

Comparative Analysis of Two Battles: Assyrian's Waush and Roman's Ticinus

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Abstract

Ancient Mesopotamia is important in history and is considered the cradle of civilizations. However, it is impossible to say that the scientific community recognizes the privilege of this region at some points. One of these important points is the strategies used by ancient Mesopotamia in warfare. So, this study addresses three main questions: First, how the Assyrians developed and implemented their strategy at the Battle of Waush; second, how Assyrian warfare can be compared to Roman and Carthaginian warfare and where the Assyrians' strategizing skills should be placed in the ancient world; and third, an attempt to create a Urartian perspective about Battle of Waush from the source material and comparison with the other battle. For this purpose, the study analyzes the Battle of Ticinus, which took place during the Second Punic War and is very similar in planning, fighting, and retreat, and compares it to the Battle of Waush. In addition, the leadership qualities of Sargon and Hannibal are discussed, and their bold initiatives and command skills are evaluated. In addition, the defeats of both battles and the strategies they planned to implement are carefully analyzed, thus providing an objective assessment of both battles in light of the available data.

Keywords: Assyria, Battle, Carthage, Sargon, Rome.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Antik Mezopotamya, medeniyetlerin beşiği olarak adlandırılmıştır çünkü yazı, devletler, imparatorluklar ve dünya tarihini değiştiren bazı önemli gelişmeler bu bölgede ortaya çıkmıştır. Mezopotamya, özellikle Antik Çağ'da tarihin odak noktalarından biri olmuştur. Yakın Doğu, tarihte savaş yapabilen ilk devletlerin ortaya çıktığı bölge olması nedeniyle savaş ve strateji açısından önemli bir yere sahiptir. Ancak bu önemin akademik camiada yeterince fark edildiğini söylemek oldukça zordur. Bu bağlamda literatürdeki boşluğun yeni bakış açıları ve yeni çalışmalarla doldurulması ya da önceki çalışmaların desteklenmesi elzemdir.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Asur kralı II. Sargon'un Yakın Doğu'da Waush Savaşı olarak da bilinen Sargon'un Sekizinci Seferi sırasında Waush Dağı'ndaki Urartu kralı Rusa II'ye karşı uyguladığı stratejilerden birini batılı bir örneklerle karşılaştırmak ve batılı bir stratejistle arasındaki doğrudan farklılıkları ve benzerlikleri ortaya koymaktır. Karşılaştırma için seçilen stratejist, Afrika'da doğmuş olmasına rağmen Avrupa tarihi üzerindeki etkisi nedeniyle Avrupa ve hatta dünya tarihinin en önemli komutanlarından biri olarak kabul edilen Kartacalı Komutan Hannibal'dir. Hannibal, strateji açısından bir "benchmark" olarak kabul edilebilir. Hannibal'den yaklaşık 500 yıl önce Asur kralı Sargon'un da Hannibal'inkine benzer bir strateji uygulamış olması dolayısıyla Asur'un stratejisinin ne kadar gelişmiş olduğu çalışmanın vurgulamak istediği temel noktalardan biridir.

Öte yandan, Waush Savaşı Asurlular tarafından Asur İmparatorluğu'nun bakış açısıyla yazılmıştır. Bu nedenle Tanrı Aşur'a Mektup ya da Sargon'un Sekizinci Seferi olarak adlandırılan belge, tarihsel bir analiz yapılmadan objektif olmaktan uzaktır. Bu çalışmada Waush Savaşı ile Ticinus Savaşı karşılaştırılacak ve Urartu perspektifinden bir strateji oluşturulmaya çalışılacaktır.

Çalışmanın ilk hedefi, Asurluların Waush Savaşı'ndaki stratejilerini nasıl tasarladıkları ve uyguladıklarını, antik belgeler ve çeşitli modern çalışmalar ışığında yapmaktır. Çalışmanın üzerinde durduğu bir diğer nokta ise, Antik Çağ'da Akdeniz ve çevresinde yaşayan toplumları inceleyen ve savaşları detaylı bir şekilde anlatan tabletlerden ziyade kitaplara yazılmış metinler üzerinde çalışan akademisyenlere, bir Asur savaşını Roma ve Kartaca savaşlarıyla karşılaştırabilecekleri bir analiz ortaya koymaktır. Böylece Asur'un stratejisinin antik dünyada nereye konumlandırılması gerektiğine dair bir fikir sunmaktır. Çalışma ayrıca arka planda Sargon ve Hannibal'in liderlik vasıflarını da tartışmaktadır. Öte yandan hem Waush hem de Ticinus'ta mağlup olan komutanlar ve uygulamayı planladıkları stratejiler, her iki muharebenin de eldeki veriler ışığında objektif bir değerlendirmesini yapmak ve mağlup komutanların kabiliyetlerini ortaya koymak amacıyla dikkatle analiz edilmiştir.

Çalışmanın en önemli bulgusu, Asur kraliyet yazıtlarının, tarihteki diğer belgelerde sıklıkla olduğu gibi, propaganda içerikli olduğu ve bu çalışma gibi karşılaştırmalı çalışmalarla daha gerçekçi bir bakış açısı oluşturulabileceğidir. Belgeler her ne kadar propaganda içerikli olsa da bazı savaşların anlaşılmasını kolaylaştıran önemli bir tarihsel gerçekliği de barındırmaktadır. Özellikle Sargon'un Waush Savaşı ilk aşamasında yaptığı saldırının tıpkı Ticinus'ta olduğu gibi rakibi dağıttığı ve aslında savaşın geri kalanının propaganda çerçevesinde şekillendiği anlaşılmaktadır. Ticinus Savaşı'nın gösterdiği gibi Sargon'un ilk saldırısından sonra Urartu ordusu dağılmış ve artık savaşmanın bir anlamının kalmadığı taktiksel bir durum ortaya çıkmıştır. Urartu kralı Rusa kurtarabildiği askerlerle savaş alanından çekilmiştir. Özellikle Sargon'un metninde Urartu merkezindeki askerleri esir aldığı bilgisinin yer alması bu bulguyu destekleyen en önemli ifadedir. Sargon'un Asur ordusunu karşılayan ilk asker grubundan önemli sayıda askeri esir alması, bu birliğin Asur ordusunu oyaladığı ve diğer birliklerin geri çekilmesini sağladığı şeklinde yorumlanabilir.

Diğer taraftan Asur belgelerindeki propaganda kısmının en dikkat çekici yanı, Asur kralının Rusa'yla yaptığı savaştan daha çok, özellikle Muşasir gibi önemli yerlerin Asur'un eline geçmesi ve Urartu'ya verilen zararların metinde yer almasıdır. Bunu da hem propaganda içeriği hem de Urartu devletinin devlet olma erkini yitirdiği iması ile belgelere aktarmaktadır. Bu durum ise bu belgeye sadece propaganda içeriği katmanın çok ötesinde Asurluların savaşı sadece maddi boyutuyla değil manevi boyutuyla da idrak ettiğinin tartışmasız bir delilidir. Onlar için askerleri öldürmek, düşman esir almaktan ziyade, düşmanın manevi güç aldığı bir psikolojik dayanak noktasını yok etmenin daha önemli olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu da Asur'un psikolojik savaş boyutunun bir diğer önemli göstergesidir.

Çalışmanın ilk sonucu, Eski Yakın Doğu'da Asur İmparatorluğu'nda kullanılan savaş stratejilerinin son derece karmaşık ve sofistike olduğunu göstermektedir. Çünkü savaş stratejisi, akademisyenler tarafından etraflıca incelenmiş olan bir komutanın, Hannibal, stratejisine benzemektedir. Benzer bir sonuç Urartu için de çıkarılabilir, çünkü savaşı kaybetmenin nedeni Urartu ordusunun beceriksizliği ya da taktiksel yetersizliği değil, Asur ordusunun üstünlüğüdür.

Öte yandan vasallar her iki savaşta da önemlidir ve Yakın Doğu'daki savaş çalışmalarında genellikle arka planda görülseler de genel olarak savaşlarda önemli bir rol oynarlar. Bu bakımdan, yerel vasalların küresel siyaset üzerindeki etkisi bu tür çalışmalarda bazen çok önemli bir faktör haline gelmektedir. Bu durum her iki savaş için de tespit edilebilir bir realite olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Waush ve Ticinus savaşları arasındaki çarpıcı bir diğer ortak nokta, her iki mağlup liderin de son derece başarılı bir kaçış stratejisi kullanmış olmalarıdır. Özellikle coğrafyanın son derece etkili bir şekilde kullanıldığı bu savaşlar Antik Çağ'da strateji çalışmaları için son derece seçkin örnekler olarak kabul edilebilir. Uygulanan bu strateji sayesinde mağlupların en az galip gelen komutanlar kadar başarılı stratejistler oldukları anlaşılmaktadır.

Introduction

The ancient Near East has been coined as the cradle of civilization because writing, states, empires, and other essential developments emerged in this region. Mesopotamia is the focal point of history, especially in the Ancient Age. The Near East has a significant place in terms of warfare and strategy, as it is the region that created the first states capable of waging war in history (Winter, 1985, pp. 11-15; Ferril, 1997, pp. 41-43; Guilaïne & Zammit, 2008, pp. 1-5). Creating a state or an empire without a proper army or battles is not possible. So, if there is a state such as Sumerians or an empire such as Akkadians, there must be battles or wars. Creating a state or empire cannot be possible without war, and war cannot be created without a strategy; this makes the Ancient Near East an essential place in terms of strategy. However, it is not possible to say that this privileged place of the Near East in history is sometimes adequately recognized. Even sometimes deliberately ignored by some academics, such as (Parker, 2022, p. vii).

This study's primary motivation and originality is that the strategic and military success of the states and empires in the Near East has been discussed in many studies by prominent authors, and it has been determined that very successful strategies were applied (Hamblin, 2006). In this study, the aim is to compare one of the strategies applied in the Near East by the Assyrian king Sargon II against the Urartian king Rusa II in the Battle of Waush with a Western example and thus to reveal the direct differences and similarities between a strategist from the west. The strategist selected for comparison is Hannibal, who is considered one of the most important commanders of strategy in European and even world history. Theodore Dodge Ayrault describes Hannibal as the "Father of Strategy" (Ayrault, 1893, p. 633). Hannibal has a distinguished place in history regarding his ability to devise and execute strategy. Thus, Hannibal can be considered a "benchmark" in strategy (Dupuy, 1969). It is one of the issues that the study wants to emphasize that the Assyrian king Sargon implemented a similar strategy to Hannibal's about 500 years before Hannibal, so it is easy to assume how advanced Assyrian strategy was. For the compare with the Battle of Waush is chosen to analyze the Assyrians' capacity to strategize is the Battle of Ticinus, which took place in 218 BC in Hannibal's attack on Italy to bring Rome to its knees and to eliminate the humiliation suffered by his state during the First Punic War (Gabriel, 2011, p. 18).

Another objective is to obtain a narrative of the battle from the Urartian perspective, comparing it with other battles from a one-sided document dictated by Sargon. Text is found in Nimrud and is named Sargon's Letter to the God Ashur or Sargon's Eight Campaign is the most essential information source of the Battle of Waush (RINAP, Sargon II, 065; Kravitz, 2003; Dezso, 2021, p. 26). This document also shows that connection between religion, strategy and warfare (Pekşen, 2016, pp. 61-65). However, it was written by Assyrians from the perspective of the Assyrians. The document is, therefore, far from being objective without a historical analysis. So, the Ticinus Battle provides a fundamental background for comparison. This article will try to create a strategy from the Urartian perspective by comparing it with the Battle of Ticinus.

There is a significant similarity between the Waush and the Ticinus battles. While these similarities are almost identical at the strategy and planning stage, this resemblance also bears significant similarities in putting the strategy on the battlefield. So, while Urartu and Rome were in an advantageous position in terms of time and geography in the battles, both victorious Sargon and Hannibal could turn the enemy's plan in their favor thanks to a good plan and armies with superior discipline and training. From this point of view, comparing these two battles, it is aimed to provide a new perspective on the Battle of Waush by addressing two battles between Assyria and Carthage in which a similar strategy was used and to make it easier for those who study the European Greco-Roman Mediterranean to understand the battle strategies and tactics of the Assyrians. Mainly because the battles written on tablets do not provide sufficient detail, and it is impossible to compare them with their Western counterparts. However, in this study, two battles similar to twins are compared to each other, and new comparative data has been revealed, especially for those who study Mediterranean civilizations, that can be considered comparing apples to apples. The study provides essential answers to understanding Assyria's strategic capability and aims to fill a significant gap in where Assyria's capacity to strategize should be positioned. And discuss the level of the Assyrians' perception of strategy by comparing it with a good example.

When we look at the sources used in the study, Sargon's Letters the Gods is the primary source of the Battle of Waush (RINAP, Sargon II, 065; Kravitz, 2003). On the other hand, modern studies such as Çilingiroğlu (1997), Carey (2005), Dezsö (2021), Grekyan (2010), and Smith (1994) contribute to the understanding of the Battle of Waush clearly. On the other hand, one of the most critical points to bear in mind is that this letter is propaganda and contains several contradictions (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 243; Kravitz, 2003, pp. 89-92). However, despite that fact, it still contains enough detail to allow inferences to be made about the strategy of the battle (Dezsö, 2021, p. 28). In terms of strategy, Urartian sources record their successes in very short and formulaic sentences such as "He defeated Aššur-nērārī, son of Adad-nērārī, king of the land Aššur" (eCUT A, 09-02). In addition, Urartian sources do not provide any information about the battle since they do not record defeats, and the battle was a heavy Urartian defeat.

On the Roman side, important writers such as Polybius, Titus Livius, Appianus, and other Roman historians focused on the Second Carthage War. On the other hand, modern studies are abundant about the Second Punic War Studies. Historians have discussed the Ticinus Battle for many years, and much has been written on them, such as Lazenby (1998), Lancel (1999), and Hoyos (2003).

Historical Outlines of the Battles

Before comparing the battles, it is essential to outline how they were fought. In this context, briefly summarizing the Battle of Waush and Ticinus would be better.

Battle of Waush

A strategic analysis of the Battle of Mount Waush, which represents an important breaking point in Assyrian-Urartu relations, reveals that various events triggered the war. The first of these stimuli is the heavy defeat of the Urartians against the Cimmerians, which played an essential role in the process that led to the battle (SAA, V, 75). Sargon, who knows what happened in the Urartian lands through an effective spy network, was informed about the Cimmerian victory (SAA, V, 75; SAA, V; Toptaş, 2020, p. 39).

Intelligence reports from different places confirmed that most of the Urartians' top military officials had been killed or captured and that their army was disorganized (Melville, 2016, p. 211). This situation shows they were vulnerable to Assyrian attacks, and an opportunity arose for Assyria. However, the Assyrian king Sargon did not choose to attack Urartu directly and preferred to move against Andia and Zikirtu, the Mannea territories. Here, the Assyrian king followed an indirect strategy (Hart, 2012; Çiğdem & Kılıç, 2025, pp. 7-8). The primary motivation was to break the Urartian coalition against Assyria and to secure the East by convincing other Urartian vassals through Mannea that the Urartians could no longer protect them. This can be considered a 'divide and conquer' strategy. On the other hand, Urartians could still intervene in Zikirtu and its vicinity despite their defeat by the Cimmerians, which can be seen as evidence that they were still powerful (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 236).

Finally, Sargon began, and after a march of about 290 kilometers, Sargon II reached Mount Waush Modern Sahand, East of Lake Urmia near present-day Tabriz (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 242; Melville, 2016, p. 130). As Sargon stated in his letter to the god Ashur, Rusa sent an envoy to Sargon to respond to his challenge at Waush Mountain (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). Rusa took a fighting position vis-à-vis Sargon and deployed his army before the Sargon. Rusa seems to have developed a strategy to maximize the impact of geography, as we saw in the later Persian Battle of Granicus (Hammond, 1980, pp. 75-88). Rusa, commanding an army fresh from defeat and had lost important commanders and allies, may have relied as much on geography as on his army.

Formation of the Assyrian army was *"With only my personal chariot and the horsemen that go at my side and never leave me in either hostile or friendly territory, the contingent of Sîn-aḫu-uṣur, I fell upon him Rusâ like a fierce arrow, inflicted a defeat on him, and turned back his attack"* (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). After Sargon's attack, his brother Sîn-aḫu-uṣur followed the king. This unexpected and powerful attack on the center of the Urartian army, where the Urartian royal guard was located, apparently disrupted the battle formation of the Urartian Army (Dezsö, 2021, p. 28). In fact, it can be stated that the expression "like a furious arrow" mentioned by the king in the text actually has a share of truth and that a terminologically known as "shock tactic" is applied (Phifer, 2012, p. 162). Thanks to this tactic, the Assyrian army gained a significant advantage at the beginning of the battle. It disrupted the battle order of the Urartian army with a hazardous shock maneuver.

In some battles, once the order of battle is broken, there is little an army can do. Even though the battle continues, the victor and the vanquished have already been determined. Even famous Roman author Frontinus proposes a strategic approach to this kind of strategic situation and names the strategy as *"On letting the enemy escape, lest, brought to bay, he renews the battle in desperation"* (Frontinus, II, 6). At this point, the use of cavalry by two different strategists can give us more accurate ideas. In the battle of Cannae, Hannibal attacked the soldiers in the center after the cavalry he placed on the flanks had finished the duty of driving out Roman cavalry. In this context, as Dezsö states, sometimes, a direct attack of cavalry on infantry does not yield the desired results (Dezsö, 2021, p. 28), which suits well in the Cannae. However, Alexander the Great is another example of the strategic use of cavalry. Alexander the Great used cavalry to create an opening in the enemy center, as he did, especially at the Battle of Issus 333 BC (Warry, 2003, pp. 30-39) or Hannibal's tactic in the Battle of Ticinus 218 BC. However, unlike the previous tactic, this one directly impacts the outcome, and if the desired break in the enemy ranks is caught, there is nothing the enemy army can do.

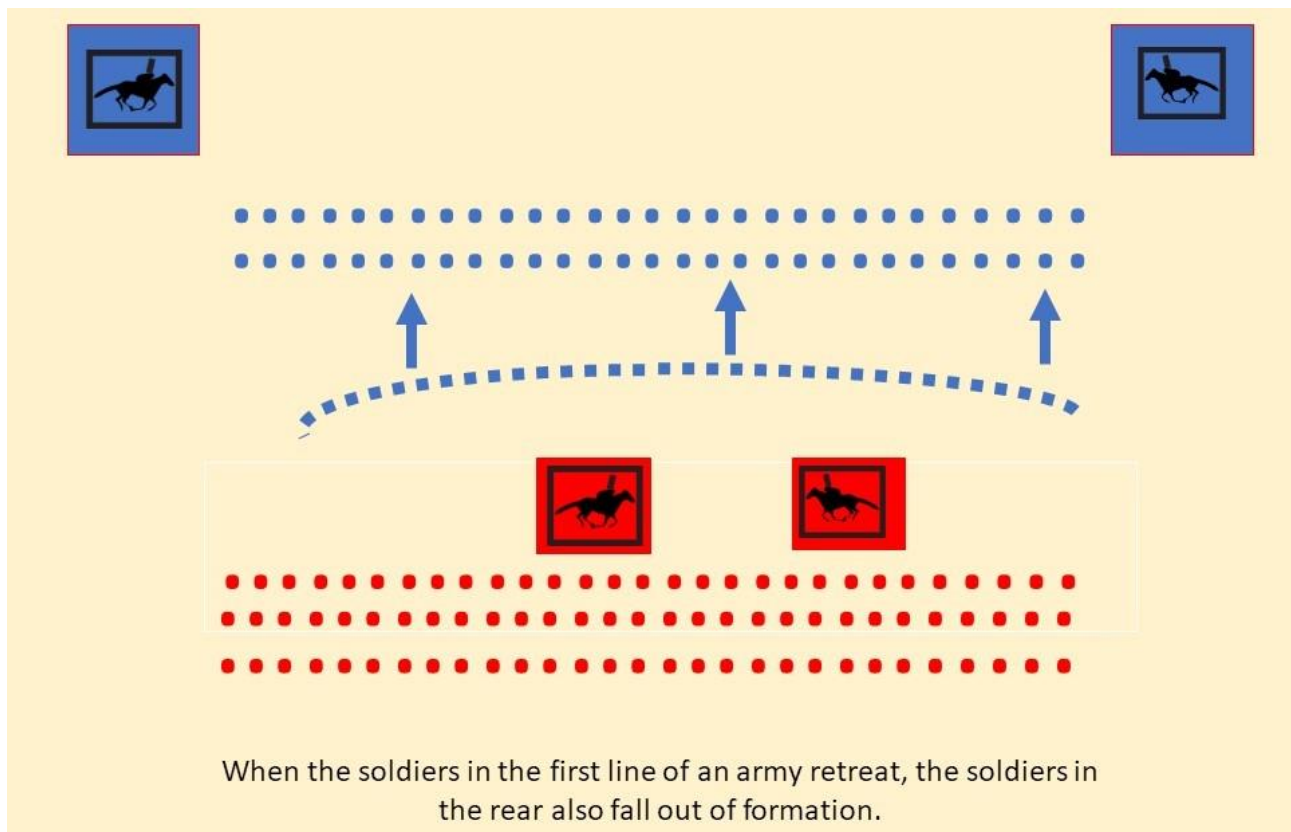


Fig. 1: A tactical plan of panic retreat.

On the other hand, this cavalry attack should be evaluated not only in terms of its physical but also in terms of its psychological impact. The most crucial aim of the Assyrian emperors, who exhibited a fierce attitude both in art, literature, and on the battlefields, was psychological, and the policy of fear was one of their most important instruments (King and Litt, 1915; Belibtreu, 2022, pp. 52-58). When we evaluate this situation in terms of the aforementioned cavalry attack, the rest of the battle no longer makes strategic sense. Because an army in battle is like a living organism, a lost limb cannot be replaced, and the army remains disabled. The battle is lost, especially if these defeated troops are defeated without causing any significant damage to the enemy side. With this attack, Sargon not only broke the Uartian center line but also crushed the Uartian army's hope of victory, and a flight must have probably begun to survive against the most powerful army of the period. One of the main problems in this flight is that soldiers fleeing from the front lines would have disorganized the soldiers in the rear. As a result of the successful attack tactics, the Uartian king left the battlefield, and the battle was over. In the meantime, it is necessary to mention Mittati of Zikirtu, who had an essential share in the occurrence of the war. Mittati could have fled the battlefield by sacrificing his own soldiers. However, it can be inferred that Mittati died here by fighting, probably courageously, against Sargon (Melville, 2016, 133).

Battle of Ticinus

The battle of Ticinus in 218 BC is the first battle in Italy in the Second Punic Wars. Hannibal's journey began in Spain and ended five months later, in November 218 BC, when he landed on the Po Plain. Carthaginian Army ambushes by the Allobroges cut his numbers almost in half. On the other hand, starvation, untimely snow, dangerous passes, and food lost to marauding Celts left the Carthaginian army in a challenging situation, even though it finished the journey (Polybius, III, 56; Lazenby, 1999, p. 48).

Roman Consul Publius Scipio wanted to stop Hannibal, who had lost half of his army in ambushes in the Alps and had landed in hunger and misery on the Po plain, as soon as possible before he advanced further into Italy. Publius Scipio crossed the Po River and marched westward to find Hannibal. Hannibal was searching for the Roman Army, so to the right bank of the river were the Carthaginians, and to the left were the Romans. Finally, two armies meet, ready for the first battle. The battle occurred near the Ticinus Ticino River, a tributary of the Po River west of present-day close to Pavia (Livy, XXI, 45).

Both commanders had to enter the battle immediately to obtain a decisive result. Hannibal's army formation is as follows: Heavy cavalry is in the center, and Numidian cavalry is distributed on both flanks. So, Publius Scipio placed the cavalry in the front with the support of the light infantry (Polybius, III, 65).

However, an unexpected event happened at the beginning of the battle, and Carthaginian cavalry swiftly attacked the Roman ranks. Cavalry charge and first movement was so fast, Hannibal's cavalry attacked the Roman light infantry before the Roman light infantry could even throw their spears. As a result of this sudden attack by the cavalry of the Carthaginian army, the Roman light infantry was forced to retreat and became inactive. When the Numidians on the flanks defeated the cavalry of the Roman army on the opposite side and attacked the center of the Roman army, the Roman army dispersed and began to flee. Because the situation had shown that it was no longer possible for the Roman army to win without cavalry to protect the flanks, the defeat of the Roman cavalry now meant that the battle was lost for the Roman army (Livy, XXI, 45).

Not all army units took part in this battle near the Ticinus River. On Hannibal's side, only cavalry was involved in the battle, while on the Roman side, only light infantry and cavalry took part. Rome's heavy infantry retreated without even engaging in any combat. Here, Scipio has prepared an escape plan (Lazenby, 1999, 53). Scipio, whose cavalry dispersed in the face of Hannibal's fast and effective maneuvers, put Plan B into practice. Scipio withdrew his army, realizing the futility of fighting anymore with the loss of cavalry and not wanting to inflict more casualties. This retreat was so fast that the soldiers in charge of destroying the bridges so that Hannibal's army could not cross were captured by Hannibal. In this battle, Hannibal fell upon the Roman army "like a furious arrow," as Sargon said, and forced the enemy army to retreat with an effective tactical maneuver. Another remarkable common point of the battle is that Scipio, like Rusa, was unable to pack up his camp, and everything in the camp fell into Hannibal's hands (Livy, XXI, 46).

Comparison of Two Battles

In this section, when we consider the objectives of Sargon and Hannibal on the battlefield, similarities and differences in the by under the following headings. In both battles, four important keys shaped the fights: the role of the vassals, wearing out the enemy, choosing remote battlefields, relying on the season, and creating escaping points on the geography.

Armies and Their Power at the Time of Battles

To understand both battles, it is necessary to analyze the situation of the army and the state. Assessments made without analyzing the situation of the Assyrian and Carthaginian armies will be incomplete. In this context, it is necessary to briefly provide information about the situation of the victorious Assyrian and Carthaginian armies, which are the focus of this article.

When we evaluate the Assyrian army from the perspective of its strength at the time of the war, the picture is quite clear. The Assyrian army gained momentum, especially thanks to Tiglath III Pileser's military reform and the king's energetic nature (Dezsö, 2012, p. 23). Afterward, during the reign of Sargon II, the state had the most powerful army, which had war experience in almost every region, was at the top in terms of weapon technology, and could be aware of every move of the enemy with the intelligence organization it established (Melville, 2016,

p. 82). At the same time, it had a large number of vassals due to its power in the region, and thanks to its economic power, it had tactically effective means, such as chariots or cavalry, but beyond the reach of its rivals, both in terms of training and the supply of horses and equipment. For these reasons, we have briefly summarized that the Assyrian army was the best of its period in almost all aspects, such as politics, economy, experience, and tactics. In this context, the Assyrian Empire was experiencing one of its most potent periods during the reign of Sargon II. Thanks to Sargon II's highly skillful, courageous, and risk-taking nature as a leader, the Assyrian army was in an unrivalled position in the Near East.

When we consider the situation of the Carthaginian army during Hannibal's Battle of Ticinus, Carthage, which was defeated in the First Punic War, was also shaken by a Mercenary Revolt. However, Hannibal's father, Hamilcar, strengthened the state by finding new economic areas in Spain and preparing for a new war (Hoyos, 2007, p. 61). Despite his young age, Hamilcar's son Hannibal proved his mettle at the Battle of Tagus (Ayrault, 1893, pp. 153-157). However, the Carthaginian army was in a slightly different situation than the Assyrians, as Rome had defeated it 35 years earlier and had suffered heavy casualties in the Mercenary Revolt. However, Hamilcar's leadership qualities created a good army and an exceptional leader, Hannibal. Since the information about the Carthaginian army comes from Roman sources, some information is missing. In this context, it is quite difficult to fill in the information here. Especially the fact that the African heavy infantry in Hannibal's army at the Battle of Cannae wore the clothes of the Roman soldiers killed at the Battle of Lake Trasimene may indicate that the Carthaginian army was not at the peak of equipment like the Assyrian army. Apart from that, however, it would not be wrong to consider the Carthaginian army one of the period's best armies (Goldsworthy, 2001, p. 53).

The main difference between the two armies is that Sargon was a king while Hannibal was a commander. Because while a commander is only obliged to fulfill the wishes of the state or the duties assigned, the powers of an Assyrian king are almost unlimited. The reflection of this on tactics is that while a king can use as many military or economic resources as he wants, a commander has to be content with only what is allocated to him. As a matter of fact, Carthage's failure to support Hannibal after the Battle of Cannae and the resulting defeat shows how important this factor was. In terms of leadership, Hannibal is an important enough person to leave a distinguished mark in world history. In summary, the Carthaginian army had a well-trained army and a good commander, but it had limitations, especially as it was in enemy territory without timely help.

Briefly explaining the situation of defeated armies, the Urtians and Romans are similar. Although the Urtian army suffered a heavy defeat from the Cimmerians and was in a challenging situation, it still did not leave its allies alone against Assyria (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 236). However, information about the Urtian army is very limited as the sources come from Assyria. On the other hand, in the Roman army, the commander Scipio came from Spain and gathered soldiers from the region. These soldiers were not the main army, but there is no need to discuss them at length here. After Scipio's defeat, Sempronius Longus, the other consul of 218 BC, came along with the rest of the army and suffered a heavier defeat against Hannibal in the Battle of Trebia (Lancel, 1999, pp. 92-95). In this context, the state of the armies of the defeated powers is weak in terms of influencing the course of the war. In general, the victors of both battles had almost absolute power and effective strategy at every moment of the battle.

Role of the Vassals in the Battles

The role of the Vassals in both battles was crucial, and Sargon built his strategy through vassals and wanted to send the message that Urartu's power in the region was over. Therefore, the Assyrian king did not attack Urartu directly and pursued an indirect strategy through vassals. It seems that for both kings, the most reasonable course of action for the confrontation was to engage in an indirect war rather than a direct one. The two armies met in the lands of the vassals, some 300 kilometers away from both capitals. The king of Assyria sees the situation from a perspective similar to that of the king of Urartu. He did not find it wise to attack Urartu directly, and instead of attacking the root first, he thought that the solution lay in destroying the vassals first and acted accordingly.

A similar situation is also valid for Rome because Rome experienced the Gallic Disaster in 387 BC, and the Celts advanced as far as Rome, receiving the most significant result of the centuries-long struggle. The noncontinuous fights lasted about 150 years, with Rome reaching the ultimate goal and reaping its most significant rewards in the

battle near the Adda River in 223 BC and defeating and intimidating the Celts (Polybius, II, 32, 33). However, the arrival of Hannibal, merely five years later, changed the balance against Rome. Scipio did not want to let these gains go to waste, so Scipio took immediate action. For this reason, Scipio had to accept an immature battle to prevent Hannibal from gaining more power and gathering supporters here (Rosenberger, 2003, p. 365).

As we have briefly summarized, the power struggle over vassals affected both battles' time, geography, and strategy. Kings Sargon, Rusa, consul Scipio, and commander Hannibal built their strategies around the vassals.

Choosing the Battlefield

When we examine the choice of the battlefield of Rusa of Urartu, we see a place that was chosen very wisely. Mount Waush, where the battle took place, is in the vicinity of Tabriz in present-day South Azerbaijan – Iran (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 242; Melville, 2016, p. 130). However, the main reason for this choice is that Assyria's primary target in the war was Zikirtu and vassals, so Sargon chose a kind of proxy war. This geography, as preferred by Rusa, was perfect for distracting the Assyrian army. The reason for this is that Sargon had to move eastward after leaving his capital; at the same time, the cost of the war increased, the army wore out, and most importantly, the "war season" suitable for battle or siege going to Urartu geography narrows (Zimansky, 2003, pp. 75-80). So even if the Urartian army was defeated at a distance of roughly 300 kilometers from the capital city of Tushpa, the Assyrian army would have to march a couple of hundred kilometers and cross a geography woven with a network of large and small fortresses until it reached the capital, a situation clearly in favor of Urartu. In short, Rusa secured the capital by fighting the war in today's Iran. Sources on wars do not generally mention defeats, but sometimes defeats become inevitable; states fall into difficulties and settle for the lesser of two evils in order to avoid the worst. Such defeats can sometimes be as successful and meaningful as victories. When we analyze it strategically in-depth, it can be said from the available data that Rusa of Urartu was a highly skilled strategy master because the Urartian king successfully manipulated the Assyrians and directed them to another target. This strategy is called the "indirect approach" by Hart and is defined as engaging the enemy indirectly rather than attacking them directly (Hart, 2012, pp. 1-7). This strategy also plays a vital role in *The Art of War*, written around 600 BC and considered by its author, Sun Tzu, as "the key to victory" (Sun Tzu, V, 5).

The first goal Rusa accomplished was to tire the Assyrian army by forcing the enemy to choose a long route. The second objective was to break the army's motivation to fight. The expression "The exhausted troops of the god Aššur, who had already come a long journey and were tired and weary, had had to cross innumerable remote mountains that were difficult to ascend and descend, and they were thus in poor condition" in the text is remarkable (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). From this expression, it can be interpreted that the army was tired or that its physical and moral strength required to fight had declined. In this context, it can be stated that Rusa's preferred geography meets his expectations.

To tire the enemy, Urartu King Rusa must have been aware that after this defeat of his army, Assyria would try to turn this weak situation of the Urartians into an opportunity. Afterward, he tried to direct Assyria's attention to a different region. He did this through his vassals in the region and prevented Assyria from directly attacking Urartu by starting a rebellion in the region. The same is valid for the Urartu, for they had come as far as the Assyrians, too. However, it would be right to assume that they moved more quickly than the Assyrian army, probably because they had to cross their own vassal's land.

The Carthaginian army, on the other hand, was in a worse situation than the Assyrian army. Although the roads Sargon crossed were difficult, they were neither as dangerous as the Alps nor exposed to two large ambushes by the Celtic tribe Allobroges that could destroy an army. Almost half of the Carthaginian army lost their lives while crossing the Alps, either in attacks or due to lack of supplies (Polybius, III, 53-57). This situation reveals the gravity of the unfavorable situation that the army went through. However, in the war between Carthage and Rome, Rome used geography. The main advantage of the battlefield chosen by Rome is that it allows for an escape strategy.

When we take into account the factors that may affect the outcome of the war before starting the battle plans, both the Assyrian army commanded by Sargon and the Carthaginian army commanded by Hannibal were able to come to the battlefield after a long and exhausting journey. As seen in Sargon's letter to the God Ashur, the Assyrian army was exhausted by long marches, had to overcome countless mountains, and was disadvantaged.

If we compare the situation of these two armies, long marches wore both of them out, and the soldiers in the army reached the battlefield by experiencing great physical and mental difficulties before the battle. In this context, Sargon and Hannibal, the attackers in both battles, were disadvantaged when the army was about to start the battle.

Timing and Surprise Element: Blitzkrieg

Timing is one of the elements of war and often one of the most important keys to success (Sun Tzu, V, 13). Sun Tzu says about timing in war: "The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim." Timing is one of the most critical elements of battles and wars.

Both the Battle of Mount Waush and the Battle of Ticinus are case studies in which timing decided the fate of the battle. Timing has a significant place in planning and implementing both battles. Because both Sargon and Hannibal successfully used the elements of surprise and timing in these battles. On the other hand, Sargon's expression "like a furious arrow" can be translated to a modern strategy roughly as Blitzkrieg. The Germans used this strategy during World War II, which was formed by combining the German words blitz lightning and krieg war. The most important feature of this strategy is to organize the entire strength of the army and quickly destroy the enemy's fortifications with a fast, powerful, and unexpected attack (Reilly, 1940, p. 254).

Sargon II's statement in the Battle of Waush is quite remarkable. From this, it is understood that the Urartian king attempted a challenge against the Assyrian King Sargon. However, we can understand from his tactical and geographical choice that Rusa did not set out on the battlefield for victory. As we have mentioned before, the geography was chosen in a way that would not allow the Urartian army to be surrounded or prevent the total destruction of the army. It is clear from the study of war strategy that in places like straits and gorges, only a limited portion of the army can fight, regardless of the size of its combatants. As a matter of fact, Allen and Muratov, who have studied Eastern Anatolia and Caucasus geography and warfare, support this statement (Allen & Muratov, 2010, p. 7). In such a situation, the Assyrian King Sargon II, who was disadvantaged in the strategy, found a solution against the Urartian battle plans.

Sargon II attacked suddenly and powerfully without waiting for the enemy to form a complete line or battle formation before the battle. Moreover, probably the most elite troops of the Assyrian army were assigned to this maneuver, and these experienced and elite troops must have created a great shock effect on the vanguard units of the Urartian army. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the Urartian army was unprepared for this strategy, and its resistance was broken in a short period of time, resulting in a domino effect. Thus, the elements of timing and surprise prepared the ground for the defeat of the Urartian army (RINAP, Sargon II, 065; Dezsö, 2021, p. 28).

When we analyze the Battle of Ticinus in terms of Blitzkrieg, two armies met on the banks of the Ticinus River, one of the tributaries of the Po River. But here, Hannibal, like Sargon, used timing as a tactical element and attacked the vanguard of the Roman army commanded by Scipio. This attack took place so quickly that even the vanguard units of Rome had not yet fully taken their places on the battlefield. In this context, the Roman cavalry and light infantry did not offer any resistance against the Carthaginian cavalry, which was almost upon them and dispersed (Lancel, 1999, pp. 82-85).

In the Battle of Mount Waush, the Assyrian texts show that the geography chosen by Rusa was not conducive to bringing the entire army or fully deploying to the battlefield (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). In contrast, on the Roman side, although geography allowed it, the Roman consul Scipio probably soon realized that it would be suicidal to continue the battle due to the loss of the cavalry part of the Roman army in the first phase of the battle and withdrew rest of it (Livy, XXI, 46; Lancel, 1999, pp. 82-85).

In both of the battles we have analyzed, timing was used effectively by the victorious commanders, creating a domino effect in the defeat of the opponent. The elements of timing and surprise constitute one of the most important commonalities of both battles.

Creating An Escaping Point

The famous Chinese commander Sun Tzu defines geography as one of the most essential elements of war. He even advises that if a commander and his army do not use geography effectively, he should prevent the enemy

from doing so (Sun Tzu, X). Battles are always risky, and one can never know in advance who will win, so losing must be calculated as much as the strategy in battle because losing an entire army means abandoning territorial dominance to the enemy. In this context, it is essential to devise an alternative strategy to establish a defensive resistance in another region in case the battle is lost.

Uartians, the Assyrian kings' main rival, used geography the most in their strategy due to their location in a mountainous area. Geography was chosen very carefully, especially the vanquished, with extreme caution (Zimansky, 2003, pp. 75-80).

The point Rusa chose for the battleground was a narrow mountain pass and did not allow the Assyrian army to use specific tactics such as pincer movement (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). So, it will bring some strategic advantages. One of these strategic advantages is that due to the limited geography, the limited number of soldiers of the armies can enter the battle, thus preventing the effective use of Assyria's army, which is quite advanced in combat experience. Another advantage of this chosen region is that it provides reaction time. In other words, it gives the army fighting each other in the strait time to escape or to bring new troops into the battle, depending on the situation. Another tactical advantage is that the risk of attacking the army from the rear or flanks is minimized. However, the biggest advantage of such a geography is that it eliminates the possibility of the army surrounding and destroying the army as Hannibal did at Cannae (Goldsworthy, 2021, p. 145). In addition, if the cavalry of the Assyrian army, which is advantageous both tactically and in terms of equipment, defeats the Uartian cavalry, the main column of the army will be vulnerable from the sides and rear, or most crucially, it can be surrounded. In addition, the possibility of the Uartian army withdrawing from the battlefield on foot would be eliminated, and the Uartian army would suffer more significant casualties.



Fig. 2: Mt. Sahand is a stratovolcano, and an aerial view shows that it is the perfect battleground for escaping strategy. (NASA, STS74-708-25)

When we analyze the Battle of Waush in the context of the escape plan, it has already been mentioned that Urartu King Rusa entered the battle cautiously. If Sargon struck a blow, which is highly obvious, it would destroy the Urartian army here, and there would be no power left to stop the Assyrian army. Thus, after a possible defeat, the Urartian king probably considered the scenario in which his state and people would survive the damage. Rather than massacring his army as Hannibal did to the Roman army at the Battle of

Cannae after his resistance was broken, it is a more reasonable strategy to prepare a suitable escape plan and to get his defeated soldier out of a chaotic battle alive. This is because the Assyrian army would not be able to move quickly in an environment where a large part of the Uartian army was still alive and organized, and could face an ambush at any moment. We see this example, especially in the campaigns of Shalmaneser III. Although Uartian King Aramu was defeated many times and its capital was destroyed, the Uartian threat could not be ended (RIMA, III, 20).

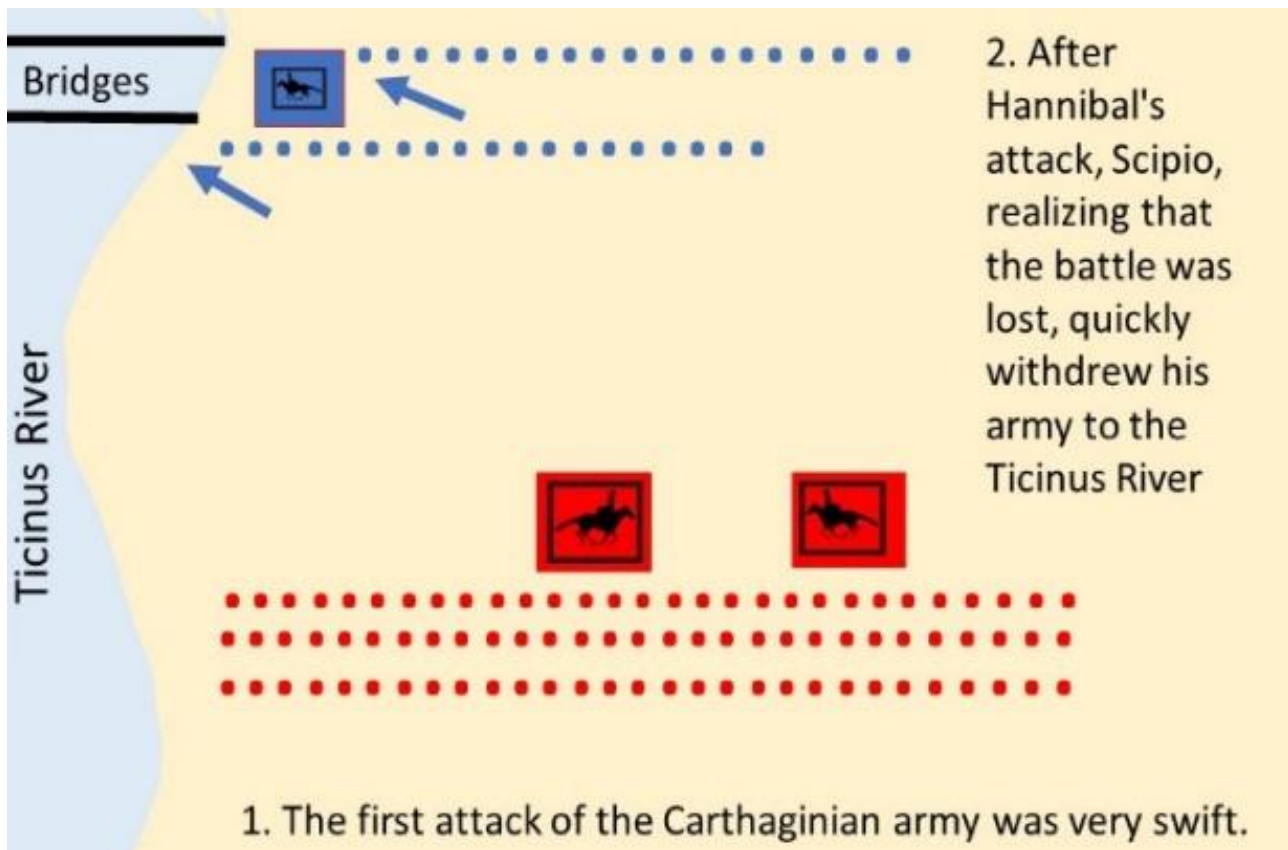


Fig. 3: Escaping strategy of Battle of Ticinus.

The escape strategy of the Battle of Mount Waush was quite successful. After the first attack of the Assyrian army under the command of Sargon, the direction of the battle changed significantly; after this change in favor of the Assyrian army, the Uartian king and his army probably realized at some point that the battle could not turn in favor of Urartu and took action. The rest of the army must have withdrawn immediately after the Assyrian army's successful attack. At this point, one of the noteworthy points in Sargon's account is the looting of the royal tent of the Uartian King Rusa (RINAP, Sargon II, 065). This point is open to serious speculation due to insufficient objective sources. Any commander with combat experience knows that the first target of the Assyrian army in a sudden attack would be the looting of the king's camp because this would mean that the battle was lost to the enemy. This raises the question of whether Rusa could have set up his camp at a point where the Assyrians would have been targeting it as a primary focus and then simply withdrew his army. Although it is very difficult to make definitive judgments, the Uartian king withdrew a considerable part of the army from the battlefield. The most substantial evidence for this claim is that if the Uartian army had suffered a heavy defeat here, its vassals in other regions could have been mobilized by Assyria to end Uartian sovereignty.

On the other hand, the Battle of Ticinus's escape strategy is also remarkable. There is a slight difference, however, in that the advantage is on the side of Rome, the defending side. Ticinus River, used as a geographical obstacle, plays an essential role in the escape strategy. However, as if to support the above claim, despite all his advantages, Scipio, the commander of the Roman armies, planned an escape strategy before the battle with the Carthaginian army, which was in a terrible situation. Scipio planned to take the army across the bridges built over the Ticinus River, one of the tributaries of the Po River, in case of defeat

and to prevent Hannibal from following by destroying the bridges. Since the resistance of the cavalry and light infantry was broken in the first attack, Scipio immediately led his army across the bridges built over the Ticinus River, and this retreat was so fast that the soldiers in charge of destroying the bridges after the Roman army crossed, they were captured by Hannibal's army. But it's important to underline that the Roman army managed to withdraw most of its troops without suffering further and heavy casualties.

Victory

The Battle of Mount Waush and the Battle of the Ticinus are tactically significant and remarkable battles. Analyzing both victories from a common point of view can be summarized under the following points. Both victorious armies had extremely good battle discipline and successfully applied the theoretical strategy on the battlefield. In this context, it can be inferred that the victorious armies had basic features such as equipment, chain of command, and training and were highly successful. Among the victorious armies, both Sargon and Hannibal applied a highly successful strategy and managed to render the enemy army unable to continue the war with successful and quick maneuvers. It is also understood that the casualties of the victorious armies were low (Lazenby, 1998, pp. 52-53; Lancel, 1999, pp. 83-85; Dezso, 2021, pp. 26-30).

Both battles were tactically similar to the Blitzkrieg tactics used during World War II. Especially in the Waush Battle, it is determined that the Assyrian army was more similar to the blitzkrieg concept as they entered the camp of the Urartian king Rusa. It is seen that the Assyrian army succeeded in splitting the Urartian army, which used the surrounding geography as a defense element, from the center, and this situation contributed to the tactical elitism of the battle. Because such a tactic can only be achieved by an army with a high combat capability, in case of failure, the soldiers of the attacking army would be surrounded and destroyed by the opposing army.

Another essential point in evaluating the wars is to analyze their political consequences. If we evaluate both battles in terms of Sargon and Hannibal, who were victorious in both battles, it is seen that the war tactically produced similar results. One of the first consequences of these victories was the dissolution effect on the vassals in the region. After the Battle of Waush, Urartu's vassals, especially in the south, came under direct Assyrian threat, and even the Temple of Musasir, which was extremely important for Urartu, was destroyed (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, pp. 236-250; Melville, 2016, p. 136; Elayi, 2017, p. 144). More interestingly, Sargon's Letter to God is more concerned with the capture of Musasir and the plight of Rusa than with the war (Kravitz, 2003, p. 92). Thus, Urartu suffered severe damage both militarily and spiritually. The looting of the cult center of its god was perhaps a more significant loss for Urartu than the battle itself.

On the other hand, the Battle of Ticinus had a political outcome similar to that of the Battle of Mount Waush. Since the battle was fought in Northern Italy, where the Celts were located, Hannibal's victory greatly impacted them. The Celtic power, which had peaked in Italy with the Gallic Disaster, gradually declined after that, and only a limited area in Northern Italy was left to be dominated. Celtic tribes such as the Boii and Insubres, who had long lost territory to Rome, as well as other tribes in the region, saw Hannibal as a leader with the power to save them from Rome. In other words, both battles initiated a significant political change in the region (Polybius, III, 68-73; Lazenby, 1998, pp. 52-53; Lancel, 1999, pp. 83-85).

Conclusion

The results of this study, which compares two battles between Assyria and Rome, should be analyzed from various perspectives. Since the Battle of Ticinus is covered in great detail in the primary sources, it would be unrealistic to draw new conclusions or claim anything new about Ticinus. In this context, evaluating the study results through the Waush Battle instead of Ticinus, which was used in the study as a benchmark, would be more accurate.

The first result of the study shows that the war strategies practiced in the Ancient Near East in the Assyrian Empire were extraordinarily complex and advanced. It should also be noted that strategy is not only an intellectual activity but also requires skilled soldiers and commanders to implement these ideas. Based on this data, the Assyrian army was extremely well organized, had a high level of maneuverability, and had capable commanders who could devise world-class strategies.

A similar reality can be said for Urartu because the fact that they lost the battle is more because the Assyrian army was much better. Apart from that, the fact that they were still willing to fight for their allies against Assyria despite the Cimmerian defeat shows how broad the Urartian political perspective was. Rusa also tried to use an elegant strategy but was defeated because his opponent was superior. Rusa's escape strategy was also extremely important and deserves even a separate study.

Assyrian royal inscriptions had propaganda content, and a more realistic perspective can be created through comparative studies, as in this study. Although the documents contain propaganda, they also contain a crucial historical reality, making it easier to understand some battles. In particular, we can state that Sargon's attack at the beginning of the war dispersed the opponent, just like in Ticinus, and the rest of the battle was more propagandistic. The detail supporting this finding is capturing a significant part of the Urartian elite troops guarding the center. It seems very unlikely that the front-line soldiers could have survived such a fast-paced and "bloody" battle.

On the other hand, the most striking aspect of the propaganda part of the Assyrian documents is the capture of important places such as Musasir, and the damages inflicted on Urartu are more focused in the text rather than the battle between the Assyrian king and Rusa. This is conveyed in the document with both propaganda content and the implication that the Urartian state lost its power as a state. This situation, far beyond adding propaganda content to this document, is indisputable proof that the Assyrians understood war not only in its material dimension but also in its intangible dimension. It shows that it was more important for them to destroy a psychological fulcrum from which the enemy drew spiritual strength rather than killing soldiers or capturing enemies. This is another important indicator of Assyria's psychological warfare dimension.

Vassals, in general, play a critical role in battles, even if they are generally seen in the background in the study of warfare. In both the Waush and Ticinus battles, the main focus is the control of the vassals. This shows us the need to look at the battles from a broader perspective.

The most striking commonality between the battles of Waush and Ticinus is that both defeated leaders employed a highly successful escape strategy. In this context, both battles are exemplary in world history. Both the victors and the vanquished produced highly successful strategies in both battles. However, the victors achieved victory by making some tactical moves more accurately, decisively, and swiftly.

The primary sources of strategy studies in the Near East are inscriptions and tablets. These sources provide little detail, as in Greek and Roman works. However, this study shows that it is possible to obtain sufficient general information about the strategy applied, even if small details are given. In addition, it has been revealed that one of the important factors in strategy studies in the Near East is the knowledge of the author who deals with the texts. Sometimes, sources that do not provide direct information can be put on a more realistic basis by comparing them with their examples in the West. In this context, this study's approach can be considered a modest methodological attempt and precursor for future comparative studies on Near Eastern warfare.

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