Garrett Fagan, “I Fell upon Him like a Furious Arrow”: Toward a Reconstruction of the Assyrian Tactical System”, *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*, ed. Garrett Fagan, Matthew Trundle, Brill, Leiden 2010, p. 86.
  - 4 Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake 1997.
  - 5 Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, ed. A Godley, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. v-ix.
  - 6 Livy, *Hannibal’s War*, ed. Dexter Hoyos, OUP Oxford, New York 2009, xxi-xxx; Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius*, trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, p. iii.

This study is part of a published dissertation<sup>7</sup>. While it would not be correct to claim that it is entirely new, there is a considerable distinction from the published dissertation because some strategies and tactics have been added. Furthermore, the originality of this study is improved by the fact that both the dissertation and the book are in Turkish, limiting their audience. Without making studies on the strategy of the Urartian state accessible and discussable in the international arena, neither the dissertation nor the studies will be able to achieve their goals. In this context, this study supports and represents published dissertations in the international scientific community. Additionally, this study also introduced a few new strategies for discussion.

The main question of this study is to evaluate the Urartians from the perspective of war and strategy, to examine which strategic and tactical methods they devised, and to answer the question of how the Urartians were able to succeed strategically and tactically in challenging geography<sup>8</sup>. In addition to the geographical difficulties, the Urartians faced vassals prone to rebellion<sup>9</sup> and the Assyrian Empire, which was trying to keep the region under its control<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, the Urartians managed to overcome all these challenges. This study aims to analyze how the Urartians did so and what their methods and strategies were.

In the context of strategy, Urartian texts are generally uniform and almost seem like repetitions of a composition. Urartian kings did not use exaggerated descriptions even in their glorious victories. For example, even when the Assyrians, the great enemy with the most significant military and political power of the time, were defeated, this event is described in the Sarduri inscription only with the following sentence<sup>11</sup>: “*He defeated Aššur-nērārī, son of Adad-nērārī, king of the land Aššur*” This example is notable in that Urartian inscriptions almost lack details relating to war and strategy. On the other hand, because Urartian texts also contain some propaganda content, extracting data can be challenging. However, wars such as the Urartian Western expansion can be considered a blitzkrieg; even if propaganda is in the texts, they reflect significant successes. It is also essential that some strategies can be identified or confirmed from Assyrian spy reports and royal texts. The main reason for focusing on these different data sources is to increase the reliability of the information used in the paper.

One of the striking points in the Urartian war strategy is its relation to religion. The Urartians used religion to keep their society together and to focus on their goals. Although it

7 Murat Kılıç, *Anadolu'da Savaş Stratejileri*, Doruk, İstanbul 2023.

8 Paul Zimansky, “Urartu Krallığı ve Topografya”, *Urartu: Savas ve Estetik*, ed. Filiz Özdem, Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat, İstanbul 2003, p. 75-85; Yasin Topaloğlu, “Erzurum Kalelerinde Kullanılan Kiklopik Duvar Tekniği”, *GSED*, 31 (2013), p. 195-222.

9 Corpus of Urartian Texts (CUT), *Upenn.edu*, 2024, A 08-02; Margaret R Payne, *Urartu Çiviyazılı Belgeler Kataloğu*, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 237.

10 Kemalettin Köroğlu, “Conflict and Interaction in the Iron Age: The Origins of Urartian–Assyrian Relations”, *European Journal of Archaeology*, XVIII/1 (2015), p. 111-127.

11 CUT A 09-01; M. Payne, *ibid.*, p. 237.

cannot be directly linked to warfare tactics, it is understood that the Urartians used religion very skillfully to achieve their political goals. A similar situation can be seen in the texts, which use a style that makes it seem like the god Haldi was leading the army. For example, the god Haldi attacks enemies with his spear and destroys them in battle<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, rituals such as offering sacrifices, dedicating weapons to the god, engraving God symbols on war tools, and leaving weapons in temples, while not physically affecting the war, can be said to be of great importance in terms of motivating soldiers when compared to later periods in history. With this belief and motivation, the state survived, thrived in a challenging geography, and managed to rise again despite the heavy defeats it suffered numerous times, so the impact of these should not be ignored. In this context, reducing war to merely tangible elements makes conducting a correct strategic analysis impossible.

The study only focuses on the tactics used by the Urartians in the battlefield, without evaluating or discussing psychological warfare and defensive strategies. The study is limited to strategies and tactics used only in the battlefield. On the other hand, due to the constraints of the article's word limit, events, theories, and cases have been condensed.

Another essential aspect of the Urartian strategy is a sharp distinction between two warfare strategies: those against weak states and those against powerful states. The Urartians used direct offensive strategies against small and weak states but adopted defensive and indirect strategies against the Assyrians, their main powerful rival. One of the strategies the Urartians used against the Assyrians was to provoke Assyrian vassals in the peripheral region against Assyria, or try to change the political axis of Assyrian allies and use them against the Assyrians. Information on the Urartian use of intelligence, diplomacy, and coalition for strategic purposes can be found in both Assyrian and Urartian sources.

### **Battlefield Tactics and Strategies of the Urartian Army**

To understand the strategy and tactics of the Urartians, it is necessary to comprehend the imperialism of the period. It is possible to summarize the imperialism of the period as the transfer of all resources to the capital city as much as possible. As depicted in the Urartian king annals, the Urartian king is almost like a collector with a sword. As long as resources were transferred to the Urartian capital, there were almost no problems. However, war broke out when these resources were not transferred, and strategy, tactics, and weapons came into play.

When we take a preliminary look at the Urartians' warfare, strategies, and tactics, it can be said that they generally used their intellect and the opportunities geography offers as effectively as weapons. Thus, strategy and tactics were essential in Urartian warfare, as

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12 CTU A 09-03; CUT A 08-01.

evidenced by the documents analyzed. On the other hand, what is known about the warfare and strategy of the Urartians is limited to what the Urartian kings described in their inscriptions. Although it is clear that the Urartians knew and used more than the strategy and tactics revealed in the royal texts, it is not possible to comment further on this issue without scientific evidence. Therefore, the tactics identified from these narratives are discussed here under the topic.

## Blitzkrieg

Blitzkrieg is the name of the war doctrine first applied by the Germans during World War II. It was formed by combining the German words blitz (lightning) and krieg (war) and was known as blitzkrieg. The most distinctive feature of this strategy is organizing all the army's power and quickly collapsing the enemy's defenses with a surprise, fast, and powerful attack<sup>13</sup>. In particular, armored cavalry, composite bows with high destructive power, light infantry units, and chariots served as the tactical units of blitzkrieg in antiquity<sup>14</sup>. Of course, unlike modern warfare, the armies of antiquity did not have air support or the ability to move as fast as modern vehicles or to be supported by firearms. In this context, it would be more appropriate to think of blitzkrieg in antiquity within the framework of its possibilities rather than in modern terms.

Although the concept is new, it also encompasses strategies from the past. Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persians at Grannichus (334 BC), the last battle of Gaugamela (331 BC), and his conquest of this great empire in a short period of three years show it is an example of this strategy. Hannibal's successive victories at Ticinus (218 BC), Trebia (218 BC), Trasimene (217 BC), and Cannae (216 BC) during the Second Punic War are other examples of blitzkrieg,<sup>15</sup> and examples in the Ancient Age can be multiplied. In conclusion, this strategy was practiced by many states in antiquity, and the Urartians were one of them.

As to why the Urartians preferred this tactic, the Urartian army had to be fast due to the scarcity of months suitable for military campaigns in their geography<sup>16</sup>. The Urartians adopted this tactic to achieve the best results in the shortest time because the longer the war, the higher the risks and costs. Blitzkrieg weakens the enemy's chances of regrouping and attacking, reduces the cost of war, prevents the demotivation of soldiers due to prolonged campaigns, and minimizes logistical problems.

Information on blitzkrieg in Urartian documents can be found in the following words in the inscription of Rusa I<sup>17</sup>:

13 Henry J. Reilly, "Blitzkrieg", *Foreign Affairs*, 18, 2 (1940), p. 254.

14 Alfred S. Bradford, *War: Antiquity and Its Legacy*, Greenwood, Westport 2015, p. 74.

15 Serge Lancel, *Hannibal*, trans. Antonia Nevill, Blackwell, Massachusetts 1999, p. 81.

16 Altan Çilingiroğlu, *Urartu Krallığı Tarihi ve Sanatı*, Yaşar Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı, İzmir 1997, p. 9-12.

17 CTU A 10-02; M. Payne, *ibid.*, p. 270.

[Through] the protection of the god Țaldi, Rusa, son of Sarduri, says: I conquered these lands in a single military campaign, and I defeated them. The land AdaȚuni, the land UelikuȚi, the land LueruȚe, the land Arquqini, four kings on this side of the lake. I defeated the land Gurqumeli, the land ŐanaȚuai, the land TeriuŐai, the land RiŐuai, the land Őezuai, the land Ariai, the land Zama, the land Irqimai, the land Elai, the land Ereltuai, the land Aidamaniu, the land Guriai, the land Alzira, the land Turuaini, the land Őilaini, the land Uiduai, the land Atezai, the land Eriai, the land Azameruni, kings on the other side of the lake, behind(?) the mountains.

“Sarduri says: I conquered 35 fortresses (and) 200 settlements in 1 day, I destroyed the fortresses, I burnt down settlements, I devastated the land”. “I conquered 20 fortresses that were (well) fortified in battle, I took 120 settlements in 1 day; I destroyed the fortresses, I burnt down settlements, I devastated the land, I deported men and women from there”<sup>18</sup>. Sarduri II: “In one day I captured 14 fortresses and 80(?) cities, I razed the fortresses to the ground”<sup>19</sup>.

These texts show that Urartian kings could capture dozens of cities or fortresses in a single day or campaign. When we evaluate this situation in terms of strategy and tactics, three different results emerge:

The first of these results is that Urartu armies skillfully applied the blitzkrieg strategy, collapsed the enemy’s defenses quickly, and achieved results exceptionally swiftly. The second is that when the Urartian army entered a region, it divided its armies into more than one group according to the strategic situation of the region; these groups attacked simultaneously, paralyzed the enemy’s defenses in a short time, and successfully concluded the operations.

The third is that when small cities saw the Urartian army before them, they agreed to surrender without a fight. Indeed, a small city has no choice but to surrender or die when faced with a considerable army. Therefore, when the army appeared at the city gate, a representative would be sent to the king, grovel at the king’s feet, and accept whatever the invader king wanted. Thus, hundreds of castles or cities could be captured quickly. The following record in the annals of Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II is vital in showing the functioning of this strategy: “*I approached the city Tela. The city was well fortified; it was surrounded by three walls. The people put their trust in their strong walls and their large number of troops and did not come down to me. They did not submit to me. In strife and conflict, I besieged (and) conquered the city...*”<sup>20</sup>. As can be seen from the text, the reason for the war is that the king of Tela did not bow or prostrate to the Assyrian king. The king expects to declare his allegiance to the Assyrian or Urartian king either in person or by sending gifts through envoys. As to why this example is given in Assyrian texts, examples are also found

18 CTU A 09-03.

19 CTU A 09-04; M. Payne, *ibid.*, p. 239.

20 Albert Kirk Grayson, *The Royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian periods II (RIMA)*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2002, p. 201.

in Urartian texts. However, the Assyrian example is essential in conveying expectations into the text. Information on the application of this method in the Urartians can be found in the following statements in the inscriptions of Menua: Menua says: “*Uṭuburšini, king of the Diaueḫi, came in front of me, he kissed my feet, he prostrated (before me) and . . . I put him under tribute. He gave gold and silver, and he paid the tribute*”<sup>21</sup>.

We have discussed three possibilities above, but it can be stated that one of these could have been used “*pro re nata*,” which means all three could have been used “*under the circumstances*.” However, while it is clear from the texts that the first and the third were used, there is no data about the second one. On the other hand, the strategy has both positive and negative sides, as achieving a lasting result is more complicated than other strategies.

## Indirect Approach

The indirect approach refers to strategies and tactics used to achieve success by misleading the enemy by introducing different factors instead of acting directly against the enemy to achieve a goal<sup>22</sup>. Although Basil Liddell Hart introduced this theory in the 18th century AD, it was used in ancient times. In his work *Indirect Approach*, Hart gives detailed information about this strategy, and the wars of Antiquity have an essential place in his work, meaning that the theorist of this strategy is aware that this style of warfare was also practiced in Antiquity even Sun Tzu mentions the indirect strategy<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, Hart also discarded this theory as a safer strategy against Blitzkrieg<sup>24</sup>. But this is where the interesting part begins, as Urartian sources show that they skillfully employed both strategies, not just one.

In addition to Hart, information on war and strategy in Antiquity can be found in Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* describes the indirect approach as follows: “*In all kinds of warfare, the direct method is used to engage in combat, but the assurance of victory lies in indirect methods*.”<sup>25</sup> Sun Tzu’s theory of “*securing*” victory was skillfully applied by the Urartians. Indeed, the best example of this strategy is found in the annals of Sarduri, son of Argishti<sup>26</sup>:

I [pra]yed to the god Ḫal[di, the Weather-God, the Sun-God (and all) the gods] of the [Bia] lands. Through the [gr]eatness [of the god Ḫaldi what I asked for the gods listened to me], they [pa]ved the way for me; [I advanced with? the troops up to] the city Ṭumiški. [Behind(?) the god Ḫaldi, behind(?) the weapon] of the god Ḫaldi on the same day [I set off to the region], on the left(?) side(?) I subdued the city [Miliṭia . . .], on the right(?) side(?) [I subdued the city Qala’ani], up to the city [Zabša]. 50 chariots [I captured in] battle, (and

21 CTU A 05-003; M. Payne, *ibid.*, p. 69.

22 B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, Pentagon Press, New Delhi 2012, p. 1-7.

23 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Allandale Online Publishing, Leicester 2000, v, 5.

24 J. Mohan Malik, “The Evolution of Strategic Thoughts”, *Contemporary Security and Strategy*, ed. Craig A. Syder, Routledge 1999, p. 31.

25 Sun Tzu, *ibid.*, v, 5.

26 CTU A 09-02; M. Payne, *ibid.*, p. 237-238.

I destroyed[?] fortresses. [I returned] from battle and occupied(?) the city Sasini, royal city of Hilaruada, (and) [I] conquered [it] in battle; I carried away [rich(?) livestock], men and women from there, I burnt settlements and fortresses and I destr[oyed . . .] Sarduri [says: I moved forward(?) to besiege] the city Miliṭia. [Hilaruada], king of Miliṭia, came [to me], [he] prostrated [(and) kissed (my) feet?], and I put him under tribute.

As the text reveals, Sarduri's campaign against Melitea (Miliṭia) was characterized by a highly complex strategy and tactics. As historically known, Miliṭia is the most powerful, wealthy, and strategic city of the region<sup>27</sup> and the primary aim of the Urtatian king<sup>28</sup>.

During the campaign, Sarduri did not directly besiege the capital; instead, he focused on other cities and Hilaruada's regional allies. Sarduri crossed the Euphrates and captured 14 fortresses and 80 cities in one day, thus reducing the possibility of a coalition against Urartu in the region. After eliminating weak rivals and making them unable to come to the aid of Hilaruada, the most powerful king of the region, the city of Sasi was besieged. There is no information on how long the siege of this fortified and strong fortress lasted, but the city was captured and Melitea remained the last target. Hilaruada became helpless due to the defeat of his allies in the region one by one, surrendered at the feet of Sarduri, and accepted his terms<sup>29</sup>.

By following an indirect approach in this war, Sarduri defeated Hilaruada's allies and eliminated the risk of the forces in the region uniting against him. Sarduri's success not only resulted in the capture of Melitea but also paved the way for the Urtatian expansion to the west. The most critical strategy in this great victory was the indirect approach. The Urtatian king managed to gain a tremendous political and strategic advantage by successfully implementing this strategy. Thus, Melitea became an ally of the Urtatians until 743 BC, when Tiglath-pileser III suffered heavy defeat upon an alliance led by forces from Urartu and Arpad<sup>30</sup>.

## Fabian Strategy

One of the most remarkable of the various strategies employed by the Urtatians is the Fabian Strategy. The Fabian Strategy is a theory that emerged after Hannibal's successive victories during the Second Punic War. In response, Roman dictator Fabius Maximus used this strategy. Instead of directly confronting Hannibal, Fabius followed him closely to pressure the Carthaginian army and attack when the opportunity arose.<sup>31</sup> An article comparing

27 Trevor Bryce, *The World of The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012, p. 99.

28 John David Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, W. De Gruyter, New York 2000, p. 285; Bryce, *ibid.*, 2012, p. 98-101, 108.

29 CTU A 09-02; Payne, *ibid.*, p. 238.

30 A. Çilingiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 33; T. Bryce *ibid.*, p. 101.

31 Paul Erdkamp, "Polybius, Livy and the Fabian Strategy", *Ancient Society*, XXIII, (1992), p. 127-138.



the strategy employed by the Urartians with the Fabian Strategy has been prepared and is currently prepared for publication. Fabian's strategy was applied before Fabius Maximus by Urartians and offered as a feasible strategy by Memnon of Rhodes to Persian Satrapies against Alexander the Great<sup>32</sup>, so this strategy was named Fabian Strategy, but the strategy was theorized and applied before his time.

The Urartians implemented the Fabian Strategy five centuries before Fabius Maximus and achieved successful results. The basic principles of the Fabian Strategy were applied by the Urartians as follows: In general, they followed a retreat strategy in front of the Assyrian army, engaged in small but attrition battles, used geographical obstacles in favor of the Urartian army, restricted the Assyrian army's free movement with a network of fortresses, forced Assyrian allies to change sides, and thus achieved significant successes.

The aforementioned information makes clear that the the Fabian Strategy cannot bring success to the state in a short time. If short-term results are to be achieved, a blitzkrieg or pitched battle could be preferred. However, there is a big difference between Urartu and Assyria regarding pitched warfare. The Assyrian army is in a much more advantageous position in a pitched battle, as we can see in Dezsö's study of the Assyrian Army<sup>33</sup>. The chances of success of the Urartians in such a battle are relatively low, and there is no record of the Urartians winning a pitched battle against Assyria during the confederation or statehood period. So, they had to find a new strategy to minimize the devastation of powerful Assyrian attacks.

We have already stated that this strategy would not yield results in a short period, but it has some advantages. First, it prevents a strong enemy from getting the results it wants quickly and prevents its own army from being defeated. Since the enemy cannot draw the Urartian army into battle and destroy it, they are constantly pursued by the Urartian army and worn down by small attacks. Due to the challenging geography of Urartu, the Assyrian army cannot stay in this region in winter. For this reason, the Urartians preferred to engage in indirect warfare, wearing down the Assyrian army and not being subjected to prolonged pressure as the Assyrian army withdrew when winter approached. The first king of Urartu, Aramu, applied this strategy, and Shalmaneser stated that<sup>34</sup>:

Moving on from the land Daiënu, I approached the city Arsašku, the royal city of Aramu (Arramu), the Urartian. Aramu the Urartian became frightened in the face of the flash of my strong weapons and stormy onslaught, abandoned his city, (and) ascended Mount Adduru...  
...I went up the mountain after him (and) fought a mighty battle in the mountain, I felled

32 Arrian, *Alexander the Great: The Anabasis and the Indica*, trans. Martin Hammond, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, i, 19.

33 Tamás Dezsö, *The Assyrian Army I*, Budapest Eötvös University Press, Budapest 2012.

34 RIMA, III, p. 20.

3,400 of his fighting men with the sword, rained down upon their destruction... ..I took away his camp (and) brought back from the mountain his chariots, cavalry, horses, mules, beasts of burden, captives, (and) rich possessions. Aramu (Arramu), in order to save his life, ascended a rugged mountain...

From this account by the Assyrian king, it is understood that the king of Urartu fought a battle against the Assyrian army; this battle was probably an attempt at an attrition campaign because another battle was fought afterwards. However, although the Assyrian king glorified his victory with laudatory expressions, it is understood that he did not achieve a final result. Thus, this strategy shows that the Urartians did not engage in a full-scale war. The Assyrians won the battle but lost the war, returning without achieving the primary aim of destroying the Urartian state; they returned home empty-handed, just like Hannibal<sup>35</sup>. Perhaps thanks to this successful strategy, Shalmaneser recorded Aramu's name as the first real king of Urartu<sup>36</sup>.

On the other hand, a different perspective can bring forward about the capture of Arsašku by the Assyrian army. This raises the possibility that the city may have been evacuated or a few soldiers may have been left behind in the face of the danger. The Romans applied a similar strategy after the Celtic Catastrophe (390 BCE) and the Sack of Rome<sup>37</sup>.

## Ambush

Ambush tactics can be defined as hiding and waiting in a concealed position to surprise and attack an unsuspecting enemy<sup>38</sup>. One of the best examples in antiquity is Hannibal's battle at Lake Treasmine (217 BC), where he almost annihilated the Roman army<sup>39</sup>. Although the Urartian texts did not directly mention ambush tactics, it can be inferred that it was one of the Urartians' most preferred forms of warfare, thanks to the geography. Ambush is not mentioned as a separate type of warfare, nor is there specific terminology in Urartian texts. The reason for this must be that the Urartians considered ambush a part of warfare, not a separate concept. The rough terrain, numerous passes, and mountains made the region a natural ambush setting.

The ambush tactic used by Urartian king Rusa I, who won a victory by ambushing the Assyrian army, can be confirmed from Assyrian texts rather than Urartians. An Assyrian text found in Nimrud contains the most explicit statements about the ambush tactic used by the Urartians. The translation of the text is as follows<sup>40</sup>:

35 John F. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War: A Military History of the Second Punic War*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1998, p. 87-110.

36 Mirjo Salvini, *Urartu Tarihi ve Kültürü*, trans. Belgin Aksoy, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 36.

37 Veit Rosenberger, "The Gallic Disaster", *The Classical World*, XCVI/4 (2003), p. 365-371.

38 V. Anisimov - Y. Anisimov, "Some Problems of Command and Control of Missile Forces and Artillery", 1997, p. 51.

39 S. Lancel, *ibid.*, p. 92-96; Murat Kılıç, "Hannibal'in Savaş Taktiklerine Genel Bir Bakış", *Erzurum Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 3, 5 (2018).

40 Henry W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters Part IV", *Iraq*, XX, 2 (1958), p. 200.

From your servant to the King, my Lord.

To the king my lord your servant.

(Concerning) the rab-BI.LUL, when he entered with troops, Ursa came (and) contained him. Not one from amongst them can go (or) come. Concerning the ..... of the rab-BI.LUL, he will set it in place. The battlefront is disengaged. Let the King, my Lord, know.

In this example, it is seen that during the reign of Sargon II, while Sargon was preparing for a campaign against Urartu, the Assyrian soldiers fell into an ambush set by Rusa. Thus, it is understood from the text that the Urartians successfully applied the ambush tactics<sup>41</sup>. The other important aspect of the example mentioned in the introduction is that some of the strategies employed by the Urartians can be identified not from their sources but from Assyrian sources. Ambush is one of them because we cannot find any clue about ambush in the Urartian texts.

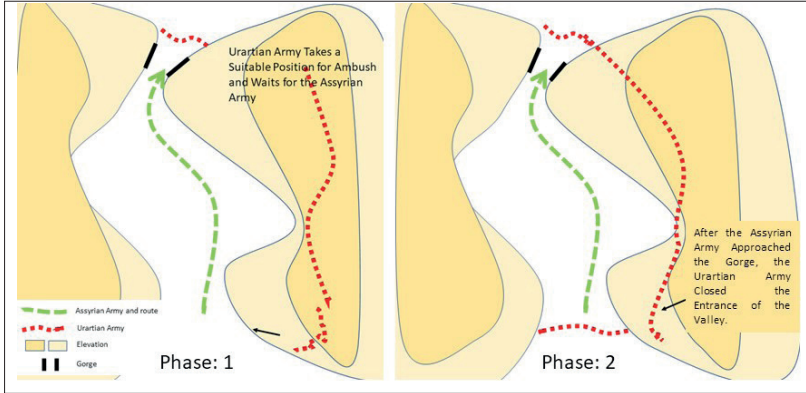


Fig. 1. A Urartian Ambush Recontraction Experiment with the Guide of Saggs 1952: 200.

The Battle of Waush, a march formation of the Assyrian army, gave another significant clue about Urartian ambushes. This clue is essential, and we can see that in Sargon II, the march formation of the Assyrian army, there was a gap between divisions, and he mentions, “I did not summon (lit.: “return”) to my side the right and left wings (of my army); I did not wait for the rear guard. I did not take fright at the main force of his army”<sup>42</sup>. The Assyrian king deliberately chose this formation to employ a hammerhead formation in battle and prevent ambushes when the army was on the move.<sup>43</sup> If a division fell into an ambush, other divisions following could attack the enemy from the outside<sup>44</sup> just as Ramses II did at

41 H. W. F. Saggs, *ibid.*, p. 200, 211.

42 RINAP, Sargon II, 065.

43 Tamas Dezsö, “The Battle of Mount Waush, 714 BC - Like a Furious Arrow”, *Ancient Warfare*, XIV/6 (2021), p. 32; Tamas Dezsö, *The Assyrian Army III*, Elte Eötvös University Press, Budapest 2022, p. 57-62.

44 Alan R. Schulman, “The N’rn at the Battle of Kadesh”, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 1 (1962), p. 50.

Kadesh<sup>45</sup>. Otherwise, if the army's main body falls into the ambush, the soldiers in the middle of the army are confined by their own soldiers and cannot reach the enemy, so they become ineffective. The enemy only needs to engage the soldiers positioned on the outside. If the trapped army cannot breach the blockade in time, it is quickly annihilated by the ambushing force, similar to a pincer movement or double envelopment.

The second important fact is that during the campaigns of the Assyrian kings in the regions where Urartu and its vassals were located, the Assyrian army was frequently attacked by small groups. These small-group attacks can be categorized as both hit-and-run attempts and ambushes<sup>46</sup>.

### Pitched Battle

A pitched battle is a battle fought by two sides with many troops in a large-scale fight or in which both sides stay in the same place<sup>47</sup>. As it can be understood from the definition, since a large part of the army attends the battle, it yields decisive results. It causes significant casualties, which makes it a hazardous strategy. The Battle of Gaugamela destroyed the Persian Empire, Pydna the Macedonian Empire, Hormizdagān the Parthian Empire, and Nihavend the Sassanid Empire. As these examples show, the outcome of a pitched battle can sometimes spell the end of a state, and it is an extremely risky strategy<sup>48</sup>.

In Ancient Anatolia, pitched battles were not the preferred warfare strategy for states such as Urartu. The main reason is that asymmetric warfare, a type in which the balance of power favors one side, is common in Anatolia. For example, in a pitched battle, the Urartians were powerful against small cities. However, they had yet to match against the Assyrians, who usually fought in pitched battles and had one of the best armies in their period. So, this situation creates asymmetrical warfare, and pitched battles become less preferable. Although pitched battles were not opted in Anatolia, historical sources still show that the Assyrians and Urartians fought a few pitched battles<sup>49</sup>.

It is understood from the statement that the Uruatri-Nairi confederation fought a pitched battle against Tukulti-Ninurta I. *“Forty kings of the lands Nairi fiercely took up*

45 K. A. Kitchen, “The Battle of Qadesh - The Poem, or Literary Record”, *The Context of Scripture.*, ed. William Wolfgang Hallo, Brill, Leiden 2003, p. 32-38.

46 Andreas Fuchs, “Assyria and the East: Western Iran and Elam”, *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken 2017, p. 252.

47 Cambridge Dictionary, “Pitched Battle”, *Cambridge Words*, 27.03.2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pitched-battle>.

48 Konijnendijk, Roel, “Playing Dice for the Polis: Pitched Battle in Greek Military Thought”, *TAPA, CLI/1* (2021), p. 21.

49 RIMA, I, p. 244; Edward Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion*, Peeters, Sterling, 2000, p. 160.

a position for armed conflict. I fought with them (and) brought about their defeat”<sup>50</sup> (The Nairi Confederation, composed of the peoples living in the Urartu region, fought a great battle against Tukulti-Ninurta I, who commanded the most powerful armies of the period. However, the war’s outcome was not what they wanted, and they had to accept Assyria’s superiority after suffering a heavy defeat<sup>51</sup>.

Other information from the records of Assyrian kings that a battle was fought in the region is found in the records of Tiglath-pileser I<sup>52</sup>: “Twenty-three kings of the lands of Nairi combined their chariotry and army in their lands (and) advanced to wage war, strife, and combat. With the onslaught of my fierce weapons, I approached them (and) destroyed their extensive army like a storm of the god Adad.”

On the other hand, pitched battles were encountered not only in the period of confederation but also in the information about the pitched battle in<sup>53</sup> about Urartu king Sarduri against Daiiān-Aššur is mentioned in Assyrian sources as follows<sup>54</sup>:

Daiiān-Aššur, the field marshal, chief of my extensive army, to lead my army to Urartu. He went down to Bit-Zamāni, entered the pass of the city Ammas, and crossed the River Arsania. When Sēduru, the Urartian, heard (of this), relying on the might of his mighty army, he attacked to wage war and battle. He fought with him, defeated him, (and) filled the wide plain with the corpses of his warriors.

When we analyze this tactic, the most striking point is the field battles fought during the confederate period of the Urartians. This strategy may not seem appropriate for the confederation. However, it can be understood that their only option was to unite and fight against the Assyrians. Although the results were negative, they were not discouraged after these defeats, and they could lay the foundations of a strong state in the later stages.

## Hit and Run Tactics

This tactic could be defined as attacking the enemy army and leaving the battlefield before the enemy army can respond to the attack. This tactic is used especially where geographical conditions permit and is one of the most effective. One of the best-known examples of this tactic in antiquity is the Battle of Carrhae between the Romans and the Parthians, one of the most significant defeats in Roman history.<sup>55</sup> Regardless of its strength, this strategy wears

50 RIMA, I, p. 244.

51 Altan Çilingiroğlu, *Urartu Tarihi*, Ege Üniversitesi, İzmir. 1994 p. 6.

52 RIMA, II, p. 21.

53 E. Lipinski, *ibid.*, p. 160.

54 RIMA, III, p. 69.

55 Ercüment Yıldırım, “Carrhae Yenilgisi ve Roma’nın Doğu Politikasına Etkileri”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 29 (2013), p. 261-270; Nikolaus Leo Overtoom, *Reign of Arrows: The Rise of the Parthian Empire in the Hellenistic Middle East*, Oxford University Press, New York 2020, p. 56.

down the enemy army in the long term, leaving great effects on both logistical resources and the motivation of the soldiers.

Information on this tactic, which the Urartians skillfully employed, is found in Assyrian texts rather than Urartian sources. This tactic, successfully applied by Aramu, enabled the Urartians to stand against the powerful Assyrian armies.

Assyrian texts describe this tactic employed by the Urartians as follows<sup>56</sup>:

Shalmaneser III first mentions: *“I approached the city of Sugunia, the fortified city of Aramu, the Urartian. I besieged the city, captured (it), massacred many of its (people), (and) carried off booty from them. I erected two towers of heads in front of his city”*. Another text: *“Aramu trusted in the greatness of his army and gathered a large number of his cavalry to fight against me. I defeated him (and) took away his cavalry and war equipment”*.

I approached the city of Arsašku, the royal city of Aramu the Urartian. Aramu the Urartian became frightened in the face of the flash of my strong weapons and stormy onslaught, abandoned his city, (and) ascended Mount Adduru. I went up the mountain after him (and) fought a mighty battle in the mountain. I felled 3,400 of his fighting men with the sword, rained down upon them destruction (lit. “flood”) as the god Adad would, (and) with their blood I dyed the mountain red like red wool. I took away his camp (and) brought back from the mountain his chariots, cavalry, horses, mules, beasts of burden, captives, (and) rich possessions. Aramu, in order to save his life, ascended a rugged mountain<sup>57</sup>.

Summing up the events from a strategic perspective, Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king, was a very energetic, successful commander and an intelligent statesman. He was probably aware of the future problems looming in the Assyrians’ northern borders, led by Urartians. The Assyrian king tried his best to *“nip in the bud”*. However, Urartian king Aramu may not have been as powerful as the Assyrian king, but he outpaced the Assyrians by his strategy and tactics. Aramu used advanced strategies against the Assyrians, engaged in several attrition battles, and successfully withdrew his army just before the Assyrian army destroyed them. Aramu left the city of Arsašku and withdrew his army to Mount Adurru and was defeated there, too. However, the Assyrian king does not mention Assyrian losses or why he could not catch or kill Aramu or follow him further. Aramu was able to save a considerable part of his army and country, and he did not let the Assyrians take control of the region. Even in the fifteenth regnal year of Shalmaneser’s, Aramu was still on his throne<sup>58</sup> as the first man in this land to take up arms, stand against the Assyrian king, join battles, and retain his life, throne, and country. Aramu probably used many more tactics than the historical texts record; he combined the Fabian strategy, hit-and-run, and perhaps others.

56 RIMA, III, p. 35.

57 RIMA, III, p. 20.

58 RIMA, III, p. 39.

The other hit-and-run tactics used by Urartians applied to Rusa I, and Saggs defines guerrilla warfare, but sources do not mention details of the tactic used by Rusa<sup>59</sup>.

## Night Operations

Night operation was widely used in Anatolia; the first example seen in the historical records is in Anitta's Proclamation<sup>60</sup>; the Hittites used it throughout their history. A text belonging to the Hittite king Arnuwanda shows that night attacks are too dangerous, and there is no room for even the slightest mistake<sup>61</sup>. Night operations are risky and require the best intelligence to avoid being caught in a trap; they need to plan meticulously to prevent their soldiers from clashing with each other. On the other hand, it is a rewarding strategy because, if successfully applied, it could catch the enemy unprepared and unorganized, minimizing the loss of one's own soldiers, as the example in Kanesh (Kültepe)<sup>62</sup>. Night operations were one of the most preferable tactics of Hittites, but there are a few examples in the Urartians. The first and most important historical record belongs to the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and the text mentions the instance as follows (RINAP, Ashurbanipal 004)<sup>63</sup>: "*(As for) Andaria, the governor of the land [Urartu], who had advanced (and) marched du[ring the night] to conquer the cities Uppu[mu and Kullimeri], the people living in the city Kullim[eri, servants who belonged to me, inflicted] a hea[vy] defeat on him during the night. They did not spare [anyone. They cut off] the head of Andaria [and they brought (it)] to Nineveh, befo[re me]*".

We can understand from the text that Urartians used night attacks. The Urartian governor<sup>64</sup> and field marshal<sup>65</sup> Andaria attempted a night attack but met with disaster. However, this situation is very suspicious; if Andaria had not considered strategy and saw his army's advantageous position, he would not have dared this operation. Nevertheless, the attack was a complete failure, and he could not even save his life. The reason for this failure is that Assyrians may have somehow gotten wind of Andaria's plans and trapped him when the attack took place because they did not spare anyone, even one soul, able to escape.

We can find another example of the night operation of Urartu in the historical texts belonging to the Tiglath pileser III: "*I fought [with th]em, defeated them, (and) took their camp(s) away from them. They fled to save [their] lives and Sarduri of the land Urartu rode*

59 Henry W. F. Saggs, "Assyrian Warfare in the Sargonid Period", *Iraq*, XXV/2 (1963), p. 153.

60 Sedat Alp, *Hittit Çağında Anadolu: Çiviyazılı ve Hiyeroglif Yazılı Kaynaklar*, Tübitak, Kavaklıdere, Ankara 2000, p. 53-55; Harry Hoffner, "Proclamation of Anitta of Kussar", *The Context of Scripture.*, ed. William Wolfgang Hallo, Brill, Boston 2003, p. 182-84.

61 Jared L Miller, *Royal Hittite Instructions and Related Administrative Texts*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2013, p. 217-221.

62 Alp, *ibid.*, p. 53-55; Hoffner, *ibid.*, p. 182-184.

63 RINAP, Ashurbanipal, 004.

64 RINAP, Ashurbanipal, 004.

65 RINAP, Ashurbanipal, 007.

*off alo[ne on a] mare [and] escaped during the night*<sup>66</sup>. So, we can understand that the Urartian king, in order to minimize risks, preferred to leave or escape in the darkness of the night.

While for the Hittites, night operations were the key to a successful strategy, for the Urartians, they were more associated with defeat. However, we would like to reiterate what we stated in the introduction: that the Urartians used more strategies than those mentioned in their historical sources. Some of the operations mentioned by the Urartian kings occurred at night, but unfortunately, we have no recorded data for now.

## Geography as a Tactical, Strategical, and Political Element

The Urartians could stand against the mighty Assyrian armies because they could make the best use of the opportunities provided by geography. In particular, when the Urartian army attacked the Assyrian army in narrow passes and valleys, the Assyrian army could not assume regular battle formations because they needed more space. It is seen that this geographical advantage could even compensate for the numerical difference between the armies, and the strategy of the Battle of Waush was based on this theory but failed.

One of the geographical elements of the Urartians was the mountains. An example of how they used mountains as a strategic element can be found in the texts of Salmanassar III: “*I approached Arzashkun, the royal city of Aramu of Urartu, and Aramu of Urartu was frightened by my strong and brilliant weapons and my fighting power and left his city. He climbed the Adduri mountain. I climbed the mountain after him and fought a terrible battle in the middle of the mountains*”<sup>67</sup>. In another example: “*Aramu climbed the rugged mountains to save his life...*”<sup>68</sup> Although Shalmaneser III writes in his inscriptions that he inflicted heavy defeats on the Urartian king Aramu each time, it is understood that he could not achieve decisive results as the threat of Aramu of Urartu could not be ended or eliminated. Urartian fortifications were built in a plan that would make maximum use of geography.

The other geographical element used effectively in the Urartian strategy was the passes, and the best strategic use of them was in the Battle of Mount Waush (Uaush) between Sargon II and Rusa I. In order to limit the power of the Assyrian army by using geography, the Urartian king Rusa placed his army in a pass near Mount Waush. However, this tactic, which was highly successful in theory, could not be applied in practice; the sudden attack of Sargon II scattered Urartu and its allies. Another instance is Mount Uašdirikka, which was also chosen as a point to stop Sargon’s army<sup>69</sup>.

66 RINAP, Tiglath-pileser, III 35.

67 Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia (ARAB)*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 1927, p. 219.

68 RIMA, III, p. 20.

69 RINAP, Sargon II, 065.





**Fig. 2.** Balawat Gates Plate 37 Shows an Example of how Urartian Using Geography as a Tactical Element. Source: *Kings and Litt, Plate XXXVII.*

It is known that the Urartians also benefited politically/strategically from the mountain ranges. Apart from the fact that the Zagros and Taurus Mountains were a major obstacle, it is also important that the passes were limited and high. The Assyrian army could not stay in the region due to the possibility of the high passes closing toward winter; thus, these mountains remained an important geographical border between Urartu and Assyria<sup>70</sup>. In addition to this, the Urartians also supported the existence of buffer states in the region, leaving the Zagros as a separating region both geographically and politically<sup>71</sup>, and built their strategies accordingly.

The Urartians used not only mountains but also water as a strategic element, and the most appropriate example is the Euphrates River. The Urartians, who became an important power in the region with their western campaigns during the Menua reign, later crossed the Euphrates River and established contact with the Neo-Hittite principalities in the region. The allies around the Euphrates became the main starting point of the expansion policy against Assyria. However, due to the heavy defeat at Halpa, especially during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the Urartian ambitions beyond the Euphrates River were thwarted<sup>72</sup>. Later on, the Urartians gave up their policy of crossing the Euphrates to the west and had to retreat to the east of the Euphrates; thus, the state's western border was determined as the Euphrates River. Another important example is the lakes.

70 P. Zimansky, *ibid.*, p. 82.

71 Karen Radner, "Between A Rock and a Hard Place: Muşasir, Kumme, Ukku and Subria – The Buffer States Between Assyria and Urartu", *Biainili-Urartu: The Proceedings of the Symposium Held In Munich 12-14 October 2007 = Tagungsbericht des Münchner Symposiums 12.-14. October 2007*, ed. U. Hellwag vd., Peeters, Leuven 2012, p. 246.

72 A. Çilingiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 87.

To summarize the use of geography as a strategic element, the Urartians not only adapted the geography in which they were founded to their strategies, but also adapted their strategies to geography. In this context, the enemy entering the borders of Urartu had to contend with natural factors such as climate, mountains, mountain ranges, passes and rivers, and human elements created by Urartu.

## Proxy Wars and Urartian Diplomacy as a Part of War

According to the famous military historian Keegan, war is the armed form of diplomacy<sup>73</sup>. War is part of diplomacy, and proxy wars are the most essential part of it. The term “proxy war” has become more prevalent today and is defined as “*a military conflict which one or more third parties directly or indirectly support one or more state or nonstate combatants to influence the conflict’s outcome and thereby to advance their own strategic interests or to undermine those of their opponents.*”<sup>74</sup>

It is evident from historical texts that the Urartians could shape their political sphere not only through weapons and wars but also through political relations. Some historical records provide fundamental data for analyzing the political and strategic capabilities of the Urartians. There is ample written evidence that the Urartians acted from a similar perspective.

As we have seen previously, some strategies related to the topic can be found in the Assyrian records. The most important one belongs to Tiglath-pileser III, and the king mentions how Urartians became part of a rebellion against Assyria<sup>75</sup>. Another instance can be seen in the records of Sargon II mentioned as: (*As for*) Ullusunu, his brother, who had sat on the royal throne, the wrath of the god [Aššur] (was directed) against him. He (Ullusunu) then put his trust in Rusâ, the Urartian. He caused Aššur-lē’i of the land Karalla (and) Ittî of the land Allabria to rebel against me and persuaded (lit.: “spoke to”) the]m to do obeisance to the land Urartu<sup>76</sup>.” In another example in Assyrian sources: “In my sixth royal year, Ursa of Urartu sent his horse messengers with false news to Bag-dati and the ruler of Zikirtu in the land of Uisdis and turned them against me (Sargon).”<sup>77</sup> As we seen in historical records, as soon as the Assyrian army withdrew from the areas where it had been operating, the Urartians immediately moved to change the status quo in the areas where Assyria had just made new political arrangements and used diplomacy as a tool of warfare by inciting them against Assyria waging a proxy war.

73 John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York 1993, p. 17.

74 Sue Baugh, “Proxy War, Armed Conflict, Britannica”, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/proxy-war>.

75 RINAP, Tiglath-pileser III, 35.

76 RINAP, Sargon II, 1.

77 RINAP, Sargon II, 1.

Another important political and strategic tool the Urartians used in war diplomacy was “*mercy*.” The Urartians wanted to avoid protracted wars, prevent the wear and tear of their army, and use time and economic resources efficiently, which led the Urartian kings to keep political paths open in any case. In the inscriptions of Urartian kings, it is recorded that many of the kings upon whom the expedition was launched saved their lives and thrones by begging for mercy from the Urartian king. These kings were Uṭuburšini<sup>78</sup>, Murini<sup>79</sup>, Hilaruada<sup>80</sup>.

The most critical example of Urartians using diplomacy as a part of war strategy is the Cimmerian raids during the reign of Rusa II, which shows that Urartian diplomacy was more effective than weapons. Urartian’s achieved the goal of neutralizing the Cimmerian threat through diplomacy, which it could not achieve with weapons<sup>81</sup>. Thus, we can conclude that the Urartians were not only masters of strategy but also masters of diplomacy.

## Sieges

In its most succinct form, a siege encircles or isolates a place with military force to defeat its defenders. A siege is a military operation to force the defenders of a surrounded or sheltered place to do what the attacker wants, to break their resistance, and to force them to surrender by isolating the help and support that may come from outside.

When the inscriptions of the Urartian kings are analyzed, it is seen that sieges were another strategy used by the Urartians. However, the information on the sieges of the Urartians is quite insufficient, not only royal inscriptions short and repetitive such as “*when I besieged the city Biḫurani, I destroyed the city Biḫurani*”<sup>82</sup> as well as the absence of reliefs or depictions depicting Urartian sieges. Due to this situation, researchers are dependent only on a few lines of information in royal inscriptions. Nevertheless, even these few lines are essential, providing textual evidence that the Urartians used siege warfare.

78 CTU, A 05-003; M. Payne, *age.*, p. 69.

79 CTU, A 09-03.

80 CTU, A 09-04.

81 RINAP, Ashurbanipal, 110.

82 CTU, A 08-03.

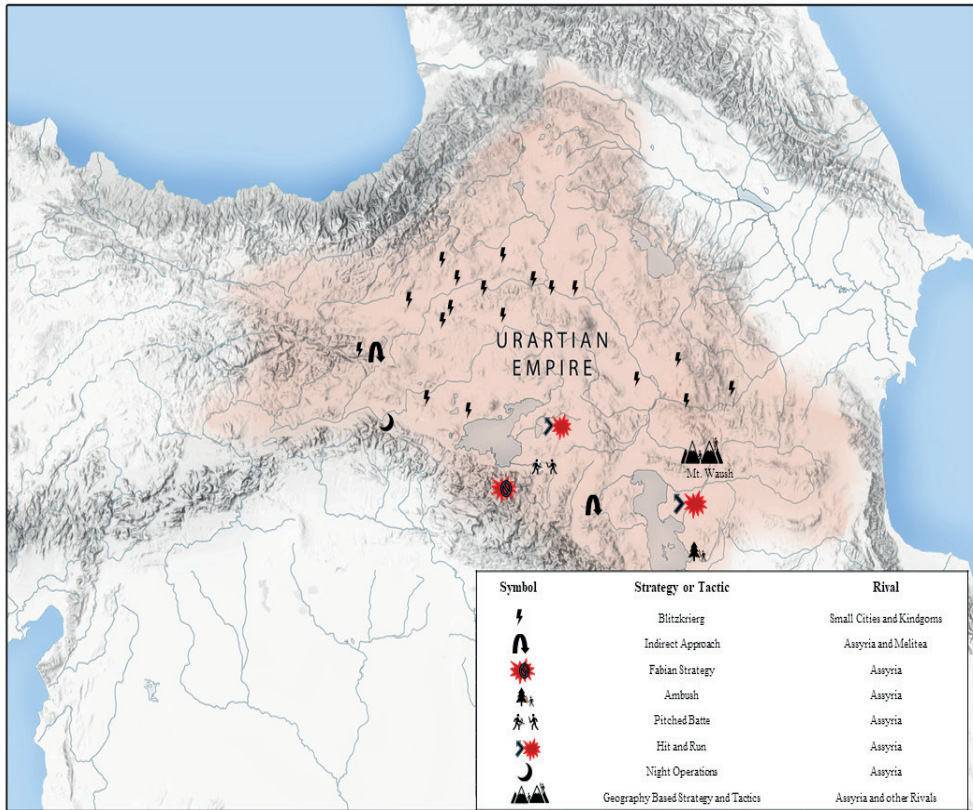


Fig. 3. Outlines of Urartian Strategy and Tactics

## Conclusion

Assyria is one of the main political actors of the era; they were able to conquer once important states such as Babylon, Elam, and even Egypt. On the other hand, Urartu rose and shone among the other states and challenged the Assyrian rule in the Near East. Our main question is how they achieved it and which strategy and tactics they used. Throughout the article, we have discussed this, and if we had to sum it up in one sentence, it could be said that the Urartians were world-class strategists who can easily be compared to almost every state in the ancient world. The only drawback of this state is the limited, undetailed, and repetitive historical records. However, despite this limitation, a small glimpse through historical records shows how advanced the Urartian strategy was.

In this study, the strategies applied by the Urartians on the battlefield were analyzed, and it was concluded that the Urartians successfully applied many strategies. The strategies of Urartians, as discussed in this study, were not only based on a single strategy but also

on a combination of multiple tactics and strategies, such as the strategies used by Aramu in order to achieve a more effective result. The most important strategy used by the Urartians against weak cities was the blitzkrieg, which was quite successful. However, they had to prefer the Fabian Strategy against the powerful Assyrian state. Indirect strategy played an important role in the long struggle against Assyria, and Urartu tried to use all strategic factors effectively to minimize the success of the Assyrians.

The ambush strategy was applied against strong enemies and combined with hit-and-run tactics to wear down the Assyrian army. The Urartians devised strategies to catch their enemies unprepared with night operations and used geography as effectively as possible. Diplomacy was one of the most important trump cards of the Urartians during the war, and Urartian kings were able to use diplomacy as effectively as weapons. Enemies who did not surrender were besieged and captured through various strategies in siege warfare.

Another essential point to be mentioned in the conclusion is the role of Assyrian sources in Urartian studies. We learn many of the strategies employed by the Urartians not from their own sources but from the Assyrian ones. In this context, it is seen that Assyria's power comes not only from weapons but also from culture, art, history, and politics.

We conclude that the strategy of Urartu has a significant place in the history of the Ancient Near East and deserves much more attention. Their capacity to develop strategies can easily be compared to Western civilizations, on which dozens of academic studies have been conducted.

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