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YENİ ASSUR ORDUSUNDA SÜVARİLER (*PİTHAİLLU*)¹

CAVALRIES IN THE NEO ASSUR ARMY (*PITHAİLLU*)

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Öz

Assur askeri tarihinde ordunun en önemli kolunu bağımsız bir birim olan süvariler oluşturmuştur. Assur’da MÖ 1. bin yılda ilk kez karşımıza çıkan süvariler, düzenli savaşçı bir birlik olarak ilk kez II. Assurnasirpal (MÖ 883-859) Dönemi saray kabartmalarında tasvir edilmiştir.

Okçu, kalkan taşıyıcı ve mızrakçıdan oluşan süvari sınıfı, savaş arabalarının kullanılmadığı ya da kısıtlı kullanılabildiği çamurlu alanlar, ırmaklar, suyolları, dağlık ve tepelik kırsal kesimler, ormanlık alanlar gibi engebeli ve zor arazilerde savaşabilmenin avantajına sahipti. Dahası süvarileri, zırh ve mızrak gibi silahların da etkisiyle savaş arabalarının girmekte zorlandığı elverişsiz bölgelerde en ağır silahlarla donatılmış düşmanlarına karşı savaş arabalarının yerini alabilecek etkin bir sınıf haline getiren etken süvarilerin ani baskın yapabilme özelliğinin olmasıdır.

MÖ 8. yüzyıldan itibaren, Assur ordusunda okçu ve mızrakçılardan oluşan *pithaillu* veya *sa pethalli* süvari birlikleri, zor arazilerde görevlendirilmek için eğitilmiş atlı ekiplerdi. Süvariler, birincil görevleri ne

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olursa olsun, ordunun ihtiyaçlarına göre diğere görevlerde de yer alabiliyorlardı. II. Assurnasirpal (MÖ 883-859) III. Salmanesser (MÖ 858-824) ve III. Tiglat-Pileser (MÖ 745-727) dönemine ait kabartmalarda, mızrakçı ve okçular çift olarak savaşmış, okçu atış yaparken; yanındaki mızrakçı atının dizginini tutar vaziyette tasvir edilmiştir. Bu zamanda binicilik henüz pek fazla bir gelişme gösterememiştir. Süvariler, ata eyersiz, üzensiz olarak binmekte ve atı kolayca yönetemeyecekleri bir biçimde arkaya doğru oturmaktaydılar. Dahası süvarilerin giyindikleri zırh, kuşandıkları kalkan ve giydikleri ağır çizmeler, süvarilerin hareketini büyük ölçüde sınırlamaktaydı. II. Sargon (MÖ 721-705) döneminde süvari sınıfında birtakım gelişmeler olmuştur. Atların zırhla kaplanması bu dönemde görülmüş bir yenilik olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. II. Sargon (MÖ 721-705) döneminde süvariler, küçük bir yay ya da uzun bir mızrak ile silahlandırılmışlardır. Diğer yandan yine bu dönemde atın eyerini dengelemek ve ata zarar vermemek için at sağrısı ve göğüs bantları kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Daha sonraları, bacakları ile atı kontrol etmeyi öğrenen Assur süvarisi, bu sayede at üzerinde ok atma becerisini kazanmıştır. Senharip (MÖ 704-681) ve Assurbanipal (MÖ 668-627) döneminde süvariler çift değil de tek sıra halinde, birbirini takip eden okçular ve mızrakçılar şeklinde sıralanmışlardır. Bu strateji piyadelerin yaraladıkları düşman askerlerinin süvariler tarafından öldürülmesinde de kolaylık sağlamıştır.

Özellikle Senharip (MÖ 704-681) dönemi saray kabartmalarında, Assur süvarisinin, Elam okçularına saldırısını ve yokuşu tutan Elam okçularını bozguna uğratışı, süvari birliğinin savaşlardaki rolünün ne kadar önemli olduğunu açıkça ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Assur, Ordu, Süvari, Okçu, Mızrakçı, Kalkan Taşıyıcı, At

Abstract

In Assur military history cavalry which was an unbound unit had been formed the most important arm of the army. Cavalry appeared in Assur for the first time in 1st Millennium BC, and they were depicted as a regular warrior unit first time at Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) period palace reliefs.

Cavalry units consisting of archers, shield bearers and spearmen were able to combat in rough and hard terrains that chariots could not be used or limitedly used in areas such as marsh areas, valleys, channels, mountainous and rural hood areas and forests. Moreover, because of the armour and weapons such as spear chariots couldn't cope with rough terrains, thus having capacity of making sudden assault against enemies that equipped with the heaviest weapons is the main determinant that led cavalries took the place of chariots in such circumstances.

Onwards 8th Century BC in Assur Army cavalry units that consisting of archers and spearmen were called *pithaillu* or *sa pethalli* and they were mounted units which were trained to employ in rough terrains. Cavalries, regardless of their primary usage they could take part in other missions in accordance with the needs of the army. In reliefs that dating back to Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) Salmanesser III (858-824 BC) and Tiglat-Pileser III (745-727 BC) periods archer and spearman had been combated as pairs and while archer were shooting the spearmen were holding the horses' reins. In this period horsemanship had not been improved much yet. Cavalries were riding horse without saddle and stirrup and they were sitting too back and it was making the control of the horse harder. In addition to this the armour, the shield and heavy boots were restricting the movements of cavalry to a large extent. In Sargon II (721-705 BC) reign cavalry unit made a set of progress. Covering horse with armour had been appeared in this period as an innovation. During Sargon II (721-705 BC) reign cavalries were armed with a short bow or with a long spear. On the other hand, again in this period in order to balance saddle and in order not to harm horses crupper and breast band had been begun to be used. Later, Assyrian cavalry learned to control horse with their feet and so that they learned to shoot while they were mounted. During Senharip (704-681 BC) and Assurbanipal (668-627 BC) period's cavalries lined up as single line ensuing archers and spearmen. This strategy paved the way for cavalries to kill enemy soldiers injured by infantries.

Especially in Senharip period's (704-681 BC) palace reliefs, assault of Assyrian cavalry to Elamite archers and defeating the Elamite archers who were defending the slope, clearly reveals the importance of cavalry for warfare.

Key Words: Neo Assur, Army, Cavalry, Archer, Spearman, Shield Bearer, Horse.

INTRODUCTION

In Assyrian military history cavalries, as a distinct group, had been constituted the most important arm of the army. Cavalries first appeared in Assyria in 1st Millennium BC but for the first time they depicted as a regular warrior unit and as an unbound unit in Assurnasirpal II period (883-859 BC) palace reliefs.

Assyrians took example of Med and Persian armies cavalry corps and at the same time they were affected by the war tactics of them.

Onwards 8th century BC we can see cavalry units consisting of archers and spearmen and in written sources they are called as *pithaillu* or *sa pethalli*.² These were mounted units trained for difficult terrains. Cavalry units were able to very effective in rough and hard terrains that chariots fell behind in areas such as marsh areas, valleys, channels, mountainous and rural hood areas and forests.³

Cavalries, regardless of their primary usage they could took part in other missions in accordance with the needs of the army. Assyrian Army's cavalries had undergone a gradual improvement. Assyrian reliefs partly shed light on this improvement process. In the reliefs that dating back to the reign of Tiglat-Pileser III (745-727 BC) it can be seen those spearmen and the archers were combating as pairs. While archers were shooting the spearmen beside them were depicted as they were holding the horse's reins.⁴ In this period horsemanship had not been improved much. Cavalries were riding horse without saddle and stirrup and they were sitting too back and it was making the control of the horse harder. In addition to this the armour, the shield and heavy boots were restricting the movements of cavalry to a large extent. Sargon II (721-705 BC) reign there had been a set of improvements and covering horse with armour showed up as an innovation in this period. Again in this period cavalries began to dress like spearmen and they were armed with a short bow or long spear. On the other hand, again in this period in order to balance saddle and in order not to harm horses crupper and breast band had been begun to be used. Later, Assyrian cavalry had learned to control the horse with their legs and thus they had the ability of shooting arrow while they were mounted. Senharip (704-681 BC) reign's palace reliefs display more tangible examples related to this issue.⁵ Palace reliefs that depicting the assault of Assyrian cavalry to Elamite archers and defeating the Elamite archers who were defending the slope, clearly reveals the how important this unit warfare.⁶

Assyrian cavalry units never and ever had the maneuverability and horse riding skill like mounted nomadic tribes living in steppe. For this reason, there were Kimmerian and Persian mercenary cavalry units integrated to the army with the aim of backing up cavalry corps. The reason why Assyrian cavalry didn't have skills like mounted nomadic tribes living in steppe was the expansion of the Assyrian's in mountainous areas. Despite unfavorable geographical conditions, Assyrians studied quite systematically in terms of supply of horses

² N. Stillman - N.Talls, *Armies Of The Ancient Near East 3000 BC to 539 BC*, Photoset and printed in England by Flexiprint Ltd., 1984, 30.

³ Ayrıntılı bilgi için Bkz. Esra Kaçmaz Levent, *Yazılı ve Tasvirli Belgeler Işığında Yeni Assur Krallığı'nda Ordu Ve Savaş*, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Yüzüncü Yıl üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Arkeoloji Anabilim Dalı, Van, 2016.

⁴ D. Noble "Assyrian Chariotry and Cavalry", *SAAB IV*, 1990, 63.

⁵ Stillman-Talls, *a.g.e.*, 1984, 61; Richard A. Gabriel, *The Ancient World*, Greenwood Pres, 2007, 207.

⁶ L. Gürkan Gökçek-Faruk Akyüz, "Assur Ordusu", *Ankara Üniversitesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 54, Ankara, 2013, 52.

and breeding them. In this system there were high ranking officers who were assigned directly by the king. These high ranking officers were horse employment officers called *musarkisu*. For one year, *Musarkisus* were breeding the horses that gathered from imperial territories or tribute horses. They were totally responsible both for the breeding and grooming of the horses kept in barns or corrals. In written documents it has been told that *musarkisus*' bred 100 horses in a day and bred 3000 horses in a month. For example, data we got from an account shows that in a month 2911 horses were gathered, 1840 of them assigned to charity, 787 of them were assigned to the cavalry unit and 27 of them were used as a stock animal.⁷

A squadron was consisting of 1000 cavalymen. (*kişru*) The leader of them was a squadron commander (lieutenant colonel) (*rab kişir ša pēthalli*)⁸. Every squadron was formed by 200 cavalry. In an account dating back to Sargon II (721-705 BC) reign mentioned about inspection of cavalry and chariot units.⁹ It is mentioned in this report that only 106 cavalymen (**LU.ša—BAD.HAL.MEŠ**) inspected and 96 cavalymen were absent under the command of chief (**LU.šak-ni**). Again in a letter dating back to this period Nabu-taklāk asked his brother Gadā to send him 200 horses and 1000 soldiers.¹⁰ A letter was written by Assurbanipal to Nabu-ušabši mentions about two platoon commanders who brought 200 horses.¹¹

The controller of Nabu Temple in Kalah Nabu-šumiddina in one of his report on horses mentions the shipment of 50 cavalymen. This may mean that; a unit consisting of 50 people might have formed the smallest unit of the Assyrian cavalry and Assyrian army what we can call as team.

In 1120 BC during Tiglath-Pileser I period Assyrian infantry units and chariot units were on cavalry's side. At the beginning a small number of cavalry units have been used. The first cavalry horses were equipped like horses of chariots', and the harnesses of the each horse had a function.

In the past archer and spearman had been combated as pairs and while archer were shooting the spearmen were holding the horses reins and protecting the archer with their shields. However, from the 7th century BC shields were removed from the inventory of the Assyrian cavalry, and the cavalry were equipped with both spears and arrows, and also the horses they used were armed¹². The cavalry became professional at horse riding, and even when the horse was in motion, he could be able to shoot arrows. (**Drawing 1-2**)

The cavalry team that consisting of archers and shield bearers had the advantage of fighting in rough and difficult terrains and at the same time cavalry team was able to carry out the function of mobile archer units. With the use of armour and lances by the Cavalry units, cavalry units had the ability of making sudden raids in unfavorable terrains where

⁷ R.A.Gabriel, *a.g.e.*, 2007, 206.

⁸ G.B. Lanfranchi- S. Parpola, "The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces", *SAA V*, Helsinki, 1990, 217 (ABL 342), 4-5.

⁹ G.B. Lanfranchi- S. Parpola, *a.g.m.*, 1990, 251 (ABL 567+).

¹⁰ M. Dietrich, "The Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib", *SAA XVII*, Helsinki, 2003, 63 (ABL 897), Rev. 7-8: 2-me ANŠE.KUR.[RA.MEŠ x x] 1-lim ERIM.MEŠ [xx].

¹¹ R.F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters belonging to the Kouyunjik collections of the British Museum, Parts I-XIV*, Chicago, 1892, 273, Rev. 1-4.

¹² Stillman-Talls, *a.g.e.*, 1984, 61.

chariots were useless against enemy forces equipped with the heaviest weapons that's why they took the place of chariots. We know that this characteristic was introduced to cavalrymen by some Urartian, Persian and Cimmerian soldiers in the Assyrian army.¹³

CAVALRIES IN WRITTEN DOCUMENTS AND DEPICTED DOCUMENTS

In depictions dating back to the Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) reign, we can observe that chariot gradually declined and cavalry arm improved independently. In the depiction, beside the archer cavalryman who is unarmoured, wearing pointed helmet and ornamented clothes, there is another cavalryman equipped with round bronze shield, sword and lance, wearing ear protective semispherical helmet. These cavalrymen, who can fight independently from each other, perfectly complete each other in close combats. (**Drawing 1-2**)

Cavalry is an important arm of the Assyrian army on the campaigns. Likewise, the cavalrymen had important duties like ambushing during the campaign. As a matter of fact; when Assurnasirpal II mounted an expedition to Zamua in 880 BC, he attacked Parsindu City with cavalry corps (*pithallu*) and infantries (*kallapu*), ambushed and entrapped them and killed 50 soldiers of the Ameka, king of Zamru, on the plain¹⁴. In a standard text Assurnasirpal II mentioned about cavalrymen as such: "...I took along forceful chariots, cavalryman and elite troops with me..."¹⁵

In 879 BC Assurnasirpal II. Campaign against Katmuhi and Nairi cities and according to the royal inscriptions, in this campaign, together with two-wheeled strong chariots, cavalrymen and infantries; he crossed over the Tigris with the help of pontoons. In 878 BC, he surrounded the Sûru, the fortified city of Kudurru, the ruler of the Sûhu territories, and captured it. Assurnasirpal took captive 50 cavalrymen, troops of Nabu-apla-ijdina, the king of Kurdinias city and his brother Zabdânu together with 3.000 warriors. In 877 BC, when he mounted expedition to the west, to the Lebanon Mountains, he took the cavalry units of the Northern Syrian States who surrendered, two-wheeled chariots and infantries along with him.¹⁶ Thus, the cavalry units of the Northern Syrian states such as Bît-Bahîni, Adad-ime, Azallu, Ahuni, Bît-Adini, Carcassiami, Lubarna, Pattina were integrated into Assyrian Army as auxiliary troops.¹⁷

In spite of the fact that the descriptions of campaigns in the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (858—824 BC) still began with the standard formula: "...I mustered my chariots and troops..."¹⁸ the cavalry was becoming increasingly important in Assyrians war-

¹³ Stillman-Talls, *a.g.e.*, 1984, 61.

¹⁴ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions I*, Weisbaden, 1972, A.0.101.1, II:70-71; A.0.101.17, III: 84-85.

¹⁵ A. K. Grayson, AR-I, A.0.101.1, II:52-54, A.0.101.17, III: 36-37.

¹⁶ A. K. Grayson, AR-I, A.0.101.1, III:58-77.

¹⁷ T. Dezsó, *The Assyrian Army The Structure of The Neo-Assyrian Army as Reconstructed from the Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Cuneiform Sources*, 2. *Cavalry and Chariotry*, Monographs of the Department of Assyriology and Hebrew, Institute of Ancient Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2012, 16.

¹⁸ Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions II*, Weisbaden, 1976, A.0.102.1, 15; A.0.102.2, I:15; A.0.102.6, I:29.

fare.¹⁹ In 855 BC, the king led a campaign against Ahuni, king of Bît-Adini, and defeated king Ahuni together with his army, cavalry, and chariots.²⁰

In 853 BC the Assyrians led the first campaign against the coalition of the twelve kings and fought a battle near Qarqar. Hadad-ezer, king of Damascus, mustered 1.200 chariots, 1200 cavalry and 20.000 troops, while Irhuleni, king of Hamath, brought 700 chariots, 700 cavalry and 10.000 troops. After the war Assyrians captured the coalition army including the cavalries.²¹ In 849 BC the Assyrian king fought the coalition army of the 12 kings again and captured their chariots and cavalry in battle.²² In the next year, 848 BC, the Assyrians fought for the third time against the coalition army of the 12 kings, defeated them, and captured their chariotry and cavalry.²³ In 845 BC the Assyrians defeated the coalition army of the 12 kings a fourth time, and destroyed their chariotry and cavalry.²⁴ In 843 BC Marduk-mudammig, king of Namri, sent his numerous cavalry (**pit-hal-lu-šu HI.A.MEŠ**) against the Assyrian army in a battle.²⁵ Marduk-mudammig lost both war and most of his cavalries. In 841 BC the Assyrian king led a campaign to Damascus and defeated them and put to the sword 16.000 Damascene fighting men, and took 1.121 chariots and 470 cavalry from Hazael.²⁶ In 832 BC the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III sent his army under the command of Commander-in-Chief Daiiān-Assur to campaign against Urartu. The Commander-in-Chief defeated Sarduri I, king of Urartu and captured his numerous cavalry.²⁷ Shalmaneser III, in his inscriptions, boasted that he captured 2002 chariot horses and captured further 5.542 horsemen for the service of his country.²⁸

His successor, Šamši-Adad V (823—811 BC) mentioned in his royal inscriptions that on his third campaign he captured 140 horsemen of the Median Hanasiruka and on his fourth campaign when he defeated Marduk-balāssu-iqbi, the king of Kardunias, in the battle fought by the Daban River he captured 100 chariots and 200 cavalryman.²⁹ On his fifth campaign he led his army to Karduniaš a second time, and in the battle fought at the gate of Nēmetti-sarri he captured the chariots and cavalry of Marduk-balāssu-iqb.³⁰

The closing formula of a ‘letter to the god,’ written probably during the reign of Shalmaneser IV (782—773 BC) as such “[1 charioteer, two] cavalrymen, (and) [three kallapu soldiers] were killed.”³¹

As the written sources show, in the early 9th century B.C. the cavalry was used outside Assyria mainly in the mountainous regions to the North and East, and in North Syria. By the late 9th century BC., however, it had become widespread throughout the Near East.

¹⁹ Grayson, AR II, A.0.102.2, 51; A.0.102.28, 40-41

²⁰ Grayson, AR II, A.0.102.2, II:73-74.

²¹ Grayson, AR II, A.0.102.2, II:101-102; A.0.102.6, II:30-32; A.0.102.8, 18-19; A.0.102.10, II:22-25; A.0.102.14, 54-66; A.0.102.16, 35-37; A.0.102.23, 21-27.

²² Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.6, II:65-66; A.0.102.8, 34-35.

²³ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.6, III:8-10; A.0.102.8, 38-39.

²⁴ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.6, III:30-32; A.0.102.8, 44-47; A.0.102.10, III:15-16; A.0.102.16, 87-95; A.0.102.24, 14b-17.

²⁵ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.6, IV:7-12.

²⁶ Grayson, AR-I, A.0.102.8, 1''-13''; A.0.102.10, III:51-52; A.0.102.12, 21-24; A.0.102.14, 97-99; A.0.102.16, 122-137.

²⁷ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.16, 228'-237'.

²⁸ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.102.6, IV:47-48; A.0.102.10, (5242); A.0.102.11, II:1-2; A.0.102.16, 348.

²⁹ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.103.1, IV:37-45.

³⁰ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.103.2, III:32.

³¹ Grayson, AR-II, A.0.105, Rev. 1-4.

In the palace reliefs of Tiglath-Pileser III (745—727 BC) cavalymen depicted both unarmoured and armoured (**Drawing 3**). In this period cavalymen wore pointed helmets and tunics, their horses were unarmoured and the trappings of the horses were decorated. The most important weapon of the cavalymen was lance and their auxiliary weapon was sword.

Tiglath-Pileser III, in his royal inscriptions, he boasted that in his 3rd Palû (743 BC) in the territory of Kummuh, between Kiřtan and Halpi, the Assyrian army defeated the coalition army of Mati'-ilu, king of Arpad, Sarduri II, king of Urartu, Sulumal, king of Meliddu, and Tarhularu, king of Gurgum. The Assyrian cavalry chased the fleeing Urartian king to his capital, Turuřpâ.³² As much as we understand; one of the missions of cavalymen was cheating the fleeing enemy.

The first armoured lancers, wearing pointed helmets with earflaps and barefoot, appeared in the sculptures of Tiglath-Pileser II (745 727 BC) their weapon was long lance designed for thrusting enemy cavalymen. (**Drawing 4**)

By browsing the palace reliefs of Sargon II (721—705 BC) we can say that the number of cavalymen rose significantly. In this period horses were unarmoured and their trappings were decorated. (**Drawing 5**) Again in this period, the cavalymen were unarmoured: they were depicted as wearing pointed helmets and tunics ending in a loosely fitting kilt reaching to the knee. The saddle was unknown at that time, and the Assyrians used animal skins as a kind of saddle cloth. Their main offensive weapon was the long cavalry lance, but they were also equipped with bows, quivers and swords. The most important feature of the cavalry was that they could wield their lances not only from the upper hand position, but from the lower hand position as well. ((**Drawing 6-7**))

We can see that in the sculptures of Sennacherib (704-681 BC) the proportion of the cavalry is high. Onwards this period cavalymen depicted not as pairs but as single line succession. While the horses were unarmoured, the cavalymen were wearing pointed helmets and scale armour. (**Drawing 8-9**) The tunics of the cavalymen became tighter and they began to wear characteristic military boots. From the palace reliefs of this period it is known that there were three types of cavalymen but only their weaponry was different, their armour and horse harnesses were the same.³³

In the palace reliefs of Sennacharip (704-681 BC) reign a lot of examples of cavalymen fighting in the forests and attacking uphill. In such attacks, cavalymen equipped with lance takes the front, and archer cavalymen, shooting above the heads of lancer, take the back. In this position, each cavalry was able to focus entirely on what they trained for. It can be seen that the main weapons of the cavalry lancers were arrows; the role of the second line that were trained just for shooting arrows is to make appropriate shots with the support of the front line and to avoid being involved in close combat. (**Drawing 10**) Because, when Assyrian infantry injured the enemy soldiers, lethaattacks are made by lancer cavalymen and archer cavalymen.

During the reign of Esarhaddon (681-669 BC), archer cavalymen's horses were equipped with large armour against lethal weapons, and thus horses were protected. This

³² H.Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria. Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*, (Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities, Judaices Spectantes), Jerusalem, 1994, Ann. 17, Stele IB: 20-43

³³ Fales-Postgate, "Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration", *SAA VII*, Helsinki, 1992. 3 (ADD 853, obv. I:6), 4 (ADD 854, obv. I:1-rev. II:6).

armor is attached to the chest of the horse and extends to the back side. During the battles the two arm of the cavalry, archers and lancers, served in the wing parts of the army to stop the escape of the enemy. The horsemen have usually been involved in the battles, and have been very effective in the mountainous and forested battle fields.³⁴

During the reign of Assurbanipal (668-631 BC) the Assyrian cavalry made progress and with this evolution horse armour appeared. The horses depicted in the palace reliefs of Assurbanipal reign (668-631) are protected by thick leather armour. The armour covered the neck and body of the horse, and hung down to its hind legs. The sculptures shows that the armour was made of separate pieces, which were fastened together with hooks on the neck, breast, back and croup of the horse, thus only the forehead and the legs were left free. It can be understood from the relief that there were 2 types of horse armour.

The first type (**Drawing 11**) partly covers the breast of the horse and leaves more freedom of movement for its forelegs.³⁵ The second type (**Drawing 12**) covers the breast of the animal much more fully, like a hanging down pectoral. This armour which covers the horse almost completely is more difficult targets for the enemy's spears and arrows as compared with the armour covering the breast of the horse. Furthermore, the horse's forehead has been protected by a bronze plate. The use of horse armour greatly improved the efficiency of the cavalry as an arm as well. Because it reduced losses in horses, increased the safety of the cavalry in battle, and thus improved the supply of horses during campaigns.³⁶

In the representational tradition of the sculptures of Assurbanipal reign the cavalry lancers and archers (**Drawing 13-14**) were separated. The armour of the archer cavalrymen is the same as in the palace reliefs of Sennacherib reign (704-681 BC). From the reign of Sennacherib onwards they wore pointed helmets made of iron.³⁷ The upper body was covered with scale armour. From the early 8th century BC scale armour which could have been made of iron, was also covering the groin and the waist of the cavalrymen. They were wearing boots.³⁸

In the reliefs depicting Assurbanipal's Battle of Ulai, chariot and cavalry units are depicted while they were attacking the left wing of the Elamites. (**Figure 1**) Despite missing part of the relief we can say that a large number of armed cavalry involved in the attack. The Assyrians were attacking over the head level to pinch the lances instead of piercing like a harpoon. The infantries who are surrounded by heavy and medium weapons at the top and staying together are seems to be formed as two open alignment line. Unless some of the heavy-armed archers who shot randomly during the battle were transformed into archer cavalry, the cavalrymen were not used in the sieges. However, they involved in very important

³⁴ A. Buttery, "Armies and Enemies of Ancient Egypt and Assyria 3200 BC to 612 BC", *Wargames Research Group*, 1974.46-47; Stillman-Talls, *a.g.e.*, 1984, Bkz Ek, VI, VII.

³⁵ Barnett-Bleibtreu-Turner, *a.g.e.*, nos. 278, 282, 313, 382, 383

³⁶ T. Dezso, *The Assyrian Army The Structure of The Neo-Assyrian Army as Reconstructed from the Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Cuneiform Sources, 2. Cavalry and Chariotry*, Monographs of the Department of Assyriology and Hebrew, Institute of Ancient Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest, 2012, 21.

³⁷ T. Dezso-Curtis, J.E. "Assyrian Iron Helmets from Nimrud, now in the British Museum", *Iraq* 53 1991, 105-126; T. Dezso, *Near Eastern Helmets of the Iron Age*, (British Archaeological Reports, S992), Oxford, 2001, 33-36.

³⁸ Dezso, *The Assyrian Army-II*, 2012, 21

missions by protecting the line of the communication and the armed reconnaissance group from sudden attacks.³⁹

As it is known, in the battle the cavalrymen were both backing up and commanding the infantries. In the battles the roles of the cavalry were protecting the proceeding infantry by shield, harassing the enemy with arrows, wandering around the enemy to try to break the circle system, and chasing the enemy until the enemy's forces are broken.⁴⁰

At the beginning, the Assyrian cavalry was an ordinary soldier equipped with armor, spear, shield and heavy boot. Being equipped like this is too heavy for them and, restricting the mobility of the cavalrymen. As time passed the upper armour shortened till waist length and the shield became smaller. Besides, in order to keep balance on the horse cavalrymen used a blanket, saddle, croup and chest straps. Later, cavalrymen learned to control boot heel pressure with their legs. This paved the way for the increasing number of archer cavalrymen. Consequently, archer cavalryman appeared for the first time in the Near East. The phrase "*hurricanes on horseback*" in the Old Testament refers to the Assyrian archer cavalry.⁴¹

CAVALRIES IN THE BATTLE

In the battles, cavalry troops consisting of 1.000 soldiers, joined the campaigns along with chariots that having auxiliary power. The Assyrian army could not exist without chariots cavalry.

In the battles, three auxiliary groups make up Assyrian cavalry unit. The first of these is horse raiders and they were organized for this purpose. The second auxiliary group is small mixed squads formed by slaves riding mare horses. The third and most important auxiliary group was the inspection system consisting of high-ranking officers. This group, called "Musarkisu", was a group which had large number of officers and these officers were responsible for taking care of the horses and supervising them and delivering the relevant information directly to the king.⁴²

While the Assyrian horses are always depicted in pairs, especially in the reliefs depicting the Tiglath-Pileser III⁴³ reign battle scenes, fleeing enemy horses are always depicted alone and scattered around the battlefield.⁴⁴ Such relief depiction probably tries to give the impression that while the Assyrian cavalry were fighting in massed formation, the panic-stricken enemy soldiers were escaping from the battlefield.

As we have already seen in the reliefs dating back to the Sargon II period, Assyrian cavalry depicted while they were assaulting the enemy infantries, fighting⁴⁵ and pursuing

³⁹ Stillman-Talls, *a.g.e.*, 61.

⁴⁰ Doyne Dawson, *The First Armies*, Ed. John Keegan, Cassel-co London, London: 2001.

⁴¹ Gabriel, *a.g.e.*, 207.

⁴² Healy, *a.g.e.*, 21.

⁴³ Barnett-Falkner, 1962, Pl. XIII.

⁴⁴ Barnett R.D., Falkner M., *The Sculptures of Assur-nasir-pal II, Tiglat-Pileser III, Esarhaddon from the Central and South-West Palace at Nimrud*, London, 1962, pl. XIII.

⁴⁵ Albenda P. *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria: monumental Wall reliefs at Dur-Sharrukin, from original drawings made at the time of their discovery in 1843-1844 by Botta and Flandin*. Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations. Synthese 22, Paris, 1986, 94-95.

them.⁴⁶

In the Sennacherib period reliefs, it is possible to see the cavalymen in different missions. According to the reliefs of this period, it is possible for us see the cavalry lined up outside the walls of a conquered city for a muster,⁴⁷ watching a siege,⁴⁸ standing guard dismounted in the escort of the king,⁴⁹ galloping beside the royal chariot in the mountains in single file⁵⁰ and marching across a plain among palm trees in single file.⁵¹

In the reliefs of Assurbanipal reign, especially in the relief depicting the Til-Tuba battle (653 BC) the lancers (**Drawing 12**) and mounted archers (**Drawing 13**) are shown in close combat with the fleeing Elamite infantry and horsemen. With the help of the Assyrian infantry they are pushing the enemy into the river.⁵²

In addition, again in a relief of Assurbanipal reign, archer cavalymen were shown while they were shooting arrow at a besieged city wall from horseback.⁵³ As we see, archer cavalry units had played an important role during the siege while besieging the castle.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of reliefs we can say that cavalry units were able to fight on various types of terrain, and they carried out their capacity for rapid deployment and for fighting battles with cavalry and infantry.

According to the impression we had from the reliefs, cavalymen depicted while they were pursuing the fleeing enemy soldiers. Likewise, written sources verify the depictions. In the annals⁵⁴ of Tiglath- Pileser III reign it is mentioned that the Assyrian cavalry after the battle fought between Kiştan and Halpi in 743 BC chased the fleeing Urartian king Sarduri II to his capital Turuřpa.

It is obvious that the cavalry was a much more versatile arm than the chariotry and only a few kinds of terrain were unsuitable for the horses such as marshland, rocky terrain, and deserts. Judging by the written sources the Assyrian cavalry units in the border regions not only served as for reconnaissance⁵⁵ but also served as guards and sentinels. In Nimrud letters it is mentioned that cavalry units stand guard in Babylonia and arrest people who didn't pay their taxes.⁵⁶ In the border regions cavalryman served as authorized person. For

⁴⁶ Albenda 1986, 99, 101, 102.

⁴⁷ Barnett R.D., Bleibtreu E., Turner G., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Senharip at Niniveh (668-627 B.C.)*, British Museum, London, 1998, 19.

⁴⁸ Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 234-236, 245, 246, 369-370, 628.

⁴⁹ Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 68, 86, 87.

⁵⁰ Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 94.

⁵¹ Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 650.

⁵² Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 383

⁵³ Barnett – Bleibtreu – Turner 1998, 278, 282;

⁵⁴ H., Tadmor 1994, *The Inscriptions of Tiglat-Pileser III, King of Assyria: Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*, *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, Jerusalem, 1994. Annal 17:10-11

⁵⁵ A., Fuchs – S., Parpola, “The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III: Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces”, *SAA, XV*, Helsinki, 2001. 118.

⁵⁶ H.W.F., Saggs *The Nimrud Letters*, 1952, (Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud, 5), London, 2001, 97-99.

example, Kumme people living in the Urartian border region, told the Urartian king Argišti as such: “*We are subject to Assur and our chief is an Assyrian cavalry officer.*”⁵⁷

Judging by the sculptures and the written sources, in 9th and 8th century BC Assyrian cavalry, like the cavalry of the neighboring states, became a forceful arm used as an arm which could be used for reconnaissance, for standing guard and for patrol duties in mountainous regions, for skirmishing, for cavalry battles, to hold and cover the wings of the battle line, and for pursuing the fleeing enemy.

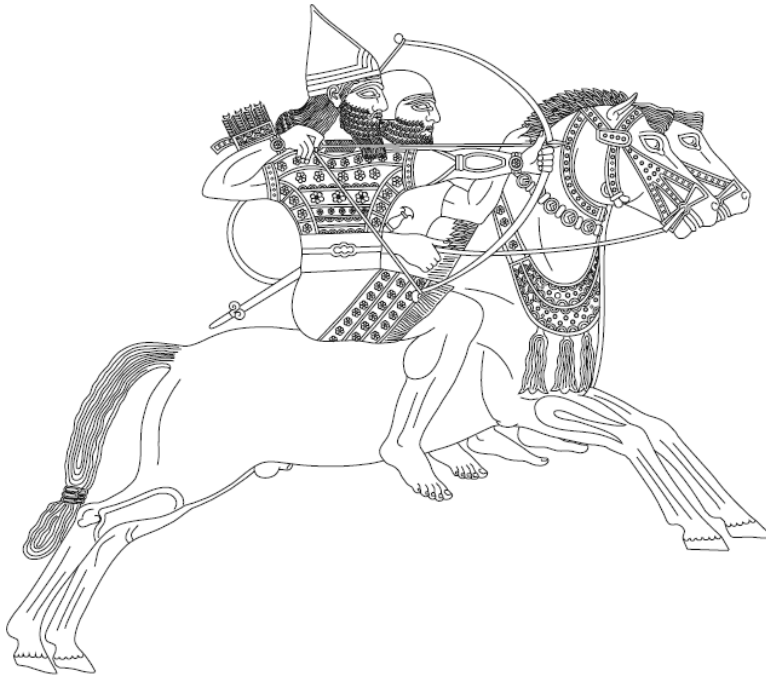
It can be said that cavalry was the ultimate arm of the Assyrian Army in set piece and again we can say that the focal point of the war is practiced under the control of the Assyrian cavalry.

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⁵⁷ G.B., Lanfranchi – S., Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*”, *SAA V*, Helsinki, 1990, 95.

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DRAWINGS

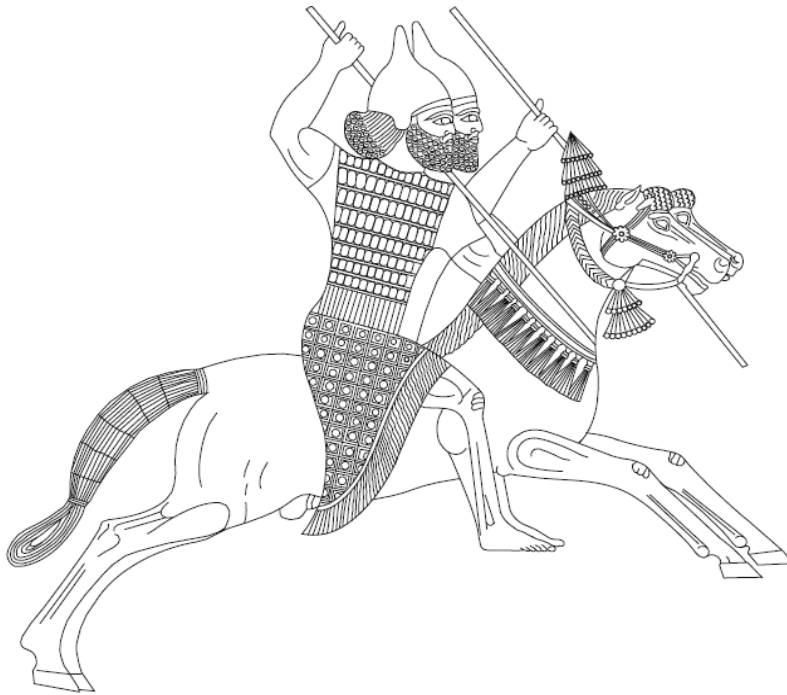
Drawing 1. Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) Reign's Archer Cavalry (Layard 1853A, 26)



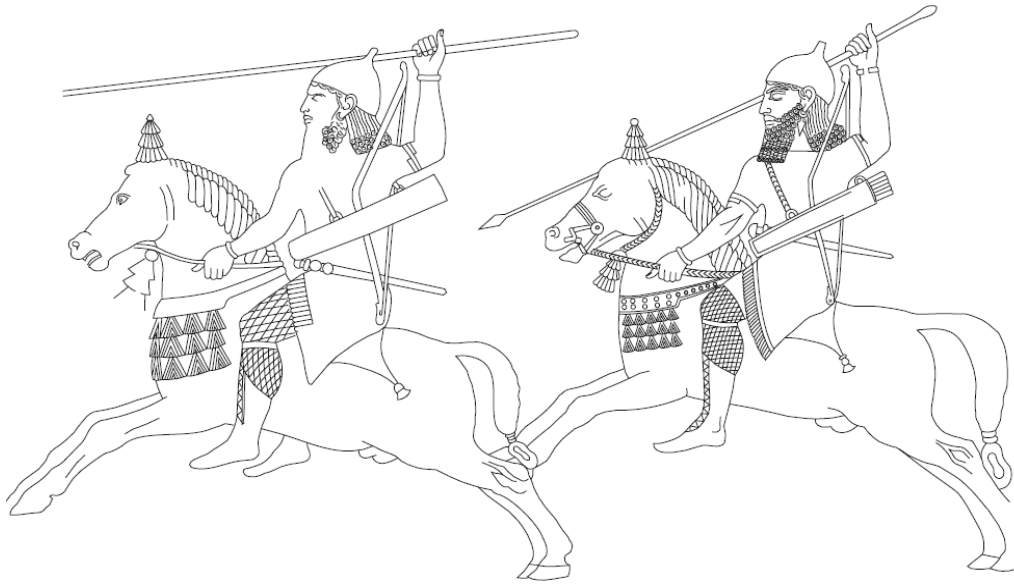
Drawing 2. Archer Cavalrymen of Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) Reign (Layard, 1853A, 26)



Drawing 3. Tiglat-Pileser III (745-727 BC) Reign Unarmoured Cavalrymen (Barnett-Falkner 1962, XIII)



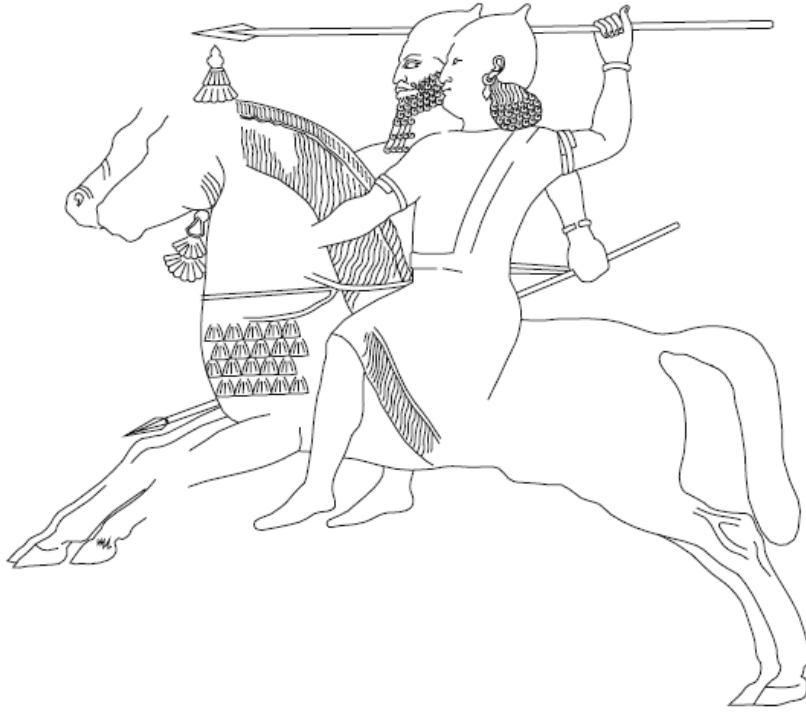
Drawing 4. Tiglat- Pileser III (745-727 BC) Reign's Armoured Cavalrymen (Barnett-Falkner 1962, LXVI)



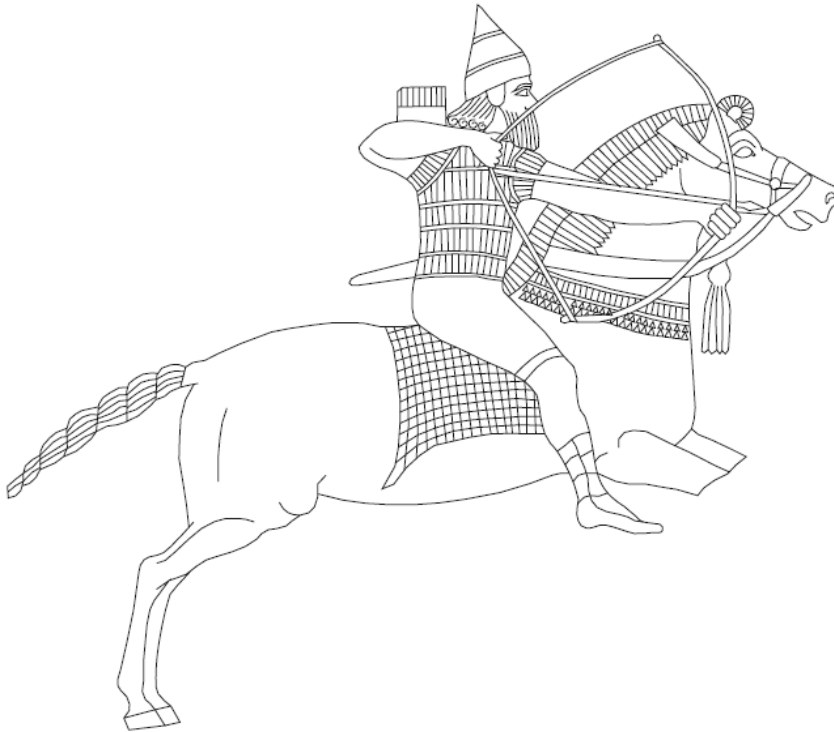
Drawing 5. Unarmoured Lancers of Sargon II (721-705 BC) Reign (Botta-Flandin 1849, 66)



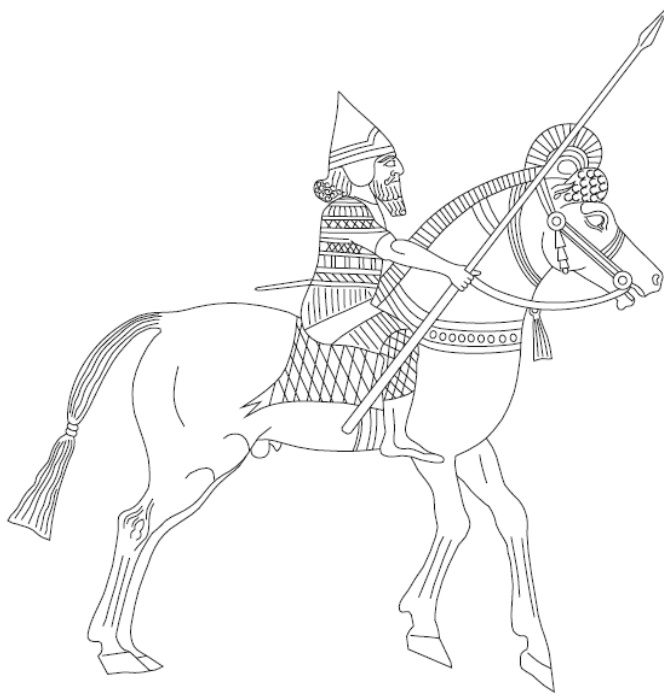
Drawing 6. Unarmoured Lancers of Sargon II (721-705 BC) Reign (Botta-Flandin 1849, 64)



Drawing 7. Unarmoured Lancers of Sargon II (721-705 BC) Reign (Botta-Flandin 1849, 88)



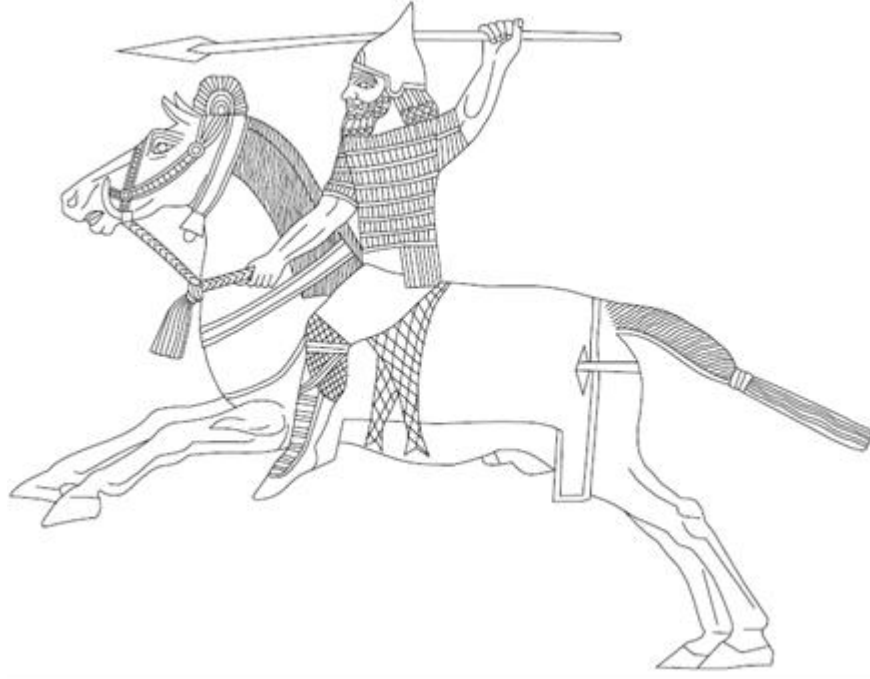
Drawing 8. Armoured Cavalrymen of Sennacherib (704-681 BC) Reign (Barnett et al. 1998, 132)



Drawing 9. Senharip Reign (704-681 BC) Armoured Cavalrymen (Layard 1853A, 80)



Drawing 10. Ninova Southwest Palace. Assyrian Horsemen in Mountainous Regions. Sennacharip Reign (704-681 BC) (Layard, 1849, lev. 81)



Drawing 11. Assurbanipal Reign (668-631 BC) Armoured Lancers (Place 1867, 59)



Drawing 12. Assurbanipal Reign (668-631 BC) Armoured Lancers (Layard 1853B, 46)



Drawing 13. Assurbanipal Reign (668-631 BC) Archer Cavalrymen (Layard 1853B, 45)



Drawing 14. Assurbanipal Reign (668-631 BC) Archer Cavalrymen (Place 1867, 61)

FIGURES



Figure 1. Til-Tuba (Ulai) Battle. Ninova Northwest Palace. Assurbanipal (668-631 BC) Reign. (Russell, 1999, 166, fig.50)